

PLAN AT A GLANCE

Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan

Summary

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan is an innovative, comprehensive approach to reducing achievement gaps among vulnerable children, birth through third grade, living in the 11 school districts of the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties.

History

- 2013 The Nebraska Legislature (LB 585) directed the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties to enact a plan "to establish early childhood education programs for children in poverty." The metro Omaha superintendents invited the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska to develop the plan.
- 2014 The Buffett Institute collaborated with 11 school districts to develop the plan. The plan was unanimously endorsed by the 11 superintendents in June, and approved by the Learning Community Coordinating Council in August.
- 2015 The program is launched for the 2015 – 2016 school year, with 12 elementary schools implementing the birth-through-third grade approach and seven districts getting specialized professional development or technical assistance. A "Professional Development for All" series gets underway, with administrators, teachers, child care providers, and other early childhood professionals across the 11 school districts participating.

Six Core Ideas

1. Early childhood **begins at birth and extends through third grade**. Research documents that the brain develops rapidly during this time, and will impact the child's entire life course.
2. Elementary **schools serve as hubs** for connecting young children, birth through third grade, and their families with high-quality early childhood services and education.
3. Services are **continuous and comprehensive**, with special emphasis on transitions between each stage (0 – 3 home visiting, PreK, Kindergarten, early elementary).
4. A "**whole child**" approach is essential, because children's physical, social-emotional, cognitive and academic development happens simultaneously. Development in one area impacts progress in another.
5. **Families play the central** role in their children's healthy development and learning. The Superintendents' Plan focuses on strengthening parenting skills, engaging families with schools, and linking families to resources.
6. The Superintendents' Plan emphasizes a **highly collaborative approach** that builds on existing school and community services.

Three Levels of Participation for Districts

1. Full implementation of birth-through-third approach at elementary school sites.

2. Professional development for teachers and other professionals who work with young children.
3. Technical assistance for district leaders around early childhood education and services.

District-by-District

- Full implementation sites (birth through third grade) and number of schools:
 - Bellevue Public Schools - Belleaire Elementary
 - Douglas County West Community Schools - Douglas County West Elementary
 - Millard Public Schools - William Cody Elementary, Mari Sandoz Elementary
 - Omaha Public Schools - Gomez Heritage Elementary, Liberty Elementary, Mount View Elementary, Pinewood Elementary
 - Ralston Public Schools - Karen Western Elementary, Meadows Elementary, and Mockingbird Elementary (one site serving three schools)
 - Westside Community Schools - Westbrook Elementary
- Customized Professional Development
 - Gretna Public Schools
 - Papillion La Vista Community Schools
 - Ralston Public Schools
 - Westside Community Schools
- Technical Assistance
 - Bellevue Public Schools
 - Bennington Public Schools
 - Elkhorn Public Schools
- Professional development open to all administrators, teachers, early childhood professionals, and child care providers in the 11 school districts.

Numbers

- 150 children, birth to age 3, receiving home visiting
- 4,000+ children and families across PreK – third grade at the full implementation schools
- 500+ educators from the full implementation schools
- 15,000+ children across PreK – third grade in districts with administrators and/or teachers participating in the sustained, customized professional development, technical assistance around early childhood programs and services

Long-Term Goal

Reduce or eliminate achievement gaps for children at risk living in the 11 school districts of the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties.

Long-Term Results for Children, Families, Schools, and Communities

1. Students are able to learn at high levels.
2. Families are supported and know that their children are learning.
3. Teaching is more effective.
4. Schools are better able to serve all children.
5. Communities become stronger.