

NEBRASKA PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANT

RENEWAL YEAR TWO



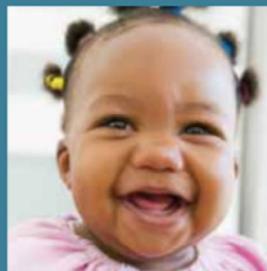
Bi-Monthly Newsletter - February 2022

Nebraska's Strategic Plan Goal 3: Collaboration

This month's focus is on collaboration in Nebraska's Preschool Development Renewal Grant Birth to Five Years. For the coming year, issues of the newsletter will not only focus on the particular goals of the Strategic Plan, but also the major themes that the Plan addresses. This month's issue spotlights PDG initiatives that focus particularly on collaboration.

The initiatives focused on Goal 3 seek to create more collaboration among early care and education providers, schools, families, coaches, and businesses in communities and regions across the state; provide models for communities to build customized collaboration plans that meet the local families' needs; and build or expand capacity within communities to support continuity of quality care for children making transitions across early care and education settings, including those from early care and education settings to kindergarten.

GOAL 3 Collaboration



Strategic Plan Update

Reaching families and early childhood professionals in diverse communities across the state is a top priority of the current stakeholder engagement effort. Only by listening to these voices can

we reflect the full range of solutions that will ensure we create a Strategic Plan for Equitable Access to Quality (SPEAQ).

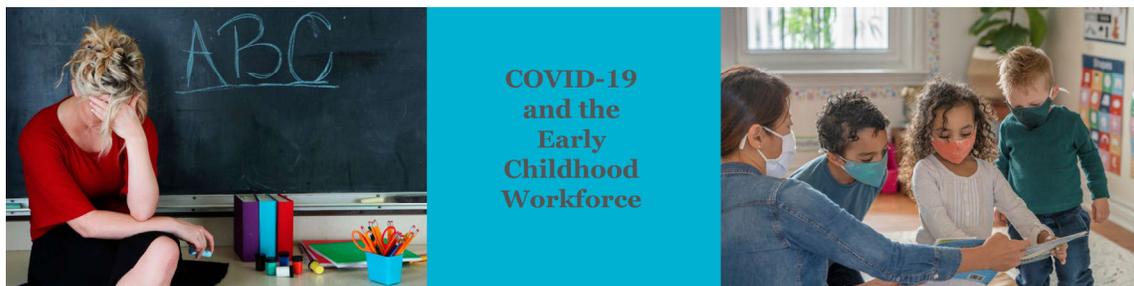
Please help us by hosting a **SPEAQ Up!** meeting, which includes:

- leading a conversation with the people you know who are interested in improving ECE;
- discussing ideas to address needs and gaps experienced in your community; and
- sharing the group's recommendations with us.

We will provide training for you as host and facilitator, all meeting materials, and a stipend for your efforts.

Help us ensure that your community's voice is represented in the 2023 Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan. Contact [Sara Vetter](#) to get started.

For questions about the Strategic Plan, please contact [Susan Sarver](#).



Needs Assessment Update

No one is a stranger to the impact of COVID-19, but our early care and education workforce has kept the world spinning for many a Nebraska parent. In April 2020, providers were asked questions about their wellbeing and needs during that earliest part of the pandemic. Providers reported experiencing high levels of stress because of the virus, but also indicated worry about their stress negatively impacting the quality of care they could provide. In June 2020, providers were again asked about their wellbeing--economic, health, and emotional. Providers indicated they were still experiencing high levels of stress, but their responses also represented a high level of resiliency.

As the two-year mark of the pandemic approaches, the Needs Assessment team will again survey the early care and education workforce regarding various aspects of their wellbeing. This survey will include questions around protective factors so that researchers, practitioners, leaders, and policymakers can better understand how to support the workforce--both now and in the future.

- [First survey findings](#)
- [Second survey findings](#).

For more information on the Needs Assessment, please contact [Kate Gallagher](#).

Collaboration for PDG Initiatives

Communities for Kids Plus Adapts to Local Needs

Communities for Kids Plus is an ambitious project aimed at all four goals of Nebraska's strategic plan, but community collaboration is at its very heart. The funding is contracted to communities so that they can implement their own plans around increasing capacity and enhancing quality of their early childhood landscapes.

To receive a contract, communities first had to collaborate among themselves to develop goals tailored to their local needs. In the management of their contract, communities continuously work together toward their common goals, adjusting when necessary to maximize the use of the funds within the narrow parameters under which they can be used.

In Year 2, the Communities for Kids team has seen the need for greater flexibility to get community goals met and funds spent--and has therefore begun collaborating with each community on any needed budget modifications and some coaching to examine innovative ways to bridge the local gap in early childhood. For instance, some communities who have lost their Early Childhood Community Coordinator have begun to spend those funds to ramp up their Early Learning Scholarship programs or Quality and Capacity Building spending while they wait to hire a new person. Others struggling to get an Early Learning Scholarship program off the ground are thinking through other innovative ways that they can help their local providers, such as paying for additional social emotional training or awarding them with stipends for increasing their involvement with Step Up to Quality.

The Communities for Kids team is looking forward to continuing to pivot when necessary in the coming year to help make a lasting impact for children and families all across Nebraska through the power of collaboration.

For more information on C4K+, please contact [Marti Beard](#).

Campaign Implementation Underway

The Nebraska Early Childhood Campaign is a statewide collaborative effort that seeks to build support for quality early childhood care and education in Nebraska. Principal funding is provided through Nebraska's Preschool Development Grant.



The two-year campaign builds upon the many strengths, resources, materials, and efforts that exist in Nebraska today. Campaign implementation is facilitated by the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska and the Neimand Collaborative, a nationally recognized social impact firm that has deep experience in early care and education.

The campaign will focus on three audiences: parents and families, the early childhood workforce, and state and community leaders.

The campaign aligns closely with the goals of the Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan and seeks to empower parents and families with information that helps them make informed decisions about their children's care and education.

Family engagement and race equity are central to the campaign. Research from the Needs Assessment, ongoing focus groups and community conversations about the strategic plan, and

statewide market research are being used to learn more about families' perspectives and inform engagement strategies. Ensuring equitable access to quality services for all children is at the heart of all efforts.

The campaign was several months in development with four groups of planning partners and draws on a statewide communications audit to identify existing communications materials that can be promoted during the campaign.

Current efforts include the formation of a campaign advisory group of stakeholders (including parents and early childhood professionals), analysis of market research to inform messaging and brand development, website development, and finalization of an evaluation plan. The campaign will roll out over the next few months and will be active through December 2023.

For more information on the Parent Education Campaign, please contact [Renee Wessels](#).

Transition Committee Provides Toolkit in Year 2

The Transitions Committee convened several meetings with partners and stakeholders in year one. This group includes school district leaders, principals, pre-k and primary teachers, early childhood care and education (ECCE) state leaders, and parents.

The Transitions Committee did the following within Year 1:

- Reviewed and revised state transitions practices documents;
- Discussed ways to increase parent and provider understanding of transition processes;
- Developed a resource library to house various materials related to transitions practices.



Year 2 is underway with collaboration continuing with the Transition Workgroup led by WestEd, an educational research, development, and service organization. Families, school districts, and ECCE representatives meet to provide input and recommendations for the development of the Nebraska Transition to Kindergarten Toolkit and Resource Guide. The group is also providing feedback through subcommittees reflective of these three user groups. The toolkit will include information and strategies for children's transitions throughout the early years with a focus on the transition to kindergarten.

The goals of the toolkit are to:

- Strengthen the collaboration among ECCE providers and public schools;
- Build knowledge among professionals in ECCE and schools;
- Contribute to the alignment of standards and curricula;
- Promote the importance of aligned standards and curricula between early childhood programs and districts.

The purpose of the toolkit is to create a common understanding of the developmental expectations of young children and best practices to support their learning and development

that are equitable to all children's needs. Collaboration with stakeholders will support alignment and coherence in state-level systems and resources for PreK through early grades.

The Nebraska Transition to Kindergarten Toolkit and Resource Guide will be available online to communities and districts statewide to ensure continuity in the transition process from birth to kindergarten.

For more information about the Transitions Committee, please contact [Lisa Roy](#).



NAESP Leadership Academy Explores Competencies

Nebraska's National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) PreK-3 Leadership Academy started its second cohort in May 2021 with more than 20 leaders from school districts and Head Start programs from across the state. These leaders have spent the year diving into the competencies from the NAESP publication: *Leading Learning Communities: A Principal's Guide to Early Learning and the Early Grades (Pre-K-3rd Grade)* to develop their knowledge to lead PreK-3rd grade learning communities.

After an initial overview of each of the competencies in the course curriculum, each of the participants self-selected one of the competencies to increase their understanding through additional articles and resources as well as implementing a capstone project. Participants chose a capstone project by selecting a problem of practice they are working through within their own program/community. The participants were then asked to utilize the coursework to determine next steps on how to address the problem and begin work on the project. This process has allowed early childhood leaders within schools and programs to focus on an issue that is directly affecting the early childhood landscape within their program/community.

The most requested competency chosen by Nebraska Early Childhood leaders for their capstone project is "developing and fostering partnerships with families and communities." Early Childhood leaders in Nebraska's NAESP PreK-3 Leadership Academy understand the importance of developing and promoting collaboration and have begun implementing projects focused on transitions to kindergarten that incorporate family engagement strategies and partnerships with community childcare providers.

For more information on the NAESP Leadership Academy, please contact [Melody Hobson](#) or [Kristine Luebbe](#).

Race Equity

Black History Month and Early Childhood Education

In honor of Black History Month and considering the focus of PDG work, we celebrate these influential and forerunning individuals who influenced early childhood education and who worked toward equity for Black children in America.



Betsey Stockton (1798-1865)

- Born into slavery.
- Known for her teaching abilities with children under age of 5.
- Emancipated at 20 years old.
- Hired by the Infant School Society of Philadelphia for the new African American infant school, one of the first of its kind.



Selena Sloan Butler (1872-1964)



- After her first son was born she realized she could not find a kindergarten for Black children near her home in Atlanta.
- Began a kindergarten in her living room
- Formed the nation's first Black parent-teacher association.
- Her programs sparked the formation of the Georgia Colored Parent-Teacher Association, which led to the National Colored Congress of Parents and Teachers.
- Worked on the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection.



Inez Beverly Prosser (1897-1934)



- Pioneer in early childhood mental health.
- Became America's first Black female psychologist.
- Was a teacher in south central Texas for 18 years at a Black elementary school.
- Earned her PhD in psychology in 1933, the first by a woman of her race.





Edmund Gordon (1921-)

- Founded the federal Head Start Program in 1965.
- Focused on improving children's living conditions.
- Founded the Institute for Urban Education in 1973.



Dr. Evelyn Moore

- Founded the National Black Child Development Institute.
- Advocate for universal childcare and access to high-quality early childhood education for all children, regardless of race or socioeconomic status.
- Works with policymakers to invest in the early childhood workforce, both to improve teaching abilities, and also to build their understanding of human and cognitive development.

Spotlight on PDG

Nebraska Infant Mental Health Forges New Alliance

Holly Hatton-Bowers knows the powerful moment of watching families struggle and trying to build positive bonds from analyzing such interactions. In a practicum where she had to employ video reflection, Hatton-Bowers tells of a woman who described herself as a “terrible mother,” and who went as far as saying, “I think my child hates me.” Hatton-Bowers describes the emotion of reviewing the video with the mother and pointing out an instance when the 2 1/2-year-old child climbed into the mother’s lap, looked up at her, smiled and stroked her face. Hatton-Bowers asked, “what did you just notice?” The mother said, “that my child wants to be with me,” and began crying.

Such is the power of laying the foundations of strong, positive family relationships that result in healthy infant and child development. Indeed, Hatton-Bowers was nearly in tears herself when she related the moment of reinforcing to the distraught mother how much her child cared for her. Perhaps that’s why Hatton-Bowers, in coordination with Sami Bradley of Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, agreed to co-leadership of the Nebraska Association for Infant Mental Health (NAIMH) in 2017, which has tripled in membership under their guidance.



Sami Bradley



Both Bradley and Hatton-Bowers are passionate about the importance of infant mental health and adamant concerning a Nebraska landscape in need of support in this area. Bradley describes a system where research abounds on the importance of cognitive and emotional development in the first three years of a child's life but where it is difficult to obtain mental health due to insurance regulations and low availability of providers. She further details a system where practitioners are leaving the field without being replaced because, she points out, burnout is high for those who work with young children and families. In fact, Bradley works in an area of Nebraska where there are no practitioners serving children under 5.



Holly Hatton-Bowers

A welcome change has come in 2022 thanks to carryover funding from the Preschool Development Renewal Grant. NAIMH has joined with the Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health, an internationally recognized certifying agency for the field. The organization offers four levels of certification to a wide range of practitioners from providers and home visitors to licensed child psychotherapists: Infant Mental Health Associate, Infant Family Specialist, Infant Mental Health Specialist, and Infant Mental Health Clinical, Faculty, or Policy.



Aiesha Rahn

[Read the full article.](#)

View the PDG Events Calendar

The PDG Events Calendar is live. To see what's happening or to submit an event, please visit our Calendar of Events Page.

Family Engagement

Family Engagement Conference Planning Moves Ahead

The Family Engagement group continues to work on the conference planned for October of 2022. During the month of December, the team collected 252 surveys throughout 35 different counties. Titled the "Conference for Family and Parents of Young Children: Collaboration, Learning, Support and Leadership," the event will focus on:

1. How to help my child develop social/emotional skills;
2. Effective parenting strategies;
3. Educational activities to do with my child;
4. How to help my child be ready for preschool and kindergarten.

The team continues to search for parents in rural communities who would like to help with the PDG efforts. If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity, please contact Mariana Schell.

You can follow updates on the upcoming Conference for Family and Parents of Young Children: Collaboration, Learning, Support and Leadership by visiting the [Family Engagement webpage](#).

If you are interested in participating, please contact [Mariana Schell](#).

[Click Here to Subscribe](#)

Have you subscribed to the PDG eNewsletter so that you can stay up-to-date on early childcare initiatives? All you have to do is complete a short form.

Do You Have Questions?

If you have questions about newsletter content, PDG-related activities, or partner organizations, we want to help you find answers. To receive information regarding your questions, please submit an online query by filling out the form at the bottom of our "PDG Progress" page, and we'll do our best to find you answers.

[Get Answers to Your Questions](#)



PDG Partners

Nebraska's PDG work is led by Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS) under the authority of Governor Pete Ricketts, in partnership with the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, the University of Nebraska system, and many other partners.

This project is made possible by funding received through Grant Number 90TP0079-02, of the USDHHS-Administration for Children and Families, Office of Early Childhood; Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services; Nebraska Department of Education; and Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, following grant requirements of 70% federal funding with 30% match from state and private resources. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Office of Child Care, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

For questions or comments regarding the Preschool Development Grant, please contact:

[Shannon Mitchell-Boekstal](#), Assistant Vice President Preschool Development

For more information or to subscribe to the newsletter, visit [Preschool Development Grant](#).

Our Contact Information

Nebraska Children & Families Foundation

215 Centennial Mall South
Suite 200
Lincoln, NE 68508
402-476-9401
<http://www.NebraskaChildren.org>

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Manage email preferences](#)