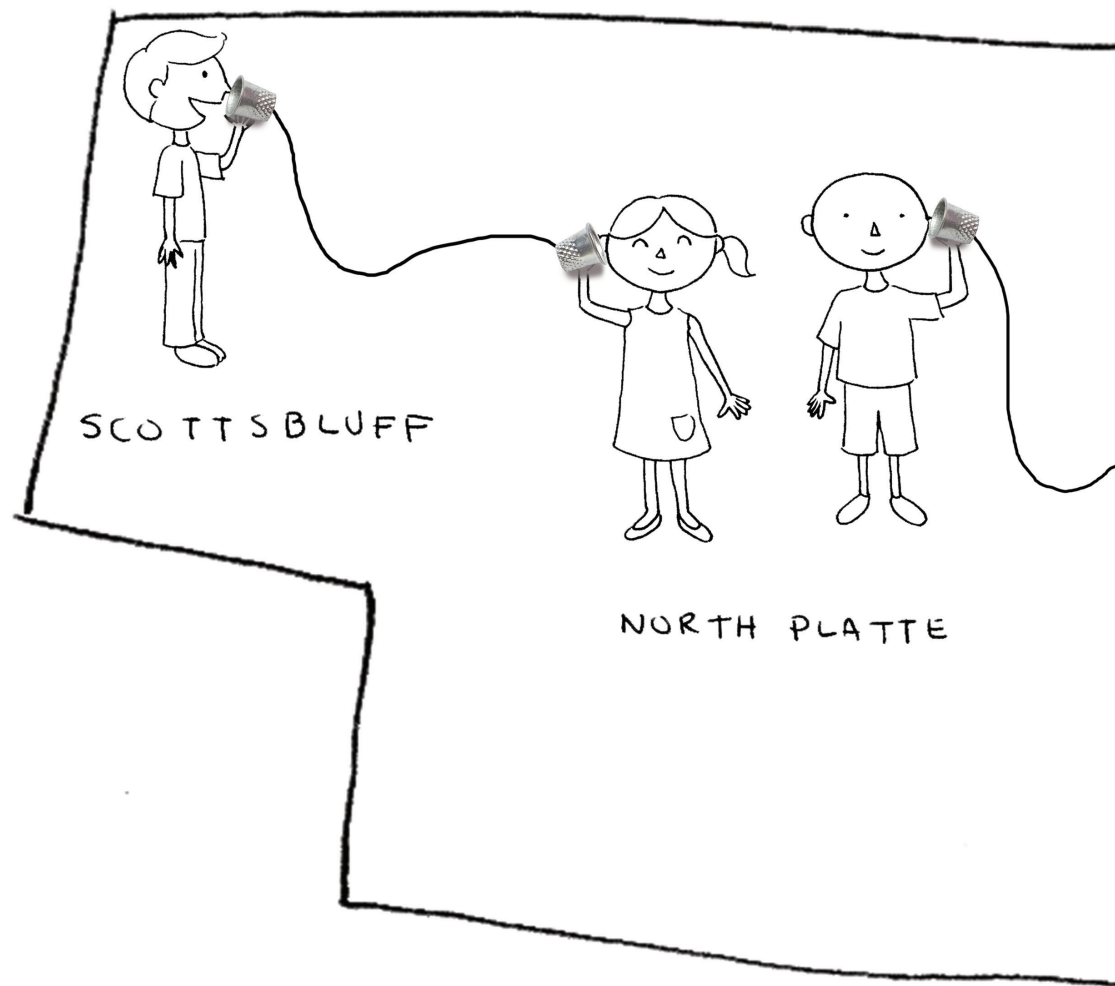


Only 15% of Nebraskans are very satisfied with the quality of early care and education programs where they live.

— Buffett Early Childhood Institute/Gallup Survey

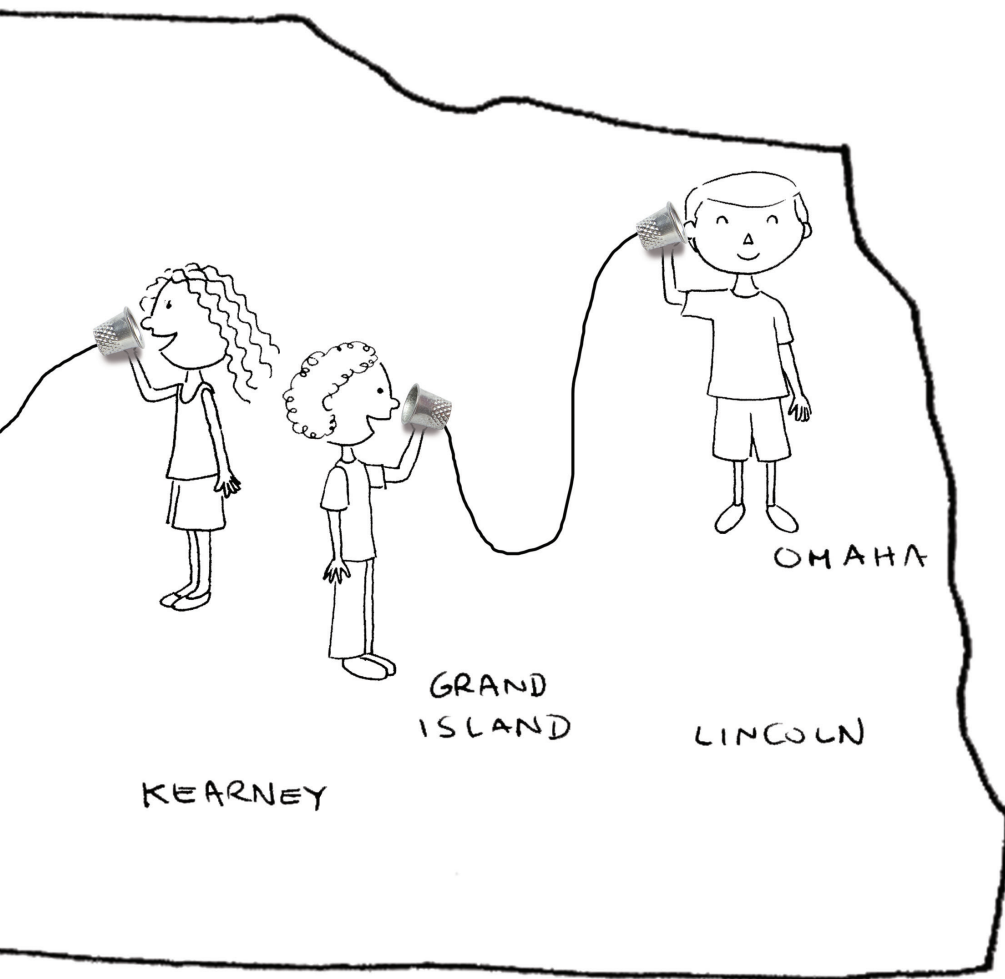


**We can do something about that.**



For the past three years, we've been working with others to examine the care and education of children from birth through age 8 in Nebraska.

We've asked people in small towns and big cities what they think, what they need, and whether they believe our state is investing enough in its youngest citizens.



We've looked at the salaries, training, aspirations, and qualifications of the people who care for and educate young children in our state.

We've inventoried Nebraska's professional preparation programs, talked with government officials and colleagues, studied supply and demand across Nebraska, and gathered data on cost and economic impact.

# We've come to a few conclusions.

# 1

First, the problems we face can be solved.

# 2

Second, the prosperity of our state—in the long and the short term—depends on solving them.

# 3

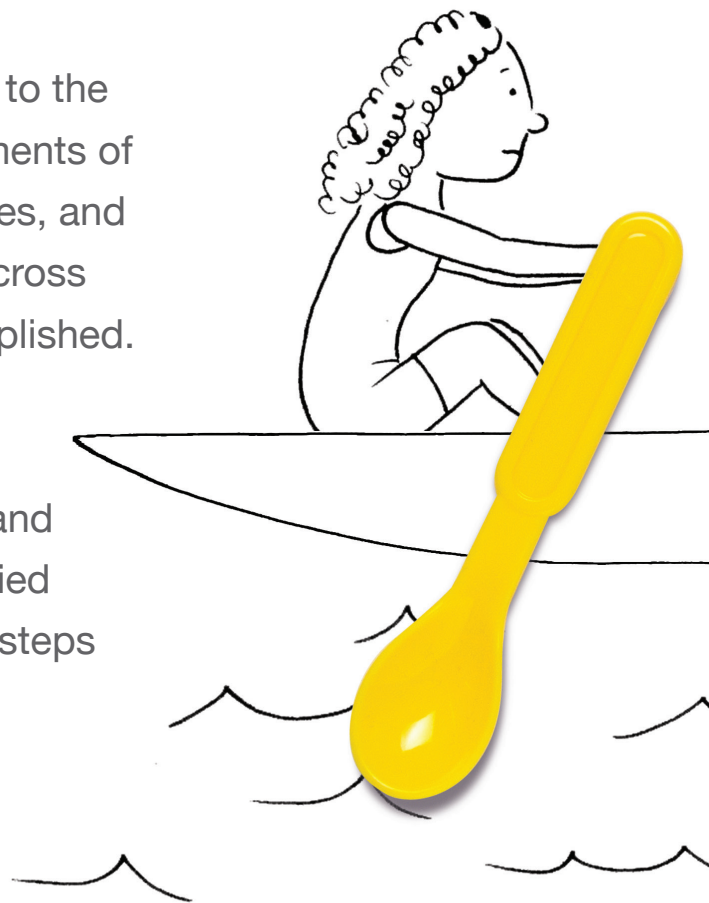
And third, to get the job done, we'll need everyone at the table.

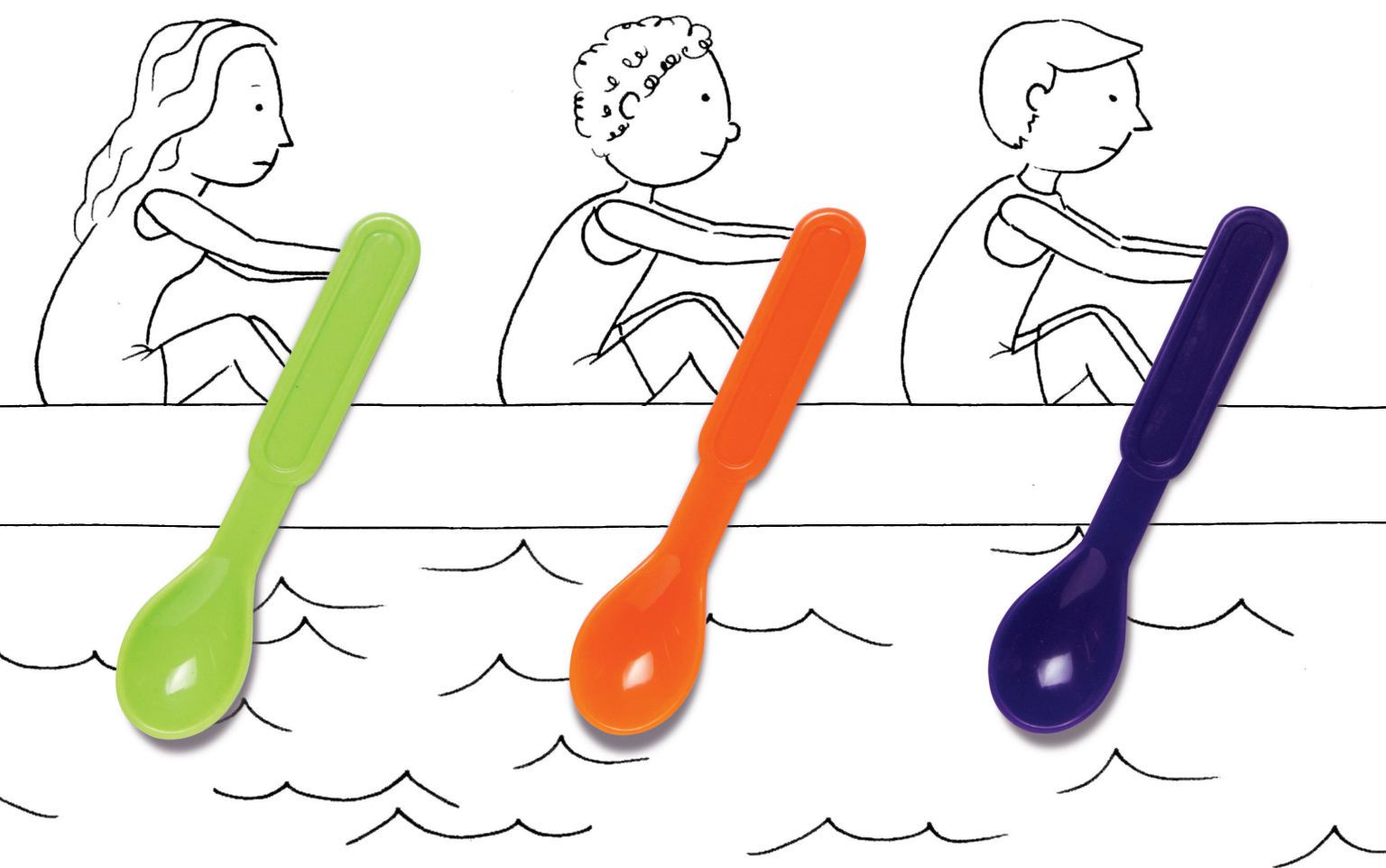
# We can start by establishing a consensus—

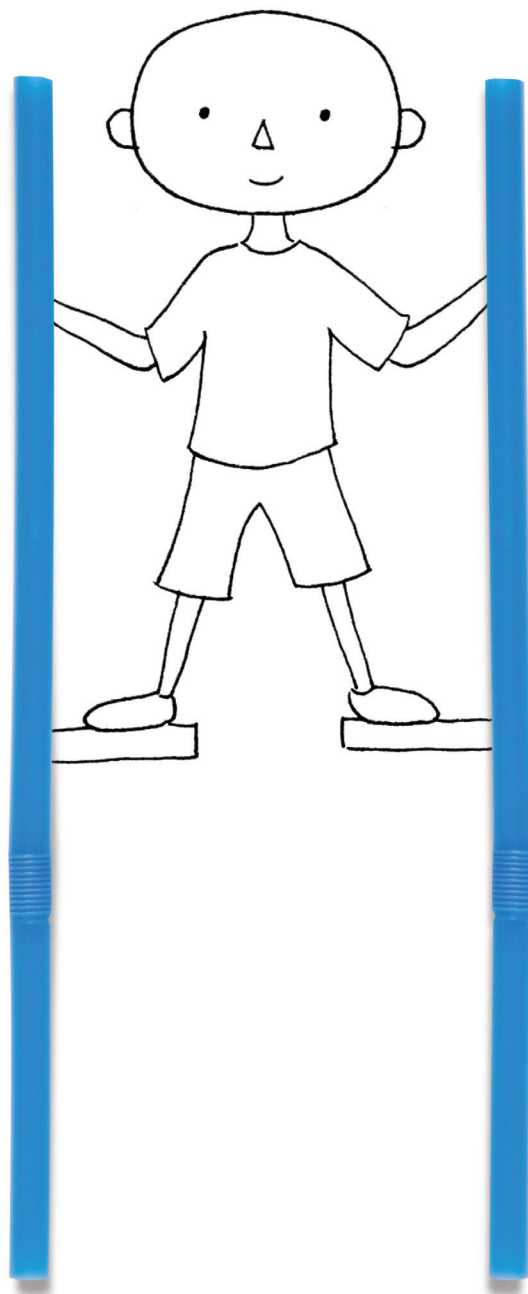
a shared understanding of competencies and expectations that everyone recognizes. Educators, regulators, policymakers, taxpayers, and especially early childhood practitioners themselves are part of the solution.

We don't have to start from zero. Thanks to the leadership of key legislators, the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, and dedicated coalitions and organizations across the state, much has already been accomplished. Much more is underway.

It's time to come together to coordinate and consolidate these efforts, agree on a unified approach, and articulate a series of next steps that build on this work.









# We can close the gaps between what we know

We know that the human brain isn't fully developed at birth, it's built over time.

We know that the single most important building block of brain architecture is constant, positive, and consistent interaction between the developing infant or child and familiar, caring adults.

First among those familiar, caring adults are parents and family members. But we know that in Nebraska, more than 76% of parents work. That means that early childhood professionals play an incredibly important role in providing our infants and young children with these essential interactions.

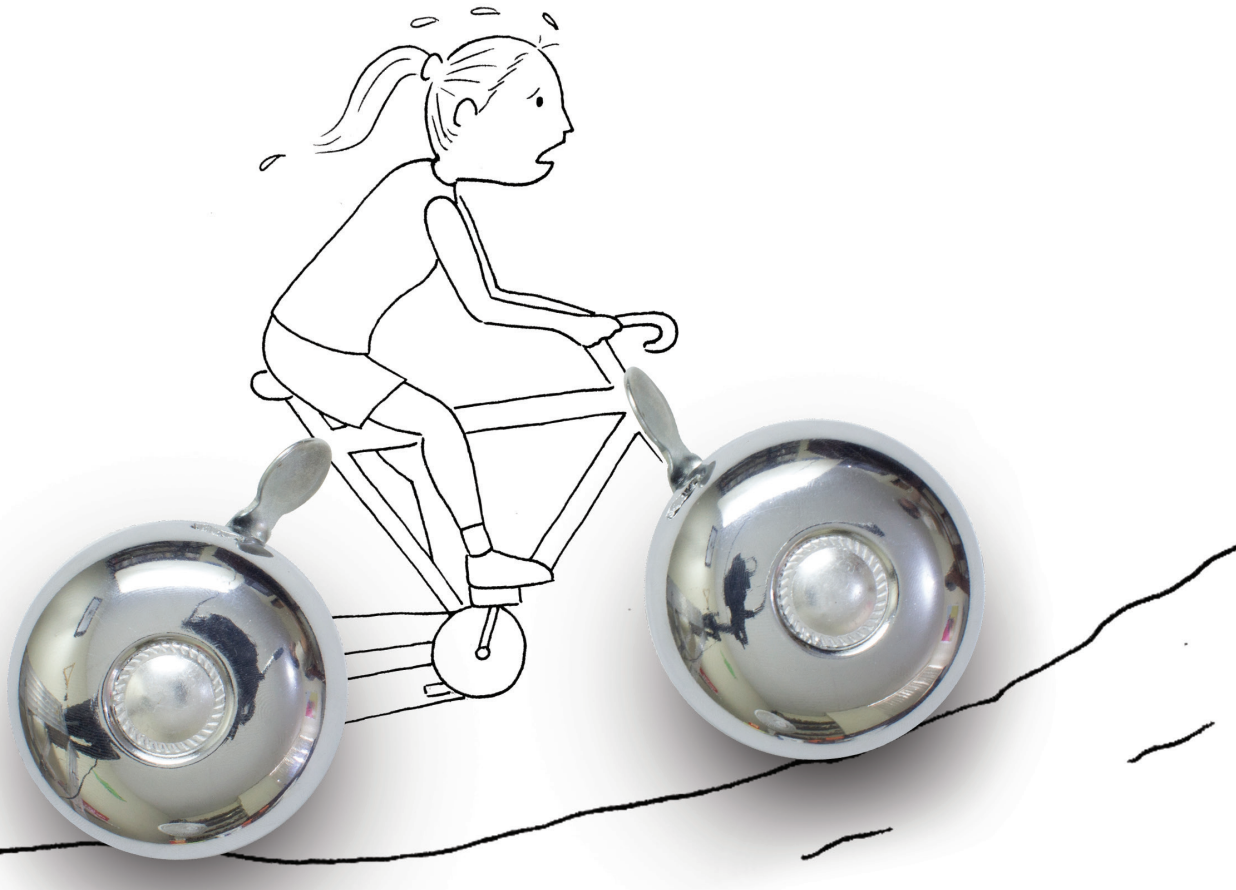
Given what we know, we must ensure that every one of those professionals is equipped with the knowledge, training, and skills to build our children's brains right from the start.

# and what we do

# what we expect and

We expect a lot from our children's teachers and caregivers. We expect them to be committed, engaged, and skilled. After all, the work they do every day affects our children for life, from developing their ability to pay attention and remember to building their capacity to manage information, prioritize tasks, and follow rules.

Yet in 2016, the average wage in our state for child care providers was just \$22,930 a year—less than what a waitress can expect to make and below the poverty line for a family of four. In fact, 30% of home-based child care providers and 20% of center-based providers rely on some form of public assistance just to make ends meet.

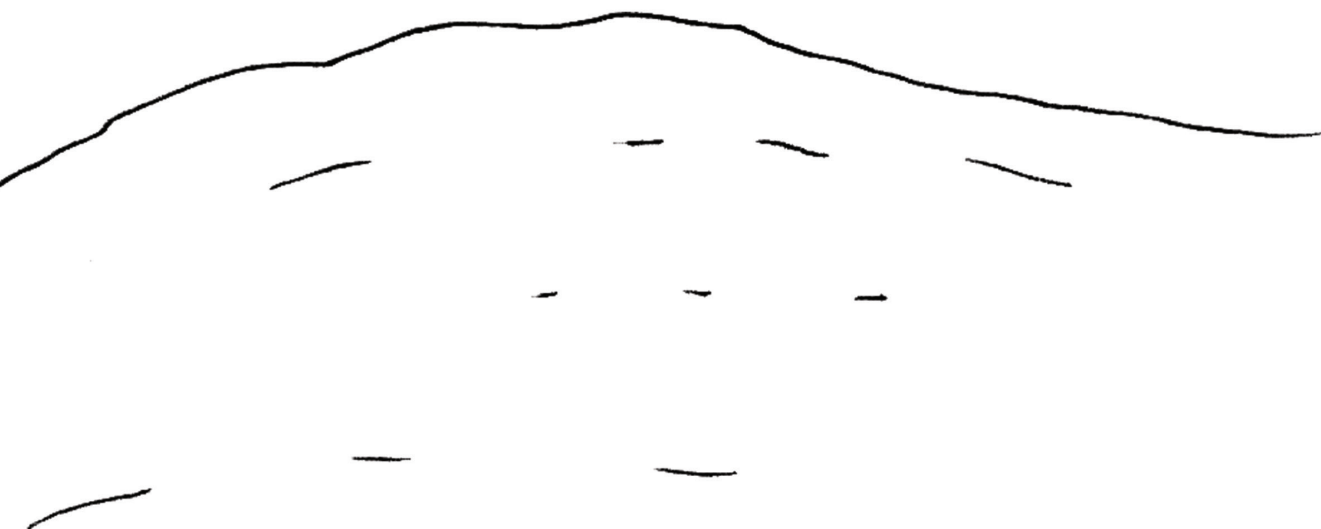


# what we incentivize

The benefits picture is no better. Those we entrust with our children's intellectual, social, and emotional development do not consistently get retirement or paid maternity leave. Only half get paid sick leave.

Salaries are higher for PreK – Grade 3 teachers, but many still struggle financially. About 20% hold second jobs, and nearly 1 in 10 use public assistance.

Is it any wonder that teacher turnover is so high? Or that there is a statewide shortage of child care providers and teachers? If we want our children to thrive—now and for the rest of their lives—we need to make sure that the adults who help them develop the skills they need can afford to stay and see the job through.







# what we need

Eleven counties in our state have no licensed child care facilities. Roughly 84% of the counties that do have such facilities don't have enough available slots to meet the current demand.

## **And demand is only going up.**

Unless we can meet the demand, not only young children will suffer the consequences. Businesses and communities all across the state will continue to lose young, skilled workers who need child care they can count on. Productivity will shrink. And tax bases—along with the vital services they pay for—will continue to erode.

# and what we have

# We can match our systems to our values



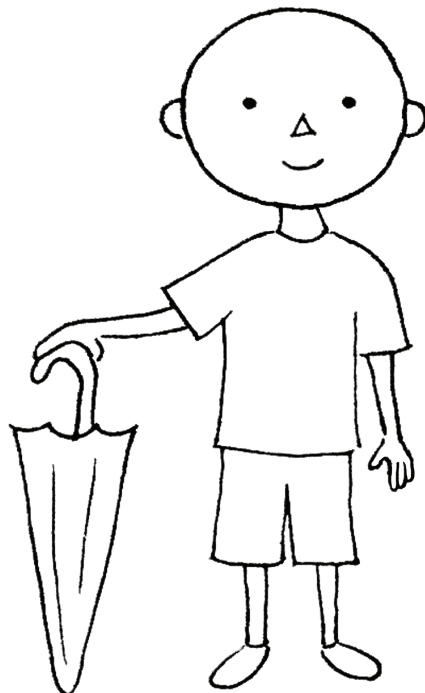
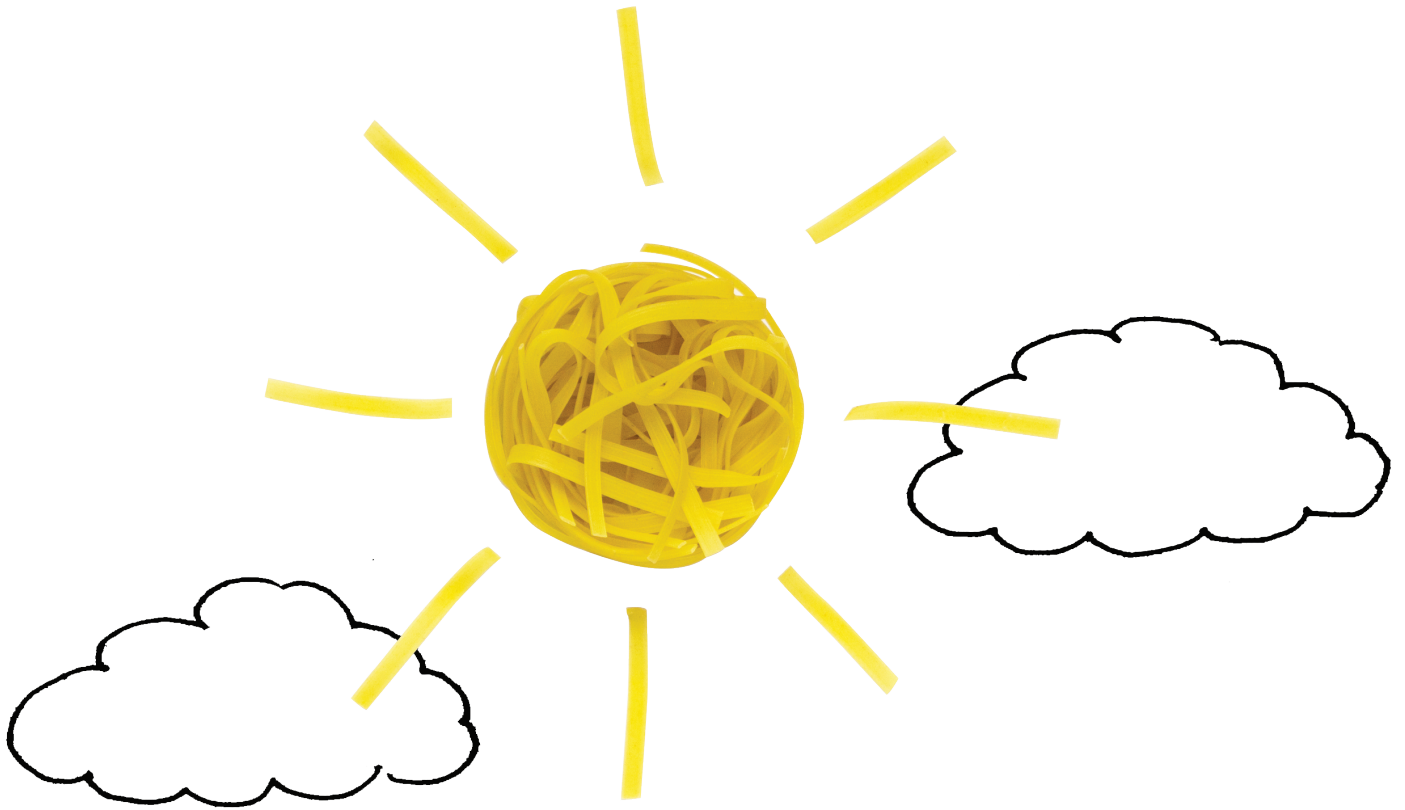
In Nebraska, we know what it means to work hard, to work together, and to keep working until the job is done. We appreciate common sense solutions, innovation, and independent thinking. If there's a better road, we're not afraid to take it.

Our values have made us who we are today. They have taken us a long way, and they can take us farther still. They can help us create a better system of care and education in our state, one that reflects our needs, our priorities, and our beliefs.

# and get more for our tax dollars.

The evidence shows that by frontloading our investments in education—doing it right the first time—we can expect a return of anywhere from \$7 to \$13 on every dollar spent. That return includes money saved on special education, health care, social services, and the criminal justice system, as well as money earned from greater educational attainment, increased earnings, and increased productivity.

**That's a good deal for all of us.**





# We can build a better future for Nebraska.

Strong, prosperous societies are made up of healthy, contributing individuals. And healthy, contributing individuals are often those who begin life with a solid foundation.

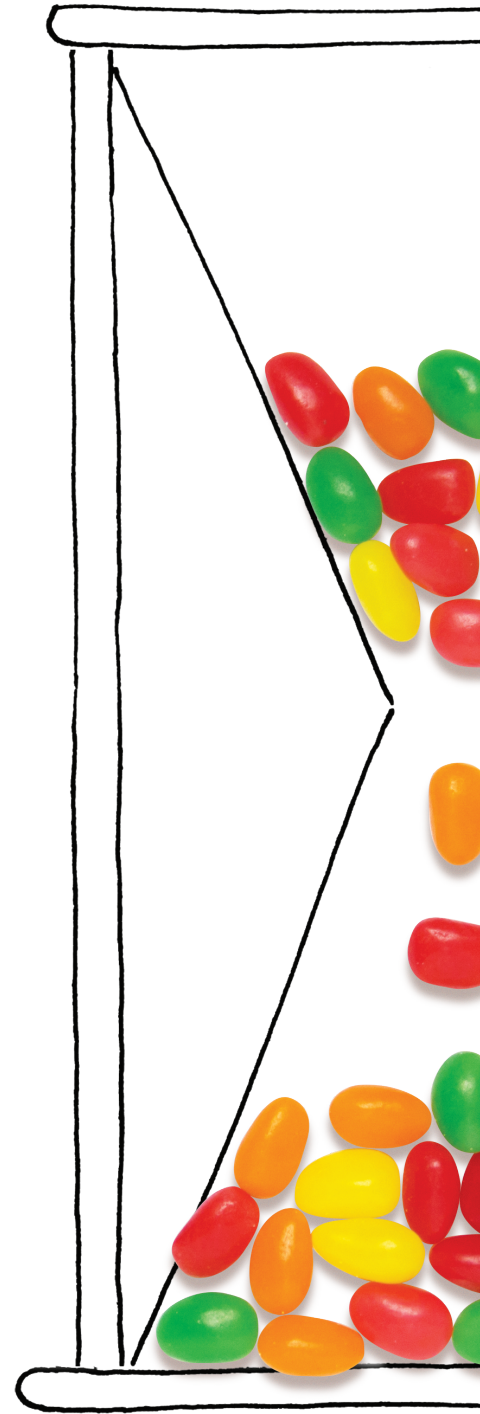
When we make sure that young children in our state have the care and education they need to thrive intellectually, socially, and emotionally, we won't need to wait a generation to see the results.

Because the system we create will improve the life of every child, every family, every community, and every worker in Nebraska starting today.

And what we do in Nebraska today can serve as a model for every state in the union tomorrow.

**Nearly 80% of Nebraska's children  
aged 5 and younger are in paid child care.**

**What are we  
waiting for?**



## Join us.

The Early Childhood Workforce Development Program is a signature program of the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska. Learn more about the research, the plan, the partners, and what we've done so far to build a skilled, informed, and diverse early childhood workforce in Nebraska.

**[buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu](http://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu)**



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