SUPERINTENDENTS' EARLY CHILDHOOD PLAN

REACH & EVALUATION
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

University of Nebraska Medical Center
MUNROE-MEYER INSTITUTE

Buffett Early Childhood Institute
at the University of Nebraska

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SCHOOL AS HUB PROGRAMMATIC HIGHLIGHTS 2024-2025*

Bellevue Public Schools

- Attendance collaboration meetings led to a significant decrease in chronic absenteeism.
- Over 300 students benefited from the full implementation of Wit & Wisdom and the Second Step program.
- GOLD assessment scores showed an increase in literacy from Fall to Winter.

DC West Elementary

- 542 students participated in morning meetings, promoting social-emotional learning and community building.
- Monthly, interest-driven family events supported connection and engagement.
- Increased participation in summer programming and monthly social experiences for families enhanced early learning and family connections.

Millard Public Schools

- Disseminated a new PK–5 mathematics curriculum and engaged staff in developmentally appropriate math practices.
- Integrated early math into home visits and routines, with documented gains in critical thinking.
- Preschoolers in traditional programs showed a 27% increase in meeting math expectations.

Omaha Public Schools

- PreK students showed strong early literacy gains through integrated preliteracy strategies.
- Weekly ESL classes and recruitment efforts led to a 55% increase in early childhood enrollment.
- Among families who enrolled in the Circle of Security program, 68% completed it.

Westside Community Schools

- Leadership implemented a consistent system of classroom walkthroughs, fostering reflection and continuous instructional improvement.
- Kindergarten-Grade 1 proficiency rose from 40% in Fall to 68% in Winter, supported by targeted reading instruction.
- Eleven literacy and math-focused family events drew high attendance and received overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Ralston Public Schools

- Continued focus on improvement through FastBridge data and expanded supports for dual language learners.
- Successfully transitioned to a new building with 453 students, supported by strong teacher leadership.
- High participation in events like Bingo for Books (200+ attendees), weekly social events, and consistent home visits.

*School as Hub partners were asked to identify programmatic achievements directly tied to their SECP action plans. Importantly, some of these are programmatic achievements not directly tied to overall evaluation metrics. These findings reflect the individuality of the district action plans and the various areas of improvement that districts are focused on.

EVALUATION OVERVIEW

Child-Level Outcomes

- How does engagement in the SECP influence students' academic growth within School as Hub sites?
  - Measure: Academic Achievement Reflections
- How does engagement in the SECP influence students' social-emotional development within School as Hub sites?
  - Measure: Ages and Stages Questionnaires

Family-Level Outcomes

- What is the degree of family engagement within School as Hub sites?
  - Measure: ChildPlus Data
- What is the influence of family engagement programming on perceptions of support?
  - Measure: Family Interviews and Family Engagement Staff Focus Groups
- What is the level of collaboration among families, communities, and schools within School as Hub sites?
  - Measure: Family Engagement Survey

Systems-Level Outcomes

- What are the barriers and facilitators to collaboration between district stakeholders and Institute staff members?
  - Measure: Collaboration Survey
- How much progress was made towards district-level action plan goals?
  - Measure: Action Plan Focus Groups
- What was the depth of learning from participants engaged in professional learning opportunities?
  - Measure: Professional Learning Survey
- How did engagement in SECP communities of practice influence teacher and principal perceptions of self-efficacy for teaching and leadership?
  - Measure: Self-Efficacy Surveys
- To what degree are principals able to develop and foster partnerships with families and communities and ensure opportunities for all?
  - Measure: NAESP Survey

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

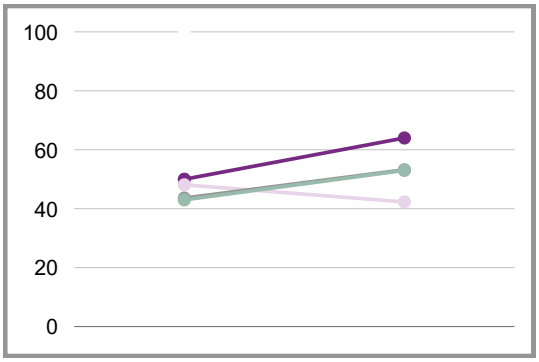
Academic Achievement

Principals at each School as Hub site and one district leader were asked to report the percentage of students that were on track for reading and math in Fall and Spring based on the District's chosen assessment tool (e.g., FastBridge, MAP).

3,039

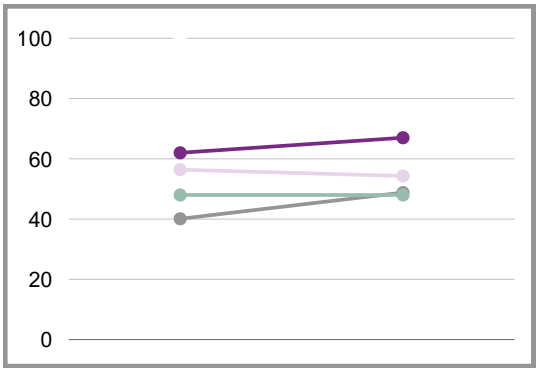
Total number of children enrolled in School as Hub PreK-Grade 3 classrooms

Fall and Spring mean scores for **reading** are reported by grade level. Overall, growth was seen from Fall to Spring for all grade levels, with Kindergarten representing the largest increase of on track students from Fall to Spring.



- Kindergarten (Fall 50.2%; Spring 64.3%)
- First Grade (Fall 48.1%; Spring 42.3%)
- Second Grade (Fall 43.6%; Spring 53.2%)
- Third Grade (Fall 42.9%; Spring 52.6%)

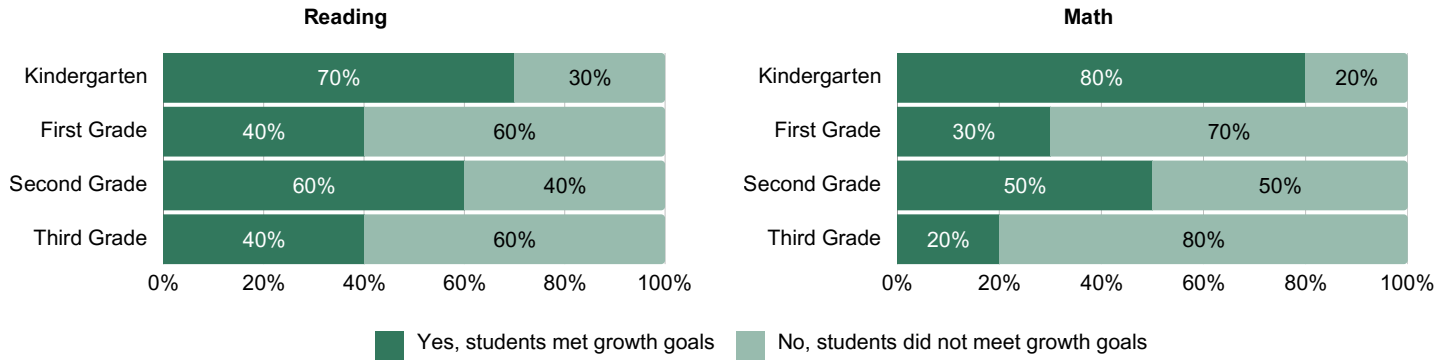
Fall and Spring means for **math** achievement scores are reported by grade level. Overall, growth was seen from Fall to Spring for all grade levels except first grade, with Kindergarten representing the largest increase from Fall to Spring.



- Kindergarten (Fall 61.5%; Spring 67.4%)
- First Grade (Fall 56.4%; Spring 54.3%)
- Second Grade (Fall 40.1%; Spring 48.8%)
- Third Grade (Fall 47.7%; Spring 48.4%)

Academic Achievement Reflections

Principals reported there was varied progress among grade levels in relation to reading scores. Many schools noted improvements, such as increases in the percentage of students reading at or near grade level, reductions in achievement gaps, and gains in math assessment scores. However, concerns were raised about persistent underperformance in specific grades and indications that overall reading growth had plateaued in some areas. Several schools reported overall growth in math, especially in early and upper grades, with many meeting or exceeding MAP math goals. However, progress was uneven, with some grades and classrooms falling short and ongoing challenges noted across sites.



AGES AND STAGES QUESTIONNAIRES

The SECP advances children's social-emotional growth through both home visitation and family-facilitation programs, organized around three core activities: individual engagement, group engagement, and transition planning.

- **Individual Engagement:** Recruit and work with families of children from the prenatal stage through school entry via scheduled in-home visits. A structured curriculum guides each family in setting and achieving personalized social-emotional development goals.
- **Group Engagement:** Convene families for facilitated learning sessions, using a family-learning curriculum to plan and deliver interactive activities that build social-emotional skills among children and caregivers.
- **Transition Planning:** Develop and facilitate customized transition plans and supports that help children and families move smoothly between different early care and education settings.

Findings for ASQ-SE

- A total of 117 observations were recorded across six districts and 12 schools, representing 77 unique students (with 18 students assessed twice and 11 students assessed three times).
- Approximately 87% of observations were screened as No-to-Low Risk, 9% Monitor risk, and 3% Referral risk.
- Percentage of observations at No-to-Low Risk by years of program participation:

Years of participation	1	2	3+*
Sample size	43	51	22
% No-to-low risk	74.4%	98.0%	86.4%

*Combined 3,4,5,6 years due to small sample size

Approximately 90% of female student observations and 83% of male student observations were screened at No-to-Low Risk.

Approximately 15% of observations were conducted in Spanish.

Findings for ASQ

- A total of 175 observations were recorded across six districts and 13 schools, representing 104 unique students (with 41 students assessed twice and 15 students assessed three times).
- Across the five ASQ domains, 65%–76% of student observations were screened.

	Communication	Gross motor	Fine motor	Problem solving	Personal-social
Typical	65%	76%	72%	69%	67%
Borderline	8%	5%	7%	9%	11%
Development Concerns	11%	2%	5%	6%	5%

- Percentage of observations at Typical by years of program participation:

Years of participation	1	2	3+*
Sample size	63	74	38
Communication, % Typical	58.1	72.6	63.2
Gross motor, % Typical	74.2	78.1	76.3
Fine motor, % Typical	67.2	75.0	73.7
Problem solving, % Typical	60.0	75.3	71.1
Personal-social, % Typical	56.7	72.6	73.0

*Combined 3,4,5,6 years due to small sample size

Approximately 68-77% of female student observations and 60-76% of male student observations were screened at Typical across the five ASQ domains.

Approximately 17% of the student observations were conducted in Spanish.

FAMILY-LEVEL OUTCOMES

Family Engagement Survey

An adaptation of the Road Map Family Engagement Survey (Ishimaru & Lott, 2015) was used to assess families' perceptions about collaboration among families, communities, and schools. The survey was available in 19 languages to accommodate the language needs of all the families at the participating schools. Parents ranked items on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A total of 455 families completed the survey across 10 schools.

Highest Scores

I know how well my child is doing academically in school.

6.4

I know who to talk with at this school regarding my concerns about my child's education and development.

6.4

Lowest Scores

I have opportunities to influence what happens at this school.

5.6

I know someone at this school who will assist me and my family in our home language in resolving questions and concerns regarding my child.*

6.0

231

Total number of children enrolled in home visitation or family facilitation

6,780

Family members in engagement and support opportunities

Family and Family Engagement Staff Perceptions

In the spring of 2025, families (n=26) and BECI family engagement staff (n=12) engaged in interviews and focus groups to assess their perceptions of social support. Interview and focus group questions were designed to answer two primary evaluation questions: (1) How does engagement in family engagement programming influence how a family receives social support? (2) What are the primary support types that engaged families are currently receiving? Triangulated thematic findings from both groups regarding how support is most effectively provided to families can be seen below.

Areas of Strength

- Family engagement staff effectively help families access essentials like food, clothing, and learning materials.
- Family engagement staff have effective and valued communication strategies. Families appreciate the personalized communication. FES recognize the need to continue to simplify materials and access to information.
- Family engagement staff build strong relationships by listening, encouraging families, and being consistently present.

Areas for Improvement

- Increased access to culturally and linguistically appropriate materials, such as bilingual books and translated resources.
- Simplify and streamline educational content to make it more understandable and usable for families with varied literacy and learning needs.
- Expand mental health support options, including access to affordable, Medicaid-accepting providers and counseling services.
- Strengthen communication tools to allow for sharing of timely information.
- Address gaps in housing and transportation services, which remain major barriers for many families.
- Provide additional training for staff to support goal setting and emotional well-being in culturally responsive ways.
- Ensure consistent funding and resources to maintain and grow personalized, high-impact services for families.

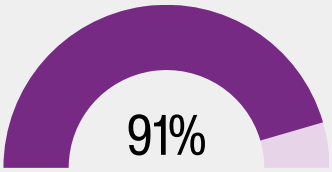
SYSTEMS-LEVEL OUTCOMES
INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE

49 Professional learning opportunities were offered in 2023-2024

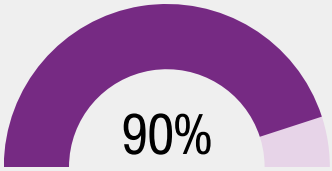
989 Educators engaged in professional learning opportunities

437 Post-program surveys completed by professional learning attendees

Professional Learning Opportunities



of participants somewhat or strongly agreed that the information learned during the professional learning opportunity could help them in their current role.



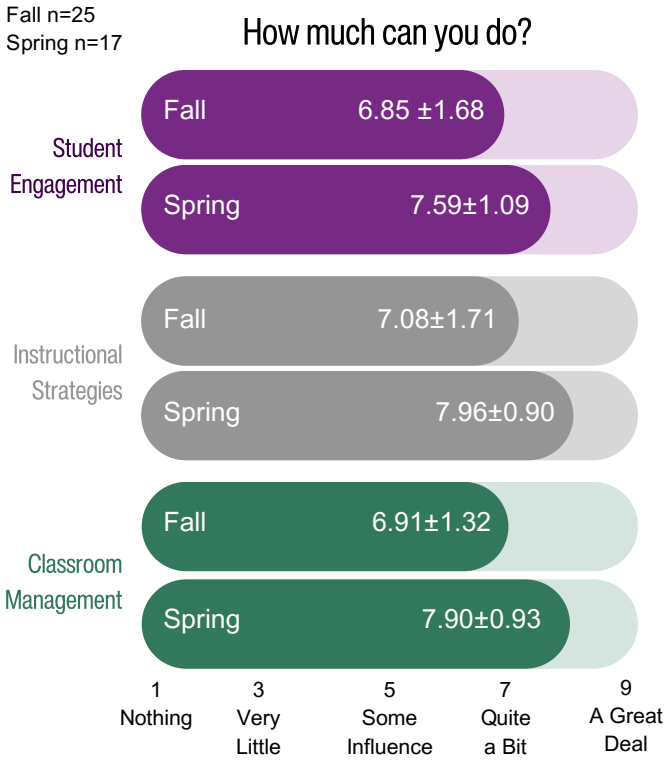
of participants somewhat or strongly agreed that the format of the professional learning opportunity was an effective way to receive helpful information.

Teachers' Sense of Self-Efficacy

In the Fall of 2024 and Spring of 2025, teachers who were engaged in coaching and/or consultation within the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan completed the short form of the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk, 2001). The largest areas of growth occurred in assisting families in helping their children do well in school (5.68; 7.53) and implementing alternative strategies in the classroom (6.76; 8.12).

45 Number of teachers engaged in coaching and/or consultation

138 Number of PreK-Grade 3 classroom teachers at School as Hub sites



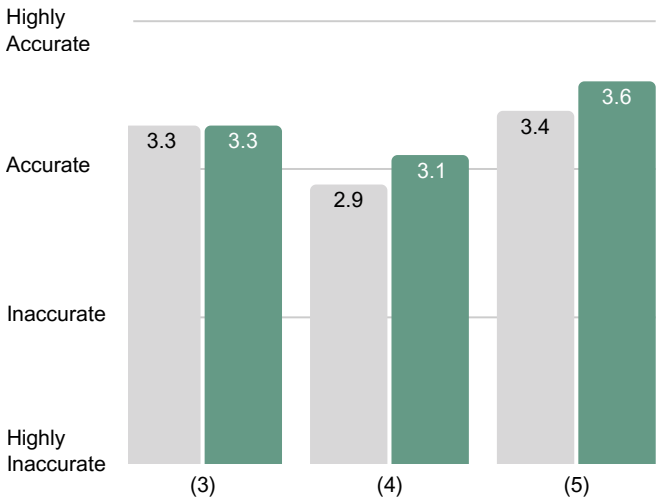
LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS

Principal Leadership

In Fall 2024, Principals from 10 Omaha-based schools participated in a community of practice focused on NAESP competencies. Principals were asked to complete a self-reflective assessment at two time points (January & May). Reflective assessments provided several constructs and asked respondents to rate themselves on a scale of (1) highly inaccurate, (2) inaccurate, (3) accurate or (4) highly accurate. Example questions are highlighted below. Full report details are available upon reasonable request. Aggregated scores are reported below at each time point: (1) Fall 2024=Grey; (3) Spring 2025=Green.

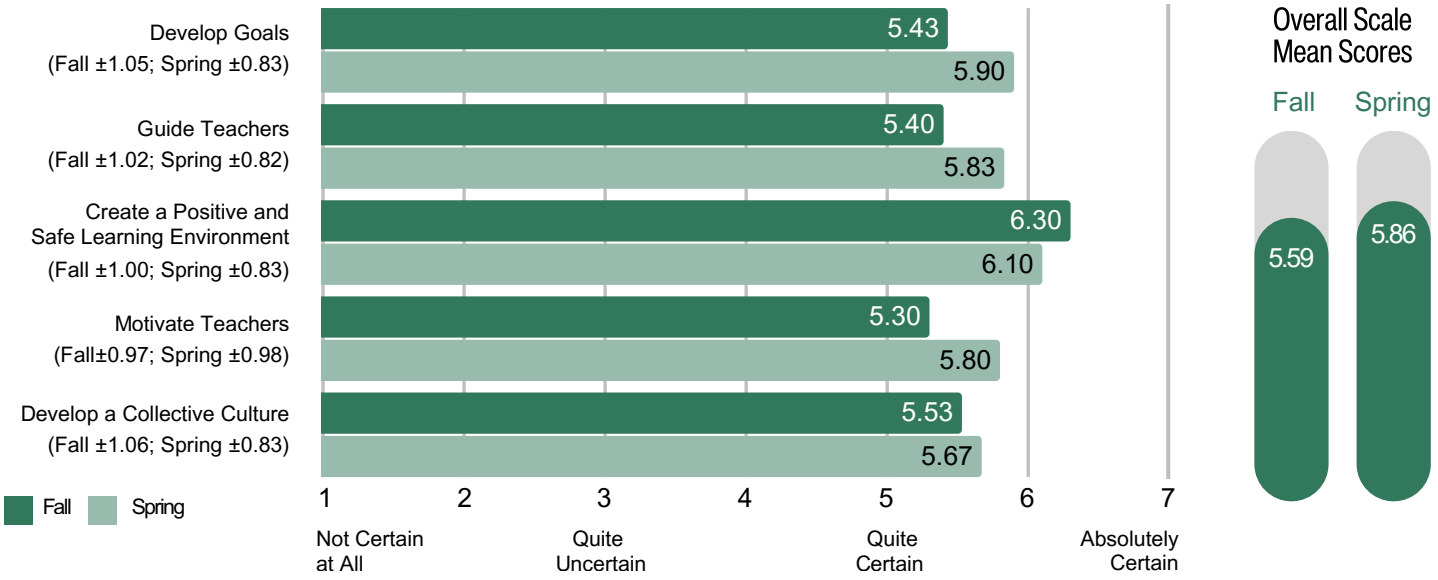
Strategy 2.3: Ensure smooth transitions for students and families not only between the variety of ECE programs and kindergarten, but also across the birth through 3rd grade continuum.

- (3) Our school has a transition plan in place to welcome and embrace students and families new to our school.
- (4) We reach out to and partner with ECE programs and community organizations to support the transitions of students and families.
- (5) We have a well-defined, manageable, and shared process to help parents register at our school. (i.e., supportive of languages other than English



Principal Self-Efficacy

Principals (n=10) engaged in the SECP community of practice rated their leadership self-efficacy across 5 domains. Enhanced feelings of self-efficacy were seen across each domain from Fall 2024 to Spring 2025.



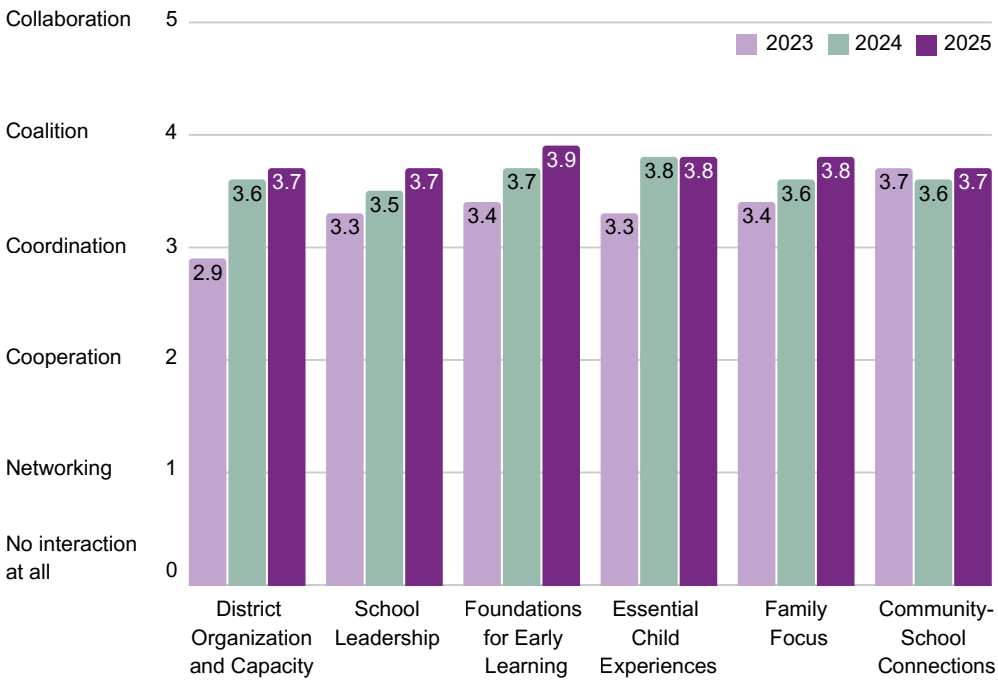
DISTRICTS & INSTITUTE COLLABORATION

37 District leaders engaged in SECP across school districts

78 School leaders and staff engaged in SECP across school districts

31 Institute staff members engaged in the SECP

Level of Collaboration



School/district program stakeholders from full-implementation districts were asked to reflect on the level of collaboration they have with the Institute on a scale of 0-5 (0=no interaction at all; 5=collaboration) across the action plan domain constructs. District stakeholders identified a mean of 3.8 for 2025. This is compared to means of 3.6 in 2024 and 3.3 in 2023. Responses for 2025 typically fell closer to the coalition level (i.e., share ideas, information, and resources; regular and focused communication; and frequent shared decision-making).

Greatest accomplishments of SECP

Continued Program Development

"Rebuilding the program from scratch and really listening to families' needs as we modified how we deliver services"

District and Institute Collaboration

"The continued connections between districts, while also allowing, through action plans, individualized supports and resources from the Institute to the districts to be developed and used"

Enhanced Professional Learning

"The support of teachers attending and implementing Responsive Classroom"

Advocacy for Early Childhood

"Voicing the importance of early childhood education and including early childhood education in elementary"

Desired improvements

Stronger Onboarding for New Staff

"Clarity on how to better support new staff that are a part of the EC plan (Family Facilitator/Home Visitor)"

Greater Flexibility for Families

"Flexibility in the model to allow families to dictate services they do and do not want to experience"

Improved Alignment Between Programs

"Connect Birth-PreK programs and data with Kindergarten-3rd grade programs and data"

ACTION PLANNING PROGRESS

During the annual Action Planning Retreats within the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan, focus groups were held with members of each District team. District team members from Bellevue Public Schools, DC West Community Schools, Omaha Public Schools, and Millard Public Schools were asked to reflect on their engagement in the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan over the past year. A 5-question semi-structured interview guide was utilized to evaluate progress, challenges, and future directions within the three primary program domains of Leadership Effectiveness, Instructional Excellence, and Family & Community Partnerships Engagement. Scores below represent the mean level of progress districts felt they made across domain areas from a scale of 1 to 100.

Leadership Effectiveness

Instructional Excellence

Family and Community Partnerships Engagement

AREAS OF PROGRESS

- Stronger staff commitment and active involvement in action plan efforts
- Expansion of leadership teams and access to monthly professional development
- Improved communication and more effective goal-setting resulting in enhanced collaboration
- Building a strong social-emotional foundation for students
- Enhanced teacher capacity to create responsive learning environments that meet the varying needs of students
- Improved instructional planning and devotion to intentional curriculum work
- Establishment of safe and welcoming environments to promote family/child engagement and satisfaction
- Increased opportunities for socializations and family engagement in the school community
- Expansion of partnerships between childcare, schools, and families

CHALLENGES

- Constraints on staff time reduced opportunities for meetings and peer collaboration
- Ambiguity in school staff responsibilities and ongoing changes in organizational focus
- Administrative limitations and communication gaps between districts and Institute staff
- Ongoing shifts in curriculum disrupted continuity and hindered instructional consistency
- Educator fatigue due to repetitive nature of scripted literacy instruction and lack of adequate support for inclusive classrooms
- Barriers in communication, time restraints, and systematic use of data in instructional planning
- Lack of time and consistent opportunities to build meaningful relationships with families
- Difficulty connecting with families or caregivers working nonstandard hours
- Gaps in communication resources for outreach to families with limited English proficiency

FUTURE PLANS

- Enhance range of resources to support effective leadership and project implementation
- Clearly define staff roles and increase staff support to reduce role strain
- Provide more opportunities for teacher feedback on action plan goals
- Formulate a more efficient teaching plan to support new curriculum implementation
- Strengthen instructional planning by integrating qualitative and quantitative data into regular team discussions
- Increase access to bilingual curriculum materials
- Broaden staff access to coaching and professional development
- Establish organized and accessible support systems to meet family engagement needs in and outside of the classroom
- Strengthen partnerships with community resources and childcare providers to support transitions and consistency
- Improve flexibility around scheduling to boost engagement at family events.

DEFINITIONS &REFERENCES

Definitions

ASQ: The Ages & Stages Questionnaires are screening tools designed to help caregivers and professionals monitor young children's development in various areas like communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, personal–social skills, and social-emotional behaviors.

ChildPlus: The database used by the Institute to track participant engagement across programmatic activities.

earlyReading Assessment™: A norm-referenced screening test designed to identify reading problems.

FastBridge: An assessment tool designed to identify students' academic and social-emotional behavior needs

MTSS: Multi-tiered systems of support is a framework used by schools to identify immediate intervention for students with academic and behavioral needs.

MAP Assessment: A child assessment tool utilized by districts to measure achievement and growth in K-12 math, reading, language usage, and science.

NAESP Survey: The National Association of Elementary School Principals survey is designed to assess various competencies focused on advocacy and support for elementary-level principals.

PD: Professional Development

Responsive Classroom: A student-centered approach to teaching and discipline to create safe and engaging classroom communities.

School as Hub: A school identified by its district due to unique risk factors. The school serves as a "hub" for complex learning systems, connecting children and families to resources within and beyond school walls.

SECP: Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan

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