



THEIR FUTURE. OUR FUTURE.

2020-2021
EVALUATION
REPORT

learning
community
 DOUGLAS
SARPY



The Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties

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Dear Local and State Constituents,

Our communities remain committed to dedication, opportunity, and equity for all. From last year's tag line "Staying Strong", the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties continues to show meaningful impact in this year's Annual Evaluation Report. The COVID-19 pandemic provided some continued disruptions, but this report confirms that the needs of children and families are being met in real ways – in real time.

CREATING AWARENESS AND ORIENTATION

This year provided an opportunity for Center programming to meet the specific needs of Learning Community families by first-listening to needs. Many barriers to family learning are present, which causes Learning Community staff to innovate and create new ways to address learning at school and at home. We continue to work toward answering the question of "How can the Learning Community best serve families and schools to promote the best possible academic, social, and community outcomes"?

EDIFYING EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND OUR ECONOMY

A family's financial security and longevity directly impacts a child's academic career. Despite the residual effects of pandemic, families in Learning Community Centers took advantage of two-generation (2-Gen) opportunities in Education courses and Employment activities. Positive outcomes further validate our 2-Gen model for children and families excel and thrive together.

Highlights: 2-Gen Outcomes

- Caregivers successfully learned to build supportive relationships with their children, which is key to the development of academic and social skills.
- When Caregivers get ahead in employment through up-skilling, re-skilling and career exploration, we know that children develop greater confidence in knowledge application.
- Digital literacy training, as well as ESL and GED courses, arm Caregivers with necessary tools to improve employment status.

CELEBRATING LEARNING COMMUNITY SUCCESS

The Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties was proud to celebrate Graduates from a number of programs this year! Many completed ESL, GED, and a number of Caregiver-related programs over the past few years. Both Centers hosted graduation ceremonies with remarkable community support. We look forward to future

outcomes showing positive trends of Student and Caregiver academic and personal success! Thank you for ALL that you do to support Learning Community Families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "BE Ekwerekwu". The letters are cursive and fluid.

Dr. Bradley Ekwerekwu
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Introduction

The Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties is an educational subdivision focused on outcomes and opportunities for children and families. Impact grows through a collaborative network of metropolitan area school districts and community organizations. Independent evaluations demonstrate consistently strong results in the implementation of quality early childhood education and family engagement programs. Improvements in teaching practices are embedded in programs.

RATIONALE

The Learning Community implements strategies built on research based on one or more of the following principles: 1) students benefit from high-quality classrooms, 2) reflective coaching adds value to the classroom, 3) family engagement is critical for a child's success in school, and 4) students' early childhood outcomes predict later school success.

NEED FOR QUALITY CLASSROOMS. Quality early childhood programs have been linked to immediate, positive developmental outcomes, as well as long-term, positive academic performance (Burchinal, et al., 2010; Barnett, 2008). Research shows that all children benefit from high-quality preschool, with low-income children and English learners benefiting the most (Yoshiwaka, et al., 2013). High-quality classroom organization is related to fewer student behavior problems and increased social competence (Rimm-Karufman, 2009).

COACHING ADDS VALUE TO THE CLASSROOM. Coaching teachers in instructional practices is proving to be an effective and feasible professional development method in improving teacher instruction. Meta-analysis of coaching studies indicated medium to large effect sizes on teacher instruction & small to medium effect sizes on student achievement (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018). Coaching methods that combine the elements of modeling, observation, and direct feedback have been found to increase teacher implementation of proactive strategies, particularly in regards to classroom management (Reinke et al., 2014, Kamps et al., 2015). The coaching relationship continues to be paramount in instructional coaching as research indicates that the most effective coaching models are those adapted to each individual's needs and situations (Bradshaw et al., 2013). The differentiation and individualization of coaching are effective for both new and veteran teachers alike (Reddy et al., 2013).

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATION IS CRITICAL FOR STUDENTS' SUCCESS. Family engagement with their children and their schools is a key element for student school success (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Partnerships between home and school are especially important for children who are socially and economically disadvantaged (Jeynes, 2005). Positive goal-directed

Our Mission

Together with school districts and community organizations as partners, we demonstrate, share, and implement more effective practices to measurably improve educational outcomes for children and families in poverty.

Our Vision

That all children within the Learning Community achieve academic success without regard to social or economic circumstance.

relationships between families and program staff are key to engagement and children's school readiness (HHS/ACF/OHS/NCPFCE, 2018).

PRESCHOOL CHILD OUTCOMES PREDICT LATER SCHOOL SUCCESS. School readiness is an essential concern for students entering the educational system. Preparation to perform in an educational setting is a significant benefit for students, especially those who are from diverse backgrounds, with a greater number of risk factors. These students typically have poorer school performance compared to their economically advantaged counterparts (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Students enrolled earlier and for a longer duration demonstrate better short and long-term results (Barnett, 2008). In studies of the longer term effects of preschool programs, the importance of quality teaching in early elementary grades is also important. Research found that investments in elementary schools influence the strength of ongoing preschool effects, researchers have found that the level of challenge provided by kindergarten teachers matters for later outcomes (Johnson & Jackson, 2017).

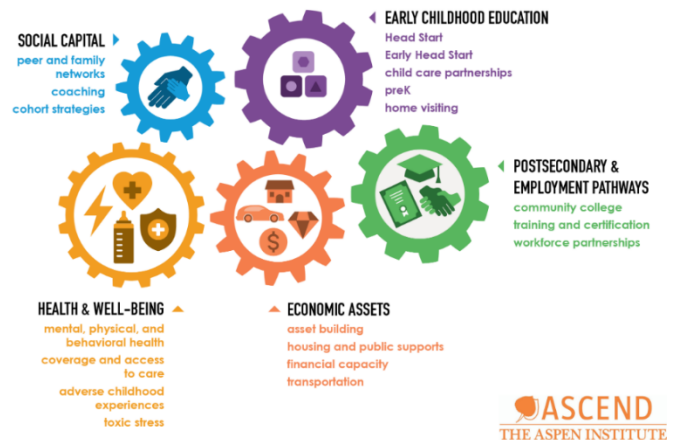
2GEN APPROACH

The Learning Community uses a two-generation (2Gen) approach in designing early childhood and family engagement programs at each of the centers, Family Learning at the Learning Community Center of South Omaha and Parent University at Learning Community Center of North Omaha. This creates opportunities for and addresses the needs of both children and adults. Using the whole-family approach, programs focus equally and intentionally on children and parents.

The theory of change behind the 2Gen approach suggests aligning services for parents and children yields stronger and lasting results (ASCEND, 2018). Based on community needs, each Learning Community Center developed a comprehensive program to address the opportunity gap for children and families based on the unique characteristics of each community and their needs.

Key elements of the 2Gen approach include:

- Early Childhood Development
- Health & Well-being
- Post-secondary & Employment Pathways
- Economic Assets
- Social Capital



SCHOOL DISTRICT INITIATIVES

The Learning Community also supports programs in nine school districts. School districts customize programs to meet specific needs, but all have the opportunity to benefit from sharing their successes and lessons learned.

- **Jumpstart to Kindergarten** provides low-income students the opportunity to experience a school setting. Most students have little or no experience in classroom environments.
- **Extended Learning** provides additional direct instruction for children to prevent summer learning loss and improve their chances of success.
- **Instructional Coaching** allows teachers to reflect on strategies and enhances instructional practice.

EVALUATION

A comprehensive evaluation process using a Utilization-Focused evaluation design (Patton, 2012) was conducted to monitor the implementation of the Learning Community programs and assess progress towards identified program outcomes. Data were used as a teaching tool throughout the year to support program improvement.

Based upon the evaluation plan, the evaluation employed multiple methods to describe and measure the quality of implementation, the nature of programming, and to report outcomes demonstrated by the programs funded by the Learning Community (LC). The findings will reflect the collective experiences of the child and family through participation in the program as well as other factors (e.g., school district efforts, other community services, and family support). The overarching evaluation questions were:

IMPLEMENTATION. What was the nature of the implementation strategies? Was there variation in implementation and if so, what factors contributed to that variation? What was the impact of COVID-19 on the program and/or evaluation practices?

DEMOGRAPHICS. Who accessed and participated in the program or intervention?

QUALITY PRACTICES. To what extent are there quality practices in the center and classroom settings? Typically, classroom observations are completed to examine quality. However, as school districts had to implement COVID-19 protocols, observations were not feasible.

CHILD AND FAMILY OUTCOMES. What were the outcomes related to academic achievement? Did family parenting skills improve? To what extent were parents engaged in their child's learning? Did parents gain skills that would improve their ability to support their child in school?

COMMUNITY PRACTICES AND USE OF DATA. How did programs use their data? What changes occurred as a result of this continuous improvement process?

In addition, this year's evaluation plan adjusted in accordance with program changes, school district policies and the COVID-19 situation. New evaluation data were collected at both centers while less data was able to be collected directly from school district students and staff. For

programs such as the Childcare Director Project and the MCC Teacher program, evaluation was dependent upon participation and with decreased participation few if any measures were able to be implemented.

INTERPRETING THE RESULTS

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF A STRATEGY IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE?

The answer to this question can be found by reviewing both the quantitative and qualitative data that are summarized in this report. Due to the pandemic, data comparisons are more difficult to make given the adaptations schools and programs made last year and impacted the context of results. Where appropriate, statistical analyses provide information to determine if there were significant changes in the outcomes (p value) and if those significant values were meaningful (d value or effect size). The effect size is the most helpful in determining “how well did the intervention work” (Coe, 2002). Qualitative data provide more detailed insight as to how the program is working and outcomes from key informants’ perspectives.



COVID-19

**IMPACT &
RESPONSE**



COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to alter the programming, services, education, and evaluation of the Learning Community in 2020-2021. Much of the programming continued to be done virtually at the LCCSO and LCCNO. Staff continued to support families and students as they navigated the changes with schools and in the community. However, the Metro Community College Teacher Prep program and the Early Childhood provider training were significantly impacted by the pandemic. Each of these components had reduced participation and needed to strategically plan on how best to move forward.

Learning Community Center of South Omaha

COVID-19 Response

The LCCSO spent much of the past year both moving the program to the Zoom platform while simultaneously preparing for the shift back to in-person learning.

In order to offer online classes during the pandemic, the program spent the year focused on teaching digital literacy. This was a difficult year for many LCCSO families (due to COVID-19, loss of employment, etc.), and for this reason, they were given the option to either be a part of the comprehensive program or choose the “home visit only” if they could not attend classes.

Before opening the center for in-person programming in June 2021, a vaccine event was held onsite for the participants and their families. The center added a new classroom to allow for less crowding in the childcare rooms. The outdoor play space was also expanded, and an expert at Nebraska Extension helped redesign the outdoor area with new play equipment and toys. OneWorld purchased an HVAC upgrade to improve air quality.

ESL/GED

The 2020-2021 school year looked vastly different for adult learners at the Learning Community Center of South Omaha than previous school years. As was true for learners around the world, it was a challenging and stressful time, but LCCSO parent participants were able to acquire myriad skills as a result of virtual learning.

Because the center was not able to host the usual family camp for participants in July of 2020, the program created a virtual version, hosting a variety of online academic and enrichment activities that families could participate in from home via Zoom. Topics included math, origami, fitness, fun facts, cooking, and music, and sessions were held daily. These sessions provided a context in which children and parents could help each other navigate technology.

Beginning in August of 2020, ESL and GED programs were implemented via Zoom. Donations from private donors allowed the program to loan each participant a Chromebook and provide

internet hotspots to those participants who did not have internet at home. From August 2020 to May 2021, all of the adult education (ESL/GED) courses took place online. However, gaps in participants' digital knowledge became apparent and teachers spent time in each class working on technology skills in addition to traditional English and GED instruction. ESL participants became proficient in using Zoom, email, search engines, and Google Classroom and gained skills such as using a mouse, copying and pasting, and typing, to name a few. In some cases, small in-person sessions were conducted in order to facilitate participants learning technology concepts that were difficult to learn remotely. GED students, who take classes in a partnership between the LCCSO and Metro Community College, received certificates from NorthStar Online Learning in Basic Computer Skills, Internet, Email, and Windows.



While technology learning and support took time away from traditional English and GED instruction, teachers were still able to use online curriculum to continue instruction in language, math, social studies, and science. During the 2020-2021 school year, five students graduated with their GEDs.

Educational Navigators

Educational Navigators increased their number of personal visits during the past year as they worked from home from 1,994 during the 2019-2020 evaluation year to 2,338 during the 2020-2021 evaluation year.

While some parents were unable to attend ESL or GED classes, most opted to continue with home visits during the pandemic. Until June, 2021, when in-home visits resumed, these visits were conducted either virtually or in-person and outdoors.

Interactive Parent/Child Classes

The program continued with interactive parent/child classes, including:

- “Bridges to Success” program – UNO School of Education (both semesters)
- Prime Time Family Reading Time program – Humanities Nebraska (both semesters)
- String Sprouts parent/child violin classes– Omaha Conservatory of Music (both semesters)

Child Learning

The Child Learning team was the most versatile team during the evaluation year. In July 2020, they held preschool graduations in the front yard of each child who was moving onto Kindergarten.



The team also made phone calls to parents on the wait list and recruited new parents to the program. They planned “drive-by” distribution events (including monthly diapers from the LC Foundation donations, books, computers, art supplies, and treats on special occasions such as Day of the Young Child). The Child Learning team became “Zoom Producers”, each assigned to certain ESL classes to assist with technology and other barriers. They assisted with in-person computer onboarding classes, teaching the basics to parents before they went home with a computer: how to use a mouse, how to log onto computer, how to log onto Zoom, etc. All members of the team completed Metro’s Child Development Associate certificate program and trained in Creative Curriculum. Finally, they held interactive Zoom classes once or twice a day for children in the program.

During June 2021, child learning classes resumed in-person, so the team began working directly with children all day.

SUMMER ACADEMY 2021

A new program for the Learning Community this year was the Summer Academy hosted at both the North Omaha and South Omaha sites.

LEARNING COMMUNITY CENTER OF SOUTH OMAHA

This summer was the first where both centers piloted a Summer Academy, which focused on remedying the COVID-19 slide and building Kindergarten skills.

At the South Center, classes were held Monday – Thursday, with a morning and afternoon session. Parents studied English while their children were in Summer Academy. The month of June had good attendance, but the rate lowered significantly during the month of July after Omaha Public Schools limited the number of students accepted into July summer school. Some

children enrolled during July attended only occasionally. Many families had older children at home who could not participate in the program this summer due to space and staffing concerns. After it was clear there was capacity for more children in July, seven additional five- and six-year-olds were allowed to attend after the first week of July.

June:	July:
Newborn to age 1: 5 children	Newborn to age 1: 6 children
Age 1: 8 children	Age 1: 6 children
Age 2: 9 children	Age 2: 9 children
Age 3: 9 children	Age 3: 5 children
Age 4: 10 children	Age 4: 8 children
Age 5: 3 children	Age 5: 5 children
Age 6: 0 children	Age 6: 5 children

The center partnered with Opera Omaha’s Community Fellowship program, which visited the center multiple times with two opera singers to engage the children with activities related to literacy and the performing arts. The Salvation Army also operated a food truck on-site called the Kids Cruisin’ Kitchen, which provided daily free meals for the children in the program.

Munroe-Meyer Institute conducted the Minnesota Executive Functioning Scale (MEFS) with preschool-aged children at the beginning of June and the end of July. Twenty-two children were pre-tested in June, and ten were post-tested in July.

LEARNING COMMUNITY CENTER OF NORTH OMAHA

At the North Center, classes were held Monday - Friday 7:30am to 8:00am breakfast was provided, and instruction began at 8:00am and ended each day at 12:00pm. A light lunch was also sent home daily with each child. Summer Academy was held starting June 2nd to June 30th and July 6th through July 23rd a total of 35 instruction days. There were six children who attend from June to July. The children were dropped off at the North Center and greeted and temperatures were checked daily. The children remained onsite daily without their parents’ presence. Summer Academy began with eight total children ages 3- and 4-year-old. It was a multi-cultural group of Black, Hispanic, Somali, and Russian children. By the end of the second term there were 6 (5 boys and 1 girl) remaining that could commit to daily attendance.

The North Center partnered with KidSquad to provide the Summer Academy. The North Center is usually very slow during the summer months, and pre-COVID-19, planned literacy activities for families to use during this time. This year the summer was focused on providing language and literacy for the children as well as social-emotional skills in preparation for starting school soon. The staff spent time working with the children to expand their vocabulary by using specific words for people, places, things, and actions. They also used descriptive words while the children participated in routines and play and then encouraged children to further develop thinking skills by asking them questions. Staff read books and the librarian did a weekly story-time that would include some physical activities such as singing and dancing. Staff promoted use of both fine and gross motor skills through play with blocks and drawings using paint. Social skills were

encouraged and when conflicts happened the staff would assist the children with resolving them. The staff taught the children about personal care routines and safety practices.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Student Outcome: By the end of summer programming **100% of students (N=15) were in the average range on an executive functioning measure (Minnesota Executive Function Scale) with a mean SS =97.**



EARLY CHILDHOOD AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

LEARNING
COMMUNITY
CENTER OF
NORTH OMAHA



The Learning Community Center of North Omaha provides innovative and demonstrative programming to improve educational outcomes for young students. Leadership and program staff work together to provide a comprehensive mix of research-based programs to the students and their caregivers in North Omaha. The center encompasses four primary programs: intensive early childhood partnership, Parent University, child care director training, and future teacher clinical training. Descriptions of each program and evaluation findings are summarized in this section.



Intensive Early Childhood Partnership

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Intensive Early Childhood (IEC) Partnership, a program that is in collaboration with Omaha Public Schools is based on evidence-based models (Yazejian & Bryant, 2012) that include four key components: intensive teaching teams, reflective coaching, professional development, and family engagement. The model was first introduced to eight inclusive preschool classrooms in Kellom and Conestoga Magnet in 2013. After two consecutive years of positive outcomes based on the model, it was expanded to two additional schools: Lothrop Magnet (3 classrooms) and Franklin (2 classrooms). In 2018, the intensive early childhood partnership expanded to Minne Lusa (3 classrooms) and Skinner (4 classrooms).

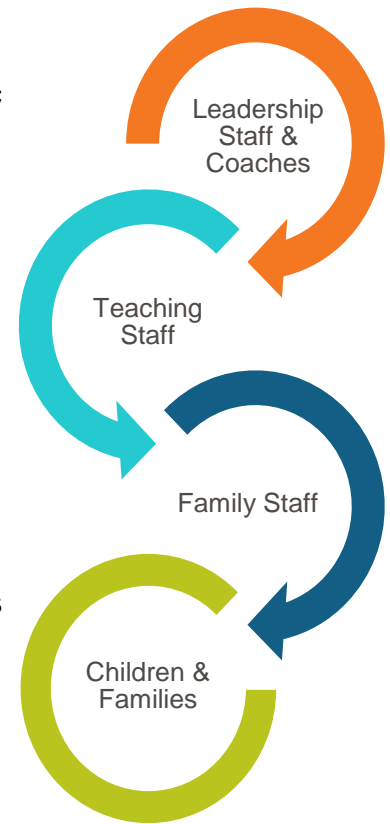
During the 2020-2021 school year, outside evaluators were not permitted to visit schools to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. As a result, evaluators were unable to conduct classroom observations or in-person assessments with the children. The only student data collected were social-emotional assessments completed by the classroom teachers or I.E.C coaches.

INTENSIVE TEACHING TEAMS. Intensive early childhood teams, consisting of teachers, leadership and family support staff, implement a combination of services and supports. The leadership team includes the principal, an early childhood coordinator, early childhood specialist, and instructional coaches. Each classroom has a lead early childhood teacher, special education teacher, and paraprofessional staff. Using an inclusive model, these professionals work with all children and discuss effective teaching strategies using data for continuous improvement.

REFLECTIVE COACHING. Instructional coaches provide reflective consultation to the teaching staff both inside and outside of the classroom. They use a coaching approach adopted by Omaha Public Schools (i.e., *Teaching Strategies: Coaching With Fidelity*). A national consultant also provides ongoing reflective consultation to the coaches. Instructional coaches work to build teacher confidence and increase their active problem-solving skills. During one-on-one sessions with teachers, helpful coaching tools include classroom videotapes and photographs. Long-term positive student outcomes are predicted with the continuity of coaching now occurring in PreK through first grade in two schools. Coaching continued to play an important role during COVID-19, brainstorming with the team on meaningful ways to reach families and supporting the team to find applications that families could use with their young children. The coach-teacher relationships in some ways were enhanced during this unique time.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT. The teaching teams benefit from 11 days of additional professional development (PD) through the school year. Six of those eleven professional development days are facilitated in each school's Early Childhood Professional Learning Community (i.e., PLC). The PLC framework establishes a collaborative, problem solving approach in review of child data and in team learning to identify strategies to improve student performance. Five of the eleven PD days are in full day sessions that extend knowledge of the PLC process and of specific interventions to enhance knowledge and skills in using the Creative Curriculum. These full day PD sessions focus on the implementation of social skill development, resilience, and reflection as a teacher educating high needs students as well as on content knowledge in literacy and language strategies and math instruction to build the skills of teaching staff. PD component is required for teachers at Kellom and Conestoga and elective for teachers at the expanded schools.

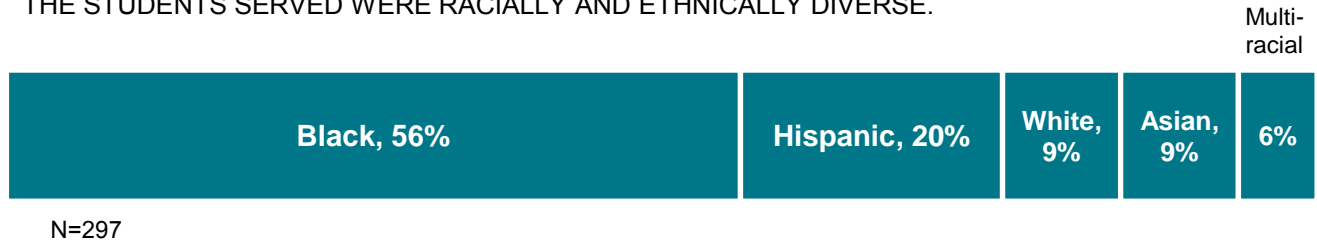
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT. During the pandemic Family Liaisons were no longer able to be officed in the schools and provide in-person support to families due to COVID-19 restrictions. However, Family Liaisons and other members of Parent University continued supporting families by creating virtual family engagement activities to promote reading and literacy. Family Liaisons promote school engagement using zoom, phone calls, or email to connect families to staff in the schools and help families access needed services. Classroom teachers and IEC coaches engaged families via virtual meetings during the school day and during scheduled Parent Teacher Meetings both to check on family wellness and to provide updates on lessons and student performance. IEC coaches produced recorded weekly lessons for families to view with their children when they were unable to attend school in-person. Communication applications such as Dojo or See-saw were also used as a tool for family engagement to offer activities, websites, and audio-recorded books to enhance their children's development.



DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2020-2021, the Intensive Early Childhood Partnership served 297 PreK students across six schools and 20 classrooms. A total of 286 students participated in the evaluation. The Intensive Early Childhood Partnership served a racially and ethnically diverse population of children. There were more males (57%) than females (43%) enrolled in the PreK classes.

THE STUDENTS SERVED WERE RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY DIVERSE.



PROGRAM OUTCOMES

During the 2020-2021 program year, OPS implemented COVID-19 safety protocols that restricted outside visitors. The evaluation team was unable to do in-person classroom observations to assess quality instructional practices.

CHILD OUTCOMES

COVID-19 safety protocols also impacted the ability to assess preschool developmental skills. External evaluators were unable to conduct in-person child assessments to assess vocabulary development, school-readiness, or executive functioning skills.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

METHOD. Limited analyses could be performed as only spring data were collected. Data could not be collected in the fall because school did not resume for full-time in-person instruction until the second semester.

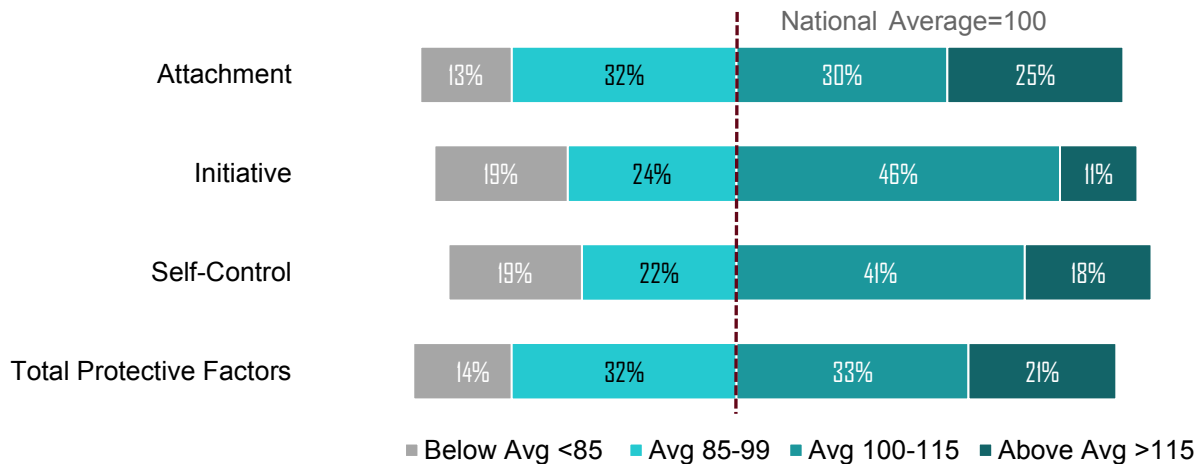
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS [DEVEREUX EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSESSMENT (DECA)]. This questionnaire assesses young students' social-emotional development by identifying total protective factors overall and in the areas of initiative, self-control, attachment, and behavior concerns. Teachers or the instructional coach at all six schools completed the DECA with a total of 286 students assessed.

FINDINGS. The descriptive analyses found that high percentages of students scored within the average to above average range across all areas of the social-emotional measure: total protective factors (86%), attachment (87%), initiative (81%) and self-control (81%). The majority of students

(ranging from 55% to 59%) demonstrated social-emotional skills above the national average which is a score of 100.

OVERALL, STUDENTS SHOWED THE GREATEST STRENGTH IN SELF-CONTROL WITH 59% MEETING OR EXCEEDING THE NATIONAL AVERAGE.

19% of the children scored in the below average range in Initiative and Self-Control. n=286



The social-emotional tool also measures behavioral concerns such as having temper tantrums, having a short attention span, and becoming upset easily. Twenty-one percent of the children scored in the “concern” range, indicating child behaviors that were outside what is typical for three to five-year old children.

Did student factors impact social-emotional scores?

GENDER. Of interest was whether there were any gender differences in students’ social-emotional outcomes. The results of an ANOVA analyses found that girls scored significantly higher across all social-emotional areas with the exception of behavioral concerns. Note the means (m) are reported as t-scores with 50 being the mid-point of average.

Total Protective Factors: Girls m=54, Boys m=48

[F(1,284)=27.953; $p<.001$].

Attachment: Girls m=56, Boys m=50

[F(1,284)=23.315; $p<.001$].

Initiative: Girls m=53, Boys m=48

[F(1,284)=22.581; $p<.001$].

Self-Control: Girls m=53, Boys m=48

[F(1,284)=14,499; $p<.001$].

Girls demonstrated stronger social-emotional skills. Boys had significantly higher behavior concern scores.

Boys scored significantly higher on behavioral concerns (m=53) compared to girls (m=47) [F(1,284)=19.210; $p=001$].

PREVIOUS PREK EXPERIENCE. Of interest was whether there were any differences between students who had been enrolled in IEC programs when they were three, differ from those who were newly enrolled in PreK. Because of the disruptions to in-person learning in the 2019 and 2020 school years, this analysis was not completed in for the 2020-2021 annual report.

RACE/ETHNICITY. Of interest was whether there were any differences between student social-emotional scores based on race and/or ethnicity. The results of the ANOVA analyses found there were significant differences at the $p=.009$ level for self-control and at the $p=.004$ level for behavior concerns.

In the Post Hoc test:

Asian students ($m=55.62$) had significantly higher self-control scores than white students ($m=45.93$) $p=.009$

Asian students ($m=44.96$) had significantly lower behavior concern scores than black students ($m=51.60$) $p=.02$ and white students ($m=54.74$) $p=.005$. Note that in the behavior concern construct, higher scores indicate more behavior concerns. In the analysis, white students had higher behavior concern scores on average than black or Asian students.

PARENT PARTICIPATION IN PARENT UNIVERSITY. Parents from all 6 schools had the opportunity to participate in Parent University. Five percent of the students enrolled in IEC classrooms ($n=15$) had a parent who was also enrolled in Parent University courses and activities. The sample size is too small to do an analysis to determine if children whose parents participated in Parent University had significantly different social-emotional outcomes than children whose parents did not.

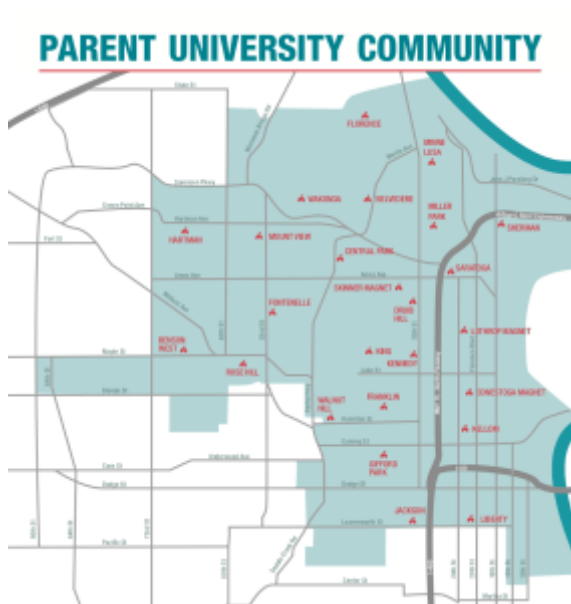
USING FEEDBACK FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

The evaluation team conducted nine focus groups in May of 2021 to collect feedback on the IEC program. Participants included four coaches, four family support workers, two principals, and 22 teachers. Each group reflected on the school year and how the IEC program impacted their school and the families and students they serve. Participants noted positive aspects of the program and offered suggestions for improving communication and services. The focus group data were analyzed and formal reports were shared with the IEC program leadership team.

Parent University

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Parent University is a comprehensive, two-generational family engagement program based on research and best practices that began in February 2015 at the Learning Community Center of North Omaha. A two-generational approach allows the program to focus on the whole family while creating opportunities for addressing needs of both children and the adults in their lives simultaneously. In 2019, the partnership expanded to additional schools in North Omaha. As a result of the recommendation, a request for proposal (RFP) was made public. Project Harmony Child Advocacy Center successfully obtained the contract to assist with managing the day-to-day operations of Parent University. Therefore, all personnel fulfilling the mission of Parent University are employees of Project Harmony Child Advocacy Center. Parent University provides individualized and center-based supports and services to families whose children are eligible to participate in the Intensive Early Childhood Partnership and families with a child six years or younger who reside in school attendance areas of the 24 elementary schools reflected (see map).



KEY COMPONENTS

INDIVIDUALIZED SERVICES. Every parent who participates in Parent University goes through a thorough intake and assessment process and is assigned his or her own personal coach; an Educational Navigator or Family Liaison, to assist in personalizing the program to best achieve the family's identified goals and needs. The following individualized services are implemented based on need of the family.

NAVIGATOR AND LIAISON SERVICES. Educational Navigators and Family Liaisons serve as personal parent advocates, helping parents gain better understanding of the public school system, community resources, child development, and learning strategies. Navigators and Liaisons build strong relationships with participants to ensure individualized education and support using a research-based home visitation/parenting curriculum. In addition to monthly home visits, the navigators and liaisons attend courses with parents to be able to assist them in transitioning the concepts learned during center-based virtual learning to opportunities in the home.

Some families may need more than monthly home visitation due to multiple risk factors such as, but not limited to, homelessness, history of trauma, lack of support system, and knowledge of community resources. Navigators and Liaisons offer additional case management to families and serve as a liaison between Parent University, the child's school, and the family. Navigators and Liaisons have the capacity to meet with families weekly until the immediate needs are met.

HOME VISITATIONS & GOAL SETTING. During the pandemic, Navigators and Liaisons visited with participants virtually, outside in their front yard, and even outdoors in parks. One hundred percent of staff are vaccinated for COVID-19. Navigators and liaisons communicate with parents, conduct formal and informal needs assessments, connect parents with resources, model supportive learning activities, coach parenting skills, and attend to specific needs. Growing Great Kids® curriculum is utilized during home visitations as appropriate. Each participant works with their designated staff member to set personal and familial goals. All goals have strategies and are S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound). Goals and strategies are reviewed during home visitations to ensure they remain relevant to the families' needs.

CENTER-BASED LEARNING. Parents have access to an onsite Parent Resource Room with access to library services through a partnership with the Omaha Public Library. During the COVID-19 lockdown parents were still able to check out library materials by simply contacting the onsite librarian and picking up materials from their assigned worker or from the front desk at the center. Many families had opportunity to check out laptop computers and learning kits to engage their children in learning. Parents select to attend a variety of Parent University courses in the center or virtually based on the family needs. Courses fit into four primary majors which were developed based on identified family needs.

PARENTING. Parents learn effective ways to parent their child(ren) and ways to support child development and learning through a series of courses designed to strengthen the parent-child bond and interactions. Family engagement events such as Family Bingo assist staff with promoting positive interactions between parent and child.

LIFE SKILLS AND WELLNESS. Parent University partner organizations provide courses to strengthen family self-sufficiency in areas like adult basic education, English as a Second Language (ESL), and employment skills. These majors contribute to stability so

that families can support their students. New this year is a pilot program with Metropolitan Community College whereby parents receive training in facilities management with a guaranteed interview in this field upon successful completion for jobs with a starting wage ranging from \$17.00-23.00/hr.

SCHOOL SUCCESS. To become full partners in their child's education, courses and workshops emphasize the importance of the parents' roles, responsibilities, and engagement opportunities.

LEADERSHIP. Courses empower parents to take on more active roles in their child's school and their community. Courses teach parents their leadership styles and helped them identify their strengths.

While parents attend courses at the center or virtually, Parent University offers year-round child learning activities for the children focusing on the domains of early childhood development. Virtual story time activities provided literacy and vocabulary enrichment. During the summer, Parent University, in partnership with KidsSquad and the Child Saving Institute, piloted a Kindergarten Readiness program called Summer Academy. Children ages three and four years-old attended classes daily onsite from June 2 to June 30th and July 6th to the 23rd. Learning activities were created to assist with supporting social-emotional development as well as language and literacy skills.



Based on feedback from parents in 2019, Parent University began offering more courses in Spanish and implemented online courses prior to the pandemic. Therefore, courses were able to fully transition to a remote learning platform beginning March 2020 and will continue to be utilized as an option for program learning.

DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of 200 parents were enrolled in Parent University. There were more females (72%) than males (28%). Most of the parents were Black (50%) or Hispanic (35%). Most of the parents (61%) were employed either part (11%) or full time (50%). Nearly half (48%) of the parents had not completed high school. Nearly a quarter (23%) had graduated high school. Twelve percent of the parents had completed some college coursework. Eleven percent had completed a college degree and 3% had completed a master's degree. The families had 380 children of which 264 were within the target age range (birth through Grade 3) for the program. Fifteen children were enrolled in one of the Intensive Early Childhood preschool programs.

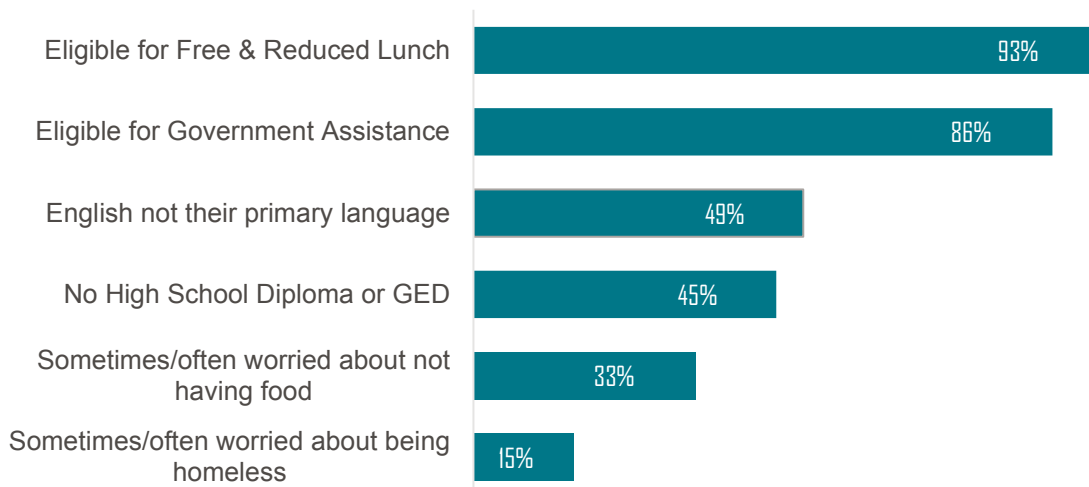
THE PARENTS SERVED WERE RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY DIVERSE.



N=200

Of the 200 active parents, nearly half (93) participated in a family interview that collected information about the stressors in their lives. Most respondents experience a number of challenges. Nearly all parents (93%) have children who qualify for Free and/or Reduced lunch. Most (86%) families received additional government assistance (e.g., SNAP, Medicaid, WIC, TANF, and Title XX). A third of the families reported that they worry about having enough food and 26% ran out of food at some point during the prior 12 months. A small percentage of families (15%) worry about losing their housing and 22% indicated that they had experienced homelessness during the past year. Nearly half (49%) of the parents' home language was not English. Many (45%) did not have a high school diploma. The challenges that many families face point to the complexity of the lives of the parents in Parent University and provide a context for interpreting the results of this report.

PARENTS FACE MANY CHALLENGES.



N=93

How did Parent University support families facing a number of challenges?

Families wanting additional support were provided more frequent home visitation meetings. The family works with their educational navigator or family liaisons to set goals and determine how best to achieve them. A total of 129 parents received this support and developed a service plan to

help the family gain stability while supporting their child's academic success. The 337 goals reflected on service plans were related to the majors within Parent University: Life Skills and Wellness (45%), School Success (36%), Parenting (15%), and Leadership (4%). Most parents are making strong progress in achieving their goals: 40% of the goals are still progressing. Nearly a quarter (24%) have been achieved. Parents have deferred 21% of the goals. Only 7% have not been achieved and 4% are regressing.

FAMILY OUTCOMES FAMILY PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Protective factors are strengths that help buffer and support families who may face challenges. These attributes mitigate risk and promote healthy development and well-being.

METHOD. The adoption of a strengths-based prevention model embracing protective factors is considered an important approach to prevent child abuse (Langford, J., & Harper-Browne, C., in press). In order to assess family protective factors, participants completed the FRIENDS Protective Factors Survey (PFS), a broad measure of family well-being, at intake and every six months thereafter during home visits with assigned navigators and liaisons. The survey assesses five areas: Family Resiliency, Social Supports, Concrete Supports, Child Development Knowledge, and Nurturing and Attachment. The PFS is based on a 7-point scale with 7 indicating strong protective factors. In the 20-21 program year, 96 families completed the PFS at two points in time.

FINDINGS. The results found that parents' nurturing and attachment skills and parents' child development knowledge were the highest rated areas. However, protective factors scores across all areas of the tool were in the strong range. Paired t-test analyses were completed to determine if there were significant changes over time.

Significant improvements were found in four of the five protective factors scales:

Child Development Knowledge: $[t(95) = -4.487; p < .001, d = 0.458]$ with the effect size suggesting medium meaningful change.

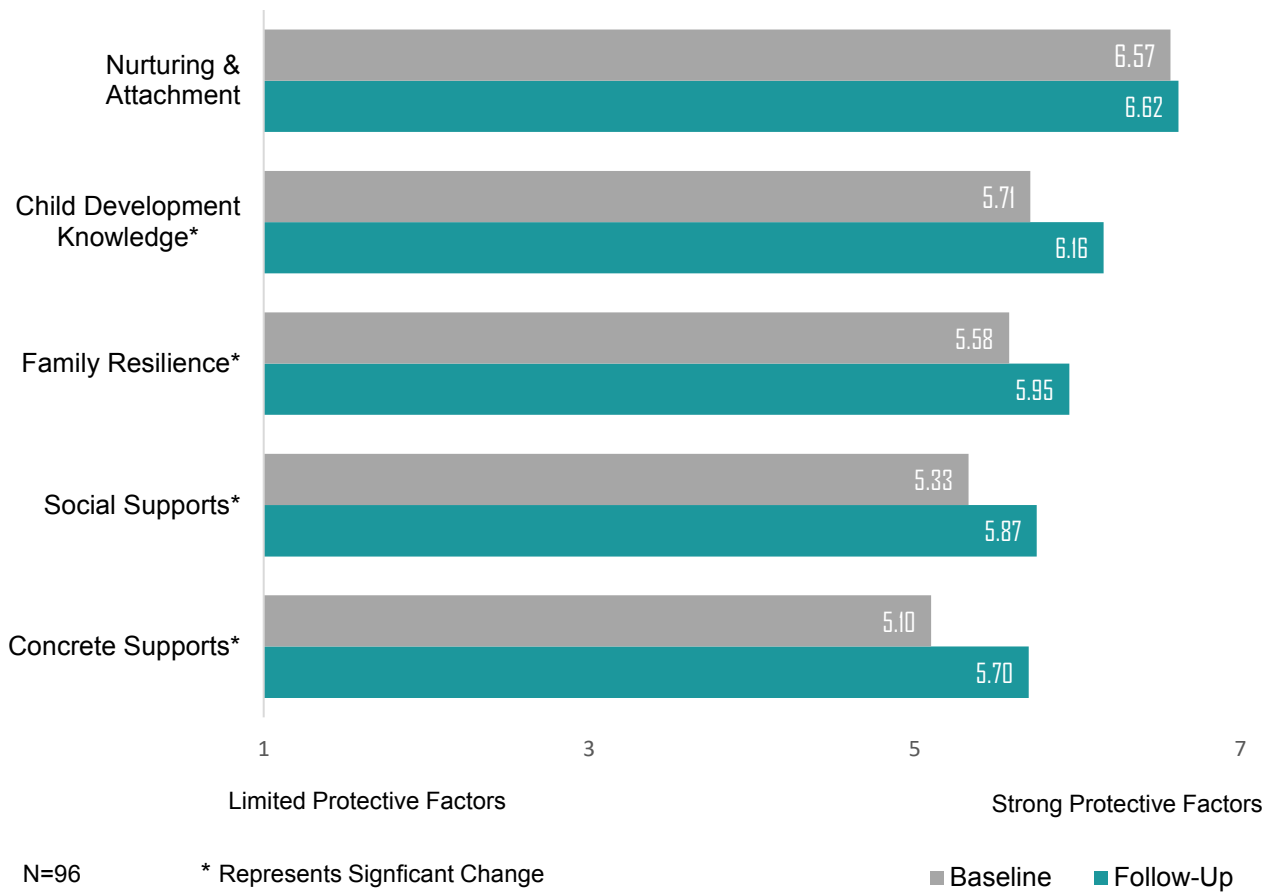
Concrete Supports: $[t(95) = -2.717; p = .008, d = 0.277]$ with the effect size suggesting small meaningful change.



Family Resilience: [t(95)= -2.879; p=.0005), d=0.294)] with the effect size suggesting small meaningful change.

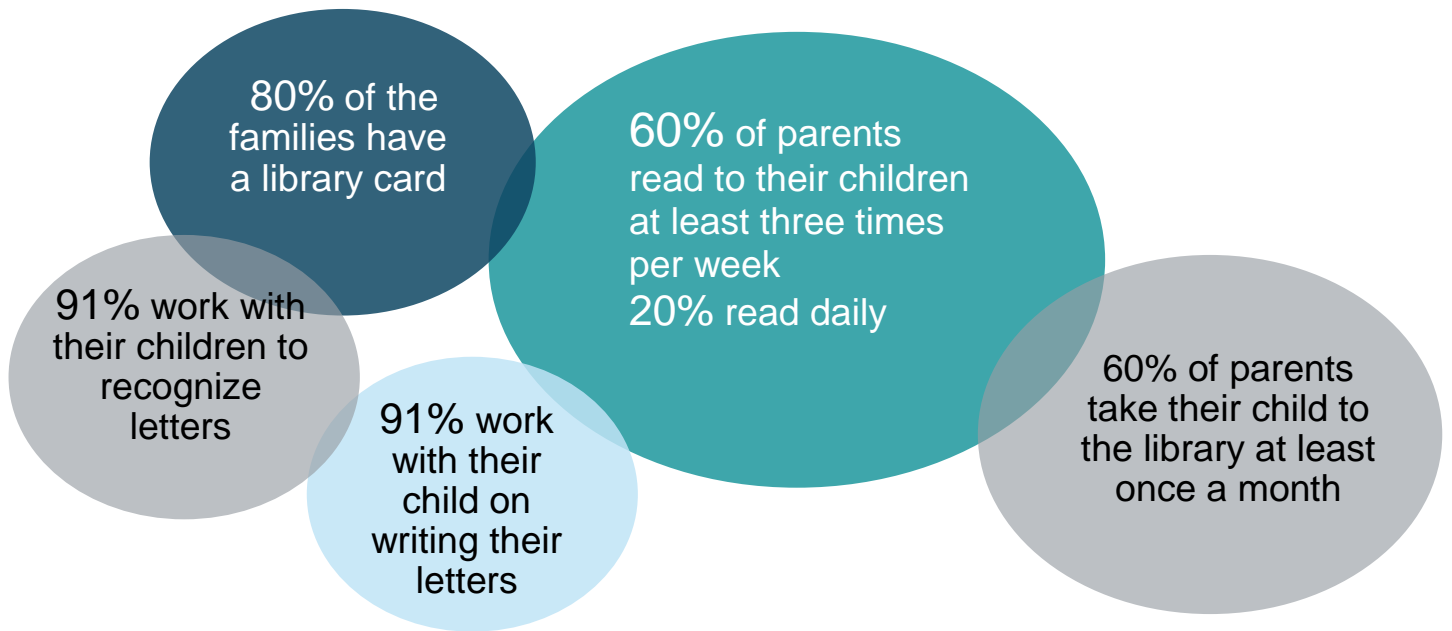
Social Supports: [t(95)= -2.679; p=.009), d=0.273)] with the effect size suggesting small meaningful change.

PARENTS DEMONSTRATED STRONG PROTECTIVE FACTORS ACROSS ALL AREAS.
Protective factors increased significantly in every area except Nurturing & Attachment which was already quite high.



How did parents support their child's literacy skills?

DAILY LITERACY ACTIVITIES. Parents (n=114) reported many positive ways that they interacted with their child to support learning. Sixty percent of parents read to their children at least three times a week and 20% read daily. Data were analyzed by comparing baseline to at least six months of service. Parents showed the most improvements in use of the library. The percentage of families with a library card went from 58% to 80%; the percentage visiting the library at least once a month went from 35% to 60%.



READYROSIE. ReadyRosie, a comprehensive family engagement resource, uses video modeling to build school family partnerships to promote school readiness. The ReadyRosie Active Family Engagement System is built on the premise that “*every child can be ready to learn when schools and families work together.*” ReadyRosie’s Modeled Moment videos are the core of the ReadyRosie program and provide resources to support programs. Parent University families enrolled in ReadyRosie received a weekly video playlist via text or e-mail. Parent University staff supported the families’ use of these video learning opportunities, focusing on health and well-being, language and literacy, math and reasoning, and social-emotional learning for children from birth to age eight. Videos were available in English and Spanish. This resource was very useful to parents during the pandemic. Parents could check out Ready Rosie learning activity kits, which include designated videos paired with tools for learning, from the onsite library.

A total of 86 children had at least one Parent University caregiver enrolled in the ReadyRosie program. Parents viewed 335 videos over the course of the 2020-2021 year.

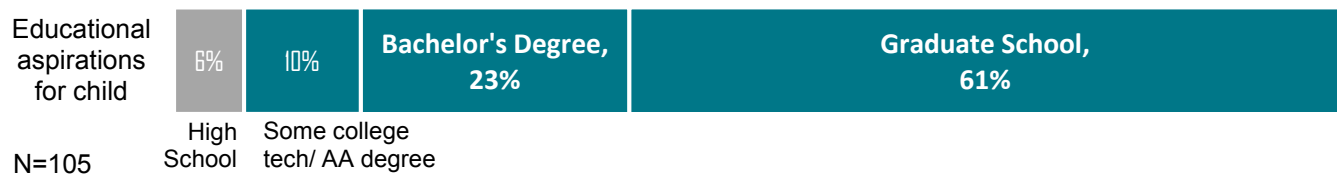
PARENT-CHILD INTERACTION. The Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS™) measures parenting behaviors across three areas: Building Relationships, Promoting Learning, and Supporting Confidence, based on a videotape of a parent playing with his or her child. Scores are based on a 5-point scale with 5 being high-quality. A program goal is scores of 3.5 or above. Scores for the parents participating at LCCNO are included in the Shared Program Outcomes section of the report.

FAMILY EDUCATION

What are the educational hopes for their children?

Parents were interviewed to determine their hopes for their child’s future education. At the follow-up assessment, most (84%) of the parents reported that they expected their child to obtain a bachelor’s or graduate degree. Only six percent expect that their child will end their education after high school.

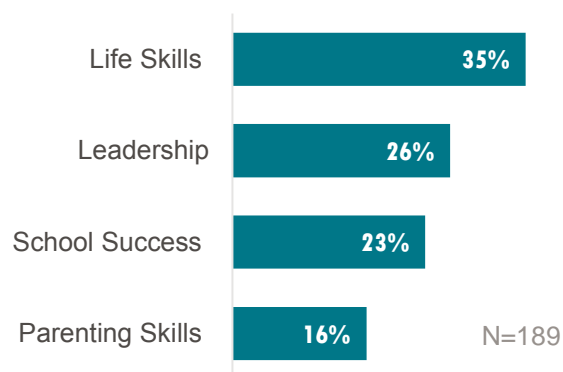
MOST PARENTS HOPE THEIR CHILD WILL COMPLETE A BACHELOR'S OR GRADUATE DEGREE.
Only six percent of parents expect their children's education to stop after high school.



COURSE PARTICIPATION

Program staff tracked parents’ participation in the 16 courses that were offered this past year. Several were offered more than once. Course topics aligned with four primary “majors” within Parent University. Life Skills and Wellness courses had the highest enrollment. Throughout the year, many parents enrolled in more than one course. Across the 16 courses, 189 participants (duplicated count) were enrolled. The largest course enrollments were in Reading Success and the GED and ELL classes. Completion status was completed for 106 course enrollments. Of these participants, 43% either withdrew or cancelled their enrollment. Of the 60 that completed courses, 85% were reported as meeting course requirements at the “satisfactory” level.

COURSES RELATED TO LIFE SKILLS AND LEADERSHIP HAD THE HIGHEST ENROLLMENTS.



Due to COVID-19, most classes were offered online and there was no system in place to collect participant feedback. In February of 2021, the evaluation team created an online survey to use

with all PU courses. Because the survey was deployed towards the end of the program year, only nine participants completed it. The majority (67%) felt they learned something new that was relevant to their lives and would recommend the course to a friend.

CIRCLE OF SECURITY™-PARENTING (COS-P)



Circle of Security™-Parenting is an 8-week parenting program based on years of research about how to build strong attachment relationships between parent and child. It is designed to help parents learn how to respond to child needs in a way that enhances the attachment between parent and child. It is important to note this course is personalized to meet the needs of participating families.

COS-P was another core parenting course provided at Parent University. A total of 16 participants enrolled across the three COS-P courses. Two of the three courses were offered in Spanish.

METHOD. Participants were asked to rate a series of questions about caregiver stress, their relationship with their children, and confidence in their parenting skills. Three individuals completed the survey. The sample size is too small to analyze the results.

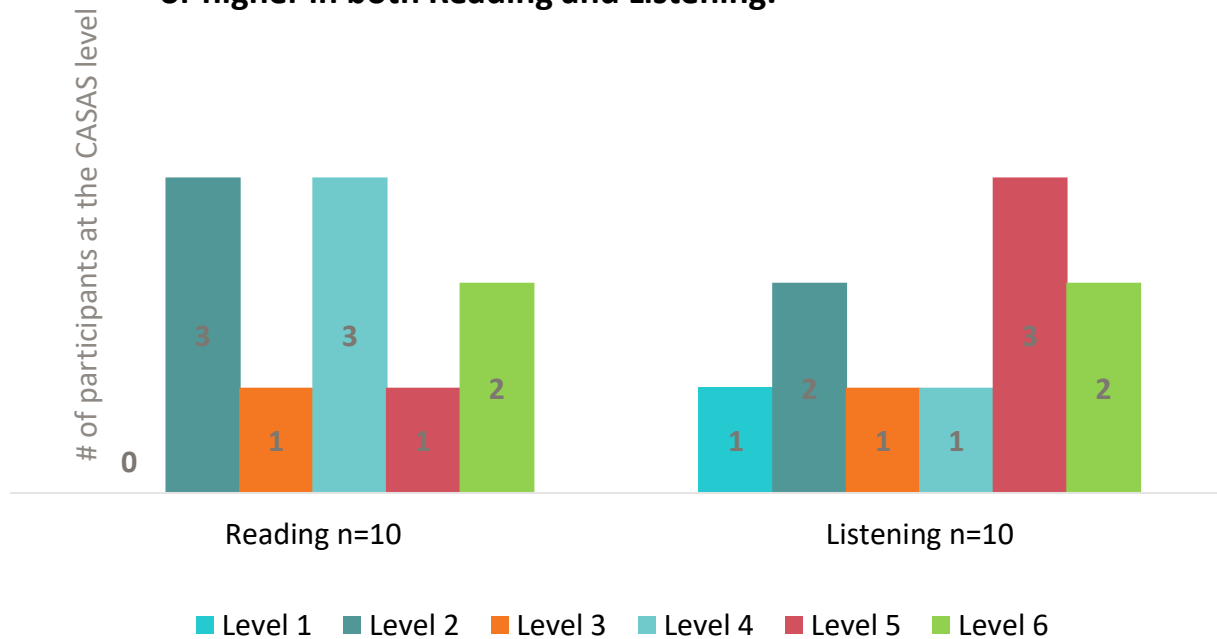
How did Parent University benefit parents' own education?

Parent University offers English as a Second Language (ESL) and General Educational Diploma (GED) courses. In the 2020-2021 program year, 52 parents participated in one of these two options, ESL (29) and GED (23).

Participant outcomes for ESL and GED courses offered to English language learners are measured using the CASAS® which is a nationally recognized assessment for English Learners that is aligned with the curriculum used at LCCNO. A total of 14 participants had the CASAS® assessment. Only two participants have results at two points in time which is too small of a sample to report.

In the ESL courses, 10 students had the CASAS® assessment. Reading and listening skills ranged from beginning literacy indicating the limited ability to express immediate needs and to understand basic learned phrases to high intermediate skills that include the ability to fill out basic

Sixty percent of the Parent University participants are at Level 4 or higher in both Reading and Listening.



forms and to work in entry-level jobs that include simple oral and written communication. The following graph shows the distribution across the levels of the assessment.

In the GED courses, four students had the CASAS® assessment of math and reading skills. Students scored at the beginning to intermediate levels.

How did participation in Parent University support parents’ financial literacy?

Parent Univesity sponsored two sessions of the Omaha Bridges Out of Poverty, Getting Ahead in a Just-Getting-By World. This course helps enhance participants’ financial, emotional, and social resources by exploring the impact of poverty on their lives. The goal is to support parents in strengthening valuable relationships and securing living-wage jobs.

FINDINGS. A total of 25 parents participated in one of two cohorts in the 10-week course offered at Parent University. All participants completed the full course. Twelve months after graduation from the course, 16% of the 25 graduate parents completed a follow-up survey and the following outcomes were reported:

Parents’ participation in the Bridges Out of Poverty course improved their financial stability.

- An average 66.5% decrease in debt-to-income ratio
- An average increase in income of \$1681.50
- An average decrease in bill reduction of \$980 per month
- An average increase in assets of \$660

At least half the survey respondents reported increased stability in the following areas: income, managing bills, employment, parenting, wages, lowered stress, transportation, health, social connections and housing.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Parent University piloted a workforce development initiative in partnership with Metropolitan Community College (Metro). Program staff identified employment opportunities in Omaha where employers have struggled to find staff for the positions. They then surveyed Parent University participants to determine which of these opportunities were most attractive to them. Survey results indicated high interest in the field of Facilities Maintenance. Parent University then worked with Metro to develop a training program to prepare students for work in Facilities Maintenance. The ten-week program had two tracks: technical training across multiple disciplines such as carpentry, HVAC, and EPA regulations plus work readiness training that included resume preparation, customer service skills, and communication skills. The first cohort included six parents.

FINDINGS. Most of the parents completed the course successfully and at least two found work in the field.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

In a typical school year, the evaluation of student outcomes for the children whose parents are enrolled in Parent University includes two strategies:

1. Pre-K outcomes are measured through in-person assessments completed by MMI evaluators and teacher-completed surveys in the six IEC preschool programs.
2. Grades K-5th grade academic outcomes are measured through analyses of the MAP® Growth™ which is a standardized assessment the school district administers three times a year.

During the 2020-2021 program year, school district efforts to mitigate COVID-19 resulted in multiple disruptions to in-person school. These disruptions impacted the normal assessment schedule that is used to monitor student progress. The program and evaluation teams developed alternative strategies to measure the social-emotional and academic skills for these children. Parents were invited to have their children ages two to third grade participate in in-person assessments at the Learning Community Center of North Omaha in the fall and spring. The results of those assessments are reported in the following section.

In addition, as the school district resumed consistent in-person instruction, the state tests were administered and the evaluation team was able to access the math and reading results for

analysis in this report. The results are reported in the Shared Program Outcomes section in this report.

PARENTS IN PARENT UNIVERSITY: CHILDREN’S (AGES 4 MONTHS TO 11 YEARS) SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL, EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING AND ACADEMIC SKILLS

METHOD. Parent University families were invited to participate in assessments of their children’s social-emotional, executive functioning, and academic skills in the fall and spring. A total of 77 children had at least one assessment. The following tools were used:

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS [DEVEREUX EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSESSMENT (DECA). Parents completed the DECA questionnaire to assess young students’ social-emotional development in the areas of initiative, self-control, attachment, and behavior as well as total protective factors overall. The DECA is available in Spanish and English. The DECA was completed for 36 children, ages 4 months to 5 years, at fall and spring.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS [THE MINNESOTA EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SCALE (MEFS). Executive functioning is defined as a student’s ability to control impulses that then enable them to plan, initiate, and complete activities needed for learning. This an online assessment was administered in English or Spanish by an evaluator from MMI. This assessment was completed with 29 children, ages 2 years to 9 years, at fall and spring.

ACADEMIC SKILLS

KAUFMAN TEST OF EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT, 3RD EDITION (KTEA-3). The KTEA-3 measures academic skills for ages 4 years to 25 years. Four subscales were utilized in the evaluation: Math Concepts & Application (MCA), Math Computation (MA), Letter & Word Recognition (LWR), and Reading Comprehension (RC). The KTEA-3 was administered in English by an evaluator from MMI to 15 children, ages 6 years to 11 years, at fall and spring.

PICTURE PEABODY VOCABULARY TEST-IV (PPVT-IV). The PPVT-IV measures English receptive vocabulary. An evaluator from MMI conducted this assessment with five children, ages 3 years to 5 years, at fall and spring. The sample size is too small to analyze so results are not reported.

BATERÍA IV WOODCOCK-MUÑOZ. The Batería IV is a Spanish-language assessment that measure cognitive abilities, achievement, and comparative oral language abilities. Four subscales were utilized in the evaluation: Test 1 Identificación de letras y palabras (Letter-Word Identification), Test 2 Problemas aplicados (Applied Problems), Test 4 Comprensión de textos (Passage Comprehension), Test 5 Cálculo (Calculation). This assessment was administered in Spanish by an evaluator from MMI to three children, ages

3 years and 4 years, at fall and spring. The sample size is too small to analyze so results are not reported.

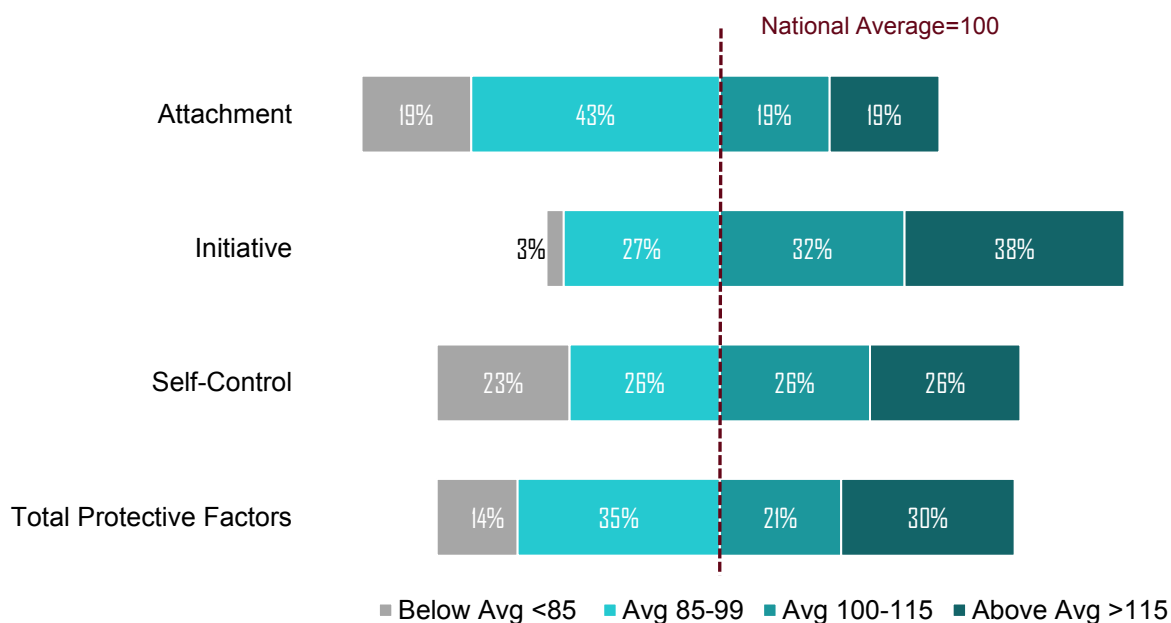
FINDINGS.

Social-Emotional

The descriptive analyses found that by spring, high percentages of students scored within the average to above average range across all areas of the social-emotional measure: total protective factors (86%), attachment (81%), initiative (97%) and self-control (78%). The majority of students demonstrated social-emotional skills above the national average, which is a score of 100, in the areas of total protective factors (51%), initiative (70%) and self-control (52%).

BY SPRING STUDENTS SHOWED THE GREATEST STRENGTH IN INITIATIVE WITH 70% MEETING OR EXCEEDING THE NATIONAL AVERAGE.

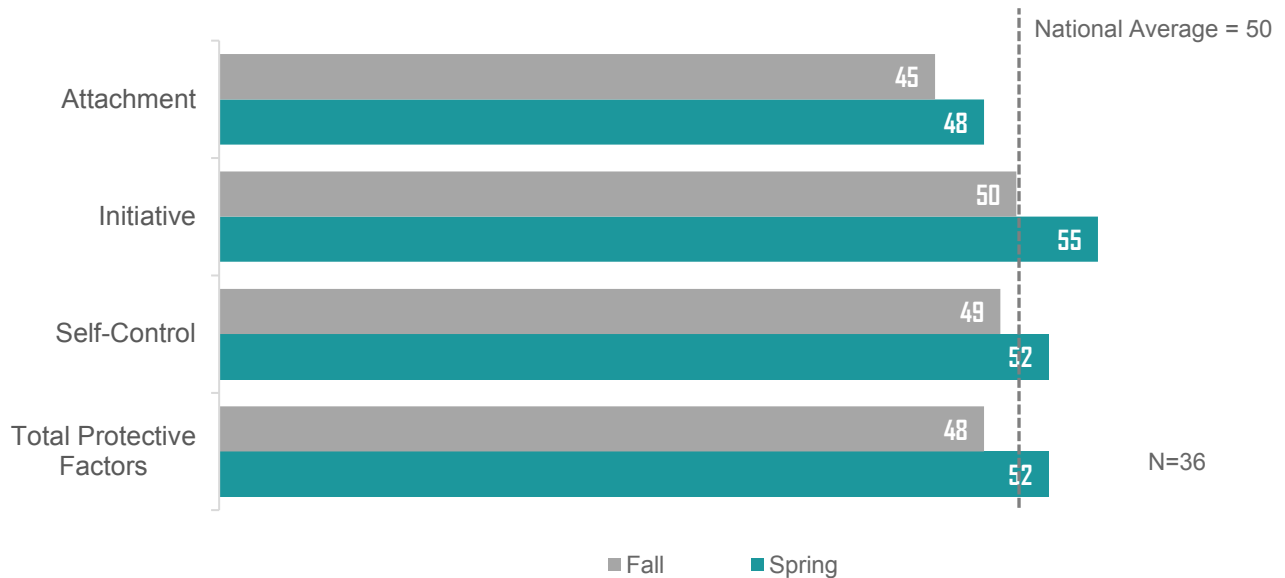
Less than half the children (38%) were at the national average in attachment. n=36



The social-emotional tool also measures behavioral concerns such as having temper tantrums, having a short attention span, and becoming upset easily. Thirteen percent of the children scored in the “concern” range, indicating child behaviors that were outside what is typical for three to five-year old children.

A comparison of social-emotional results at fall and spring is reported in the following graph.

ON AVERAGE, CHILDREN IMPROVED ACROSS ALL AREAS FROM FALL TO SPRING.
The most growth was in the area of initiative.



Children demonstrated improved social-emotional skills across all areas. By spring they exceeded the national average in every area except for attachment. The most gains were made in initiative (5 point increase on average). A paired t-test analysis found that there were significant increases in initiative ($t=-3.190$, $p<.01$), and in total protective factors ($t=-2.219$, $p<.05$). The effect sizes, initiative ($d=.532$) and total protective factors ($d=.370$), indicate medium to small change across time. The analysis did not find significant changes in attachment or self-control suggesting these areas remained stable over time.

Executive Functioning

Twenty-nine children were assessed. The descriptive analyses found that 90% of the children demonstrated average executive functioning skills in fall and 97% in spring. Average scores were 95.69 in the fall and 96.93 in the spring. The national average is a score of 100. In fall, 41% of the children met



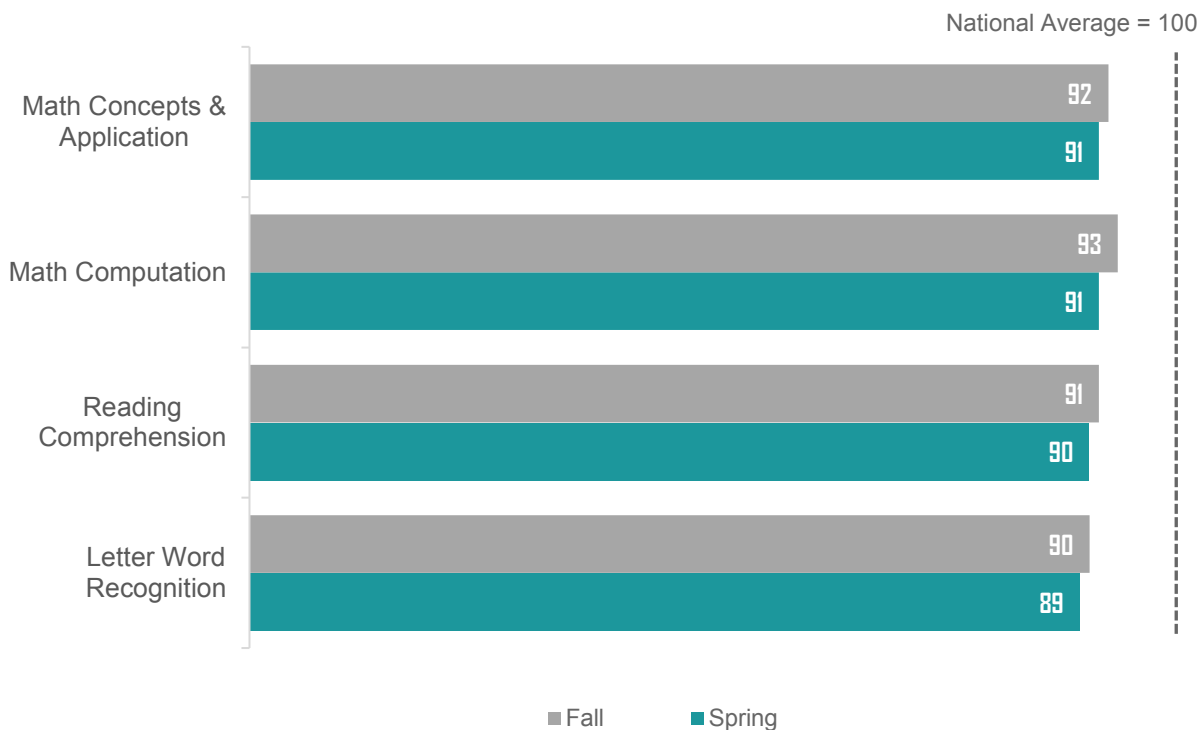
this benchmark. In spring, 30% scored at this level. A paired t-test analysis did not find significant changes from fall to spring in executive functioning scores, indicating that children’s skills remained stable over time.

Academic Skills

Fifteen children had math and reading assessments. The descriptive analyses found that in spring, high percentages of children (73% in math concepts & application, 87% in math computation) scored in the average range and above in math. Reading outcomes were not as strong with fewer children scoring in the average range and above (53% in reading comprehension and 47% in letter word recognition). A paired t-test analysis did not find significant changes from fall to spring in academic scores across the four assessments, indicating that skills remained stable over time.

ON AVERAGE, ACADEMIC SKILLS REMAINED STABLE OVER TIME WITH MINIMAL CHANGE FROM FALL TO SPRING.

Average scores were below the national average. n=15



Childcare Director Training

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

In partnership with the Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative, the Learning Community Center of North Omaha offers training and coaching services to center directors. The initial goal of the Child Care Director Training program was to work closely with home- and center-based childcare directors to enhance their skills, provide a sustainable professional development system for staff and ultimately improve the quality of care and education for the children. The program was created using a relationship- and strength-based approach which uses reflective practices based on the National Center of Quality Teaching and Learning Model. However, the COVID-19 pandemic created additional challenges in recruitment and support of directors and programs.

The intensive training was also designed to support directors through the first two phases of Step Up to Quality (SU2Q), the state of Nebraska initiative which promotes improvements in the quality of early childhood education. Participating providers could then receive additional coaching services and incentives to strengthen their businesses. Given the challenges presented by the pandemic the initial goals and program focus shifted away from supporting director through the phases of SU2Q and toward general program support.

The second cohort of directors completed the Childcare Director Training Program in May of 2020. A third cohort of directors was not recruited for the 2020-2021 program year and a focus group was held with North Omaha childcare providers both center-based and homebased providers in the fall of 2021 to determine community needs and wants in terms of training and support. Two focus groups were held and a total of 18 childcare providers (center based=8, home based=8, other=2) attended. Attendees completed a short online demographic survey and were compensated with a \$20 gift card for their time. Following the focus groups it was determined that trainings would be held via Zoom and open to any childcare provider in North Omaha area for support and assistance. Focus group data revealed that childcare providers were interested in having a group that allows providers to meet and discuss interests and issues with others in similar positions. In addition, gaining more information about available grants and information on topics such as trauma, managing children's behaviors, and building children's social-emotional skills.

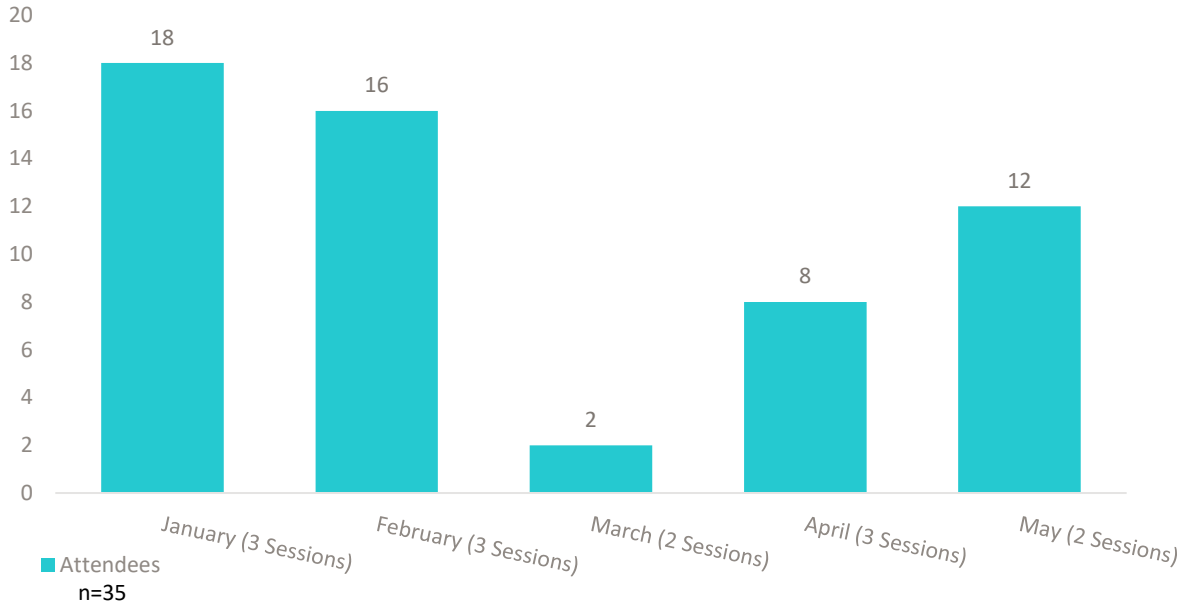
The 2020-2021 online director training program provided an opportunity for directors to meet virtually a few times a month through the end of the school year. Beginning in January of 2021, multiple virtual training and support sessions were offered at different times (to best meet the needs of the community.)

DEMOGRAPHICS

Following the initial focus group sessions which included 18 participants, subsequent training sessions included a total 56 participants from January-May 2021. Zip codes represented at trainings included 68104, 68134, 68110, 68111, 68122, 68117, and 68505. The majority of

attendees were from center based childcares (89%), but a small percentage of home-based providers (11%) also attend the trainings.

PARTICIPATION VARIED FOR ONLINE TRAINING SESSIONS.

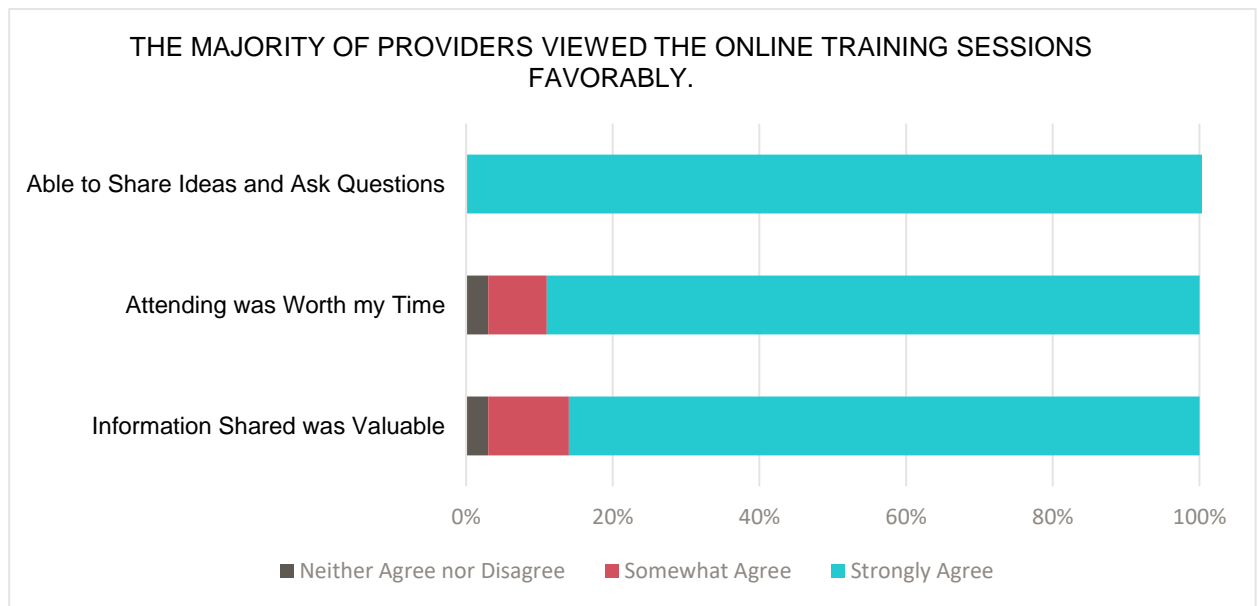


OUTCOMES

PARTICIPANT PERCEPTIONS OF ONLINE TRAINING PROGRAM

METHOD. Following each of the training sessions in April and May, an online feedback survey was provided to help in determining program effectiveness and future directions of training sessions. Each participant (n=35) who completed the feedback survey was given a \$20 gift card for their attendance and time.

The majority (88%) of online training attendees indicated that the length of the training sessions were appropriate (1 hour), attending the session was worth their time, and that they would attend future online sessions. All attendees strongly agreed that they were able to share their ideas and ask questions during the sessions. As the goal of the previous childcare director trainings were to provide coaching to increase center quality, participants were asked if they would like a coach to contact them with any other questions about the topic that they may have. The majority of training attendees (89%) indicated that they did not want a coach to contact them about topics that were discussed.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall recommendation was to increase the leadership opportunities for North Omaha childcare directors to guide support and training for the North Omaha childcare community. Expanding on training and support that is specific to community needs and driven by the childcare community could increase provider buy-in and lead to a stronger North Omaha childcare network. Given that the majority of training attendees (89%) indicated that they did not want a coach to contact them about topics that were discussed it may be beneficial to shift the training program away from a coaching model and to a community-directed model.

Prior training cohorts have indicated that expanding topics to include more information surrounding topics on trauma, diversity, and needs unique to the community would be beneficial. A community-led advisory council would allow for training topics to be tailored to the needs of the community and centered on the goals and values of the North Omaha childcare community members.



Future Teacher Clinical Training

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Metropolitan Community College (MCC) in partnership with the Learning Community and Educare developed a new approach to pre-service education to better prepare college students to teach in high poverty early childhood and preschool classrooms. With guidance from experienced faculty, college students work directly with teaching teams at Educare, Kellom, and Conestoga. The Educare classroom is linked to the MCC classroom at the Learning Community Center of North Omaha (LCCNO) via robotic cameras and audio, giving students a unique opportunity to learn while receiving real-time feedback from their instructors and classmates. These strategies resulted in students receiving immediate feedback from instructors as they employed newly learned teaching techniques.

A primary goal of the program is to increase the number of early childhood teachers to address the shortage in the field. An additional goal is to provide a curriculum that supports teachers to gain skills in working with diverse populations of children and families.

A partnership between MCC, the Learning Community, and Creighton University is providing an opportunity for students (called A + B) to obtain a cost-effective path to a teaching degree with an Early Childhood endorsement. Qualifying MCC early childhood students can enter Creighton as full-fledged juniors and graduate in two years.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Due to a change in faculty leadership, demographic information was not available prior to this report. Data for the 2020-2021 year will be reported in the 2021-2022 evaluation.

OUTCOMES

METHOD. Evaluation of this strategy included tracking graduates' short- and long-term education outcomes and a Qualtrics survey with students enrolled in the MCC Early Childhood program who have attended at least one early childhood class at LCCNO.

FINDINGS

A goal of the program is to increase the number of early childhood teachers to address the shortage in the field. An additional goal is to provide a curriculum that supports teachers to gain skills in working with diverse populations of children and families. MCC Early Childhood program addressed the shortage of teachers by graduating 14 students with Early Childhood associate degrees and 1 student with an Early Childhood Certificate. Of these graduates, six students had all attended at least one early childhood class at LCCNO during their program.

MCC tracks the students who graduate from the Early Childhood associate degree program to determine the number that continue their education at a 4-year institution. There were 6 students graduating in 2020-2021 that have transferred and enrolled in a 4-year institution. The majority of those have enrolled at University of Nebraska at Kearney (33%) and Omaha (33%), followed by Bellevue University (17%) and Midland (17%).

Students enrolled in MCC Early Childhood classes connected with LCCNO were invited to participate in an online survey to capture their experience with the technology and instruction at LCCNO. Students were emailed the survey by their course instructor.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic MCC Early Childhood classes were not held on site at LCCNO during the 2020-2021 school year. In addition, there were no responses to the online survey sent to students by their MCC instructor. The survey from the previous evaluation year had very limited responses (n=3), so it was not surprising that there were no responses for the current year given the lack of on-site programming and general challenges surrounding the pandemic.

RECOMMENDATIONS

MCC and LCCNO have implemented an innovative clinical approach for students, however, long-term outcomes are needed to determine if these experiences influence student preparedness and confidence in working with children and families in poverty, and whether students are continuing to work in early childhood settings in the areas surrounding LCCNO and LCCSO after graduation.

The move to online learning and MCC classes not being held at LCCNO may require a shift in goals and experiences within the MCC and LCCNO partnership to continue to benefit students and build the early childhood workforce.



FAMILY LEARNING

LEARNING
COMMUNITY
CENTER OF
SOUTH OMAHA



Learning Community Center of South Omaha

The family learning program in South Omaha is a comprehensive, center-based initiative created using national models and best practices from the two-generational approach. The program originated in 2012 as a collaborative effort between the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties and OneWorld Community Health Centers. The Learning Community Center of South Omaha was nationally recognized by the White House as a Bright Spot in Hispanic Education and is a 2-GEN network partner through Ascend at the Aspen Institute.

Each family in the program attends classes or programming an average of seven hours per week during the academic school year and throughout the summer. Families participate in all three of the program's primary components:

- Education for Parents of Young Children
- Early Childhood Education
- Interactive Parent/Child Activities

EDUCATION FOR PARENTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN

Since a parent's level of educational attainment is a strong predictor of a child's academic success, all parents at the center enroll in an English as a Second Language or a GED cohort for six hours a week. During most of the 2020-2021 year, parent classes were held virtually. During Spring 2021, classes gradually returned to in-person learning, and by June 2021, most classes were held in-person.

ENGLISH FOR PARENTS. As parents learn English, they become more confident talking to teachers and asking questions about their child's progress, as well as communicating with the broader community. An English for Parents class might teach parents how to use computers to access school information, role-play parent/teacher conferences, or utilize children's books as learning tools.

GED. In partnership with Metro Community College, the program offers GED classes and a bilingual ESL instructor provides in-class language supports to parents as needed. The goal of the classes is to help parents increase their educational level and better their family's economic security through more stable and lucrative jobs or new educational pathways only open to GED graduates. GED classes also help parents guide their children on their academic journey (homework help, role modeling, academic language and concepts, etc.)

Along with ESL or GED, parent participants receive:

PARENTING CLASSES AND WORKSHOPS. Parenting classes and family-focused workshops strengthen and support parents, who are the first and most important teachers for their children.

Parents learn practical strategies to support child development and education. Program staff and community organizations provide a wide variety of offerings, including Circle of Security®, Love and Logic®, domestic violence prevention, financial literacy, and nutritious cooking. All workshops teach skills and techniques to foster learning and well-being at home.

Sample Parent Classes and Workshops

Circle of Security® (Child Saving Institute & Project Harmony)

Budgeting 101 (Lending Link)

How To Help Your Struggling Child Succeed (PTI Nebraska)

Setting Boundaries (Women’s Center for Advancement)

Cooking Matters® (Whispering Roots)

Love and Logic® (program staff)

EDUCATIONAL & SOCIAL ASSISTANCE NAVIGATION SERVICES. The center employs navigators who develop authentic relationships with parent participants and serve as their advocates. Every parent in the program is assigned an **Educational Navigator**, who conducts home visits with family at least once a month to help connect them with the public school system and provide new insights into child development and learning strategies. Navigators use a research-based home visiting/parenting curriculum, Growing Great Kids®, which ensures effective individualized education and support. A **Social Assistance Navigator** assists families who are in crisis or have challenging social or economic needs. This navigator connects parent participants with many community resources, such as pantries, mental health services, and homeless shelters.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.

Since research shows children whose parents have higher-wage jobs have better educational outcomes, workforce development classes are offered onsite in collaboration with Metropolitan Community College. Parents learn workforce readiness skills such as resume-building, interview skills, and job search methods and receive certificates in customer services, workforce ethics proficiency, and the National Career



Readiness Certificate. A Career Skills Coach also offers individual career coaching or assistance connecting to continued education.

DIGITAL LITERACY. Due to COVID-19 and private donors, each parent enrolled in the program is loaned a computer. Since 2020, digital literacy was included in all English for Parents classes, and parents in the program have become proficient in using Zoom, email, search engines, and Google Classroom and gained skills such as using a mouse, copying and pasting, and typing. Throughout the year, small in-person sessions were conducted at the center in order to facilitate participants understanding technology concepts that were difficult to learn remotely. Additionally, Metropolitan Community College offers computer certificates to parents who take onsite courses that include the following topics: Basic Computer Skills, Internet Basics, Using Email, and Windows.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

While parents attend classes, the Learning Community Center of South Omaha offers year-round learning activities for young children, from newborn to age five. The primary focus is on building social, emotional, and executive functioning skills as well as cognitive concepts to support school readiness. The program partners with many organizations, including Farm to School (The Big Garden), Story Time (Omaha Public Library), nutrition classes for children (UNMC's Center for Reducing Health Disparities), and performing arts sessions (Opera Omaha).

When staff or parents identify children with delayed development or challenging behaviors, the program connects these children and their families to programs such as Omaha Public Schools Early Intervention or KidSquad at Child Saving Institute. That way, young children receive interventions before they enter the public school system. The program also encourages families to enroll children who qualify in early childhood programs through Omaha Public Schools.

During the 2020-2021 year, adjustments were made to continue the program during the pandemic. A virtual "summer camp" in July 2020, included classes in math, origami, fitness, fun facts, cooking, virtual adventures, and music. Each preschool child heading to Kindergarten received a visit from the "graduation bus", where their early childhood teachers set up a mini graduation ceremony in each child's front yard. Young children had the opportunity to join daily Zoom sessions with other children from the center to engage with their teachers who read books, sang songs, and did science experiments. Art and craft activities were sent home with parents, and special events, like the Week of the Young Child, were celebrated with drive-through events. In June 2021, the center piloted a Summer Academy, a daily in-person program for young children.

INTERACTIVE PARENT/CHILD ACTIVITIES

Interactive parent/child activities are offered to families enrolled in the program to promote supportive and responsive parent/child relationships and interactions, which are the building blocks for healthy brain development. Interactive parent/child activities allow parents opportunities to practice new parenting strategies while learning together with their children. Examples of interactive parent/child activities include field trips, special events, or family summer camps with themes such as STEM learning, music, art, or literacy. Outside partners bring enrichment

programs to the center, including Prime Time Family Reading Time® (Humanities Nebraska), College Prep for Families (UNO Service Learning Academy) and String Sprouts® (Omaha Conservatory of Music).

DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2020-2021, the Family Learning Program served 298 families and 824 children (532 target students, birth to 8). Of the families served, 216 were enrolled in the comprehensive program while 82 families participated in the auxiliary program. Of the families attending the Family Learning Program, 74% needed childcare to attend programming, 85% reported that their students qualified for free-reduced lunch.

OUTCOMES QUALITY OF PROGRAMMING

METHOD. Multiple tools were used to measure growth, assess perceptions of the participants, and demonstrate program quality. The evaluation is both summative and developmental in nature. The tools selected for the evaluation provided outcome information as well as informed the implementers about what is working and what needs improvement.

FOCUS GROUP RESULTS. Multiple focus groups were conducted in 2020-2021 to allow participants the opportunity to voice their experiences and thoughts. Questions were broad in nature and asked about the participants' overall experience with the program, satisfaction levels with multiple facets of the program (navigators, parenting classes, resources, English classes) and ideas for improvements to the program. Additional focus groups conducted in December 2020 and summer of 2021 focused specifically on the digital programming providing by LCCSO.

FOCUS GROUPS. In the spring of 2021, seven focus groups were conducted with adults enrolled in the ESL classes at the Learning Community of South Omaha. In order to be a part of the focus groups, a participant must have participated in the center programming for at least six months. A total of 76 participants attended. Focus group questions centered on participants' experiences with the center during the past year. Below are the summarized results of those discussions.

Participants reported a high level of satisfaction with English classes. Along with a high sentiment of gratitude, participants stated, "I feel satisfied. I love the English classes. I like the conversations we have during class so we can practice speaking." The English classes also led to an increased level of understanding, e.g., "They have helped me a lot. When I go to the store, I can ask for things that I am looking for. I feel more confident. I understand more than I did."

Many participants also shared an increased ability to help their children with homework because of taking classes at the center. One participant shared, "The classes have been very helpful. I can help my child with her homework and read books to her in English. The teacher is very good, and it has helped me in my work." Other participants reported that the English classes helped them to understand what their children were learning in school.

The word “patient” was frequently used to describe the nature of the English teachers. In addition, participants noted satisfaction with the curriculum, stating, “I think they have a great curriculum. I like how they split us up by levels and not just throw us in one group together.”

Participants shared a desire to return to in-person classes. A shared understanding of the need for online classes was expressed, but many participants are ready to return to in-person learning, e.g., “I am happy, but the only thing I have to say is that it is a bit more difficult to learn through Zoom compared to in-person classes due to being distracted with watching my kids.” Other participants agreed that in-person classes can support more personal interactions with one another.

Specific suggestions for the content of English classes include more writing time in English, more reading time in class, more opportunities to converse and practice English during class, and basic math courses to help participants understand what their children are learning in school. Other suggestions include adding classes at additional times, such as evenings or weekends for those who work during the day. Participants were thankful for the computer courses offered during the past year and expressed a need for on-going computer classes.

A high level of satisfaction was reported by participants enrolled in the GED classes. Out of the focus group participants, 11 reported enrollments in GED classes, while 36 reported a willingness to enroll in the program in the future. One GED participant stated, “Personally, this is when I improved my English. I had to use it more and use new words that I did not learn in the English classes.” Others agreed that the courses were challenging, but “excellent.” Several GED participants reported having started the GED program elsewhere, but then found more success with the program offered through the Learning Community. Other participants were surprised to

report that the program had helped them with the subject of math stating, “The math part has been so helpful. Math was like another world for me. I have children in first and fourth grade. This is nice for me because I can now help them with their homework. When I am practicing something, they also help me. It is more than learning. It is a life goal. There are always things to learn.”



Participants benefitted from a variety of classes offered by the center. Classes such as Love and Logic, Prime Time, Workforce, Circle of Security, Puente al Exito (Bridge to Success), and Violin were discussed during the focus group sessions. An active participant of these opportunities shared, “I think each of these offered me more knowledge and strength to use with my family. Each of these classes offers security for the future.” Other participants shared that classes such as Prime Time helped their children to improve their ability to communicate, and the finance classes helped others learn how to purchase a home. Participants also shared satisfaction and appreciation of violin classes offered for their children. Additional quotations about personal experiences with various classes are shared below:

Circle of Security: “Circle of Security was very helpful to me in my life. We don’t always have the understanding of how to be parents, and there was so much information in this program. I feel that it helped me to be a better mother. It also reminded me that no parent is perfect.”

Workforce: “I am happy with workforce because it motivated me to apply for a job, and to know that I could do it. Now I have a job and will have worked there for two years come this September.”

Puente al Exito (Bridge to Success): “Puente al Exito with UNO really helped open the doors for my daughter to attend UNL.”

Love and Logic: “I am taking Love and Logic. It has really opened and changed the way I think. It makes you reflect on yourself. It has helped me to better reflect on my emotions.”

To summarize the classes offered, participants shared that the parenting classes helped them to apply new skills within their own families that were different from what they had learned in their native countries.

Participants unanimously benefitted from the support of the educational navigators. There was a shared sentiment of satisfaction with the educational navigator staff among the focus group participants. Participants shared, “Navigators do not only help us with our classes, but they help us at home as well. I feel like they are even more focused on us during this time of the pandemic. They have been there for us.” Participants echoed the opinion that navigators were a great resource during the pandemic, e.g., “When we had the virus, my husband had it very hard, and my children were here, and I did not have food to cook or diapers for my six-month-old. I talked with my navigator, and she brought me diapers and food. She helped me so much.” Other participants shared that navigators assisted them with enrollment in classes at Metro Community College to continue their education.

Many valued character traits were used to describe the educational navigators. The adjacent word cloud shares commonly used words expressed by participants to describe the educational navigator staff.

Suggestions for the educational navigators were minimal, but participants remarked that this year felt different than other years due to the fact that they could no longer speak with their navigator in-person. Home visits with the educational navigators were missed. One participant suggested having outdoor visits with the navigators at the Learning Community site, which began in the spring of 2021.



Participants saw improved communication with their child’s school. The impact of communication between the family and school was two-fold: resulting from increased English-speaking skills as well as newly acquired technology skills opening doors to communicate electronically. One participant shared, “Before my daughter would communicate with the school for me. I could not speak with anyone at school, and the hours of my job made it complicated for me to communicate with the school. Because I did not know how to communicate with the school, I was not motivated to speak with them. Now after taking English classes, I can ask questions by myself. I communicate with the teacher. I can speak with the people in the office. I am more comfortable now. I know that my English is not perfect, but I can express myself well enough that we understand one another. They tell me that I speak well in English. It is a great support. I no longer feel embarrassed, and I am grateful.” Participants also shared how computer classes have helped them to understand how to access online portals for their children at school, and they can now view their grades online. Improved communication with teachers at conferences was also noted.

Participants also shared a high level of satisfaction with the early learning classes offered for young children at the center. Participants reported the classes allowed their children to be more social with their peers. Many noted an increased confidence in their children; whereas prior to attending classes their children were timid and less talkative, and after taking classes at the center children were more at ease. Participants also reported satisfaction with the early childhood teachers, e.g., “The teachers are so good and patient. They work so hard with our children. They sing and teach them their letters. They are very motivating and nice.”

Students who needed extra support also received additional resources. A few participants spoke of receiving increased services for their children with disabilities, e.g., “The center has helped me a lot with my children. They have some delays in speech, so they have a lot of support. They have had opportunities to socialize and to be with other children.” Another participant explained, “My child is diagnosed with ADHD. Because of the center, I am now able to communicate better with the psychologists and therapists that work with my child so that he can continue to grow and develop.”

Many participants agreed that the pandemic created stress for their family. Stress was a result of fear of the virus, and for some participants loss of a job. Participants mentioned taking in less income while spending more on utilities since family members were staying home.

While stress was a common theme among many participants, there was also a common notion of hope, e.g., “We can see the light at the end of the tunnel because we have the vaccine. This last year was very difficult and stressful. My husband was on furlough. He went to the doctor because of his stress. It was also hard for the kids to be stuck in the house all day long. But the strength was that we had more family time. My husband spent more time with the kids. Thank God things are starting to get back to normal. We just kept moving forward, and here we are.” Additional participants agreed the pandemic helped their family to unite more closely and created more appreciation for life’s simple things, such as going to the park or the ability to hug loved ones

DIGITAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

In December of 2020, six focus groups were conducted with parents who attended Computer Literacy classes at Learning Community Center of South Omaha. The following is a summary of statements and common beliefs that were analyzed from approximately 30 parents who participated in those focus groups.

COMPUTER LITERACY CLASSES WERE GREATLY NEEDED FOR PARENTS

“Now that the pandemic is here, it is an obligation to know this.”

In the spring of 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic forced families into isolation, the use of technology was a necessity for a variety of reasons. ESL instruction pivoted to online instruction through Zoom. Younger children of participants also attended early childhood instruction through Zoom. In addition, school age children began remote learning on tablets received from schools. A majority of parents stated that they had minimal previous experience with computers prior to the pandemic. A few participants needed assistance with basic keyboarding skills, as well as assistance turning the devices on.

Fear was a commonly expressed emotion by parents as their children transitioned to full remote learning, e.g., “When the children started with their tablets, I did not know how to use it. Sometimes I would ask my son, ‘Mijo, what is this application?’ And he would answer, ‘I don’t know.’ ...**I was afraid to move the tablet. I knew if I could learn this, I could help him with his homework.**”

A commonly needed skill was the ability to communicate through email. One participant shared, “For me, it was very helpful to learn email. I did not know a lot about it. When I started all of this, everything with the school was through email...I learned how to write, receive, and send emails. It was so much help.”

“It was difficult to send emails to my teacher. I would try to send him one and I could not, so I would just call him. I have a hard time trying to write a new email.”

One participant was happy to learn more advanced skills with email, stating “I have also learned how to send emails that look more presentable. The meaning and structure of the email, how to

navigate the website and the icons, and the star that means your favorites; things like that were helpful.”

Many participants in the focus group also reported an unfamiliarity with the Zoom platform prior to the pandemic. A few individuals shared their initial confusion of getting a Zoom link in their email and using a code to enter the early childhood virtual session for their children, e.g., “At first, my daughter’s classes, I did not know how to do them! It was very difficult. I did not understand. Everything was in English, right? But the teacher showed me where to find the link and enter the password and everything.”

Participants expressed a growing confidence with Zoom. Some participants stated that they are now using the platform to connect with friends outside of class. One participant shared that she can attend training for work through Zoom in the evenings. Another participant shared that she is looking forward to using Zoom to communicate with her family in Mexico.

Some participants benefited from assistance in navigating search engines such as Google. Others stated they needed help toggling back and forth between multiple tabs and other multi-tasking techniques. The use of Microsoft Word was also included in instruction.

Overall, a large number of parents believed the computer literacy classes assisted them in supporting their children with online learning, e.g., “I never thought my child would be doing school like this. At the beginning, it was difficult, and I did not know if my child was really ‘in her class’ doing what she was supposed to. Now with what I have learned in these classes, I can see that she is connected. It was really helpful.”

“Nowadays, you have to use technology for everything. Before I did not feel comfortable with it, but after COVID and having to be quarantined, everything had to be done virtually. That was hard for me. My son is in eighth grade and his parent/teacher conferences and other meetings are through Zoom. Thanks to this class, it has helped me a lot, and I am a lot better with technology.”

Due to the patience and clear explanations of the classroom teachers, a transformation from fear to confidence occurred for many. Participants reported feeling frustrated at first, but the patience of the teachers contributed to learning new strategies. Teachers also made classes interesting and fun.

“When we did not understand something, they explained it to us. Or sometimes they explained it to us separately and took the time to make sure we understood it.”

“They helped us so much. For me it helped me so much with my son to comprehend and understand how to use his tablet. I felt comfortable with the way they taught us.”

“The teacher is patient, helpful, and encouraging... I can tell they love their job.”

Beyond helping their children with school, parents also felt the computer classes will improve their lives on a personal level. Participants noted feeling more comfortable scheduling appointments electronically with doctors, hospitals, and attorneys. One participant shared that possessing computer skills will make her more marketable in the workforce, e.g., “I think what I

am learning can help me in the future. If I were to work, I can say, 'I know a little about computers...and well, I can speak English too!'"

Suggestions for future computer classes included adding computer time to each ESL class. Other suggestions mentioned were a need for leveled computer classes according to ability, e.g., "It is difficult to follow when we are all trying and working at a different pace." There was a range of responses of those individuals who needed basic keyboarding skills (e.g., reviewing parts of the computer) to others with a more advanced skill set who were ready to work on email presentation and multi-tasking.

Many participants continue to request additional options for classes during the week, as well as longer class times or Saturday options.

In conclusion, the computer literacy classes provided a much needed skill set for parents new to technology, who were suddenly forced to enter an uncharted world of communication for the sake of their children.

"It has helped me so much because before we really did not need to know a lot about technology. Now, it is a necessity. It has helped me and my children so much."

"It has helped me a lot with my child's learning. I can check and see my child's grades and homework assignments. I can help my daughter get connected."

It is also worth noting the gratitude expressed by many parents for receiving a computer from the center.

Digital learning focus groups were conducted for a second time in June 2021. Participants shared similar feedback to what was collected in December with one difference being the increased use and generalization of skills beyond the classrooms.

Participants reported that learning Zoom, how to maneuver in Google and use email were the most helpful pieces of technology to learn. Zoom was mentioned across participants as most useful as it impacted access to programming, communication with their student(s) school, and telehealth appointments. Security and email were also mentioned as being helpful to learn as participants learned to navigate an increasingly digital world.



“When I decided to study online, everything was new. Zoom was very helpful. When I called the center, they told me I had to take three classes. It has been very good-a great experience. They taught me the basics of Zoom.”

Participants reported gaining multiple skills and wanted additional classes to continue learning and using the new skills both to help their children and for themselves personally.

One participant stated, “Overall, it was always difficult for me to use a computer; I knew nothing about computers. Now, it is a lot easier for me to use.” Several mentioned the patience of the teachers in teaching the apps and technology as a reason for improvement and sticking with learning. They also appreciated being able to learn in chunks and mastering concepts before moving to the next topic. Participants want to learn more, particularly the specific apps and programs used by school district and how to better use tablets. Other suggestions include having more online classes, learning additional security features and having more practice using Google apps.

“I would like to learn more about how to manipulate the computer because it is very necessary. All the things I have learned have been helpful for school and my personal life.”

Participants agreed that helping their students with remote learning was easier due to the classes provided at the center and they wanted to learn more. Understanding Zoom allowed parents to connect with teachers about their students’ learning. In addition, parents reported increased confidence in downloading/using app and helping their children with the pieces taught at the center. However, several mentioned the need to learn more programs and navigate tablets to take their skills to the next level.

“The teacher taught us how to use several applications/programs to practice and study our English. I can also help my children practice/study. When they are on their tablets and if an issue comes up, I can now help them.”

Digital learning benefited families with young children as well as those with school age students. Parents mentioned how the technology not only allowed them to help their children but it allowed them to continue in their own learning while staying home as caregivers.

One parent shared “At LCCSO, my daughter entered a program called Prime Time for children 3 years of age. Everything was virtual, and it was six weeks of literacy. My daughter has completed two programs. She is excited to see her teachers virtually. Because of the computer skills I learned, my daughter was able to adapt and learn online as well.”

Another parent discussed how it helped them personally, “These classes were a big blessing for me because my younger children are here at home with me. It was a great benefit because I can stay at home and learn at the same time...I am so thankful to everyone at the center. Thank you to everyone, because we are all learning.”

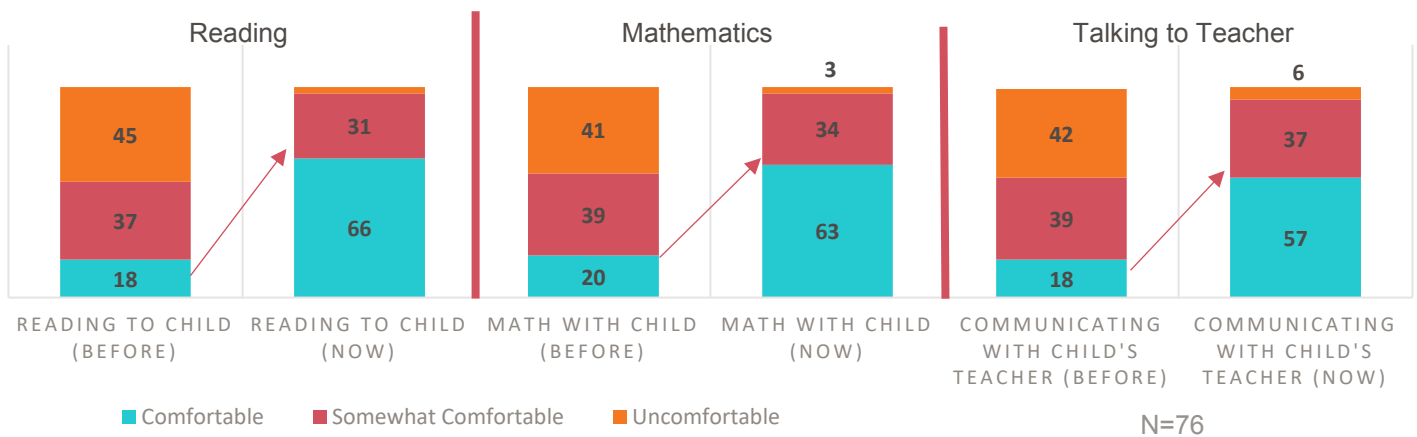
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT RESULTS

As part of the focus groups, parents reflected on their levels of comfort about engaging with the school prior to starting the program and how they compared to now after participating in the programming. A total of 76 parents completed the items and of those, 9% had participated for at least 6 months, 26% had been in the program for one year, 36% for at least two years and 29% for three years or longer.

The current results align with the past five years of evaluation data. Parents feel increasingly comfortable engaging in school efforts including reading to their child in English, working on mathematics and communicating with the teacher.

The percent of participants feeling comfortable reading to their child increased from 18% to 66% (+48% increase) and from 20% to 63% (+43% increase) for math. Additionally, parents reported feeling more comfortable communicating with their child's teacher and the school, from 18% comfortable to 57% comfortable (+39% increase).

PROGRAMMING INCREASES PARENT ENGAGEMENT ACROSS ALL EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES.
PARENTS REPORT INCREASED LEVELS OF CONFIDENCE.

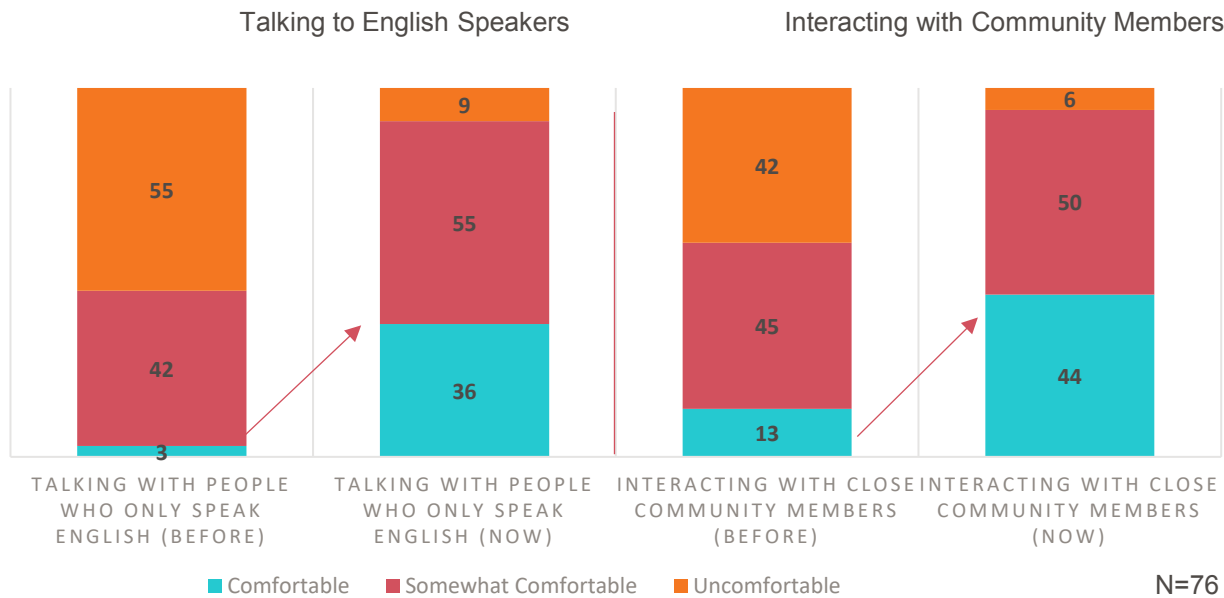


In addition to school engagement items, participants were asked about their engagement both with English-only speakers and within the community. In both scenarios, participants indicated increased levels of feeling comfortable communicating with English speakers. The percent of participants feeling comfortable talking with people who only speak English increased from 3% to 36% while the percentage of participants who felt uncomfortable interacting with community members decreased from 13% to 6%.

The pattern of responses is consistent with those reported in the previous four years. As participants remain in the program and gain English language skills, comfort levels working on academics, engagement with the school, and community engagement all increase. These data are supported by the qualitative feedback provided by participants in the focus groups. Both the

English classes and the digital learning opportunities were recognized by participants as contributors to increased levels of confidence and comfort.

LEVELS OF COMFORT USING ENGLISH SKILLS INCREASED AFTER ATTENDING PROGRAMMING FOR AT LEAST 6 MONTHS.



Suggestions for Future Programming

As part of all focus groups, participants provided suggestions on all aspects of the programming: English classes, Educational Navigators, parenting, activities, online classes, home visiting practices, and challenges.

Suggestions for future classes to be offered by the center include classes on how to start a business, cooking or crafts, guitar, domestic violence, and human sexuality or LGBTQ topics.

A current requirement of the Learning Community is that participants must have children to enroll in the program. A few participants spoke of peers in the community who would also like to improve their English, but do not have children. In addition, a few participants mentioned a need for a Learning Community site in West Omaha, where there is a high Spanish speaking population, but no such programs are offered.

PARENT EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

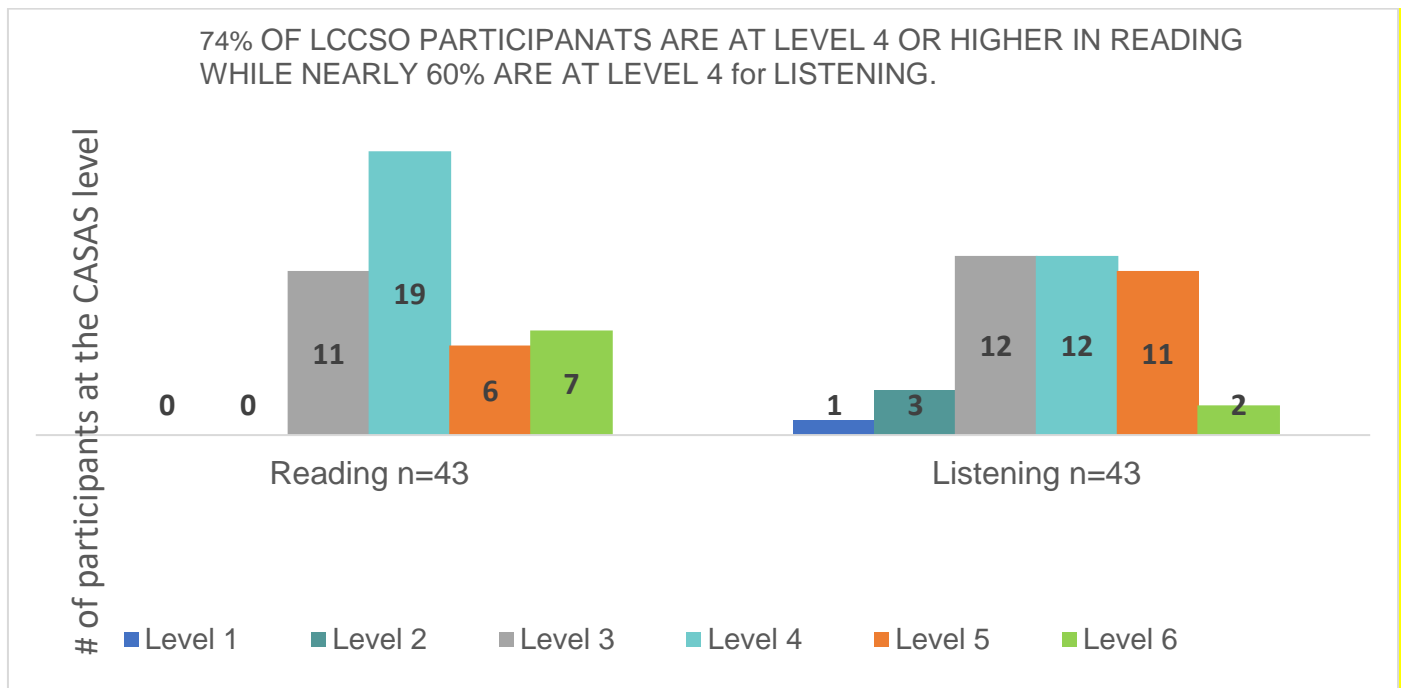
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

METHOD. English language skills for listening and reading were assessed using the CASAS®. CASAS® was used for multiple reasons; 1) CASAS® is the nationally recognized assessment for

English Learners; 2) It is aligned with the English curriculum used at the center; 3) It provides information that informs classroom instruction; and 4) Participants can easily transition to the GED subtests using the same format. This online assessment was administered jointly by Munroe-Meyer Institute’s program evaluators and staff from the center.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT RESULTS

FINDINGS. Using a paired-samples t-tests participants demonstrated a significant increase in their English language scores from pre to post testing for both listening $t(42)=2.35, p<.05$ and reading $t(42)=1.998, p=.05$. By the end of the reporting period, 74% of participants were scoring at a Level 4 for reading and nearly 60% at a Level 4 for listening.



The levels of the CASAS® indicate increasing level of skills and comfort in being able to listen, understand, and read English. For example, at ESL Level 2 a participant understands basic greetings, simple phrases and simple questions but may require the speaker to speak slowly and repeat the items. A person at this level would have difficulty with any direct communication even when simplified. At ESL Level 4, participants can understand simple everyday conversations and have basic routine social interactions. They can follow simple directions and are recognizing new words and phrases. Upon reaching an ESL Level 5, a participant understands common vocabulary across familiar subjects. At this point the person can find information in text, follow simple written directions, and understands the language on basic computer applications.

Individual reports were provided to the participants and ESL teachers at the centers. Teachers used these scores to group students and to inform instruction. The CASAS® is aligned with the current curriculum used so the teachers have found the information to be useful for planning instruction and monitoring the progress of the students.

PARENTING PRACTICES

METHOD. Navigators provided video observations of parents and their children to the evaluation team. The Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS™) was used to provide feedback to parents and help navigators determine which skills to focus on with parents. Educational Navigators receive a written report with scores and recommendations to use with families.

PARENT-CHILD INTERACTION RESULTS FINDINGS. The Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS™) measures parenting behaviors across three areas: Building Relationships, Promoting Learning, and Supporting Confidence, based on a videotape of a parent playing with his or her child. Scores are based on a 5-point scale with 5 being high-quality. A program goal is scores of 3.5 or above. Scores for the parents participating at LCCSO are included in the Shared Outcomes section of the report.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

A partnership was established with Metro Community College to provide work readiness classes for participants at LCCSO. Several work certification program opportunities were offered during the past year with multiple participants earning certificates.

FINDINGS. The following is a list of additional work certificates and the numbers of certificates awarded in each category.

1. Customer Service (29)
2. National Career Readiness (5)
3. Work Ethics Proficiency (15)
4. Career Skills Consultations (10)
5. North Star Computer Readiness Certifications (236)

Additionally, 39 participants enrolled in two GED cohorts in partnership with Metro Community College. **Of those participants, five earned their GED.** Sixty percent in cohort 1 and 63% of cohort two demonstrated measurable skills gains (3-4 grade level increase).

SUCCESS STORY. A participant began working with the Workforce Innovation Department in June 2019. She was referred by the Learning Community Center of South Omaha, as part of their Workforce Development Program. While attending the Workforce Development classes, she received her Customer Service Certificate, Work Ethic Certification, National Career Readiness Certification (NCRC), and an updated resume.

In November 2020 discussions began, with the Learning Community Center of Omaha, to create a Workforce Development Program Level 3. This new program would work individually with participants to determine Career/Education Goals and create a path to achieve those goals. She was the initial student for the Level 3 program. While completing career exploration Pharmacy Technician was her choice. It was truly a team effort to successfully submit the necessary

paperwork to obtain GAP Funding. While in the program, Medical Terminology was difficult for the participant due to English not being her first language. However, she arranged a meeting with her instructor to develop strategies to learn the new material. The strategies worked and she successfully completed her Medical Terminology Course.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE NAVIGATOR

METHOD. Data were collected from parents who received additional services and resources through the social assistance navigator. Data were collected from families pre and post services on selected measures and on their goals. It should be noted that this position was impacted by turnover during the evaluation year.

FINDINGS. A total of 164 families were referred to participate in services with the social assistance navigator. Of those families, 146 were simple referrals and the remaining 18 were complex referrals. Simple referrals are those in which families may need short-term assistance such as help with paperwork, referrals to other resources (food bank, energy assistance, etc.).

Complex referrals are those requiring longer engagement and additional supports and involve goal setting with families. Service plans were developed with families who chose to engage to establish goals. By the end of the year, of the families enrolled, 33% were able to close their case successfully while 11% were still active and 11% disengaged in services. The remaining families chose to not participate or deferred engaging with the navigator.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

PARENTS IN LCCSO: STUDENTS (GRADES K-5) READING AND MATH SKILLS

ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

METHOD. During the 2020-2021 program year, school district efforts to mitigate COVID-19 resulted in multiple disruptions to in-person school. These disruptions impacted the normal assessment schedule that is used to monitor student progress. The program and evaluation teams developed alternative strategies to measure the social-emotional and academic skills for these children. Parents were invited to have their children ages two to kindergarten participate in in-person assessments at the Learning Community Center of South Omaha in the fall and spring. The results of those assessments are reported in the following section.

In addition, as the school district resumed consistent in-person instruction, the MAP-NWEA assessments were administered, and the evaluation team was able to access the math and reading results for analysis in this report. The results are reported in the Shared Program Outcomes section in this report.

PARENTS IN LCCSO: CHILDREN'S SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL, EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING AND ACADEMIC SKILLS

METHOD. Families were invited to participate in assessments of their children's social-emotional, executive functioning, and academic skills in the fall and spring. The following tools were used:

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS [DEVEREUX EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSESSMENT (DECA)]. Parents completed the DECA questionnaire to assess young students' social-emotional development in the areas of initiative, self-control, attachment, and behavior as well as total protective factors overall. The DECA is available in Spanish and English. The DECA was completed for 57 children total with 33 having assessments in both fall and spring.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS [THE MINNESOTA EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SCALE (MEFS)]. Executive functioning is defined as a student's ability to control impulses that then enable them to plan, initiate, and complete activities needed for learning. This an online assessment was administered in English or Spanish by an evaluator from MMI. This assessment was completed with 56 children at fall and spring.

ACADEMIC SKILLS

PICTURE PEABODY VOCABULARY TEST-IV (PPVT-IV). The PPVT-IV measures English receptive vocabulary. An evaluator from MMI conducted this assessment with five children, ages three years to five years, at fall and spring. The sample size is too small to analyze so results are not reported.

BATERÍA IV WOODCOCK-MUÑOZ. The Bateria IV is a Spanish-language assessment that measure cognitive abilities, achievement, and comparative oral language abilities. Four subscales were utilized in the evaluation: Test 1 Identificación de letras y palabras (Letter-Word Identification), Test 2 Problemas aplicados (Applied Problems), Test 4 Comprensión de textos (Passage Comprehension), Test 5 Cálculo (Calculation). This assessment was administered in Spanish by an evaluator from MMI on children, ages three years and four years, at fall and spring. This was completed with 38 children.

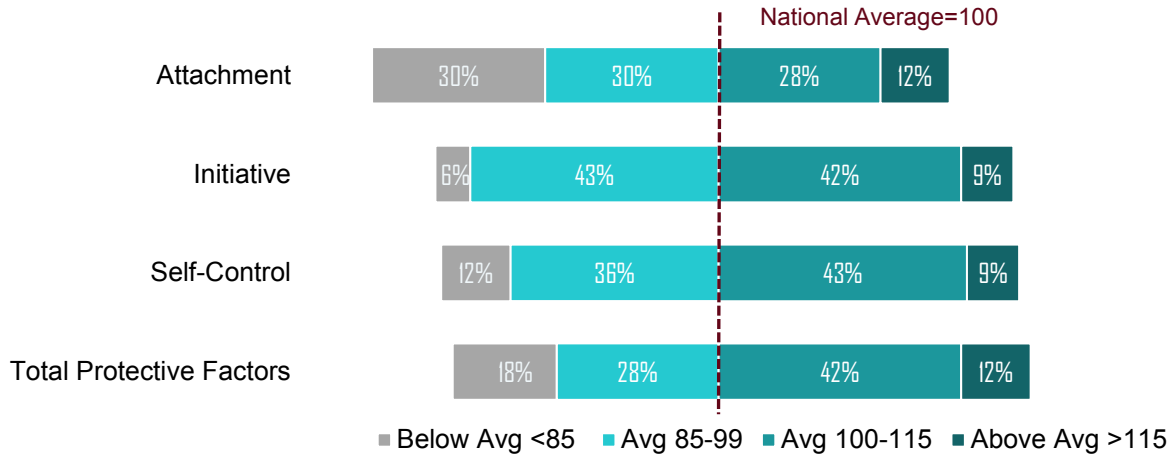
In order to assess the academic outcomes of the school-age children whose parents participated in programming at LCCSO, the MAP® Growth™ was used. The NWEA-MAP® Growth™ assessment provides data on student academic growth in the areas of Reading and Math and monitors change over time. **The results are reported in the Shared Program Outcomes section in this report.**

FINDINGS

Social-Emotional

The descriptive analyses found that by spring, high percentages of students scored within the average to above average range across all areas of the social-emotional measure: total protective factors (82%), attachment (70%), initiative (94%) and self-control (88%). The majority of students

BY SPRING STUDENTS SHOWED THE GREATEST STRENGTH IN SELF-CONTROL.
 Less than half the children (%) were at the national average in attachment. n=33



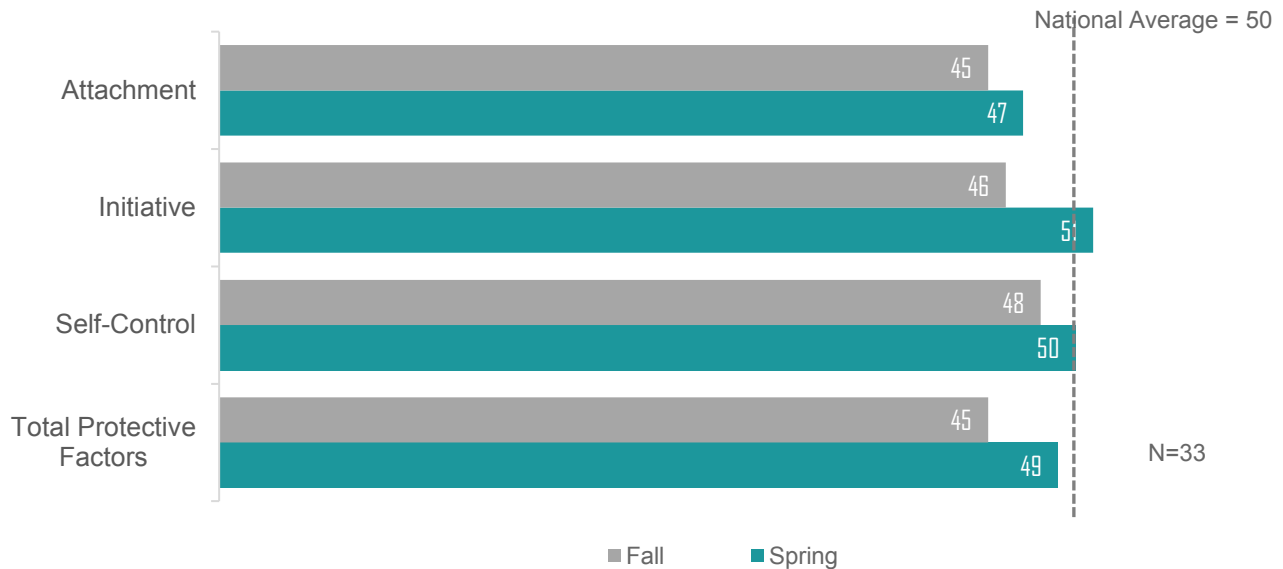
demonstrated social-emotional skills above the national average, which is a score of 100, in the areas of total protective factors (54%), initiative (51%) and self-control (51%).

The social-emotional tool also measures behavioral concerns such as having temper tantrums, having a short attention span, and becoming upset easily. Twenty-eight percent of the children scored in the “concern” range, indicating child behaviors that were outside what is typical for three to five-year old children.



A comparison of social-emotional results at fall and spring is reported in the following graph.

ON AVERAGE, CHILDREN IMPROVED ACROSS ALL AREAS FROM FALL TO SPRING.
The most growth was in the area of initiative.



Children demonstrated improved social-emotional skills across all areas. By spring they were approaching or exceeding the national average. The most gains were made in initiative (5 point increase on average) followed by total protective factors (4 point average increase). A paired t-test analysis found that there were significant increases in initiative ($t=-3.183, p<.01$), and in total protective factors ($t=-3.463, p<.01$). The analysis did not find significant changes in attachment or self-control suggesting these areas remained stable over time.

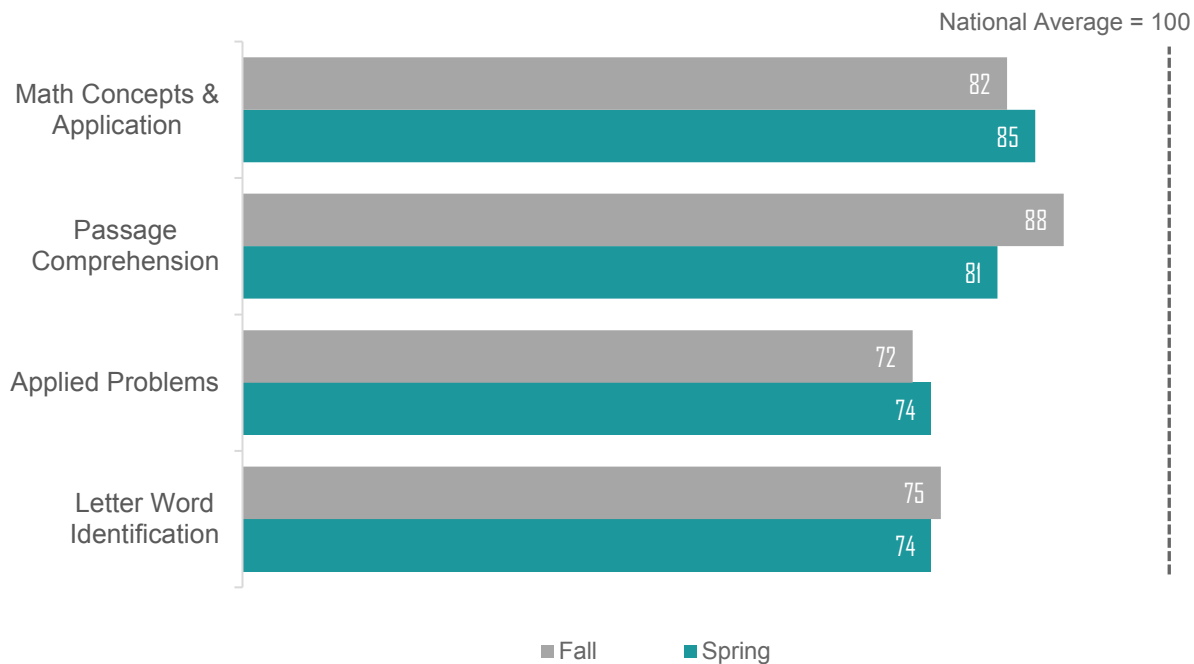
Executive Functioning.

Fifty-six children were assessed with 30 children having both pre and post assessments. The descriptive analyses found that 84% of the children demonstrated average executive functioning skills in fall and 97% in spring. Average scores were 94.47 in the fall and 96.10 in the spring. The national average is a score of 100. In fall, 25% of the children met this benchmark. In spring, 37% scored at this level. A paired t-test analysis did not find a significant change indicating skills had remained stable over time.

Academic Skills

Thirty-eight children had math and reading assessments with 22 of those students having pre and post assessments. Spring assessments found that 50% of children scored in the average or above range for Passage Comprehension while less than 50% scored in that range for Applied Problems (46%), Letter Word Identification (32%) and Math Concepts and Applications (27%). A paired t-test analysis indicated a significant decrease in Passage Comprehension ($t(21)=-1.944, p=.03$). No other significant differences were found.

ON AVERAGE, MATHEMATICS SCORES REMAINED STABLE FROM FALL TO SPRING.
Average scores were below the national average. n=22



ATTENDANCE OUTCOMES

School Attendance data was collected on school-age students of parents participating in the LCCSO program. For those students with parents attending programming **73% missed fewer than 10 days of school**. The attendance data are consistent with data from previous years as LCCSO students typically miss fewer days than their peers.

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE: USE OF DATA

CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT. The Learning Community Center of South Omaha focuses on using data gathered for the evaluation on an ongoing basis. The evaluation team from MMI and the management team at LCCSO engage in multiple feedback loops to improve programming and make informed decisions. KIPS and CASAS assessments provide valuable information for the family navigators and English teachers to use in their interactions with families and students. Information from the December digital learning focus groups helped inform programming and teaching for the spring semester.

SUMMARY

Even while in a pandemic families and students participating in the LCCSO program demonstrated improved outcomes across English language outcomes, workforce development, GED achievement, social-emotional learning and executive functioning. School-age students, on average, missed fewer days of schools and many maintained academic skills within the broad

average range. Families continue to view the center as a necessary resource within the community and value the services and opportunities provided. It speaks well of the staff and leadership to have been able to pivot and provide digital learning and needed COVID-19 resources for families while continuing to provide the core services of the center.

One recommendation would be to conduct a longitudinal follow-up to families who have graduated and have been out of the program for a time to examine both the student-level academic outcomes and the family level outcomes.



Shared Outcomes across Learning Community Programs

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT: RESULTS ACROSS LEARNING COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

It was important to evaluate student's academic outcomes across multiple Learning Community programs including: 1) students Grades K-5 whose parents were enrolled in Learning Community Center of North Omaha (LCCNO: Parent University) and Learning Community Center of South Omaha (LCCSO) and 2) students in Grades K-1 in schools participating in the Intensive Early Childhood Partnership. The Northwest Evaluation Association's Measures of Academic Progress Growth (NWEA-MAP®) was used to assess students' academic achievement and growth. MAP Growth is a norm-referenced assessment that measures student proficiency and growth in the areas of Reading and Mathematics. In 2020-2021, this assessment was administered by the Omaha Public Schools (OPS) in the fall and spring. The purpose of these data was to provide information to the program on how well the students were doing in these two academic areas and to plan future supports to parents to engage and support their student's learning.

Demographics

PARENT UNIVERSITY. Data was received on 157 students whose parents were participating in Parent University. There were equal numbers of females (50%) versus males (50%). The primary race/ethnicity represented were students who were Black (47%) or Hispanic (38%). A majority of the students were native English speakers (50%) followed by English Language Learners (ELL) (40%) and Exited ELL students (10%). The students who were ELL represented both Spanish-speaking children and children from a refugee population with a variety of languages represented. The students ranged across Grades PK through Grade 5, with the majority of the students in Grades K through 3 (76%).

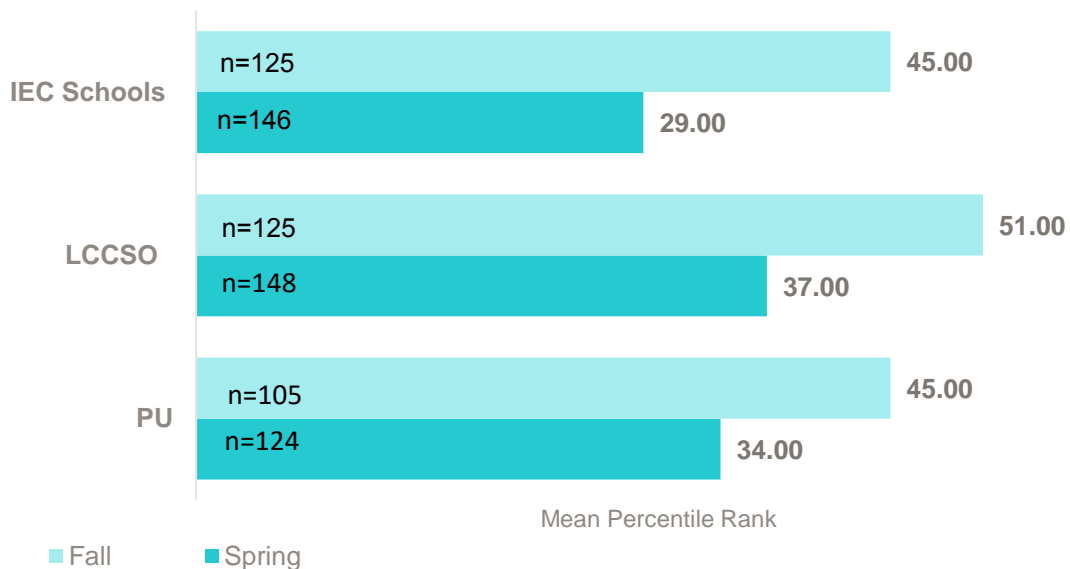
LEARNING COMMUNITY CENTER OF SOUTH OMAHA. Data was received on 157 students whose parents were participating in LCCSO. There were slightly more females (52%) than males (48%). The primary race/ethnicity represented were students who were Hispanic (98%). A majority of the students were English Language Learners (ELL) (67%) and Exited ELL students (27%). The students who were ELL represented mainly Spanish-speaking children and some children from a refugee population with a variety of languages represented. The students ranged across Grades K through 3 and fairly equally split across the four grade levels.

SCHOOLS IN THE INTENSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD PARTNERSHIP. Data was received on 164 students whose parents were participating in the two schools participating in the IEC partnership. There were fewer females (44%) than males (56%). The primary race/ethnicity represented were students who were Black (56%), followed by Hispanic (17%) and Asian (14%). A majority of the students were native English speakers (84%), followed by English Language Learners (ELL) (16%). The students who were ELL represented both Spanish-speaking children and children from a refugee population with a variety of language represented. The students ranged across Grades K through 1, with the majority of the students in Kindergarten (52%).

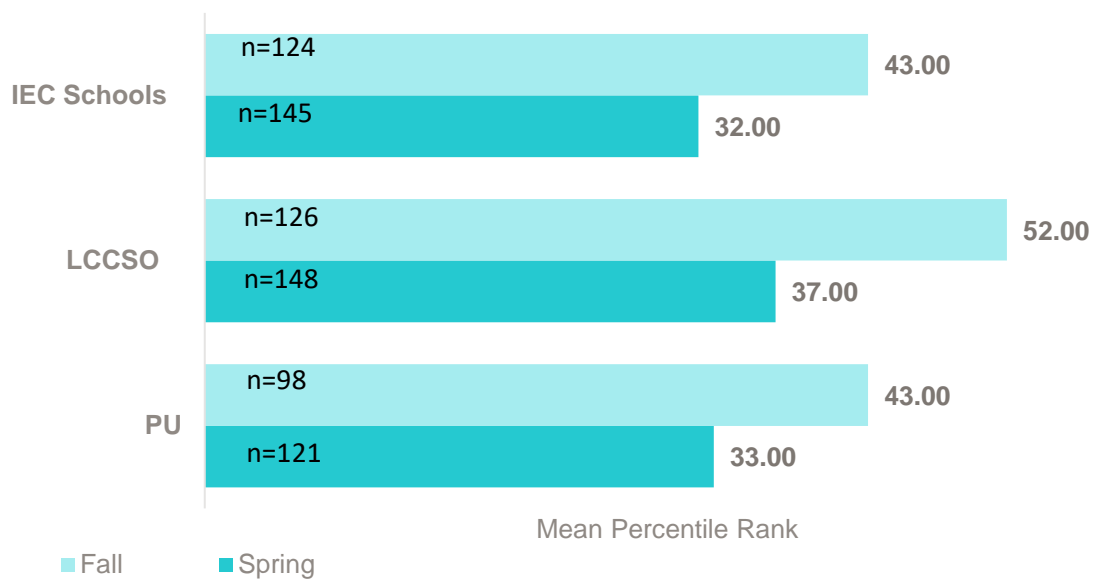
Student Achievement Status Results

ACHIEVEMENT STATUS BY PROGRAM. The NWEA-MAP® Growth™ assessment provides data on student academic growth in the areas of Reading and Math and monitors change over time. For this report, fall and spring mean percentile scores were used to evaluate the status of Reading and Mathematics achievement of students across time. For interpretation purposes, a percentile of 50 indicates a student performed at the mid-point of similar students across the United States. The following section provides a descriptive analyses of the findings. The figures below summarize the Reading and Math mean percentile rank for each of the three Learning Community programs for fall and spring. At the fall assessment students whose parents participated in LCCSO were performing at the mid-point for both reading and math. While not at the mid-point students enrolled in IEC schools and those with parents attending Parent University were close to performing at the mid-point. However, at the spring assessment, Reading and Mathematics achievement status declined in all programs.

READING PERCENTILE RANKS DECREASED FROM FALL TO SPRING ACROSS ALL PROGRAMS.



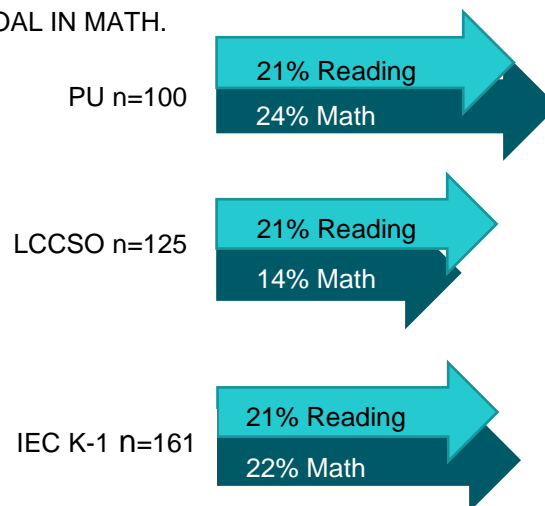
MATH PERCENTILE RANKS DECREASED ACROSS ALL PROGRAMS FROM FALL TO SPRING.



Student Projected Growth to Observed Growth Comparisons

PERCENTAGE THAT MET GROWTH GOAL. In addition to monitoring a student's achievement status, it is equally important to assess a student's growth in skills. NWEA-MAP® calculates a projected growth score that allow schools to compare to the students' observed growth. Programs did not vary in the percentage of students meeting their growth goals in reading. However, there were differences across programs in mathematics.

IN SPRING 2021, PARENT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS HAD THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS MEETING THEIR GROWTH GOAL IN MATH.



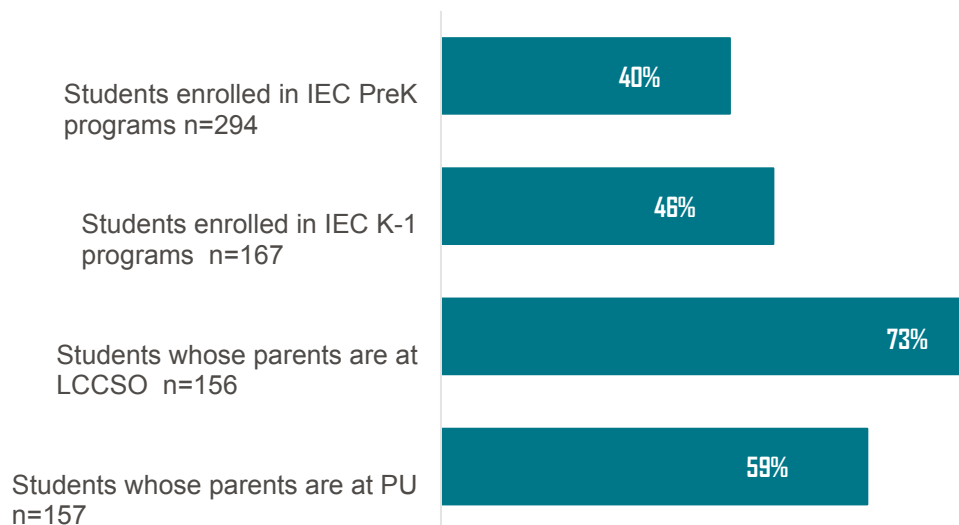
Given the varied nature of the 2020-2021 school year it is unsurprising that students did not maintain their gains in academic achievement. Students and teachers alike were tasked with new systems of teaching and learning in addition to the stressors and anxiety from dealing with COVID19. For students in K-1, they have had two years of disrupted learning with kindergarten students learning in a virtual manner for the entire first half of the year. These data should be examined through that context and seen as almost a new baseline to compare to the 2021-2022 data.

Student Attendance

STUDENTS WHO MET THE OPS ATTENDANCE GOAL. Research has found that students who were chronically absent in early grades demonstrated weaker reading skills, with Latino children suffering the worst effects (Chang & Romero, 2008). This points to the importance of attendance in schools especially for those children living below the poverty line and students who are Latino. Omaha Public Schools has recognized the importance of attendance and established “Strive for 95”, a program that promotes reducing students' absenteeism. They are promoting that students should have less than 10 absences per year or a 95% attendance rate. Overall students in these programs met the attendance goal with 53% missed 10 or fewer days. **Students with parents attending LCCSO had the highest rate of attendance with 73% of students missing 10 days or fewer** compared to 59% of students with parents participating in Parent University and 42% of students attending an IEC school.

LCCSO STUDENTS HAD THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGES MISSED FEWER THAN 10 DAYS OF SCHOOL.

On average, students in other programs were absent approximately 13 days.



PARENTING: RESULTS ACROSS LEARNING COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

PARENT-CHILD INTERACTIONS

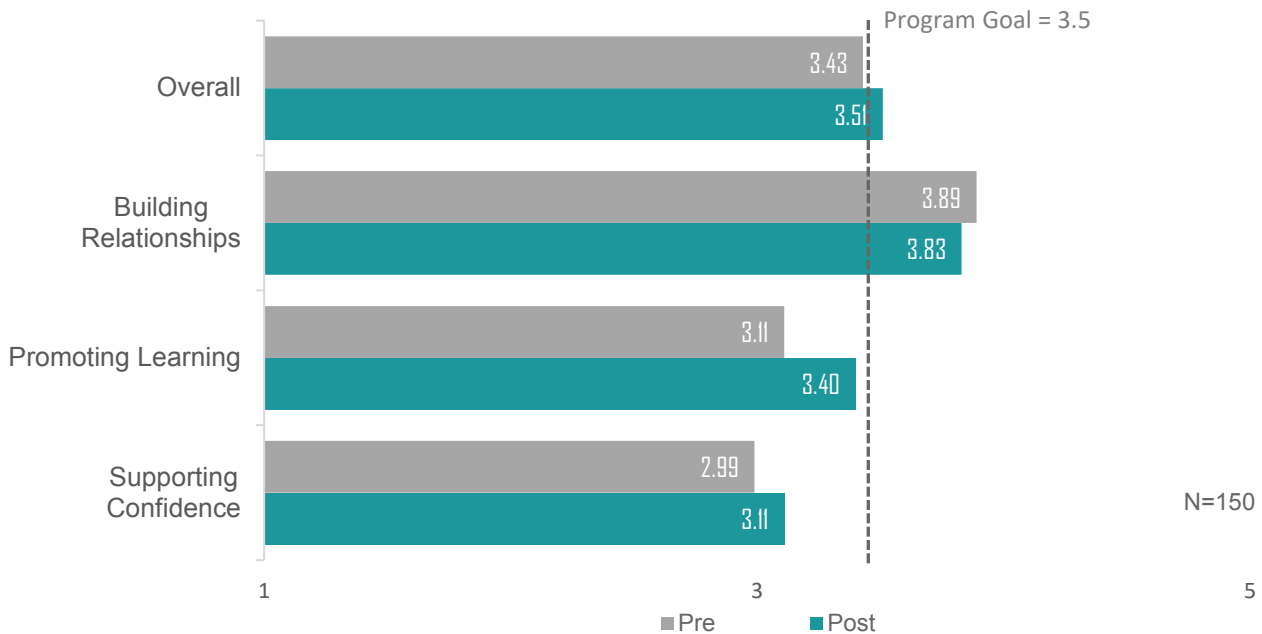
Positive day-to-day interactions between parents and children lay the foundation for better social and academic skills. Both LCCSO and Parent University programs strive to enhance participants' parenting skills. Educational Navigators assist and encourage parents to have high-quality interactions with their children.

METHOD. The Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS) measures parenting behaviors overall and across three areas: Building Relationships, Promoting Learning, and Supporting Confidence, based on a videotape of a parent playing with his or her child. Scores are reported on a 5-point scale with 5 being high-quality. In 2020-2021, 150 parents enrolled across the two programs had at least two KIPS evaluations. This is a 50% increase over the previous year when 99 parents had KIPS at two points in time.

FINDINGS. The program and evaluation team set a score of 3.5 as the program goal. By post, families, on average, met the program goal in Building Relationships (3.83) and on the Overall scale (3.51). They came close to meeting the goal in Promoting Learning (3.40). Parents showed the greatest strengths in Building Relationships with their children. At pre, 49% of parents met the program goal. By post, 54% met the goal.

The following graph shows average KIPS scores across both programs at pre and post.

PARENTS DEMONSTRATED THE GREATEST STRENGTH IN BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS.
The most growth was in the area of Promoting Learning.



A paired samples t-test analysis found that parents' skills in Promoting Learning increased significantly over time ($t=-3.905, p<.001$). The effect size was $d=.319$, which is in the modest range.

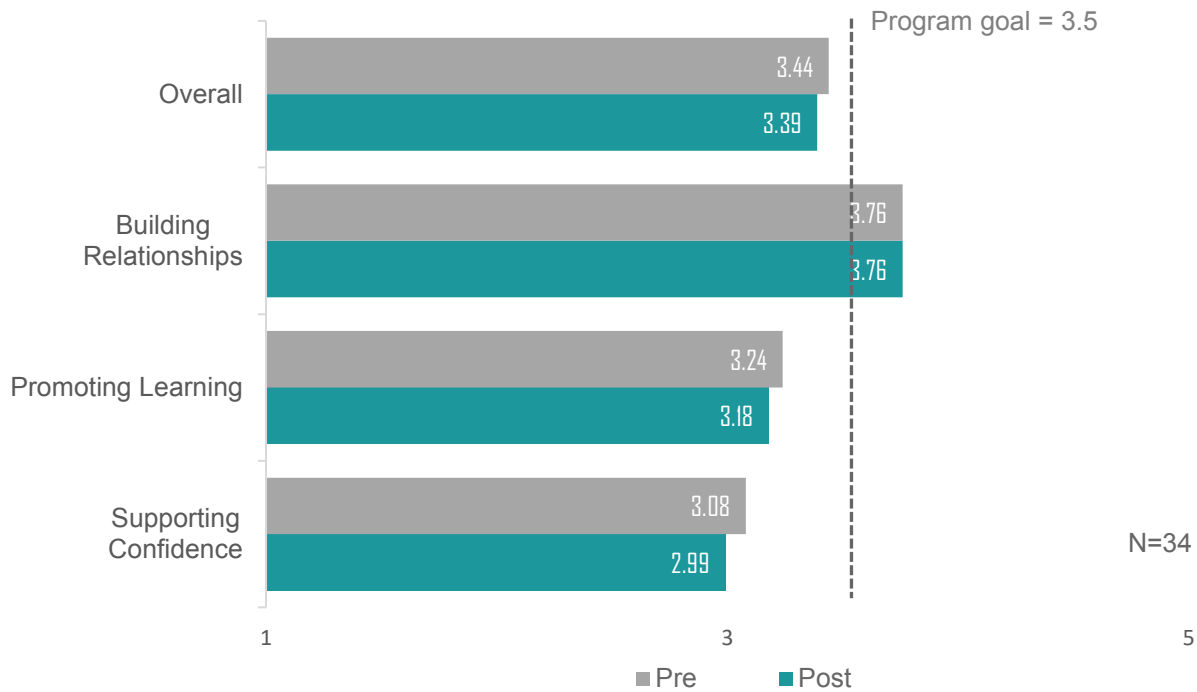
The analysis found that there were not significant changes over time in the other three areas: Building Relationships, Supporting Confidence, or Overall, suggesting that these interactional skills remained stable over time.

PARENT UNIVERSITY

FINDINGS. On average, families met or exceeded the program goal in Building Relationships (3.76). They came close to meeting the goal Overall (3.39). A paired t-test analysis found that there were not significant changes in interactional skills, suggesting skills remained stable over time.

At pre and post, 44% of parents met the program goal for parent-child interactions. The following graph shows parent-child interaction results for Parent University.

PARENT UNIVERSITY PARENTS MET THE PROGRAM GOAL IN BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS. They nearly met the goal Overall.

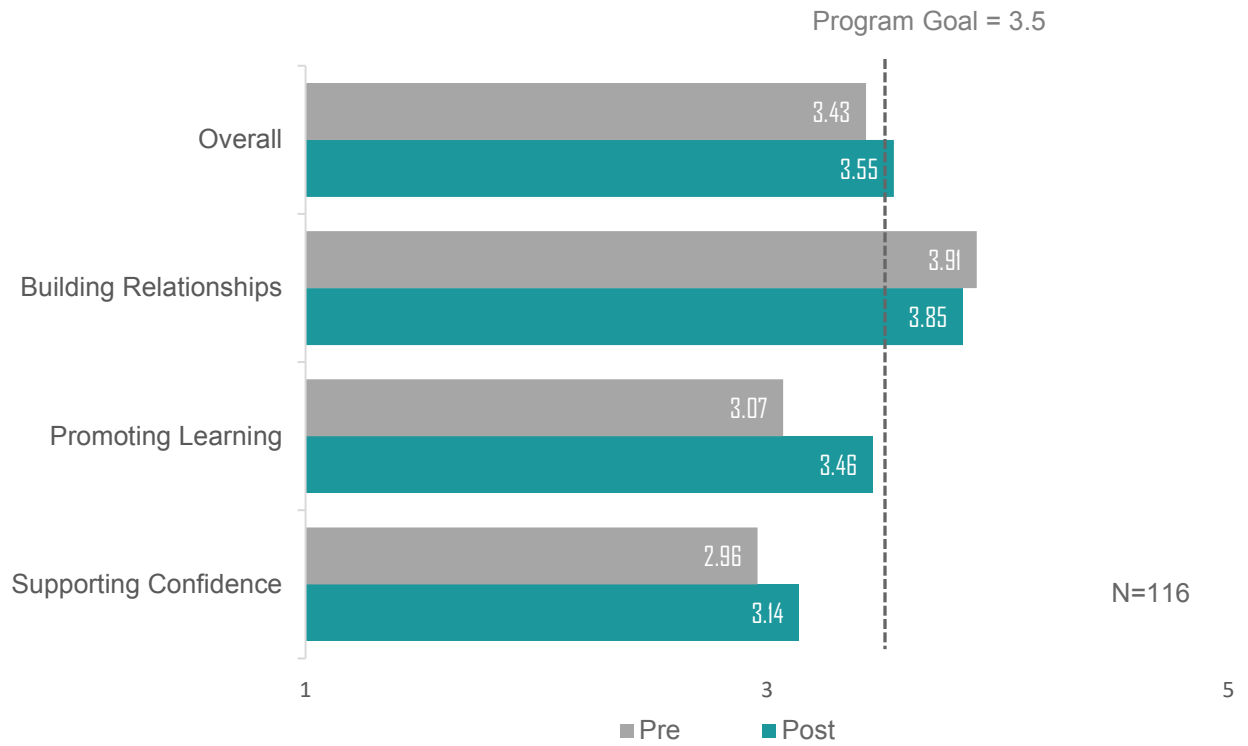


LCCSO

FINDINGS. On average, families met or exceeded the program goal in Building Relationships (3.85) and Overall (3.55). They nearly met the goal in Promoting Learning (3.46). The most gains were made in Promoting Learning (.14 increase on average). A paired t-test analysis found that there were significant increases in Promoting Learning ($t=-4.74, p<.001$), and in Supporting Confidence ($t=-1.98, p=.05$). The analysis did not find significant changes in Building Relationships or Overall suggesting these areas remained stable over time.

A slight majority (51%) of parents met the program goal at baseline. After participating in LCCSO activities, 57% met the goal. The following graph shows parent-child interaction results for LCCSO.

LCCSO PARENTS MET THE PROGRAM GOAL IN BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND OVERALL. They grew the most in the area of Promoting Learning.



SCHOOL DISTRICT INITIATIVES



Instructional Coaching

The Learning Community supported three school district initiatives: Instructional Coaching, Extended Learning, and Jump Start to Kindergarten. The descriptions of each program and a summary of their evaluation data are found in this section.

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

Instructional Coaching has been an ongoing district initiative since 2012-2013 and has grown to include five Learning Community school districts (Bellevue Public Schools, Millard Public Schools, Omaha Public Schools, Ralston Public Schools, and Westside Community Schools). Each district uses a different coaching model, and the focus for that model varies.

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

While each district has different implementation models of Instructional Coaching, some of the components are consistent across all four districts. Coaches work with teachers to provide consultation, modeling, data analysis, co-teaching, and lesson planning support. All districts emphasize supporting new teachers and helping teachers implement new curricula.

BELLEVUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Bellevue Public Schools combined Jim Knight's coaching framework with Charlotte Danielson's teacher evaluation model to provide coaching across seven elementary buildings using six instructional coaches. Coaching cycles were used once teachers enrolled in the coaching process. Coaching activities included observations, modeling, individual student problem solving, data analysis and utilization, teacher feedback, and guidance with new curriculum. Instructional Coaches served 113 teachers and approximately 1,907 students.

RALSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS. The Instructional Coach serves all elementary schools in the district, focusing on teachers that are in their first three years of teaching. A focus on supporting teachers with classroom management, instructional practice, and onboarding of new curriculum is emphasized during collaboration. The instructional coach also assists with the New Teacher Mentoring Program. During 2020-2021, 32 teachers and 1700 students were part of the coaching model.

MILLARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Millard Public Schools implemented instructional coaching at two buildings during 2020-2021. Two instructional coaches served 43 teachers and 838 students across two elementary buildings.

OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Coaches received multiple professional development days designed to hone skills in teaching and coaching reading instruction. The focus for the OPS instructional coaches was reading instruction (both large and small group). Approximately 150 teachers and 3,100 students were impacted in 2020-2021.

WESTSIDE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS. Cognitive coaching served as the base for the Instructional Coaching provided to two buildings in Westside. Coaches provided multiple opportunities for K-6 staff with coaching cycles required for new teachers (those within their first three years). Coaching activities included modeling, co-teaching, planning, videotaped observations with feedback, grade level planning and training in large groups. Coaches also provided guidance in lesson planning and support to Professional Learning Communities at the building level. Forty-five teachers and 820 students were impacted by Instructional Coaching.

DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2020-2021, approximately 383 teachers and potentially 8365 students were impacted by Learning Community funded Instructional Coaches. Each of the schools funded by the Learning Community for Instructional Coaching were elementary buildings.

OUTCOMES

COACH AND TEACHER FEEDBACK ON INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

METHOD. A combination of teacher surveys, instructional coach surveys and instructional coach interviews were used to gather information on how both teachers and coaches perceived the instructional coaching programs across the five districts. Data are reported in aggregate and not by district.

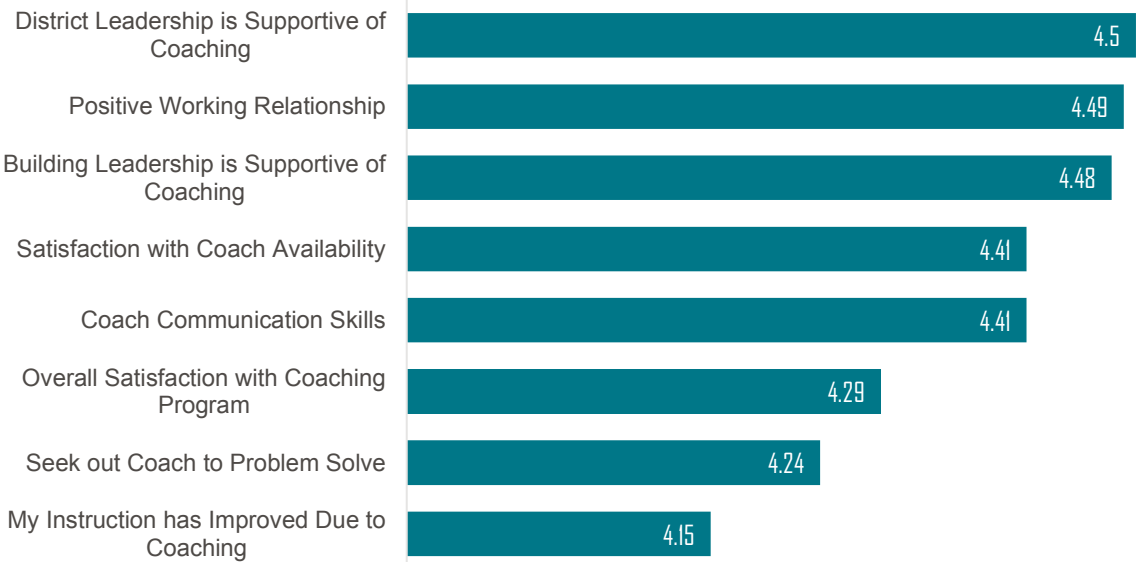
FINDINGS

TEACHER SURVEY

A total of 195 teachers across five districts completed the teacher survey. Unlike the previous year, most teacher completing the survey has at least 10 years of experience as a teacher (50%) compared to 29% with 4-10 years of teaching experience and 21% in their first three years of teaching.

COACHING WAS VIEWED POSITIVELY ACROSS FOUR DISTRICTS.

77% of teachers reported that their instruction has improved due to coaching.



Teachers rated their items on a 5-point scale (1=*strongly disagree* to 5= *strongly agree*). Teachers valued the relationship with their coach, felt supported by their district and had strong overall satisfaction with the coaching program. **Additionally, 77% of the teachers “somewhat or strongly agreed” that coaching had improved their instructional practices.**

“My teaching and content understanding have drastically improved thanks to my instructional coach. I would not be even close to the teacher I am today without her help. Our instructional coach is one of the few people in our building that I feel comfortable going to when I need help or advice in any content area.”

Not only did teachers rate the district and building level support for coaching very positively, they saw strong support in other areas. Sixty-five percent of teachers “*strongly agreed*” with the statement, “I had the support in my building to improve my instruction” and 63% “*strongly agreed*” with the statement, “I had resources/opportunities from the district/building available to me to improve my instruction.”

Analysis of the responses from the open-ended item asking about success and challenges revealed the following themes.

Successes.

Teachers felt supported and challenged to grow by their instructional coaches. Approachability, follow-through, and expertise were valued by the teachers who believed the feedback and support led to changes in instruction. Teachers valued multiple components of coaching including professional development, grade level work and one on one coaching interactions.

“I was able to fine-tune my content to ensure that my students were getting exactly what they needed”.

“I could not do my job as effectively as a Reading Specialist without the Instructional Coach. She has been an integral part of introducing and implementing curriculum. This is especially helpful with new teachers and or programs.”

Coaches were viewed as a resource and a collaborative partner in understanding curricula, planning and problem-solving. Coaches were noted for expertise and knowledge with curricula, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), behavior management and data utilization. Teachers mentioned specific instances of help with individual students, co-teaching, co-planning and answering questions about the curriculum and assessments.

“She took the time to help us problem-solve and pinpoint exactly what we would like to fix with our teaching”

“Weekly planning with our instructional coach has greatly helped and improved delivering effective content this year through discussion and sharing of ideas, strategies and planning reading and writing together.”

Teachers responded well to coaches deemed passionate about coaching and aspects of teaching. They valued the collaborative aspect of working with coaches to improve not only large group instruction but small group and individualized instruction as well. Several teachers

mentioned how the coach was able to help them see things in a different way or to approach content in a new way that would better serve students.

“My instruction in reading has improved and my students' test scores improved considerably!”

“She is always so helpful, kind and full of innovative ideas to use in both whole group and small group instructional time. I am so happy we have her as a resource. It makes things easier to develop when there are multiple minds discussing it and looking at it.”

Challenges. While most of the responses mentioned only successes a few challenges were noted. The most frequent being a perceived lack of consistency for roles/expectations for coaches within a district with teachers commenting on how some coaches “went above and beyond” while others struggled to connect with their teachers.

Instructional Coach Feedback

Coaches could provide feedback in two ways either by completing a survey or participating in an interview. A total of 7 coaches representing 3 districts provided feedback. Of the seven coaches, five of them had less than 5 years of experience as a coach and all of them provided support to more than 20 teachers in a year.

Coaches were asked about the effectiveness of several coaching activities. Of the activities, all were rated to be at least moderately effective with four of the activities (**Small groups/Differentiated Instruction, Data Analysis, Professional Development and Coaching Cycles** being rated the most effective with 100% of the coaches rating them to be “very to extremely effective”). Observations were rated to be the least effective method of coaching.

Impact of COVID-19 on Coaching

Teachers were more reluctant to add additional learning to their plates. They had less time to devote to planning and reflection with a coach. They requested more support in areas that took things off their 'to do' lists. Much of the coaching and professional development was done over zoom. Zoom was both a change and a benefit to coaches as they could meet with teachers across buildings without the drive time. Some coaches felt they were able to connect more often and also more informally with teachers. Coaches also played a significant role in supporting teachers' well-being and covering classes for their respective building due to the challenges of the pandemic.

In addition, coaching was more informal and focused around just supporting teachers in whatever they needed to keep them and their students afloat. At the beginning of the year, coaching was focused on helping teachers become more confident with technology and on-line instruction. Training sessions on various apps/technology tools were held to help teachers feel more confident.

Successes

“The largest success was that I had every single teacher that I was supposed to work with, worked with me in some form or fashion without resistance.”

Many of the coaching successes mentioned highlighted relationships built with teachers and with administration. Relationships built with veteran teachers and teachers who had been previously resistant to coaching were mentioned more than once as evidence of success. Some pointed out the importance of coaching cycles while others focused on their support of teachers throughout the year doing whatever was needed. Additionally, coaches reported success using data and aligning instructional practices with content area best practices.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Data on student outcomes was reported by individual districts and as there was no state required assessment last year the assessments varied.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Instructional coaching continues to be viewed as a valued resource by districts and teachers. Coaches are instrumental building teacher capacity and supporting teacher growth. One recommendation is to conduct individualized evaluation studies to further examine impact on student growth related to improved teacher skills.



Extended Learning

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Extended Learning programs provide additional direct instruction for students with smaller teacher to student ratios and a focus on specific skills identified by spring assessments. These opportunities provide engaging interactions that can motivate young learners. Summer programming, in particular, is designed to prevent learning loss so that students are better prepared for academic success as they enter into the next school year. Due to COVID-19 some programs had to shift delivery of services while others pushed back their time frame to allow in-person attendance.

DC WEST COMMUNITY SCHOOLS. Our summer extended learning program consists of 12 days, 3 hours each day. Students are provided targeted instruction in the areas of reading, writing, and math. Weekly newsletters, resources, and communication are sent home to parents about their child's progress. The goal of the program is to help students maintain their academic skills over the summer break

COMPLETELY KIDS. Students in this before and after school program are served at Field Club elementary. The strongest focus in the before school program is on academic enrichment (successful KIDS). Completely KIDS focused on STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Math), IXL (website with targeted math and language arts games and activities), site word and literacy games (one day/week is completely dedicated to literacy activity reinforcement), journaling, and homework help to help the kids to finish their grade level learning on time. Fifty-one participated in programming with 86% participating in free reduced lunch.

ELKHORN PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Jump Start to Reading provided students at-risk for reading failure three weeks of intense reading intervention. The goal of the program is to reduce summer reading loss. The program pulled from multiple curricula (Reading Street's My Sidewalks, Read Naturally, Guided Reading and/or Guided Writing) and was taught by district teachers. The goal of the program is to reduce summer reading loss. A total of forty-three students participated with 19% qualifying for free reduced lunch.

SPRINGFIELD-PLATTEVIEW COMMUNITY SCHOOLS. Students targeted for this school year program receive individual/small group math instruction at two elementary buildings. Students participate one hour per week with intervention lessons that are developed as a result of a collaborative effort between the classroom teacher and the math interventionist. The goal of the program is for at-risk students to be meeting grade level expectations in math by the end of the school year. Fifth grade is the level targeted for this intervention with fifteen students participating across two elementary buildings.

DEMOGRAPHICS

One hundred sixty-nine students in Grades K-5 were served through extended learning programming across five sites.

OUTCOMES

PARENT SATISFACTION

METHOD. Twenty-nine parents completed the survey. The survey was provided to programs in both Spanish and English. Parents were asked to respond to multiple satisfaction questions using a 1 to 5 scale (*1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree*). Parents had the opportunity to provide specific comments on the successes and possible improvements for programming.

FINDINGS. Parents reported high levels of overall satisfaction ($M=4.59$) with the extended learning programs. Parents rated staff as being excellent ($M=4.69$) and were satisfied with the length and hours of the program. Communication continues to be area for improvement as both communication items were the lowest rated for satisfaction with 35% of parents reporting they had no communication from the child's teacher on academic progress.

PARENTS FELT STAFF WERE EXCELLENT.
Overall satisfaction with the program was high.



N=29

Parents were asked to provide 1-2 examples of things the program could better and 1-2 examples of positives about the programming. The majority of comments surrounding improvement were centered on communication. Parents wanted increased communication on student progress, objectives met and additional activities for the remainder of the summer. Other ideas for improvement included additional time and longer programming.

Frequent comments from parents mentioned the academic benefit(s) they noticed in their student due to the extended learning program. They mentioned that teachers were caring and made the program enjoyable and engaging for students. Additionally, several parents commented on how they liked the hours of the programming and that students had Fridays off.

“My child enjoyed going and never complained which a win for me when it comes to school.”

“She was immediately getting better at reading fluency following the program”

- Parents of Students

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXTENDED LEARNING

Continue to investigate which programs demonstrate improvement for student achievement and learning. Use the state assessment scores when possible from spring to fall to see if the programs are useful in reducing summer loss.

Jump Start to Kindergarten

STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Jump Start to Kindergarten began in 2011. Programming is designed for low-income students who have limited or no previous educational experience. The opportunity to participate in a kindergarten setting and daily routines prior to the first day of school is a significant contributor to school readiness.

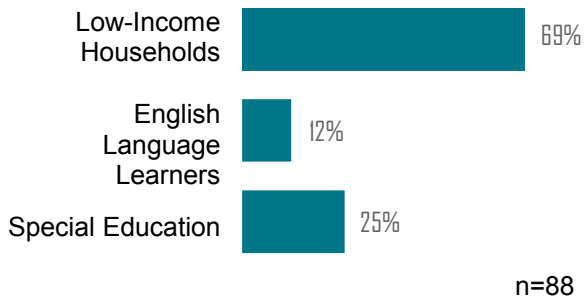
Programming focuses on pre-academic skills, social-emotional-behavioral readiness and orienting students to the processes and procedures of the school. The program includes a strong family engagement component such as home visits. It also utilizes certified teachers for part or all of their staffing. The program ran for three weeks and was a full-day program.

DEMOGRAPHICS

In the summer of 2021, Jump Start to Kindergarten was implemented in one district due to COVID-19. A total of 88 Kindergarten students were served. The program was implemented in-person and individual child assessments were collected. Demographic information including

eligibility for free and reduced lunch, race, ethnicity, and/or enrollment in special education services was collected to help interpret the evaluation findings.

STUDENTS FROM HIGH RISK POPULATIONS WERE SERVED DURING THE JUMP START PROGRAM.



Jump Start to Kindergarten served nine classrooms in five schools across the participating district. The program served more males (58%) than females (42%). The majority of children served were five years of age.

SOME RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS WERE SERVED. There were 25% of students who were Hispanic.



OUTCOMES

SCHOOL READINESS SKILLS

Did the students' school readiness change over time?

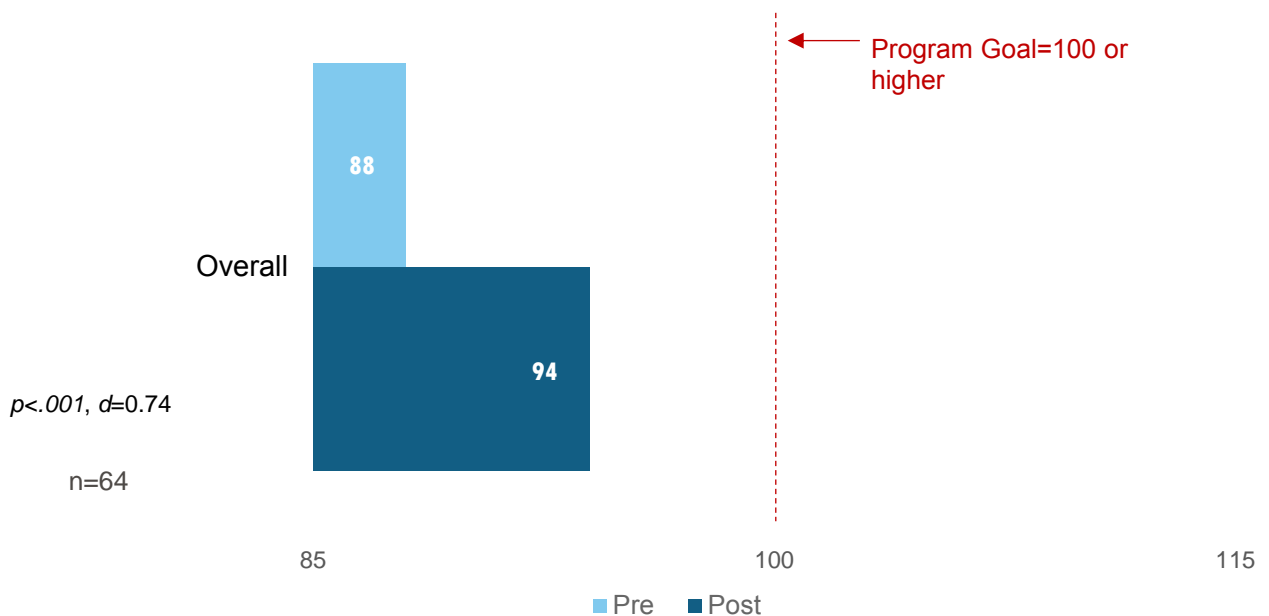
METHOD. The importance of concept development, particularly for students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, has been demonstrated in numerous research articles (Neuman, 2006; Panter & Bracken, 2009). Some researchers have found that children need a thorough understanding of basic concepts to make comparisons, classify, problem solve, and sequence. Children who do not understand basic concepts will most likely struggle not only with day-to-day academic activities such as reading and math, but with extra-curricular activities such as playing sports (Boehm, 2013). The norm-referenced assessment selected to measure Kindergarten students' school readiness was the Bracken School Readiness Assessment (BSRA). The BSRA

measures the academic readiness skills of young students in the areas of colors, letters, numbers/counting, sizes, comparisons, and shapes. The mean of the BSRA is 100, with 85 to 115 falling within the average range (one standard deviation above and below the mean).

SCHOOL READINESS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

For the 2021 summer, pre-post comparisons were made using a paired-samples t-test. The results found that overall, the students made significant gains in the area of school readiness over the course of the program ($t=-5.934$, $p<.001$, $d=0.74$) suggesting substantial, meaningful change.

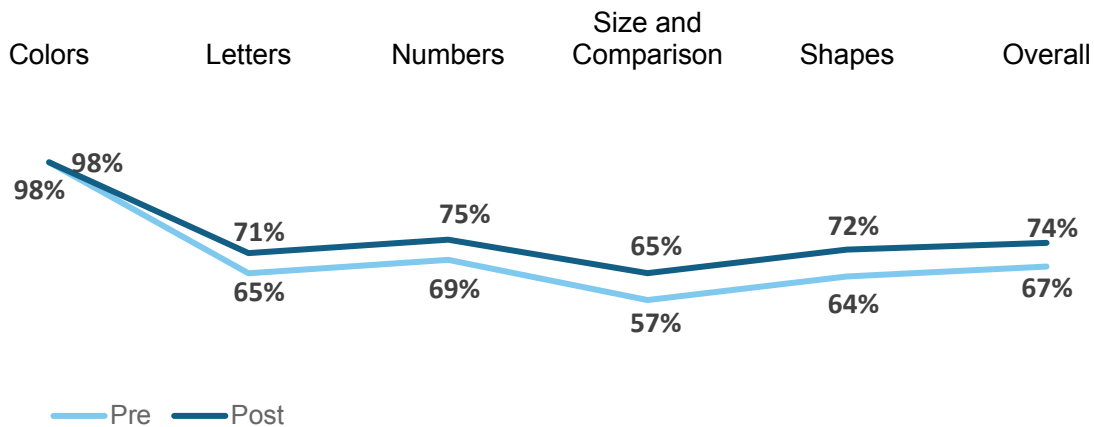
STUDENTS' SCHOOL READINESS SKILLS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED OVERALL.
EFFECT SIZE SUGGESTS SUBSTANTIAL, MEANINGFUL CHANGE.



The overall mean standard scores on the Bracken increased from 88 to 94, moving them closer to the desired mean of 100. The goal each year is to move the group as close to mean scores of 100 or greater as possible.

When examining individual subtests, the percentage of mastery increased in most areas with colors staying the same. Overall, there was an increase of seven percentage points. An area of strength for these students was color naming (98% mastery). An area for improvement would be Sizes/Comparisons (65% mastery). Sizes/Comparison may be a higher cognitive level skill for students as this subtest assesses their understanding of location words, comparison concepts, and understanding directional concepts.

PERCENT OF MASTERY INCREASED IN EACH SUBTEST.



EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS

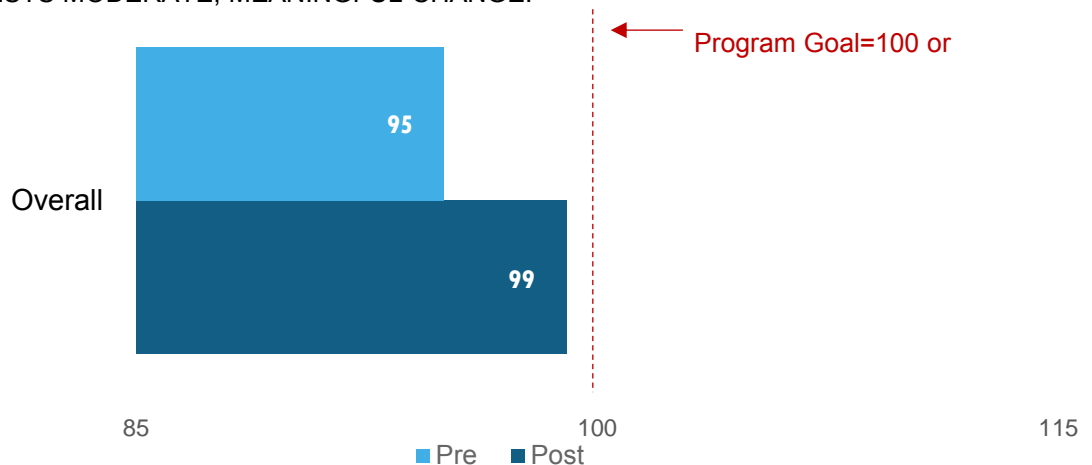
Did the students' executive functioning skills change over time?

METHOD. In recent years the important contributions of executive functioning to school readiness have been highlighted (Blair & Razza, 2007). Executive functioning is defined as a student's ability to control impulses that then enable them to plan, initiate, and complete activities needed for learning. Researchers correlate a relationship between executive functioning and a preschooler's ability to learn in the classroom (Benson, et. al., 2013). The Minnesota Executive Functioning Scale (MEFS), is an online assessment for children two and older.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING ASSESSMENT RESULTS

For the 2021 summer, pre-post comparisons were made using a paired-samples t-test. The results found that overall, the students made significant gains in the area of executive functioning over the course of the program ($t=-4.571, p<.001, d=0.57$) suggesting moderate, meaningful change.

STUDENTS' EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED OVERALL. EFFECT SIZE SUGGESTS MODERATE, MEANINGFUL CHANGE.



The overall mean standard scores on the MEFS increased from 95 to 99, moving them within one standard score point of the desired mean of 100. The goal each year is to move the group as close to a mean standard score of 100 or greater as possible.

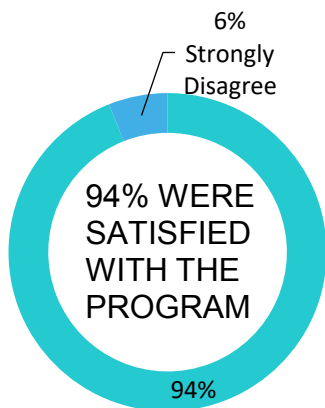
PARENT SATISFACTION

What did parents report about the Jump Start to Kindergarten Program?

METHOD. Parents provided feedback on the value or usefulness of the Jump Start to Kindergarten Program. Using a collaborative process across all districts and agencies, a master parent survey was developed. Districts or agencies were then able to choose which sections they would use for their program. Parent survey data was received from the participating district. Parent survey results are displayed in the following tables (N=17).



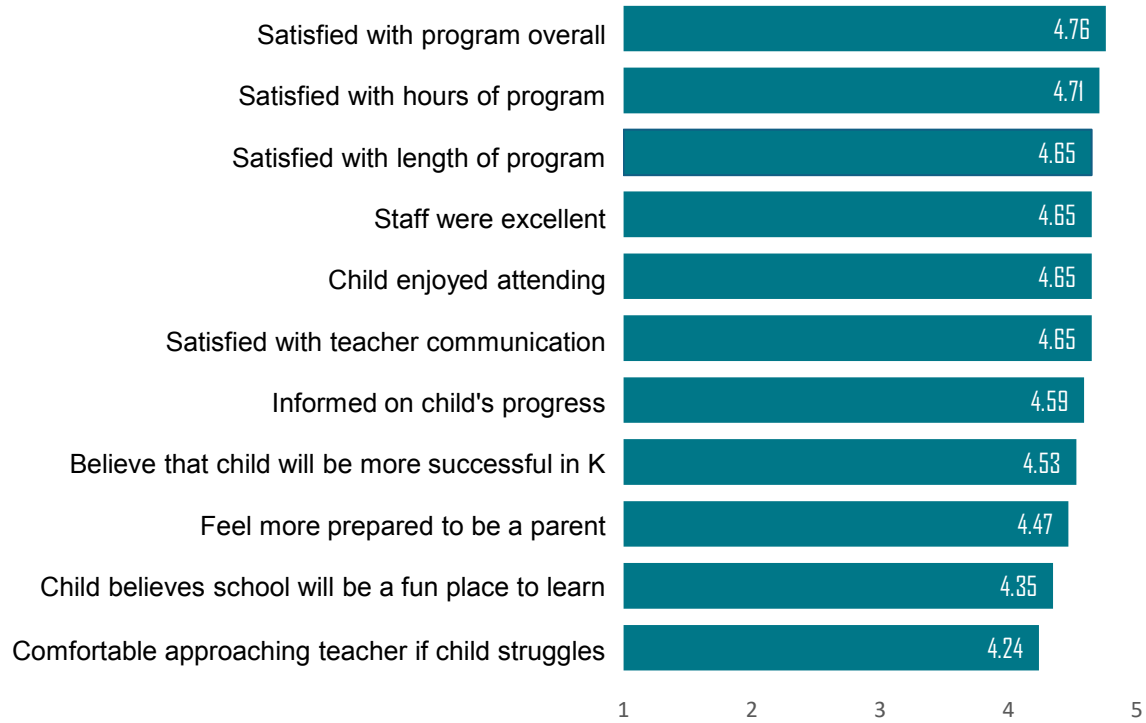
FAMILY SATISFACTION RESULTS



N=17

Families reported high overall satisfaction in all areas, including the structure and environment of the program. They also reported high levels of satisfaction on such items as believing the program staff were excellent and feeling that their child enjoyed attending the program. The lowest level of satisfaction was for being informed about their child's progress.

PARENTS REPORTED HIGH LEVELS OF SATISFACTION IN ALL AREAS.



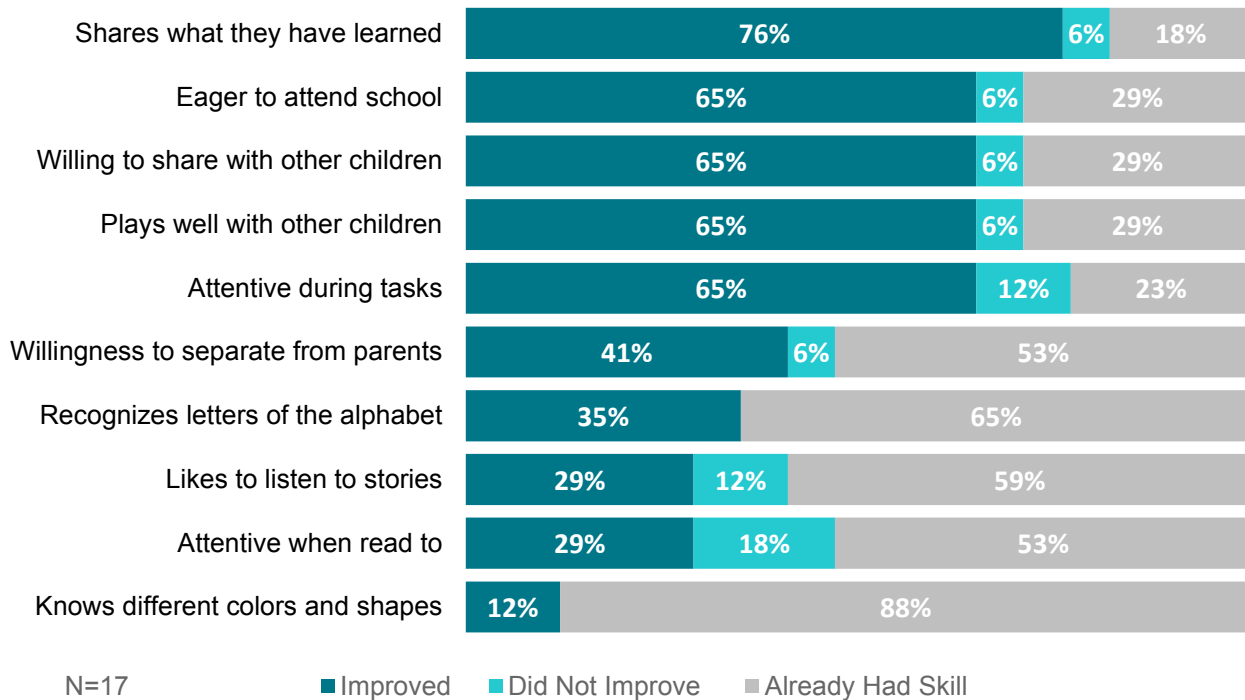
N=17

PARENT RATING OF STUDENT PROGRESS

How did parents rate their students' readiness for school?

Parents were also surveyed about their perceptions of how the program impacted their child. Over half of respondents reported that their child improved in the following areas: sharing what they learned, eagerness to attend school, willingness to share with other children, playing well with other children and attentiveness to task. Some areas where the majority of students already possessed the skills included: knows different shapes and numbers, recognizes letters of the alphabet, and likes to listen to stories. Attentiveness when read to had the highest percentage of “did not improve” (18%).

PARENTS CONSISTENTLY REPORTED THAT THEIR CHILDREN WERE SHARING MORE OF WHAT THEY LEARNED BY THE COMPLETION OF THE JUMP START PROGRAM.



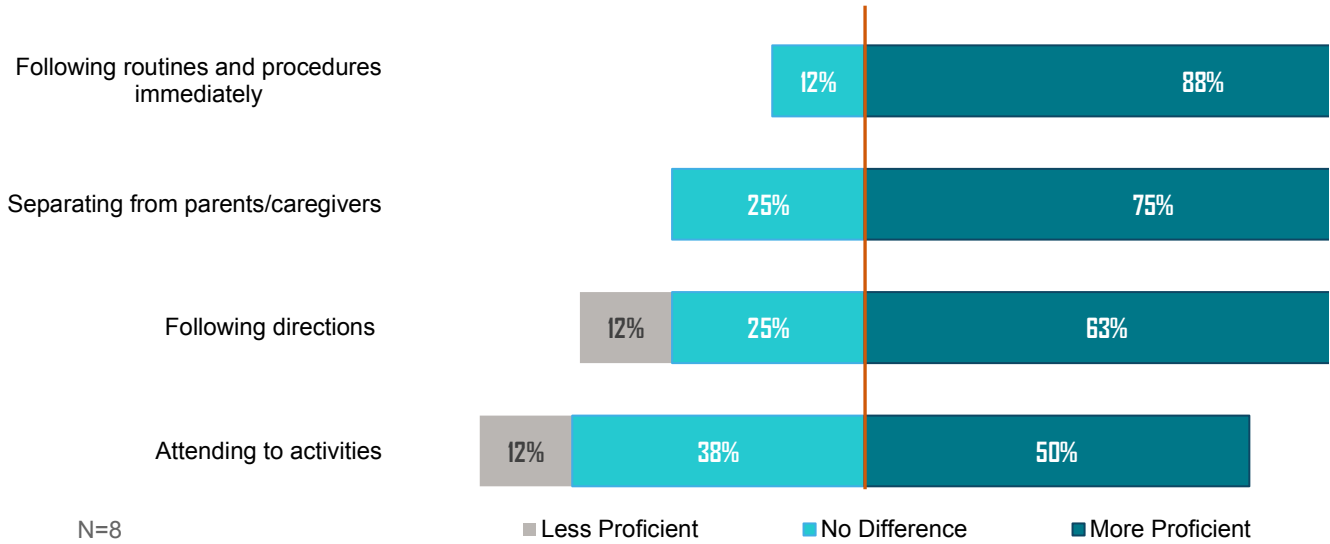
What did teachers report about students who attended the Jump Start to Kindergarten Programs?

METHOD. In the fall of 2021, all kindergarten teachers who had 2021 Jump Start to Kindergarten students in their classroom were asked to fill out a survey about the overall level of proficiency of students who attended the Jump Start to Kindergarten program compared to those that did not. Of the eight teachers that were surveyed, 50% taught Jump Start to Kindergarten this year.

TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

Teachers reported high overall proficiency in all areas, including separating from parent/caregivers and following routines and procedures right away. Teachers consistently reported that Jump Start to Kindergarten students were either more proficient or that there was no difference in skill level, when compared to their peers who did not attend the program.

THE MAJORITY OF STUDENTS WHO ATTENDED THE JUMP START TO KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM WERE RATED MORE PROFICIENT THAN THEIR PEERS WHO DID NOT ATTEND THE PROGRAM IN THE AREA OF FOLLOWING ROUTINES AND PROCEDURES IMMEDIATELY.



LEARNING COMMUNITY ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY

LEARNING COMMUNITY CENTER OF NORTH OMAHA: EARLY CHILDHOOD AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

INTENSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

- 294 and 184 Grade K-1 students were enrolled
- Majority are low income & represent diverse populations
- Girls outperformed boys in Social-Emotional skills

PARENT UNIVERSITY

- 200 parents were enrolled with majority representing low income & culturally diverse populations
- Enrolled parents had 380 children of which 264 were within the targeted age range
- Parents participated in 16 different courses which focused on parenting, school success, leadership, and life skills
- Parents demonstrated gains in Protective Factors
Parents learned new parenting strategies, and improved their financial stability

FUTURE TEACHER CLINICAL TRAINING

- 6 students graduated and enrolled in 4 year institution

CHILD CARE DIRECTOR TRAINING

- 13 online training sessions provided
- 56 participants across the sessions
- Feedback on the sessions was largely positive
- 89% did NOT want further coaching

LEARNING COMMUNITY CENTER OF SOUTH OMAHA:

FAMILY LEARNING

- 298 families were enrolled
- 532 0-8 year old children; 824 total children
- Two generation programming yielded positive effects Workforce Development with 295 certificates being earned
- 5 participants earned their GED
- 39 participants were enrolled in GED classes
- For the sixth year in a row, parents reported increased levels of school and community engagement
- Participants demonstrated statistically significant gains in English reading and listening skills

PARENTING OUTCOMES

- Parents reported gaining multiple digital skills and that it helped with remote learning
- Parents met the overall program goal in parent-child interaction and in building relationships
- For parents working with the social assistance navigator, 146 were simple referrals and 18 were complex
- 33% of parents were able to close their cases with the social assistance navigator

STUDENT OUTCOMES

- 73% of students missed fewer than 10 days
- Students demonstrated improved social emotional skills from fall to spring
- 97% of students were in the average range for executive functioning by spring
- NWEA-MAP™ mathematics mean percentile rank remained in the average range.

SCHOOL DISTRICT INITIATIVES

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

- Approximately 383 teachers, and potentially 8365 students were served across 5 districts
- 50% of teachers had at least 10 years of experience
- 77% of teachers reported that their instruction improved due to coaching
- Instructional coaches were viewed a resource and collaborative partner

JUMP START

- 88 kindergarten eligible students enrolled in Jump Start across one district
- 69% represented low-income households and 12% were ELL
- The majority of the parents (94%) were satisfied with the programs
- Students' school readiness and executive functioning skills improved significantly from pre to post
- Kindergarten teachers consistently reported JS students had skills equal to or more proficient than peers not attending the program

EXTENDED LEARNING

- 169 students were enrolled in Extended Learning
- 4 districts and 1 community agency participated
- Parents were highly satisfied with the program
- Overall satisfaction with the program was 4.59 on a 5-point scale
- Parents believed the program would be an academic benefit to students

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APPENDIX A. ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Tool	Author	Purpose
Bracken School Readiness Assessment, 3 rd Ed.	Bracken, B. (2007)	The Bracken School Readiness Assessment measure school readiness concepts including colors, letters, shapes and concepts and numbers.
Bateria IV Woodcock-Munoz	Woodcock, Alvarado, Ruef, & Schrank (2017)	The Bateria IV is a Spanish-language assessment that measures cognitive, achievement and oral language abilities.
CASAS [®]		THE CASAS [®] provides a measure of a participant's English language skills in reading and listening.
Circle of Security Parenting Survey	Jackson, B. (2014) Unpublished	This survey completed by parents evaluates three areas including parenting strategies, parent-child relationships, and parenting stress. It is based on a 5 point Likert scale.
Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA), Second Edition	LeBuffe, P. & Naglieri, J. (2012).	The DECA assesses young children's social-emotional protective factors, specifically evaluating, initiative, attachment, behavior concerns, and self-control.
FRIENDS Protective Factors Survey (PFS)	FRIENDS National Resource Center for Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (2011)	The PFS is a broad measure of family well-being that examines five factors including: family resiliency, social supports, concrete supports, child development knowledge and nurturing and attachment. It is scored on a 7 point Likert scale.
Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement – 3 rd Edition (KTEA-3)	Kaufman, A.S. & Kaufman, N.L. (2014)	The KTEA-3 measure academic skills for ages 4 to 25 years.
Minnesota Executive Function Scale (MEFS)	Carlson, S.M. & Zelazo, P. (2014)	The MEFS is a digital assessment measuring student's broad executive function skills.
Parenting Children and Adolescents Scale (PARCA)	Hair, E., Anderson, K., Garrett, S., Kinukawa, A., Lippman, I., & Michelson, E. 2005	This is a parent completed assessment that evaluates three areas including: supporting good behavior, setting limits and being proactive in their parenting. It is based on a 7 point Likert scale.
Parenting Stress Scale (PSS)	Berry and Jones (1995) Unpublished	The PSS is completed by the parent to assess parental stress. It is based on a 5 point Likert scale with higher scores reflecting greater stress.
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-IV	Dunn, L. M., & Dunn, D. M. 2007 Pearson	A measure of receptive vocabulary.

Tool	Author	Purpose
Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire	Goodman et al., 2000	The SDQ is 25 item parent assessment on a child's behavioral strengths and difficulties.

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BUFFETT EARLY CHILDHOOD INSTITUTE

Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan Evaluation: 2020-21

SIXTH YEAR REPORT



Buffett
Early Childhood
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at the University of Nebraska



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Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan Evaluation: 2020-21

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Executive Summary

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan is focused on reducing opportunity and achievement gaps based on systemic and structural inequities for children from birth through Grade 3 in the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties. The plan was developed in response to legislation (LB 585) passed by the Nebraska Legislature in 2013 that directed the Learning Community Coordinating Council to enact an early childhood program created by the metro Omaha superintendents for young children living in neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty. The plan is financed by a half-cent levy, resulting in annual funding of approximately \$2.9 million to be used for this purpose, as well as funds contributed by the Buffett Early Childhood Institute and several foundations.

In 2013, the superintendents of the 11 school districts in Douglas and Sarpy Counties invited the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska to partner with them to prepare a plan for their review and, after approval by the Learning Community Council, to facilitate the plan's implementation. The plan was adopted unanimously by the 11 superintendents in June 2014 and approved by the Learning Community Council in August 2014. In-depth planning and initial implementation in the districts occurred throughout 2014–2015. Implementation of plan components was launched in summer 2015 and continues.

The goal of the Superintendents' Plan is to reduce or eliminate social, learning, and opportunity gaps among young children living in neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty that are impacted by systemic and structural inequities. Translating research into practice, the plan provides for a comprehensive systems approach that transforms learning opportunities for children placed at risk for school failure by the end of Grade 3. Because of its systemic perspective, the plan is intended to elevate the capacity of the Omaha metro school districts to serve all young children well, not just those living in neighborhoods that are impacted by high concentrations of poverty.

The Superintendents' Plan engages in three levels of implementation through which school districts, elementary schools, and community-based professionals can strengthen efforts targeted at increasing educational opportunity and reducing achievement gaps among young children.

1. School as Hub for Birth Through Grade 3 (Full Implementation) is an approach in which elementary schools serve as a connector to build pathways of continuous, high-quality, and equitable learning experiences for children starting at birth and extending through Grade 3. Strong links between school, home, and community allow for new opportunities for family engagement and provide access to supportive services and

resources as they navigate their children's learning experiences. A shared goal is the prevention and reduction of disparities in opportunity and achievement.

2. Customized Assistance offers school districts technical assistance and consultation tailored to specific needs in birth through Grade 3 policies and programming. As previous district partnerships had ended and no new ones were initiated due to COVID-19 and distance learning, school districts and the Institute did not engage in Customized Assistance in the 2020–2021 school year.
3. Professional Development for All provides a connected series of professional development institutes open to all school and community-based program leaders, teachers, and early childhood professionals who work with children from birth through Grade 3, and parents in the Omaha metro area. PD for All introduces leading-edge research and innovative practices while promoting collaborative connections and shared commitments to strong early learning and family support systems. In the 2020–2021 school year, sessions addressed issues requested by School as Hub teachers, including technology, educational opportunity, and equitable interactions in the classroom.

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan entered its sixth year of implementation and evaluation across six school districts in the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties in the fall of 2020. During this year, the evaluation continued to assess school-level change, program quality, family processes, and child learning and development with a focus on program quality and child development and learning. However, this year was unlike any other in the history of Omaha metropolitan schools and the Superintendents' Plan. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic led districts to close many school buildings through the end of the academic year and transition to distance learning strategies and suspend year-end assessments. Some schools maintained distance learning strategies through the fall of 2020 while others returned to in-person learning. Families were engaged in home visiting that was virtual, rather than in person. These changes affected schooling for children, families, and teachers, and impacted the Superintendents' Plan implementation and evaluation. Throughout this report, details are provided regarding modifications in programming and how evaluation captured learning in the face of program adaptations.

For the 2020–2021 year, evaluation activities were intended to address the following questions:

What has been learned about the processes and outcomes related to program quality, family processes, and child learning and development?

- Are family supports and classroom practices related to program quality improving?
- Do family interaction processes reflect support and engagement?

- How are children in full implementation schools learning and developing?
- How are schools implementing School as Hub?
- How have perspectives among the leaders and practitioners changed over time?

Various methods were used in the current evaluation approach, including observations in family homes, direct child assessments, and family surveys. Principals, school staff, and educational facilitators were interviewed about how their work supported school connections with families and communities. In all evaluation processes, efforts were made to understand how schools and families engaged in creating contexts that support children's learning and development and how schools can be supported in leading that engagement. Evaluation to address these questions was incomplete due to disruptions in programs and assessments as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings concerning the processes and outcomes related to program quality, family processes, and child learning and development that could be examined are highlighted below.

Are family supports and classroom practices related to program quality improving?

- ***Home visiting and personal visit*** participation remained stable. While implementing home visiting can be challenging for schools, efforts to engage families are increasing. This year, many of the visits took place virtually to accommodate for the pandemic.

Do family interaction processes reflect support and engagement?

- ***Family engagement***, as connected to interaction with the home visitor and measured via the HOVRS, was rated in the "good" range of engagement in both the fall and spring.
- ***Parent-child interaction***, as assessed by the KIPS assessment tool, reflected that most parents involved in the home visiting evaluation were interacting with children in ways that supported early learning.
- ***Family perceptions of school engagement***, assessed using an adapted version of the FES, reflected relatively high family perceptions of engagement with schools, though families' assessment of school engagement decreased during the pandemic. Future efforts aim to increase the number of families who provide feedback using the survey.
- ***Perspectives of home visiting and family facilitation services*** were evaluated by family interviews. Findings showed that parents were positive about home visiting and services to the family.

How are children in full implementation schools learning and developing?

- ***Development and learning from birth–3 years*** were assessed using a screening tool completed by parents. The majority of children enrolled in home visiting were developing typically, according to parents.

- ***Academic achievement in Kindergarten through Grade 3*** was assessed using school-based achievement assessments in fall, winter, and spring. On average, children's reading and mathematics achievement status were slightly below the expected levels and varied by family and child demographics related to income, race, and ethnicity.
- ***Executive functioning in PreK–Grade 3*** was evaluated using a standardized assessment. Children's executive function scores were in the average range.

How are schools implementing School as Hub?

- ***Home visiting and family facilitation*** support child and parent learning, as well as family values and goals.
- ***Children's educational transitions*** are supported by communication between families and home visitors/family facilitators as well as schools.
- ***Educational facilitators*** fulfilled various roles in the full implementation schools including instructional coach, equity coach, professional development facilitator, thought partner, data utilization partner, and classroom visitor. Some of the most frequently reported interactions between educational facilitators and teachers included grade-level meetings, student support and consultation, and professional development opportunities.
- ***Schools are continuing to advance School as Hub principles (quality, continuity, and equity)***. Quality is enhanced by coaching and professional learning provided by educational facilitators. School leaders also focused on strengthening and building relationships with families and parents (including those with younger children) to address continuity. *Courageous Conversations* (Singleton, 2021), as a field guide, helped bring an equity lens to practices and policies.

How have perspectives among the leaders and practitioners changed over time?

- ***Influencing the perspectives*** of school systems is complex and labor intensive and made more complex and difficult in the context of an unprecedented pandemic. As the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan enters its seventh year, program and school staff have learned to identify essential elements of school systems change. Schools and districts are engaging families and communities with children birth through Grade 3 with varying intensity across schools and districts. Evaluation efforts are capturing how efforts are implemented and how they manifest in program quality and family engagement.

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan: Overview

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan offers an innovative, comprehensive approach to reducing gaps based on inequitable opportunities for children from birth through Grade 3 in the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties. The plan was developed in response to legislation (LB 585) passed by the Nebraska Legislature in 2013 that directed the Learning Community Coordinating Council to enact an early childhood program created by the metro Omaha superintendents for young children living in neighborhoods impacted by high concentrations of poverty. The plan is financed by a half-cent levy, resulting in annual funding of approximately \$2.9 million to be used for this purpose.

In 2013, the superintendents of the 11 school districts in Douglas and Sarpy Counties invited the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska to partner with them to prepare a plan for their review and, after approval by the Learning Community Council, to facilitate the plan's implementation. The plan was adopted unanimously by the 11 superintendents in June 2014 and approved by the Learning Community Council in August 2014. In-depth planning and initial implementation within the districts occurred throughout 2014–2015. Full implementation of the plan was initiated in summer 2015 and continues.

Translating research into practice, the plan uses a comprehensive systems approach that is grounded in the understanding that local elementary schools can serve as community hubs that connect young children, birth to Grade 3, and their families to a pathway of continuous, high-quality, and equitable learning experiences. This systemic and community-based approach, known as the School as Hub Birth–Grade 3 Approach, is intended to elevate the capacity of the Omaha metro school districts to serve all young children well, not just those who are at risk of school failure because they live in neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty.

THE SCHOOL AS HUB BIRTH–GRADE 3 FRAMEWORK

School as Hub for Birth–Grade 3 is a leading-edge approach in which strong links between school, home, and community open new opportunities to engage with families and help them access supports and resources as they navigate their children's learning experiences.

According to the tenets of change for School as Hub, quality, continuity, and equity for children are the lens through which practices and policies are shaped and evaluated at all levels of educational systems, including classrooms, elementary schools, districts,

and communities. Only by addressing all levels of the system can this approach be effective in reducing or eliminating disparities in opportunity and achievement based on systemic and structural inequities.

Quality refers to the commitment to implement practices with families, children, and educators that are evidence-based, produce positive developmental and educational outcomes, and are informed by continuous improvement (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016).

Continuity refers to the commitment to provide children with seamless learning and educational experiences from birth through Grade 3. Continuity and seamless transitions across the full birth through Grade 3 continuum promote stability and long-term educational success for children (Stipek et al., 2017; Takahashi, 2016).

Equity refers to the commitment that every child receives what is needed to succeed in school and life (Blankenstein & Noguera, 2016). An explicit focus on equity throughout School as Hub practices and policies provides an essential catalyst for progress toward the goal of preventing and eliminating disparities in opportunity and achievement based on systemic and structural inequities by starting early.

An essential feature of the School as Hub approach is a guiding integrated framework that combines educational experiences for children with opportunities for family engagement and parenting support. The School as Hub framework identifies three essential dimensions, requiring schools to (1) implement a continuum of birth through Grade 3 practices, (2) strengthen organizational environments, and (3) build professional capacity. These dimensions highlight School as Hub as a systems approach through which multiple components work together interactively (Table 1). While changes in practices to enhance child and family supports are at the forefront, school organizational environments and professional capacity are equally influential dimensions that must be intentionally cultivated as part of the transformation from traditional elementary school to School as Hub for Birth–Grade 3 (Fullan, 2010; Sebring et al., 2006).

The Superintendents' Plan addresses each dimension of the School as Hub approach and related components through three interrelated levels of programming, as described in the following section.

TABLE 1. | SCHOOL AS HUB FOR BIRTH-GRADE 3 FRAMEWORK

DIMENSIONS		
Implement Birth–Grade 3 Continuum of Practices	Strengthen Organizational Environments	Build Professional Capacity
COMPONENTS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child-Centered Teaching and Learning Child-Centered Parenting and Learning Cross-Cutting Practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culture and Climate Family-School Partnerships Community-School Connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership Professional Learning Collaboration

THREE INTERRELATED LEVELS OF PROGRAMMING

The Superintendents’ Plan provides three interrelated levels of programming through which school districts, elementary schools, and community-based professionals can strengthen efforts targeted at increasing educational opportunity and reducing achievement gaps among young children. A shared goal across all three levels is the prevention and reduction of disparities in opportunity and achievement based on systemic and structural inequities.

Level 1: Full Implementation of the School as Hub for Birth–Grade 3 Approach in Selected Schools

The Superintendents’ Plan engages 10 elementary schools across six districts in Level 1 programming, Full Implementation of the School as Hub for Birth–Grade 3 Approach. This is the most comprehensive level of programming, and it addresses all dimensions and components of the School as Hub framework within specific school contexts. It is designed to support schools in becoming hubs that connect young children and their families with high-quality, comprehensive, and continuous early childhood education and services across the birth through Grade 3 continuum. Educators, families, and communities work together in the full implementation schools to attain new levels of excellence in children’s early learning experiences, from birth through Grade 3. In most of these schools, more than half of the students enrolled are eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch. Several of these schools also serve student populations that are predominately composed of students of color. Table 2 describes the characteristics of the children enrolled in the full implementation districts and schools.

TABLE 2. | SCHOOL AND DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS: FULL IMPLEMENTATION SCHOOLS 2020–2021

District and Schools	2020–2021 Student Enrollment	2020–2021 % Free/Reduced Lunch	2020–2021 % Students of Color	2020–2021 % English Language Learners
Bellevue	9,386	42%	34%	3%
Belleaire	272	71%	48%	12%
DC West	985	35%	13%	*
DC West	468	35%	11%	*
Millard	23,633	24%	25%	3%
Cody	310	51%	40%	*
Sandoz	355	45%	42%	15%
Omaha	51,914	78%	76%	19%
Gomez Heritage	773	87%	94%	55%
Liberty	663	89%	91%	53%
Mount View	327	89%	90%	20%
Pinewood	208	78%	82%	28%
Ralston	3,210	61%	51%	12%
Mockingbird	363	75%	74%	25%
Westside	6,091	38%	31%	3%
Westbrook	524	65%	46%	6%
Total school enrollment	4,263			
Total district enrollment	95,219			

*This table masks or hides data for groups with fewer than 10 students to protect confidential information about individual students as required by federal law.

Program Staff

The Level 1 programming is designed to bring about significant shifts in how “schools do school” over time. Principals, teachers, school staff, children, and families participate in the program. In addition to principals and teachers, school staff include a home visitor and family facilitator employed by each school (and funded by the levy associated with LB 585) to provide early parenting supports and promote family-school-community partnerships. Educational facilitators, employed by the Buffett Institute, work with principals and teachers to promote an aligned approach to Kindergarten through Grade 3 curriculum.

Program Components

The Level 1 programming includes three integrated components:

- **Home visiting for children birth to age 3.** In this component, a home visitor who is employed at the local school conducts three one-hour visits per month with each participating family in the given school. Visits are conducted throughout the school year and summer months.
- **Family facilitation in the context of transitions to high-quality preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds.** As children age out of home visiting when they are 3 years old, a family facilitator who is employed at the local school continues to perform personal visits with participating families once per month to provide continuity of educational experiences for children until they enter school-based PreK or Kindergarten.
- **Aligned Kindergarten through Grade 3 educational experiences for 5- through 8-year-olds.** As children complete preschool, they transition into a coordinated and rigorous Kindergarten through Grade 3 educational continuum. Educational facilitators who are employed at the Buffett Institute work with principals and classroom teachers in the full implementation schools to support academic instruction in PreK–Grade 3 classrooms. In this way, children’s early elementary education builds upon their preschool experiences to promote academic, intellectual, and social-emotional competence. Strong home-school partnerships and family support continue to be combined with a high-quality, rigorous educational approach. A hallmark of the approach to early elementary education is a focus on child development.

Level 2: Customized Assistance to Districts

Level 2 programming, Customized Assistance to Districts, is intended to strengthen organizational environments and build professional capacity within school districts. It is provided to districts in the Learning Community that request technical assistance and consultation tailored to specific needs in birth through Grade 3 policies and programming. Technical assistance provides school districts with access to state and national consultation as they engage in strategic planning and improvement efforts that will impact districtwide early childhood education and services.

Level 3: Professional Development for All

Level 3 programming, Professional Development (PD) for All, builds professional capacity by providing a connected series of professional development institutes open to all school and community-based program leaders, teachers, and early childhood professionals who work with children from birth through Grade 3, and parents in the Omaha metro area. PD for All introduces leading-edge research and innovative practices while promoting collaborative connections and shared commitments to strong early learning and family support systems.

PROGRAMMING ADAPTATIONS IN 2020–2021: RESPONDING TO THE PANDEMIC AND RACIAL INEQUITY

When schools were closed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, program staff worked closely with partners in Omaha-area schools and communities to adapt programming and services to meet the needs of children and families. As the pandemic continued into 2020–2021, collaborative efforts continued to provide support based on the needs of each school and community. The pandemic exposed and exacerbated existing disparities that disproportionately affect people of color in the School as Hub neighborhoods—such as disparities in access to health care, child care, and internet connectivity. Furthermore, the stressors of the pandemic were compounded in 2020–2021, especially for people of color, by the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and similar incidents, which highlighted longstanding issues of racial inequity and led to public protests, both locally and nationally. As schools and communities grappled with these issues, program staff collaborated with school and community partners to adapt programming to meet emerging needs in each school, with a focus on maintaining safety while simultaneously promoting quality, continuity, and equity. Notable adaptations and innovations are summarized below.

Adaptations in Level 1 Programming

Schools adopted various virtual and in-person learning strategies. In 2020–2021, the 10 schools engaged in full implementation of the School as Hub approach used varied strategies for responding to the needs of schools in the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the school districts in Douglas and Sarpy Counties offered full-time in-person learning for students, while also offering a virtual learning option. The largest district, Omaha Public Schools (OPS), started the year with fully virtual learning for all students, then switched to a “family 3-2 model” in which students had the option to attend school in person on alternating weekdays. In the spring, OPS switched from the family 3-2 model to a full-time in-person learning option, while continuing to offer the fully virtual learning option.

Home visitors and family facilitators helped identify and support basic needs. In keeping with the School as Hub approach, home visitors and family facilitators were quick to identify families who needed additional support to meet basic needs during the pandemic, including those facing food insecurity, loss of child care, unemployment, and other stressors. Although personal visits were limited due to the pandemic, home visitors and family facilitators stayed connected with enrolled families via phone calls, text messaging, and video conferencing to help support the individual needs of each family in the program. In some schools, especially those with a high percentage of students of color, issues related to poor internet connectivity made it more difficult to connect with and support enrolled families. The home visitors and family facilitators worked together to identify solutions to these issues.

Program staff adopted virtual delivery strategies for program implementation and professional development. In summer 2020, program staff developed new strategies for conducting home visiting and family facilitation sessions online, allowing personal visits with children and families to continue safely throughout 2020–2021, despite the pandemic. Similarly, the Buffett Institute’s School as Hub program staff and family engagement specialists used virtual tools to deliver professional development. Program staff also conducted regular virtual meetings to discuss emerging needs and solutions throughout the year.

Program staff provided technical and professional development resources to support virtual learning. Teachers and families experienced many challenges associated with the shift to virtual learning and virtual interactions. For example, some families and child care providers had difficulty reliably accessing virtual learning resources and technologies because of a shortage of appropriate devices or issues with internet connectivity. Program staff sought to address these needs by helping ensure families and child care facilities had access to the devices and connectivity they needed to participate in virtual learning and program activities. In addition, program staff assisted schools in distributing books and curriculum to virtual learners. Program staff also provided professional development resources and support regarding best practices for supporting virtual learners, based on child development guidelines. This included information on supporting learners’ academic development, as well as their social-emotional learning.

Program staff increased professional development support related to issues of inequity. Program staff worked with the school-based home visitors and family facilitators to increase professional development support related to issues of inequity. This included increasing Community of Practice meetings from once to twice a month and increasing one-on-one coaching sessions with each home visitor and family facilitator. These meetings and conversations focused on sharing resources, strategies, and ideas about how to provide equitable and culturally responsive support for all children and families.

Adaptations in Level 2 Programming

Customized Assistance contracts with school districts were completed in the 2019–2020 school year. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, school districts and the Institute did not participate in Customized Assistance in the 2020–2021 school year.

Adaptations in Level 3 Programming

From the beginning of the Superintendents’ Early Childhood Plan, PD for All has offered a series of in-person events to engage educators in learning around exemplary

practices and pedagogy for young children. The COVID-19 pandemic prompted new, innovative professional learning structures because the in-person events of the past were not an option due to health and safety concerns. In response to these challenges, the Buffett Institute and partners shifted programming. Timely, relevant, and engaging learning opportunities for early childhood professionals were developed and facilitated through two online webinar series during the 2020–2021 school year.

EVALUATING THE SCHOOL AS HUB FOR BIRTH–GRADE 3 APPROACH

The Superintendents’ Early Childhood Plan Evaluation aims to capture the degree to which the School as Hub for Birth–Grade 3 framework is being implemented and observed across a range of districts and schools. The evaluation was designed to document, measure, and support implementation of the Superintendents’ Plan, and to provide information about shifts in practices and progress in school systems, family processes and engagement, and child learning and development. Findings from the evaluation are also used to improve programming over time.

In 2020–2021, some of the evaluation methods were adapted to align with the adaptations in programming necessitated by the pandemic. In addition, new qualitative efforts were implemented to help researchers and program staff better understand the impact of Level 1 programming on participating families and school staff. Key changes in the evaluation approach are summarized below.

For the most part, measures used to evaluate programming were the same as those used in previous years, with the following exceptions:

- **The CLASS observational tool was not used in 2020–2021.** In past years, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) observational tool was used to assess the quality of classroom practices. The CLASS tool is designed to be used with in-person instruction. Because of the varied instructional strategies used by schools during the pandemic, including periods of remote instruction, the CLASS tool was not used in 2020–2021. Questions related to classroom practices, therefore, are not fully answered in this year’s report.
- **Qualitative studies elevated parents’ voices¹ and investigated the role of instructional supports.** In the 2020–2021 school year, Buffett Early Childhood Institute researchers engaged in two studies to (1) elevate parents’ voices in their experiences of home visiting and family facilitation (family interviews) and (2) investigate the role of the instructional supports from the vantage point of the instructional leaders, teachers, and educational facilitators in full implementation schools (instructional support interviews). These qualitative studies provided an

¹The term “parent” is used in this report to refer to the person (e.g., parent, grandparent, guardian) who served as the primary contact and participant in the evaluation.

opportunity to examine the processes involved in implementing the School as Hub approach. By considering perspectives of individuals involved and examining how various systems—schools, families, and communities—were engaged in effecting change, we are learning more about how enhancements to quality, continuity, and equity are being supported.

The following sections provide more information about the evaluation methods and summarize findings for each level and component of programming.

Full Implementation of the School as Hub for Birth–Grade 3 Approach

EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND METHODS

For 2020–2021, evaluation for Level 1 programming addressed the following questions:

What has been learned about the processes and outcomes related to program quality, family processes, instructional supports, and child development and learning?

- Are family supports and classroom practices related to program quality improving?
- Do family interaction processes reflect support and engagement?
- How are schools implementing School as Hub? How are children in full implementation schools learning and developing?

The quality of home visiting and family facilitation was assessed using video observations of virtual visits. Family process assessments included observations of parent-child interactions and a survey to assess aspects of family engagement. Families were interviewed about their experiences with home visiting and family facilitation, providing feedback regarding program quality and family processes.

The quality of instructional supports provided to the 10 School as Hub schools was assessed using a teacher survey and interviews with educational facilitators, principals, teachers, and program administrators. The survey and interview questions were aligned with the School as Hub principles (quality, continuity, equity).

Child development and learning outcomes were assessed with standardized measures of educational achievement and executive function. The measures chosen were either currently being utilized by the schools or could be implemented with all children in the same manner as the current school-based measures so that data could be used for multiple purposes. Data sharing agreements were negotiated with participating districts to facilitate the use of school-based data.

General methods by child age group are described below. Specific methods for evaluating program quality, family processes, instructional supports, and child learning and development are described in the following sections.

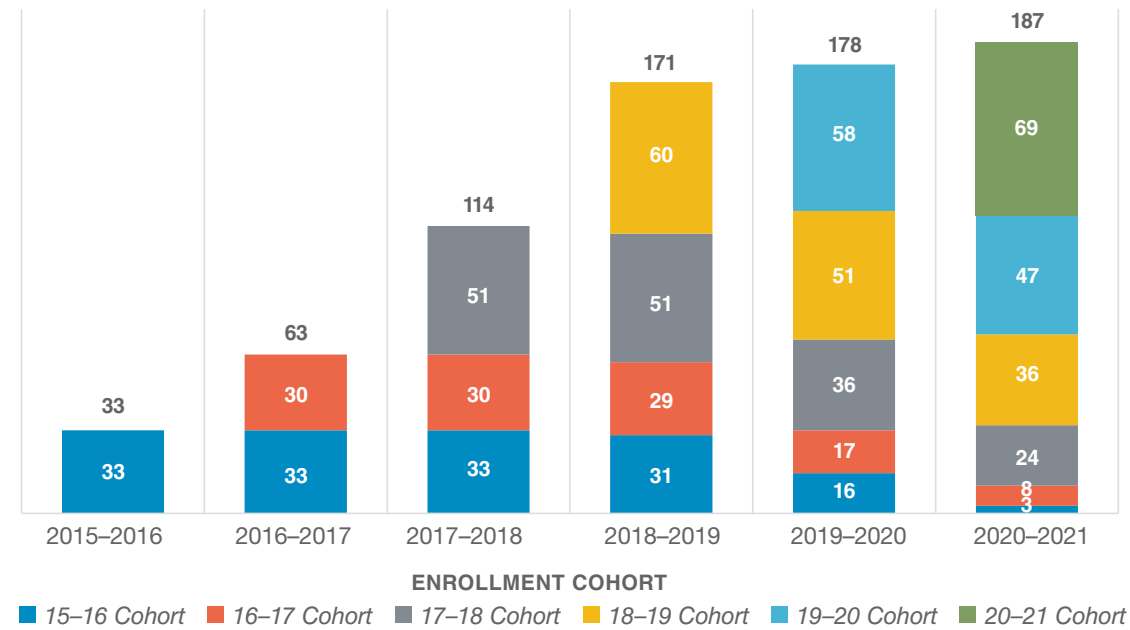
Birth–Age 5. Families of children under 5 years who were enrolled in either home visiting (birth–3 years) and/or in family facilitation (3–5 years) who consented to participate in the evaluation are represented in these results. Families completed developmental screening and home visiting observations that included home visitor interaction quality and parent-child interaction.

PreK–Grade 3. Evaluation staff used school-based child assessments, direct child assessments, video observations of classroom practices, and a family survey. All children in PreK through Grade 3 were enrolled in the evaluation. This process resulted in 2,799 PreK through Grade 3 children, across 10 full implementation schools, participating in the evaluation.

Following Children From Previous Cohort Design

Children included in the original design and any additional children for each of the following years continue to participate in the evaluation. Children from all the cohorts will be followed through Grade 3. For children enrolled in birth–age 5 programming (e.g., home visiting and personal visits), future evaluation will consider the number of years children were enrolled in programming and participation in School as Hub components. This will be particularly valuable as we consider children in the original birth to age 3 cohort who experience multiple years of home visiting (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1. | HOME VISITING ENROLLMENT NUMBERS BY ENROLLMENT COHORT



Note: Children are generally enrolled at birth and begin to age out of the program at age 3.

Data Analytic Approach

Descriptive and inferential data analytic approaches were used to address the evaluation questions. Statistical analyses were conducted to test for differences across time points and groups, when possible.

Family Interviews

To better understand and elevate the perspectives of families, interviews were conducted with family members participating in home visiting or family facilitation services in seven of the full implementation schools. Interviews sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are families' experiences with home visiting and family facilitation?
2. How does home visiting and family facilitation support parenting practices?
3. In what ways is home visiting and family facilitation culturally responsive?
4. How do families experience educational transitions through home visiting and family facilitation?
5. How are families experiencing engagement with their school via home visiting or family facilitation?

Families enrolled in evaluation of home visiting or family facilitation for at least one year were selected to participate in interviews based on school affiliation, race, and ethnicity, to provide a breadth of perspectives across demographics, districts, and schools. Interviews were conducted in April and May of 2021 via Zoom and WhatsApp virtual platforms due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants, all mothers, gave verbal consent and received a \$25 gift card for 30 minutes to one hour of their time. Of the seven interviews, five were conducted in Spanish and two in English.

INTRODUCTION TO EVALUATION OF LEVEL 1 PROGRAMMING

The evaluation of Level 1, Full Implementation of the School as Hub Birth–Grade 3 Approach, includes evaluation of the following program components and related outcomes:

- Program quality in home visiting and family facilitation
- Family processes
- Instructional supports
- Child development and learning
- Social-emotional and executive function development

Evaluation methods and findings for each of these areas are presented in the following sections. Findings from the family interviews are integrated into the sections on program quality and family processes.

Program Quality: Home Visiting and Family Facilitation, Birth–Age 5

School-based, voluntary home visiting is a key program component for the School as Hub approach. Consistent, high-quality home visiting in the early years has been shown to improve children’s outcomes over time by: (1) increasing parents’ capacity to support their child’s learning and development (Caldera et al., 2007) and (2) enhancing families’ relationships and engagement with their child’s school (Wessels, 2013). The home visiting program includes three one-hour visits per month with each participating family throughout the school year and summer months. As children age out of home visiting when they are 3 years old, family facilitators continue to conduct personal visits with most families once per month to provide continuity of educational experiences for children until they enter school-based PreK or Kindergarten.

In previous years, recruitment of families into home visiting typically took place at social school events. Because of the pandemic, these types of events were canceled in 2020–2021, so classroom teachers were called upon to recruit and reach out to families as they interacted with families online. In addition to classroom teachers, general staff within the school helped identify families requesting and/or displaying signs of needing support. When home visitors enrolled families in the program, they invited them to participate in the evaluation. Evaluation activities in the 2020–2021 year focused on the process of home visitation and parent-child interaction. A typical home visit was recorded for each family, lasting approximately 60 minutes in length, twice a year.

In the 2020–2021 academic year, 146 children from 108 families received home visiting services from their school. Of these children, 123 participated in the evaluation (Table 3).

TABLE 3. | CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ENROLLED IN HOME VISITING

Full Implementation School	Families enrolled in home visiting (birth–age 3)	Families who consented to participate in the evaluation	Children enrolled in home visiting (birth–age 3)	Children enrolled in home visiting with families consented to the evaluation
Belleaire	10	10	12	11
Cody	8	5	12	6
DC West	13	13	14	14
Gomez Heritage	7	6	8	8
Liberty	13	11	21	14
Mockingbird	12	12	18	16
Mount View	10	7	13	8
Pinewood	11	9	16	14
Sandoz	15	15	19	19
Westbrook	9	9	13	13
Totals	108	97	146	123

When a child turns 3, families face an important decision about which pathway they will choose for their child’s preschool experience. Families enrolled in home visiting informed the home visitor and family facilitator of their child’s pathway by the time the child turned 3—stating whether the child would be enrolling in school-based PreK or Head Start, community child care, or staying at home with family, friend, or neighbor. Parents who chose the pathway of community child care or staying at home with family, friend, or neighbor continued receiving personal visits with the family facilitator once a month. As of May 31, 2021, 50 children turned 3 years old and transitioned from traditional home visiting into one of the pathways. Of this group, 15 children were accepted into school-based PreK or Head Start classrooms and transitioned out of the program, and 24 children stayed home and continued in the program. The remaining 11 children had other reasons listed for transitioning out of the program.

School-based home visitors and family facilitators implemented the Growing Great Kids (GGK) curriculum (Elliot, Flanagan, Belza, & Dew, 2012), which focuses on understanding family assets, building secure attachments, and cultivating resilience. All through the pandemic, Growing Great Kids offered support to their users on how to implement the curriculum virtually. These additional resources were helpful to home visitors and family facilitators. Using the curriculum, home visitors engaged and empowered parents in their role as educators of their children, while family facilitators helped to ensure a smooth transition by developing a reciprocal partnership with those families who continued with personal visits.

HOME VISITORS AND FAMILY FACILITATORS CONDUCT QUALITY VISITS

For professional development and coaching purposes, the Home Visiting Rating Scales (HOVRS; Roggman et al., 2017) were used to assess the quality of home and personal visits. Because of the pandemic, some visits were completed virtually, while others were completed at home or at school during the 2020–2021 academic year (Table 4). Visits in all formats were video recorded for observation.

TABLE 4. | HOME VISIT FORMAT

	Virtual	In-Home	In-School
Fall 2020	72%	18%	10%
Spring 2021	62%	19%	19%

The HOVRS assessment includes a videotaped observation containing two subscales: Home Visiting Practices and Family Engagement. Individual items are scored using anchors that indicate the quality of the interaction (1=*needs training*, 3=*adequate*, 5=*good*, 7=*excellent*), and each scale is assigned an overall score (1–7). Home Visiting Practices refers to the home visitor’s responsiveness, relationship with the family, facilitation of

parent-child interactions, and non-intrusiveness and collaboration. Family Engagement refers to how the home visitor supports developmentally appropriate parent-child interactions (see section on Family Processes).

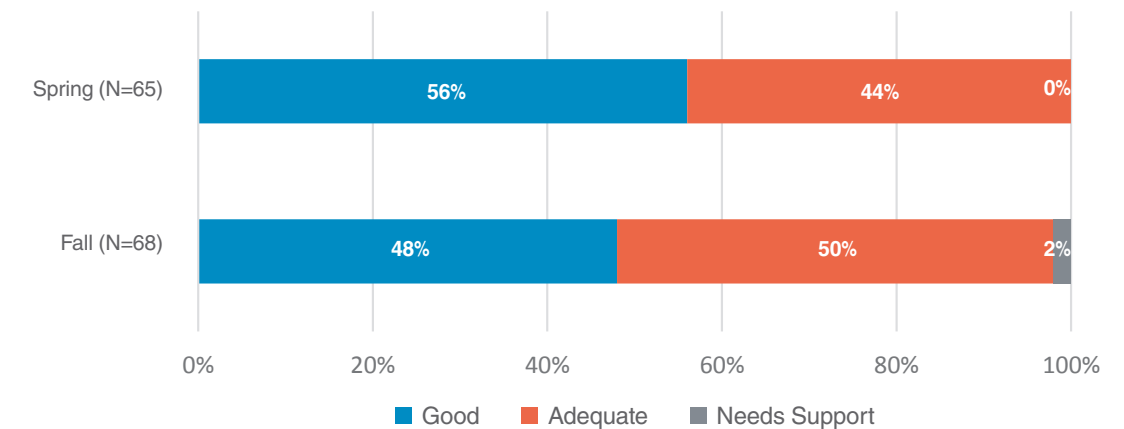
Home visit and personal visit quality were evaluated twice per year. Families were invited to participate in the evaluation process upon enrollment into home visitation. The evaluation process consists of recording a visit for use of the HOVRS measure and recording a parent-child interaction to document the growth of parents with their child and for child assessment as the child turns 3. Families received \$50 gift cards each time they participated in one of the evaluation activities. These confidential recordings are uploaded via secure school servers into protected online research folders. An external evaluation team scores the quality of the visit and shares reports with the home visitors, family facilitators, and program team to support ongoing professional learning.

HOVRS coders participate in a rigorous training and reliability process. Coders must achieve 85% reliability and submit to ongoing reliability checks on every fifth video to continue coding. Individualized reports are shared with the program staff for professional development and self-assessment purposes. Compilations of these data are utilized for evaluation aims. Recorded observations were evaluated from eight home visitors and five family facilitators in the fall and nine home visitors and five family facilitators in the spring. Eight home visitors and four family facilitators were consistent from fall to spring, with one home visitor and one family facilitator collecting only spring data. In the fall, 68 observations were completed, including 52 by home visitors and 16 by family facilitators. In spring 2021, 65 observations were completed, including 47 by home visitors and 18 by family facilitators.

The Home Visiting Practices was used to assess home visitors based on four subscales, each of which is assigned a rating of 1 to 7. The scales include responsiveness to family, relationship with family, facilitation of parent-child interactions, and non-intrusiveness and collaboration. The four subscale scores are summed to provide the summary score. In the fall and again in the spring, most summary mean scale scores were within the “adequate” range (11–18). The mean home visit practice quality summary score was 16.7 (range 10–23) at the fall data collection and remained consistent in the spring with a mean score of 17.0 (range 10–23). Scores for the individual item relationship with the family, a foundational element for building trust in the context of home visiting, were positively rated in the “good” range at 5.5 in the fall and 5.3 in the spring. These scores remained consistent irrespective of visit format (virtual, in-school, in-home). In considering overall home visit quality, including Home Visiting Practices and Family Engagement, more visitors were conducting “good” quality visits during the spring data collection round with no visits rated as “needing support,” indicating that high-quality

services persisted and even improved despite the challenges of the pandemic (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2. | OVERALL HOME VISIT QUALITY



FAMILIES REPORT POSITIVE EXPERIENCES WITH HOME VISITING AND FAMILY FACILITATION

In family interviews, parents described their experiences participating in the home visiting and family facilitation programs. Subthemes that emerged from their responses included how parents were referred to the program, challenges they encountered during the program, and the reasons their family stays in the program. These subthemes answer the research question “What are parents’ experiences with home visiting and family facilitation services?”

Referral process based on promoting positive development and learning. Several parents discussed how they entered home visiting and family facilitation. Overall, there were many differences in families’ expressions of the referral process. Two families expressed having an older child in special education services and being asked if they would like home visiting or family facilitation for their younger child, while one mother mentioned she was approached by a home visitor when she was pregnant and dropping off her nephews at school. A fourth discussed how she was referred:

“I went to a conference at the school for my daughter...I...saw little cards, brochures...because I knew that it was through the school...it was also easy for me because...my daughter is here, and I can also come here for [my other daughter].”

Although there was diversity in the type of referral, all referrals were based in prevention and promoting positive development and learning, rather than in response to a learning or development problem, which is how intervention referrals are typically made.

Challenges in the program related to the pandemic. As with any program that serves families, some challenges were expressed by mothers. Nearly all expressions of challenges centered on around the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, parents referenced the difficulties of needing to attend to other children during a virtual visit or of having their child “stay still and focus” on the home visitor or family facilitator through a computer, without having the tactile stimulation of games or toys that typically accompany in-person visits. One mother described this difficulty of virtual visits:

“It’s different because when the teacher would come here to the house, [my daughter] did focus...with the teacher. Through video call...the kids are present, but not as much.”

In order to protect the physical health and safety of families, home visitors, and family facilitators, virtual visits were needed. However, as this mother describes, there is a trade-off with how much the child is learning directly with the home visitor or family facilitator.

Reasons families continue with home visiting and family facilitation services.

Parents discussed the reasons that keep them in home visitation and family facilitation services. Most of these responses centered on the learning of both the parent and child as well as the enjoyment seen through the child’s interaction with the home visitor or family facilitator. One mother expressed several reasons her family stays in home visiting and family facilitation services:

“I happen to have seen my child grow...I honestly think it has a lot to do with him being in this program...I’m always learning stuff that I can help my kid’s learning...I got a couple of different cousins who are the same age as him, and I can see the difference between the two...I really believe that is because I have this program.”

Positive experiences overall. In summary, parents’ experiences of home visiting and family facilitation were mostly positive with a couple of challenges. Parents described a diversity of ways they were referred, challenges due to virtual services, and staying with the home visiting and family facilitation programs due to enjoyment and learning of both the parent and child.

Family Processes

The Superintendents’ Plan works with schools to address support of families of young children, birth–Grade 3. Schools can support families by helping them connect with other families, school staff, and helpful community resources (Min, Anderson, & Chen, 2017). Research shows that welcoming, embracing, and supporting parents and other caregivers central to children’s lives supports the development of the trusting relationships needed to promote true partnerships with families (Pecaski, McLennan, & Howitt, 2018). Through intentional interactions with every family, such as those taking place in the context of a home visiting relationship or parent-child interaction group, schools can provide information about child development and learning and promote healthy relationships. These trusting relationships often offer families an opportunity to ask questions, express opinions, and learn about school processes. Schools can listen and be responsive to families as a part of this partnership and shift their practices related to partnering with families, communication, school culture, and trust. To learn about family processes, birth to Grade 3, in the full implementation schools, we examined parent-child engagement and interaction, assessed parenting efficacy and social support, and surveyed and interviewed families about their engagement with schools.

HOME VISITING AND FAMILY FACILITATION FOSTER POSITIVE PARENT-CHILD INTERACTION

Connecting families to early education knowledge, other families, and the schools in their communities are the sources of family engagement and a major goal of home visiting in the School as Hub Birth–Grade 3 Approach. The quality of family processes is assessed using the family engagement subscale of the Home Visiting Rating Scales (HOVRS; Roggman et al., 2017). The family engagement scale assesses the degree to which the home visitor or family facilitator supports developmentally appropriate parent-child interactions. Home visitors (Fall N=8; Spring N=9) and family facilitators (Fall N=5; Spring N=5) video recorded their visits with families, and trained evaluators viewed the videos and coded the interactions among parents, children, and the home visitor or family facilitator.

The three family engagement scales—Parent Engagement, Child Engagement, and Parent-Child Interaction—are each rated between a minimum of 1 and maximum of 7 and are summed to get the summary score. In the fall, family engagement subscale scores were within the “good” range of engagement (M=14.3; range 6–21). The family engagement subscale scores increased in the spring with scores maintaining in the “good” range (M=15.0; range 8–19). This is significant given that the majority of visits were conducted virtually (72% in the fall and 62% in the spring), which differed from the in-person format of home and personal visits conducted in previous years.

POSITIVE PARENT-CHILD INTERACTIONS, PARENTING EFFICACY, AND SOCIAL SUPPORT FACILITATE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The parent-child relationship contributes in essential ways to young children's development and learning (Richter, Griesel, & Manegold, 2004). A primary goal of home visiting is to help the parent develop and maintain a positive relationship with their child (Sama-Miller et al., 2017). In the context of the home visit, the home visitor or family facilitator video records the parent and child engaging in play for 10 minutes. Trained coders observed how the parent and child interacted in play and used the Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS; Comfort & Gordon, 2006) to observe how the parent responds to the child in ways that promote trust and acceptance, scaffold child learning, and encourage the child's self-confidence. The 12-item scale is rated on a 5-point scale (1=*rarely*, 3=*usually*, and 5=*consistently*).

In 2020–2021, 139 observations were recorded and rated for 67 families in the fall and 72 families in the spring. Most families participating in home visiting demonstrated moderate to high-quality parent-child interactions in both the fall (M=3.6; range 2.3–4.8) and spring (M=3.7; range 2.4–4.8), suggesting that on average, parents are responsive and supportive of their children's development and learning.

Parents also completed a questionnaire (Healthy Families Parenting Inventory; Krysik & Lecroy, 2012) to assess their perceptions of their interactions with their children, their parenting efficacy, and social support. In the fall, 85 families (59 English, 26 Spanish) responded to the survey; 90 families (60 English, 30 Spanish) completed the assessment in the spring. Subscale score options range from 1 (*rarely or never true*) to 5 (*true almost or most of the time*) on the HFPI. For parent-child interactions, family ratings aligned with the observational ratings of parent-child interactions. Families reported positive relationships with their children in both fall (M=4.4) and spring (M=4.4). Additionally, parents reported high levels of parenting efficacy, including attitudes and practices surrounding the home environment, role satisfaction, and parent/child behavior in the fall (M=4.3; range 2.7–5) and spring (M=4.4; range 2.8–5). Parents also reported that they maintained their social supports, including their problem-solving skills and self-identified capacities to respond to situational difficulties, from fall (M=4.4; range 2.8–5) to spring (M=4.5; range 2.6–5).

The maintenance of quality parent-child interactions and parenting efficacy amidst the pandemic scenario is an important finding and suggests that home visitation activities might promote ongoing growth in parents' interactions (perceived and observed) with their children despite the stress created by the pandemic.

FAMILIES RECEIVED SUPPORT FOR LEARNING FROM HOME VISITORS AND FAMILY FACILITATORS

In family interviews, mothers described how home visiting supports their children's learning, their own learning as a parent, their family values and goals, and access to physical materials for learning.

Supporting children's learning. Mothers shared that their child receives support from the home visitor or family facilitator in assisting with their child's learning. Many of the mothers mentioned that home visiting and family facilitation help prepare their child for a school setting by teaching how to follow directions or listen to the teacher. Nearly all parents described how the home visitor or family facilitator supports the child's learning through activities or games.

"...She sends over a lot of activities [to the house] that [she will] show you...and we can...practice...Even with counting with the cereal...Lucky Charms and pulling out all the marshmallows and [lining] them up and making a graph...counting and seeing which one has the most, which one has the least and knowing the differences..."

Supporting parents' learning. Mothers shared that "...there are a lot of things that as a mom, you don't know," and the home visitor and family facilitator provide advice on how to make learning more fun and engaging, how to react based on their child's developmental level, and ways to support their child's development. Two mothers described receiving advice about how to support their child's emotional development such as "tantrums" by "...understand[ing] why she throws those kinds of tantrums, because she's entering a certain stage..." Another parent talked about how home visiting and family facilitation have helped:

"It's also teaching me different things on how to be a better parent or how to be a better teacher in his life...Not only do I try to encourage him, but she also points out stuff that I'm doing that I don't realize I'm doing, whether it be good or bad...I just feel like it helps us work together. It's helped our family."

Parent and child enjoyment. The pure joy and excitement of home visiting and family facilitation services was evident throughout the interviews, both from the perspective of the parent and the child. Parents expressed feeling joy when their child showed excitement about seeing their home visitor or family facilitator. One mother describes how excited her child was to see his "teacher":

“Sometimes we see [the home visitor/family facilitator] is in the...parking lot, and he tells me, ‘Mommy, can you roll the window down? I want to talk to my teacher...’ That’s what encourages me a lot. That I also see that he’s excited.”

Mothers themselves also expressed enjoyment and appreciation of home visiting and family facilitation themselves. One parent said, “It excites me that people are willing to work with kids more, not just as classes but like on a one-on-one basis, because that’s not always available for people. We’re very fortunate.” It is clear from mothers’ descriptions that the home visitors and family facilitators build relationships to keep interactions fun and engaging.

Supporting family values and goals. Since five out of seven interviews were completed in Spanish, many parents expressed they valued that the home visitor or family facilitator utilizes both English and Spanish for teaching the child such as “the colors she says in English, and the numbers she says in Spanish,” as well as using the parent’s native language to communicate with parents. Many of the mothers were from diverse Latin American countries and the home visitor’s or family facilitator’s ethnic identity did not always match the families’ ethnic identity. Regardless, mothers mentioned that the home visitor or family facilitator encouraged them to celebrate traditions and holidays that were celebrated in their home countries or holidays they wanted to celebrate from U.S. culture, because, as one mother described, “The [home visitor/family facilitator] says if you celebrate more, you have more of a bond with the family.” Another parent expressed the intentionality that the home visitor or family facilitator had in asking questions regarding family values:

“One of the first couple of visits she [asked]...what are some of the things that I value... One thing that I want to see from him, and what do I think is important...for him to learn. So...she was trying to figure out...what was important to me, so...she can teach towards that...I think that was her value in my culture.”

Activities and materials supporting learning. Many parents discussed the significance of the activities that the home visitor or family facilitator does with the child and the physical materials that assist in the child’s learning. One parent described that these materials are “just basic everyday activities that I don’t think of as being learning experiences to help teach him,” which allows the parent to also facilitate learning when the home visitor or family facilitator is not present. One mother mentioned that “[The home visitor/family facilitator] would bring boxes of [activities and games] to show me how to do it myself here at home for [my daughter].” Another mother spoke about a specific physical material the home visitor or family facilitator brought in order to assist with language development:

“She always brings new activities to do. She brings...a book that...[was] for sign language, because she says that since he can’t talk right now, you don’t know...what he wants to ask for. So, she lent me...images of how to use sign language.”

Overall, home visitors and family facilitators support parenting practices by demonstrating ways in which the parent can use everyday activities to assist their child to learn and develop, providing physical materials to assist the child’s learning during the visit and when the home visitor or family visitor is not present, and providing advice on developmental issues. Home visitors and family facilitators are also culturally responsive by listening, asking, and implementing practices related to parents’ values and goals for their family.

ASSESSING FAMILY PERCEPTIONS INFORMS FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

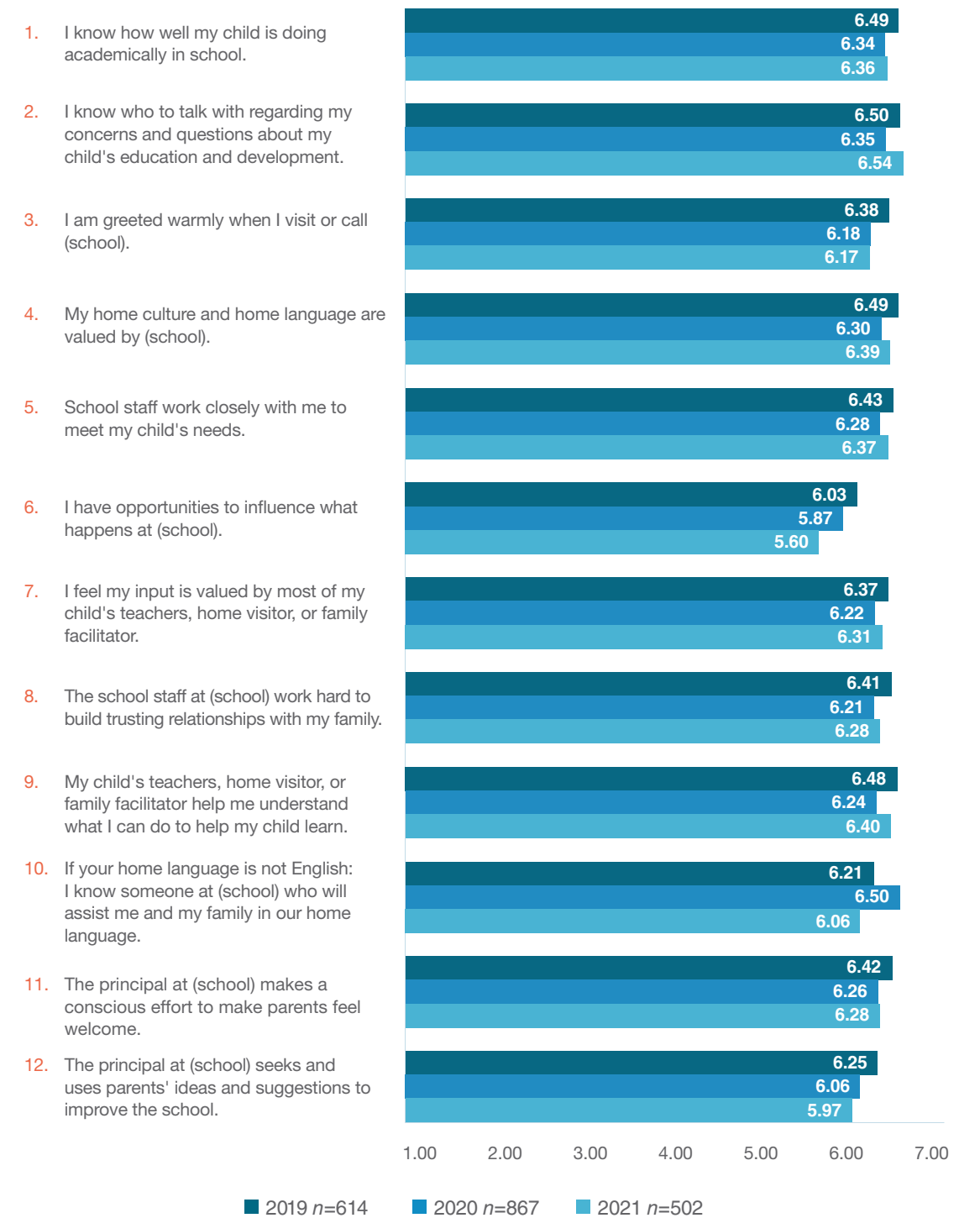
When schools engage meaningfully with families, children demonstrate better educational achievement and social outcomes (Fantuzzo et al., 2004). To support schools’ practices engaging families for quality, continuity, and equity, an adaptation of the Road Map Family Engagement Survey (Ishimaru & Lott, 2015) was used to assess families’ perceptions about collaboration among families, communities, and schools. Twelve items addressed six domains: Parent/Family Knowledge and Confidence, Welcoming and Culturally Responsive School Climate, Parent/Family Influence and Decision-Making, Family-Educator Trust, Family-Educator Communication, and Principal Leadership for Engagement. Parents rank items on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Surveys were distributed to families in six of the 10 full implementation schools in an online format. Families enrolled in home visiting or family facilitation also received the surveys. The survey was available in 19 languages to accommodate the language needs of all the families at the participating schools.

A total of 502 families responded to the Family Engagement Survey (FES) across the six schools, with 76 (15%) of these families reporting speaking a language other than English in the home. The majority of the families reported their race as White (n=386; 77%) with the next largest race categories reported being “Two or more races” (n=50; 10%) or Asian (n=17; 3%). About one-fifth of the families (n=100; 20%) reported their ethnicity as Hispanic. Less than half of the families (n=205; 41%) reported qualifying for the Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL) program. Across all grade levels in the schools, the number of families responding to the survey ranged from 79 (low) to 129 (high) per school, with an average response rate of 39% across each of the six schools. Response rates ranged from 25% to 63%.

On a scale of 1 (low) to 7 (high), families rated schools very positively, with item means ranging from 5.74 (SD=1.72) to 6.56 (SD=1.30). The highest-rated item across the schools was “I know who to talk with regarding my concerns and questions about my child’s education and development.” The lowest-rated item, while still very positive, was “I have opportunities to influence what happens at (school).”

Figure 3 displays the families’ ratings for each item across the three years in which the survey was administered. All items were rated significantly lower in 2021 compared to the previous two years, aside from the items 2, 9, and 10. It is important to note that COVID-19 may have had negative impacts on school-family connections during the 2020–2021 school year. Most elementary schools restricted visitors, switched from in-person to virtual parent-teacher conferences, and eliminated school-based events such as back to school nights. Some schools did not allow parents to walk their children to their classrooms in an effort to minimize staff and student exposure to COVID-19. These changes, while necessary for health and safety, made it more challenging for schools to forge strong relationships with parents.

FIGURE 3. | RATINGS OF FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS



Note: Data from 2020–2021 include six of the 10 SECP schools.

FAMILIES REPORT COMMUNICATING WITH HOME VISITORS AND FAMILY FACILITATORS ABOUT EDUCATIONAL TRANSITIONS

Some families experienced educational transitions of their child from home care to child care to school-based care. Communication from the school and home visitor or family facilitator was a large part of how families experienced these transitions or preparation of transitions. The two subthemes regarding home visiting, family facilitation, and school communication directly answer the following research questions: “How do families experience educational transitions?” and “How are families experiencing engagement with their school via home visiting or family facilitation?”

Home visitors and family facilitators communicate with families about educational transitions. Nearly all parents expressed that the home visitor or family facilitator discussed options with them regarding their child’s care outside the home, even if the child did not transition to a new care setting. One parent described how this process was initiated and how the home visitor or family facilitator helped the parent make a decision:

“Well, she helped me...look for day cares, so I could work...Then we saw that there was a...Head Start program in the school that my [older] daughter goes to...I could take her there, and it could be a good way to...transition...She helped me to find the best option for [my daughter].”

Other parents voiced that the home visitor or family facilitator prepared them for the transition to school-based care by “talking...about different options” and “explaining how the process is,” including age eligibility, timing of sign-ups, developmental considerations, and half days versus full days. Most parents felt comfortable and connected with the school if they had older children at the school because they had a relationship with the teachers, principals, or interpreters. One mother expressed that the home visitor or family facilitator used to invite her for events at the school, but “since COVID was here, I haven’t had any invites, so I’m guessing it’s probably because they haven’t really been anything...” This would suggest that some schools have events or activities at the school for families, but in 2020–2021, due to COVID-19, there were fewer family engagement activities in the schools.

Schools provide limited communication about educational transitions. Many families mentioned receiving some form of communication from the school, but that the information was typically limited to one email, a poster or a letter in the mail about sign-ups for PreK. One mom described this in detail:

“...I’ve...seen them build little posters...saying preschool...sign-up and we’ll contact you...but not anything that they’ve directly said, “Hey [name of parent]...this is what

we’re doing, you can be a part it...Now they have like Kindergarten roundup and stuff like that, but they don’t have too much for preschool.”

However, it is important to note that schools’ communication may have been limited in 2020–2021 due to the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic and fewer opportunities for in-person interaction.

CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Challenges of virtual home and family facilitation visits included needing to “attend to other children,” children’s short attention span, and lacking access to physical learning materials during the visit. Should virtual visits continue, home visitors and family facilitators could resume providing materials and focus on teaching the parent how to use them with their child during the home visit and beyond. Home visitors and family facilitators provided advice around development, and parents may continue to benefit from coaching on stressors due to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as virtual learning. Parents may also benefit from resources and practices supporting their own well-being in the context of stress.

Although efforts were made to solicit perspectives from diverse families, five out of the seven interviewed families were Hispanic and primarily spoke Spanish. Less than a third of families participating in home visiting and family facilitation report Spanish as their first language. Furthermore, the participants represented four of the six participating districts. It will be important to ensure that ongoing evaluation solicits perspectives from diverse families across all districts. It is also important to include families who are new to home visiting or who have discontinued services.

Instructional Supports

In the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan, educational facilitators bring an outside perspective to each school community, with a focus on promoting instruction and developing parent and community partnerships that are founded in the School as Hub principles of quality, continuity, and equity for all children birth–Grade 3. Each educational facilitator is assigned two schools and works onsite at each school two days a week. Their role includes emphasizing leadership for preschool–Grade 3 teacher professional development, promoting and supporting teacher self-reflection, creating meaningful relationships with students and their families, and expanding the use of culturally responsive practices that honor all children and families. In addition, they model the use of information gathered from data to promote the use of high-yield strategies for engaging children and families. The educational facilitators continue to deepen their knowledge and skills around facilitating reciprocal conversations to promote high levels of teacher reflection.

In 2020–2021, interviews and a teacher survey were used to evaluate how schools are implementing the School as Hub approach and using instructional supports provided by educational facilitators.

Research and evaluation staff interviewed five educational facilitators, 10 principals, and four teachers in the School as Hub full implementation schools and a program administrator, educational facilitator team lead, and two program specialists between February and May of 2021. The educational facilitators reported varied educational experiences and backgrounds, describing prior career roles (e.g., assistant principal, instructional coach), experiences (e.g., using data to guide instruction) and strengths (e.g., trauma-informed practices, social-emotional learning) that influence how they approach their work in the full implementation school settings.

In addition, a survey was distributed to teachers of the 10 School as Hub schools in April of 2021 before the teachers participated in the interview. A total of 95 out of 168 teachers (56.5%) responded to the survey.

Surveys and interviews informed each of the three research questions: (1) How do educational facilitators support instructional practices? (2) What are school leaders' expectations for instructional supports? and (3) How are the School as Hub principles (quality, continuity, equity), policies, and practices advanced in schools?

HOW EDUCATIONAL FACILITATORS SUPPORT INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

Data from the teacher survey indicate the frequency of teacher engagement with the educational facilitators and how the teachers interacted with the educational facilitators, and data from the interviews describe the various roles of the educational facilitators.

Teacher Engagement With Educational Facilitators

Teachers were surveyed about their engagement with educational facilitators. Of the 95 teacher survey respondents, 65 (68.4%) indicated that they had engaged with the educational facilitator. Out of the 65 teachers who had engaged with the educational facilitator, most had either only participated in one or two sessions (44%) or had participated in more than six sessions (33%), with little variation in between (Figure 4). Teachers were asked what activities they participated in with the educational facilitator. Some of the most frequently reported activities were grade-level meetings/professional learning communities, student support and consultation, and professional development opportunities (Figure 5).

FIGURE 4. | NUMBER OF SESSIONS TEACHERS ENGAGED WITH THE EDUCATIONAL FACILITATOR

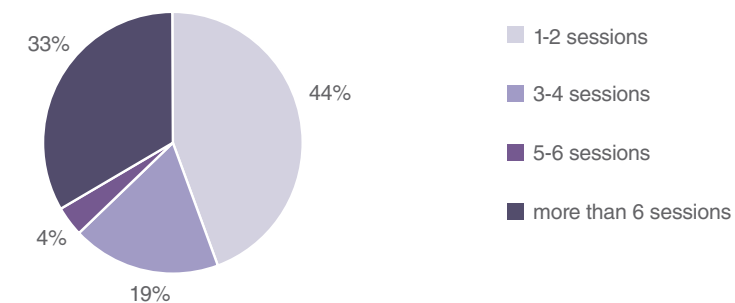
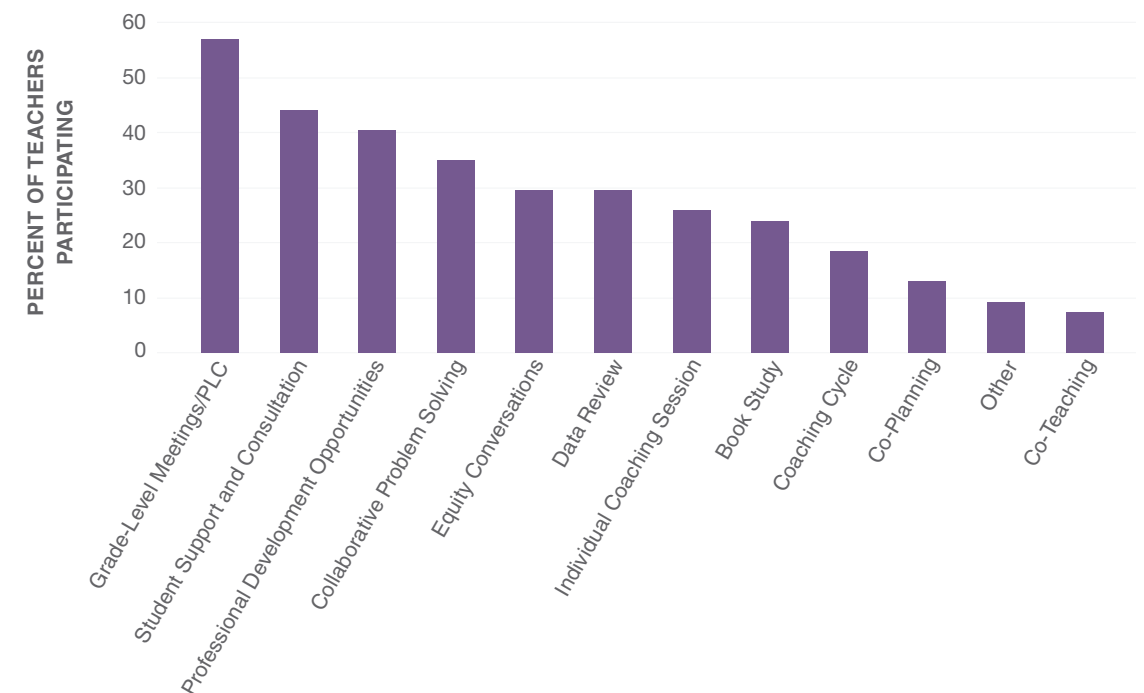


FIGURE 5. | TEACHER PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES WITH THE EDUCATIONAL FACILITATOR



Role of Educational Facilitators

The various activities identified by teachers in the survey were also reflected in the interviews, which indicated that educational facilitators carry out many roles in the full implementation schools, as described below.

Instructional Coach

The educational facilitator serves as an instructional coach with a curricular and academic focus. Educational facilitators describe working with teachers in individual sessions or coaching cycles. Educational facilitators also model practices in the classroom and participate in grade-level meetings, helping with the planning and facilitation. One principal described how the educational facilitator is supporting building capacity in the school by “training people in our building to become the experts.” One teacher describes collaborating with the educational facilitator:

“[The educational facilitator] would come in and collaborate with me...and say, ‘hey, I was thinking, those kiddos who are really struggling with long vowels, what about this activity?’...taking that weight off me and already having an activity...was wonderfully helpful...”

Equity Coach

The educational facilitator also serves as an equity coach, providing professional development with an equity focus. Schools are learning about equity and equitable practices through book studies, workshops, reading articles, and participating in other professional development opportunities. The educational facilitator often plans and facilitates these professional development opportunities. The educational facilitator also brings an equity lens to conversations and discussions, offering an outside perspective and asking, “Whose voice is not at the table?” The educational facilitator also assists with looking at the data, identifying where the gaps are for students, and identifying ways to help meet the needs of these students. One principal described the equity coaching role:

“When we have questions or...discussions...she always brings us back to equity...‘What data can we look at, what different trainings or what different conversations do we need to have to the equity lens all the time?’ She always brings it back to that.”

Professional Development/Learning Facilitator

The educational facilitators provide and lead professional development for the school staff. One educational facilitator described how she leads and creates the content for a book study. A principal described how the educational facilitator “presented to our whole staff on social-emotional ideas.” Another principal explained how it’s more effective when the educational facilitator presents information instead of just “forwarding

on an article” as it adds “personal connection, context, and relatability.” Teachers described how the educational facilitator provided trainings on the impact of trauma on children and conscious discipline, and one teacher stating the trainings “have definitely impacted some of the things that I’ve considered in my room.”

Thought Partner

Educational facilitators and principals described how the educational facilitator serves as a thought partner for teachers, principals, and other educational facilitators. The educational facilitator often has reflective conversations with other staff offering support, ideas, and input. One educational facilitator explained how colleagues ask for her input on specific student and school situations. The educational facilitators will often be part of the decision-making processes at the leadership level. A principal explained that the educational facilitator is always part of the decision-making process for the school, with another stating the educational facilitator is involved with decisions regarding their school improvement plans. One principal explained that conversations and self-reflection with the educational facilitator allowed the school leadership to develop a vision for what needs to happen in their school. The educational facilitator also offers outside perspectives in conversations with principals and teachers. A principal described how the educational facilitator brings outside ideas and is the one asking “have you thought about this?” and always bringing the big picture. Principals have meetings with their educational facilitators and have conversations about equity, staff improvement, professional learning, and the needs of the teachers. One educational facilitator described their conversations below:

“And then we have debriefing meetings afterwards, after the grade-level meetings or after the staff meetings, like ‘what did you get from your breakout?’ ‘What did I get?’ ‘All right, what do we think our next steps are?’”

Data Utilization Partner

Educational facilitators described participating in discussions around data and collaborating with principals in making data-based decisions. For example, one educational facilitator described how she was “able to work with administration on using some of the MAP data and behavior data to try to set professional development goals as a school to look at some biases that teachers [were] having.” Another educational facilitator reported that she “looked at children’s [schoolwork and] at the growth.” Educational facilitators described the collaboration with principals in data utilization. One explained that “[the principal] really wants [the educational facilitator] to go in and have some reflective conversations around the MAP and some of the students that are scoring lower and really delving deeper and looking at those students as they do with their MAP.” Another educational facilitator worked with the principal and other leadership to create a “walk-through form that [they] would use that aligned to [district policies].”

Classroom Visitor

The educational facilitator participates in classroom observations, which are used to provide technical support to classroom teachers. One educational facilitator described that “there [were] a couple of teachers at [one school] that [would] invite [her] into the classroom, and would have conversation with [her]...” A principal described the educational facilitator’s role in classroom visits as “observe, offer support, guidance, [and] ideas.” One principal explained that the educational facilitator was able to help with students who just needed “a little bit more practice with [a] skill, [so that they] might be able to better understand it or possibly master it for an upcoming assessment.” A teacher shared that “normally, every year [the educational facilitators] come in and videotape [teachers] and give [them] scales.” Another teacher stated that the educational facilitator “would come in and be very helpful to [her] when [she] was [assessing reading levels]... [the educational facilitator] would either offer to take a student and [assess their reading level]...or she would monitor [the] class, while [the teacher] would be in the hallway [with] the students.” Another teacher had less interaction with the educational facilitator: “[The educational facilitator] did reach out. I was a new teacher at the school, so she did reach out and she came into my room a few times and observed a couple times. She came in and talked to a few students and made some observations and chatted with me about them, and did give some suggestions and some feedback, but nothing very formal.”

COVID Response Partner

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the educational facilitators’ role shifted to support schools as they navigated the challenges of remote learning and virtual instruction. Educational facilitators’ roles and activities across the full implementation schools varied widely to support schools during this challenging time.

Some educational facilitators provided vital online resources and supports. In some schools, the educational facilitators provided examples of how to use online lessons. They did research on online tools and technology platforms to provide additional curricular support. One educational facilitator became an expert in Zoom and then provided professional development to teachers on how to use the platform. Another educational facilitator hopped into remote classrooms to assist teachers with the technology and with the lessons. One teacher describes the educational facilitator helping her classroom:

“... she had absolutely no hesitation to...help us. She just asked ‘Hey, share your lesson plans with me, so I can look over what you're teaching’...But then it was super helpful to have her on those Zooms because I could go off and worry about my 17 other in-person students and help them with a math skill and she would stay on the Zoom and work one-on-one more closely so that my remote learners could get more support.... She took some weight off of me and really helped...”

One principal described how the educational facilitator supported professional development by giving teachers a forum to share what they knew about remote teaching. She recognized how much teachers could learn from each other and facilitated ways for them to do that.

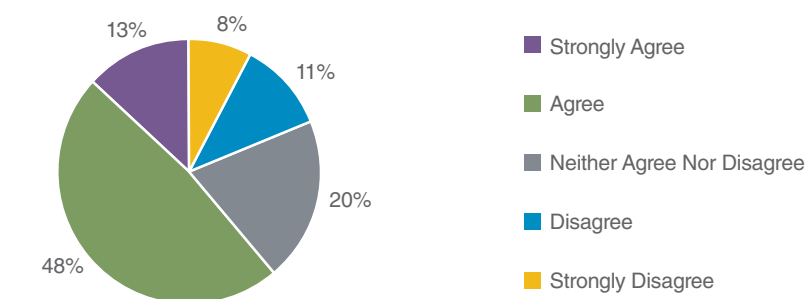
In one school, the educational facilitator reached out to local child care programs providing services to school-age children during the day. She offered assistance with online learning and let the providers know she was available to help.

One educational facilitator described how her focus shifted to social-emotional learning and “supporting the teachers in their ability to keep themselves well and focused on the kids.”

Some principals were not aware of how the educational facilitators provided assistance or felt they did not need assistance. Principals spoke positively about the facilitators, but several could not be specific about how the educational facilitators had helped teachers pivot to remote learning. Others felt they had enough support and expertise within their own staff or from the district to meet their needs.

Teachers who completed the survey were asked to rank a statement related to COVID-19 responses in the school on a 5-point scale of *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Sixty-one percent of teachers who had collaborated with the educational facilitator indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed that the facilitator influenced how they thought about self-care and teacher well-being (Figure 6).

FIGURE 6. | TEACHER RESPONSES TO EDUCATIONAL FACILITATOR INFLUENCES ON THOUGHTS ABOUT SELF-CARE AND TEACHER WELL-BEING



SCHOOL LEADERS' EXPECTATIONS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORTS

To examine school leaders' expectations for instructional supports, researchers used data derived from the interviews, exploring the educational facilitators' relationships within the school setting as well as the challenges associated with the role as expressed by the educational facilitators, principals, and teachers. Additional support comes from the teacher survey data related to barriers to collaboration with the educational facilitator experienced by teachers.

Importance of Relationship-Building

The relationship educational facilitators shared with different school staff members including leadership, teachers, and additional staff members emerged as a key theme throughout the interviews.

Educational Facilitator Relationship With Leadership

In interviews, educational facilitators and principals described their relationships, which varied across settings. Successful relationships with leadership (typically referring to principals) were described by educational facilitators as reciprocal and characterized by trust. One educational facilitator felt that she and her principal "are very aligned...in... that idea of equity and embedding equity into what's going on." Another educational facilitator described her relationship with the principal as an "evolving, trusting relationship where [the school principal] allows [her] to push and ask questions," giving her a level of autonomy to independently prepare professional development presentations, receive feedback, and make adjustments. One educational facilitator described feeling more effective when "[the principal] told [her] what [her] role was. [The principal] said 'this is how we're going to utilize you, and this is what we need to have done,' and gave [the educational facilitator] a clear vision." "Working closely with principals" was described as "the thing that helped...the most" for one educational facilitator.

Principals also described the importance of this relationship and their role in facilitating. One principal described how they would "try to meet regularly [with the educational facilitator] and try to join some of their grade-level meetings [and the educational facilitator] organizes the monthly meetings that [they] have with [the program staff from the Buffett Early Childhood Institute]." Another principal described viewing the educational facilitator as part of the "core leadership team in the building."

Educational Facilitator Relationship With Teachers

When educational facilitators described their relationships with teachers in relation to their effectiveness in the classroom, trust and openness to coaching emerged as important elements of the educational facilitator/teacher relationship. Trust was described by one educational facilitator as the "number one element" that allowed her to work effectively

with teachers, though she recognized that "it's not necessarily always there." Another educational facilitator described the "long journey in terms of... establishing basic trust with teachers to let [her] in their classrooms to help in more of a coaching way instead of a teacher's aide way." Also important was "teacher openness, teachers being comfortable, open to coaching...willing[ness] to try new things, willing[ness] to have [an educational facilitator] in their classroom building that trust." The relationship with teachers was described in one case as "a slow build...Just building that trust takes such a long time that you have to do that before you can really...step in and be more of an influencer in terms of instruction, approach, and engagement..." Educational facilitators also valued "being able to lead some of [the professional development opportunities as] beneficial because teachers see [the educational facilitator] as a source of knowledge or a source of a resource to come to."

Principals also recognized the value of trusting and successful relationships between teachers and educational facilitators. One principal described that the educational facilitator "reaching out to teachers and having them partner with her was important." Several principals stated that "relationship-building is number one, and it's hard... for teachers to have someone new come in and observe." In one situation where the relationship was successfully navigated, the principal described how the educational facilitator was "super strong at developing relationships, and people really respect her knowledge and...she does a nice job of approaching staff." Principals noted that building trusting relationships with teachers could lead to a chain reaction, allowing educational facilitators to connect with other teachers. A principal explained, "There's nothing more powerful than teachers telling another teacher that 'hey, [the educational facilitator] has got tons of knowledge in regards to literacy. You should touch base with her or see how she can also support you.'"

To build these relationships, it was important for the educational facilitators to "[have] the regularly scheduled time with teachers. If [teachers] know [the educational facilitator is] coming and they know [the principal is] making them go, that helps." This principal also noted the effectiveness of "informing all the teachers of what [the educational facilitator's] support role is, what [they] expect them to do in those groups is helpful because then everybody's on the same pages about why they're there...in [the] team meeting, when [teachers] don't know [the educational facilitator] very well." While this support and encouragement was helpful in the schools where it existed, in other schools, educational facilitators expressed that additional encouragement or requirements from the principal would be helpful.

Another principal described the value of connecting to teachers and building trust, stating, "...it's almost like sweat equity, like, oh, this person isn't just coming in to do this, she's

helping me staple things up on the bulletin board and get this ready and so maybe I can trust her a little bit more when she says this or she's seen my class in action..." The concept of sweat equity was reiterated by a teacher who mentioned that she valued "the sweat equity that [the educational facilitator] put in." She described that the educational facilitator "would come in...and say, 'what are some skills you want me to work on?' 'Who do you want me to work with?' She would find an activity. She was taking things off my plate and working with kids that needed those skills, so that was helpful for me."

Educational Facilitator Relationship With Home Visitor, Family Facilitator, and Coaches

Educational facilitators were able to work with other staff, including the school's home visitor, family facilitator, and other coaches, and often described these relationships as positive. In addition, educational facilitators explained that "collaborating with [the instructional coach] was beneficial" and that the educational coach was able to "guide [her] work with teachers." One educational facilitator stated that this relationship "help[ed] [her] get an idea of some of more of the nitty gritty stuff, the curriculum they use, the online portals, and those details that [someone wouldn't] necessarily know about if [they were] not working in the school day to day." In another school, "the instructional coach [was very good] at guiding [the educational facilitator] where [she could] work with teachers in a productive way, having reflective conversations...and looking at children's [schoolwork]." Principals also noted that "[the educational facilitator] works hand in hand with [the] instructional coach in the building," emphasizing that this was something they were proud of.

Challenges and Barriers to Collaboration

Principals, educational facilitators, and teachers noted difficulties that occasionally limited the progress of educational facilitators in the school building. Across participants, similar challenges emerged, and varying perspectives are described below.

Clarity of Role

Educational facilitators, principals, and teachers all expressed a desire for a stronger vision of the role of the educational facilitator and for examples of what the educational facilitator could provide the teachers and schools. Educational facilitators also felt this was connected to a "lack of direction," noting that "guidance and coaching has been one of [the] biggest challenges in this position from the Institute" and that "it feels a little...disconnected at times." One educational facilitator noted specifically that there was a lack of "having a full understanding and scope of [their] role across all grades, [their] role as children transition from home visiting to school." Educational facilitators also recognize that "a lot of teachers still don't know what this role is" and some "think of [the educational facilitator] more like a paraprofessional." Teachers' thoughts were

similar: "We just haven't really even known what to ask for help or what...[they] provide..." Principals echoed this desire for clarity, stating that they "wish[ed] [they] had a better idea of people who had a really highly effective [educational] facilitator, what they did, what that looks like, and what types of conversations they have." Another principal explained this desire for an example:

"I feel like I do better when I have an example of what a solid person does right...I think that would be an opportunity for enhancement...If I knew a principal had a really strong [educational facilitator], it might be a great opportunity just to...Zoom in and listen... especially when you're starting from scratch, trying to encapsulate what actually is the mission and then what does that look like...I think it sure would help to have a little bit more mentorship with that."

Principals described a need for a better description of what the educational facilitator role can offer: "What I need from the Institute is what they can bring me..." This request for a clearer definition of the role was accompanied by a desire to maintain some flexibility: "My first gut instinct says I want more direction...more of a checklist, more of an exact to-do. But then the other side says...I have to be able to adapt and utilize these three people the way that I see fit."

Evaluation

Overall, teachers and educational facilitators expressed concern that assessments used in the evaluations did not capture the classroom environment well, citing infrequency of data collection and delayed timeline for sharing of data. With the limited amount of time educational facilitators spend in individual classrooms, concern was expressed over whether CLASS truly captures the effectiveness of their work and whether the evaluation allows educational facilitators to be "set up for success." One principal emphasized the importance of ensuring that evaluative measures provided building-level benefits in addition to contributing to a larger body of research. Teachers indicated that "one day for an hour is not a super accurate piece of data" and that this captured "just a piece of the puzzle...a glimpse into [their] day...but doesn't really give...a good picture." Several educational facilitators and teachers felt as though evaluation tools were not utilized often enough to provide an accurate measure of what was happening in the classrooms.

Non-Building Employee

Educational facilitators felt disadvantaged by not being district-level employees. Principals echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the importance of knowing the district curriculum and having access to district-level trainings and communication tools. Educational facilitators felt that "it can be harder to make gains and leeway when

[they are] coming into a school that [they] are not technically an employee.” Another educational facilitator described the ways in which not being a part of the district minimized the amount of control she had in working with other teachers. Educational facilitators felt further disadvantaged by missing out on communication from the district. Principals were also impacted by this, noticing that the educational facilitators were not always familiar with their district’s curriculum and indicating that they “would have benefited greatly from having [educational facilitators] follow up district policies.” Additionally, principals indicated that being a non-district employee meant that the educational facilitators did “not have access to Teams to call students online the way that the rest of the staff members do” and could not gain access to some professional development opportunities offered to district employees and/or were unable to attend trainings. Principals also felt that having to learn the curriculum of two different districts might be a challenge for educational facilitators. Not being a building employee was not noted by teachers as a challenge in collaborating with the educational facilitators.

Time in Building

Educational facilitators, principals, and teachers all recognized the challenge created by the limited amount of time the educational facilitator spends in each school building. Educational facilitators reported “find[ing] it difficult to be [at each school] just the two days a week...[and] to create...and sustain momentum.” One educational facilitator reported that “it’s hard to understand [her] effects on something like CLASS because... educational facilitators are spread a little too thin.” This concern was reported with more frequency among principals. Sometimes principals found it difficult to recall the educational facilitator’s schedule due to the limited amount of time they spent together. It was stated that having a more flexible schedule where the educational facilitator could attend Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and staff development opportunities as well as staff meetings and additional opportunities to meet and work with staff would be beneficial. With relationship-building being a key component to success, principals also felt like the limited time in the building affected the educational facilitators’ ability to build the relationships necessary to meaningfully support teachers:

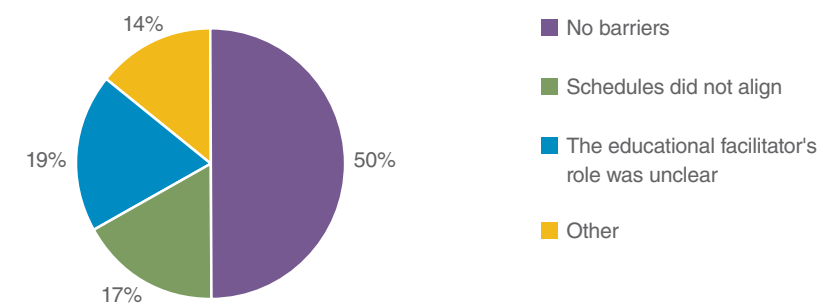
“I don’t think staff...think of [the educational facilitator] as a resource first and probably not even second. It’s not like they’re averse to what she’s doing...it’s just she hasn’t been here...[Teachers] go to the person who’s down the hall...and that’s unfortunate... because there’s an awful lot of resources that [the educational facilitator] has access to, and [the educational facilitator has] so much knowledge.”

Sometimes principals felt as though educational facilitators offered ideas, but they would have appreciated a follow-through with help in implementation of the practices. Teachers indicated that their interactions with the educational facilitator were limited.

Barriers Identified in Teacher Surveys

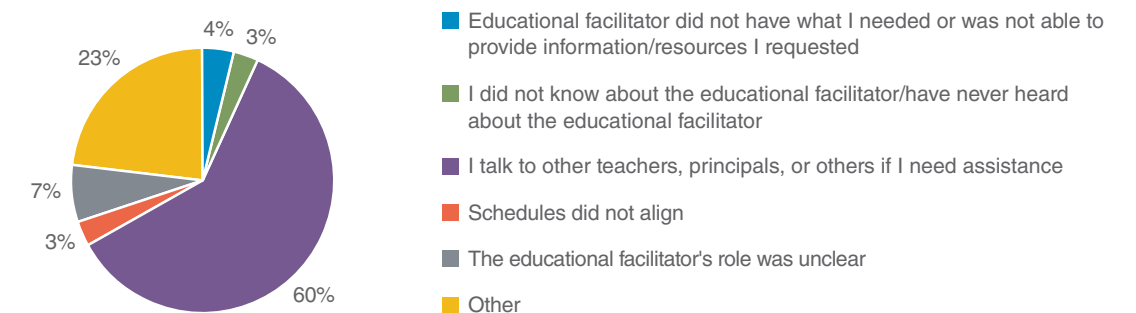
Teachers who collaborated with the educational facilitator (68.4%) were asked whether there were any barriers to collaboration. While half indicated that there were no barriers (Figure 7), others shared barriers of limited contact with the facilitator, classroom issues, lack of opportunity to meet, and (for this last year) lack of campus presence due to COVID.

FIGURE 7. | BARRIERS EXPERIENCED BY TEACHERS WHO COLLABORATED WITH THE EDUCATIONAL FACILITATOR



Teachers who had not collaborated with the educational facilitator (31.6%) were asked for the main reason they had not utilized the educational facilitator. Sixty percent indicated that they talked to other teachers, principals, or others when they needed assistance (Figure 8). Other reasons teachers had not utilized the educational facilitator included the COVID-19 pandemic, lack of knowledge of their purpose, lack of necessity, not enough time on site, and physical distance from the educational facilitator (both when in the building and due to being remote during the pandemic).

FIGURE 8. | BARRIERS EXPERIENCED BY TEACHERS WHO DID NOT COLLABORATE WITH THE EDUCATIONAL FACILITATOR



HOW THE SCHOOL AS HUB PRINCIPLES (QUALITY, CONTINUITY, EQUITY), POLICIES, AND PRACTICES ARE ADVANCED IN SCHOOLS

Interviews and surveys examined how the School as Hub principles (quality, continuity, equity), policies, and practices are advanced in schools.

Quality

Quality refers to a commitment that all practices used with children, families, and educators will be focused on producing developmentally and educationally meaningful outcomes. These practices are research-based and benefit from continuous improvement. The goal is to enhance the impact of programs and instruction for young children through Grade 3 (Buffett Early Childhood Institute, n.d.). To enhance quality, educational facilitators provide coaching and professional learning opportunities for PreK–Grade 3 teachers and work with all school staff to support children’s optimal learning and development. Educational facilitators focus on instructional practices and making sure teachers know “how to bring these strategies and practices into the classroom.” In addition, educational facilitators also review data “to guide instruction and guide those conversations” in order to “problem solve academic achievement.” Educational facilitators provide professional development opportunities in staff meetings or in PLC grade-level meetings. Individual and coaching cycles between the teachers and educational facilitators have influenced quality “through planning, through co-teaching with them, through the offering of resources, through brainstorming together.” Educational facilitators also model best practices in the classroom, described by a principal below:

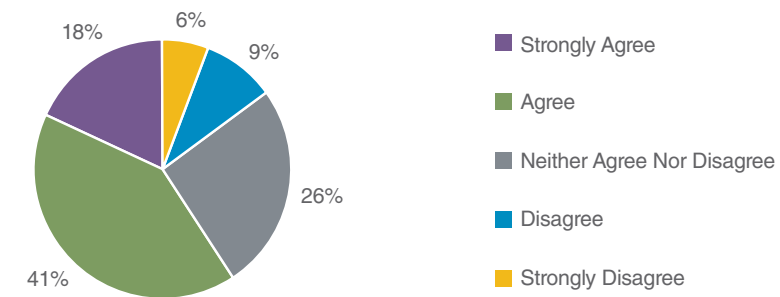
“...what is the best practice in language development for them, so she would model that during center time for preschool and Kindergarten. She would go in and model what parallel talk and self-talk looks like, and then...coach the teachers a little bit on that and then follow through with some check-ins with them and some feedback...”

One school previously had a leadership team that was making all of the decisions, and the principal wanted the teachers to be part of decision-making conversations and processes. The school’s staff is now divided up into three teams, including a team that focuses on academics, which is teacher-led, and guides and helps find resources as needed. There’s also a behavioral and social-emotional team and a curriculum team. Due to the shift, there’s been “so much more buy-in” when decisions are made, and teachers are excited and very proud of what they are doing and recommending. To improve quality, another school is implementing a writer’s workshop, which is aligned with their reading program. It is being implemented in Kindergarten through second grade with an ultimate plan of doing it school-wide. “Doing the same writing curriculum, using that same language, and building on the years prior” has made it successful and allowed the school to see gains in their assessment scores. In one school, the principal

does not know how to use the educational facilitator to support quality as the school’s needs do not match the educational facilitator’s strengths.

On the survey, teachers were asked to rank a series of five statements related to quality on a 5-point scale of *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Fifty-nine percent of teachers who had interacted with the educational facilitator agreed or strongly agreed that the educational facilitator influenced how they thought about and implemented quality practices in the classroom (Figure 9).

FIGURE 9. | TEACHER RESPONSES TO EDUCATIONAL FACILITATOR INFLUENCES ON THOUGHTS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF QUALITY PRACTICES IN THE CLASSROOM



Continuity

Continuity means that children will experience a seamless set of learning and educational experiences from birth through Grade 3. What children learn at one age or grade level builds upon learning that came before (Buffett Early Childhood Institute, n.d.). When asked about continuity of instructional practices and educational experiences, many principals and educational facilitators described how schools have focused on strengthening and building relationships with families and parents. Teachers are collaborating and meeting with their educational facilitator on how to best engage families. An educational facilitator explains how she is constantly asking teachers, “How are you incorporating families? How are you communicating with your families? How do your families know how to support their child in the classroom?” Schools consider their relationship with families bidirectional. One school described meeting with all families before the school year starts and consider it a listening session for the parents to share their hopes for their child and what they want their child to get out of school. Schools try to be accommodating in how to reach families (e.g., text, email, Facetime, Duo, in person at the school) and when they reach families (e.g., weekend, daytime). One school found success in having one parent take on more of a leadership role in the school. Other parents felt more comfortable talking to this parent, and the school was able to capture more authentic feedback.

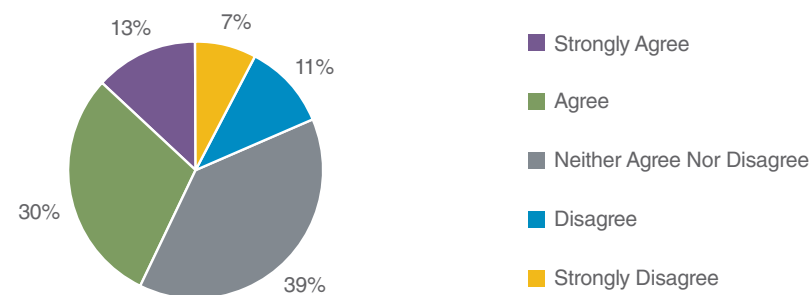
More specifically, schools are being more intentional about engaging families with younger children. Schools are now purposefully thinking of ways to bring in all families with young children, not just those with school-age children. One school created a room for families with younger children that was used for crafts, breakfast and coffee, and book clubs. Another school created a living room space in the school as an option for home visits if parents were not comfortable with home visits taking place in their home.

Early childhood team meetings are taking place in some schools with the educational facilitator, home visitor, family facilitator, and teachers meeting to discuss Kindergarten expectations, transitions, and what’s going on in the schools. A program specialist says that during meetings, “there’s an elevated voice of thinking about what’s being implemented on a school level and what does that mean for our youngest learners.” One principal describes how their educational facilitator runs those meetings:

“[The educational facilitator] runs our meetings...she really helps with that continuity and is...the glue or that common bond that tries to tie everything together...She has...an idea of all of the programs, a wide variety of experiences, but yet she does a really good job of trying to tie it together. If one group, let's say the preschool teachers, aren't quite sure about another aspect, she's able to and has dealt with enough to... know why we're doing things and where the continuum is with that...”

Teachers who completed the survey were asked to rank a statement related to continuity on a 5-point scale of *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Forty-three percent of teachers who had interacted with the educational facilitator indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed that the facilitator influenced how they engaged in partnership with families (Figure 10).

FIGURE 10. | TEACHER RESPONSES TO EDUCATIONAL FACILITATOR INFLUENCES ON ENGAGING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FAMILIES



Equity

Equity involves prioritizing policies and practices that effectively promote the learning of all children and seek to address disparities in learning opportunities, family supports, and child outcomes (Buffett Early Childhood Institute, n.d.). Schools are having Courageous Conversations (Singleton, 2021) about race, racism, and equity, with the educational facilitator always trying to help with those conversations. Schools are acknowledging that there’s a lot of learning and work to be done around equity and recognizing the importance of bringing these issues to the surface. Conversations may include making sure students of color and their families are feeling safe and comfortable at school and getting at root causes of behavior issues.

Schools are looking at data (e.g., behavior and suspension data, attendance data, MAP) by race and gender to guide them in their conversations, including why there are disparities, and brainstorming solutions. One educational facilitator described how when her school is looking at disparities in the data, they’re “working in collaboration with the community and parents to say ‘how do we fix this?’” One educational facilitator described the types of conversations they may have:

“...when you say that a child is non-compliant...how might your biases play into what you determine as non-compliance and who are the kids that you're sending out of the class and really looking at data and their performance data, and kind of examining it with that lens of...why are students of color not performing?...What is it about what's happening in the classroom that might be [not be] providing them those opportunities to show their brilliance?”

Teachers, educational facilitators, and principals are guiding their learning through workshops, book studies, professional development opportunities, and reading and discussing articles. Many educational facilitators are leading these efforts by guiding the conversations, selecting resources and materials for discussion, leading the professional development opportunities, and always thinking about equity. One educational facilitator describes:

“...in the...book study one of their themes is looking outside the light, so not just ‘what we can see?’ but ‘what are our blind spots?’ ‘What does our data tell us?’ and...‘how do we pick through that?’ and then ‘how do we go about being very targeted specific with interventions, with professional learning, with coaching conversations, with teachers’ goal setting, all of it?’ So, pulling all that together. I think that's...my lens in both places.”

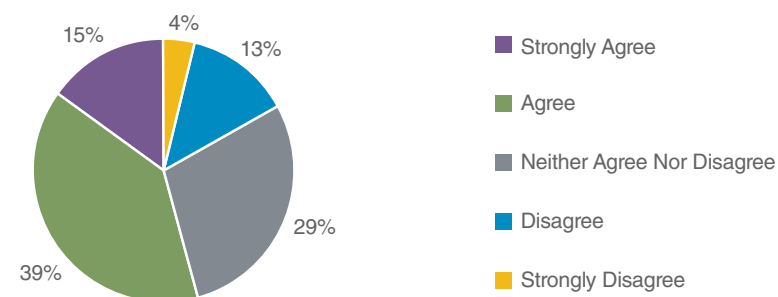
One teacher describes changes she has made as a result of working with the educational facilitator:

“For me it’s just been a lot of...recognizing the things I’m doing...[and] saying to make sure that it’s culturally sensitive and to make sure that I’m thinking about any of those biases that I harbor, and how I can work towards making sure that those aren’t coming out of my teaching...just being a little bit more reflective and aware of what’s happening and going on and...making sure we are not making assumptions about students that may or may not be true...”

One school developed a racial equity team composed of staff members, community members, parents, and Buffett Early Childhood Institute staff to discuss race, racism, and equity. Within that group, they are doing a book club to help guide them in their thinking. This school is also finding different ways to highlight people in the African American culture. At another school, the principal was unclear of the definition of using an “equity lens” in the school building and did not “want to take on something else.” However, this principal mentioned that school leaders are looking at data and with a focus on identifying kids’ needs and intervening the correct way.

On the survey, teachers were asked to rank a statement related to equity on a 5-point scale of *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Fifty-four percent of teachers who had interacted with the educational facilitator indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed that the educational facilitator influenced how they thought about equity (Figure 11).

FIGURE 11. | TEACHER RESPONSES TO EDUCATIONAL FACILITATOR INFLUENCES ON THOUGHTS ABOUT EQUITY



Goals

Principals shared their goals as a School as Hub principal, with many saying they wanted to improve parent and family engagement. Principals described wanting all families “to feel welcomed and have a voice in our school” and making sure the school feels like it belongs to the families. Two principals discussed wanting to determine how to have families “share their strengths,” while another discussed wanting to give parents opportunities to be able to help their kids in ways they feel comfortable with. Some of the principals also said they wanted to improve connections with their birth–Grade 3 students and families, as expressed below by one principal:

“...we want to make sure that we’re engaging those kids that aren’t even at school yet ...I want to be able to provide those families, those kids with support before they even ever walk into our doors.”

Some principals expressed wanting their school to be a resource hub and “to be that place where people come for information, for support, for services, for ideas.” One principal described wanting to use “research-based practices about what’s best for students, and not just what’s best or easiest for staff,” while another principal shared that they want to use their data to make improvements instead of making excuses about the data. Improving safety, relationships with community stakeholders, academic achievement, and emotional health of staff were also goals shared by principals.

Successes

Principals and educational facilitators reflected on their points of pride in their schools. A few principals expressed being much more intentional about connecting to their birth–Grade 3 children. One principal described how they now have more opportunities for families with young children to come into the school. A few schools increased their number of families in home visiting over the past year. One principal reached out to the families to better understand the barriers to home visiting. Many families weren’t as comfortable with the home visitor coming into their home, so a living space was created at their school for those families. Principals also reflected on how their school is much more intentional about being family focused. One principal expressed pride in the fact that there’s been a “big shift in finding ways to engage all families.” Another principal explained how families are in the “forefront of our thoughts, no longer an afterthought.”

Principals and educational facilitators described how their school brought equity more to a focus with schools having more conversations about race and equity. One principal expressed how the staff is putting effort into making sure students of color and families feel safe and comfortable at school. One principal personally reached out to 20 families

to hear how they were doing during the pandemic, which led to their school developing a racial equity team. An educational facilitator explained how there's a high level of quality instruction happening in her school, and one principal described pride in that they feel their school is the community hub.

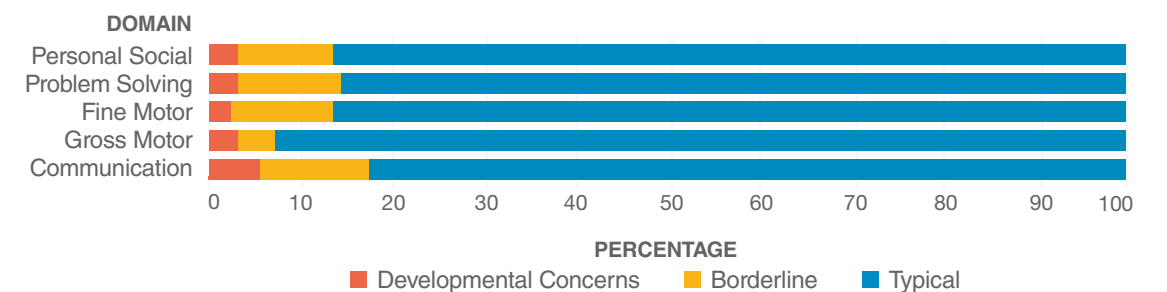
Child Development and Learning

Over time, a focus on quality, continuity, and equity in the context of the School as Hub Birth–Grade 3 is expected to manifest in an increase in opportunities for all children to receive a dynamic and engaged educational experience and a subsequent reduction in the development and learning gap between children of different racial and economic backgrounds. Children’s development and educational achievement are examined annually. Measures used in the 2020–2021 school year were intended to (1) identify development concerns in the birth to 3-year-old population participating in home visiting and (2) examine development and learning for children using school-based assessments for reading and math, PreK to Grade 3. That said, the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted schools’ and evaluators’ ability to assess child development and learning, and in many cases only partial data were available.

DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING: BIRTH–5 YEARS

Children’s development was assessed using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, Third Edition (ASQ-3; Squires, Bricker & Twombly, 2009). A screening tool, the ASQ-3 includes 21 age-specific questionnaires for 3 to 60 months, with items assessing five developmental areas: communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, and personal-social. Scores for each developmental area are assigned one of three ratings meant to indicate risk of developmental delay and need for referral: Developmental Concerns (lowest), Borderline (mid-range), Typical (highest). Families complete the questionnaires in the context of the home visit or personal visit; home visitors and family facilitators score and discuss any concerns families may have about their child’s development. Due to the ongoing recruitment of families into home visiting and family facilitation, children’s ages at first assessment varied. One hundred-twenty-six children were assessed at least one time (M=21.19 months, SD=12.00 months), with the youngest child measured at 1 month and the oldest child measured at 60 months. Due to the variability in the number and timing of assessment points, children’s initial enrollment questionnaire served as the focus of these analyses. A majority of children in home visiting were developing typically (83%–93% across five areas), and a very small number presented developmental concerns (7%-17% across five areas). Figure 12 illustrates the proportion of children rated in each developmental category.

FIGURE 12. | CHILDREN BIRTH-AGE 5 ASQ SCORES BY DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN



ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

An indicator of children’s early academic achievement includes the ability to understand written language and acquire fundamental math concepts. In the Superintendents’ Early Childhood Plan, educational facilitators work with classroom teachers to support academic instruction in PreK–Grade 3 classrooms.

Language, Cognitive, and Academic Skills at 3 Years

Children’s language develops rapidly in the first three years of life and continues to predict academic achievement through the school years (Lonigan, Burgess, & Anthony, 2000). Language serves as a linchpin for ongoing learning. When children are delayed in their language learning or are not exposed to language-rich environments, they often struggle with social development and academic achievement (Scarborough, 2009).

In the 2020–2021 program year, assessments to measure the children’s language development and academic skills at age 3 were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Home visiting program protocols limited in-person services.

Academic Achievement in Kindergarten–Grade 3

The Northwest Evaluation Association’s Measures of Academic Progress Growth (NWEA MAP) was used to examine students’ academic achievement and growth. MAP Growth is a computer adaptive, multiple-choice norm-referenced assessment that measures student proficiency and growth in the areas of reading, mathematics, language usage, and science. Schools participating in the Superintendents’ Plan administer MAP Growth testing three times a year (fall, winter, and spring) in Kindergarten through Grade 3. For evaluation purposes, data obtained from participating schools were used to examine status and status of student growth for math and reading. Status refers to a student’s achievement level at a specific point in time (e.g., fall). For this report, fall 2020 data will be reported for status. Growth refers to how much the student progressed across multiple points in time (e.g., fall to spring). NWEA growth metric (conditional growth percentile) was calculated based on two points of time, fall of 2019 and fall of 2020 assessments. Fall data for nine of the 10 Superintendents’ Plan schools were provided for Kindergarten and Grades 1 through 3.

Student Achievement Status

NWEA MAP uses a proprietary RIT (Rasch UniT) scale to measure student achievement status. The RIT scale is an equal-interval scale that is particularly useful for measuring student achievement in a variety of subject areas as well as tracking student achievement over time (Thum & Kuhfeld, 2020). Fall 2020 RIT scores were used to evaluate the status of reading and mathematics achievement of students in Kindergarten through Grade 3. Achievement percentiles were calculated based on a

national norm sample. For interpretation purposes, an achievement status percentile of 50 indicates a student performed at the midpoint of similar students across the United States. Norms were developed by NWEA (Thum & Kuhfeld, 2020). Table 5 summarizes the median student achievement percentile as well as achievement descriptors from NWEA across nine Superintendents’ Plan schools for each grade level. For example, kindergartners demonstrated average achievement percentiles relative to the midpoint of similar students across the U.S. Achievement status data was available for 1,792 students across all nine schools. Median percentile scores were in the low average to average range. It is important to note that national averages also reflected lower achievement scores in the 2020–2021 pandemic-affected school year compared to a typical year (Lewis et al., 2021).

TABLE 5. | KINDERGARTEN–GRADE 3 MAP FALL READING AND MATHEMATICS ACHIEVEMENT STATUS SCORES

Grade	READING			MATHEMATICS		
	N	Median Percentile	Goal Descriptors*	N	Median Percentile	Goal Descriptors*
Kindergarten	469	58.00	Average	459	55.00	Average
Grade 1	414	53.00	Average	410	59.00	Average
Grade 2	463	36.00	Low Average	448	38.00	Low Average
Grade 3	446	49.00	Average	427	41.00	Average

Note: NWEA uses these labels to describe achievement and growth of students.

The median achievement status scores by sub-populations are summarized in Figures 13 and 14. Percentile score patterns were similar across academic areas, with highest median scores in math demonstrated by students who were American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and White. In reading, Asian and White students had the highest median scores. Students who were non-English Language Learners and who had paid lunch status had the highest median scores in both reading and math. These results are consistent with national averages which indicate students of color and those in high-poverty elementary schools showed disproportionately lower scores in the 2020–2021 pandemic year (Lewis et al., 2021).

FIGURE 13. | MEDIAN READING ACHIEVEMENT STATUS PERCENTILE SCORES BY SELECTED DEMOGRAPHICS: FALL 2020



Note: Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander not reported as n < 10.
 FRL status includes data from five of the 10 SECP schools; ELL status and Race/Ethnicity includes data from nine schools.

FIGURE 14. | MEDIAN MATH ACHIEVEMENT STATUS PERCENTILE SCORES BY SELECTED DEMOGRAPHICS: FALL 2020



Note: Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander not reported as n < 10.
 FRL status includes data from five of the 10 SECP schools; ELL status and Race/Ethnicity includes data from nine schools.

Student Growth Status

The Conditional Growth Percentile (CGP) indicates how a student’s growth compares to the 2020 NWEA student growth norms (Thum & Kuhfeld, 2020). Table 7 provides the median CGP for reading and mathematics by grade level for fall of 2019 to fall of 2020, for eight schools. For interpretation purposes, a CGP of 50 indicates a student performed at the midpoint of similar students across the United States. A total of 1,105 students in Grades 1 to 3 had growth scores. Due to overall decreases in enrollment, fewer scores were available to analyze between years, and it should be recognized that explanations for the decreased enrollment may be systemic and related to the COVID-19 pandemic (Johnson & Kuhfeld, 2020). Overall, across both reading and math, median CGP scores ranged from the low average (30.00 percentile value) to the high average range (66.00 percentile value). In Grades 1 and 2, median CGP scores were higher in math. In Grade 3, median CGP scores were higher in reading. The highest median CGP score was for Grade 1 students in math. The lowest median CGP score was for Grade 2 students in reading. It should be noted there was much variance in median percentile ranks across schools.

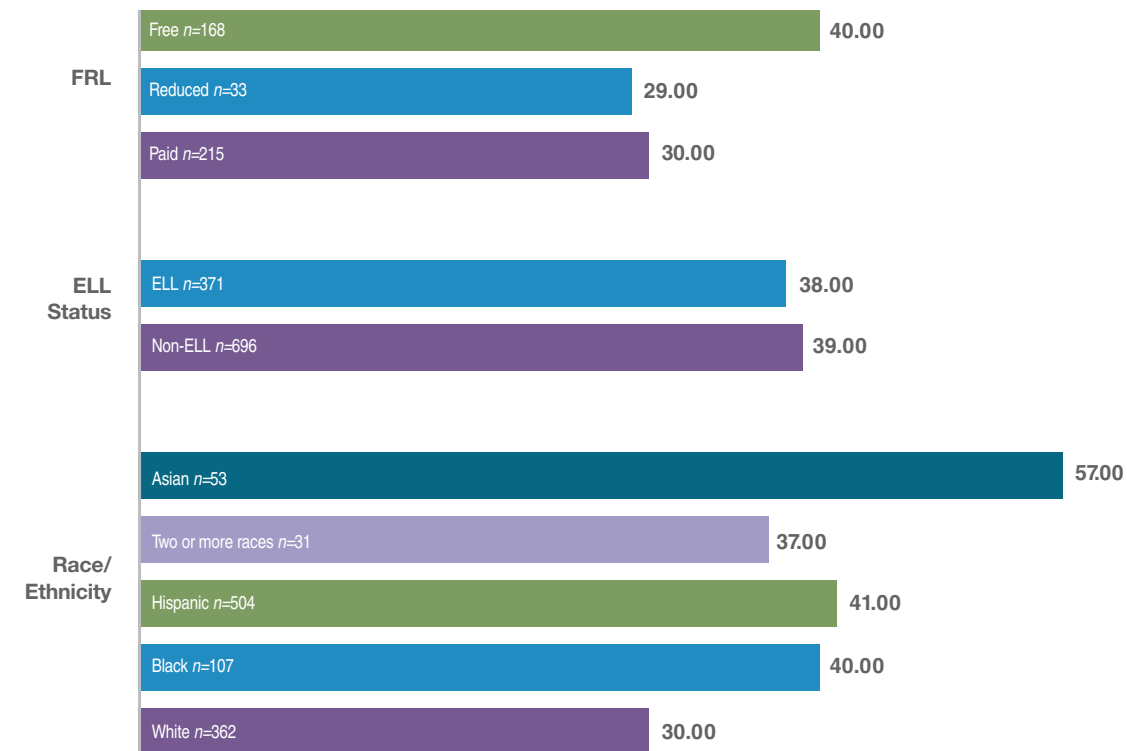
TABLE 6. | GRADES 1–3 MAP FALL 2019 TO FALL 2020 READING AND MATHEMATICS CGP SCORES

Grade	Reading			Mathematics		
	N	Median Percentile	Goal Descriptors*	N	Median Percentile	Goal Descriptors*
Grade 1	348	34.00	Low Average	344	66.00	High Average
Grade 2	391	31.00	Low Average	379	40.00	Low Average
Grade 3	328	47.00	Average	366	38.00	Low Average

*Note: NWEA uses these labels to describe achievement and growth of students.

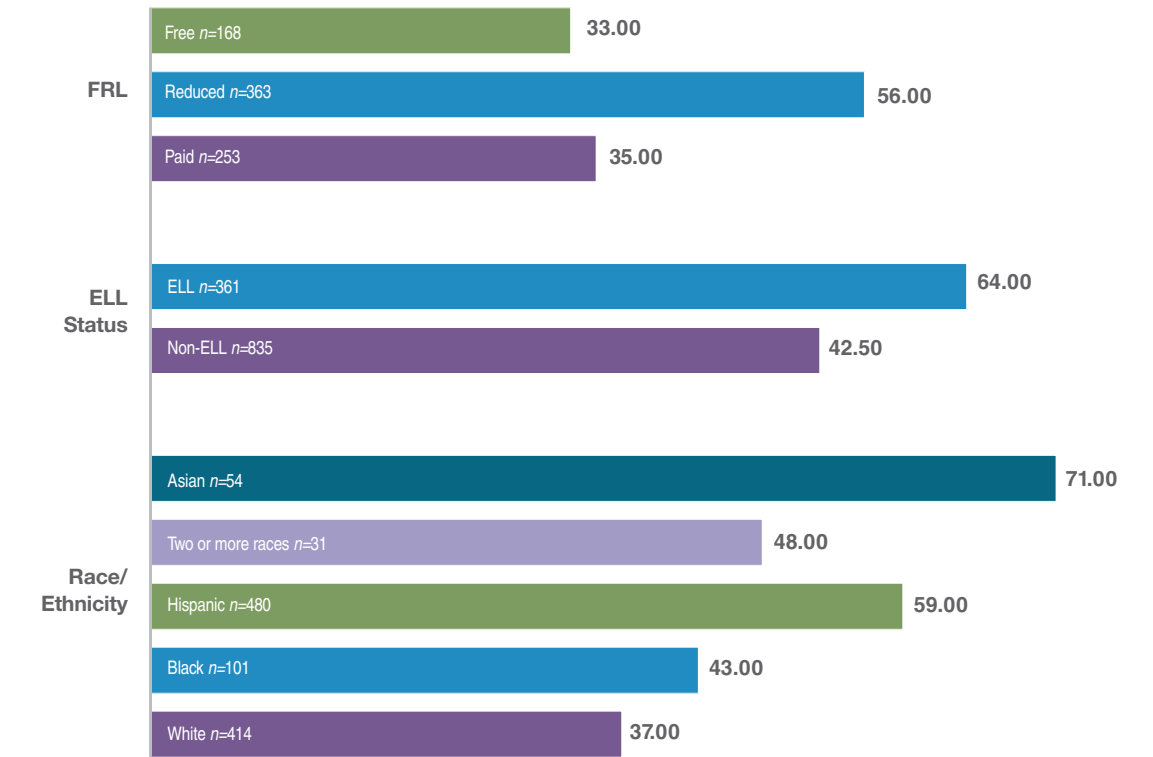
Students’ math and reading status were also analyzed by demographic groups. Figures 15 and 16 present the demographic breakdown of fall percentile ranks across race/ethnicity, ELL, and Free or Reduced Lunch status. In math, the following groups of students had median CGP scores that were above the 50th percentile, indicating growth that was greater than average: Asian students (71.00), ELL students (64.00), Hispanic students (59.00), and reduced lunch students (56.00). In reading, Asian students were the only group that had median CGP scores above the 50th percentile, with a score of 57.00.

FIGURE 15. | MEDIAN READING CONDITIONAL GROWTH PERCENTILE SCORES BY SELECTED DEMOGRAPHICS: FALL 2019 TO FALL 2020



Note: American Indian/Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander not reported as n < 10. FRL status includes data from four of the 10 SECP schools; ELL status and Race/Ethnicity includes data from eight schools.

FIGURE 16. | MEDIAN MATH CONDITIONAL GROWTH PERCENTILE SCORES BY SELECTED DEMOGRAPHICS: FALL 2019 TO FALL 2020



Note: American Indian/Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander not reported as n < 10. FRL status includes data from four of the 10 SECP schools; ELL status and Race/Ethnicity includes data from eight schools.

Achievement Status and Growth Summary

It is important to examine student progress by reviewing both student achievement status and conditional growth. Ideally, one would see students demonstrate both high achievement and high growth. Tables 8 and 9 summarize the data from students based on median achievement scores and conditional growth percentile data. Note that the two data points for each grade are not a matched sample because some children who had MAP results in the fall of 2020 may not have had a MAP assessment in the fall of 2019. No Kindergarten growth scores (i.e., CGP, Observed Growth, Projected Growth) are available because those students were not eligible for MAP testing in the fall of 2019.

TABLE 7. | READING ACHIEVEMENT STATUS AND GROWTH SUMMARY

Grade	N	Median Achievement Percentile (Fall 2020)	Median Achievement Percentile (Fall 2020)	N	Median Conditional Growth Percentile (Fall 2019 to Fall 2020)	Median Conditional Growth Percentile (Fall 2019 to Fall 2020)
Kindergarten	469	58.00		--	--	
Grade 1	414	53.00		348	34.00	
Grade 2	463	36.00		391	31.00	
Grade 3	446	49.00		328	47.00	

TABLE 8. | MATH ACHIEVEMENT STATUS AND GROWTH SUMMARY

Grade	N	Median Achievement Percentile (Fall 2020)	Median Achievement Percentile (Fall 2020)	N	Median Conditional Growth Percentile (Fall 2019 to Fall 2020)	Median Conditional Growth Percentile (Fall 2019 to Fall 2020)
Grade 1	459	55.00		--	--	
Grade 2	410	59.00		344	66.00	
Grade 3	448	38.00		379	40.00	

Student Projected Growth to Observed Growth Comparisons

NWEA MAP calculates a projected growth score that represents the change in RIT score that half the U.S. students will make over time, which are based on the student growth norms. An important analysis is to determine how the student’s actual change in RIT scores compared to the projected growth. The descriptive analyses were completed with students in Grades 1 through 3 (1,067 reading scores and 1,089 math scores) across the schools. In reading, students’ observed growth was below their projected growth. Third graders came the closest to meeting projected growth with nearly half (49.70%) meeting expectations for growth. Slightly more than a third (37.10%) of first and second graders met the projected growth. In math, the majority (69.5%) of first grade students met their projected growth. In Grades 2 and 3, 44.09% and 41.20% respectively met projected growth. Results by grade are summarized in Figures 17 and 18.

FIGURE 17. | READING GROWTH FALL 2019 TO FALL 2020 PROJECTED VS. OBSERVED GROWTH BY GRADE LEVEL

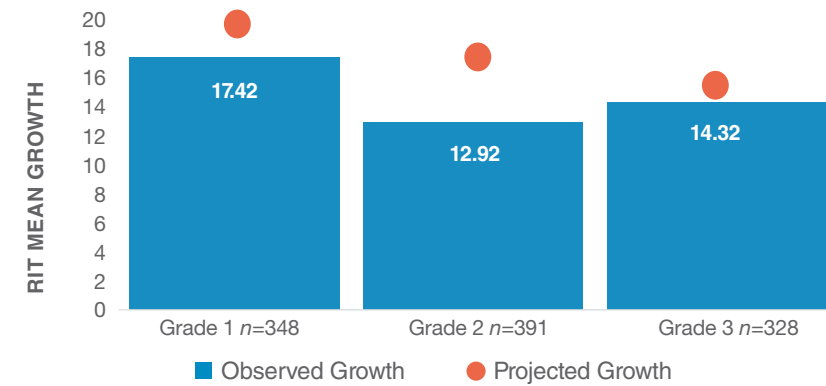
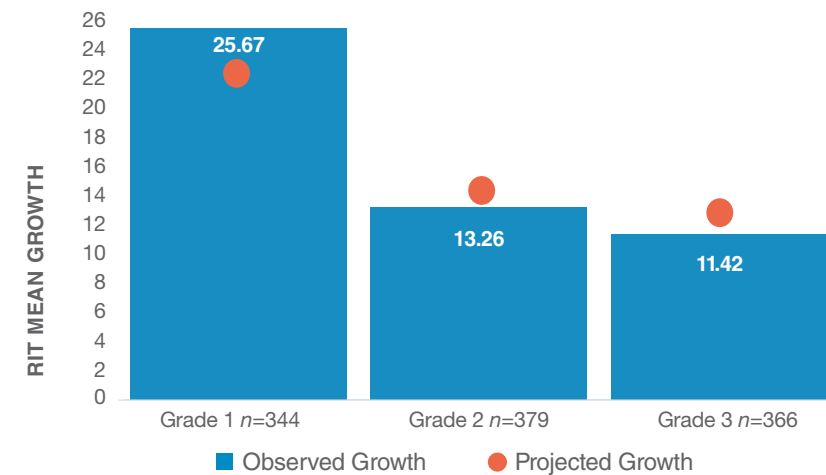


FIGURE 18. | MATH GROWTH FALL 2019 TO FALL 2020 PROJECTED VS. OBSERVED GROWTH BY GRADE LEVEL



Social-Emotional and Executive Function Development

Social-emotional and executive function development in early childhood is strongly associated with children’s academic progress through the school years. Learning to express and regulate emotions, develop empathy for others, develop relationships, make responsible decisions, and adapt to challenging situations effectively are key achievements during early childhood (Mahoney, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2018). In the Superintendents’ Early Childhood Plan, children whose families participate in home visiting (birth–3 years) and personal visits (3–5 years) complete regular screening questionnaires on children’s social-emotional development.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT: BIRTH TO 3 YEARS

A program specialist with the Buffett Institute coached school-based home visitors to support their work with families of children birth to 3 years. Home visitors work with families to increase their understanding of children’s social-emotional development, with a focus on enhancing parent-child interaction quality. Using the screening tool, Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social Emotional (ASQ:SE; Squires, Bricker, & Twombly, 2002), families answer questions about their young child’s expression and regulation of emotions, relationships, and interactions with others, and how the child explores her environment. Home visitors identify children who may need further assessment and/or intervention and provide resources to families who may want to know how to support their child’s social-emotional development. Offered in English and Spanish, parents completed the questionnaire for each child upon enrollment in home visiting and in regular intervals thereafter. The assessment takes about 10–15 minutes for parents to complete and is scored by the home visitor. Scores reflect the degree to which the child may be exhibiting delays and provide guidance for action: Refer, Monitor, or No to Low Risk.

During the 2020–2021 school year, data were available for children whose families participated in home visiting in the 10 full implementation schools, for a total of 58 children, aged 1 to 61 months. At the first visit of the school year, 52 children (89.7%) scored in the No to Low Risk category, two (3.4%) scored in the Monitor range, and four (6.9%) scored in the Refer range. In general, children enrolled in home visiting were developing typically in terms of their social and emotional development.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING: PREK TO GRADE 3

In the first eight years, children’s executive function skills develop rapidly and are associated with how well children participate in activities and engage in learning. Executive functioning supports children’s ability to focus and shift attention, regulate emotions and behaviors, and follow directions. When children have well-developed executive functioning, they exhibit self-control, think creatively, and remember information while using it in thinking or planning. They regulate their behavior and

emotions in order to learn and get along with others. Children’s executive functioning supports cognitive, social, and psychological development, as well as success in school and in life (Diamond, 2014).

In the 2020–2021 school year, in six of the 10 full implementation schools, children in PreK through Grade 3 completed the Minnesota Executive Function Scale (MEFS). MEFS is a global measure of executive functioning for children 2 years through adulthood (Carlson & Zelazo, 2014). It is reported as a single standard score, with an average of 100 (SD=15). The MEFS is administered on an iPad by a trained assessor and takes five to seven minutes to complete. A team of six evaluators from MMI spent one to four days at each participating school to conduct the assessments. The assessment was conducted in English or Spanish depending on the students’ preferred academic language.

Across the full implementation schools, children’s executive function skills were in the average range, approaching the midpoint of average across ages, with slightly lower scores for second and third graders (see Table 10a). There were minimal differences in mean scores from year to year. Additional analyses were done by demographic groups including Free or Reduced Lunch status and race/ethnicity (see Tables 10b and 10c). Across all groups, mean standard scores ranged from the low (93.12) to high (99.10) 90s. Note that the sample is not matched from year to year, so results do not represent individual student change over time.

TABLE 9A. | PREK–GRADE 3 MINNESOTA EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SCALE RESULTS ACROSS 3 YEARS

Grade	2018–2019			2019–2020			2020–2021		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Preschool	NA	NA	NA	200	98.26	7.93	140	98.04	8.58
Kindergarten	303	98.89	8.55	250	98.62	8.20	237	98.05	9.84
Grade 1	287	96.61	8.58	282	98.93	8.88	218	98.81	10.29
Grade 2	255	95.45	8.36	285	96.42	8.40	236	96.60	10.97
Grade 3	280	93.12	9.14	260	94.97	8.69	235	95.17	12.27

Note: Preschool MEFS data not collected in 2018–2019 school year.

Data presented across the three years include six of the 10 SECP schools.

TABLE 9B. | PREK–GRADE 3 MINNESOTA EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SCALE RESULTS BY FRL STATUS ACROSS 3 YEARS

FRL	N	2018–2019		2019–2020		2020–2021	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Free	336	93.19	9.09	95.86	8.81	95.60	11.37
Reduced	83	97.02	9.03	96.03	9.55	95.99	8.82
Paid	274	97.92	8.96	98.81	8.13	99.10	10.00

Note: Data presented across the three years includes six of the 10 SECP schools.

TABLE 9C. | PREK–GRADE 3 MINNESOTA EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SCALE RESULTS BY RACE/ETHNICITY ACROSS 3 YEARS

Race/Ethnicity	N	2018–2019		2019–2020		2020–2021	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Asian	27	96.48	11.46	97.51	8.22	98.39	10.97
Black/African American	120	95.53	8.64	96.71	9.32	94.86	10.07
White	667	97.29	8.41	98.24	8.29	98.11	10.74
Two or more races	70	94.23	9.39	96.17	8.03	96.27	10.23
Hispanic	156	93.60	9.56	95.18	9.03	95.68	10.47

Note: Data presented across the three years includes six of the 10 SECP schools.

American Indian/Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander not reported as n < 10.

An analysis was done to show the distribution of MEFS results across five scoring categories defined by the MEFS authors: Approaching, Meets-Low, Meets, Meets-High, and Exceeds. Overall, 92% of the students demonstrated executive function skills in the Meets-Low to Exceeds categories, with the majority (62%) meeting or exceeding. Figures 19 and 20 report the distribution by Free or Reduced Lunch status and race and ethnicity. Students with paid lunch status had the strongest executive functioning skills, with 95% scoring in the Meets-Low to Exceeds range; 87% of students with free lunch status scored in this range. Across all racial and ethnic groups, at least 88% of the students demonstrated executive functioning skills in the Meets-Low to Exceeds range. At least 51% of the students scored in the Meets to Exceeds range.

FIGURE 19. | CATEGORICAL MEFS SCORES BY FREE OR REDUCED LUNCH STATUS

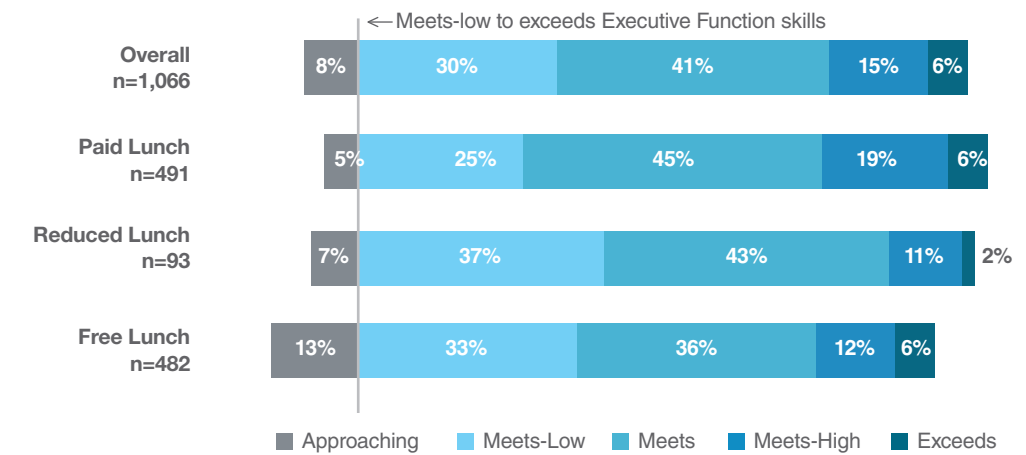
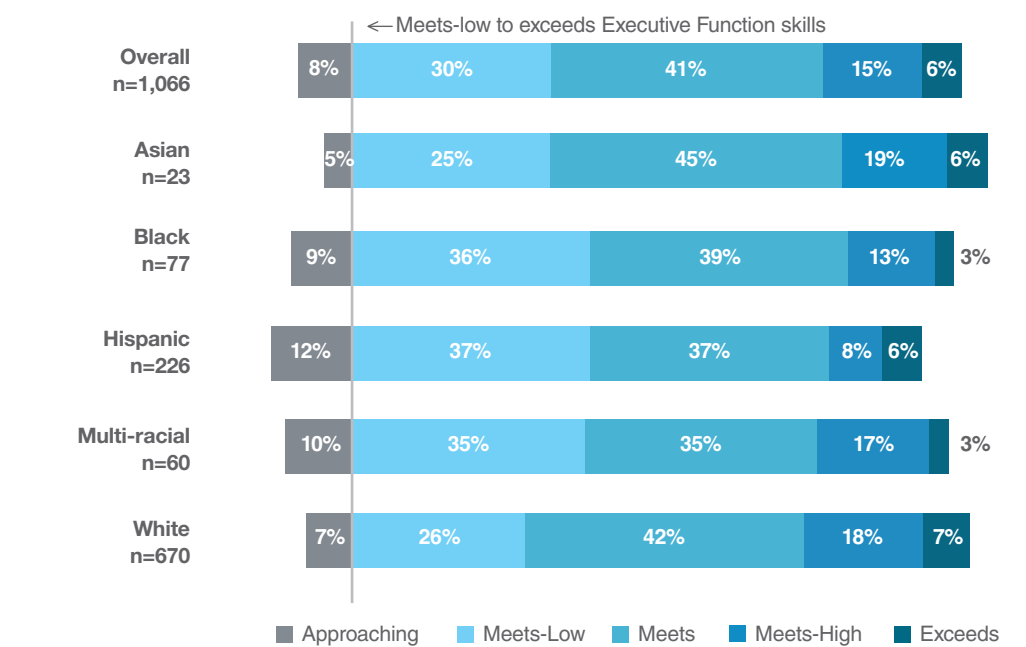


FIGURE 20. | CATEGORICAL MEFS SCORES BY RACE/ETHNICITY



Evaluation Summary and Recommendations for Level 1 Programming

This year's evaluation reflects a year of continued success in the midst of a pandemic that forced shifts in the entire education system. However, staff working to support School as Hub in full implementation continued to partner with school building leadership and family engagement staff (home visiting and family facilitation) to provide families and staff with needed supports. Program quality was assessed, when possible, as were child development and learning, and system shifts related to School as Hub principles of quality, continuity, and equity.

PROGRAM QUALITY

Home visiting continues to be an area of focus. While challenges persist in schools' ability to recruit families for program and evaluation participation, positive trends are beginning to emerge. Enrollment of new children and families in the home visiting program has increased each year, and more families that enroll in programming are also enrolling in evaluation activities. Likewise, children and families that enroll in the home visiting program generally remain in the program until the age of 3, at which point they transition to other aspects of programming. Unfortunately, not all schools have been able to fill their caseloads, with only four schools serving a full caseload of 15 children. The reach of the home visiting program continues to be a component in need of improvement.

Delivering high-quality programs for home visiting has also been a challenge, with program quality hovering in the "acceptable" range across the program years. An exception to this program rating is the degree to which home visitors supported quality parent-child relationships, for which their efforts were evaluated as "good." Clearly, the interruption of home visiting in the context of the pandemic interfered with targeted efforts on the part of schools to integrate assessment into ongoing program improvement. All have worked hard to provide what families need in this stressful context, with most home visitors meeting with families virtually.

In the coming year, Buffett Institute program staff will provide additional supports to increase district and school staff recruitment of families with children birth to age 3 into home visitation and evaluation participation. Program staff will continue to use observational assessments with home visitors and family facilitators as tools for continuous improvement.

The opportunity remains to learn how schools can continue to engage with families and learn how to create meaningful learning experiences in the years before school

entry. Schools can support staff and families to acknowledge the value of parent engagement rooted in reciprocal partnerships. Going forward, efforts to enroll families will include partnering with community organizations to engage families that reflect school demographics.

FAMILY PROCESSES

Family engagement, as connected to interaction with the home visitor and measured via the HOVRS, was evaluated as a program strength, consistent with findings from the 2019–2020 school year.

Parent-child interaction, as assessed by the KIPS assessment tool, reflected that most parents involved in the home visiting evaluation were interacting with children in ways that supported early learning. Home visitors and family facilitators will continue to build trusting partnerships with families with the aim of supporting parent-child interactions, while increasing efforts to support program evaluation.

Family perceptions of school engagement, as assessed using the Family Engagement Survey (FES), reflected lower family perceptions of engagement with schools than in the two previous school years. Understanding family beliefs and values regarding education is an ongoing commitment for schools, and using data to inform school decisions for family engagement should remain a regular priority. Families should be able to see themselves reflected in these data as schools continue to develop partnerships based on trust. In order to effectively support high-quality school partnerships and family processes, more family perspectives are needed to support school-based staff reflection and processes for engaging with and supporting families, birth–Grade 3.

Family interviews captured experiences with home visiting and family facilitation services as part of the Superintendents' Early Childhood plan for the first time. Families reported positive experiences with the program. Lived experiences of mothers in the home visiting program and family facilitation program concentrated on ways in which families entered the program, challenges in the program that focused on virtual learning, and reasons families stay in the program, which included enjoyment and learning of both the child and parent. Future interviews should aim to be representative of race, language, district, and school as well as the amount of time spent in the program.

Home visitors and family facilitators supported parents' parenting practices by demonstrating everyday activities that the child could use to learn, providing physical materials for the parent to practice learning opportunities with the child, making visits

enjoyable for both the child and parent, supporting families' values and goals, and offering advice about how to be aware and react to children's development. Home visitors and family facilitators supported education transitions through direct communication about options for child care, home care, or school-based care, preparation about what is needed before entry into a new care setting, and communicating about school events when available, in spite of limitations due to COVID-19.

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORTS

Educational facilitators fill a variety of roles within schools. Through interviews, educational facilitators, principals, and teachers all expressed a desire for a stronger vision of the role of the educational facilitator and for examples of what the facilitator could provide the teachers and schools. In future years, it may be helpful to provide the principals a menu of options of what the educational facilitator can provide and give examples of when an educational facilitator was successful. Once a clearer vision for the educational facilitator role has been established, principals can work with their facilitator and school staff to articulate how the role is carried out within their schools to fulfill their specific needs.

Relationships between educational facilitators and teachers were described by educational facilitators in relation to their effectiveness in the classroom. Trust and openness to coaching emerged as important elements of the relationship. Placing demonstrable value on the relationship-building stage between the facilitator and teachers would help emphasize this phase of the relationship.

Quality, continuity, and equity remain key principles of the School as Hub foundation. Educational facilitators can enhance quality in the classroom by reviewing data to help guide instruction and conversation and by modeling best practices in the classroom. School leaders also strive to improve connections with their birth–Grade 3 parents and families to improve continuity. Continuing to provide professional development opportunities on equity for all school staff and encouraging all staff to participate will serve to advance equity work within the schools.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

Development and learning from birth–3 years were assessed using a screening tool completed by parents. A majority of children enrolled in home visiting and family facilitation were typically developing in all areas of development. Home visiting supports were in place to help children whose development was at risk. Children will continue to be screened, monitored, and supported using the ASQ and ASQ: SE in the context of birth–3 years home visiting and family facilitation.

Academic achievement in Kindergarten through Grade 3 was assessed using the school-based MAP assessments. On average, children's reading and mathematics achievement status was slightly below the expected levels and varied by family and child demographics related to family income, race, and ethnicity. Research by NWEA notes the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and recommends using caution in the interpretation of Fall 2020 achievement scores, particularly in comparison to previous years (Johnson & Kuhfeld, 2020). While schools and districts have begun to shift their attention to quality, continuous, equitable learning opportunities for families and young children, opportunity gaps based on racial and ethnic disparities continue to be reflected in academic achievement scores. Children's academic achievement will continue to be observed using MAP assessments in future evaluation years to examine how system-level changes may be associated with child outcomes. Efforts will continue to work more closely with school districts to obtain essential data. Future analyses will compare baseline achievement status and growth across schools' years to examine how system-level changes might influence child development and learning over time.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL AND EXECUTIVE FUNCTION DEVELOPMENT

Executive functioning in Kindergarten–Grade 3 was evaluated using the MEFS assessment. Children's executive function was largely in the average range. Supporting executive function development for children who may not have equal access to high-quality opportunities could be a priority for districts and schools in the future.

Professional Development for All

Professional Development for All (PD for All) is a series of free professional development workshops open to early childhood professionals in the Omaha metro area as part of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan. The series introduces leading-edge research and innovative practices to support quality, continuity, and equity in early care and education for young children, birth through Grade 3. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the Buffett Institute and its partners were able to provide a series of timely, relevant, and engaging learning opportunities for early childhood professionals through two online webinar series during the 2020–2021 school year. These webinars offered participants the chance to learn from a wide range of local and national experts, and they expanded the reach of PD for All to professionals who, for a variety of reasons, were previously unable to attend in-person events.

Themes and topics for the webinar series were identified and refined based on input from many stakeholders. In May 2020, the Institute sent out an online survey to learn more about the interests and preferences of participants, and 229 early childhood professionals responded. The Institute's partners at Educational Service Unit 3, who support early childhood professionals in Douglas and Sarpy Counties, also surveyed their stakeholders and shared results. Additionally, the Superintendents' Early Childhood workgroup and principals at the 10 School as Hub full implementation sites were consulted and feedback was sought from the Learning Community Coordinating Council at meetings in September 2020, November 2020, and March 2021.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL FALL WEBINAR SERIES

Over half of the educators who responded to the PD for All survey indicated that they were interested in learning more about strategies for distance learning. In the fall of 2020, nearly all early childhood educators were thinking about the impact of digital technology on young children's learning and development. The PD for All webinar series aimed to support the use of digital technology in ways that can help children thrive in the pandemic and beyond. This series was co-developed and led by Chip Donohue, founding director of the Technology in Early Childhood Center (TEC) at Erikson Institute and senior fellow at the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Digital Media. Tables 11a and 11b provide descriptions of fall webinar participants.

TABLE 10A. | COMBINED PARTICIPANT ROLE ACROSS ALL THREE FALL WEBINARS, N=230

Participant Role	N	%
Teacher/Provider	110	48%
Assistant Teacher/Para	17	8%
Principal/School Admin	3	1%
School District Admin	2	1%
Instructional Facilitator	6	3%
Child Care Director	24	11%
Home Visitor	12	5%
University Faculty/Staff	7	3%
Community Member	4	2%
Parent/Guardian	3	1%
Other	37	16%

TABLE 10B. | COMBINED AGE GROUP SERVED BY PARTICIPANT ACROSS ALL THREE FALL WEBINARS, N=230

Age Group/Grade	N	%
Birth to 3	114	50%
Preschoolers (3–5)	155	67%
Kindergarten	60	26%
Grades 1–3	55	24%
Other	29	13%

Webinar 1:

This webinar offered support to families, educators, and community members as they navigated the “new normal.” Following a brief presentation by Donohue, Amy Mart, director of professional learning at the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, moderated a panel discussion with Donohue; Anne Karabon, assistant professor of early childhood and STEM education at the University of Nebraska at Omaha; Gwen Gideon, director of the Omaha Early Learning Center at Skinner; and Keeley Bibins, parent and educational facilitator at the Buffett Institute. The conversation explored how intentional and appropriate use of technology can:

- Support healthy child development
- Promote early learning and early literacy
- Encourage social-emotional development
- Create quality, continuity, and equity in children's learning

A total of 480 individuals registered for this event.

In a follow-up survey:

- 93% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the webinar helped them understand new information and ideas.

- 95% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they plan to use what they learned in the webinar.
- 94% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that after the webinar they knew how to use digital technology in ways that support children’s learning and development.

Webinar 2:

This webinar provided information and strategies to support educators in using technological tools such as tablets and digital cameras to support children’s engagement, enhance communication with families, document learning, and promote educational equity for diverse learners. After a brief presentation by Chip Donohue, three teachers shared examples of how they use technology as a tool to help children “show what they know” and become authors, storytellers, and producers of digital media. Panelists were Alex Morgan, community outreach specialist at Boulder (Colo.) Journey School; Greg Morgan, mentor teacher at Boulder (Colo.) Journey School; and Laura Marr, preschool teacher at Liberty Elementary School in Omaha.

Seventy-nine individuals registered for this event.

In a follow-up survey:

- 96% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the webinar helped them understand new information and ideas.
- 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they plan to use what they learned in the webinar.
- 98% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that after the webinar they know how to use digital storytelling in ways that support children’s learning and development.

Webinar 3:

This webinar examined the elements of effective digital teaching and learning with a focus on tools for engagement, the concept of “high tech with high touch,” and the importance of promoting quality, continuity, and equity for all learners. Chip Donohue provided an overview of research on effective online learning, and local educators and leaders shared the innovative practices that they used to effectively support student learning and development online. Panelists included Tony Gunter, principal at Kennedy Elementary School; Megan Rogers, Kindergarten/first grade teacher at Omaha Virtual School; Mark Dowling, second/third grade teacher at Omaha Virtual School; and Octavia Butler, first grade teacher at Gomez Heritage Elementary School.

Eighty-three individuals registered for this event.

In a follow-up survey:

- 96% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the webinar helped them understand new information and ideas.

- 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they plan to use what they learned in the webinar.
- 96% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that after the webinar they know how to enhance children’s social and emotional learning in virtual and blended learning environments.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL SPRING WEBINAR SERIES

In summer and fall webinar follow-up surveys, when early childhood professionals were asked to describe topics that would be of interest to them for future learning, equity was mentioned in 55 of 90 responses, making it the most common theme. A survey of early childhood providers in the Omaha metro area conducted by colleagues at Educational Service Unit 3 yielded similar results with respondents saying they were interested in learning more about equity in early care and education. In response to this demand, Kerry-Ann Escayg, an assistant professor of education at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, worked with the Buffett Early Childhood Institute to co-design and facilitate a two-part webinar series. Tables 11a and 11b provide descriptions of spring webinar participants.

TABLE 11A. | COMBINED PARTICIPANT ROLE ACROSS BOTH SPRING WEBINARS, N=128

Participant Role	N	%
Teacher/Provider	39	30%
Assistant Teacher/Para	7	5%
Principal/School Admin	3	2%
School District Admin	4	3%
Instructional Facilitator	9	7%
Child Care Director	12	9%
Home Visitor	3	2%
Family Facilitator	5	4%
University Faculty/Staff	18	14%
Community Member	7	5%
Parent/Guardian	5	4%
Other	16	13%

TABLE 11B. | COMBINED AGE GROUP SERVED BY PARTICIPANT ACROSS BOTH SPRING WEBINARS, N=128

Age Group/Grade	N	%
Birth to 3	57	45%
Preschoolers (3–5)	81	63%
Kindergarten	24	19%
Grades 1–3	23	18%
Other	26	20%

Webinar 1:

This webinar featured a presentation by Terry Husband, professor of early childhood education at Illinois State University, a national early education expert. In this session, he shared a philosophical and practical approach that seeks to identify, examine, and combat inequity in schools and the world. The presentation described several reasons why an equity focus is warranted in schools and classrooms today and outlined a practical and multi-dimensional framework for action.

A total of 224 individuals registered for this event.

In a follow-up survey:

- 99% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the webinar helped them understand new information and ideas.
- 99% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they plan to use what they learned in the webinar.
- 95% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that after the webinar they know what actions they can take in their schools and communities, compared with 73% before the webinar.

Webinar 2:

This webinar offered the opportunity for participants to learn from families' experiences. Dalhia Lloyd, family and community specialist at the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, described the research on how children of color develop understanding of what it means to be a member of their racial group. The presentation highlighted the ways in which negative messages from media, school, and other sources can negatively impact children's racial identity, and ways in which parents' efforts affirm and empower their young children.

A total of 298 individuals registered for this event.

In a follow-up survey:

- 97% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the webinar helped them understand new information and ideas.
- 97% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they plan to use what they learned in the webinar.
- 93% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that after the webinar they know what actions they can take to support racial socialization practices, compared with 55% before the webinar.

EVALUATION SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEVEL 3 PROGRAMMING

Professional Development for All was designed to introduce early childhood practitioners in community and school settings to leading-edge research and innovative practices. Throughout the tenure of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan, districts, schools, and practitioners have provided essential input to the content and processes of PD for All, and this was not interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. While all in virtual format due to the pandemic, five professional development webinar sessions provided critical knowledge for practitioners during the pandemic-afflicted 2020–2021 school year. Across the five sessions, 1,164 practitioners participated in real time, and 358 (31%) provided feedback on their learning experiences, which was overwhelmingly positive.

For the set of webinars on technology-mediated learning in early childhood education, 93–96% of the 230 survey respondents reported that as a result of the webinars they understood new information and ideas, planned to use what they learned (95–99%), and knew what actions they could take to successfully use technology to enhance their teaching and children's learning. For the set of webinars on equity-focused practices in early education, 97–99% of the 128 responding participants reported understanding new information and ideas. The same proportion of responding participants (97–99%) reported that they planned to use what they learned, and notably 93–95% of respondents reported a significant increase in knowledge about how to support equitable practices in their teaching.

With the COVID-19 pandemic continuing as this evaluation is published, PD for All will likely continue to be virtual for the 2021–2022 year. The benefit of the virtual format is that more practitioners may be able to participate than with an in-person format. When considering recommendations, learnings from the 2020–2021 program year could guide planning for the future. First, it will continue to be important to learn from practitioners directly, via survey or other methods, what they need and desire for their professional learning. Second, it will be important to engage with school and community leaders to align professional learning with district and community needs in meaningful ways. Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic has taken a heavy toll on the well-being of early child education professionals across all roles (caregiver, teacher, administrator), necessitating a professional learning focus on enhancing and supporting the well-being and resilience of early care and education professionals.

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