
Common Ground

More Now than Ever

Collaboration and shared leadership in systems serving Nebraska's youngest children

SUMMARY

Nebraska Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC) Biennial Report to the Governor

2018-2021

Overview

Early Childhood in Nebraska experienced numerous challenges in the past few years. Children with expanding needs, families navigating employment, educational pursuits, family dynamics, and in some areas, a disappearing of community resources and supports. We know resources to meet the needs are more accessible in some communities than others. The diverse nature of Nebraska's little ones and their families offer opportunities to understand, grow, develop or expand existing programs and bring communities together. Collaboration and coordination are key in addressing the needs in an efficient and effective manner.

Moreover, the deadly Coronavirus pandemic invaded our communities across the state. The various federal relief funds created a stop gap opportunity to support programs and services, and help private providers of child care to remain in business. It wasn't easy. It was scary. It was overwhelming at times. It required intense collaboration and communication from a virtual platform. It was necessary to stabilize an already fragile early care and education system. Like many institutions, programs, livelihoods, the early childhood world survived. Not without injury and consequences, however. The needs remain and are perhaps more obvious than ever. Collaboration and shared leadership is crucial. Yes, great efforts and outcomes have been and continue to be realized. What we definitely know is, our **common ground is needed more now than ever.**

The Nebraska Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council submits its Biennial Report to the Governor on the status of early childhood in our state. The Council addresses the 2018-20

Biennium plus year 2021 to include activities, data, and updated information related to the pandemic. The Recommendations have not changed in the key areas, summarized below, as the Council believes they continue to be relevant.

The full report can be found online at: education.ne.gov/ecicc/reports

I. Quality

Young children who receive high quality programs and services have better developmental, health, and learning outcomes. Through ongoing expansion of early childhood efforts, more programs are able to demonstrate an increase in quality.

Recommendation



Train professionals in all early childhood programs in the knowledge and support of young children's growth and development using the seven domains of Nebraska's revised *Early Learning Guidelines*.

II: Professional Development

The availability of a well-trained and educated early childhood professional directly correlates to quality of programs and services. Increased access to college coursework and high-quality continuing education and training expands the knowledge and expertise of providers, teachers, and caregivers.

Recommendation



Expand efforts of the Coach Collaborative Team to engage more programs and providers in the early childhood coach model.

III. Early Learning Standards

Well-defined standards guide early childhood professionals in their practice. Measuring progress of children's outcomes is more valid and reliable when assessed within a framework of complementary and aligned standards.

Recommendation



Support the use of the revised *Early Learning Guidelines* more widely in all early childhood programs and services.

IV: Early Childhood Data

Credible data resources are an integral part of a well-coordinated, viable early childhood infrastructure.

Recommendation



Support the integration of data from multiple early childhood data systems to create meaningful tools to better inform early childhood systems, services and policies in Nebraska.

V: Coordination and Collaboration

Authentic collaboration in early care and education helps build systems at the state, regional, and local levels. Working together generally results in family-centered, higher quality and sustainable programs.

Recommendation



Enhance, align and sustain strategies for a mixed-delivery system in early care and education across Nebraska.



About the Nebraska Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council

The ECICC offers a framework for aligning early childhood efforts and information related to public policy, state agency initiatives, funding, data resources and barriers in service systems and other functions.

The Council serves as a statewide networking platform for early childhood stakeholders from public and private sector interests.

Its membership represents the Nebraska Legislature, state agencies, social service organizations, direct service providers, higher education, business interests and parents, among other stakeholders.

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