



REPORT LAUNCH EVENT

Elevating Nebraska's Early Childhood Workforce:

Report and Recommendations of the Nebraska
Early Childhood Workforce Commission

Thursday, January 30, 2020

Agenda

- 8:30 a.m. **Coffee**
- 9:00 a.m. **Welcome**
Marjorie Kostelnik, Commission Co-Chair and Professor, Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies, University of Nebraska–Lincoln
- 9:10 a.m. **Opening Remarks**
Senator John Stinner, Commission Member and Chair of the Nebraska Legislature Appropriations Committee
- 9:20 a.m. **Overview of the Report**
Susan Sarver, Director of Workforce Planning and Development, Buffett Early Childhood Institute
- 9:45 a.m. **Commission Member Panel**
Moderator: Samuel J. Meisels, Commission Co-Chair and Founding Executive Director, Buffett Early Childhood Institute
- Nancy Edick, Dean, College of Education, University of Nebraska at Omaha
- Tawana Grover, Superintendent, Grand Island Public Schools
- Catherine Lang, State Director, Nebraska Business Development Center at the University of Nebraska at Omaha
- John Spatz, Executive Director, Nebraska Association of School Boards
- Mariah Stowe, Owner-Operator, Splash of Color Child Care
- 10:50 a.m. **Closing Remarks**
Matthew Blomstedt, Commissioner of Education, Nebraska Department of Education
- Dannette Smith, Chief Executive Officer, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

Welcome

Marjorie Kostelnik

Dr. Marjorie Kostelnik began her career as a Head Start teacher and has been educating children and early childhood practitioners ever since. Graduating with a bachelor's degree from the University of Pittsburgh, she received her master's and doctorate in human development and family studies from Penn State.



Kostelnik was on the faculty at Michigan State for 22 years, serving as a faculty member, director of the Child Development Laboratories, and chair of the Department of Family and Child Ecology. She worked with over 100 programs/communities worldwide developing curriculum, enhancing children's school readiness, and promoting positive child guidance.

Kostelnik came to the University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL) in 2000 as dean of the College of Human Resources and Family Sciences (HRFS). In 2003, HRFS combined with Teachers College to become one of the first colleges of Education and Human Sciences (CEHS) in the country. She served as CEHS dean for 14 years. In 2017, she was appointed senior associate to the president at the University of Nebraska, leading the implementation of budget response team recommendations to trim millions of dollars across four campuses. Today, she is a professor in Child, Youth and Family Studies at UNL.

Nationally, Kostelnik has been vice president of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, a member of the Board on Human Sciences, and chair for the Great Plains Interactive Distance Education Alliance. She served on the National Academies of Science Institute of Medicine Committee to Study the Science of Children Birth to Age 8. Locally, she serves as chair of the Educare-Lincoln Board, the Dimensions Foundation Board, and as the early childhood co-chair for Lincoln Prosper.

Opening Remarks

John Stinner

John Stinner was born on the outskirts of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He attended the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration, as well as a master’s degree in economics with a minor in accounting. Stinner started his career in public accounting in Lincoln and later moved to western Nebraska when he and a local group of investors opened a bank in Gering. Stinner served as CEO and president of Valley Bank and Trust and Western States Bank since their inception. As of January 2016, Stinner has retired from his position at the bank and is now an investor and board member.



In January 2015, Stinner began his first term in the Nebraska Legislature. He is currently serving his fourth year as chair of the Appropriations Committee, and he also serves on the Retirement Committee. Stinner’s interest in early childhood education started when he was a member of the Gering Public School Board. Stinner was selected through the National Conference of State Legislators to be a Fellow in the Early Learning Fellows Program. This program builds knowledge among legislators about new research and policy; promotes an exchange of ideas and solutions related to early learning, the early achievement gap, and many other issues; provides Fellows with a practical early learning plan they can use in their state; and facilitates access to leading researchers and policy experts. In recent years, with the help of First Five Nebraska, he held listening sessions around the state gathering data from superintendents in order to produce possible legislation that would fund permanent financing for early childhood education through Nebraska’s state funding formula.

Overview of the Report

Susan Sarver

Dr. Susan Sarver is director of workforce planning and development at the Buffett Early Childhood Institute and also an associate professor in the Department of Child, Youth, and Family Studies in the College of Education and Human Sciences at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. Sarver previously served as assistant chair in the department, providing leadership for undergraduate programs, particularly in the area of early childhood education. Sarver initiated a statewide early childhood workforce survey, an inventory of higher education programs, and other data collection efforts in the state. She serves as primary staff for the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission, writing an implementation plan to ensure a skilled, informed, and diverse workforce for all children birth through third grade. She brings expertise in systems work at the state level to this project.



Commission Member Panel

Moderator: Samuel J. Meisels

Dr. Samuel J. Meisels, the founding executive director of the Buffett Early Childhood Institute and the Richard D. Holland Presidential Chair in Early Childhood Development, is one of the nation's leading authorities on the assessment of young children and early childhood development. He came to the Buffett Institute in 2013 to launch the Institute and form its programs. In 2019, Meisels received the visionary leadership award from the Simms/Mann Institute—one of the highest career honors given to early childhood experts. He is also professor of Child, Youth, and Family Studies at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, with courtesy appointments as professor of public health (College of Public Health, University of Nebraska Medical Center), education (College of Education, University of Nebraska at Kearney), and public administration (College of Public Affairs, University of Nebraska at Omaha). A former preschool, Kindergarten, and first grade teacher, Meisels formerly served as president of Erikson Institute in Chicago, one of the country's premier graduate schools in child development. Prior to leading Erikson Institute, Meisels had a distinguished 21-year tenure at the University of Michigan, where he remains professor emeritus and research scientist emeritus. Meisels was also a faculty member at Tufts University for eight years and director of the Eliot-Pearson Children's School at Tufts. He graduated magna cum laude from the University of Rochester and received master's and doctoral degrees from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.



Nancy Edick

Dr. Nancy Edick is the dean of the College of Education at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. She has also served as executive director of the Metropolitan Omaha Educational Consortium, was the founding director of the nationally recognized CADRE Project, and an associate professor of teacher education. Prior to joining the UNO faculty, Edick enjoyed a 12-year career as a classroom teacher with Omaha Public Schools. Edick's research and publication agenda has been primarily devoted to assessing teacher quality with special emphasis in three areas: mentoring, teacher dispositions, and culturally responsive teaching. She received her Ed.D. in educational administration and supervision from the University of Nebraska Omaha-Lincoln joint program. She earned a master's degree in supervision and administration and a bachelor's degree in elementary education, both from UNO.



Tawana Grover

Dr. Tawana Grover is the superintendent of Grand Island Public School (GIPS) a public school district serving just over 10,000 students, more than 70 percent of whom qualify for free or reduced price meals. The district's 1,500 employees follow the mission of "Every Student, Every Day, A Success." GIPS has 14 elementary schools, three middle schools, one Class A high school with three campuses, multiple alternative high school settings, and a preschool. Now in her fourth year with the district, Grover has helped lead the district through the first three years of the five-year strategic plan. In addition to the strategic plan, as superintendent, Grover has overseen the completion of the seven projects of the successful 2014 \$69.9 million bond issue, the high school transformation to the Academies of Grand Island Senior High, and the start of a number of successful education programs. With an annual budget of \$131.6 million, GIPS and the Board of Education work tirelessly to meet the needs of every student while being fiscally responsible with taxpayer money. Grover is actively engaged at the local, state, and national level championing policy and program development to reach our Grand Island vision of "students prepared to make positive contributions to society and thrive in an ever-changing world."



Catherine Lang

Catherine Lang is the state director of the Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC) at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Lang leads the statewide outreach for NBDC, working to build new collaborative efforts across all four University of Nebraska campuses to support the economic development mission of the university. NBDC provides consulting services to anyone interested in starting or growing a business in Nebraska. Before joining NBDC, Lang served the State of Nebraska for almost 33 years. She was the director of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and the Commissioner of Labor. She was the Nebraska Property Tax Administrator and the Deputy Tax Commissioner. Lang received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1978 from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, and her Juris Doctor in 1983 from the University of Nebraska College of Law.



Commission Member Panel

John Spatz

John Spatz has served as executive director of the Nebraska Association of School Boards since 2012. He joined the association as its legal counsel in 2003. He also serves as the chief administrator for ALICAP (property/casualty school insurance pool), he is a co-founder and on the board of Sparq Data Solutions (a software development company), is a co-founder and on the board of Enviser AMS (providing association management systems), is the administrator of the Nebraska Whole Child Project (which promotes physical/behavioral health in schools), and serves as the chief administrator for NJUMP and CJUMP (natural gas purchasing pools for schools). Spatz served on the Lincoln City Council from 2007 to 2011.



Mariah Stowe

Mariah Stowe is the owner and operator of Splash of Color Child Care, a family child care program in Lincoln. She has always had a passion for working with children and worked in a variety of child care settings before finding her calling in family child care. The mixed ages, small group numbers, and continuity of care made family child care call to her. Since opening her own program, she has made quality a focus through programs such as Step Up to Quality, Rooted in Relationships, and the Infant Toddler Quality Initiative. This focus on quality helps ensure that all of the children in the program are given a quality environment with every opportunity to learn and grow. Stowe received an associate's degree in early childhood education from Southeast Community College in 2017 and is currently in the Great Plains IDEA program at University of Nebraska–Lincoln to get her bachelor's degree in early childhood education.



Closing Remarks

Matthew Blomstedt

Dr. Matthew Blomstedt was named commissioner of education by the Nebraska State Board of Education on Jan. 2, 2014.

In his role, Blomstedt led the successful development and implementation of a comprehensive state accountability system, AQuESTT, and positioned Nebraska to meet new federal requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act. To

further develop and focus on improvement efforts, Blomstedt

and the State Board of Education jointly initiated a comprehensive strategic plan to guide their student-focused work and that of the Nebraska Department of Education. Blomstedt

serves on several boards and commissions in Nebraska. He was appointed to the national Board of Directors of the Council of Chief State School Officers in December 2017. The native Nebraskan's career has focused on local, regional, and statewide education issues.

Blomstedt's experience includes education finance and organization, assessment, and accountability, professional development, and the development of systems to enhance blended and distance learning opportunities across the state. Blomstedt earned a Ph.D. in educational leadership and higher education and a master's degree in community and regional planning from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.



Dannette Smith

Dannette R. Smith was appointed chief executive officer of the Department of Health and Human Services for the State of Nebraska in February 2019. She brings more than 25 years of executive leadership experience in large, complex organizations to the state. Prior to joining the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Smith was director of the Virginia Beach Department of Human Services. She has also worked in a

leadership capacity in Seattle; Atlanta; Charlotte, North Carolina;

and Cook County, Illinois. A true advocate of public and community service, Smith serves on the boards of the Healing Place of Hampton Roads in Norfolk, Virginia, and ATTACH (the Association for Training on Trauma and Attachment in Children) in Minneapolis. Smith holds a bachelor of science in psychology from Eastern Michigan University and a master's degree in social work from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Under the auspices of the Child Welfare League of America, she participated in a child welfare leadership program at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. She also attended the County Administration Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



Commission Roster

Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission Members 2017-2019

The roster includes all members of the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission since its inception. Titles listed reflect the member's title at the time of their service on the commission.

CO-CHAIRS	ORGANIZATION
Samuel Meisels	Founding Executive Director, Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska
Marjorie Kostelnik	Professor, Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies, University of Nebraska–Lincoln

MEMBERS	ORGANIZATION
Teresa Berube	Early Childhood Special Education Coordinator, Nebraska Department of Education
Linda Boeckner	Program Leader, University of Nebraska Extension (retired)
Amy Bornemeier	Vice President of Early Childhood Programs, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
Lynne Brehm	Associate Vice President of Early Childhood Mental Health, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
Amy Bunnell	Part-C Co-Coordinator, Special Education Office, Nebraska Department of Education
Melissa Comine	Chief Academic Officer of Curriculum and Instructional Support, Omaha Public Schools
Robin Dexter	Associate Superintendent, Grand Island Public Schools
Fabiola Dimas	Home Visitor, Crete Sixpence
Beth Doll	Professor, Educational Psychology, University of Nebraska–Lincoln
Nancy Edick	Dean, College of Education, University of Nebraska at Omaha
Sheryl Feinstein	Dean, College of Education, University of Nebraska at Kearney (retired)
Maddie Fennell	Executive Director, Nebraska State Education Association
Cristina Fernandez	Pediatrician, Children’s Hospital and Medical Center*
Jane Franklin	Dean of Social Sciences, Metropolitan Community College
Deborah Frison	Deputy Commissioner of Education, Nebraska Department of Education
Kelly Gewecke	Business Development Consultant (Central Nebraska Region), Nebraska Department of Economic Development
Tawana Grover	Superintendent, Grand Island Public Schools
Kristen Hassebrook	Executive Vice President-Legislation and Policy, Nebraska Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Melody Hobson	Administrator of Office of Early Childhood, Nebraska Department of Education
Nici Johnson	Director of Early Childhood, Educational Service Unit 13 (Sidney)
Sherri Jones	Dean, College of Education and Human Sciences, University of Nebraska–Lincoln
Sharon Katt	Senior Administrator for Adult Program Services, Nebraska Department of Education (retired)

MEMBERS	ORGANIZATION
Kelly Kiihne	Owner/Operator, Kelly's Kids
Sarah Ann Kotchian	Chief Operating Officer, Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative
Catherine Lang	Director, Nebraska Business Development Center, UNO
Kathleen Lodl	Associate Dean and State 4-H Program Leader, University of Nebraska Extension
David Ludwig	Executive Director, Educational Service Unit Coordinating Council*
Joan Luebbers	Head Start State Collaboration Director, Nebraska Department of Education
Kim Madsen	Applied Sciences Professor - Family and Consumer Sciences, Chadron State College
Grace Mims	Dean, College of Education, Interim, University of Nebraska at Kearney
Sara Morgan	Administrator, Lifespan Health Services, Division of Public Health, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
James Powell	Dean, School of Education, Chadron State College
Jessie Rasmussen	President, Buffett Early Childhood Fund
Sara Renken	Third Grade Teacher, Eagle Elementary School, Waverly School District 145
Carol Renner	Associate Superintendent, Kearney Public Schools (retired)
Jay Sears	Director of Instructional Advocacy, Nebraska State Education Association (retired)
John Spatz	Executive Director, Nebraska Association of School Boards
Jane Stavem	Associate Superintendent for Instruction, Lincoln Public Schools*
John Stinner	Senator, District 48, Nebraska Legislature
Mariah Stowe	Owner/Operator, Splash of Color Child Care
Michelle Suarez	Early Childhood Developer, Prosper Lincoln*
Drew Theophilus	Director, Dividends Nebraska*
Patricia Timm	Nebraska State Board of Education, District 5
Becky Veak	Director, First Five Nebraska*
Nicole Vint	Child Care and Development Fund Administrator I, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
Matthew Wallen	Director, Division of Children and Family Services, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services*
Jeff West	Administrator, Educational Service Unit 13 (Scottsbluff)*
Stacie Williams	First Grade Teacher, Central Elementary School, Kearney Public Schools
Thomas Williams	Chief Medical Officer and Director, Division of Public Health, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services*
Jeff Yost	President and Chief Executive Officer, Nebraska Community Foundation
Joseph Young	Executive Vice President, Nebraska Chamber of Commerce and Industry*
Laurie Ziems	Owner/Operator, Learningtree Childcare

*Titles listed reflect member's title at time of their service

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