

SUPERINTENDENTS' EARLY CHILDHOOD PLAN EVALUATION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the purpose of the Superintendent's Early Childhood Plan Evaluation?

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan evaluation focuses on the full implementation of the birth – Grade 3 approach. The purpose of the evaluation is twofold: (1) to provide information about the plan's usefulness and how it can be improved and (2) to provide information about how the plan is impacting schools, teachers/classrooms, families, and children.

Why is the evaluation important?

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan is a new, system-level intervention that represents the most comprehensive approach in the nation to addressing achievement gaps among children from birth through Grade 3. What is learned from this one-of-a-kind plan about how best to support the learning and development of young children will be valuable to early childhood educators in Nebraska and across the country.

Additionally, funding for the Superintendents' Plan comes from levy authority granted by the Nebraska Legislature to the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties. Accountability and responsible use of taxpayers' investment in young children are a high priority for all involved in implementing the Superintendents' Plan.

Who is conducting this evaluation?

The research and evaluation unit of the Buffett Early Childhood Institute will manage the evaluation in collaboration with the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) and the Interdisciplinary Center for Program Evaluation of the Munroe-Meyer Institute at the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC). UNL will lead the birth – age 3 component and will contribute to the overall design of the evaluation and the development of the database. UNMC will lead the PreK – Grade 3 component of the evaluation. Dr. Iheoma Iruka, director of research and evaluation at the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, will provide overall guidance for the evaluation. Data will be collected by experienced and trained data collectors.

Why are there separate evaluation approaches for Birth – Age 3 and PreK – Grade 3?

The evaluation design places an emphasis on stages of child development and will follow two age-based cohorts. Children aged birth to 3 will participate in home visiting programs, which require specific, age-related evaluation approaches and assessments. Children in the PreK to Grade 3 cohort will participate in school-based programs. Each of these cohorts will require different evaluation approaches and assessments that match the intervention and stage of child development.

What is the length of the evaluation?

This is a longitudinal evaluation study, in which it is projected that children and families can be followed through Grade 3. For those enrolled at birth, this means we intend to follow them nine years.

What is expected from schools, families, and children?

The success of the evaluation depends on the involvement of schools, teachers, home visitors, family facilitators, families, and children so that all data collection activities are as seamless as possible. Schools will serve as the central contact, connecting evaluators with teachers, families, and children.

- School districts must grant approval to conduct the evaluation. School administrators and PreK – Grade 3 teachers will be asked to allow videotaped observation to take place in their schools and classrooms as well as to complete short surveys about selected children and school processes and to participate in interviews and focus groups.
- All families with children ages 0 to 3 in the home visiting program will be asked to participate in surveys and observations of parent-child interactions as well as child assessments.
- Parents of approximately 3 to 4 children randomly selected from PreK and Kindergarten classrooms at participating sites will be asked to participate in parent surveys and to consent to child assessments.
- All data will be collected by experienced and trained research assistants.

Don't teachers already evaluate and test students to meet Nebraska Department of Education requirements? Does this evaluation represent an additional burden for teachers and participating students?

We have tried to minimize the burden on schools, teachers, families, and children. When possible, available data such as classroom observation and NeSA scores will be incorporated in the evaluation. Data being collected for the evaluation is often not systematically collected by schools.

When can we expect results?

The evaluation team will provide annual updates about the evaluation. The first two years of the evaluation (2015 – 2017) will focus on whether the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan is useful and feasible, including assessing implementation barriers and enabling factors.

The next two years (2017 – 2019) will focus on whether the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan is being implemented as expected and provide preliminary information about the impact of the plan on schools, teachers/classrooms, families, and children.

How will you maintain confidentiality of families and students participating in the evaluation?

Once families and students are selected for participation, they will be given an evaluation identification number. For students this will be their Nebraska Student Record System (NSSRS) identification number. Any identifier will be stripped and stored in a secure space only accessible by key project staff. The University of Nebraska has stringent protocols in place to secure data, and we will abide by these guidelines.

Who do we contact if we have questions about the evaluation?

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Who do we contact if we have questions about the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan?

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