



# Together, Better Initiative

## A Full-Service Community Schools pilot

In response to the pandemic and the influx of funds to support schools, children, and families, the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), in partnership with Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFF), formed the **Together, Better Initiative**, which is a series of strategic investments in authentic, evidence-based and reimagined learning supports and family and community engagement. NDE and NCFF are collaborating to address these critical needs for students, families, and communities with five strategies, and this report provides an update on one of them: the Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) Pilot Project. This effort was launched in fall 2021 in four communities: Fremont, Grand Island, Schuyler, and South Sioux City.

All four Full-Service Community School (FSCS) sites began the implementation of their work in September 2021. NDE and NCFF provided strategic support to build a learning cohort across the four locations, define a shared understanding of Community Schools, specifically identify the measurable results they'll be working toward, understand the current conditions for each of the sites/communities, and develop key strategies to accelerate the work. Each of the four sites has created plans and started the implementation of strategies that will accelerate:

- Student Learning and Development
- Family and Community Engagement
- Partnership Development

## Highlights from FSCS sites

### Fremont

#### Fremont Middle School

One of the key issues recognized by this site team is related to the barrier of reliable transportation so families can be connected to the school, so this site will be working to address transportation issues for family and community engagement events to ensure all families can attend.

### South Sioux City

#### Dakota Elementary School

This site has continued development of cross sector site team to address the needs that were identified by families. Similar to the needs identified at the site in Schuyler, one need that was shared by families related to family literacy supports. The Site Coordinator is also cultivating a partnership with the Family Literacy Program to provide programming for families.

### Grand Island

#### O'Connor Learning Center

One of the key components of this site's work was to address the need for childcare for early learning students when they were not in the program. As a result, this site established a partnership with local YWCA to provide childcare on site for time youth are not in school. Additionally, this collaboration team is exploring the idea of "success planning" for each early learner to ensure each student has a team of adults to make sure needs are being met, and provide for a successful transition to elementary school.

### Schuyler

#### Schuyler Elementary School

This site has been engaged in ongoing development of cross sector site team to address the needs that were identified by families. One of those needs related to adult and family literacy, and as such the Site Coordinator is developing partnership with the Family Literacy Program to provide programming.

## Ongoing work/ Next steps

The initial success parameters for each of the sites are being reinforced through the **Together, Better Initiative** partnership between NDE and NCFF. The collective team members meet regularly for planning and update sessions, and with each of the sites to provide implementation support. This team will continue to work with the sites to design and implement the formal evaluation, and to help sites quickly adapt to emerging needs in their communities and the continually changing situations occurring as the pandemic persists.



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