Learning Community Coordinating Council

October 21, 2021 – 6:00PM

1612 North 24th Street, Omaha, Nebraska 68110

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

The subjects to be discussed or considered, or upon which any formal action may be taken, are as follows: (Items do not have to be taken in the same order as listed.)

I. Opening the Meeting

i. Call to Order: The regular October meeting of the Learning Community Council is called to order on October 21, 2021, at p.m.

ii. **Council Mission Statement: 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.**

iii. Public Notice and Compliance Nebraska Open Meetings Law

iv. Council Roll Call:

v. Pledge of Allegiance

II. Public Comment

III. Chair Opening Statement:

A. Reports

i. Chair Update on redistricting efforts
ii. CEO
iii. Treasurer
iv. Legal Counsel
v. Foundation

IV. Consent Agenda

Unless removed from the consent agenda, items identified within the consent agenda will be acted on at one time.

i. Minutes of the September 9, 2021, meeting of the Council

ii. Treasurer's Report – dated August 31, 2021

iii. Budget to Actual – Combined YTD Year End August 31, 2021

V. Programming Update

a. Centers Updates-

b. Superintendents' Plan-

c. District Initiatives-

VI. Subcommittee Reports

1. Elementary and Diversity Subcommittee (ELD)

i. Evaluation of Superintendents' Plan

2. Budget, Finance and Audit Subcommittee

3. Legislative Subcommittee

VII. Upcoming Meeting – November 18, 2021 – Learning Community Center of North Omaha, 1612 North 24th Street, Omaha, NE 68110

VIII. Adjourn

*__Closed Session__: If, during the course of the meeting, discussion of any item on the agenda should be held in a closed meeting, the council will conduct a closed meeting in accordance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Law.

**__Sequence of Agenda__: The sequence of agenda topics is subject to change at the discretion of the Council. Please arrive at the beginning of the meeting.

UPCOMING LEARNING COMMUNITY EVENTS:

Advisory Committee	To Be Determined
LC Coordinating Council	November 18, 2021, Learning Community Center of North Omaha, 1612 N. 24th Street, Omaha, NE
Subcouncil #1	To Be Determined
Subcouncil #2	To Be Determined
Subcouncil #3	To Be Determined
Subcouncil #4	To Be Determined
Subcouncil #5	To Be Determined
Subcouncil #6	To Be Determined

DOCUMENTS TO ACCOMPANY THIS AGENDA ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- LCCC Minutes dated September 9, 2021
- Treasurer's Report dated August 31, 2021
- Budget to Actual – Combined YTD Year End August 31, 2021
- BECI Evaluation

Closed Sessions: Any agenda time, or portion thereof, may be discussed in closed session where permitted by law. The public is hereby notified that the Council may come in and out of closed session during the meeting. Members of the public who exit the room during closed session may remain outside the meeting room and rejoin the meeting when the Council returns to open session.

Learning Community Coordinating Council

September 9, 2021 – 6:00PM

1612 North 24th, Omaha, Nebraska

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

The subjects to be discussed or considered, or upon which any formal action may be taken, are as follows: (Items do not have to be taken in the same order as listed.)

I. Opening the Meeting

i. Call to Order: The regular September meeting of the Learning Community Council is called to order on September 9, 2021, at 6:03 p.m.

ii. **Council Mission Statement: 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.**

iii. Public Notice and Compliance Nebraska Open Meetings Law

A meeting of the Coordinating Council of the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties was held September 9, 2021. Notice of the meeting, containing the date, time, place, and agenda, was given in advance thereof by publication in the Daily Record on September 2nd, 2021. The proofs of publication have been received and will be made a permanent part of the record of the meeting. Notice of the agenda was given to all members of the Council on August 31st, 2021.

iv. Council Roll Call:

Voting Members Present: Brock, Hoeger, Hager, Hahn, Hall, Jackson, Schoenberger, Servellon, Thommes, Zingg, Ward

Voting Members Excused: Kozel

Members Absent:

Staff Present: Ekwerekwu, Harris, Lewis, Videgla, O'Hara, Franklin

Also Present: Loretta Carroll, BECI, Koley Jessen, Westside Community Schools

v. Pledge of Allegiance

II. Public Comment

III. Chair Opening Statement: Chair Hager asked the group to observe a moment of silence for Marine Corporal Daegan Page and his family, and mentioned that Councilperson Ward is joining by phone for this meeting, able to listen, but not submit comment or vote on any item.

A. Reports

i. Chair- No report.

ii. CEO- Reported on the strategic planning process and upcoming dates to be aware of (October 14th and 18th Council meetings with Parlay Consulting) and presentation to the Council at the November LCCC meeting, the 3rd center needs assessment, welcomed the guests and school district personnel, and mentioned excitement about items happening at the Centers. Expression of gratitude for all education professionals was delivered.

iii. Treasurer- Gave report.

iv. Legal Counsel- No report.

v. Foundation – Hahn reported on the backpack giveaways at LCCSO and LCCNO. Backpacks included two books and a bookmark, courtesy of Bookworm, and an Omaha Public Library card application.

IV. Consent Agenda

Unless removed from the consent agenda, items identified within the consent agenda will be acted on at one time.

i. Minutes of the August 5 & 19, 2021, meeting of the Council

ii. Treasurer's Report – dated July 31, 2021

Chair Hager moved to amend the Aug 19th Minutes, Hoeger seconded. The amendment was to add Kozel to the agenda showing that she was a voting member present at the meeting.

Motion to amend Council meeting minutes of August 19th, 2021. Motion first by Hager, 2nd by Zingg.

Yeas: Brock, Hoeger, Hahn, Hall, Jackson, Schoenberger, Servellon, Thommes, Zingg, Chair Hager, **Motion carried.**

Motion to approve Council meeting minutes of August 5th & 19th, 2021; Treasurer's report of July 31st, 2021. Motion first by Hager, second by Zingg.

Yeas: Brock, Hoeger, Hahn, Hall, Jackson, Schoenberger, Servellon, Thommes, Zingg, Chair Hager, **Motion carried.**

V. Programming Update

a. Center Updates-LCSSO Sublease Basement Annex

i. **Action Item:**
Upon recommendation of the Executive Committee, the Council authorizes the CEO to enter into a written agreement with One World Community Health Centers/El Mero Mero (existing landlord) to sublease basement annex space for use at the Learning Community Center of South Omaha not to exceed $8,400.00 for FY 2021/2022. The contract will hold four, 3-year renewable terms and terminate after twelve (12) years.

Motion to approve written agreement with One World Community Health Centers/El Mero Mero (existing landlord). Motion first by Schoenberger, second by Zingg.

Yeas: Brock, Hoeger, Hahn, Hall, Jackson, Schoenberger, Thommes, Zingg, Chair Hager, **Abstain:** Servellon, **Motion carried.**

b. Superintendents' Plan-BECI Presentation

c. District Initiatives- Westside Community Schools Presentation

VI. Subcommittee Reports

1. Elementary Learning and Diversity Subcommittee (ELD)

2. Budget, Finance and Audit Subcommittee

i. Action Items: 2021-2022 Budget

1. Upon recommendation of the Budget, Finance & Audit Subcommittee, I move that the Coordinating Council approve the General Fund Budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year in the amount of $595,261, calling for a total property tax requirement of $0.

Motion to approve General Fund Budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. Motion first by Hoeger, 2nd by Zingg

Yeas: Brock, Hoeger, Hahn, Hall, Jackson, Schoenberger, Servellon, Thommes, Zingg, Chair Hager, **Motion carried.**

2. Upon recommendation of the Budget, Finance & Audit Subcommittee, I move that the Coordinating Council approve the Capital Projects Fund Budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year in the amount of $871,180, calling for a property tax requirement of $903,563, plus a 1% County Treasurer Collection Fee of $9,126.89 for a total property tax requirement of $912,689.89.

Motion to approve the Capital Projects Fund Budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. Motion first by Hoeger, 2nd by Zingg.

Yeas: Brock, Hoeger, Hahn, Hall, Jackson, Schoenberger, Servellon, Thommes, Zingg, Chair Hager, **Motion carried.**

3. Upon recommendation of the Budget, Finance & Audit Subcommittee, I move that the Coordinating Council approve the Elementary Learning Center Fund Budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year in the amount of $10,517,947 calling for a property tax requirement of $10,841,675 plus a 1% County Treasurer Collection Fee of $109,511.76 for a total property tax requirement of $10,951,186.76.

Motion to approve the Elementary Learning Center Fund Budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. Motion first by Hoeger, 2nd by Zingg.

Yeas: Hoeger, Hahn, Jackson, Schoenberger, Servellon, Thommes, Zingg, Chair Hager, **Nays:** Brock, Hall, **Motion carried.**

4. Upon recommendation of the Budget, Finance & Audit Subcommittee, I move that the Coordinating Council approve the Research & Evaluation Fund Budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year in the amount of $924,000, calling for a total property tax requirement of $0.

Motion to approve the Research & Evaluation Fund Budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. Motion first by Hoeger, 2nd by Zingg.

Yeas: Yeas: Hoeger, Hahn, Jackson, Schoenberger, Servellon, Thommes, Zingg, Chair Hager, **Nays:** Brock, Hall, **Motion carried.**

ii. Action Item: 2022 Tax Year Levy Resolutions

Upon recommendation of the Budget, Finance & Audit Subcommittee, I move adoption of the following resolutions:

WHEREAS, Nebraska Revised Statute § 77-1601.02 provides that the Coordinating Council, as the governing body of the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties (the "Learning Community"), passes by majority vote a resolution setting the Learning Community's tax requests for its Capital Projects Levy and Elementary Learning Center Levy after

holding a public hearing for the purpose of discussing and approving or modifying the Learning Community's tax requests for the 2021-2022 fiscal year.

WHEREAS, such special public hearing was held on September 9, 2021, as required by law to receive and consider public comments regarding the proposed property tax requests of the Learning Community's Capital Projects Levy and Elementary Learning Center Levy, notice of the special public hearing having been given in accordance with Nebraska Revised Statute § 77-1601.02;

WHEREAS, the total assessed value of the property differs from the previous year's total assessed value by 6.12%; the tax rate which would levy the same amount of property taxes as the previous year, when multiplied by the new total assessed value of property would be $0.015313 per $100 of assessed value; the Learning Community proposes to adopt a property tax requests that will cause its tax rate to be $0.016248 per $100 of assessed value for the 2021-2022 fiscal year;

WHEREAS, based on the proposed property tax request and changes in other revenue, the total operating budget of Learning Community will increase last year's budget by 12.7 percent; and

WHEREAS, the Coordinating Council, after having reviewed the Learning Community's tax requests for each said levy, and after public consideration of the matter, has determined that the tax requests as listed below are necessary to carry out the functions of the Learning Community, as determined by the Coordinating Council for the 2021-2022 fiscal year.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Coordinating Council of the Learning Community hereby sets its Capital Projects Levy property tax request for the 2021-2022 fiscal year at $912,689.89; and

BE IT RESOLVED that the Coordinating Council of the Learning Community hereby sets its Elementary Learning Centers Levy property tax request for the 2021-2022 fiscal year at $10,951,186.76.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be certified and forwarded to the Douglas County Clerk on or before October 13, 2021.

Motion to approve 2022 Tax Year Levy Solutions. Motion first by Hoeger, 2nd by Zingg.

Yeas: Hoeger, Hahn, Hall, Jackson, Schoenberger, Servellon, Thommes, Zingg, Chair Hager, **Nays:** Brock, **Motion carried.**

VII. New Business

i. **Action Item:** CEO 2021 Salary Adjustment and Contract Renewal

1. Upon recommendation by the Executive Committee, motion to approve salary adjustment for Dr. Bradley Ekwerekwu in the amount of $2,199.96 (1.6% of his 2020-2021 base salary) and a 1 (one) year contract extension to June 30, 2023.

Motion to move to Executive Session, first by Servellon at 7:19 PM , 2nd by Zingg.

Yeas: Brock, Hall Hoeger, Hahn, Jackson, Schoenberger, Servellon, Thommes, Zingg, Chair Hager, **Motion carried.**

Council returned to General Session at 7:57PM.

2. Motion to approve an increase of pay of **2.5%** of the CEO 2020-2021 contractual base salary (retro pay back to July 1, 2021) based upon the completion of CEO goals and Professional Development process provided by the Council. At the 6 month mark (March 2022), there would be a performance evaluation of completed progress, and eligibility of increase of salary base of **3.5%** of the 2020-2021 base salary for the remainder of the fiscal year (a realized **1%** increase), and extension of the initial contract to June 30, 2023.

Motion first by Jackson, 2nd by Schoenberger

Yeas: Brock, Hall Hoeger, Hahn, Jackson, Schoenberger, Servellon, Thommes, Zingg, Chair Hager, **Motion carried.**

VIII. Upcoming Meeting – October 21, 2021 – Learning Community Center of North Omaha, 1612 North 24th Street, Omaha, NE 68110

IX. Adjourn at 8:21 PM.

*__Closed Session__: If, during the course of the meeting, discussion of any item on the agenda should be held in a closed meeting, the council will conduct a closed meeting in accordance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Law.

**__Sequence of Agenda__: The sequence of agenda topics is subject to change at the discretion of the Council. Please arrive at the beginning of the meeting.

UPCOMING LEARNING COMMUNITY EVENTS:

Advisory Committee	To Be Determined
LC Coordinating Council	October 21, 2021, 6:00 p.m. Learning Community Center of North Omaha, 1612 N. 24th Street, Omaha, NE
Subcouncil #1	To Be Determined
Subcouncil #2	To Be Determined
Subcouncil #3	To Be Determined
Subcouncil #4	To Be Determined
Subcouncil #5	To Be Determined
Subcouncil #6	To Be Determined

HANDOUTS TO ACCOMPANY THIS AGENDA ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- Parlay Documents
- LCCC Minutes dated August 5 & 19, 2021
- Treasurer's Report dated July 31, 2021
- South Center Recommendation
- Westside Community Schools Presentation

LEARNING COMMUNITY OF DOUGLAS SARPY COUNTIES
Treasurer's Report
Aug 31, 2021

Check #	Invoice Date	Name	Invoice/CM #	Line Description	Debit Amount	Credit Amount	Payment Status
	7/22/21	ACCO Brands Corp	4716988238	Laminator repair	352.00		
5259				**ACCO Brands Corp**		**352.00**	**Paid In Full**
	8/1/21	Buffett Early Childhood Institute	8/2021 SupECPlan	August 2021 Supt Plan Eval	18,666.66		
3740				**Buffett Early Childhood Institute**		**18,666.66**	**Paid In Full**
	8/1/21	Buffett Early Childhood Institute	8/2021 Supt Plan	August monthly program payment	110,507.08		
5240				**Buffett Early Childhood Institute**		**110,507.08**	**Paid In Full**
	7/31/21	BIZCO	93226	Camera Service	270.00		
5243				**BIZCO**		**270.00**	**Paid In Full**
	7/20/21	Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska	1567127	Admin Health/Dental (Bradley Ekwerekwu, Paula Erlwine, Sarah Videgla, Alice Lewis)	5,031.94		
				ELC Health/Dental (Renee Franklin)	751.04		
				LCCNO Health/Dental (Lucia Vaughan)	751.04		
5241				**Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska**		**6,534.02**	**Paid In Full**
	7/9/21	Carroll Communications	1709	June Comm/Plan/Strategy	5,022.50		
5280				**Carroll Communications**		**5,022.50**	**Paid In Full**
	8/15/21	Carroll Communications	1714	July Comm/Plan/Strategy	2,516.25		
5281				**Carroll Communications**		**2,516.25**	**Paid In Full**
	8/30/21	Carroll Communications	1715	August Comm/Plan/Strategy	3,103.25		
5288				**Carroll Communications**		**3,103.25**	**Paid In Full**
	7/19/21	C & A Industries - Celebrity Staff	2269621	Bkgrd check for temp recept	234.44		
5244				**C & A Industries - Celebrity Staff**		**234.44**	**Paid In Full**
	8/9/21	C & A Industries - Celebrity Staff	2287099	Receptionist temp	675.00		
5260				**C & A Industries - Celebrity Staff**		**675.00**	**Paid In Full**
	8/16/21	C & A Industries - Celebrity Staff	2293064	Receptionist temp 8/2-8/6/2021	675.00		
5269				**C & A Industries - Celebrity Staff**		**675.00**	**Paid In Full**
	8/23/21	C & A Industries - Celebrity Staff	2298974	Receptionist temp 8/9-8/13/21	675.00		
5284				**C & A Industries - Celebrity Staff**		**675.00**	**Paid In Full**
	8/2/21	City of Omaha	322278	Certificate of Assembly	100.00		
5261				**City of Omaha**		**100.00**	**Paid In Full**
	8/11/21	City of Omaha	207734	Librarian (Debra Paris) Jul 2021 PR/Benefits Part-Time Status	3,300.19		
5258				**City of Omaha**		**3,300.19**	**Paid In Full**
	8/1/21	Clarity Benefit Solutions	0801214474	July 2021 Admin Mo Fee; MED & DCA	43.00		
5272				**Clarity Benefit Solutions**		**43.00**	**Paid In Full**
	7/22/21	Colonial Life	3884152-0801893	Short Term Dis (Admin)	311.65		
				Short Term Dis (Franklin)	138.00		
5251				**Colonial Life**		**449.65**	**Paid In Full**
	8/17/21	Control Yours	5930	Plus membership Subscription fee for LCC	175.00		
5272				**Control Yours**		**175.00**	**Paid In Full**

LEARNING COMMUNITY OF DOUGLAS SARPY COUNTIES
Treasurer's Report
Aug 31, 2021

Check #	Invoice Date	Name	Invoice/CM #	Line Description	Debit Amount	Credit Amount	Payment Status
	7/31/21	Culligan of Omaha	1008810	Water & Delivery (Admin Office)	12.50		
	7/31/21	Culligan of Omaha	1008935	Equipment Cooler (LCCNO Class Rooms)	3.50		
5245				**Culligan of Omaha**		**16.00**	**Paid In Full**
	8/9/21	Culligan of Omaha	1009362	Water & Delivery (Admin Office)	15.50		
	8/9/21	Culligan of Omaha	1009367	5 Gal water Delivery & Equipment Cooler (LCCNO Class Rooms)	33.00		
5262				**Culligan of Omaha**		**48.50**	**Paid In Full**
	8/5/21	The Daily Record	137258	Coordinating Council mtg notice - 08/5/21	17.90		
5263				**The Daily Record**		**17.90**	**Paid In Full**
	8/17/21	The Daily Record	137508	Coordinating Council mtg notice - 08/19/21	17.90		
5278				**The Daily Record**		**17.90**	**Paid In Full**
	8/24/21	Douglas County West School District	Dec-Jan 2021	Sup EC Prgrm Dec 2020-Jan 2021 (reallocated Ipad & cases for remote learning)	23,071.51		
	8/24/21	Douglas County West School District	Jun-Aug 2021	Sup EC Prgrm Jun-Aug 2021	31,073.64		
5282				**Douglas County West School District**		**54,145.15**	**Paid In Full**
	7/26/21	El Mero Mero Inc	August 2021	August 2021	6,864.50		
1364				**El Mero Mero Inc**		**6,864.50**	**Paid In Full**
	7/26/21	Envisioned Solution	188	LC Monthly Hosting Cost of LCC app	199.00		
5246				**Envisioned Solution**		**199.00**	**Paid In Full**
	8/1/21	HELP Foundation of Omaha	2302 August 2021	Rent and utilities	12,279.38		
1365				**HELP Foundation of Omaha**		**12,279.38**	**Paid In Full**
	8/1/21	InfiNet Solutions, Inc.	59616ISI	Monthly Managed Services - August	2,071.50		
5254				**InfiNet Solutions, Inc.**		**2,071.50**	**Paid In Full**
	8/15/21	Jensen Rogert Associates, Inc.	2021-09	September 2021	2,375.00		
5277				**Jensen Rogert Associates, Inc.**		**2,375.00**	**Paid In Full**
	8/8/21	Koley Jessen	411933	North Omaha ELC	108.00		
	8/8/21	Koley Jessen	411934	South Omaha ELC	792.00		
	8/8/21	Koley Jessen	413384	General	187.50		
	8/8/21	Koley Jessen	413385	ELC Contract	3,414.00		
	8/8/21	Koley Jessen	413386	Personnel Matters	804.00		
5267				**Koley Jessen**		**5,305.50**	**Paid In Full**
	7/30/21	Konica Minolta Premier Finance	73334952	Admin Lease payment	194.48		
				PU lease payment	200.34		
				Credit balance	-19.75		
5247				**Konica Minolta Premier Finance**		**375.07**	**Paid In Full**
	7/26/21	Dale Kreher	080321	Budget/Accounting Consultant	750.00		
5248				**Dale Kreher**		**750.00**	**Paid In Full**
	8/27/21	The Salvation Army Kroc Center	Parlay Forum#1	Facilities rental deposit for Public Forum for Parlay Sept 8th 2021	84.50		
5285				**The Salvation Army Kroc Center**		**84.50**	**Paid In Full**
	7/27/21	Lund Company	1612-August 2021	Lease payment	52,212.61		

LEARNING COMMUNITY OF DOUGLAS SARPY COUNTIES
Treasurer's Report
Aug 31, 2021

Check #	Invoice Date	Name	Invoice/CM #	Line Description	Debit Amount	Credit Amount	Payment Status
1366				**Lund Company**		**52,212.61**	**Paid In Full**
	7/26/21	J. Michael Murphy & Associates, Inc.	3121	Stain Resist Polo-Ladies	50.00		
				Stain Resist Polo-Ladies XXL	54.00		
				L/S Poplin Shirt	135.00		
				Ladies Poplin Shirt XXL	87.00		
				Shipping & Handling	32.47		
5252				**J. Michael Murphy & Associates, Inc.**		**358.47**	**Paid In Full**
	7/31/21	Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative	07312021	Childcare Director Training Prog - June 2021			
				Childcare Director Training Prog - July 2021			
	8/27/21	Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative	08312021	Childcare Director Training Prog - June 2021	1,155.56		
				Childcare Director Training Prog - July 2021	888.89		
				Childcare Director Training Prog - August 2021	1,777.78		
5287				**Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative**		**3,822.23**	**Paid In Full**
	8/1/21	One World Community Heatlh Centers, Inc	0004248-IN	Aug Expenses South Omaha Center	132,616.67		
5265				**One World Community Heatlh Centers, Inc**		**132,616.67**	**Paid In Full**
	8/2/21	OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	BECI004	Jun-July 2021 BECI payment - Mt. View	27,147.22		
				Jun-July 2021 BECI payment - Gomez	23,811.13		
				Jun-July 2021 BECI payment - Liberty	24,666.08		
				Jun-July 2021 BECI payment - Pinewood	19,830.54		
5274				**OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**		**95,454.97**	**Paid In Full**
	8/2/21	OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	Jun-July 2021 ELC	Instructional Coaching - SC1	15,581.56		
				Instructional Coaching - SC3	26,051.58		
				ELC Partnership Progrm	68,643.47		
5276				**OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**		**110,276.61**	**Paid In Full**
	8/25/21	Papillion La Vista Community Schools	01001102130000-12130	Feb. - August 2021 Jump start charges	81,009.33		
5283				**Papillion La Vista Community Schools**		**81,009.33**	**Paid In Full**
	7/1/21	HiTouch/Pay-LESS Office	1872538ATL	Nestle Pure Life Water	75.31		
5264				**HiTouch/Pay-LESS Office**		**75.31**	**Paid In Full**
	7/31/21	HiTouch/Pay-LESS Office	1637194120	PU Supplies 2 qty Copy Paper	100.96		
5249				**HiTouch/Pay-LESS Office**		**100.96**	**Paid In Full**
	7/26/21	Philadelphia Insurance Companies	2003122399	umbrella payment	459.92		
5253				**Philadelphia Insurance Companies**		**459.92**	**Paid In Full**
	8/9/21	Project Harmony	08092021	Parent University Program July 2021	35,593.34		
5255				**Project Harmony**		**35,593.34**	**Paid In Full**
	7/19/21	Seim Johnson LLP	CL6438.00 07192021	Acctg Assistance - L Determan	10,640.00		
				Review Credit Card & Fraud Policies - D Osten	670.00		
				Less Discount for investment in relationship	-1,000.00		
5256				**Seim Johnson LLP**		**10,310.00**	**Paid In Full**
	8/1/21	Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada	August 2021	EE Life, AD&D, & LTD Insurance (ADMIN)	59.41		
				EE Life, AD&D, & LTD Insurance (LCCNO)	-18.20		
				Lucia's Final Adj	-4.80		
				EE Life, AD&D, & LTD Insurance (PR Ded)	-12.00		
				EE Life, AD&D, & LTD Insurance (PR Ded)	4.00		

Check #	Invoice Date	Name	Invoice/CM #	Line Description	Debit Amount	Credit Amount	Payment Status
5256				**Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada**		**28.41**	**Paid In Full**
	7/26/21	United Way of the Midlands	082021	Grade Level Reading Agreement 3rd installment	25,000.00		
5242				**United Way of the Midlands**		**25,000.00**	**Paid In Full**
	8/16/21	UNMC	8/2021	August 2021 Monthly ELC Eval Prog	36,134.92		
3741				**UNMC**		**36,134.92**	**Paid In Full**
	7/19/21	VSP Insurance Co.	812831288	August 2021	28.26		
5250				**VSP Insurance Co.**		**28.26**	**Paid In Full**
	7/1/21	Westside Community Schools Disctrict 66	Sup Plan FY21 Final	Sup Plan FY21 Final Pmt	61,615.71		
5279				**Westside Community Schools Disctrict 66**		**61,615.71**	**Paid In Full**
	8/13/21	Zee Medical Service, Inc. #125	125-073958	LCCNO replenish first aid kit in hallway AED INSPECTION AND BATTERY TEST	70.70		
5271				**Zee Medical Service, Inc. #125**		**70.70**	**Paid In Full**
082721EFT	**8/27/21**	**Security National Bank**	**July Statement**	**Credit Card Online Pmt**	**4,103.40**	**4,103.40**	**Paid In Full**
					887,120.76	**887,120.76**	

LEARNING COMMUNITY OF DOUGLAS SARPY COUNTIES
Credit Card Report
Jul 31, 2021

Date	Reference	Trans Description	Debit Amt	Credit Amt	Balance
7/1/21		**Beginning Balance**			**-834.16**
7/7/21	CC072021_V01	Greater Omaha Refrigeration		576.18	
7/7/21	CC072021_V02	Marking Refrigeration, Inc		181.36	
7/7/21	CC072021_V03	Dropbox		119.88	
7/7/21	CC072021_V04	Amazon.com		309.56	
7/7/21	CC072021_V05	Zoom Video Communication, Inc.		199.90	
7/7/21	CC072021_V06	Vornado Air, LLC		723.93	
7/7/21	CC072021_V07	Stamps.com		17.99	
7/7/21	CC072021_V08	1&1 Ionos		8.71	
7/7/21	CC072021_V09	Vornado Air, LLC		1,965.89	
7/26/21	**072621EFT**	**Security National Bank - Credit Card Payable-SNB**	**834.16**		
		Current Period Change	834.16	4,103.40	-3,269.24
7/31/21		**Ending Balance**			**-4,103.40**

BFA Approved 8/24/2021

LEARNING COMMUNITY OF DOUGLAS SARPY COUNTIES
Credit Card Report
Aug 31, 2021

Date	Reference	Trans Description	Debit Amt	Credit Amt	Balance
8/1/21		**Beginning Balance**			**-4,103.40**
8/13/21	CC082021_V01	Amazon.com		97.92	
8/17/21	CC082021_V02	Zoom Video Communication, Inc.		199.90	
8/24/21	CC082021_V03	Stamps.com		17.99	
8/27/21	**082721EFT**	**Security National Bank - Credit Card Payable - SNB**	**4,103.40**		
8/27/21	CC082021_V04	Seventy Five North Revitalizat		175.00	
8/28/21	CC082021_V05	1&1 Ionos		8.71	
		Current Period Change	4,103.40	499.52	3,603.88
8/31/21		**Ending Balance**			**-499.52**

LEARNING COMMUNITY OF DOUGLAS & SARPY COUNTIES
Budget to Actual - General Administration
For the Twelve Months Ending August 31, 2021

	Current FY Budget	Actual YTD	Percent of Budget	Remaining Spent
Revenues				
STATE AID	$ 470,000.00	$ 470,000.00	100.00	0.00
Total Revenues	**470,000.00**	**470,000.00**	**100.00**	**0.00**
General Expenses				
Coordinating Council				
LCCC- CONTRACTED SERVICES	35,000.00	34,313.86	98.04	686.14
LCCC-OTHER PROF/TECH	6,000.00	7,363.03	122.72	(1,363.03)
LCCC - ADVERTISING	3,500.00	438.50	12.53	3,061.50
LCCC -PRINTING	500.00	0.00	0.00	500.00
LCCC - OFF SUPPLIES	250.00	487.25	194.90	(237.25)
LCCC-CONFERENCE REGISTRATIO	2,500.00	880.00	35.20	1,620.00
LCCC - MISC EXPENSES	1,800.00	117.00	6.50	1,683.00
Coordinating Council - Subtotal	**49,550.00**	**43,599.64**	**87.99**	**5,950.36**
Administration				
CEO SALARY	137,500.00	137,499.96	100.00	0.04
OTHER SALARIES AND WAGES	188,287.85	184,223.53	97.84	4,064.32
PAYROLL TAXES	24,922.77	24,754.50	99.32	168.27
BENEFIT EXPENSES	61,480.28	46,814.75	76.15	14,665.53
DUES AND MEMBERSHIPS	6,900.00	4,375.00	63.41	2,525.00
CONFERENCE/PROFESSIONAL DEV	8,900.00	2,293.88	25.77	6,606.12
PUBLIC ACCOUNTING	10,000.00	70,663.00	706.63	(60,663.00)
STATE AUDIT	11,000.00	11,002.50	100.02	(2.50)
TELECOMMUNICATIONS/WEBSITE	5,460.00	2,550.22	46.71	2,909.78
SUPPLIES	5,460.00	5,817.15	106.54	(357.15)
FURNITURE	5,460.00	1,163.25	21.30	4,296.75
PRINTING AND POSTAGE	17,480.00	7,702.85	44.07	9,777.15
TECHNOLOGY/EQUIPMENT	126,000.00	29,116.63	23.11	96,883.37
REIMBURSED EXPENSES	2,500.00	38.12	1.52	2,461.88
OTHER MISC.	14,900.00	22,447.28	150.65	(7,547.28)
Administration - Subtotal	**626,250.90**	**550,462.62**	**87.90**	**75,788.28**
Total Expenses	**675,800.90**	**594,062.26**	**87.90**	**81,738.64**
Net Income	**$ (205,800.90)**	**$ (124,062.26)**	**(60.28)**	**(81,738.64)**

LEARNING COMMUNITY OF DOUGLAS & SARPY COUNTIES
Budget to Actual - ELC Operations
For the Twelve Months Ending August 31, 2021

	Current FY Budget	Actual YTD	Percent of Budget	Remaining Spent
Revenues				
LOC PROP TAX - ELC LEVY	$ 10,321,062.51	$ 9,519,077.49	92.23	801,985.02
INTEREST - ELC OP	10,000.00	1,186.71	11.87	8,813.29
Total Revenues	**10,331,062.51**	**9,520,264.20**	**92.15**	**810,798.31**
General Expenses				
District Initiatives				
Subcouncil 1 ELC Programming	203,990.00	282,432.54	138.45	(78,442.54)
Subcouncil 3 ELC Programming	304,935.00	375,415.90	123.11	(70,480.90)
Subcouncil 4 ELC Programming	141,822.00	183,878.22	129.65	(42,056.22)
Subcouncil 5 ELC Programming	309,000.00	309,000.00	100.00	0.00
Subcouncil 6 ELC Programming	121,753.00	123,622.40	101.54	(1,869.40)
Programming - Subtotal	**1,081,500.00**	**1,274,349.06**	**117.83**	**(192,849.06)**
North Omaha Center				
Early Childhood Partnership	875,422.60	549,215.58	62.74	326,207.02
Subcouncil 2 Family Support Li	0.00	16,473.11	0.00	(16,473.11)
Childcare Director Training	144,000.00	32,489.62	22.56	111,510.38
Parent University	1,516,444.00	669,545.52	44.15	846,898.48
Center Operations	130,286.73	90,249.92	69.27	40,036.81
North Omaha Center - Subtotal	**3,747,653.33**	**2,632,322.81**	**70.24**	**1,115,330.52**
South Omaha Center				
South Omaha Center	1,591,400.00	1,591,400.04	100.00	(0.04)
Subcouncil 5 Family Support Li	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
South Omaha Center - Subtotal	**1,591,400.00**	**1,591,400.04**	**100.00**	**(0.04)**
Superintendent's Early Childhood Plan				
Superintendent's Early Childho	2,600,000.00	2,362,876.09	90.88	237,123.91
Superintendent's Plan - Subtotal	**2,600,000.00**	**2,362,876.09**	**90.88**	**237,123.91**
General Expenses				
Admin-Community Relations	175,000.00	71,637.67	40.94	103,362.33
Admin-Legal	30,000.00	73,590.25	245.30	(43,590.25)
Admin-Insurance/Bonding	69,000.00	70,934.28	102.80	(1,934.28)
Admin-Lobbying	29,000.00	31,075.00	107.16	(2,075.00)
Admin-Salaries and Wages	267,933.62	163,783.71	61.13	104,149.91
Admin-Payroll Taxes	20,496.92	12,395.55	60.48	8,101.37
Admin-Benefit Expenses	41,275.45	24,249.04	58.75	17,026.41
Admin-Other Misc. Expenses	19,600.00	99.57	0.51	19,500.43
General Expenses - Subtotal	**652,305.99**	**447,765.07**	**68.64**	**204,540.92**
Total Expenses	**8,591,359.32**	**7,034,364.01**	**81.88**	**1,556,995.31**
Difference of Revenues & Expenses	**(1,739,703.19)**	**(2,485,900.19)**	**142.89**	**746,197.00**
Net Income	**$ 1,739,703.19**	**$ 2,485,900.19**	**(142.89)**	**(746,197.00)**

LEARNING COMMUNITY OF DOUGLAS & SARPY COUNTIES
Budget to Actual - Capital Projects
For the Twelve Months Ending August 31, 2021

	Current FY Budget	Actual YTD	Percent of Budget	Remaining Spent
Revenues				
LOC PROP TAX - CAP PROJ (1070)	$ 860,088.56	$ 925,850.28	107.65	(65,761.72)
Total Revenues	**860,088.56**	**925,850.28**	**107.65**	**(65,761.72)**
Learning Centers				
North Omaha Center - Lease Pay	630,000.00	627,665.22	99.63	2,334.78
South Omaha Center - Lease Pay	224,600.00	215,679.21	96.03	8,920.79
Total Expenses	**854,600.00**	**843,344.43**	**98.68**	**11,255.57**
Difference of Revenues & Expenses	**$ 5,488.56**	**$ 82,505.85**	**(1,503.23)**	**(77,017.29)**

For Management Purposes Only

LEARNING COMMUNITY OF DOUGLAS & SARPY COUNTIES
Budget to Actual - Research & Evaluation
For the Twelve Months Ending August 31, 2021

	Current FY Budget	Actual YTD	Percent of Budget	Remaining Spent
Revenues				
	$ 721,150.70	$ 721,150.70	100.00	0.00
Interest	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Revenues	**721,150.70**	**721,150.70**	**100.00**	**0.00**
Research & Evaluation				
Program Evaluation & Research	525,000.00	455,774.04	86.81	69,225.96
GOALS Student Attendance Initi	95,000.00	95,000.00	100.00	0.00
CAP - Full Plan Evaluation by	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Superintendent's Plan Evaluati	224,000.00	167,999.94	75.00	56,000.06
Total Expenses	**844,000.00**	**718,773.98**	**85.16**	**125,226.02**
Difference of Revenues & Expenses	**$ (122,849.30)**	**$ 2,376.72**	**1.93**	**(125,226.02)**

This Fund is restircted to research and evaluation related disbursements only

BUFFETT EARLY CHILDHOOD INSTITUTE

Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan Evaluation: 2020-21

SIXTH YEAR REPORT

Buffett
Early Childhood
Institute
at the University of Nebraska

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan Evaluation is a collaborative effort among the Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI) at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, the Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families, and Schools (CYFS) at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, and the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska. The following teams and individuals contributed to this program evaluation report:

University of Nebraska Evaluation Partners
PreK–Grade 3 evaluation team at MMI, led by Jolene Johnson and Rosie Zweiback
Home Visiting Evaluation Team at CYFS, led by Lisa Knoche and Belle Scheef

Buffett Early Childhood Institute Staff
Communications team, including Rebecca Elder, Kelly Jefferson, and Duane Retzlaff
Program Development team, including Cris López Anderson, Molly Colling, Dalhia Lloyd, and Lisa Roy
Professional Learning team, including Amy Mart and Amy Schmidtke
Research and Evaluation team, including Venessa Bryant, Kymberly Caddell, Kristen Cunningham, Kathleen Gallagher, Marie Geist, Kate Sutton, Elizabeth Svoboda, and Greg Welch

Special thanks to:

Professionals working with children and families: the teachers, home visitors, family facilitators, principals, and school staff at the participating districts

Data collectors and analysts at MMI and CYFS

Leadership of the Learning Community Coordinating Council of Douglas and Sarpy Counties and the 11 school district superintendents

Copyright © 2021 Buffett Early Childhood Institute.

Permission is granted for use of this report with attribution to the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska. The suggested citation for this report is: Buffett Early Childhood Institute (2021). Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan Evaluation: 2020-21 Academic Year. Retrieved from Buffett Early Childhood Institute website: http://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/resources/reports-publications.

Research reported in this publication was supported by the Learning Community Coordinating Council and the Buffett Early Childhood Institute. The content does not necessarily represent the official views of the sponsoring organizations.

The Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska promotes the development and learning of children from birth through age 8. Our vision is to make Nebraska the best place in the nation to be a baby.

The Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska does not discriminate based on race, color, ethnicity, national origin, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, marital status, and/or political affiliation in its programs, activities, or employment.

Visit buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu for more information.

BUFFETT EARLY CHILDHOOD INSTITUTE

Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan Evaluation: 2020-21

Contents

Contents 2

Executive Summary 4

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan: Overview 8
- The School as Hub Birth–Grade 3 Framework 8
- Three Interrelated Levels of Programming 10
- Programming Adaptations in 2020–2021: Responding to the Pandemic and Racial Inequity 13
- Evaluating the School as Hub for Birth–Grade 3 Approach 15

Full Implementation of the School as Hub for Birth–Grade 3 Approach 17
- Evaluation Questions and Methods 17
- Introduction to Evaluation of Level 1 Programming 19

Program Quality: Home Visiting and Family Facilitation, Birth–Age 5 20
- Home Visitors and Family Facilitators Conduct Quality Visits 21

Family Processes 25
- Home Visiting and Family Facilitation Foster Positive Parent-Child Interaction 25
- Positive Parent-Child Interactions, Parenting Efficacy, and Social Support Facilitate Learning and Development 26
- Families Received Support for Learning From Home Visitors and Family Facilitators 27
- Assessing Family Perceptions Informs Family-School Partnerships 29
- Families Report Communicating With Home Visitors and Family Facilitators About Educational Transitions 32
- Challenges and Future Directions 33

Instructional Supports 34
- How Educational Facilitators Support Instructional Practices 34
- School Leaders' Expectations for Instructional Supports 40
- How the School as Hub Principles (Quality, Continuity, Equity), Policies, and Practices Are Advanced in Schools 46

Child Development and Learning 53
- Development and Learning: Birth–5 Years 53
- Academic Achievement 54

Social-Emotional and Executive Function Development 62
- Social-Emotional Development: Birth to 3 Years 62
- Executive Functioning: PreK to Grade 3 62

Evaluation Summary and Recommendations for Level 1 Programming 66
- Program Quality 66
- Family Processes 67
- Instructional Supports 68
- Child Development and Learning 68
- Social-Emotional and Executive Function Development 69

Professional Development for All 70
- Professional Development for All Fall Webinar Series 70
- Professional Development for All Spring Webinar Series 73
- Evaluation Summary and Recommendations for Level 3 Programming 75

References 76

TABLES

TABLE 1 SCHOOL AS HUB FOR BIRTH–GRADE 3 FRAMEWORK 10

TABLE 2 SCHOOL AND DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS: FULL IMPLEMENTATION SCHOOLS 2020–2021 11

TABLE 3 CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ENROLLED IN HOME VISITING 20

TABLE 4 HOME VISIT FORMAT 21

TABLE 5 KINDERGARTEN–GRADE 3 MAP FALL READING AND MATHEMATICS ACHIEVEMENT STATUS SCORES 55

TABLE 6 GRADES 1–3 MAP FALL 2019 TO FALL 2020 READING AND MATHEMATICS CGP SCORES 58

TABLE 7 READING ACHIEVEMENT STATUS AND GROWTH SUMMARY 60

TABLE 8 MATH ACHIEVEMENT STATUS AND GROWTH SUMMARY 60

TABLE 9A PREK–GRADE 3 MINNESOTA EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SCALE RESULTS ACROSS 3 YEARS 63

TABLE 9B PREK–GRADE 3 MINNESOTA EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SCALE RESULTS BY FRL STATUS ACROSS 3 YEARS 64

TABLE 9C PREK–GRADE 3 MINNESOTA EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SCALE RESULTS BY RACE/ETHNICITY ACROSS 3 YEARS 64

TABLE 10A COMBINED PARTICIPANT ROLE ACROSS ALL THREE FALL WEBINARS 71

TABLE 10B COMBINED AGE GROUP SERVED BY PARTICIPANT ACROSS ALL THREE FALL WEBINARS 71

TABLE 11A COMBINED PARTICIPANT ROLE ACROSS BOTH SPRING WEBINARS 73

TABLE 11B COMBINED AGE GROUP SERVED BY PARTICIPANT ACROSS BOTH SPRING WEBINARS 73

FIGURES

FIGURE 1 HOME VISITING ENROLLMENT NUMBERS BY ENROLLMENT COHORT 18

FIGURE 2 OVERALL HOME VISIT QUALITY 23

FIGURE 3 RATINGS OF FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS 31

FIGURE 4 NUMBER OF SESSIONS TEACHERS ENGAGED WITH THE EDUCATIONAL FACILITATOR 35

FIGURE 5 TEACHER PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES WITH THE EDUCATIONAL FACILITATOR 35

FIGURE 6 TEACHER RESPONSES TO EDUCATIONAL FACILITATOR INFLUENCES ON THOUGHTS ABOUT SELF-CARE AND TEACHER WELL-BEING 39

FIGURE 7 BARRIERS EXPERIENCED BY TEACHERS WHO COLLABORATED WITH THE EDUCATIONAL FACILITATOR 45

FIGURE 8 BARRIERS EXPERIENCED BY TEACHERS WHO DID NOT COLLABORATE WITH THE EDUCATIONAL FACILITATOR 45

FIGURE 9 TEACHER RESPONSES TO EDUCATIONAL FACILITATOR INFLUENCES ON THOUGHTS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF QUALITY PRACTICES IN THE CLASSROOM 47

FIGURE 10 TEACHER RESPONSES TO EDUCATIONAL FACILITATOR INFLUENCES ON ENGAGING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FAMILIES 48

FIGURE 11 TEACHER RESPONSES TO EDUCATIONAL FACILITATOR INFLUENCES ON THOUGHTS ABOUT EQUITY 50

FIGURE 12 CHILDREN BIRTH–AGE 3 ASQ SCORES BY DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAIN 53

FIGURE 13 MEDIAN READING ACHIEVEMENT STATUS PERCENTILE SCORES BY SELECTED DEMOGRAPHICS: FALL 2020 56

FIGURE 14 MEDIAN MATH ACHIEVEMENT STATUS PERCENTILE SCORES BY SELECTED DEMOGRAPHICS: FALL 2020 57

FIGURE 15 MEDIAN READING CONDITIONAL GROWTH PERCENTILE SCORES BY SELECTED DEMOGRAPHICS: FALL 2019 TO FALL 2020 58

FIGURE 16 MEDIAN MATH CONDITIONAL GROWTH PERCENTILE SCORES BY SELECTED DEMOGRAPHICS: FALL 2019 TO FALL 2020 59

FIGURE 17 READING GROWTH FALL 2019 TO FALL 2020 PROJECTED VS. OBSERVED GROWTH BY GRADE LEVEL 61

FIGURE 18 MATH GROWTH FALL 2019 TO FALL 2020 PROJECTED VS. OBSERVED GROWTH BY GRADE LEVEL 61

FIGURE 19 CATEGORICAL MEFS SCORES BY FREE OR REDUCED LUNCH STATUS 65

FIGURE 20 CATEGORICAL MEFS SCORES BY RACE/ETHNICITY 65

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; Takanishi, 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		
• Child-Centered Teaching and Learning • Child-Centered Parenting and Learning • Cross-Cutting Practices	• Culture and Climate • Family-School Partnerships • Community-School Connections	• 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' voices[1] 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

[1]The 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.

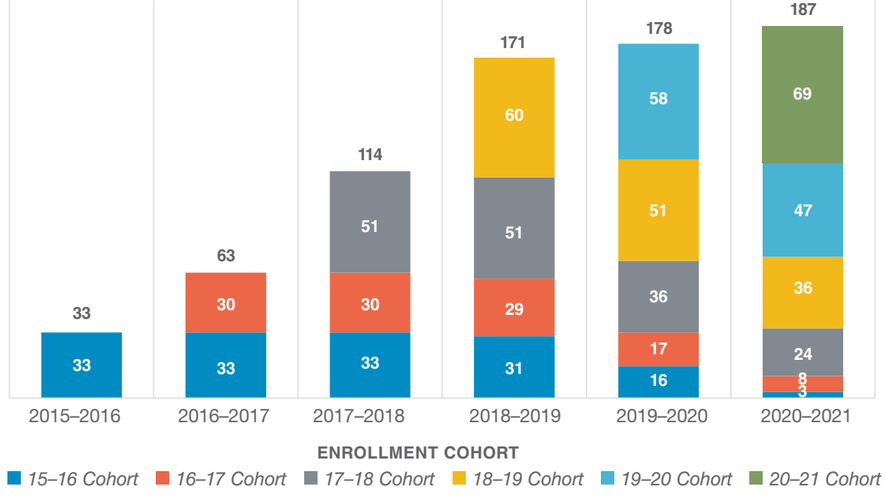
Birth–Age 5. Families of children under 5 years who were enrolled in either home visiting (birth–3 years) and/or in family facilitation (3–5 years) who consented to participate in the evaluation are represented in these results. Families completed developmental screening and home visiting observations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

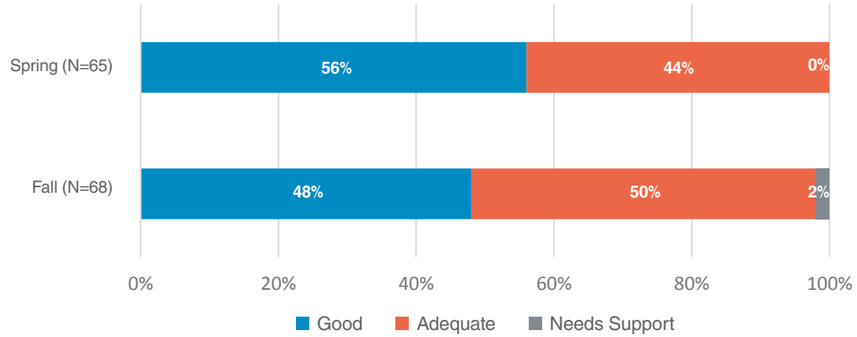
HOVRS coders participate in a rigorous training and reliability process. Coders must achieve 85% reliability and submit to ongoing reliability checks on every fifth video to continue coding. Individualized reports are shared with the program staff for professional development and self-assessment purposes. 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

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

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

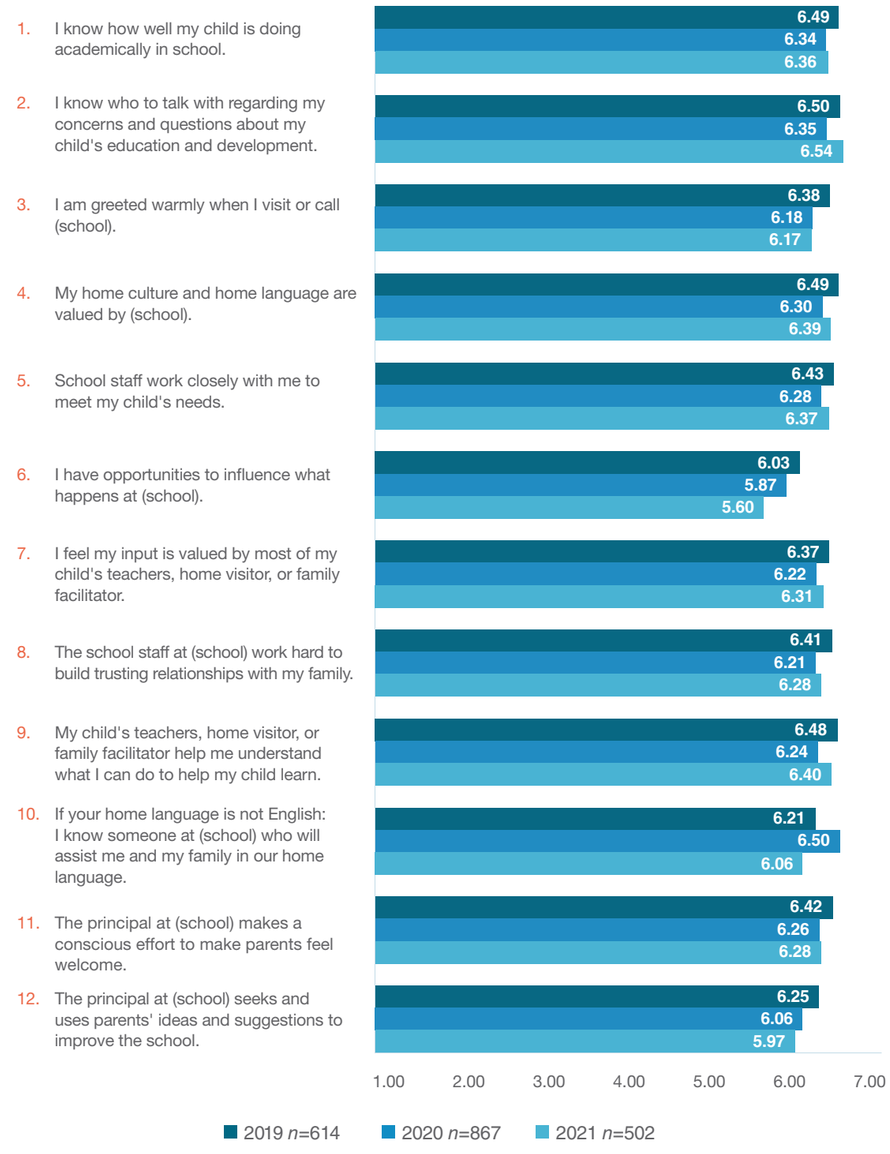
When schools engage meaningfully with families, children demonstrate better educational achievement and social outcomes (Fantuzzo et al., 2004). To support schools' practices engaging families for quality, continuity, and equity, an adaptation of the Road Map Family Engagement Survey (Ishimaru & Lott, 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

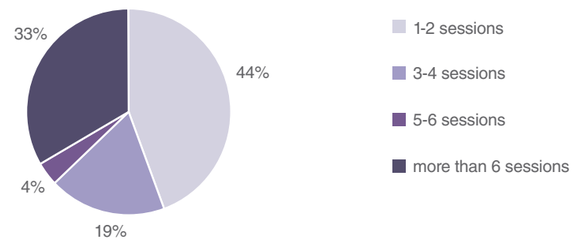
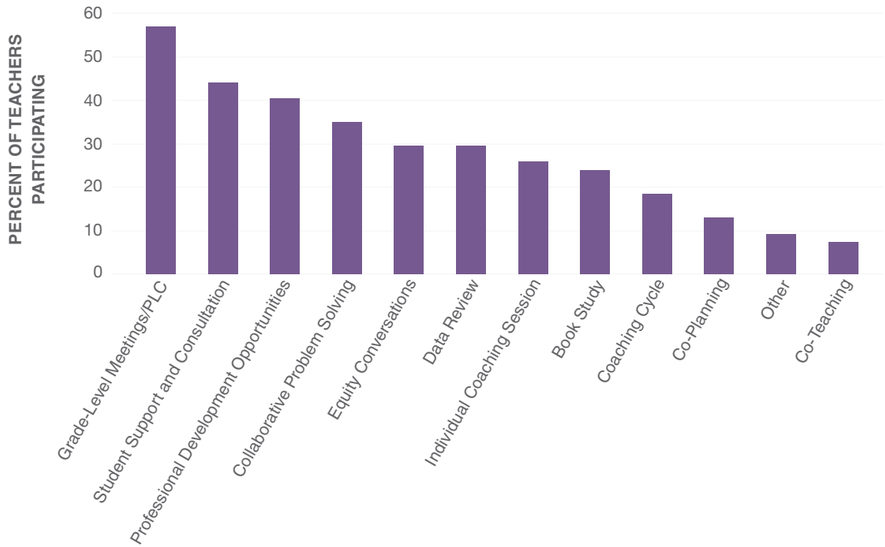


FIGURE 5. | TEACHER PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES WITH THE EDUCATIONAL FACILITATOR



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.

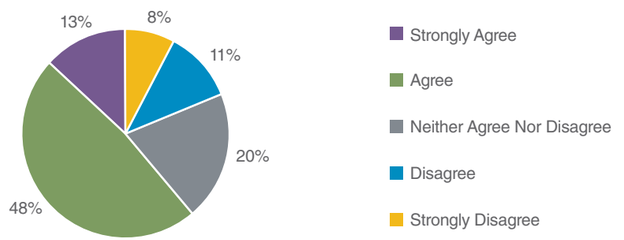
In one school, the educational facilitator reached out to local child care programs providing services to school-age children during the day. She offered assistance with online learning and let the providers know she was available to help.

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:

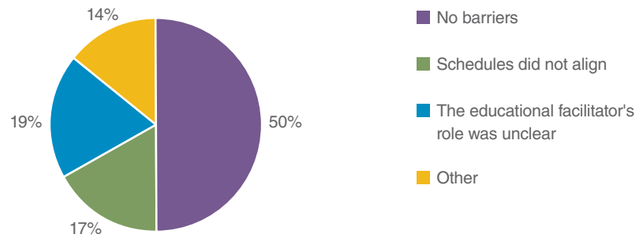
"I don't think staff...think of [the educational facilitator] as a resource first and probably not even second. It's not like they're averse to what she's doing…it's just she hasn't been here…[Teachers] go to the person who's down the hall…and that's unfortunate... because there's an awful lot of resources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

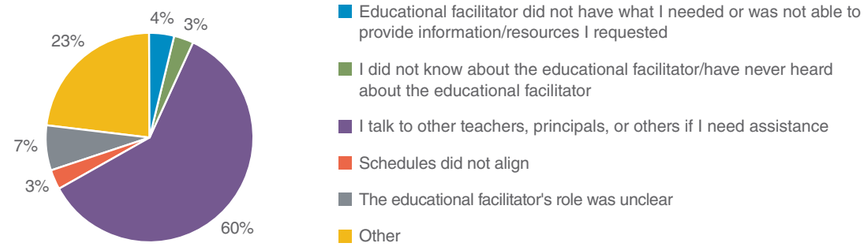
Teachers who collaborated with the educational facilitator (68.4%) were asked whether there were any barriers to collaboration. While half indicated that there were no barriers (Figure 7), others shared barriers of limited contact with the facilitator, classroom issues, lack of opportunity to meet, and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

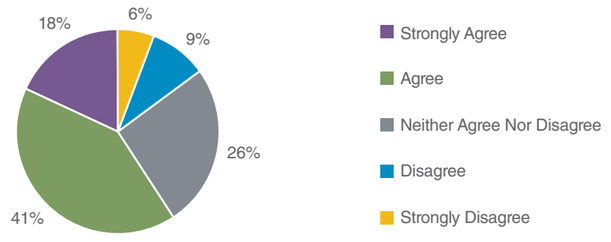
Quality refers to a commitment that all practices used with children, families, and educators will be focused on producing developmentally and educationally meaningful outcomes. These practices are research-based and benefit from continuous improvement. The goal is to enhance the impact of programs and 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.

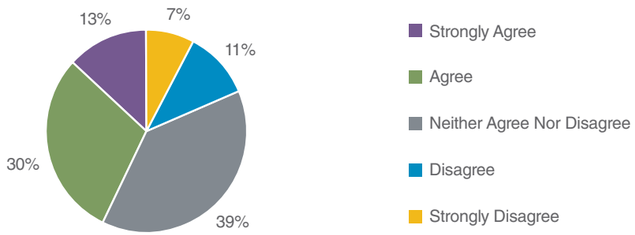
More specifically, schools are being more intentional about engaging families with younger children. Schools are now purposefully thinking of ways to bring in all families with young children, not just those with school-age children. One school created a room for families with younger children that was 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."

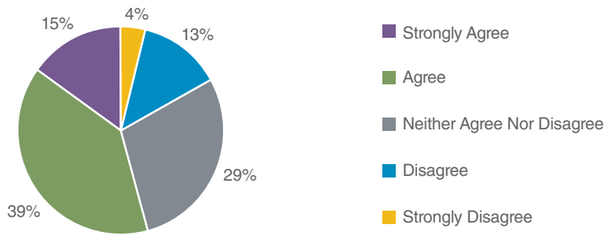
One teacher describes changes she has made as a result of working with the educational facilitator:

"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.

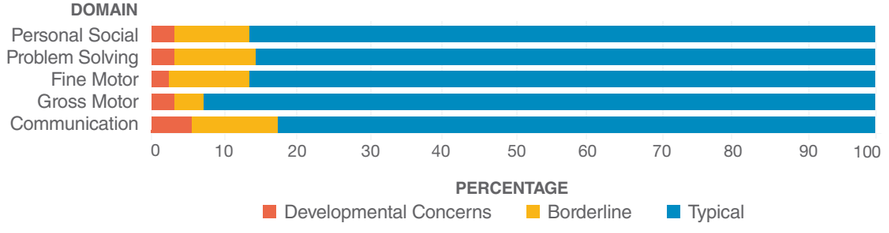
Child Development and Learning

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

	READING			MATHEMATICS		
Grade	*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.

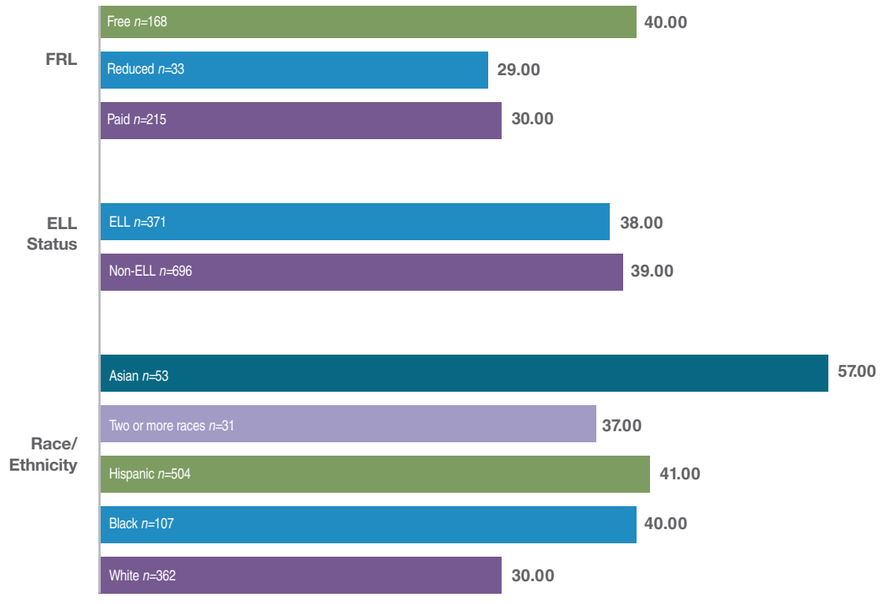
TABLE 6. | GRADES 1–3 MAP FALL 2019 TO FALL 2020 READING AND MATHEMATICS CGP SCORES

	Reading			Mathematics		
Grade	*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.

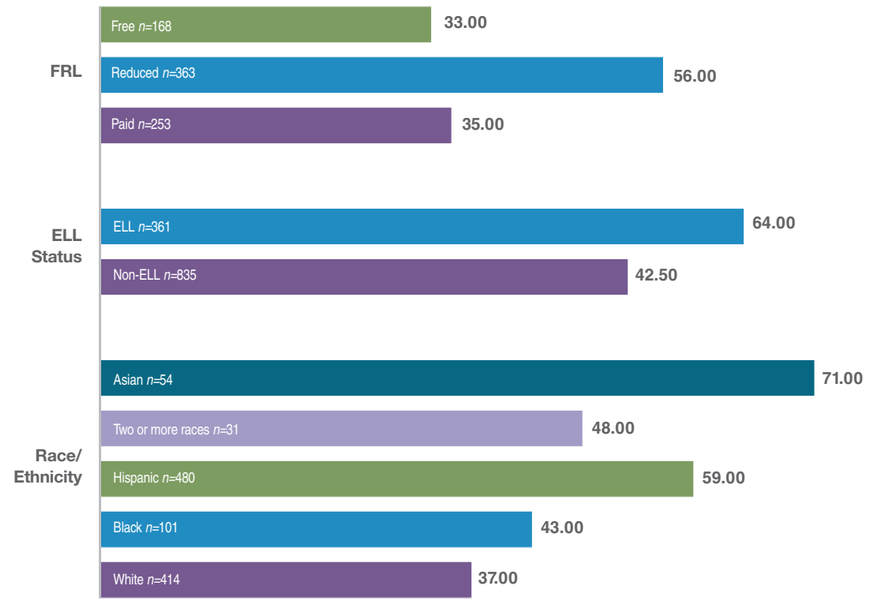
FIGURE 15. | MEDIAN READING CONDITIONAL GROWTH PERCENTILE SCORES BY SELECTED DEMOGRAPHICS: FALL 2019 TO FALL 2020



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 Achievement Percentile (Fall 2020)*	*Median Achievement Percentile (Fall 2020)*	*N 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 Achievement Percentile (Fall 2020)*	*Median Achievement Percentile (Fall 2020)*	*N 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

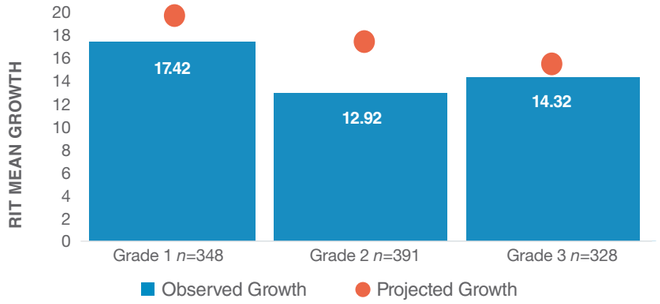
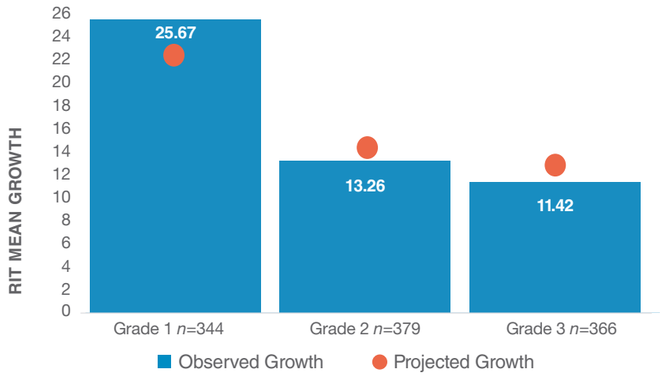


FIGURE 18. | MATH GROWTH FALL 2019 TO FALL 2020 PROJECTED VS. OBSERVED GROWTH BY GRADE LEVEL



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

	2018–2019			2019–2020			2020–2021		
Grade	*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

	2018–2019			2019–2020			2020–2021		
FRL	*N*	Mean	SD	*N*	Mean	SD	*N*	Mean	SD
Free	336	93.19	9.09	536	95.86	8.81	482	95.60	11.37
Reduced	83	97.02	9.03	62	96.03	9.55	93	95.99	8.82
Paid	274	97.92	8.96	600	98.81	8.13	491	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

	2018–2019			2019–2020			2020–2021		
Race/Ethnicity	*N*	Mean	SD	*N*	Mean	SD	*N*	Mean	SD
Asian	27	96.48	11.46	41	97.51	8.22	23	98.39	10.97
Black/African American	120	95.53	8.64	126	96.71	9.32	77	94.86	10.07
White	667	97.29	8.41	815	98.24	8.29	670	98.11	10.74
Two or more races	70	94.23	9.39	47	96.17	8.03	60	96.27	10.23
Hispanic	156	93.60	9.56	238	95.18	9.03	226	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

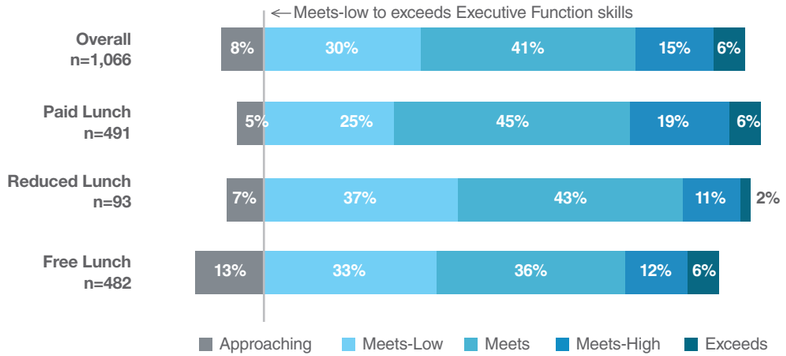
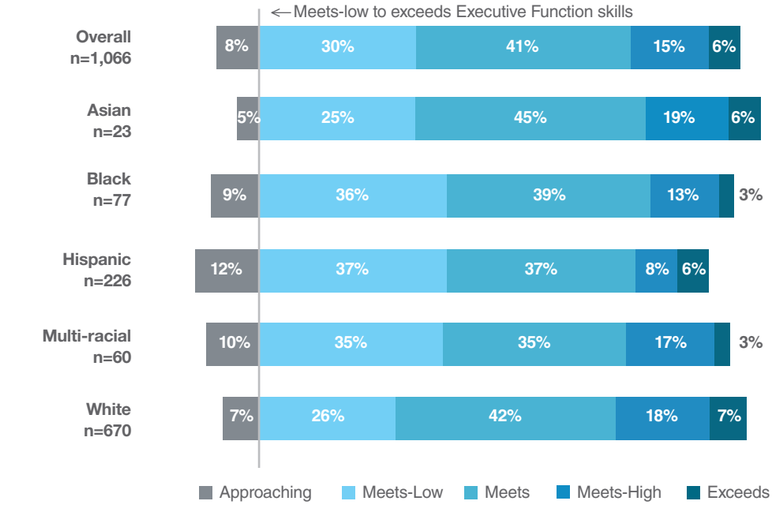


FIGURE 20. | CATEGORICAL MEFS SCORES BY RACE/ETHNICITY



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.

References

Buffett Early Childhood Institute (n.d.) *The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan: A Birth-Grade 3 Approach to Closing the Opportunity Gap.* Retrieved from: https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/-/media/beci/docs/superintendents-plan-brochure-final.pdf?la=en

Caldera, D., Burrell, L., Rodriguez, K., Crowne, S.S., Rohde, C., & Duggan, A. (2007). Impact of a statewide home visiting program on parenting and on child health and development. *Child Abuse & Neglect,* 31(8), 829–852. doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2007.02.008

Carlson, S.M., & Zelazo, P.D. (2014). *Minnesota Executive Function Scale: Test manual.* Saint Paul, MN: Reflection Sciences.

CASEL. (2010). *Social and emotional learning and positive behavioral interventions and supports.* Retrieved from https://www.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/PDF-10-social-and-emotional-learning-and-positive-behavioral-interventions-and-supports.pdf

Comfort, M., Gordon, P.R., English, B., Hacker, K., Hembree, R., Knight, R., Miller, C. (2010). Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale: KIPS shows how parents grow. *Zero to Three Journal,* 30(4), 33–39.

Comfort, M., Gordon, P.R., & Naples, D. (2011). KIPS: An evidence-based tool for assessing parenting strengths and needs in diverse families. *Infants & Young Children: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Early Childhood Intervention,* 24(1), 56–74.

Diamond, A. (2014). Executive functions: Insights into ways to help more children thrive. *Zero to Three,* 35(2), 9–17.

Downer, J.T., Lopez, M.L., Grimm, K.J., Hamagami, A., Pianta, R.C., & Howes, C. (2012). Observations of teacher-child interactions in classrooms serving Latinos and dual language learners: Applicability of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System in diverse settings. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly,* 27, 21–32. doi: 10.1016/j.ecresq.2011.07.005

Elliot, L.K., Flanagan, K., Belza, A.B., & Dew, B. (2012). *Growing great kids for preschoolers in home visiting programs.* Wausau, WI: Great Kids

Hamre, B.K. (2014). Teachers' daily interactions with children: An essential ingredient in effective early childhood programs. *Child Development Perspectives,* 8, 223–230. doi:10.1111/cdep.12090

Hamre, B.K., & Pianta, R.C. (2005). Can instructional and emotional support in the first-grade classroom make a difference for children at risk of school failure? *Child Development*, 76, 949–967. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2005.00889.x

Ishimaru, A.M., & Lott, J. (2015). *User's Guide for Road Map Family Engagement Survey: Data Inquiry for Equitable Collaboration.* Retrieved from the Equitable Parent-School Collaboration Research Project website: https://education.uw.edu/epsc

KIPS Behaviors in Detail. (2000). *Perseus Publishing.* Brazelton & Greenspan.

KIPS eLearning. (2009). *Scoring KIPS* (3rd ed.). Comfort & Gordon.

KIPS Background & Parenting Skills (2013). *Keys to Interactive Parenting Scale: Background Sources and Further Information on Parenting.* Comfort & Gordon

Lewis, K., Kuhfeld, M., Ruzek, E., & McEachin, A. (2021). Learning during COVID-19: Reading and math achievement in the 2020-21 school year. NWEA.

Mahoney, J.L., Durlak, J.A., & Weissberg, R.P. (2018). An update on social and emotional learning outcome research. *Phi Delta Kappan,* 100(4), 18–23. doi: 10.1177/0031721718815668

Nebraska Department of Education (2019, July 1). NSSRS Resouces. Retrieved from https://www.education.ne.gov/dataservices/nssrs-resources/

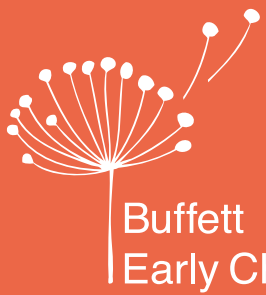
Roggman, L., Cook., G., Innocenti, M., Jump Norman, V., Christiansen, K., Boyce, L., . . . Hallgren, K. (2017). *Home visit rating scales—adapted and extended (HOVRS-A+v.2.1)* [Unpublished instrument]. Used with permission of authors.

Singleton, G. (2021). *Courageous conversations about race: a field guide for achieving equity in schools and beyond* (3rd ed.). Corwin.

Squires, J., Brickner, D., Heo, K., & Twombly, E. (2001). Identification of social-emotional problems in young children using a parent-completed screening measure. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly,* 16, 405–419. doi: 10.1016/S0885-2006(01)00115-6

Squires, Bricker, & Twombly. (2009). *Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social Emotional.* Paul H. Brookes Publishing: Baltimore, MD.

Wessels, Stephanie. (2013). Home Visits: A Way of Connecting With Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families. *Faculty Publications: Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education.* 147



Buffett
Early Childhood
Institute
at the University of Nebraska

2111 S. 67th St., Suite 350
Omaha, NE 68106
402.554.2924
buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu

University of Nebraska