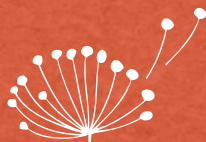


# Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan Annual Report: 2024–25

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Buffett  
Early Childhood  
Institute  
*at the University of Nebraska*

## Acknowledgments

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# Letter from the Director

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Dear Colleagues and Community Members,

I am excited to share this 10th anniversary report, highlighting a decade of shared progress through the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan. During the 2024–25 school year, we advanced our collective efforts to close opportunity gaps and support children and families across our Learning Community. This year has been a testament to the power of collaboration, dedication, and innovative approaches in fostering supportive and effective educational environments for young children and their families.

Leaders in 10 of our 11 Learning Community school districts implemented action plans in collaboration with the Buffett Early Childhood Institute. Ten schools across six districts implemented comprehensive School as Hub programming, and professional development offerings were retooled to better serve district and community professionals.

The work of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan touches thousands of students and their families, with more than 2,800 PreK through Grade 3 students in School as Hub sites alone. The Plan continues to stand as a national model of sustained cross-district collaboration—something truly rare and powerful in the early childhood space.

The impact of this work is far-reaching. Participating districts have shown notable progress—from deepening family engagement and building strong community partnerships to advancing instructional practices and seeing measurable gains in student outcomes.

As we reflect on these achievements, we look ahead with optimism and determination. I am confident that, together, we will continue building the conditions every child needs to thrive.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment and partnership in ensuring that every child—regardless of neighborhood or background—has access to high-quality early learning experiences that prepare them for lifelong success. Your dedication to collaboration and excellence in early learning inspires the work we do every day. Together, we are creating a brighter future for young children and their families.

With gratitude,



Amy Schmidtke, Ed.D.

Director of Educational Practice

Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan Project Lead

# District Highlights:



## **Bellevue Public Schools**

Increased family visitation by 100% with 14 families receiving monthly visits.

## **Bennington Public Schools**

Finalized and disseminated a comprehensive Early Childhood Staff Handbook to provide clarity for early childhood staff on effective processes and expectations, including expanding partnerships with community child care providers.

## **Douglas County West Community Schools**

Strengthened implementation of Responsive Classroom and clarified behavior supports, including calm corners and Falcon Coins—all contributing to a nurturing and respectful school environment.

## **Elkhorn Public Schools**

Reviewed current curriculum, utilizing research and evidence from their practice to inform curriculum decision-making.

## **Gretna Public Schools**

Established a district-wide strategic plan, incorporating early childhood education across all four strategic areas: curriculum instruction and assessment; growth, climate, and culture; mental health; and recruitment and retention.

## **Millard Public Schools**

Implemented new mathematics curriculum for PreK through Grade 5, engaging staff in best practices around mathematics. As a result, students in PreK saw an increase in meeting widely held math expectations.

## **Omaha Public Schools**

Connected families to their children's schools through intentional outreach and weekly English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. These efforts helped build trust and strengthen partnerships, leading to an increase in early childhood enrollment and deeper family engagement in learning.

## **Papillion La Vista Community Schools**

Developed a data dashboard that aligned with questions asked as a part of the preschool program review.

## **Ralston Public Schools**

Continued focus on data-driven improvement, professional learning, and targeted support led to improvement in reading across student groups, especially among English learners and students in special education.

## **Westside Community Schools**

Increased family engagement event participation significantly and improved reading scores.

## CROSS-DISTRICT HIGHLIGHT

# Reduction in Chronic Absenteeism at School as Hub Sites



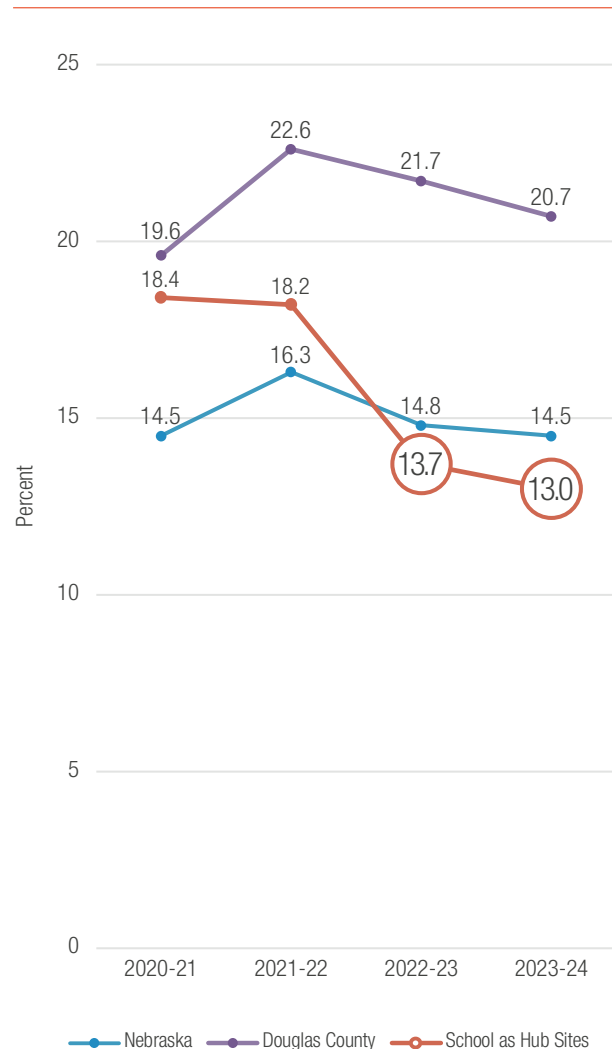
Schools implementing the Institute's School as Hub approach have reduced chronic absenteeism to levels far below the rest of Douglas County schools and, for the last two years, to levels notably below that of Nebraska as a whole.

Figure 1 illustrates this improvement, showing a steady decrease in the percentage of students with excessive absences (20+ days per school year) at School as Hub sites compared to broader district and state trends.

This 20-day threshold represents approximately 10% of the standard school year and triggers mandatory reporting requirements under Nebraska education regulations.

The significant improvement in attendance rates serves as a powerful indicator of program effectiveness, as regular school attendance forms the foundation for student achievement and long-term educational success.

**Figure 1. Percentage of School as Hub Students With 20+ Absences Per Year Compared to County and State Trends**



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## About the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan is a collaborative initiative of the 11 school districts of Douglas and Sarpy Counties to develop early childhood programs for young children living in poverty. The focus of the plan is on closing opportunity gaps so that all children can reach their full potential. In partnership with the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties, the Buffett Institute provides leadership and support for the plan, which is an innovative and comprehensive approach to ensure early learning opportunities for all children.

The plan was mandated in 2013 by LB 585 of the Nebraska Legislature, which directed the Learning Community to enact a program created by the Omaha-area superintendents "to establish early childhood programs for children in poverty." The Superintendents' Plan was developed by the Institute in collaboration with district superintendents and their staff and launched in 2015. Today, more than 2,800 PreK through Grade 3 students are served at School as Hub Sites and many more benefit through their district's work in customized assistance through the Superintendents' Plan.

The plan provides three interconnected levels of support for school districts, elementary schools, and community-based professionals to strengthen their birth through Grade 3 efforts:



### **School as Hub Programming for Birth Through Grade 3**

School as Hub provides intensive support to selected elementary schools in neighborhoods impacted by high concentrations of poverty. Programming is designed to establish the school as a "hub" that connects young children and their families with quality, comprehensive, and continuous early childhood services and resources.



### **Customized Assistance for School Districts**

Customized Assistance provides access to consultation services through the Superintendents' Plan to all 11 school districts. These services are tailored to the unique strengths and needs of each district and are designed to help them build their organizational infrastructure and capacity for providing quality early childhood programming. Consultation services are provided by Institute staff in collaboration with other state and national consultants.



### **Specialized Professional Learning**

Professional learning opportunities include tailored workshops aligned with the School as Hub Birth through Grade 3 approach. These sessions can be seamlessly integrated into annual professional development and support action plan goals to advance leadership effectiveness, enhance instructional excellence, and foster strong family and community partnerships. Custom workshops are available to districts, individual schools, and community child care programs in Douglas and Sarpy Counties.

A summary of services available at each level of the plan is provided in Appendix A.



## **Key Accomplishments in 2024–25: All Participating Districts**



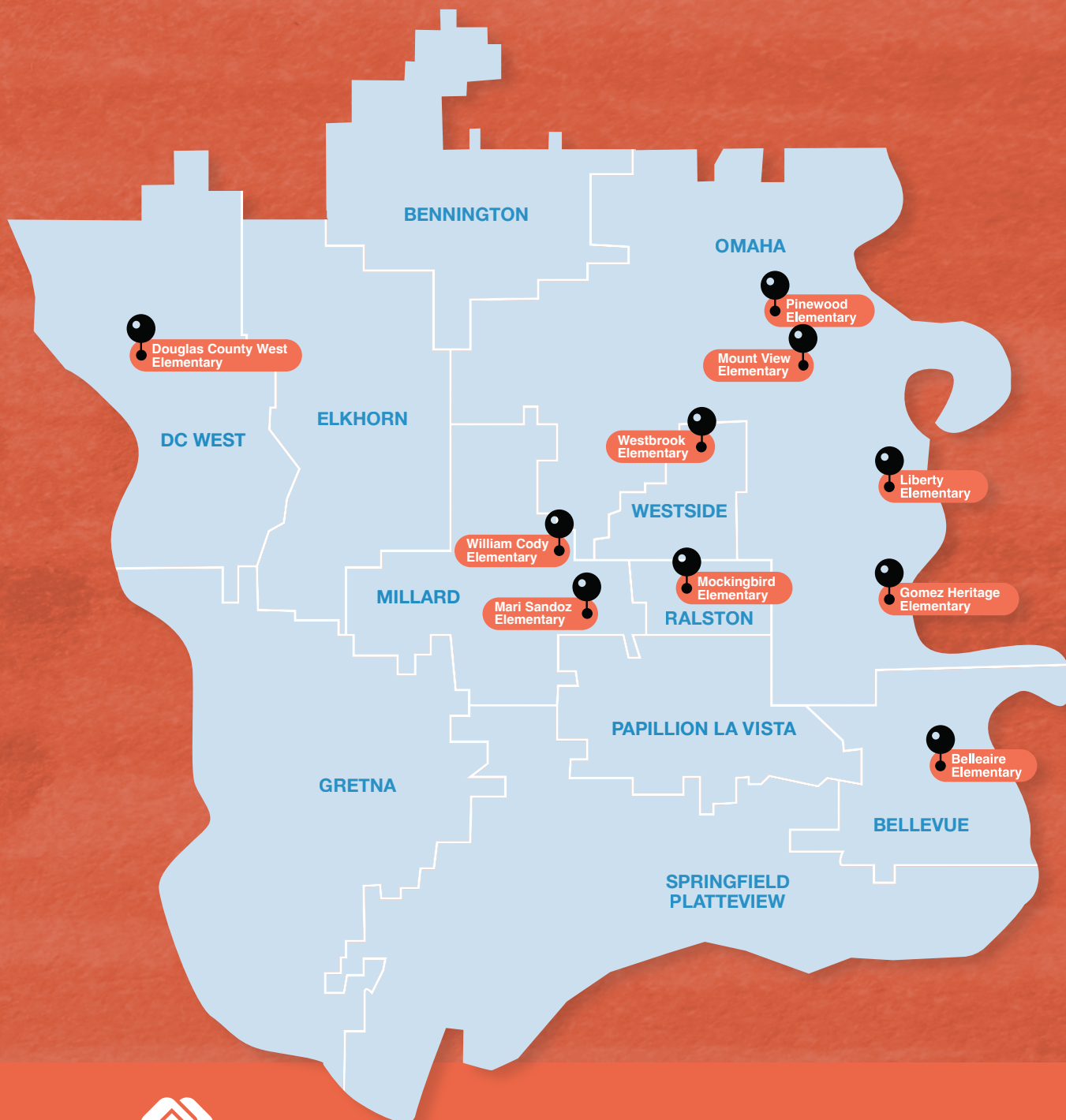
Leaders in 10 of the 11 Learning Community districts developed and implemented action plans that specified what they did to close opportunity gaps for young children, with a focus on improving professional practice in three domains:

- ▶ Leadership effectiveness
- ▶ Instructional excellence
- ▶ Family and community partnership engagement

Each participating district implemented activities aligned with its district-level action plan and monitored progress to determine how its efforts are impacting schools, families, and children.

Additional support was provided to 10 schools across six districts to implement comprehensive School as Hub programming for children and families.

Participation numbers for the 2024–25 school year across all districts involved in the Superintendents’ Early Childhood Plan are provided in Appendix B.



## Key Accomplishments in 2024–25: School as Hub Districts

## Bellevue Public Schools

School as Hub Site:

### **Belleaire Elementary School**

#### Activities

##### ► Leadership effectiveness

Monthly professional learning was provided by the early childhood team to elementary school principals, including training on Creative Curriculum<sup>1</sup> and its alignment with state standards. Staff completed an annual presentation to the Bellevue Public School Board to share preschool data and updates and shared the work of School as Hub and how the approach supports the preschool through Grade 3 plan, goals, and progress.

##### ► Instructional excellence

All K–3 teachers received Wit & Wisdom<sup>2</sup> materials and ongoing professional development for effective implementation. First grade teachers received targeted coaching support, and specialists (physical education, art, and music) were supported in integrating instructional excellence practices aligned with Wit & Wisdom into their subject areas.

##### ► Family and community partnership engagement

Hosted community and family engagement events, including Literacy Night, Getting to Know You Conferences, Socializations with Padres, and Bellevue Together-Back to School Event. In response to Bellevue's request to align District Initiative 2.0 efforts with their Superintendents' Plan action plan, the Buffett Institute partnered with Bellevue Public Schools and the University of Nebraska at Omaha to conduct a targeted family and preschool teacher wellness survey. The findings highlight families' desire for better communication, bilingual support, and help with at-home learning. This is now guiding district strategies to improve family engagement.

#### Reach and Impact

##### ► Family Engagement

This year, there was a 100% increase in family visitation, with 14 families receiving monthly visits. The Padres Partnership was highly successful in engaging families across the school district, including those involved in the School as Hub initiative, with a strong focus on supporting Spanish-speaking families.

##### ► Direct Connections

Thirty-one community partnerships were developed between Bellevue Public Schools and local organizations that support children and families, and 865 direct connections were made between families and school support/community services.

##### ► Increased Skills

Belleaire teachers increased their understanding of the social skills program from 28% to 100%, which directly supports the school goal of decreasing office referrals by 10%.



## SCHOOL AS HUB STORIES

### **'Getting to Know You' Conferences Help Bellevue Parents, Teachers Start the School Year on a Positive Note**



Belleaire Elementary in Bellevue Public Schools welcomes back students for the 2024-25 school year

“Tell me about your child.”

Before the first day of school, Belleaire holds “getting to know you conferences.” Parents and families, often with kids in tow, meet with teachers for 15-30 minutes to ask questions and give them more insight into their child—their favorite activities, strengths, any back-to-school jitters.

Principal Nikole Schubauer said the conferences, typically held a few days before the start of the school year, are a welcome alternative to hectic back-to-school nights.

“This is truly parent-led,” Schubauer said. “It helps to make that first contact positive, to help build that teamwork.”

Belleaire serves about 300 kids, 68% of whom qualify for free or reduced lunch. Fifteen percent are English Learners, and a number come from military families—Offutt Air Force Base is just 1 mile down the road.

The conferences started eight years ago with incoming Kindergartners.

“It was amazing,” Schubauer said. “The first year I went down on the first day of school and it was almost eerie. I didn’t have parents crying; I didn’t have kids crying.”



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# Douglas County West Community Schools

School as Hub Site:

## Douglas County West Elementary School

### Activities

#### ► Leadership effectiveness

Enhanced communication by including Family Facilitator updates in the school newsletter, sharing important information on school websites and social media, such as Falcon Café, and adding teacher representatives from Kindergarten and second grade to the Executive Leadership Team.

#### ► Instructional excellence

Implemented coaching sessions between teachers and Buffett Institute staff, focusing on the best social and behavioral learning and academic instructional practices.

#### ► Family and community partnership engagement

DC West also implemented several new activities to strengthen family and community partnerships, including expanding partnerships with center-based child cares, home providers, and community partners that included Valley and Waterloo Libraries, YMCA, and COPE (Community Outreach Program of Elkhorn).



### Reach and Impact

#### ► Data-Driven Decision-Making

There was notable growth in student data and instructional decision-making, driven by collaborative teams, Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS)<sup>3</sup> practices, and ongoing professional learning.

#### ► Positive School Culture

The school strengthened implementation of Responsive Classroom<sup>4</sup> and clarified behavior supports including calm corners and Falcon Coins, all contributing to a nurturing and respectful school environment.

#### ► Community Engagement

The school saw ongoing success with Falcon Café, expanding community partnerships and robust summer programming supporting socialization and whole-child development.

#### ► Smart Start Backpack Program

Douglas County West partnered with the Buffett Institute and the University of Nebraska at Omaha to pilot the Smart Start Backpack Program as part of aligning District Initiative 2.0 work with their Superintendents' Plan action plan. Designed to strengthen Kindergarten readiness and parent-child interactions, the initiative reached families with hands-on learning kits. Over 90% of participants found the materials easy to use, and 83% expressed interest in future participation, demonstrating the power of collaborative, responsive design.

# **Millard Public Schools**

School as Hub Sites:

**William Cody Elementary School, Mari Sandoz Elementary School**

## **Activities**

### ▶ **Leadership effectiveness**

Instructional leaders and early childhood educators developed a deeper understanding of research-based and high-impact mathematics instructional practices through the Summer Mathematics Institute, Mathematic Look for Documents, and Mathematics Commitments.

### ▶ **Instructional excellence**

Essential mathematical experiences for students birth through Grade 3 were implemented to ensure comprehensive coverage of early numeracy skills and those essential for early childhood development. This included engaging in a Summer Mathematics Institute and Essential Math for PreK paraprofessionals and utilizing tools like Mathematic Look For Documents and Vertical Alignment Resource.

### ▶ **Family and community partnership engagement**

The team enhanced and disseminated the Family Engagement Framework to Millard Public School leadership and all 25 Millard elementary schools. Through the mathematics “link to learning” section, early math learning was linked to home visits, socializations, and everyday routines. Principals participated in professional learning sessions on family engagement, and 738 families enrolled in ParentPowered<sup>5</sup> online resources to support learning at home. The district heard overwhelmingly positive feedback from enrolled families related to their child’s learning and growth.

## **Reach and Impact**

### ▶ **Improved Math Skills**

In the 2024–25 school year, the district implemented a new mathematics curriculum for PreK through Grade 5, engaging staff in best practices around mathematics. As a result, 3- and 4-year-old preschoolers in traditional preschools showed a 27% increase in meeting widely held math expectations.

### ▶ **Family Engagement Framework**

The district developed the mathematics link to learning section of the Millard Family Engagement Framework.

### ▶ **Participation in Home-Based Math Activities**

Engagement in Cody Elementary’s home-based math activities doubled each month, reflecting increased confidence in supporting learning and strengthening school-family partnerships.



## Omaha Public Schools

School as Hub Sites:

**Gomez Heritage Elementary School, Liberty Elementary School,  
Mount View Elementary School, Pinewood Elementary School**

### Activities

#### ▶ Leadership effectiveness

District leaders developed and distributed three targeted home-school kits for all PreK families—each designed to strengthen early literacy, numeracy, and Kindergarten transition skills—while partnering with the Buffett Institute to provide ongoing, personalized leadership support to principals at School as Hub sites.

#### ▶ Instructional excellence

Teachers implemented high-impact and data-driven instructional approaches, including daily opportunities to write across routine and play, scaffolded writer's workshops, and embedding targeted pre-literacy skills into daily transitions, strengthening phonemic awareness and alphabet knowledge.

#### ▶ Family and community partnership engagement

Schools expanded family engagement through weekly ESL classes, the evidence-based Circle of Security<sup>6</sup> program to promote strong parent-child relationships, and strategic outreach efforts. Community facilitators also supported early learning providers with on-site coaching and coordinated summer learning experiences—collectively enhancing parent-child relationships, school readiness, and family participation across multiple sites.

### Reach and Impact

#### ▶ Family-School Partnerships

Families became more connected to their children's schools through intentional outreach and weekly ESL classes. These efforts helped build trust and strengthen partnerships, leading to a 55% increase in early childhood enrollment and deeper family engagement in learning.

#### ▶ Child and Family Well-Being

Family well-being and child development were supported with 68% of parents completing the Circle of Security program. Families embraced positive parenting strategies that helped strengthen emotional security and build healthy, trusting relationships at home.

#### ▶ Literacy Improvement

PreK students demonstrated significant early literacy growth through scaffolded instruction, modeled daily writing strategies, and integrated pre-literacy skills into daily routines. This intentional approach helped lay a strong foundation for their readiness to thrive in Kindergarten.



## Omaha Public Schools Intensive Early Childhood Program

Omaha Public Schools (OPS) enhanced its long-standing Intensive Early Childhood Program by adding School as Hub programming components to six existing sites, reaching an additional 1,750 PreK through Grade 3 students.

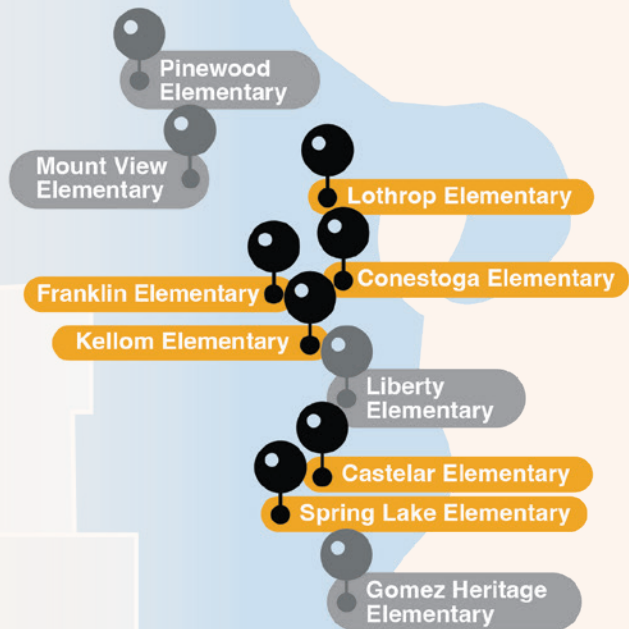
Funds from the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties support site-level staffing and materials, as well as coaching and leadership consultation from the Buffett Institute.

These schools now benefit from full participation in cross-district Superintendents' Plan supports and learning opportunities, including:

- ▶ District action planning with school level connections
- ▶ Monthly professional learning for family and community staff
- ▶ Teacher Leadership Network
- ▶ Principal Community of Practice
- ▶ Breakfast convening event
- ▶ Annual collaboration summit

This alignment deepens implementation and extends the impact of the School as Hub approach across OPS.

### OMAHA



- Intensive Early Childhood Program Schools
- School as Hub Schools

## SCHOOL AS HUB STORIES

### School as Hub: Omaha School Builds Community and Inspires Lifelong Learners



Pinewood Elementary fourth grader Maxton Clark hugs his mother, Erin Clark, in the school's family room.

Pinewood Elementary is more than just a school to Maxton Clark.

Now 10 years old, he's been going to the northwest Omaha elementary school since he was just an 8-month-old baby receiving early childhood services alongside his older siblings.

He took his first steps inside the Panther Den, the family room named for the school's mascot. He attended preschool there and is now a fourth grader with big aspirations to graduate from Harvard University, become a scientist, and invent the first time machine.

"Max wanted to be in school," said his mother, Erin Clark. "He told someone, 'I live at Pinewood.' He grew up thinking it was his home."

Pinewood has been a central part of the Clark family's life since oldest sister Makiela, now a high school freshman, started Kindergarten there. Middle brother Marcus, Jr. (MJ) was enrolled in the home visiting and PreKindergarten programs, and Maxton, never one to be left out, followed suit. Erin Clark was at the school so often, some of the students thought she worked there.

Making early connections with families, providing high-quality early education services, and ensuring educational continuity—this is what the School as Hub approach under the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan is all about.

"Kids love coming here at 1, 2, 3 years old," said Mary Ellyn Dunn, the family facilitator at Pinewood. "They see this as their school. They see this as their classroom."



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# **Ralston Public Schools**

School as Hub Site:

## **Mockingbird Elementary School**

### **Activities**

#### **Leadership effectiveness**

School leaders held monthly data reviews to align on School as Hub practices and set quarterly goals, and supported leadership by coordinating check-ins, aligning schedules, and facilitating ongoing collaboration to drive improvements in reading outcomes for all student groups.

#### **Instructional excellence**

To strengthen instructional quality and support a 10% reading gain, educators engaged in monthly reflective sessions—supported by Teacher Leadership Network members and focused on aligning instruction with child development milestones, using student data and coaching to guide continuous improvement across grade levels.

#### **Family and community partnership engagement**

The home visitor/family facilitator conducted monthly home visits with 15 families and hosted weekly socialization sessions that fostered family engagement, promoted developmental growth, and built stronger school-community connections.

### **Reach and Impact**

#### **Literacy Improvement**

The district continued to focus on data-driven improvement and professional learning. Targeted support led to gains across grade levels shown by FastBridge<sup>7</sup> results, and in reading across student groups, especially among English learners and students in special education.

#### **Family Engagement**

Over 170 families participated in the Newcomer Program and consistent home visits and weekly social events helped family engagement thrive. Activities like Bingo for Books, which saw 200-plus attendees, helped foster strong school-family partnerships and deeper community connections.

#### **New Facilities**

The school transitioned to a new building with 453 students and 19 preschoolers.



## Westside Community Schools

School as Hub Site:

### Westbrook Elementary School

#### Activities

##### ► Leadership effectiveness

School leadership implemented a structured walkthrough and coaching cycle system, using information gathered during weekly classroom visits to provide timely, actionable feedback and guide targeted professional development. This approach fostered professional growth by aligning support with teachers' instructional needs and encouraging participation in literacy and family engagement training.

##### ► Instructional excellence

All birth through Grade 3 staff participated in a year-long professional development series focused on strengthening foundational literacy instruction. On-site support included classroom observations, real-time feedback, and collaborative learning experiences—including a schoolwide book study and literacy initiatives—leading to improved instructional practices and increased teacher confidence.

##### ► Family and community partnership engagement

Westbrook hosted 11 well-attended events, reinforcing strong school-family partnerships. Strategic recruitment led to the enrollment of families in home visiting services and “Cub Club,” which offers daily opportunities for informal, play-based interactions fostering two-generational learning and deepening school-community connections.

#### Reach and Impact

##### ► Literacy Improvement

Kindergarten and Grade 1 students proficient in reading increased by 28% from fall to winter screening. Grade 2 students proficient in reading increased by 10% from fall to winter. Grade 3 students above the 50th percentile on the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) increased by 8%.

##### ► Family Engagement

Engagement in professional learning and coaching opportunities increased among preschool teachers, reflecting a commitment to ongoing professional development.

##### ► System-Wide Instructional Growth

A schoolwide walkthrough and coaching system provided 92% of classrooms with targeted feedback, reinforcing a culture of continuous improvement in literacy and family engagement. This structure promoted professional reflection and supported instructional improvement.



## SCHOOL AS HUB STORIES

### At Westbrook Elementary, Young Children Get to Socialize at After-School 'Park and Play'



Younger children get to play together during a park and play event at Westbrook Elementary.

At Westbrook Elementary School, a part of Westside Community Schools in Omaha, students file out of the building as the last bell of the day rings. But next to the entrance, equipped with books and learning materials, there's a group of kids too young to be Kindergarteners.

They, and their parents, are here for park and play.

Three times a week, when parents come to pick up their school-aged kids, they're able to bring younger children as well. Books, learning materials, and other activities are set out to give the younger kids a chance to socialize and interact with each other.

They are part of the "Cub Club."

Jill Garrett, family facilitator and early childhood specialist at Westbrook, developed Cub Club to give children and their families a chance to be involved within their school well before they are officially enrolled.

On Tuesdays, Garrett hosts a drop-in and play socialization at an area of Westbrook fondly called "Little Land," a space designed specifically for young children. Here, the kids get a chance to play and learn with others while parents can chat.

Family engagement nights occur once a month, organized around an activity for students and their families. Garrett sets up age-appropriate activities for the Cub Club kids, so they can be involved, too.

Parents are also given the opportunity to meet with Garrett one-on-one to set goals, review milestones, and explore techniques that will encourage their child's growth and development.

"It's extremely important to have children birth through 5 socializing with each other so they begin to develop those social skills that are needed for Kindergarten," said Garrett.

The benefits for kids and the school community are evident, but an unexpected perk for some has been the community and camaraderie between parents.

"It's good for the kids, but it's also really needed for us," said Stormie Ramer. "It's just nice to be around like-minded people in the same position, doing the same thing, in a little judgment-free zone."



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## SCHOOL AS HUB STORIES

### All Teachers are Leaders: Inside the Teacher Leadership Network



Members of the Teacher Leadership Network and Buffett Early Childhood Institute staff at an April 2025 event celebrating the Network's first cohort.

Leadership in education doesn't only happen in front offices or district buildings—it happens every day in classrooms and beyond. Every teacher leads: in their instruction, in the way they mentor students, and in how they collaborate with their colleagues and community.

“If you're in front of a group of students all day and you're working with kids all day, you're definitely already a leader,” said Ben Thomas, an early childhood teacher at Omaha Public Schools' Liberty Elementary in downtown Omaha.

The Teacher Leadership Network (TLN), first launched in January 2024, recognizes just that.



TLN is a cohort of 16 educators, all committed to professional growth and collaboration, from six Omaha metro

school districts—Omaha Public Schools, Millard Public Schools, Douglas County West Community Schools, Westside Community Schools, Bellevue Public Schools, and Ralston Public Schools.

It was created to give teachers the background of the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan and allow them to have a voice in the work that is being implemented at their schools around the School as Hub approach.

“I enjoy being someone who makes a difference, and so the Teacher Leadership Network felt like just another great opportunity to do that,” said Kelsey Nabity, a math intervention specialist at Douglas County West Elementary in Valley, Neb., and TLN member. “The Superintendents' Plan really aligns with our district plans and I think TLN has really allowed me to see that alignment between why we're doing what we're doing.”



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## Key Accomplishments in 2024–25: Customized Assistance Districts



### Bennington Public Schools



#### Activities

► **Leadership effectiveness**

District leaders developed, finalized, and disseminated the Early Childhood Staff Handbook, designed to streamline, document, and orient preschool staff to early childhood and early childhood special education processes and procedures.

► **Family and community partnership engagement**

To increase engagement and partnership with community-based child care and preschool providers, district leaders engaged providers through shared resources and an invitation to participate in the Preschool Advisory Committee.



#### Reach and Impact

- District leaders produced a comprehensive Early Childhood Staff Handbook aligned with the Nebraska Department of Education's Rule 11 and Rule 51, which set standards across the state for PreK programs and special education programs, respectively.
- Preschool Advisory Committee engagement was expanded by inviting local providers to participate and by planning an advisory team, including partners.
- District leaders and staff engaged and collaborated with the Superintendents' Plan workgroup members and leaders across other districts for ideas and support.



### Elkhorn Public Schools



#### Activities

► **Leadership effectiveness**

The Early Childhood Leadership Team was expanded to include key district leaders, signaling a districtwide commitment to elevating early childhood education. Through Customized Assistance, leaders engaged deeply with the School as Hub framework to examine their current birth through Grade 3 efforts. This collaborative process helped the team assess alignment across systems, identify areas of strength and opportunity, and begin shaping a cohesive strategy to strengthen instructional coherence, family partnerships, and leadership capacity across the early learning continuum.

► **Instructional excellence**

The team established a clear vision for early childhood curriculum, articulated content-specific goals, and analyzed existing materials and data to identify alignment with district vision. Professional learning opportunities were provided for staff, including training on the science of reading and core content areas.

► **Family and community partnership engagement**

Staff members attended monthly family engagement professional learning opportunities, developing knowledge and strategies for working with children and families experiencing economic and social disparities.



#### Reach and Impact

- All preschool teachers collaborated in a curriculum review, utilizing research and evidence from their practice to inform curriculum decision-making.
- High-quality professional development was created and facilitated for preschool teachers, deepening understanding of the science of reading and the Pyramid Model Module<sup>8</sup> implementation.
- Collaboration at the district level was expanded to enhance and support early childhood programming.



### Gretna Public Schools



#### Activities

##### ► Leadership effectiveness

The Gretna Public Schools team established a timeline for implementation of the School as Hub approach, with an alignment to the district's strategic plan, gathering information from the 0-8 Advisory Team meetings and a district-wide needs assessment.

##### ► Instructional excellence

Gretna's Superintendents' Plan Leadership Team will review current alignment of 0-3, PreK, and K-3 curriculum expectations to determine consistency, adherence, and identify gaps in state standards and legislative requirements. This will be accomplished through Early Childhood LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling)<sup>9</sup>, Nebraska Literacy Project<sup>10</sup> training, and review of PreK/K standards and zero to age 8 professional development.

##### ► Family and community partnership engagement

The district will create partnerships with Gretna-area child care providers throughout the community to give ongoing training and support to provide developmentally appropriate social supports for all Gretna children. To do this, Pyramid Model Module training will be provided at no cost to all interested Gretna-area child care providers.



#### Reach and Impact

- A district-wide strategic plan was established, incorporating early childhood education across all four strategic areas: curriculum instruction and assessment; growth, climate and culture; mental health; and recruitment and retention.
- A student services specialist was hired for families from birth to age 8.



### Papillion La Vista Community Schools



#### Activities

##### ► Leadership effectiveness

The district redesigned the early childhood webpage to align with district priorities, updated the early childhood data dashboard for usability and accuracy.

##### ► Family and community partnership engagement

Staff developed knowledge and strategies for working with children and families experiencing economic and social disparities through monthly family engagement activities, professional learning, and information about community engagement from the program handbook.



#### Reach and Impact

- Leaders developed a data dashboard that aligned with questions asked as part of the preschool program review.
- The district completed a preschool program review.
- Based on the outcomes and feedback gathered during the program review process, district leaders developed a targeted implementation plan that reflects the priorities and suggestions of families, educators, and program staff.



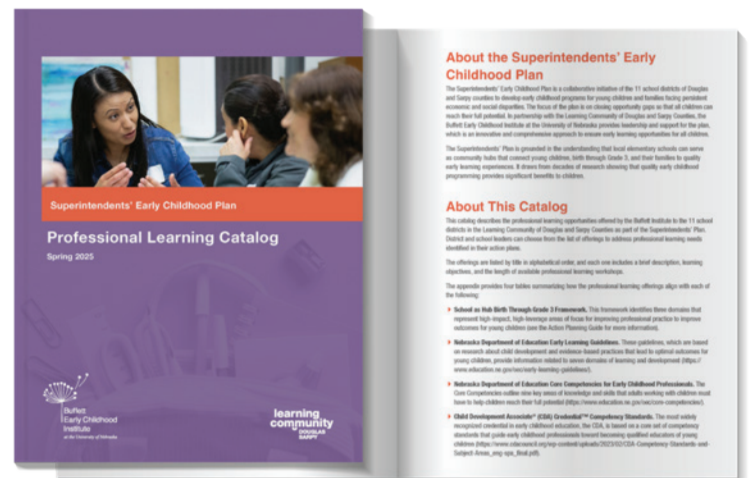
# Accomplishments in 2024–25: Specialized Professional Learning

## Activities

The recently developed Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan Professional Learning Catalog describes the professional learning opportunities offered by the Buffett Institute to the 11 school districts in the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties as part of the Superintendents' Plan. District and school leaders can choose from the list of offerings to address professional learning needs identified in their action plans.

The catalog offers professional learning opportunities that cover more than 20 different topics, with multiple workshops for each topic, along with a brief description, learning objectives, and the lengths of the available workshops. It also outlines how each offering aligns with the School as Hub framework, the Nebraska Department of Education Early Learning Guidelines<sup>11</sup>, the Nebraska Department of Education Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals<sup>12</sup>, and the Child Development Associate® (CDA) Credential™ Competency Standards<sup>13</sup>.

The offerings included in the catalog provide a targeted approach to professional learning for school districts and early childhood programs with accessible workshops that are linked to the birth through Grade 3 framework.



**Scan to view the catalog.**

[buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/educators/professional-development](https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/educators/professional-development)

## Reach and Impact



**52 workshops  
completed** in  
2024–25, with

**972 participants**  
from across all

**11 districts**



**20-plus topics  
currently available,**  
with additional  
workshops being  
developed



## Looking Ahead to 2025–26

Moving forward, the Institute will continue supporting district teams in implementing the Superintendents' Plan core initiatives with a specific focus on enhancing leadership and technical assistance support services to increase efficiency in program administration. Other goals include expanding the reach of strategic communications and strengthening implementation measures across all three core levels of support.

District teams will continue to sustain and expand successful birth through Grade 3 policies and programs with support from the Buffett Institute. In collaboration with the Institute and community partners, districts will focus on quality, continuity, and increasing access so all young children have the opportunity to learn, develop, and succeed. Key areas of focus for the next year will include:



} **Enhancing** program administration, increasing efficiency and impact while extending reach



} **Expanding** professional learning offerings and services



} **Enhancing** action planning services for districts to align goals and activities with evidence-based practices



} **Developing** new needs assessment tool for districts to evaluate their early childhood systems

## Appendix A. Summary of Services Available Through the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan in 2024–25

### Summary of Services Available Through the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan in 2024-25

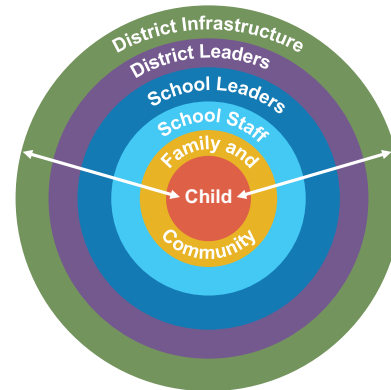
Consultation and Support Services by Level of Support	No. of Districts Participating in 2024-25	New or Enhanced Service in 2024-25
<b>Customized Assistance</b> —Services available to all 11 districts in the Learning Community		
<b>District-Level Action Planning</b>		
Annual action plan facilitation	9*	
Action plan review and discussion	9*	
Recommended activities to reach action plan goals	9*	
<b>District-Level Project Management</b>		
Co-creation of long-range plans: activities, milestones, timelines, responsibilities	9*	
Quarterly progress checks	6*	
Summative progress reflection and report	6*	
<b>Using Data for Continuous Improvement in District Early Childhood Efforts</b>		
Data collection system design and support for district early childhood programs	2	
Data collection and analysis connected to action plan goals	1	
<b>Professional Development, Including Consultation and Coaching</b>		
Facilitated presentations and workshops for leaders, teachers, and staff	7*	
Ongoing consultation for district leaders	9*	
Choice to join School as Hub professional learning opportunities if content is applicable to district goals	8	✓
<b>School as Hub</b> —Additional services available to the six districts with School as Hub schools		
<b>School-Level Project Management Tied to District-Level Plans</b>		
Monthly district planning meetings	6	
Monthly school-based team meetings in School as Hub schools, expanded in 2024-25 to include district leaders	6	
<b>Using Data for Continuous Improvement in Family Engagement Efforts</b>		
Data collection system facilitation for family engagement staff	6	
<b>Professional Development, Including Consultation and Coaching, in School as Hub Schools</b>		
Monthly Community of Practice meetings for principals	6	
Monthly Community of Practice meetings and planning meetings for family engagement staff	6	
Monthly Community of Practice meetings for selected teachers participating in the Teacher Leadership Network	6	
Ongoing consultation for principals and other school leaders	6	
Ongoing consultation for selected teachers participating in the Teacher Leadership Network	6	
Coaching cycles for PreK–Grade 3 teachers, paraprofessionals, and family and community engagement staff	6	
<b>Family and Community Engagement Staffing and Services</b>		
Family and community engagement staffing (home visitors, family facilitators, and/or community facilitators) adapted to district and school needs	6	
Family engagement events (“two generation” events for children and families)	6	
<b>Specialized Professional Learning</b> —Tailored workshops aligned with the School as Hub Birth through Grade 3 approach**		
Focused professional learning series for family engagement staff	8	✓
Professional learning catalog of customizable workshops to enhance early childhood efforts	4	✓



\*This number includes all six districts with School as Hub schools.  
 \*\*These opportunities are available to birth–Grade 3 educators in all settings, including home-, community-, and school-based settings.

## Appendix B. Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan 2024–25 School Year: Participation Numbers

### Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan 2024–25 School Year Participation Numbers



#### DISTRICT INFRASTRUCTURE

School districts within  
Douglas and Sarpy Counties

**11**

#### DISTRICT LEADERS

Superintendents

**11**

Superintendents' Plan  
workgroup members

**11**

Additional district leaders actively involved in  
Superintendents' Plan action plans

**37**

#### SCHOOL LEADERS

School as Hub principals  
participating in Community  
of Practice

**9**

Additional School as Hub assistant principals, coaches,  
instructional facilitators, etc., actively involved in the  
Superintendents' Plan

**11**

School as Hub full district principals/  
school leaders engaging in professional  
development

**30**

#### SCHOOL STAFF

Home visitors, family facilitators,  
and community facilitators  
engaging in 1:1 coaching

**13**

Educators  
engaging in 1:1  
coaching

**45**

Teacher Leadership  
Network workgroup  
members

**15**

School as Hub  
PreK-Grade 3  
classroom teachers

**138**

Educators who attended  
district or school  
professional development

**972**

#### FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

Community partners  
connecting families with  
resources or services

**82**

Families enrolled in  
home visitation or family  
facilitation

**176**

Family members in  
engagement and support  
opportunities

**6,780**

Cumulative number of providers  
participating in Community  
Facilitation

**17**

#### CHILD

Children enrolled in  
home visitation or  
family facilitation

**231**

Child participants  
in Drop In and  
Play events

**157**

Children in classrooms  
with educators  
participating in coaching

**906**

Child participants  
in socializations

**1,184**

Children enrolled in  
School as Hub PreK-  
Grade 3 classrooms

**2,874**

Child participants in  
family engagement and  
support opportunities

**12,186**

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Buffett  
Early Childhood  
Institute

*at the University of Nebraska*

2111 S. 67th St., Suite 350  
Omaha, NE 68106  
402.554.2924

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

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