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WELCOME!

On behalf of the Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children, Inc. (Nebraska AEYC) staff and Board of Directors, we would like to welcome you to the 2020-2021 Nebraska AEYC Annual Report.

From the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, early childhood education programs and educators endured a variety of stressors, challenges, and mountains to climb. Early in the pandemic, providers reported concerns around threats of the virus and increased requirements for safety precautions. As the pandemic wore on, providers responded positively to stimulus efforts at the state and federal levels to support their work and ensure they could remain open to serve Nebraska children and families. Now, we are seeing the effects the pandemic has had on child care providers’ emotional and physical health, as many are choosing to leave the profession due to overwhelming stress.

If nothing else, this past year has seen an increased recognition of the importance of early childhood education programs when it comes to child development, the workforce, the needs of families, and the economic wellbeing of communities across the country. We are thrilled to see so many individuals talking about child care, early learning, the value of the early childhood workforce, and the needs of working families. Throughout this past year, the projects and services we offered continued to focus on our mission of providing opportunities that promote excellence in early childhood for Nebraska’s educators, children, and families through education, advocacy, and leadership. We are proud of the Nebraska AEYC staff, and the numerous participants in our projects, for their ongoing commitment to excellence, focus on building quality, strengthening parent/child interactions, and supporting the early childhood workforce.

We are truly thankful to so many of you for your hard work and dedication to the field of early childhood education, now and into the future! We recognize that our mission–driven work could not be accomplished, or as successful, without the commitment of our many partners, members, and passionate advocates. Thank you for your continued support and we look forward to working with all of you for years to come!

Chantel Tonkinson, Board President
Tracy Gordon, Executive Director

Vision Statement
Nebraska AEYC envisions a state where all of Nebraska’s children, families, and educators have access to high quality opportunities that support positive, lasting outcomes.

Mission Statement
Nebraska AEYC provides opportunities that promote excellence in early childhood for Nebraska’s educators, children, and families, through education, advocacy, and leadership.

Join Us!
Please join us in membership and work toward a better tomorrow for all children. More information about Nebraska AEYC and how to become a member can be found at www.NebraskaAEYC.org.

Nebraska AEYC Staff
(in order from left to right)
Tracy Gordon, Executive Director
Jennifer Durow, Finance Manager
Jill Snyder, Project Coordinator
Sarah Lowe, Circle of Security Project Coordinator
Melanie Cordry, Senior Administrative Assistant
Julie Warford, T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® and Child Care WAGE$® NEBRASKA Counselor/Program Coordinator
Nebraska AEYC is an affiliate of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The NAEYC Affiliate Network is a vibrant community of nonprofit organizations dedicated to providing local member engagement opportunities, resources, conferences, professional development, and advocacy efforts for our shared members.

This past year, NAEYC released the fourth edition of the Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) Position Statement. To learn more about the updated DAP, visit [https://www.naeyc.org/resources/developmentally-appropriate-practice/](https://www.naeyc.org/resources/developmentally-appropriate-practice/).

It was also a very busy year for public policy and advocacy with millions of dollars dispatched to states that will benefit early childhood programs and the workforce. The NAEYC Public Policy Team was actively engaged in conversations with federal lawmakers to help them better understand the child care crisis, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on child care across the country, and so much more! You can learn more about their public policy and advocacy work by visiting their website, [https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/public-policy-advocacy](https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/public-policy-advocacy).

**Membership**

During the fiscal year of October 2020 through September 2021, Nebraska AYEC had an average of 325 members, with an average retention rate of 54%. Throughout the year, the Association welcomed 26 new members across four Chapters and At Large counties.

**Membership 2020–2021 FY**

**2020–2021**

**NEBRASKA AEYC CHAPTERS**

Omaha Chapter of Nebraska AEYC  
Cass, Douglas, Sarpy, Saunders, Washington

Lincoln Chapter of Nebraska AEYC  
Lancaster, Otoe, Saline, Seward

Kearney Chapter of Nebraska AEYC  
Adams, Buffalo, Custer, Dawson, Hall, Howard, Kearney, Phelps, Sherman

Northeast Chapter of Nebraska AEYC  
Antelope, Boone, Burt, Cedar, Cuming, Dakota, Dixon, Dodge, Holt, Knox, Madison, Nance, Pierce, Stanton, Thurston, Wayne

**2020–2021 funding for Nebraska AEYC programs supported by:**

- Community Action Partnership of Lancaster & Saunders Counties
- Nebraska Children & Families Foundation
- Nebraska Department of Education–Office of Early Childhood
- Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services
- Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative
- United Way of Lincoln/Lancaster County
- Nebraska Child Abuse Prevention Fund
- Community Health Endowment of Lincoln

**Nebraska AEYC Board of Directors**

- Quentin Brown
- Carrie Gottschalk
- Robin Kolumban
- Melissa LaRue
- Jennifer Miller
- Dawn Mollenkopf
- Adam Feser
- Rietta Glesmann
- Colleen Schmit
- Andreea Shnayder
- Chantel Tonkinson
- Betsy Tonniges
- Jenny Wallinger
T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® NEBRASKA
The quality of early care and education a child receives is directly linked to the education and compensation of early educators. In Nebraska, many early educators do not have higher education degrees and many earn less than $12 an hour. The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Program awards educational scholarships to early education professionals in an effort to address the key issues of under-education, poor compensation, and high turnover in the early education workforce. All T.E.A.C.H. scholarships link increased education with higher compensation and retention. With a 95% (for associate degree) and a 98% (for bachelor's degree) retention rate, Nebraska's T.E.A.C.H. recipients show dramatic dedication to remaining in their professions with turnover rates that are far less than the national turnover rates of 30–40%. This year alone, 11,717 of Nebraska's children benefitted from consistent early education and care provided by better prepared early childhood educators.

2020–2021 funding for T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® NEBRASKA
provided by:
Nebraska Department of Education
Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services
Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative

131* Scholarship Recipients
Completed 1,703 Credits

8 Community Colleges
Central Western NE
Metropolitan Little Priest Tribal
Southeast Nebraska Indian
Mid-Plains Northeast

5 Universities
University of Nebraska–Lincoln
University of Nebraska–Kearney
Chadron State College
Peru State College
Wayne State College

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® NEBRASKA
Advisory Committee
Lori Altmaier Cheryl Roche
Lisa Brestel Heather Schmidt
Tammy Classen Cathy Stockwell
Adam Feser Paula Thompson
M. Jane Franklin Shelley Wallace
Diane Lewis Nicole Vint
Brandy Price Beckie Cromer

Student/Program Demographics
◇ Average recipient is 34 years old
◇ 56% of recipients began their scholarship with a high school diploma (or GED)
◇ 48% of recipients have no other college graduates in their family
◇ Positions
  ◇ 9 Directors, 101 Teachers, 21 Family Child Care Providers
  ◇ 92 different sponsoring programs

*T.E.A.C.H. is empowering! This organization enables me to improve myself as an individual, a teacher, and as a member of society. I rely on the support of T.E.A.C.H. to continue my learning journey and greatly appreciate the opportunity to participate in this program.”

2020–2021 Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Associate Degree</th>
<th>Bachelor's Degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Recipients*</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. GPA</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. credits per contract</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed commitment</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. increase in salary</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*These numbers will be different since we had recipients on more than one model type within the same year.
The Mastery Level Competency Assessment Program Attestation is a way to honor long-standing, highly successful T.E.A.C.H. programs. This level provides an opportunity for states that have been determined, through a rigorous eligibility process, to be stable and highly successful state programs, to use a streamlined process to assess and report on their competence to the National Center prior to license renewal.

Nebraska was selected as the first T.E.A.C.H. state (outside of North Carolina) to participate in the Competency Assessment at this level and took place in Fall 2020. After reviewing T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® NEBRASKA Competency Assessment documentation, the T.E.A.C.H. National Center had this to say: “It is clear that substantial effort, including much thought and discussion, went into the development of the NE Mastery Level Competency submission and served your program well. While there is some additional reflection that could go into the Outreach Action Plan, it is clear that the NE program is functioning at a high level and will continue to push itself forward with quality improvements. Congratulations on the completion of the Mastery Level Competency Assessment. We believe this confirms the Center’s decision to go in this direction for longstanding T.E.A.C.H. programs.”

For more information about T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® NEBRASKA:
teach@NebraskaAEYC.org • 402-858-5143 (Lincoln) • www.NebraskaAEYC.org

Moving the Needle on Early Childhood Workforce Issues

In 2020-2021, Nebraska AEYC received a grant opportunity from the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center called, “Moving the Needle on Early Childhood Workforce Issues”. A statewide stakeholder team was pulled together to identify objectives and outcomes with a specific focus around equity in T.E.A.C.H. and WAGE$ recruitment and retention. While Nebraska’s T.E.A.C.H. demographics include 33% women of color and/or Latinx, the Moving the Needle stakeholder team sought to address ways in which we could impact early childhood workforce issues in the following areas:

1. Increase demand for an educated workforce by developing and distributing resources that encourage higher compensation of early childhood educators,
2. Mitigate systemic barriers to equity and access in higher education by expanding T.E.A.C.H. in underrepresented communities to promote the education of a workforce that is demographically consistent with our state,
3. Increase compensation of the early childhood workforce through the expansion of the WAGE$ project.

Nebraska was selected for another year of “Moving the Needle on Early Childhood Workforce Compensation” for the 2021-2022 year.

Mastery Level Competency Assessment

The Mastery Level Competency Assessment Program Attestation is a way to honor long-standing, highly successful T.E.A.C.H. programs. This level provides an opportunity for states that have been determined, through a rigorous eligibility process, to be stable and highly successful state programs, to use a streamlined process to assess and report on their competence to the National Center prior to license renewal.

Nebraska was selected as the first T.E.A.C.H. state (outside of North Carolina) to participate in the Competency Assessment at this level and took place in Fall 2020. After reviewing T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® NEBRASKA Competency Assessment documentation, the T.E.A.C.H. National Center had this to say: “It is clear that substantial effort, including much thought and discussion, went into the development of the NE Mastery Level Competency submission and served your program well. While there is some additional reflection that could go into the Outreach Action Plan, it is clear that the NE program is functioning at a high level and will continue to push itself forward with quality improvements. Congratulations on the completion of the Mastery Level Competency Assessment. We believe this confirms the Center’s decision to go in this direction for longstanding T.E.A.C.H. programs.”

For more information about T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® NEBRASKA:
teach@NebraskaAEYC.org • 402-858-5143 (Lincoln) • www.NebraskaAEYC.org

All credits converted to semester credit hours. Data taken from 2020-2021 Annual Report to the T.E.A.C.H. National Center. T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® NEBRASKA is a licensed program of Child Care Services Association.
Child Care WAGE$® NEBRASKA

Child Care WAGE$® NEBRASKA is a program that provides education-based salary supplements (sometimes called stipends) to low-paid early care and education providers working with children ages birth to five in licensed family child care settings in Nebraska. WAGE$ impacts early childhood education programs and educators by recognizing and rewarding dedicated professionals, stabilizing the early childhood workforce, and encouraging continued education.

- In 2020-2021, 29 child care professionals earned salary supplements.
- 218 Nebraska children benefited from consistent care provided by a WAGE$ participant.

Education
- 72% of participants had an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education or higher OR submitted education documentation to show progress in college.

Compensation
- 93% of WAGE$ participants earned less than $12 per hour.
- Recipients earned an average six-month supplement of $1,048.

Retention
- 97% of WAGE$ participants stayed in their early education programs.

Demographics
- 7% of participants were people of color.
- 100% of participants were women.

Sandy Kosierowski

Sandy has been caring for children for over 26 years. She began providing child care in her home so she could also be the primary care provider for her own children.

WAGE$ makes Sandy feel valued and that she is worth being well paid. It also encourages her to further her education and help improve herself and program. With the WAGE$ stipends, she has been able to purchase new learning tools and improve the child care environment. Sandy believes it is especially important to take care of child care providers, as a well-cared for provider is better able to take care of children.

"I hope it will become the norm for child care teachers to earn living wages and have access to benefits like paid time off and college tuition aid. WAGE$ is making great strides in turning this into reality. The program publicizes the fact that early childhood education is important, not just to children and their parents, but to the community."

~Sandy Kosierowski

For more information about Child Care WAGE$® NEBRASKA:
wages@NebraskaAEYC.org  402-858-5143 (Lincoln)  www.NebraskaAEYC.org

Child Care WAGE$® NEBRASKA is a licensed program of Child Care Services Association.
Circle of Security™-Parenting (COSP) is an 8-week parenting program based on years of research about how to build strong attachment relationships between parent and child. It is designed to help parents learn how to respond to their child's needs in a way that enhances the attachment between parent and child. It helps parents give their children a feeling of security and confidence so they can explore, learn, grow, and build relationships; all skills for life-long success.

COSP, which was initiated statewide in 2011, has continued to expand its reach across communities throughout Nebraska. There are 260 trained parenting facilitators across 46 counties. Parents who complete the classes say they have happier, more positive relationships with their children and their children are more understanding of other's emotions and have stronger self-esteem.

“I would tell all parents who would have the opportunity to experience this training to take this, embrace this, practice it, live by it, and not only your children will benefit, but you will come away feeling empowered as a parent.”  ~A Nebraska Parent

In 2020-2021 the initiative included:
* 12 providers
* 8 child care center directors
* 386 children directly served by participants
* 4 trainings
* 4 collaboration meetings among participants
* Supports for healthy social-emotional development through COSP classes, PIWI classes, social-emotional backpack project, and Lincoln Children's Museum school readiness project

Circle of Security™-Parenting Classroom

In 2020, Circle of Security International released a new endorsement to COSP called the Classroom Model. This model modifies COSP specifically for child care providers, teachers, and other early learning professionals. This new program is approved for 12 in-service hours for early childhood professionals who complete the entire learning series.

Currently, Nebraska AEYC has added COSP Classroom as one of their newest programs, with funding and support from the Nebraska Preschool Development Grant (PDG). These PDG funds were used to train 35 new COSP Classroom facilitators and support classes across the state.

“When teachers participated in COSP [Classroom], it served as a great opportunity for the teaching team to bond and to come together in a space of vulnerability that allowed them to learn more about themselves and about each other. They were able to reflect on how their upbringing impacts how they operate in the classroom with children, families, and with each other.”  ~A COSP Facilitator

Rooted in Relationships

Rooted in Relationships is an initiative that partners with communities to implement evidence-based practices that enhance the social-emotional development of children, birth through age 8. One part of this initiative supports communities as they implement the Pyramid Model, a framework of evidence-based practices that promote the social, emotional, and behavioral competence of young children, in selected family child care homes and child care centers. In addition, communities develop and implement a long-range plan that influences the early childhood systems of care in the community, and supports the healthy social-emotional development of children. Nebraska AEYC has coordinated the Rooted in Relationships initiative in Lincoln/Lancaster County since 2015.

In 2020-2021 the initiative included:

12 providers
8 child care center directors
386 children directly served by participants
4 trainings
4 collaboration meetings among participants
Supports for healthy social-emotional development through COSP classes, PIWI classes, social-emotional backpack project, and Lincoln Children’s Museum school readiness project

Parent–Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)

Thanks to a grant from the Nebraska Child Abuse Prevention Fund Board, Nebraska AEYC supported Parent–Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) services for families/providers in Lincoln. Grant funds supported the training of one Lincoln-based licensed mental health therapist in the PCIT model and the purchase of materials which allowed her to implement PCIT practices with thirteen families. Additionally, the grant provided funds to one partnering agency who used these funds to purchase materials and complete room modifications that allowed for full implementation of PCIT throughout their agency.
Infant/Toddler Quality Initiative (ITQI)

Nebraska AEYC works jointly with the Community Action Partnership of Lancaster and Saunders Counties, and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, to implement the Infant/Toddler Quality Initiative (ITQI). This project offers an opportunity for child care providers, in both center and family environments serving infants and toddlers, to increase the quality of care offered to Nebraska’s youngest learners. In 2020-2021, the ITQI worked with ten center-based teachers and their directors, spread across five different child care centers located throughout Lancaster County. The ITQI project provides a variety of activities and services that allow for new understanding and enhanced skills, which ultimately result in higher quality services for children and families.

- Ten early childhood educators participated in the ITQI in 2020-2021.
- All ten participants received a pre—Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) observation with feedback.
- Goals were set based on the results of the ITERS and the individual needs of each participant.
- The goals became the foundation of content for each monthly coaching session.
- Individualized communication, resources, supplemental materials, and support were offered to each participant.
- Classroom and professional resources were selected and purchased for each participant.
- Nine of the ten participants received a post-ITERS observation with feedback, analysis, and assessment of growth, success, and continued areas of need.
- Seven of the nine post-ITERS observations saw a significant increase in scores.

Nebraska AEYC Leadership Academy

The purpose of the Leadership Academy is to increase the knowledge, skills, and abilities of early childhood education program administrators, including child care center directors and family child care home providers, with the expectation that they become more confident and competent leaders in their program and early childhood community.

The Leadership Academy remained busy in 2020-2021 with eleven participants across the state including, five family child care providers in the Lexington/Broken Bow area, and four center directors in Papillion and three in Fremont. Monthly meetings with each cohort allowed for networking, relationship building, and skill learning in a variety of different areas including: authentic leadership, core values, emotional intelligence, active listening, strength based leadership, and leadership in early childhood. With funding from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, participants were provided a variety of resources which offered the opportunity to examine the topics more thoroughly. Additionally, an integral part of the Leadership Academy is developing relationships with other early childhood professionals in the community, which results in continued support for one another.

Participants were surveyed at the end of the project and all respondents strongly agreed that they will be able to use what they learned during the Leadership Academy in their job and/or life and this was a good way to learn about leadership skills and development. All survey respondents also strongly agreed that they have increased their knowledge of leadership and improved their personal leadership skills and abilities.

“*I feel like the knowledge and confidence I gained from this program, and the connections I made, have helped me speak up more. I feel like I have more ideas to share and implement to improve the efficiency and professionalism of my center.*”--2020 Graduate Survey Respondent

For more information about our programs and services, visit our website at:

www.NebraskaAEYC.org
United Way Quality Enhancement Project (QEP)

The goal of the Quality Enhancement Project (QEP) is to improve quality in early childhood settings through assessment, coaching, supplies, and training, by utilizing a combination of activities and resources to produce a measurable increase in the quality of care being provided to children. Specifically, a pre- and post- Environment Rating Scale (ERS), classroom observations, regular coaching, purchasing classroom materials, and professional development activities are crucial components of the partnership’s success.

In this project, Nebraska AEYC worked collectively with the United Way of Lincoln/Lancaster County to assess and improve the quality of two preschool classrooms in one child care center in Lincoln. Utilizing a partnership coaching model, the classroom teachers and the center directors worked closely with a coach to develop a quality improvement plan, purchase additional classroom supplies, and identify specific areas in which the teachers needed training and support. Despite challenges throughout the year, the post-ERS showed an improvement in many identified areas, including language and literacy, and gross motor play, the teachers developed a stronger relationship, and the children experience limited transitions and disruptions.

Recognition

Dr. Barb Jackson is the recipient of the 2021 Nebraska AEYC Distinguished Service to Children Award. Dr. Jackson is retiring her career as an advocate for children after more than 40 years in the field of early intervention. Colleen Schmit, Nebraska AEYC board member, nominated Dr. Jackson and shared the following words, “Dr. Barb is a passionate advocate for children and families and has worked in the field of early intervention for many years. Every aspect of Barb’s work has a focus on relationship building and intentional improvement for our community and Nebraska as a whole. She is both a powerhouse and delight!”

This award was developed to recognize a member who has contributed outstanding service to the organization, its program of work, its development, and its membership; or a Nebraskan who has done exemplary work to promote the rights, services, status, and programs for/of children. Dr. Jackson is the 38th recipient of this award, which began in 1983.

Donations

Thank you to following individuals that donated to the organization during the 2020-2021 fiscal year through Give Nebraska and Give to Lincoln Day 2021:

- Quentin Brown
- Melanie Cordry
- Adam Feser
- Kathleen Gallagher
- Tracy Gordon
- James R. Johnson
- Jean Jordan
- Marjorie Kostelnik
- Brandee Lengel
- Jill Snyder
- Janeen Ward
- Julie Warford

Nebraska AEYC is a proud member of Give Nebraska.