

NEBRASKA

PRESCHOOL

DEVELOPMENT GRANT

Renewal Year Three**Bi-Monthly Newsletter - October 2022**

Fall Events Create Crucial Partnerships

The fall leaves have started to fall, all those wonderful holidays are coming, and in early childhood circles, it is event season. Ongoing functions such as SPEAQ Up and Nebraska Cafe maintain their busy schedules, national gatherings such as the Prenatal to 3 Research to Policy Summit are upon us, and Preschool Development Grant initiatives are in full swing with events both big and small designed to inform, build collaborations, and invite new system partners as well as communities, early childhood professionals, and families into the process of building a better system.

This issue of the PDG eNews focuses on three such events, two large and one small, that are broadening the audience for early childhood changes and deepening the impact initiatives are having on Nebraska's early childhood system.

PDG Events

What We Can Do: Family Engagement Conference Brings Families and Organizations Together



Parent Advisors filming session for Family Conference (from left--Todd Schmeeckle, Ashley Schmit, Krista Meyer, and Raegan Brown)

Todd Schmeeckle, father of 7 children, five of whom are adopted, has been a foster parent; a parent to special needs children; the Director of the Family and Men's Shelters at People's City Mission in Lincoln; a co-founder of a community house where his family lives and which offers affordable housing to the homeless, to parolees, and to those making a new start; an organizer of the Parents Encouraging Parents Conference, a parent-led conference that works with families of children with Individualized Education Programs; and, now, one of four parent advisors for the first Conference for the Families and Parents of Small Children.

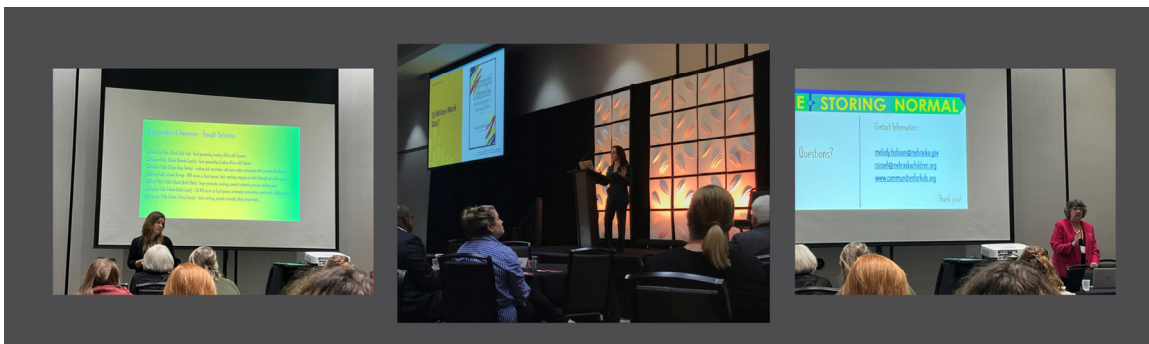
For Todd, the work stems from a time in his life when he felt he was selfish. He now "seeks who God is" and believes that serving other people has made a difference. He believes in interdependence rather than independence, sharing a favorite quote from Mother Teresa to illustrate, "You can do what I cannot do. I can do what you cannot do. Together we can do great things." Whether he meant to or not, he has encapsulated the guiding principle of the Conference.

The Conference for the Families and Parents of Small Children came about a little over a year and a half ago, when organizer Mariana Munoz de Schell said she was daydreaming with Nebraska Children's Shannon Mitchell-Boekstal about a parent-driven conference where families and organizations partner to bring Nebraska parents the resources they need in raising young children and the means to connect with their own communities to build local infrastructure. Six months later, with the support of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, a budget built out of Preschool Development Grant funds was approved and planning was underway.

Read the [full article](#).



Knowledge and Networking at Thriving 2022



Thriving 2022 Keynote Speaker Dana Suskind (center), Panelists Rachel Sissel (left) and Melody Hobson (right)

I don't usually write newsletter articles in the first person; you know, reportorial distance, objectivity, and all that. But what better way to talk about experiential moments? We've been Zooming and Teaming and attending conferences in our little screen boxes for far too long now. It was thus refreshing to break out of my little video shell and attend the Thriving Children, Families, and Communities 2022 Conference in a space where I could see feet and arms and legs, where I could shake hands and exchange business cards, and, yes, where I could indulge in all those real-world conference extras like coffee and lunches and warm cookies, oh my!

There's just something about meeting in person that creates an incubator for ideas, for learning and networking. Those brief hallway conversations grow, catalyzed by thoughtful panel presentations, into deeper lunch table idea exchanges, which transform in those post-conference weeks into collaborative actions.

As Senator Myron Dorn of Gage County said

in his opening remarks, “If you’re not at the table, if you’re not out there presenting yourself, you will get left.” So Thriving 2022



was a chance for me, a chance for us all to present ourselves, our knowledge, our concerns, our hopes, and our desires to work together to build a better early childhood system.

Thriving 2022 was an international affair. Lisa Caudle, the Event Manager for Buffett Early Childhood Institute shared with me that six other countries were in attendance, including Russia, Rwanda, and the United Kingdom. What better stage then to discuss the current state of work with young children both locally and nationally. Samuel Meissels, the founding Executive Director of the Buffett Early Childhood Institute said of Nebraska’s current post-pandemic outlook that 74% of the state’s families have both parents in the workforce and need affordable care. Yet, he went on to point out, “1 in 4 providers saw income reduced by half during the pandemic,” demonstrating the critical imbalance between demand and supply. Combined with childcare closures, early childhood professionals seeking other employment, and a continued lack of a living wage and benefits, the state has reached a critical juncture in the work we do.

Read the [full article](#).

Click Here to Subscribe

Stay up-to-date on early childcare initiatives by subscribing to the PDG eNews.

Reflective Practice Creates Provider Communities



Penny Gerking's Family 2 Childcare Little Gerkins

Penny Gerking is the owner of Little Gerkins Childcare in Auburn, Nebraska. She's been in the business for almost 15 years and has accomplished much in that time. She is the first in her county to reach Step 5 of Step Up to Quality Certification, and she has grown her business from a "Family 1" to a "Family 2" facility. But for all her successes, she describes a dilemma that faces many early childhood professionals.

"We're adults working all day with kids on our own," she says. "We want to be able to be around like-minded people." But too often, providers like Penny can't find peer groups during the evening and weekend hours when they don't have children under their supervision.

That changed for Penny and other providers around the state when in 2021 the Nebraska Center on Reflective Practice began offering Facilitating Attuned Interactions (FAN) training to in-home childcare providers. The Nebraska Center on Reflective Practice (NCRP), which is part of the UNL-CCFL Nebraska Resource Project for Vulnerable Young Children, utilizes funding provided by the Preschool Development Grant to provide ongoing reflective consultation to Family Childcare Home Providers (FCHP). "The trained facilitators use the FAN model of reflective practice when facilitating these groups," says Tracey Kock, who has been NCRP's Reflective Practice Outreach and Training Specialist for the last year and half.

Read the [full article](#).

First Steps Parent and Provider Quarterly

The fall issue of *First Steps* is now available. *First Steps* provides information important to parents and early childhood professionals and links them to resources from Preschool Development Grant initiatives, early childhood partners around the state, and to vital national sources. To see the fall issue or to sign up for *First Steps* click the button below.

Learn More about First Steps

PDG Brief Reports

Coaching Collaboration

Coaching Collaboration continues to work in an effort to support a framework for coaches across the state. Five Coach Consultants have worked in their regions to build relationships and connections with coaches working in family childcare homes, centers, and programs.

The updating of the *Nebraska Early Childhood Coaching Guidebook: Competencies for Professional Practice* created opportunities to build on 5 domains, with a focus on coaching for equity. The Coach Development Network website launched to secure a place as a resource for coach information and sharing of coaching opportunities. Lastly, the streamlining of the Nebraska Coach List has helped clarify where coaches are in the state and the initiatives that they support.

These efforts have strengthened the systems of support to the coaching landscape across Nebraska.

For more information on Coaching Collaboration, please contact [Tracy Went](#).



Center on Reflective Practice

In July 2022, the Nebraska Center on Reflective Practice (NCRP) trained its 150th training participant, as part of its reflective practice FAN training program, utilizing PDG funding. Training participants are highly satisfied with the training program (4.5 out of 5), feel prepared to use reflective practice (4.36 out of 5), and find reflective practice beneficial (4.6 out of 5). The NCRP is set to begin four more FAN training cohorts before the end of grant funding, and is also continuously working to expand infrastructure and supports for FAN trainers, mentors, and consultants.

For more information on Center on Reflective Practice, please contact [Kelli Hauptman](#).



Workforce Commission

The Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission released a report in 2020 with four goals to elevate the early childhood workforce to a priority profession. Those goals focus on a highly qualified early childhood workforce; sustainable funding for early care and education; an

informed, engaged, and committed public; and, finally, an infrastructure for effective collaboration, coordination, and communication across the state. As part of all these goals, there is an emphasis on authentic engagement of early childhood professionals—working WITH early childhood professionals to co-design solutions to difficult problems, not presenting them with solutions or imposing policies on them.

[Read more.](#)

For more information on the Workforce Commission, please contact **[Susan Sarver.](#)**



CHIME

Nebraska Extension's Cultivating Healthy Intentional Mindful Educator's program (CHIME) continues to show promising evidence in supporting the well-being of early childhood educators and supporting young children's social-emotional development. Due to PDG funding, CHIME has been provided to Spanish-Speaking/Bilingual providers and teachers, and is being expanded for families. Some of the biggest successes are being able to grow our facilitators of the CHIME program and increasing our reach to family home providers and early childhood teachers throughout Nebraska. In the words of the educators who have participated in the CHIME program:

- *"CHIME made me be a more aware and more calm teacher. I found a lot of tools in CHIME that I now use daily. My room is somewhere I want to be now with going through the program."*
- *"[CHIME] has tremendously helped with not only my childcare but family as well!"*
- *"CHIME has made me more self-aware and able to express my emotions in a more positive way. I feel that I am a better educator after completing CHIME. It has definitely made me feel better and way less stressed in my work life. I am so thankful that I took this course!"*

Since receiving PDG funding we have supported approximately 532 educators with CHIME and other professional development learnings.

To learn more about CHIME, please contact **[Holly Hatton-Bowers.](#)**

PDG has new Facebook and Twitter Pages--Please be sure to follow us.

Follow Us on Facebook

Follow Us on Twitter

Do You Have Questions?

If you have questions about newsletter content, PDG-related activities, or partner organizations, fill out the form on our "Contact Us" page, and we'll 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 90TP0079-03-00 , 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 enewsletter, 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](#)