

STAY STRONG.

OPPORTUNITIES 2021
COMMUNITY REPORT

GOAL: TEACH MY CHILDREN
THE IMPORTANCE
OF EDUCATION.



“The knowledge and skills I acquired from the Learning Community Center enabled all of us to be prepared for the pandemic. I guided my children through virtual learning, and they have succeeded.”

ANTHONY DOUGLAS
with his children, Aaliyah, 9 and Anthony, 10
Parent University,
Learning Community Center of North Omaha

ABOUT THE DATA

This Community Report includes evaluation highlights from the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties 2019-2020 Annual Report. Due to COVID-19, outcomes from the second-half of the year reflect the transition to virtual learning and critical support initiatives.

In a year disrupted by COVID-19, the mission of the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties has never mattered more. The pandemic made longstanding disparities even more visible for many community members. Working together, we can turn awareness into action.

The Learning Community, and its partners, welcome your interest in innovative, practical strategies to improve the landscape for learning in the Omaha metro region. We're here to close the opportunity gap which impacts student achievement long before a child goes to school.

In this Community Report, you will see steady progress in the Learning Community. Here are a few highlights which illustrate the power of starting early with a two-generation approach.

TWO-GENERATION LEARNING WORKS

Opportunities for children AND families lead to better outcomes for our entire community.

WORKFORCE TRAINING WINS

Everyone wins when educational and economic opportunities connect.

DIGITAL LITERACY MATTERS

New family-based pilot initiatives provide an early learning platform to close the digital divide.

We all want our communities to support strong families and healthy children. Let's take our shared experiences from this difficult year and expand learning opportunities where children and families need them the most.



DR. BRADLEY
EKWEREKWU
Chief Executive Officer
Learning Community
of Douglas
and Sarpy Counties

LEARNING COMMUNITY MISSION

Together with school districts and community organizations as partners, we demonstrate, share and implement more effective practices to measurably improve educational outcomes for children and families in poverty.

CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

BRIDGING THE GAPS TOGETHER

No system, no playbook, no time to waste. The COVID-19 pandemic left school districts and parents scrambling. The Learning Community mobilized as families faced extreme challenges in education, health and safety.

FOOD FOR LEARNING

At the outset of the pandemic, the Learning Community, Millard Public Schools, OneWorld Community Health Centers and Northstar Foundation formed a healthy meals partnership. As families made the transition to virtual learning, the curbside food distribution in the Omaha metro bridged the gap until school districts and community organizations could take over.

DIGITAL INEQUITIES HIT HOME

The inequities in virtual learning quite literally, hit home. Teams in our Learning Community Centers worked with generous donors to equip families with technology and resolve internet access issues, but that wasn't enough. What's the value of technology without training? In South Omaha, many families had little experience with a computer. Closing the digital divide in early childhood education meant teaching families the equivalent of a brand-new language – digital literacy. In Learning Community Centers, teachers worked one-on-one or in small groups to coach parents in computer basics, emails, school district resources, and website navigation.

2-GEN VIRTUAL VALUE

The Learning Community's 2-Gen approach took a creative shift into virtual learning while families tried to juggle jobs, school learning packets and new technology. In South Omaha, the Learning Community team launched a YouTube channel just for families.

The Parent University team at the Learning Community Center of North Omaha shared weekly ReadyRosie videos. The mobile technology gave parents a model to engage children in school readiness activities.

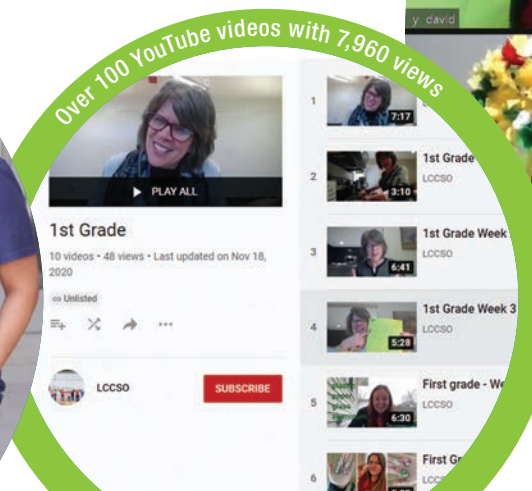
With popular classes via zoom from both Learning Community Centers, early learning during the pandemic never stopped. Family-friendly online sessions actually reduced stress and fear. Families told evaluators the regular connections reassured them, even as they faced grief and health concerns.

“Families are faced with a lot of financial strain. They are very brave as many work in places that don't have the benefits that offer them protection from COVID-19 and they continue to work to support their families.”

PROTECTING CHILD & FAMILY HEALTH

The Learning Community 2-Gen partnership encouraged families to make health and safety a top priority. Our teams in Learning Community Centers connected families to community supports for the financial and emotional stresses created by the pandemic.

And just in time, the Learning Community Foundation teamed up with local donors to keep babies and toddlers healthy. Their successful campaign raised \$70,000, enough for diapers, baby formula and wipes to last the rest of the year. Their generosity also made it possible for parents to continue in classes, while guiding virtual learning at home.



LEARNING COMMUNITY CENTER OF SOUTH OMAHA

FAMILY LEARNING A 2-GEN MODEL

Two-generation opportunities in Family Learning increase academic and economic success for children and families.

STRONG ATTENDANCE MATTERS

LEARNING COMMUNITY CENTER
OF SOUTH OMAHA STUDENTS
SURPASSED THE SCHOOL
DISTRICT AVERAGE

For four consecutive years, students have consistently demonstrated strong attendance, a key factor in student achievement.

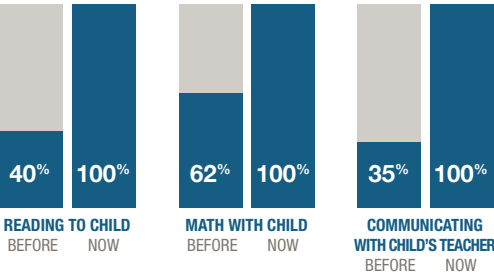


LEARNING ENGLISH OPENS DOOR TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS

For the fourth consecutive year, parents gained confidence to be involved in their child's education, and connected to their local schools.

Reading, math, talking to teachers – parents developed essential skills to support their children in school and continue their own education.

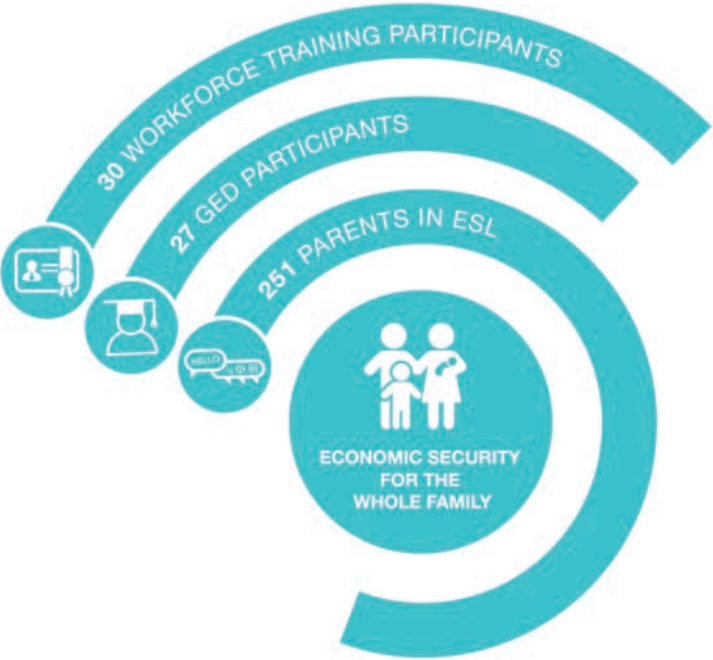
PARENT FOCUS GROUPS



■ SOMEWHAT COMFORTABLE / COMFORTABLE ■ UNCOMFORTABLE

A PARENT EDUCATION PATHWAY

Any combination of English, GED, and Workforce Training gives parents skills to support their children in school while building a stronger future for the entire family.



Essential skills and workforce certifications improve parent-school partnerships and lead to better jobs. Research tells us the financial security from better earnings also improves student learning.



THE 2-GEN DIFFERENCE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ONEWORLD COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

“In the past, I didn’t see reading as something I had to do. If my kids wanted to read, we could, but we didn’t have to.”

A home visit with Ana Carina, the family’s Learning Community educational navigator, convinced Yessica reading would help her children in school. She set a family goal to read one book a day **together** and join Prime Time Reading classes.

“They really liked it and I started getting ideas for what I could do to practice reading with them. And from there it became a routine. I’ve learned a lot of new words...they’re helping me, too!”

Children in the Learning Community Center of South Omaha consistently show strong academic proficiency when parents take classes to learn or improve English language skills.

“They’re raising their reading level at school. I’ve noticed they comprehend better what they’re reading.”

And now, reading reminders come from Yessica’s children.

“Mom, we haven’t read a book yet! We have to read a book!”

“I want two things for my children –
to be kind to others and be educated.”

When Khine and her family came to Omaha as refugees from Burma, they didn’t know anyone. In Parent University at the Learning Community Center of North Omaha, they gained a sense of belonging and support.

“Parent University is a very good thing. I can
see our future here. My children won’t have to
worry because we are all learning.”

When Khine is in a parent class, little Ney is just a few doors away immersed in early learning activities. Before going home, they stop in the Family Resource Center for take-home kits and books. What everyone here shares is a love of learning.

“I have friends from lots of different places.
We’re happy and help each other to study and
learn new things, like how to get a better job.”

In Parent University, Khine is already more than half-way to her next goal, a GED. And from there? She’ll go to college to become an early childhood teacher, but a career in criminal law could come later. This mom believes in the power of education.

“I want to help my community (from
Burma) come to the center to get
more education
because then we can
help this country.”



79%
MEETS OPS
STRIVE FOR 95

**POSITIVE
ATTENDANCE
TREND**
STRONG SCHOOL
ATTENDANCE MEANS
HIGHER SCORES IN
READING AND MATH

Children from Parent University families continued to meet or exceed school district attendance goals.

**PARENTS INCREASED
FINANCIAL STABILITY**
NEW UNDERSTANDINGS
INCREASE ECONOMIC SECURITY

In this 10-week course, parents learned financial skills to move past difficult experiences. One year later, more than half the parent participants gained greater economic and social stability.

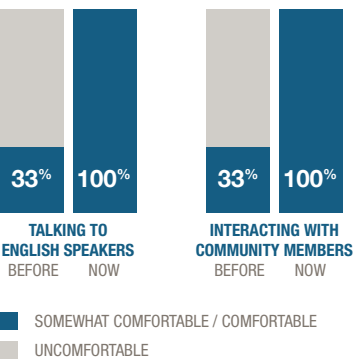
LEARNING COMMUNITY CENTER
OF NORTH OMAHA

PARENT UNIVERSITY
A 2-GEN MODEL

Two-generation learning in Parent University leads to better educational and economic opportunities for the whole family.

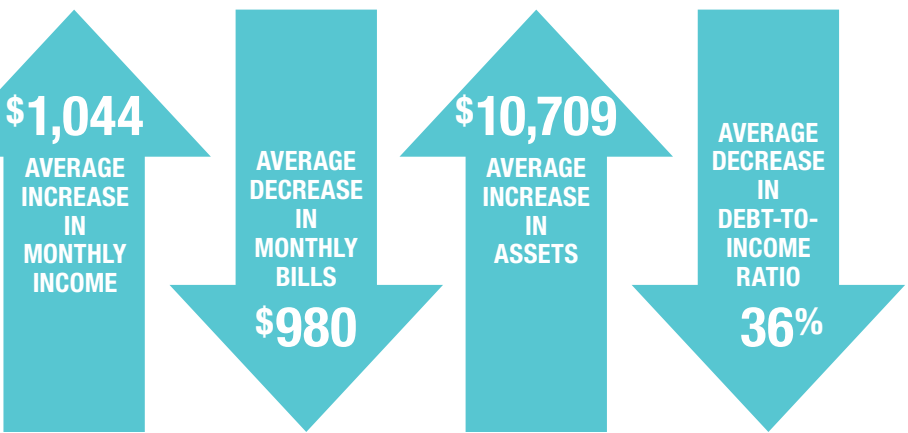
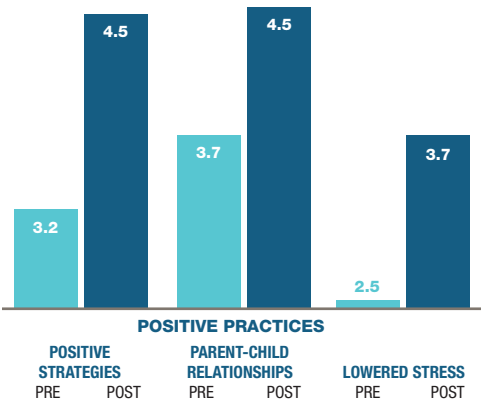
**PARENTS GAIN
STRONG SKILLS**
COMFORTABLE INTERACTIONS
INCREASED DRAMATICALLY IN
THE COMMUNITY

It’s a challenging journey that ends with confidence. Parents gained essential skills to participate in community activities and partner with their local school.



**PARENTS STRENGTHENED
RELATIONSHIPS WITH
THEIR CHILDREN**
REDUCING STRESS HELPS
THE ENTIRE FAMILY

Parents made strong, meaningful changes engaging with their children. Over the course of eight-weeks, parents learned new ways to build even stronger relationships for the future.



LEARNING COMMUNITY CENTER OF NORTH OMAHA
CONTINUED

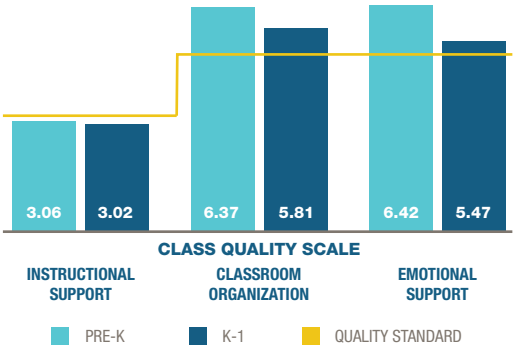
INTENSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD PARTNERSHIP
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Intensive Early Childhood Partnership (IECP) is a Pre-K—Grade 1 teaching team system for six OPS elementary schools. Enhanced professional development, family outreach and dedicated teacher-coaches lead to more effective teaching.

TEACHER CLASSROOM PRACTICES

AMONG THE TOP 10% OF
HEAD START CLASSROOMS
NATIONWIDE IN 2 OF 3 DOMAINS

Pre-K and K-1 teachers reached the high quality range for positive impact on student achievement. While there is room for growth in instructional support, teachers showed strength in modeling advanced language. This skill is an important contributor to student achievement.



CHILD CARE DIRECTOR TRAINING
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NEBRASKA EARLY
CHILDHOOD COLLABORATIVE

The Child Care Director Training program aims for quality early childhood care in home-based and community child care centers in north Omaha. The program provides directors with coaching and training to model best practice skills for center staff.

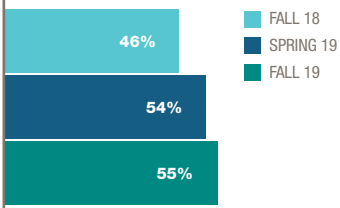
TEACHERS USED MORE KEY PRACTICES

After a year in the program, teaching staff used more skills which positively contribute to a child’s social and emotional growth.



STATE OF NEBRASKA
EARLY CHILDHOOD QUALITY
STANDARDS FOR LICENSED
PROVIDERS.

KEY CHILD CARE PRACTICES



FUTURE TEACHER TRAINING
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The program prepares future early childhood teachers for classrooms in more diverse, urban communities. Despite the Creighton-MCC pathway to a teaching degree with an early childhood endorsement, cost and class times continue to be student obstacles.

FUTURE
TEACHER
PIPELINE
2016-2019

73
EARLY CHILDHOOD
GRADUATES

83%
GRADUATES EMPLOYED
EARLY CHILDHOOD

17
ENROLLED IN 4-YEAR
DEGREE PROGRAM

THE LEARNING COMMUNITY SUPPORTS AND EVALUATES SCHOOL DISTRICT PROGRAMS TO MEET LOCAL NEEDS. ALL DISTRICTS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE EXPERIENCES AND COLLABORATE FOR FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS.

DISTRICT INITIATIVES

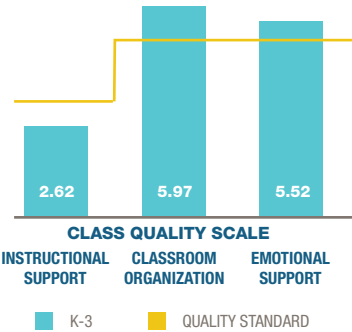
INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING SUPPORTS
CLASSROOM TEACHING SKILLS

BELLEVUE, RALSTON, MILLARD, OMAHA, WESTSIDE

Research shows strong teacher-coaching programs positively impact student achievement.

K-3 TEACHERS
DEMONSTRATED
STRONG SKILLS IN
CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION
AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Instructional support shows a continued need for improvement. Evaluation results are shared with teachers and coaches to strengthen their process.

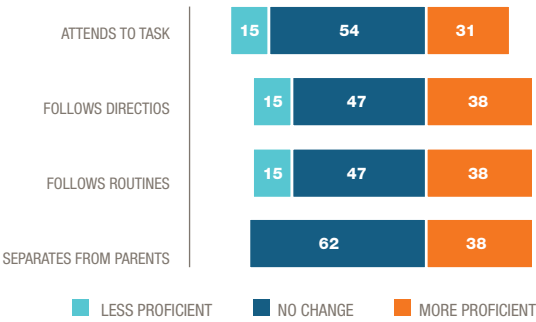


JUMPSTART TO KINDERGARTEN
1 SCHOOL DISTRICT

Jumpstart to Kindergarten gives children with little classroom experience an opportunity to make rapid gains in school readiness.

TEACHERS FOUND JUMPSTART
STUDENTS WERE EQUAL TO OR MORE
PROFICIENT THAN THEIR PEERS

The majority of parents noticed improvements in their child’s understanding of key academic concepts.



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

Extended Learning classes are smaller and more personal. In some districts, a pilot program for virtual summer school targeted students most in need of academic support.

PARENT SATISFACTION HIGH

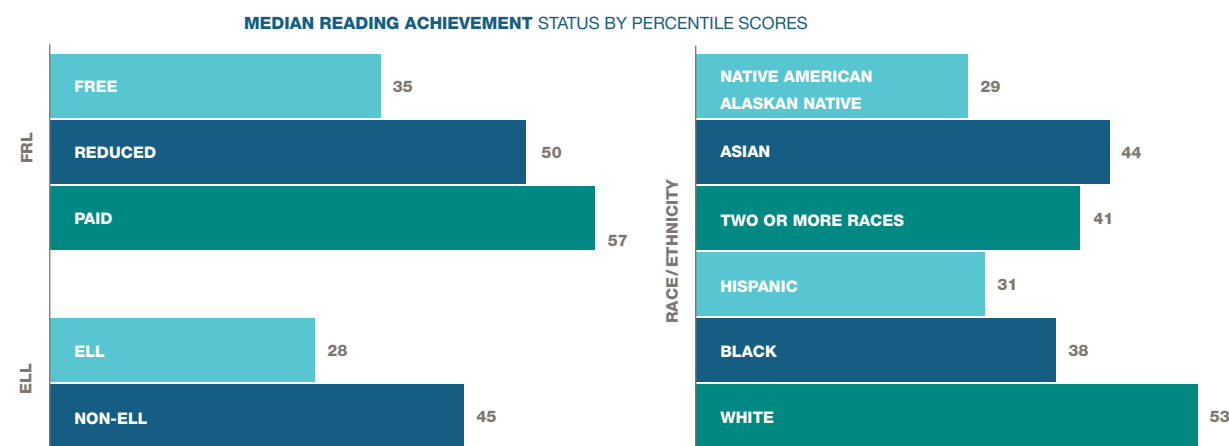
“My son enjoyed
the program and
felt more confident
starting 2nd grade.”

“Equity is one of our core values of the district. Everything we should be doing should have equity at the heart.” PRINCIPAL

The Superintendents’ Plan offers an innovative, comprehensive approach for reducing opportunity gaps based on systemic and structural inequities from birth through Grade 3.

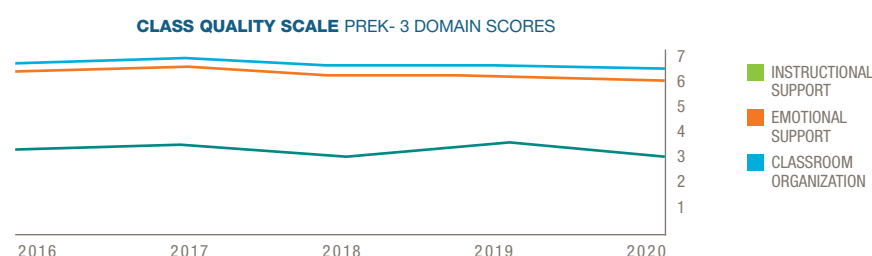
STUDENT GROWTH IMPROVED BUT VARIED BY GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, results revealed disparities in achievement based on family income, home language, and child race or ethnicity.



CLASSROOM QUALITY WAS HIGH AND INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY OVER TIME

The quality of teachers’ practices and interactions in the classroom, assessed before the onset of COVID-19, was associated with higher academic and social interactions.



SUPERINTENDENTS’ EARLY CHILDHOOD PLAN



SCHOOL AS HUB

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

TYLER HOTTOVY

Principal, Westbrook Elementary, Westside Community Schools

“We want our school to be a place where every family and child feels at home. So, equity is an action, something we do as a team.”

For the team at Westbrook, the largest elementary in the Westside school district, equity means going the extra mile. From the school pantry to the multi-cultural library displays, a visitor can see the difference.

“COVID-19 gave us an opportunity to ask what we could do for families. Early on, we had to find help for families who had no child care and no option to work from home.”

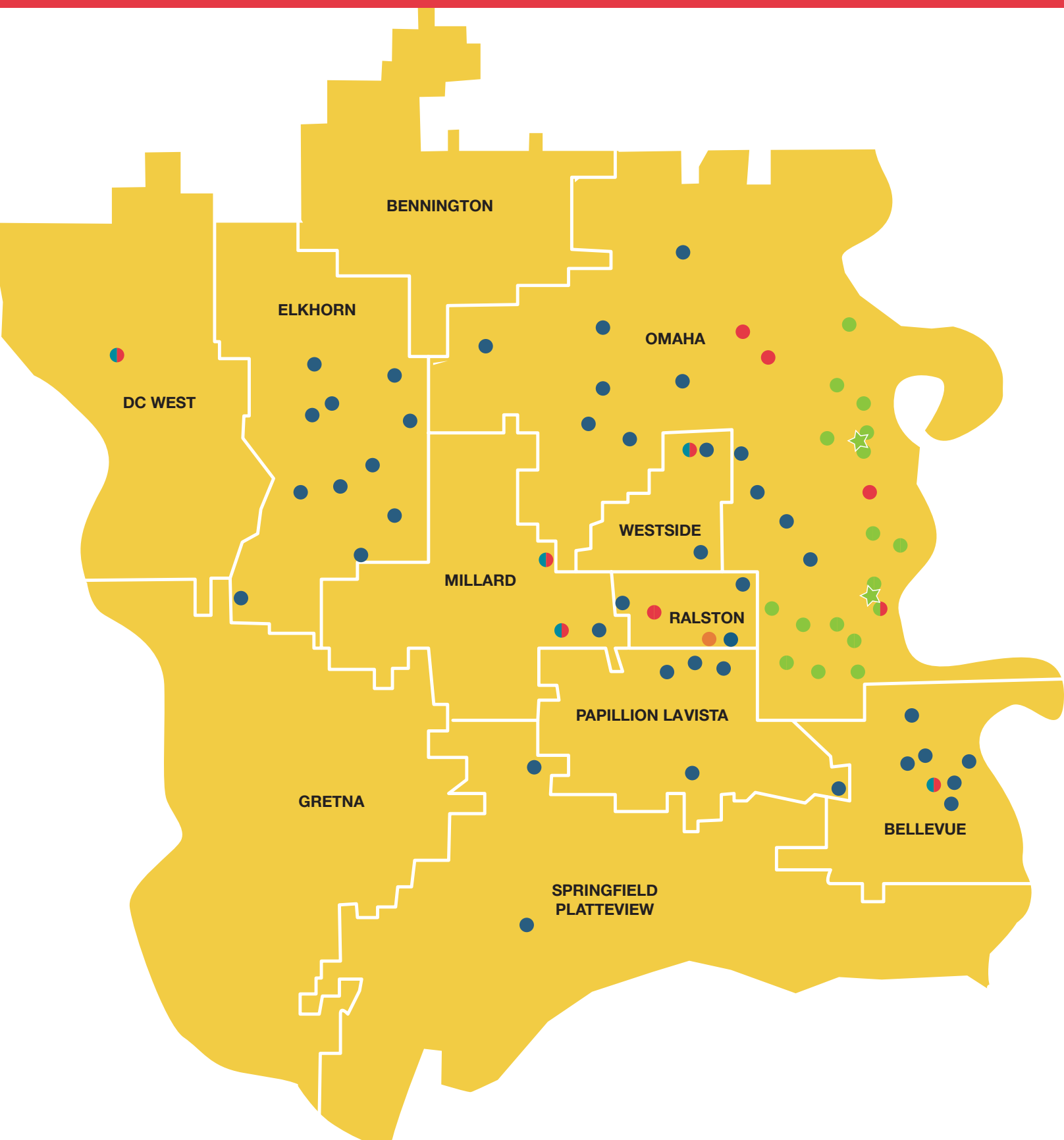
- A school partnership through Do Space and Metropolitan Community College provided a safe, all-day learning environment. Students gained the one-on-one help they needed while their parents returned to work with peace of mind.
- Hottovy and his team canvassed neighborhoods around the school, setting up hot spots so every family would have internet access.
- Students couldn’t go to the library, so the library went home. During the pandemic, every child had regular access to books they wanted to read.

“This is all part of growing the School as Hub. We are getting the message out that we want to be there as a resource for families with children, starting at birth.”



PROGRAM IMPACT

BY SCHOOL DISTRICT



★ **LEARNING COMMUNITY CENTER**

● **NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS**

<u>OMAHA (north)</u> Conestoga Franklin Kellom Lothrop Minnie Lusa Skinner	<u>OMAHA (south)</u> Ashland Park-Robbins Bancroft Castelar Chandler View Gomez Heritage Gateway	Gilder Highland Indian Hill Pawnee Spring Lake
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● **SUPERINTENDENTS' PLAN SCHOOL SITES**

<u>OMAHA</u> Gomez Heritage Pinewood Liberty Mount View <u>WESTSIDE</u> Westbrook <u>BELLEVUE</u> Belleaire	<u>RALSTON</u> Mockingbird <u>MILLARD</u> Cody Sandoz <u>DC WEST</u> DC West
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● **DISTRICT INITIATIVES**

<u>OMAHA</u> Beals Boyd Edison Jefferson Joslyn Prairie Wind Saddlebrook Sunny Slope Washington Western Hills <u>WESTSIDE</u> Hillside Westbrook Westgate <u>RALSTON</u> Blumfield Karen Western Wildewood	<u>BELLEVUE</u> Avery Belleaire Bertha Barber Betz Birchcrest Central Twin Ridge <u>PAPILLION LA VISTA</u> Carriage Hill G. Stanley Hall Golden Hills Parkview Heights La Vista West <u>MILLARD</u> Cody Disney Sandoz	<u>SPRINGFIELD PLATTEVIEW</u> Springfield Westmont <u>ELKHORN</u> Arbor View Blu Sage Fire Ridge Hillrise Manchester Sagewood Skyline Spring Ridge West Bay West Dodge Station Westridge <u>DC WEST</u> DC West
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● **CUSTOMIZED ASSISTANCE**

BY DISTRICT
Ralston



“The response of the Learning Community and its partners during this pandemic gives me great confidence in what we are accomplishing. I see continued growth in new and much-needed opportunities for children and families.”

ALLEN HAGER
Chair
Coordinating Council

FOUNDATION PUTS
FAMILIES FIRST

The Learning Community Foundation is a much welcome support team. We're working together to expand successful Learning Community programs where children and families need them the most.



At the outset of the pandemic, the foundation shifted from startup mode to urgent fundraising. Their successful diaper campaign helped children and families stay healthy and connected to our programs. We are amazed, but not surprised, that foundation fundraising surpassed \$100,000 in 2020.

WELCOMING NEW
PARTNERS

The Learning Community partnership network gives the Omaha metro region a distinct advantage. Our partners include top experts in community health, child advocacy, early childhood education, and workforce development. In challenging times, this expertise makes strong programs even better.



LEARNING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP NETWORK

- 1

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Bellevue Public
Bennington Public
DC West Community
Elkhorn Public
Gretna Public
Millard Public
Omaha Public
Papillion La Vista Community
Ralston Public
Springfield Platteview Community
Westside Community
- 2

HIGHER EDUCATION

Bellevue University
Buffett Early Childhood Institute
Creighton University
Metropolitan Community College
University of Nebraska Omaha
- 3

RESEARCH

Aspen Institute Ascend Network
National Centers for Family Learning
University of Nebraska Medical Center —
Munroe Meyer Institute
- 4

FOUNDATIONS

Buffett Early Childhood Fund
Dillon Foundation
Dollar General Literacy Foundation
First National Bank
Humanities Nebraska
Learning Community Foundation
Nebraska Children and Families
Foundation
Richard Brooke Foundation
The Sherwood Foundation
Union Pacific Foundation
U.S. Bank Foundation
Wells Fargo Foundation
- 5

HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Abundant Life Consulting
MMI | Autism Care for Toddlers (ACT)
Benevolence Disposition
Boys Town
Connections|Project Harmony
Douglas County Community Response
Douglas County Health Department
Educare
Foodbank of the Heartland
Grief's Journey
Jewish Family Service of Omaha
Lutheran Family Services
Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative
North Omaha Community Care Council
UNMC
Omaha Public Library
OneWorld Community Health Centers
Project Harmony Child Advocacy Center
UNMC Center for Reducing Health
Disparities
Williams Consulting
- 6

**COMMUNITY
ACHIEVEMENT PLAN**

Buffett Early Childhood Institute
Educational Service Units 3 & 19
GOALS Center
Iowa Western Community College
Metropolitan Community College
Metropolitan Omaha Educational
Consortium
Nebraska Department of Education
University of Nebraska Omaha
- 7

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Avenue Scholars
Child Saving Institute | KidSquad
City Sprouts
Completely Kids
Creighton Financial Hope
Durham Museum
ESU3 Early Learning Connection
Eastern Nebraska Community Action
Partnership
Empowerment Network
Family Housing Advisory Services
Goodwill Industries
Heartland Workforce Solutions
Joslyn Art Museum
Latino Center of the Midlands
Life Coach Academy
Nebraska Children's Home Society
Nebraska Enterprise Fund
Nebraska Extension Office
Nonprofit Association of the Midlands
Omaha Bridges Out of Poverty
Omaha Conservatory of Music
Omaha Economic Development Corporation
Opera Omaha
PTI Nebraska
Raise Me to Read
Smart Girls Society
Sparkpositivity
Surreal Media
The Big Garden
The KIM Foundation
The Wellbeing Partners
University of Nebraska Omaha
College of Education, Health and
Human Sciences
Teacher Education Department
Special Education and Communication
Disorder Department
Grace Abbott School of Social Work
School of Music
Service Learning Academy
United Way of the Midlands
Whispering Roots
Women's Center for Advancement (WCA)



Learning Community Center of South Omaha



Learning Community Center of North Omaha



OUR VISION

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

Strong partners, research-based programs and a commitment to continuous improvement. That's how the Learning Community leadership team and Coordinating Council define innovation to close the opportunity gap in the Omaha metro region.

WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER
Better opportunities
lead to better
outcomes.
Children
and
families in
Learning
Community Centers
prove that every day.



WHAT'S AT STAKE?

COVID-19 has pushed the stakes even higher for all of us. A strong, diverse workforce depends on a more inclusive learning landscape where children and families thrive.

WHAT'S AHEAD?

ELIMINATE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE.

Digital literacy is like a new language. The pandemic showed us families need digital skills well before children start school.

GROW 2-GEN OPPORTUNITIES.

It is an efficient and innovative approach that elevates the valuable role of families in education.

EXPLORE A THIRD COMMUNITY CENTER.

We are planning so that we can do more to counter the opportunity gap which impacts student achievement long before a child starts school.

COORDINATING COUNCIL



ALLEN HAGER
Chair
Achievement
Subcouncil 4



BRIAN THOMMES
Vice Chair
Achievement
Subcouncil 1



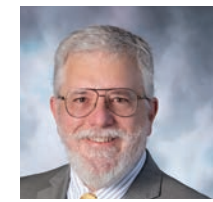
MARK HOEGER
Treasurer
Achievement
Subcouncil 3



CAROL HAHN
Secretary
Achievement
Subcouncil 2



CLARICE JACKSON
Achievement
Subcouncil 1



NATHAN ZINGG
Achievement
Subcouncil 2



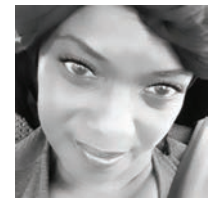
MELINDA KOZEL
Achievement
Subcouncil 3



LISA SCHOENBERGER
Achievement
Subcouncil 4



ERIK SERVELLON
Achievement
Subcouncil 5



TONYA WARD
Achievement
Subcouncil 5



ANDREW BROCK
Achievement
Subcouncil 6



TIM HALL
Achievement
Subcouncil 6

LEADERSHIP



DR. BRADLEY EKWEREKWU
Chief Executive Officer



RENEE FRANKLIN
Executive Director
Elementary Learning
Centers



ALICE K. LEWIS
Finance Director



ANNE O'HARA
Program Director
Family Learning



TAMESHIA HARRIS
Program Director
Parent University



SARAH VIDEGLA
Operations Manager

GOAL: FOR MY CHILDREN TO
LOVE LEARNING AND
SEE WHAT EDUCATION
CAN DO.

**“We’re all here
because we want
a better life for
our children. Every
step gives me hope
that we’re moving
towards a better
future.”**

SUNSHINE MASON-MELENDEZ
with her children, Uriel, 8 and Xiomara, 3
Parent University,
Learning Community Center of North Omaha



**learning
community**
DOUGLAS
SARPY

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