

NEBRASKA PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANT

RENEWAL YEAR TWO



Bi-Monthly Newsletter - December 2021

Nebraska's Strategic Plan Goal 2: Quality

This is part 2 of the focus on quality 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 continues to spotlight PDG initiatives that focus particularly on quality.

The initiatives focused on Goal 2 seek to establish a statewide definition of quality that shapes and directs early childhood system change efforts, to promote quality by supporting and training the early childhood workforce, to improve family engagement practices, and to promote quality through the assessment of spaces and facilities in which children receive care.

GOAL 2 Quality



Strategic Plan Update

As 2021 is wrapping up and we look forward to 2022, the Strategic Plan team wants to make you aware of important planning engagements that will be coming in early 2022. Across Nebraska, individuals and organizations are bettering early childhood care and education for all of Nebraska's children, and we seek to discover and promote those stories.

Engagements in 2022 will involve both the leadership of early childhood organizations, grassroots community members, and early childhood professionals. These engagements will help the [Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan](#) become a sustainable tool for coordinated systems change. Information will be gathered at these events in the form of success stories that will promote inclusion and highlight the Nebraska-ness of the strategic plan. Community-led engagements will be coordinated by those considered “trusted voices” throughout the diverse communities of Nebraska.

[Get involved or learn more about the strategic plan.](#)

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



Needs Assessment Update

The Preschool Development Grant Strategic Plan defines quality early care and education as responsive and sensitive interactions and instruction that meet the developmental needs of children and are respectful and inclusive of children’s cultures, languages, and families. Data collected by the Needs Assessment shows that:

- Over 95%** of parents indicated they think it is important that care settings have warm and kind staff, are clean and sanitary, have routines that include exercise and physical activity, and have menus that include healthy and nutritious food.
- In addition, over 90%** of parents indicated they think it is essential for providers to meet children’s behavioral and social needs, have well-educated staff, and communicate regularly with parents about their children’s development.
- Over 90%* of providers indicated they felt the goals of enhancing overall child development, promoting child health and physical development, and identifying developmental delays to provide early intervention were important to their programs.
- Also, over 90%* indicated that teacher-child interactions, physical environment and materials, and teacher-to-child ratios/group sizes were important characteristics of quality care settings.

The Needs Assessment team will continue to gather data from Nebraskan families and providers about their perspectives, focusing on populations we have not yet been able to reach.

*Source: [Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan Executive Summary](#)

**Source: [2019 Nebraska’s Preschool Development Grant Needs Assessment Report](#)

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

Building Quality through PDG Funding

Ready Rosie's Modeled Moments

ReadyRosie is an evidence-based, birth-elementary age family engagement resource currently being utilized by 450 classrooms statewide through PDG funding—and will be expanding to well over 1,000 classrooms in Year Three!

ReadyRosie uses current research on family engagement, developmentally appropriate practice, standards, family protective factors, and core social emotional competencies as the foundation of learning games and activities. It provides data for educators and families to measure outcomes.

ReadyRosie offers 1,000+ “Modeled Moment” English and Spanish videos to families via text, email, and a website, letting educators target specific skills and individualize the videos to be shared with parents of their students. It can also be used to provide interactive family workshops, for professional development, and to support a cohesive family engagement plan.

The ReadyRosie platform provides the perfect opportunity for providers to maintain a collaborative relationship with caregivers and help support each child’s learning and development (which is a quality indicator for [Step Up to Quality](#)). Some of the most active ReadyRosie users are Spanish-speakers, showing that this tool is instrumental in helping to increase quality in some underserved communities.

The C4K team continues to track and evaluate usage of the platform and could not be more excited about this excellent opportunity to enhance family engagement and quality all across Nebraska.

For more information about Ready Rosie, please contact [Noelle Wegner](#).



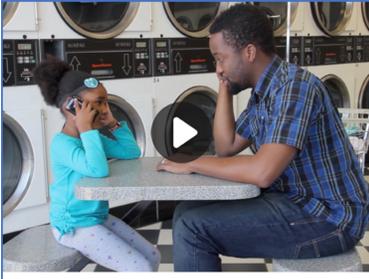
Following Directions
GROCERY STORE



Measuring the Table
RESTAURANT



Laundry Talk
LAUNDRY MAT



Trainee Evaluations of Reflective Practice are Encouraging

Working in the early childhood education field can be challenging enough without the additional difficulties posed over the past 18 months: closures, health scares, loss of children, loss of staff, loss of income, supply shortages. Those issues alone can cause a person to become more anxious, overwhelmed, and stressed even without adding the day-to-day challenges of working in an early childhood education setting.

The Facilitating Attuned Interactions (FAN) model of reflective practice can help a professional mitigate the effects of emotionally intrusive circumstances and build resiliency against work stress. The Nebraska Center on Reflective Practice (NCRP) has been providing FAN training to

early childhood education professionals and other helping professionals since 2016. Over 400 people from 66 agencies have participated in the FAN training program. As of November 1, 2021, 100 professionals have participated in PDG-funded FAN training programs, including center directors and assistant directors, coaches, coordinators, and professors.

The NCRP is conducting an evaluation of these efforts to assess its impact on the Strategic Plan's Goal 2 of *increasing the quality of ECCE settings*. Although the sample size is still small, the data is showing promising trends in slightly higher reflective ability and a statistically significant decrease in workplace burnout. Trainees from PDG cohorts report, concerning reflective practice:

- “It’s a better way of handling conflicts.”
- “I have learned I don’t have to fix all of the problems.”
- “It is a steady process to work back and forth between myself and my staff. It can be used for improvements and showing next steps, along with the growth they are making.”

The overall trainee average response to the statement, “Reflective Practice is beneficial,” is clearly positive, receiving a 4.81 out of 5 rating by training participants who have completed six months of training.

The next PDG cohort starts in February 2022, and the NCRP is hoping to increase the number of training cohorts it can provide in Year 3.

To learn more about the Nebraska Center on Reflective Practice, please contact [Kelli Hauptman](#).

New Alliance for Nebraska Association for Infant Mental Health

After many years of dedicated effort, the [Nebraska Association for Infant Mental Health](#) (NAIMH) has joined the Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health. The Alliance is a nationally recognized global organization that supports infant mental-health associations around the world to grow the professional knowledge, skills, and recognition of professionals working with infants and young children.



Nebraska Association
for Infant Mental Health

As part of the Alliance, Nebraska can now offer Endorsement®, which is intended to recognize competency in the infant, young-child family field. The *Competency Guidelines*® provide a shared set of standards across multiple disciplines and service delivery systems (promotion, prevention/early intervention, intervention, and leadership), which makes this specific set of competencies unique and valuable for supporting early childhood mental health across Nebraska. Sami Bradley, one of project leads of the initiative, says of the impact of work in the field, “We know that children thrive when they have caregivers that understand and value the importance of relationships and social emotional development. This gives us an opportunity to recognize and support professionals working with young children and their families.”

Bradley, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, and Holly Hatton-Bowers, Assistant Professor at UNL, are the co-leads of NAIMH and have been moving the work forward with planning. A Leadership Cohort, comprised of individuals of diverse disciplines and geographies across the state, has been identified and will be the first in the state to be endorsed. They will then support other professionals as they begin the process in 2022. An official kick-off day has been planned for April 6th, 2022, during the “Week of the Young Child.”

Collaborations with many entities, including the Nebraska Resource Project for Vulnerable Young Children at UNL-Center on Children, Families and the Law, have been helpful in enhancing this work. “Our project is so excited to embark on this endeavor with NAIMH to help increase the supports and skills being provided to Nebraska practitioners who work in the area of infant mental health,” said Kelli Hauptman of the Nebraska Center on Reflective Practice.

For more information about the Nebraska Association for Infant Mental Health, please contact [Sami Bradley](#).



Learning Begins at Birth Expands Reach in Multiple Languages

Nebraska statute 79-1902 states that the Nebraska Department of Education and Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services will collaborate to create a resource booklet titled *Learning Begins at Birth*. This booklet is to be given to the parents of each child born in Nebraska to provide information on child development, childcare, how children learn, children’s health, services available to children and parents, and any other relevant information.

A broad coalition of partners from the Nebraska Department of Education, multiple divisions of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, university professors, parents, and private organizations came together to push this project forward. Funding from the Preschool Development grant enabled this team to update, print, and distribute this guide across Nebraska to help parents understand child development, the importance of quality childcare and education, and the resources available to them. Nearly 140,000 copies have been printed and over 60,000 shipped in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Arabic. In this PDG cycle, the Learning Begins at Birth team is working to distribute Vietnamese and Arabic guides, ensure all birthing hospitals have adequate copies and practices for distribution, and build the list of partners to expand distribution. As word of the project has spread, community partners have been reaching out requesting copies.

It is important to get every new parent access to this guide, as it promotes to parents the importance of quality experiences in early childhood. This guide improves the quality of children’s education by emphasizing that learning begins at birth, not kindergarten; by making parents aware of the importance of quality early childcare and education; by offering tools to help parents find quality childcare and education; and by making parents aware of the many excellent resources available to them.

For more information about Learning Begins at Birth, please contact [Adam Feser](#).





Circle of Security Parenting Classroom a Growing Success

In April 2021, a Nebraska PDG contract was awarded to the Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children (Nebraska AEYC) to coordinate the expansion of Circle of Security Parenting – Classroom (COSP) across the state, with a specific focus on childcare providers.

The COSP-Classroom overview states, “Interactions between children and adults are the primary mechanism for development and learning. By investing in the quality of classroom relationships, we see improvements both in teacher wellbeing and in the learning and developmental outcomes for children. Children who have stronger relationships with teachers in early schooling years are more likely to have greater academic and social success as they age.” This focus on classroom quality clearly brings the project into alignment with PDG objective 2.2 as it works to improve the quality of early childhood education programs by strengthening and improving the skills, knowledge, and abilities of the workforce through the provision of COSP-C training.

Early in the project, applications were sent out to all registered COSP facilitators with 25 applications returned. The original budget allowed for 20 facilitators to be trained in COSP-Classroom; however, thanks to a registration discount from COS International, we were able to fund all 25 applicants! To date, seventeen of the twenty-five facilitators have completed training and submitted their certificate of completion to Nebraska AEYC. One Childcare Center Director commented after completion, “Everything has changed, the way we as staff talk about kids, think about kids, and even ourselves. When we get ourselves to really step back for a second and reflect everything becomes so much clearer.”

Other benefits of the project include: monthly facilitator meetings, fidelity coaching, and a \$300 participation stipend for involved childcare providers. By offering a stipend to all childcare providers, we are ensuring equitable access to the program. COSP-Classroom facilitators are offering classes in both English and Spanish.

For more information about Circle of Security Parenting Classroom, please contact [Tracy Gordon](#).

Positive Home Visit Responses for Getting Ready



Getting Ready promotes quality experiences for children through a collaborative partnership-based, family engagement approach. Educators use strategies that support parents as equal partners, promote frequent and bi-directional communication, engage in mutual decision-making, and respect family language and culture. To date, we have partnered with 179 home visitation and center-based educators from close to 50 Nebraska communities to support their use of eight Getting Ready strategies and a collaborative parent meeting structure.



The response to Getting Ready has been positive; 94% of home visitors indicate that home visit quality has improved. Specifically, home visitors report gains in structuring home visits, communicating and collaborating with families, setting mutual child/family goals, and facilitating parent/child interactions. One home visitor expressed, “I’m asking more open-ended questions and I’m engaging with my families in a way that’s meaningful. I’m definitely more capable of communicating honestly and clearly and because of that, I’m seeing my relationships with my families flourish.”

Getting Ready also supports the development of practices and procedures that infuse the strategies and structure into everyday agency/program activities and expectations to support quality experiences for children. During coaching, administrators/supervisors/coaches discuss how they can uniquely support the Getting Ready approach after PDG. One agency Supervisor reported, “I feel that I am significantly more aware of the needs of my Home Visitors after using the Getting Ready Approach. I am more focused on making them recall their strengths FIRST and then working with them on how they would like to build on them instead of focusing on what negatives we need to work on fixing.”



In Year 2, Getting Ready continues to build the knowledge and skills of home visitation and center-based educators and agency staff to promote sustained support for collaborative family engagement practices that will yield quality experiences for children and families.

To learn more about Getting Ready, please contact [Lisa Knoche](#).

Child Care Essentials – Choosing Quality Child Care Nebraska Booklet

Ensuring all children have access to quality early experiences is an investment in Nebraska’s future. Informing family decisions around choosing quality childcare for their children is one effective way to support children receiving quality early learning experiences. As such, a booklet

that is a rethinking and redesign of *The Right Place*, under the guidance of project leads Holly Hatton-Bowers, assistant professor in Child, Youth, and Family Studies, and Jaci Foged, Early Childhood (EC) Extension Educator, was developed to guide Nebraska parents and caregivers seeking information on how to choose quality childcare that best meets the needs of their family.

As part of the project, 213 Nebraskan families, childcare educators, and community members completed a survey in October 2021 to share their feedback for a draft of the booklet. There was overwhelming positive feedback and enthusiasm. All survey respondents said they found the booklet helpful for guiding decisions to choose quality childcare, and 99% said they would share the booklet with other families. One parent commented that “this booklet is a very comprehensive introduction to quality services for children, and it has given me a lot of help” and that “without it, [he] would have difficulties in finding quality services for children.”

We hope many families agree and are excited that the *Child Care Essentials – Choosing Quality Child Care* in Nebraska booklet will be available to download in 2022 from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

If you have questions about *Child Care Essentials*, please contact [Holly Hatton-Bowers](#) or [Jaci Foged](#).

PDG-Related News

Race Equity



Community

Comunidad

Communities for Kids Translates Passion and Knowledge into Action

Wendy Gwennap, the Early Childhood Community Coordinator for Adams County, admits that before she started her position, she was unaware of the challenges migrant Spanish-speaking families face when they come to the U.S. “I was ignorant of what they go through,” she said. But to speak with her now, to see her fight back tears as she describes positive change in her community, is to see the passion she feels for working with these families to provide them with the services and tools they need to succeed.

Adams County is only one of three communities who applied for new grant funding for projects connected to bilingual initiatives. In early September, Communities for Kids (C4K) received an additional \$55,000 in Preschool Development Grant funding to be used by communities already participating in the Spanish-Speaking/Bilingual Support Initiative and “to improve access to early childhood professional development and quality improvement activities for Spanish-speaking/bilingual child care providers.” Communities were invited to submit proposals that either benefitted the entire state or that were easily replicable in other areas of Nebraska. In addition to Adams County, Hall County and the Lexington area were awarded grant funding to pursue projects focused on Spanish-speaking communities.

[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 Needs Your Help

The Family Engagement team seeks input from families for the first annual Family Engagement Conference. Below are links to a conference survey in multiple languages. Please share the links with families you interact with or with groups who might be able to disseminate them.

[English Version](#)

[Spanish Version](#)

[Vietnamese Version](#)

[Karen Version](#)

[Arabic Version](#)

You can also help Family Engagement recruit parents who want to help in planning the conference or who would be interested in being a parent representative for a PDG initiative by disseminating the cards below.

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





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[Download Spanish Version](#)

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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.

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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 enewsletter, visit [Preschool Development Grant](#).

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