BECOMING A STRONGER, BETTER PLACE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Closing the achievement gap might have seemed impossible 20 years ago. In this Community Report, children and families show us how opportunities put success within reach, for all of us.

The Learning Community and its partners are focused on proven OPPORTUNITIES. Opportunity empowers children and families, inspires teachers, encourages community childcare providers and prepares our future teachers for urban classrooms.

At a time when more families experience hardship, easy access to community-wide supports is essential. That means connecting schools to our systems for health, business and higher education. We have much work to do, but the Omaha metro area is becoming a stronger, better place for children and families.

Let’s keep building a culture of opportunity together!

LEARNING COMMUNITY 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.

“Let’s keep building a culture of opportunity together!”

David Patton
Chief Executive Officer
Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties

“I would like to be an example, to encourage them to achieve their hopes and dreams.”

Maria Rosalba Salazar
Parent Graduate
Learning Community Center of South Omaha

ABOUT THE DATA

“I see the value of the Learning Community in the way our unique strengths have come together. The result is powerful opportunities and a stronger future for children, families and our communities.”

Susan Kelley
Coordinating Council
BETTER OPPORTUNITIES. BETTER OUTCOMES.

In the Learning Community, closing the achievement gap means opening doors to opportunity for the whole family. Positive outcomes make our communities stronger. That’s why we’re so passionate about our 2-Gen approach.

So what happened to children and families over the last 20 years? Since 2000, the growth of poverty was three times greater than the total student population and significantly higher than the rest of the state. Poverty in the Omaha metro area is spreading out and now impacts the majority of our school districts.

CREATING PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY

Everyone has a role to play in the innovative can-do spirit that drives growth and prosperity in Omaha. Our workforce needs well-educated children and families. That’s why the Learning Community and its partners work with the Omaha Chamber and business leaders to identify critical gaps in our local economy. Internships, college prep sessions, apprenticeships, skills-based certifications – we’re making real progress in cradle to career pathways.

WHAT DOES 100% POVERTY MEAN?

FAMILY OF THREE

$410 WEEKLY INCOME 1

LEARNING COMMUNITY CHILDHOOD POVERTY GROWS

WHAT’S THE TREND?
MORE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN SCHOOLS ACROSS THE LEARNING COMMUNITY WILL NEED SUPPORT AND OPPORTUNITIES.

18,205 2000

28,634 2017

57% GAIN 2

74%

WORK COMMUNITY CENTER NEIGHBORHOODS & TAKE CLASSES

READY FOR WORK

Long hours for less than a living wage. That’s a typical experience for families in our community centers. They helped us take a fresh look at what children and families need to succeed. The result is new workforce development classes in partnership with Metropolitan Community College. Our evaluations show parents develop valuable skills to guide their children AND land better paying jobs. Why does that matter? Research shows children are more likely to succeed in school when their families are financially stable.

COLLEGE & CAREER PARTNERSHIPS

Families join our programs with dreams of a college education for their children. They graduate with a plan. The University of Nebraska Omaha (UNO) Service Learning Academy hosts a series of weekly workshops where families discover college is within reach. This model partnership gets a tremendous result – children who are more likely to attend college after high school and parents who realize it’s not too late for them.

“Homework (for my children) is not so difficult now. And I have homework too, so we’re together.”

Suk Tamang, Parent University member

1 Source: 2019 HHS Federal Poverty Guidelines

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LEARNING COMMUNITY CENTER OF SOUTH OMAHA
STRONG PARENT IMPACT FOR HOME AND SCHOOL

1,232
CHILDREN
& FAMILIES

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY
In the Learning Community Center of South Omaha, outcomes demonstrate the power of a two-generation approach. We strive to connect every opportunity because children and family succeed best together.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ONEWORLD COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

FAMILY LEARNING:
ENGLISH FOR PARENTS
EDUCATIONAL NAVIGATORS
PARENT WORKSHOPS
PARENT-CHILD ACTIVITIES
ADULT EDUCATION

BUILDING STRONGER PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

TOP 3 PARENT STRENGTHS
Sensitivity
Positive Interactions
Involved

COMMON SENSE PARENTING WORKS
Parents learned new skills to improve their relationships. By the end of the class, they reported reduced parenting stress and greater confidence in positive interactions with their children.

SIGNIFICANT PARENT GAINS
100% Reported Improvement in Parenting Skills

“I don’t need a translator anymore. I feel excited that I’m able to talk with the teachers.”
Learning Community Center of South Omaha parent

ENGAGED IN ACADEMICS & TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS
A parent is a child’s first teacher. In Family Learning classes, parents gained confidence to help with homework, advocate for their children and support their success in school.

COMFORTABLE, CONFIDENT AND COMMUNITY-INVOLVED

COMFORTABLE, CONFIDENT AND COMMUNITY-INVOLVED

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ONEWORLD COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS
EARLY CHILDHOOD PARTNERSHIP:
INTENSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
CHILDCARE DIRECTOR TRAINING
FUTURE TEACHER TRAINING
PARENT UNIVERSITY

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
AND OMAHA PUBLIC LIBRARY

LEARNING COMMUNITY CENTER OF NORTH OMAHA
EARLY CHILDHOOD AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT GETS RESULTS

2,387
CHILDREN, FAMILIES & TEACHERS

Our North community center is home to one of the most amazing partnerships in the country. The center empowers the caring adults in every child’s life with new opportunities that change lives. The result is more resilient children and families, better academic outcomes and teachers prepared for urban classrooms.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND OMAHA PUBLIC LIBRARY

INTENSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
PRESCHOOLERS GAINED VOCABULARY
39%
ACHIEVE/EXCEED NATIONAL AVERAGE

VOCABULARY MATTERS
The ability to recognize words is a predictor of grade level reading skills. Most preschoolers made significant progress closing the vocabulary gap by spring.

ACADEMIC GAINS FOR SCHOOL READINESS
Colors, letters, shapes and counting. Children made gains in basic concepts that contribute to school readiness. By spring, 65 percent were within the average range or higher.

EARLY CHILDHOOD PARTNERSHIP:
INTENSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
CHILDCARE DIRECTOR TRAINING
FUTURE TEACHER TRAINING
PARENT UNIVERSITY

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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND OMAHA PUBLIC LIBRARY

TEACHER COACHING GETS RESULTS
How do we know that coaching teachers helps children? All grade K-1 students showed positive growth in math and reading. Compared to national rankings, students made greater gains than expected.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS
64%
NATIONAL AVERAGE OR HIGHER

POSITVE SKILLS FOR LEARNING
Children need to learn kindness, empathy and self-control to succeed. By the end of the school year, children gained stronger social-emotional skills.

GREATER GAINS
44% 38%
MATH READING
OVER A THIRD OF STUDENTS IN GRADES K-1 MADE GREATER THAN EXPECTED GAINS IN MATH AND READING.
Training Improves Teaching

Our second class of community childcare directors actively trained staff and modeled what quality childcare looks like.

The director-coaching and monthly workshops clearly resonated with staff. Program outcomes directly supported healthy child development and school readiness.

The free training inspired every director to voluntarily join the statewide initiative for quality childcare, Nebraska Step Up to Quality.

Future Teacher Training

In Partnership with Educare, Metropolitan Community College and Creighton University

Ready to Teach in Urban Classrooms

How do we better prepare our future teachers? This partnership takes an innovative approach. Robotic cameras connect college classes in our center to Educare Omaha. Real-time access to preschool classrooms gives students a way to explore beyond the textbook. It’s a great way to show them what quality early childhood education really means.

A to B: A Pathway to the Classroom

Some early childhood graduates need affordable pathways to an elementary teaching degree. Through an MCC-Creighton University partnership, students continue their education seamlessly. Best of all, they can be ready for their own classroom in just two years.

The MCC-Creighton A to B pathway made it possible for Katie Norris to finish her elementary teaching degree in just two years.

“I wanted to teach where I could make the biggest difference.”

Katie Norris, First year teacher, OPS Kellom Elementary
Stability at home supports success in school. Parent University families showed progress in solving problems that can disrupt family life.

**Parent University families embrace positive strategies**

Parent classes connect positive practices to the parent-child relationship. Parent University families appreciated the positive differences, including lower stress levels.

**Stronger parent-child relationships**

**Big gains positive parenting**

**Strong protective factors**

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<th>Baseline</th>
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**Limited protective factors**

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<th>Pre</th>
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**Parents learned English**

100%

**Parents learned English**

71%

**Reading to children 3 or more times per week**

**Parents learned English**

100%

**ESL students advancing one or more levels**

**Parents learned English**

71%

**Reading to children 3 or more times per week**

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SCHOOL DISTRICT PILOTS

6,155 STUDENTS & TEACHERS

9 SCHOOL DISTRICTS

50 SCHOOL BUILDINGS

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LEARNING COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

PROGRAMS:
INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING
JUMP START TO KINDERGARTEN
EXTENDED LEARNING

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING IMPACTS STUDENTS
BELLEVUE, OMAHA, WESTSIDE, RALSTON

The trusting partnership that develops in this pilot program gets results in the classroom. New and veteran teachers demonstrated improvements in areas that directly impact students.

COACHING HELPS NEW TEACHERS
New teachers appreciate the opportunity to work in partnership with a coach at a critical time in their careers. In surveys of new teachers, 95 percent reported improvements in their teaching.

JUMP START TO KINDERGARTEN
ELKHORN, MILLARD, PAPILLION LA VISTA

IMPROVING SCHOOL READINESS
Jump Start to Kindergarten provides a critical opportunity for children who have little classroom experience. Students made strong progress in academic readiness. By the end of the program, the majority of student scores moved much closer to the national average.

EXTENDED LEARNING
DC WEST, COMPLETELY KIDS, ELKHORN, MILLARD, SPRINGFIELD PLATTEVIEW

REDUCING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP
Extended Learning is a targeted intervention that can reduce the achievement gap between struggling students and their peers. While results varied, the program clearly helped students from falling behind over the summer months. Again this year, the majority of students maintained or raised their achievement level.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LEARNING COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

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Eleven school districts are working together to improve early learning across the Omaha metro area. The Superintendents’ Plan is the nation’s largest, most comprehensive early childhood initiative. The goal is to reduce income- and race-based achievement gaps among young children.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH BUFFETT EARLY CHILDHOOD INSTITUTE & LEARNING COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

**SUPERINTENDENTS’ PLAN**

**PROMISING PROGRESS**

**FEATURES:**
- BIRTH TO GRADE 3 APPROACH
- PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL
- CUSTOMIZED ASSISTANCE

**6,785 STUDENTS, FAMILIES & TEACHERS**

PD FOR ALL 11 SCHOOL DISTRICTS

School district staff, community child care providers, and nonprofit teams came together for a series of professional learning institutes. During each session, experts shared the latest research and best practices to promote a child’s academic and social-emotional growth. Participants engaged actively in new learning to apply in their work with children and families.

**PARTICIPANTS**

1,003

**APPLIED NEW PRACTICES**

98%

**SHARED NEW KNOWLEDGE WITH OTHERS**

70%

**HOME VISITATION IMPACT**

The school is becoming a hub as families of young children build relationships with their local schools. Perceptions of social support increased for families engaged in home visiting. When families received more home visits, children from birth through age 3 showed significantly higher language development.

**SOCIAL SUPPORT INCREASES**

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<th>2017-18</th>
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<tr>
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<td>67%</td>
<td>79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>spanish</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>79%</td>
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**CHILDREN GAINED**

Educational achievement improved overall for students from Pre-K through Grade 3. Children whose home language is Spanish improved at a greater rate, demonstrating progress in reducing the achievement disparity.

**PARTICIPANTS APPLIED NEW PRACTICES SHARED NEW KNOWLEDGE WITH OTHERS**

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**HOME LANGUAGE COMPARISON: PRE-K ENTRY GROUP**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TIME 1</th>
<th>TIME 2</th>
<th>TIME 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPANISH</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGLISH</td>
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<td>95%</td>
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WHAT’S THE VALUE-ADD IN PROVEN OPPORTUNITIES?

BUILDING ON OMAHA’S STRENGTH

The Learning Community partnership network is unique to Omaha. The level of commitment here is an amazing advantage that few communities could match. As a result, the Learning Community stretches every dollar for even greater impact. Positive outcomes speak loudly to proven opportunities and the growing resilience of children and families in our communities.

HOW DO WE SHARE PROVEN OPPORTUNITIES WITH MORE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES?

The new Learning Community Foundation goes to work later this year. We’re excited to welcome volunteer board members to share the success stories of our children and families. With their support, we can expand proven opportunities that change lives.

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

How do we build cradle to career pathways after high school? The Community Achievement Plan. The Learning Community guides the process which takes partnership and collaboration to the next level. By connecting systems, the goal is more accessible student pathways for success in college, career and community.

LEARNING COMMUNITY PARTNER NETWORK

1 SCHOOL DISTRICTS
Bellevue Public
Bennington Public
DC West Community
Elkhorn Public
Gretna Public
Millard Public
Omaha Public
Papillion La Vista Community
Ralston Public
Springfield Platteview Community
Westside Community

2 HIGHER EDUCATION
Bellevue University
Buffett Early Childhood Institute
Creighton University
Metropolitan Community College
University of Nebraska Omaha

3 RESEARCH
Aspen Institute Ascend Network
National Centers for Family Learning
University of Nebraska Medical Center Munroe Meyer Institute

4 FOUNDATIONS
Buffett Early Childhood Fund
Dillon Foundation
Dollar General Literacy Foundation
Richard Brooke Foundation
The Sherwood Foundation
Union Pacific Foundation
U.S. Bank Foundation
Wells Fargo Foundation

5 HEALTH & WELL-BEING
Abundant Life Consulting
Boys Town
Douglas County Health Dept.
Educare
Foodbank of the Heartland
Grief’s Journey
Lutheran Family Services
Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative
Omaha Public Library
OneWorld Community Health Centers
Project Harmony Connections
UNMC Center for Reducing Health Disparities
Williams Consulting
Women’s Center for Advancement

6 COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENT PLAN
Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties
Buffett Early Childhood Institute
Educational Service Units 3 & 19
Iowa Western Community College
Metropolitan Community College
Metropolitan Omaha Education Consortium
Nebraska Department of Education
University of Nebraska Omaha

7 COMMUNITY
Bellevue University
Child Saving Institute
City Sprouts
Completely Kids
Creighton Financial Hope
Do Space
Durham Museum
ESUS Early Learning Connection
Eastern Nebraska Community Action Partnership
Empowerment Network
Family Housing Advisory Services
First National Bank Omaha
Goodwill Industries
Heartland Workforce Solutions
Humanities Nebraska
Joslyn Art Museum
Latino Center of the Midlands

Life Coach Academy
Nebraska Children’s Home Society
Nebraska Enterprise Fund
Nebraska Extension Office
Nonprofit Association of the Midlands
Omaha Bridges out of Poverty
Omaha Conservatory of Music
 Omaha Economic Development Corporation
Omaha Fire Department
Omaha Police Department
Opera Omaha
PTI Nebraska
Smart Girls Society
Sparkpositivity
The Big Garden
University of Nebraska Omaha
– College of Education
– School of Music
– Service Learning Academy

21
INVESTING IN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WORKS

STRONG IMPACT IN THE LIVES OF MORE THAN 16,000 CHILDREN & ADULTS

CHILDREN MORE LIKELY TO SUCCEED IN SCHOOL

STRONGER AND MORE INDEPENDENT FAMILIES

MORE PROVEN STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS

MORE SCHOOLS EMBRACING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

BETTER FAMILY-FRIENDLY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES COMMUNITYWIDE

COORDINATING COUNCIL
The Council invests in research-based programs and practices to change lives. Programs must demonstrate strong and measurable impact for continued funding.

SUSAN KELLEY  
Chair  
Achievement Subcouncil 4

ALLEN HAGER  
Vice Chair  
Achievement Subcouncil 4

JILL WOODWARD  
Secretary  
Achievement Subcouncil 6

CAROL HAHN  
Treasurer  
Achievement Subcouncil 2

DR. BRADLEY EKWEREKU  
Achievement Subcouncil 1

BRIAN THOMMES  
Achievement Subcouncil 1

DR. CORNELIUS WILLIAMS  
Achievement Subcouncil 2

MARK HOEGER  
Achievement Subcouncil 3

MELINDA KOZEL  
Achievement Subcouncil 3

ANAYELI MARTINEZ REAL  
Achievement Subcouncil 5

TONYA WARD  
Achievement Subcouncil 5

MIKE AVERY  
Achievement Subcouncil 6

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

DAVID PATTON  
Chief Executive Officer

JAMALIA PARKER  
Director  
Family Engagement Services

ANNE O’HARA  
Program Director  
Family Learning

DALE KREHER  
Finance Director

RENEE FRANKLIN  
Executive Director  
Elementary Learning Centers

LEADERSHIP TEAM
“Taking all of these classes has made me want to be the best parent I can be. If I make education important in their lives, they’re more likely to want to go to school and do well.”

Amira Blanco-Liggins
Learning Community parent