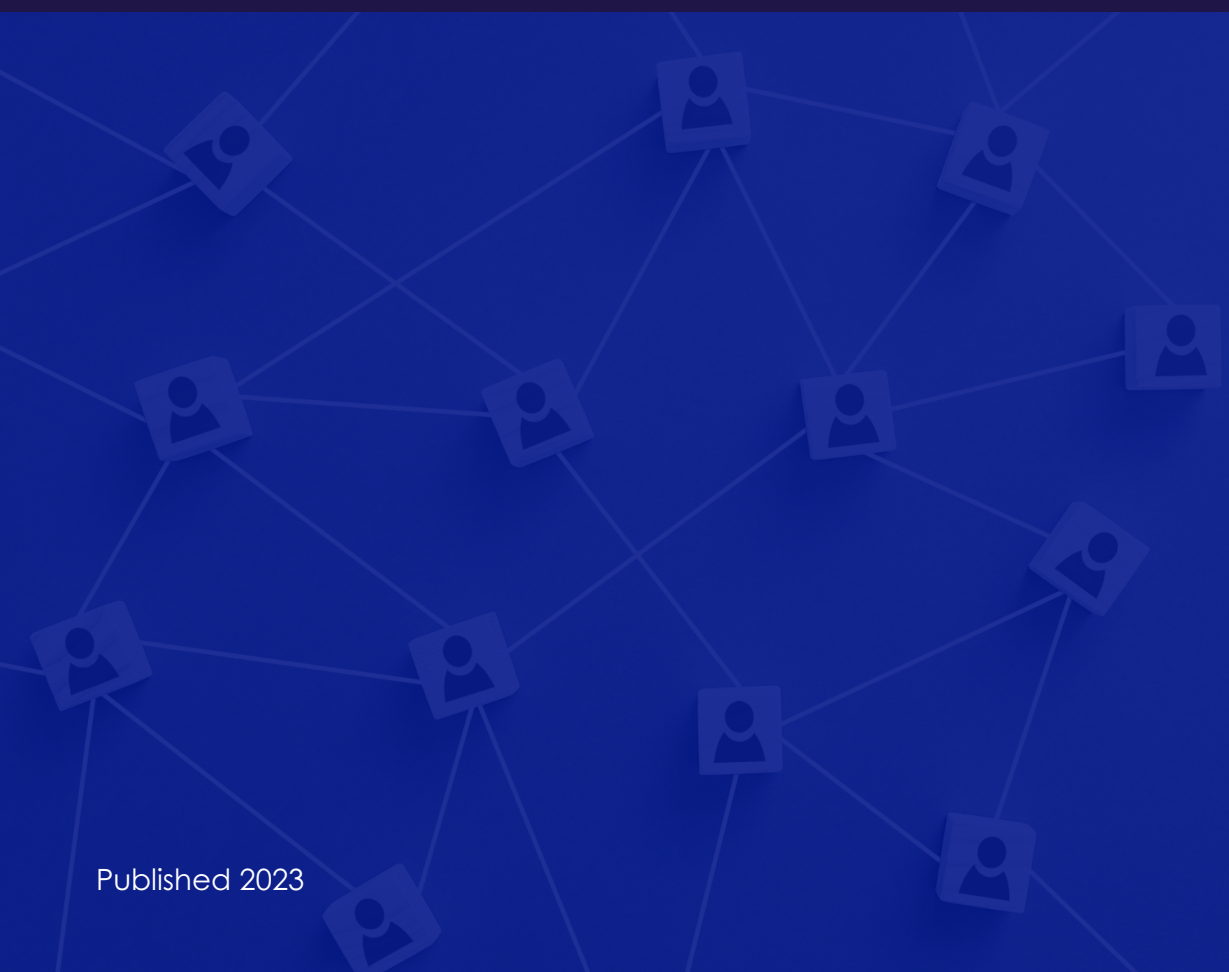
Nebraska School, Family, and Community Engagement

Framework



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Introduction

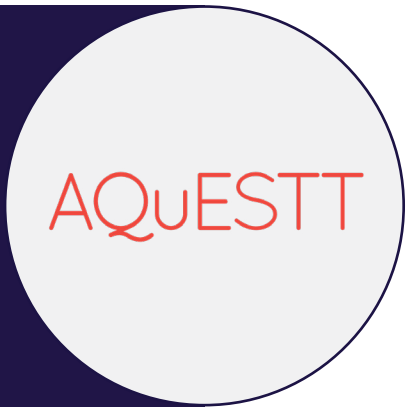
Schools and childcare providers implement best practices in student, family, and community engagement to enhance experiences and opportunities that are culturally inclusive and relevant for each student. Student success and engagement relies on positive partnerships and relationships to improve the outcomes for each child, family, school, district, and community.

In order to better support learners throughout the state, The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) in collaboration with educators, parents, and community partners created the *Nebraska School, Family, and Community Engagement Framework*. This Framework is a tool to help Nebraska educators as they reach out to families and community partners.

Content was aligned to the Positive Partnerships, Relationships, and Success AQuESTT tenet.

> "Schools and districts implement best practices in student, family, and community engagement to enhance experiences and opportunities that are culturally inclusive and relevant for each student. Student success and engagement relies on positive partnerships and relationships to fundamentally improve the outcomes for each student, school, district, and community."

To learn more about AQuESTT, visit www.aquestt.com.



This Framework is built on the understanding that school, family, and community engagement:

- **recognizes the role families and the community play** in advocating for educational equity, opportunity, and quality;
- **is a shared responsibility** of families, schools, and communities where knowledge is exchanged;
- **focuses on culturally respectful partnerships** that support student learning, at home, at school, and in the community;
- **builds, sustains, and grows relationships** that empower all students, families, and communities;
- **is continuous across a child's life** spanning from birth to young adulthood;
- **occurs in multiple settings** where children and youth learn before, during, and after the regular school day as well as summer.

The Framework includes information on six interrelated focus areas:

1. **Active Family Engagement** *(pg. 3)*
2. **Safe and Welcoming Schools** *(pg. 7)*
3. **Student Attendance** *(pg. 11)*
4. **Community Partnerships and Support Services** *(pg. 16)*
5. **Business and Industry Partnerships** *(pg. 20)*
6. **Before-School, Afterschool, and Summer Programs** *(pg. 24)*

Information provided includes a definition, best practices, research, and additional resources.

This framework is for schools and teams of educators to use in their continuous improvement efforts. Educators can use the resources and suggestions included in their engagement efforts on school improvement teams, MTSS teams, school safety committees, etc.

The creation of the *Nebraska School, Family, and Community Engagement Framework* was a collaborative effort that reflects input from individuals from across the state including educators, parents, and community partners. For a list of individuals who contributed to this project see Appendix A.

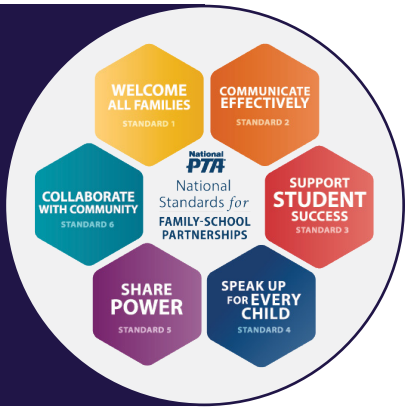
FOCUS AREA #1:
ACTIVE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Family engagement supports the ongoing learning, development, and well-being of children, youth, families, schools, and communities. Schools and childcare providers partner with families to help meet the diverse needs of learners, giving input and influencing systems, policies, practices, and evaluation to support continuous improvement and ensure all children are prepared for learning and living.

It is a shared responsibility in which schools, childcare providers, and other community agencies and organizations work closely with families to meet the needs of children and improve their learning environments. Building effective relationships takes time and involves building trust through multiple positive interactions. All other focus areas in the framework are based on and support the concepts described in this section. They are all interconnected and often function more effectively when used together.

The National PTA Standards for Family-School Partnerships are a vital guide for schools engaging in this work. The 6 standards are:

- Welcome All Families
- Communicate Effectively
- Support Student Success
- Speak Up for Every Child
- Share Power
- Collaborate with Community



When building positive relationships with families, it is important to take into consideration each family's diverse needs. The State Support Network suggests 11 ways that this can be accomplished including: planning strategically over time, ensuring that communications are accessible to all families, welcoming families in consistently appropriate and culturally competent ways, and engaging families with ongoing and recurring efforts.

Remember that not all families will engage in the same way, but that it is important to honor any and all ways that families engage.

Engagement Practices & Exemplars

There are many opportunities for family engagement and all are important. It is essential to understand that each family's situation, capacity, and schedule is different. Teams should make sure to look at each approach or strategy and think through the intention behind it.

When considering these examples, remember that the most authentic family engagement is done by asking what and how the families themselves would like to engage and collaborating alongside them to make it happen.

Practice: Start by **evaluating and honoring** where each district, school, childcare provider, or team is with family engagement efforts. The Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) is based on quality, evidence-based education practices for student success. The tool is aligned to AQuESTT and articulates the expected education practices under each of the domains. Pages 16-22 of the current CNA model evaluate family engagement and student attendance, both of which are focus areas of this Framework.

> **Exemplar:** Completing the Comprehensive Needs Assessment is a requirement for Migrant Education Programs through Title 1, Part C in order to help state and local programs make policy and service decisions that will most benefit families.

Practice: Invite and encourage family members to attend school activities. This type of family engagement encourages family members to participate in activities as recipients. Family members may receive information from the school or childcare provider, but minimal input is received from family members. Examples include:

- Open House Nights
- Family Nights (Academic and/or Enrichment)
- Attending school or childcare provider activities (play, concert, sports events)

> **Exemplar:** The Carnegie Corporation of New York's 2018 challenge paper discusses the impact that sharing student data with families can have (pages 19-20 on the report). Notably, they emphasize the necessity of making the data available and understandable to families.

Practice: Gather input and ideas through meaningful conversations with family members. In addition to receiving information from a school/teacher, the perspective of the family members should be actively sought and considered. With this practice, families aren't just recipients, but involved members of the learning community. All families care about their children, but many times don't know how to effectively engage with the school. When a school builds trust and authentically creates space for input, families are more willing to open up. Examples include:

- Parent Teacher Committees / School Neighborhood Advisory Committees
- Connection Circles
- 1:1 Learning Conversations / Home Visits

> **Exemplar:** Home visits are an effective way to break down barriers. Parent Teacher Home Visits had 3 independent studies examine the effectiveness of home visits. Significantly, one of the findings was that all students were less likely to be chronically absent at a school where at least 10% of the population received a home visit. It was also found that students at those same schools were 1.34 times more likely to score proficient on standardized ELA tests.

Practice: Invite families to collaborate and advocate by including them in school, childcare provider, and community systems. Family engagement can become more of a systemic practice that focuses on engaging, involving, lifting up the voice of families, and sharing power. Family members may become advocates for others and family voices are deliberately included throughout the school/and community systems. Examples include:

- Community Cafes
- Asset-Based Community Development
- Parent Leadership Opportunities

Exemplar: In Nebraska there are 2 major examples of family collaboration and advocating:

1. Community Cafes have taken place in Auburn, Lincoln, & Omaha. A statewide, virtual Nebraska CAFE is also hosted quarterly with input and leadership from Nebraska parents.

2. The Nebraska Statewide Family Engagement Center (SFEC) is using the National Center for Families Learning's (NCFL) four-component Family Literacy model in 14 different districts across the state including both rural and urban, and public and private schools. The model consists of adult education, children's education, Parent Time, and Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time®. Parenting adults attend programming in schools at the same time as their children, which not only helps to address a significant barrier for parents to attend adult education—child care—but also helps to bolster children's attendance in school and sets the example that education is important and a lifelong endeavor.

Related Research

The Dual Capacity-Building Framework can be used as a guide to help learning environments establish goals and conditions essential to effectively engaging families and communities in their area. It references further information and resources that can help schools and childcare providers.

The Community Schools Playbook describes family engagement as essential to accomplish the following outcomes in learning environments:

- Fostering relationships of trust and respect
- Building capacity of all stakeholders & the community
- Creating empowered decision-making processes
- Leveraging local resources and expertise
- Addressing educational inequities

Additionally, the Community Schools Playbook discusses how meaningful partnerships can improve the school climate and student outcomes in almost every area.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children outlines 6 Principles of Effective Family Engagement that every school should consider and provides examples of these principles.

Joyce Epstein defined 6 Types of Involvement that schools, families, and communities can participate in at different levels. The types of involvement go from least involved at 1 to most involved at 6:

1. Parenting
2. Communicating
3. Volunteering
4. Learning at Home
5. Decision Making
6. Collaborating with the Community

Epstein's framework is helpful because it affirms all types of involvement while encouraging and providing guidance on how to incorporate more involvement types.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- The Nebraska Department of Education has purchased a statewide license to TransACT Parent Notices. TransAct helps schools "amplify parent engagement in your district with an unlimited, district wide subscription to translated parent notifications that meet federal parent and family engagement requirements."
- This training discusses how meaningful family engagement can advance equity efforts. It was developed and implemented by from the Oakland Unified School District in California.
- The National Association For Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE) has many resources surrounding engagement. Specifically this page discusses high-impact family engagement and what that means.
- The Global Family Research Project (formerly The Harvard Family Research Project) - produces a variety of articles and resources that are research based and focus on school, family, and community engagement.
- The National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) works to eradicate poverty through education solutions for families. Partnering with educators, literacy advocates, and policymakers, NCFL develops and provides programming, professional development, and resources for families.
- The Child-Parent Centers (CPC) program is a federally-funded early childhood preschool model that emphasizes aligned education and services in high needs communities, for children from pre-kindergarten through the primary grades.

FOCUS AREA #2:
SAFE AND WELCOMING SCHOOLS

Safe and welcoming schools and childcare centers include strong elements of physical safety, emotional safety, and a welcoming climate. A safe and welcoming learning environment is rooted in a foundation of strong relationships between children and adults within the community. Having open and transparent communication will build trust among students, parents, and community members.

Families, learners, and staff need to feel seen and safe at school and in the community, and feel that their unique needs and experiences are recognized and validated. Having a welcoming school environment makes children and parents more prone to report concerning behaviors when they arise.

- All school and childcare personnel are important to creating and maintaining a positive school culture.
- Schools can use data to identify areas to focus efforts to improve culture and climate (e.g. disproportionality in suspension data).
- Schools and childcare providers should use public transparency in their efforts to make their learning environment safe and welcoming. Community partners should be engaged in creating a site-specific policy for safe and welcoming environments.
- Locations should consistently implement proactive bullying prevention policies and procedures to support a safe environment.
- Learners must perceive their environment as just, fair, and safe. Research indicates that if children don't feel safe they won't learn. Families feel the same and can be reluctant to send their students to school.

According to the National School Climate Center (NSCC), "school climate refers to the quality and character of school life. School climate is based on patterns of learner, parent, and school personnel experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures."

School climate is composed of multiple systems (i.e., individual relationships, classroom climate, family, community climate, safety protocols, and partnerships with state and local agencies) each contributing to the overall school environment. To create a welcoming climate, it is critical to include school-hosted events outside of the school day such as, before-school and afterschool programs, extracurricular activities, conferences, etc.

- National flags or welcome signs in a variety of languages that represent the culture or home country of students who attend that school help recognize and celebrate the uniqueness of their local community.
- Make sure all learners have the tools to appropriately express themselves and build positive and supportive relationships through Social Emotional Learning (SEL).

Engagement Practices & Exemplars

Creating safe and welcoming learning environments is the responsibility of everyone involved. There are many practices and exemplars that positively support a safe and welcoming school or childcare provider.

Practice: Ensure physical and mental safety from potential threats, hazards, or incidents by developing an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). Having these in place and shared with stakeholders help students and families feel more confidence in their school knowing that they are safe.

> **Exemplar:** Follow government requirements, such as the Nebraska Annual Safety Requirements for Schools, and Accreditation, Rule 10 while developing an EOP. Also, Nebraska Statute 79-2, 144 details the responsibilities of the State School Safety Director. Threat Assessment Teams, although not required, have been shown to be one of the first lines of defense for a behavior threat or concerning behavior.

Practice: Foster emotional safety by focusing on connectedness and relationship building. Students who feel connected to school are more likely to attend school regularly, stay in school longer, and have higher grades and test scores. They are less likely to engage in risky behaviors, become involved in violence, or suffer emotional problems.

> **Exemplar:** Some factors that can help strengthen school connectedness for students are: adult support, belonging to a positive peer group, commitment to education, and a positive school environment.

> **Exemplar:** National flags or welcome signs in a variety of languages that represent the culture or home country of students who attend that school help recognize and celebrate the uniqueness of their local community. A cultural audit walk can help identify areas to improve.

Practice: Invite families and community partners to provide input when reflecting on school practices and developing an action plan utilizing the Nebraska Department of Education's (NDE) Equity Scorecard and Dashboard. This could be achieved by using NDE's Revised Perceptual Surveys, which elicit input from staff, students, families, and community members.

> **Exemplar:** A review committee could include: students, family members, teachers, support staff, administrators, and non-profit school partners.

Practice: Provide continuous professional development opportunities on topics that relate to safe and welcoming schools.

> **Exemplar:** Topics could include: Bullying Prevention, Social Emotional Learning, Trauma Informed Care, Mental Health, & Culturally Responsive Teaching.

Practice: Connect families with community partners in order to support the emotional wellbeing of the family and child.

> **Exemplar:** Family Support Advocates identify systems of community supports and connect individual families with those systems. Supports could include: counseling resources, housing and employment connections, career and technical education and training, etc.

Related Research

When families send their children to school they expect the school to keep their children safe from harm, both physical and emotional. SchoolSafety.gov provides tools and resources to help schools create safer school environments. This short document with 1-pagers on 8 different categories is a good place to start. Topics include bullying, emergency planning, cybersecurity, and more.

The School Culture & Climate Brief from the University of Nebraska Lincoln details how ensuring physical safety at schools improves both the emotional safety of learners as well as academic achievement. They state that, "safety goes beyond physical security; safety is important because it creates a sense of security in school that fosters student learning and support." Additionally, the National School Climate Center (NSCC) provides research that shows how improving school climate reduces instances of bullying.

All efforts to improve safety or create a welcoming environment will be more effective when attempted in partnership with families and community members. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) indicates that one of the key Indicators of Sitewide SEL is that "families and staff have regular and meaningful opportunities to build relationships and collaborate to support youth social, emotional, and academic development." Effectively implemented social emotional learning leads to increased safety and improved academic achievement for all learners. CASEL also suggests that schools need to work with community partners to align efforts with the community-at-large.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learning Environment Climate Checklist and Briefs

- CDC Safe & Supportive Environments - this discusses protective factors that can help create safe and supportive schools, reduce negative outcomes for learners and strategies to increase protective factors.
- National School Climate Center - NSCC's Practice Briefs summarize effective practices that support implementation and sustainability efforts.
- School Culture and Climate Brief - UNL - This 2016 strategy brief focuses on the difference between school climate and school culture and discusses ways to improve them.
- Professional Development Service for Teachers web site provides resources for educators about creating a positive school culture.

Tips & Guidance

- Model School Code on Education and Dignity - presents a set of recommended policies to schools, districts and legislators to protect the human rights to education, dignity, participation and freedom from discrimination.
- Indicators of Sitewide SEL - CASEL - Sitewide SEL is a systemic approach to integrating academic, social, and emotional learning across all learning.
- Professional Development Services for Teachers - a site that offers professional learning opportunities to teachers and school leaders in a range of pedagogical, curricular and educational areas.
  - » Key Elements of a Positive School Culture and Climate (Anti-Bullying Procedures) document
  - » Practical tips for building a Positive School Culture and Climate document

Evidenced-Based Programs and Practices

- Review of programs conducted by NDE School Safety - a document reviewing a variety of school safety programs.
- Blueprints Clearinghouse - provides a comprehensive registry of interventions that prevent or reduce the likelihood of antisocial behavior and promote a healthy course of youth development.
- Resource Center - SAMHSA - information and tools to incorporate evidence-based practices
- WWC - Find What Works (ed.gov) - A curated site of researched educational resources and articles
- Social Think - Social Interventions - social emotional learning resources and research

FOCUS AREA #3: STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Attendance promotes success and positive outcomes for all learners. To improve attendance, a holistic approach utilizing school, family, and community resources should be taken to identify and address the reasons students are absent from school. For example, a student who is working through mental health concerns may be referred to the Multi-Tiered System of Support, Student Assistance team, or community resource for more intensive, targeted intervention.

Families and students may face challenging situations which impact consistent attendance. Risk factors can include poverty, mental health, lack of connection to students and staff, academic struggles, family crisis, etc. It is important to work closely with the family to address the student's unique needs to improve attendance.

Local attendance data provides important information to proactively identify demographic groups (examples include ethnicity, free/reduced lunch, special education, English Language Learners, etc.) that are most impacted and work with members of those groups and the community to address attendance in a holistic manner.

- Utilize a variety of preferred communications channels (phone, email, text, social media).
- Provide attendance expectations and resources in the native language of each family.
- Use interpreters for meetings or translated written materials to reach intended audiences.

Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism in a school setting is defined by a student missing 10% or more time and participation in the school day (learn more at Nebraska Department of Education or US Department of Education). Students who are chronically absent have difficulty learning to read by the third-grade, achieving in middle school, and graduating from high school. It is also important to note that chronic absenteeism data is used as a filter to identify schools for designations and classifications per Nebraska's Accountability for a Quality Education System for Today and Tomorrow (AQuESTT).

- When a student is identified as chronically absent, support may be provided through problem solving and early intervention rather than punitive action.
- A multi-tiered system to address chronic absences should include strategies that target the root causes and barriers of those most affected.
- Chronic absence data is a powerful tool for organizing and accelerating efforts to improve outcomes for children.

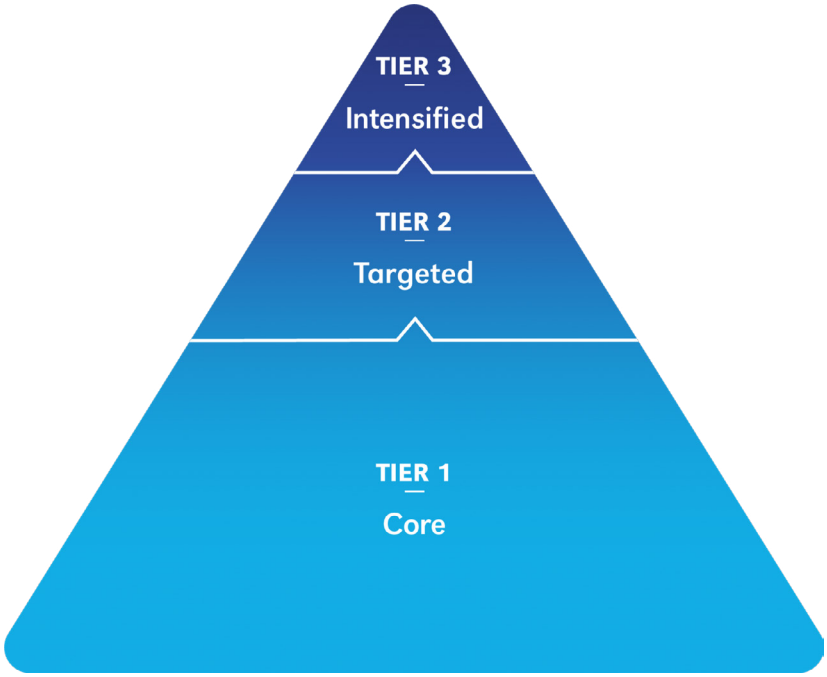
Engagement Practices & Exemplars

Practice: Use a multi-tiered system of support to increase overall student attendance rates and address chronic attendance issues by partnering with families and community resources to reduce the barriers to attending school. The Nebraska Multi-Tier System of Supports (NeMTSS) includes proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate behaviors to create positive environments.

Exemplar: Attendance teams, including a social worker, a community school coordinator, the school principal, nurse, attendance secretary and district family support specialist that meet regularly have been shown to increase attendance and student achievement. Other possible team members could include an afterschool site coordinator or early childhood education coordinator.

Exemplar: A trauma-informed approach to addressing chronic absenteeism helps schools and childcare providers view learner behavior and performance in the context of their lives rather than taking a punitive approach.

Exemplar: Tier 1 expectations would include clear messaging (including translation services as needed) to families and children related to the impact of absences on success, family expectations regarding notifying the school related to their child's absences, and support available to students and families. A more targeted outreach may be needed for families where communication and collaboration has been difficult.



Practice: Create community conversations to build partnerships, and access community resources that can help schools and/or families to remove barriers to consistent attendance.

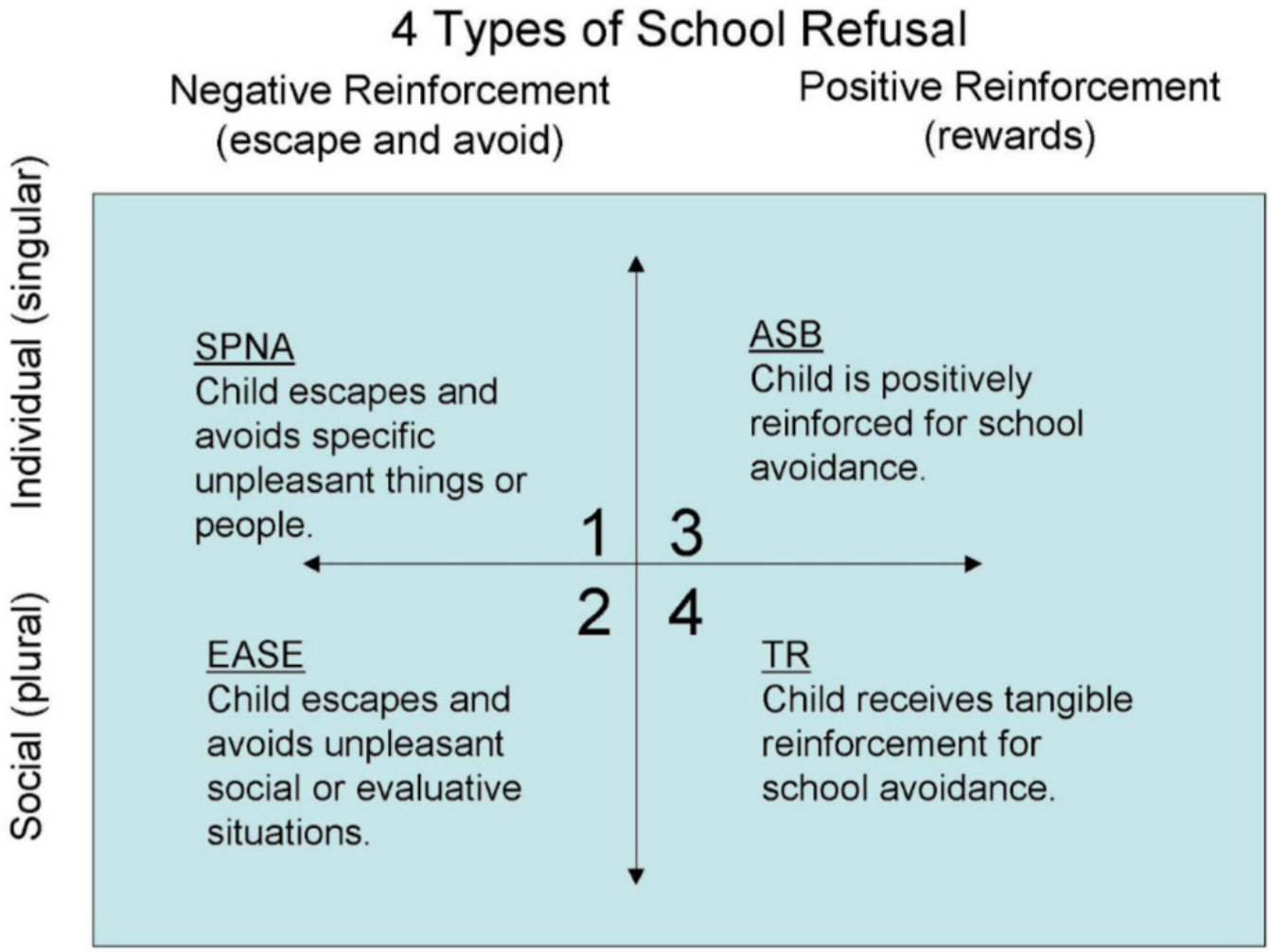
Exemplars:

- 211 connects professionals and families to expert, caring help. Every call is completely confidential.
- Unite Us can build and scale coordinated care networks, track outcomes together, identify service gaps and at-risk populations, and most importantly, empower members of the community to take ownership of their own health.
- The MyLink APP provides information about resources related to behavioral health, disability services, basic needs, education, employment and other categories throughout Nebraska.

Practice: Use assessment tools to help identify specific family, school and community factors related to school attendance for individual students and develop a student and family support plan.

Exemplars:

- The Ohio Scales for Youth are three (parent, youth, and agency worker rated), brief measures used to assess the outcome of mental health services for youth who are 5 to 18 years of age. Manuals and training aids can be found through the link.
- North Carolina Family Assessment Scale (NCFAS) measures how a family is functioning. A training package is available for purchase through the National Family Preservation Network.
- School Refusal Assessment (SRAS-R) is a self-report inventory of reasons for avoiding school. A copy of the SRAS-R and other resources can be downloaded from the School Avoidance Alliance. The website simplified language about School Avoidance for parents as well as resources for educators.



Companion handout to the School Refusal Assessment Scale-Revised (SRAS-R C/P) developed by Dr. Christopher Kearney, PhD, University of Nevada Las Vegas.
Developed by Metropolitan Child Advocacy Coalition Truancy Committee (www.MCAComahaNE.org)

Related Research

The articles and resources shared in this section point to the need for schools to work collaboratively with families to address chronic absenteeism. The Attendance Playbook, by Phyllis Jordan, is filled with strategies to address student chronic absence, whether it be mild, moderate or severe, and divides strategies into the three tiers of intervention. It identifies the problem each intervention solves and highlights schools or school districts that have used the strategy successfully.

PBiS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) is a behavior based and research validated process that increases the capacity of schools, families, and communities to develop preventive, proactive, positive environments. The process focuses on building school-wide, classroom and individual systems of support general enough to assist all students, but focused enough to provide students at risk individual help. The NDE has a variety of PBiS resources and coaches throughout the state. Educational Service Units (ESU's) also have personnel who can assist school systems with building PBiS practices. The Pyramid Model is an additional behavior resource that focuses on behavior support for pre-K learners.

A research article authored by Christopher Kearney, a clinical child psychologist who specializes with internalizing problems in youth, explores factors associated with problematic absenteeism and school refusal behavior. Excused and unexcused absences are discussed along with the impact of school withdrawal and exclusionary practices.

Family involvement is viewed as having the most positive impact on school attendance rates. Research has found that most families don't know how many days their child is absent each year and few understand how attendance impacts school achievement, especially in the early grades. Schools & childcare providers can engage with families early and take a strengths-based approach that supports the family to improve school attendance by utilizing approaches outlined in the following articles.

- Bringing Attendance Home: Engaging Parents in Preventing Chronic Absence (2018)
- Portraits of Change: Aligning School and Community Resources to reduce Chronic Absence (2017)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Attendance Overview

- "School Leader's Guide to Tackling Attendance Challenges" This book by Randy & Jessica Sprick provides resources to develop a multi-tiered system of support to prevent and respond to attendance issues.
- Attendance Works website provides information related to nearly every aspect of attendance including systems, best practices, research and communication.
- Attendance Playbook by Phyllis Jordan is a 2020 resource that describes multi-tier interventions and approaches to address attendance issues in the COVID era.
- The Link Between School Attendance and Good Health is a 2019 article published by the American Academy of Pediatrics that discusses the link between chronic absenteeism and health.
- The Nebraska Legislature provides the Nebraska state statute related to school attendance.
- The Collaborative Plan User's Guide created by Lincoln Public Schools guides teachers and staff through the truancy referral process and ensures the process meets the requirements of state law.

Multi-tiered Systems of Support

- PBIS.org website provides information and a multitude of resources related to building a system of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports.
- The PBiS Program Information – Nebraska Department of Education is a resource provided by the Nebraska Department of Education describing the PBiS approach that has met with resounding success nationwide and in Nebraska
- The MTSS-B website provides information from Lincoln Public Schools related to their multi-tiered system of support for behavior.
- Classroom Practices Lincoln Public Schools website describes specific classroom practices to help staff develop positive classroom behavior systems.

FOCUS AREA #4:
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

For the purposes of this framework community partnerships and support services are considered separately from business and industry partnerships. Partnerships discussed in this focus area are intended to encompass not-for-profit partners such as government organizations, non-profit organizations, faith-based groups, and other such organizations. The reason for this distinction is that the way in which a school or childcare provider connects with an organization should differ based on the organization's main purpose.

The NDE believes the best community partnerships are local. Partnerships should build programs catered to the unique strengths and needs of each community. Each school or childcare provider should evaluate their community and determine where outreach to specific potential partners would be valuable.Community partnerships should be mutually beneficial, collaborative in nature, and result in achieving identified goals of those involved. Goals for these partnerships could be developing opportunities around:

- Academics
- Wellness
- Safety
- Social services
- Physical and mental health
- Community engagement
- Nutrition
- Other functions

Identifying the desired outcomes of a potential partnership and seeking a local organization that can address those goals collaboratively will help schools and childcare providers support success for all learners. Additionally, community organizations can bring their own varied perspective to consider all needs of a community.

Sustainable & effective partnerships:

- Grow in strength over time
- Reflect the efforts and commitment of those involved
- Persist through changes in individual participants and membership
- Impact academic growth
- Improve health and physical well-being
- Supplement social-emotional learning

Engagement Practices & Exemplars

Practice: Conduct a needs assessment to identify strengths and challenges in goal areas such as: academic learning, youth development, family engagement and support, health and social services. Gather data and information to identify needs and gaps that could be addressed to improve the school or childcare provider.

Exemplar: The Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) is based on quality, evidence-based education practices for student success. The tool is aligned to AQuESTT and articulates the expected education practices under each of the domains. Create a copy of the tool and refer to p.17 to get started.

Exemplar: Collaborate with community partners such as emergency managers, law enforcement, fire/rescue personnel, hospitals, health departments, and mental health professionals as part of the annual security plan review process (Accreditation, Rule 10; section 011.01D).

Practice: Determine how to evaluate the partnership and projects. Be realistic about what success looks like in the short- and long-term. Building toward shared goals can be a slow process, and it can be helpful to focus on distinct and attainable wins in order to build momentum. Consider not only what leadership thinks success would look like, but also invite learner and community stakeholders to articulate what success would look like.

Exemplar: A strengths, opportunities, aspirations, results (SOAR) analysis is a strategic planning tool that focuses groups on its current strengths and vision of the future for developing strategic goals. Consider working with a partner to do this analysis to identify projects and ways to evaluate. More information about the SOAR strategy can be found here.

Exemplar: Safety and security plans are reviewed annually by one or more persons external to the school system. The review will include a visit to the site as well as incorporate recommendations for improvement. Any suggestions made as a result of the analysis are communicated with the designated leadership team and are useful when considering how community partnerships and services can be added to increase learner engagement.

Exemplar: Nebraska Community Foundation - Asset-based Community Development Guide

Practice: Establish honest communication at the beginning of the partnership-building process. This will set the stage for a constructive, mutually beneficial partnership moving forward. This can include explicitly clear expectations of the initiative and how it will work.

Exemplar: Identify a single person who is accountable for communication and making decisions. Schools and childcare providers can have a person dedicated to the partnership to ensure a clear line of communication between partners.

Exemplar: The Responsibility Matrix is a great tool to help identify and assign the tasks and responsibilities necessary for implementing an action plan. The plan can help teams consider the following questions: What are the tasks involved with implementing the plan? Who is responsible for each of the tasks? Are there other people who need to provide direction, consultation or review in order for the tasks to be completed?

Practice: Ensure sustainability when planning for partnerships. Partnerships take time and resources to establish and maintain. Focus on finding the "right" partners that address needs or gaps and help achieve planned goals. While many different partners may be involved in school and childcare improvement, strategic, solid partnerships that can be built upon are a good investment of time and energy. While planning, it is important to prioritize sustainable partners and programs.

Exemplar: Full-Service Community Schools are an example of sustainable partnerships in action.

A Full-Service Community School is the product of intentional partnerships and shared leadership between the school or childcare provider, the community, learners and families coming together to address the broad spectrum of needs.

Practice: Check-in with partners on a regular basis to share progress, struggles, and next steps. Regular communication about what is working and what is not will help build community and strengthen partnerships while also monitoring shared goals and assessing progress. Including time to share successes and celebrations as part of these check-ins is important.

Exemplar: Use the feedback gathered from evaluation to not only determine impact, but also to recognize when goals have been reached or project is no longer necessary.

Related Research

Benefits for Learners and Students

The National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE) shares that there are learner benefits of strong community partnerships. When schools, childcare providers, and communities work together at every level, learners benefit in a variety of ways. Benefits include:

- Improved academic achievement including higher grade point averages and scores on standardized tests or rating scales, more classes passed and credits earned
- Enrollment in more challenging academic programs with more students continuing onto secondary education
- Improved attendance and retention
- Improved behavior
- Better social skills and learning environment adaptation
- Increased motivation.

In the book *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*, Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp found that these benefits hold true for children of all ages, all backgrounds, and across race and ethnicity.

NCSSLE also shares that foundations for academic success begin in early childhood and are further developed during elementary school years. Conversely, patterns of failure and disengagement also begin early. Continuity with partnerships with community programs from PreK/Elementary School to Middle and High School can help support academic achievement throughout a student's school tenure.

Benefits For Schools

In their article, "The Benefits of Community Engagement for a Stronger School District", Lena Eisenstein states that consistent involvement and engagement by the community has shown to have considerable short- and long-term benefits that not only affect students, but also the schools within the district. Schools that have an increased sense of public involvement see a statistically significant increase in their reputation. Schools are advocated for by the community when they make the effort to make the public feel included and involved. The school becomes more significant as a space where one can receive instruction and support with strong public and school partnerships, resulting in better student performance and achievement. School benefits include:

- Upgraded school facilities.
- Improved school leadership and staffing.
- Higher-quality learning programs for students.
- New resources and programs to improve teaching and curriculum.
- New funding for after-school programs and family supports (Henderson & Mapp).
- Cultivating trust, respect, and transparency between the board and the public.
- Establishing and maintaining stronger school performance and reputation (Eisenstein).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Finding Local Partners

- Beyond School Bells is a Nebraska organization that supports afterschool and summer programming and partnership development in connection with the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation. They have a wide range of Nebraska resources including a guide on Engaging Nontraditional Community Partners.
- Nebraska's 2-1-1 database, a United Way service that catalogs government and community services in communities around Nebraska online and via live call center (by calling 2-1-1 for free anywhere in the state), can be a good place to find out about services, and potential partners in most communities.
- MyLink is a free, downloadable app that provides a database of resources and community partners for families in Nebraska. Resources are grouped by category or can be searched. The app works without data or wifi once downloaded.
- The NDE's 21st Century Community Learning Center Partner Spotlight has examples of strong partnerships across the state that can be recreated in most communities.
- CASEL provides suggestions for finding community partners to help with Social Emotional Learning (SEL).
- Find a list of Nebraska exemplars on this document which includes organizations active with schools around the state, a description of the organizational mission/vision, website, and geographic reach of many partners.

Nebraska Resources

- Review and assess your programs using the NDE Special Education Resources for Equity, Inclusion, and Opportunity
- The Nebraska Court Improvement Project, a program of the State of Nebraska Judicial Branch, provides a variety of resources that schools can use in conjunction with courts to assist families involved in the judicial system.
  - » An Education Court Report is filled out in conjunction with the school to help judges understand the educational information of children involved in the legal system.
  - » Additionally they provide two What Now? guides for families to use if their children become involved in the legal system.
    - ◊ Child Welfare Guide
    - ◊ Juvenile Justice Guide

Community Providers

- DHHS - The Department of Health and Human Services focuses on basic needs and health of families throughout the state of Nebraska.
- NE Children & Families Foundation - focuses on supporting children and families by helping build strong communities
- Nebraska Extension - 4-H - provides a variety of programing to enhance education
- Nebraska Extension - UNL Food - provides a great deal of support to afterschool programming and is a partner for many Nutrition Services programs and projects.
- Community Collaboratives is a database of community support agencies for parents across the state of Nebraska. The type of supports available depend on location.
- Special Olympics Nebraska facilitates acceptance, participation, and empowerment for individuals with and without disabilities through sports training and competition, inclusive youth leadership, and whole school engagement for students of all ages.
- Educational Service Units (ESUs) are political subdivisions that serve as intermediate level education service agencies for member school districts.

FOCUS AREA #5:
BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS

Business and industry partnerships are collaborations between business and industry groups and education. This could include internships, tours of businesses and industries to connect to content area or career and technical education and training standards. It's important to know that businesses might not immediately think of schools and childcare providers when discussing business and industry partnerships. Instead they may first think of collaborations between businesses within an industry or collaborations between industries.

The Need for Business and Industry Partnerships

Business and industry partnerships can enhance the education of young people and increase the capacity of local education providers. Intentional business and industry partnerships provide opportunities to improve Pre-K-12 student outcomes and experiences. Such experiences prepare students to meet the local needs of current and future employers, and connect families to community resources. Business and industry partnerships:

- Develop both academic and employability competencies
- Build networking opportunities
- Create opportunities for young people
- Strengthen local communities
- Support families in understanding career choices
- Provide students with experiential learning opportunities

Finding Local Partnerships to Meet ALL Student's Needs

When searching for local business and industry partnerships, finding business owners and industry representatives that reflect the local school population is a great first step to building a lasting and meaningful relationship. Students will be more likely to engage positively when they can see themselves represented in the partnership.

Perkins V reflects the 100-year federal commitment to Career Technical Education (CTE) by providing federal support for CTE programs and focuses on improving the academic and technical achievement of CTE students, strengthening the connections between secondary and postsecondary education and improving accountability. Perkins V affords states and local communities the opportunity to implement a vision for CTE that uniquely supports the range of educational needs of students — exploration through career preparation — and balances those student needs with the current and emerging needs of the economy.

PERKINS V
IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING

Some considerations when searching for business and industry partnerships are:

- The demographics of each school population
- Student interests
- Economic priorities and opportunities of each community and region
- The positive impact of potential relationships for both students and businesses
- Needs of business and industry

Engagement Practices & Exemplars

Practice: Develop a comprehensive needs assessment for each school's partnership. The reVISION Guidebook and the reVISION Resource Manual tools found on the Nebraska Department of Education CTE reVISION webpage can be used for this.

Exemplar: Connecting the Dots - is a Nebraska 4-H interactive career exploration simulation program designed to help 9th and 10th grade students learn more about careers of interest incorporating local/area business and industry, post-secondary, and military partners. Additional workshops on resumes, motivating skills, and additional topics are a part of this program. Encompasses ESU's (10, 11 ,4), 4H/Extension, public schools, and private schools.

Practice: Use shared workforce data to develop and improve partnerships to ensure the collaboration is meeting the needs of businesses, industries, communities and learners. Before meeting with businesses, schools should prepare by looking at data to understand industry trends and needs that might apply to them. After a partnership is established, it's also beneficial to use data to evaluate and improve the partnership.

- Workforce Trends Magazine (Nebraska Department of Labor)
- Nebraska H3 - High Wage. High Demand. High Skill. (Nebraska Departments of Labor, Education, & Economic Development)
  - » Shows workforce needs in Nebraska that meet the 3 criteria of high wage, high demand, & high skills
- Additional Databases
  - » Source Link Nebraska (collaboration of the Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC), Nebraska Extension, and Rural Prosperity Nebraska (RPN))
  - » NE Works (NE Department of Labor)
    - ◊ Provides labor market information that can be used to evaluate potential partnerships
- Industry-specific statistics and data
  - » NE Travel and Tourism
  - » Nebraska Farm Bureau
  - » Nebraska Manufacturing Alliance

Exemplar: Ralston's Career & Technical Education Blueprint encompasses all of the different partnerships they have cultivated and maintained. This includes advisory groups that provide industry-level insights into curriculum decisions. Some of the partnerships include those in the medical, construction, education, and agricultural fields.

Practice: Determine and **contact local businesses/industries to determine their needs or interests** that would be accomplished with a partnership. Using data, research and determine local businesses that could meet specific needs of both parties. Keep in mind that industry needs are often broad, while local stakeholder needs can be more specific. Through collaborative discussion(s), determine a mutually beneficial engagement.

Exemplar: Scottsbluff/Gering - Business Partnerships

Practice: Prioritize timely response to outreach from business contacts and work to prioritize their request for communication (which could lead to partnerships, collaborations, etc.). Ensure school staff and childcare providers understand the need for timely communication and ensure proper point of contact is identified. If a business reaches out with a partnership idea or offer and the response takes too long, they will likely not reach out again.

Exemplar: If a business makes contact for a partnership, administrative staff forward the request to the appropriate individual. The request is followed up on within 48 hours.

Additional Exemplars: Each year, programs, educators, administrators, and community partners are honored for outstanding work in Nebraska with Career and Technical Education. Learn more about current and past recipients on the Nebraska Department of Education CTE Awards page.

Related Research

Cambiar Quest describes the importance of business and industry partnerships in education with its resource Effective Partnerships between Schools and Industries. They provide two main reasons for the importance of these types of partnerships. First, because of the rapid change of pace in technology and businesses, students need to be able to meet "new demands in the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for career and life success." Second, the rapid pace of changes requires schools to think differently about what students need. Business and industry partners can help schools better understand the specific needs that students will have.

> "Our schools need help from stakeholders who have a better understanding of how well-paid, upwardly mobile careers are changing, the related skills and knowledge expected of new hires, and how best to develop and assess these skills. Among others, schools need meaningful opportunities to connect with and learn from employers and other experts from business and industry."

The Nebraska Guide for Starting and Managing School-Based Enterprises describes that student-led entrepreneurial, educational opportunities effectively prepare students for transitioning to the next step in their career or education. They also allow students to build skills in management, supervision, and leadership. Many such tools are possible with the support of business and industry experts.

Quality career and technical education is a great way to build lasting relationships with business and industry partners. Local advisory committees are one of the most effective ways to develop positive partnerships. The Developing a Local Advisory Committee: Resource Handbook describes the benefits of creating such a committee:

> "Local advisory committees are designed to increase the participation of the public in local career and technical education programs and provide greater cooperation between career and technical education and the private sector in:
>
> - Making career and technical education more responsive to, and reflective of, both the labor market and business/industry
> - Promoting quality career and technical education
> - Preparing individuals for employment and entrepreneurship"

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- 9 Tips for Successful Business School and Industry Partnerships covers the basics on how to get started.
- Beyond the Building: Facilitator Guide for Schools, Family and Community Connections has classroom ready activities.

Current Initiatives

- Workplace Experiences and Launch WBL provides up-to-date information on the Work-Based Learning (WBL) program. It includes a professional development course and other resources.
- The Nebraska Council on Economic Education focuses on economic and financial literacy by providing programming for schools.

Potential Partnerships

- Philanthropic Community involves community members working together and leveraging community resources to improve the quality of life in a community
- The Lincoln STEM Ecosystem brings together business with K-12/CLC to increase awareness of STEM careers.

Additional Nebraska Examples

- Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) - The Career Academy - Business Partnerships
- LPS also has Jobs and Extended Learning Opportunities which offer internships, jobs, apprenticeships, and job shadows. Anyone can submit new information about other career opportunities using the link.
- Nebraska 4-H
  - » Real World Money - is an interactive financial management program designed to help 7th and 8th grade students become better prepared to make financial decisions as young adults.
  - » Next Chapter at Nebraska - is a college readiness program offered to enrolled 4-H members at the beginning of their 8th-grade year. Throughout high school, Next Chapter scholars engage in a variety of experiences that will help them transition to and succeed in college. Through Next Chapter at Nebraska, these students are pre-admitted to the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.
  - » Career Chat Live - offers online career exploration opportunities. Each session focuses on a new set of careers. During each session, youth will get to meet workforce professionals in that career field, ask questions and engage in small group conversations.

FOCUS AREA #6: BEFORE-SCHOOL, AFTERSCHOOL, AND SUMMER PROGRAMS

Out-of-school time (OST) programs are regularly scheduled, structured, and supervised activities where learning opportunities take place outside the school day. These age appropriate programs can occur within a school or at a community based site before-school, afterschool, or during the summer. OST programs provide safe environments for youth and resources for families.

The Nebraska State Board of Education believes that in order to help prepare future generations of Nebraska youth for success in life, Nebraska's schools, families and communities must work together to provide multiple opportunities for healthy growth, development and academic success. For this reason, in 2017 the Board adopted the *Expanded Learning Opportunities Position Statement*. The Nebraska 21st CCLC program developed the *Nebraska 21st CCLC Quality Framework* based on this position statement and include the following indicators:

- Administration with sound management and well-developed systems
- College/career awareness and readiness
- Community-school partnerships and resource sharing
- Diverse, prepared staff including certificated educators
- Engaged learning
- Family engagement
- Intentional programming aligned with the school day program
- Ongoing assessment and improvement
- Participation, access and support during transitions
- Safety, health and wellness

It is the goal of OST programming to improve academic outcomes for all learners. A 2020 study by Afterschool Alliance examined the effects of early childhood education and afterschool activities found that both higher quality early child care and afterschool programs in the elementary years (K-5th grade) are associated with higher reading comprehension and math achievement scores in high school. The effects were cumulative, with children who participated in both experiencing increased benefits.

Because staff play such an important role in implementing a high quality OST program and connecting with families and children, it is important to provide ongoing professional development to ensure a diverse, prepared staff.

Engagement Practices & Exemplars

Practice: Intentionally build and support collaborative relationships with schools, local community members and leaders, businesses, and community-based organizations committed to partnering with before, afterschool and summer programs. These important partnerships support program planning, implementation, and funding for program improvement and sustainability.

Exemplar: Beyond School Bells developed a resource to assist programs identify local partners (both likely and unlikely) and tools to utilize in order to build collaborative relationships and enhance program offerings. They also created a guide on Engaging Nontraditional Community Partners.

Exemplar: The 21st CCLC Partner Spotlight highlights the work of organizations committed to partnering with OST programs across Nebraska. Featured partners have demonstrated a commitment to working with program leaders and staff to identify ways to mutually accomplish identified goals. Contact the featured partners to explore the possibilities for bringing unique and engaging learning opportunities to children and youth.

Exemplar: North Platte Public Schools Kids Klub asks families for their place of work and uses this information to talk to businesses about how Kids Klub is supporting their employees and creating new partnerships.

Practice: When appropriate, **invite community partners and family members to site-level leadership team meetings.** Quality OST program leaders can also form community/parent advisory groups to provide direction and guidance while assisting a program toward its goal of continuous improvement. Community partners and family members can bring knowledge, experience, and a variety of perspectives to an OST program.

Exemplar: The Nebraska 21st CCLC program requires a *Site-Level Management Team*, that includes the school building principal and program leader, meets regularly (at least four times per year) to discuss program strengths, needs and data collected.

Exemplar: Every Hour Counts is a coalition of OST providers that created a Measurement Framework and Putting Data to Work Guidebook that can assist site-level management teams and advisory groups when analyzing data.

Practice: Provide time outside of the regular school day for students to connect in meaningful ways with program staff, school-day educators, colleges/universities, and local business and industry partners to develop interests and skills for future success. OST experiences are planned based on students' interests, available community resources and identified student needs.

Exemplar: Provide programming that allows students to explore potential career paths. NDE provides resources and virtual career tours on their CTE Career Fields & Career Clusters page. Beyond School Bells also has career units for OST surrounding six different fields.

Practice: Provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment for all students. The physical space and the atmosphere of the program promote a healthy learning environment. Program staff should be prepared to address situations as they arise to ensure students' safety. Health and nutrition are incorporated into daily programming, and there are daily opportunities for physical activity.

Exemplar: OST programs conduct regular safety drills, including fire and tornado. The OST program leader is part of the district or school Safety Committee and all staff participate in relevant inservice training.

Exemplar: Program leaders provide ongoing professional development to assure a safe, healthy learning environment for students. Resources that provide relevant professional development include You for Youth (Y4Y), 4-H Extension, C.A.T.C.H., and the NDE Early Childhood Training Center.

Practice: Offer an inviting OST environment where families feel welcome, promote positive communication with families, and support meaningful family engagement in the educational experiences of students. Incorporate regular opportunities for family members to be engaged in program planning and implementation.

> **Exemplar:** You for Youth (Y4Y) provides helpful tips on ways to engage families in authentic ways. This resource from Y4Y can be used to plan ways to meet the needs of OST students' families.
>
> **Exemplar:** Provide opportunities for families to be meaningfully engaged in the program including ongoing communication with families in their primary language. Examples of ways to engage families in the program include:
>
> - Opportunities for family members to volunteer in the program
> - Utilize a Parent Advisory Board to provide program input
> - Implement a School, Neighborhood Advisory Committee (Lincoln Community Learning Centers SNAC)

Related Research

Afterschool Alliance discusses the barriers and benefits of family engagement through afterschool programs. One of the largest benefits is that afterschool programs can help break down barriers between schools and families because of the unique way OST programs interact with both partners. Additionally, they point out that there are distinct categories of family engagement and that programs need to acknowledge and honor all types of family engagement.

The Nebraska 21st CCLC statewide evaluation team collects data that is compiled into an annual report. Data includes survey results from school day teachers, families, students, staff and community partners. Additionally, the United States Department of Education (USDE) provides a national overview of performance data for the 21st CCLC programs. This site explains what is measured and provides links for the most recently published data.

When "Promoting Engagement in Afterschool," programs should focus on 3 principles: shared responsibility, connection, and continuity. This helps to "create a more equitable approach to family engagement based on family strengths."

This study from the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST), shows how out-of-school time programs can positively impact the families of students who were served. Notably, students are the ones initiating change in their families based on their experiences in the OST program.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Community Schools

- The National Center for Community Schools has resources and strategies for building successful community schools that help transform schools "into vital hubs that benefit students, their families and the surrounding community." This graphic shows how the 4 pillars of community schools work together to support all learners.
- This framework from the Institutes of Educational Leadership and the Coalition for Community Schools provides schools with actionable steps to improve their schools and provides examples of successful community schools in action.
- Heather Weiss, M. Elena Lopez and Margaret Caspe highlight how communities are shaping learning anywhere, anytime for children and youth in this blog.

Improving OST Programs and Activities

- The National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) provides support and resources for families to engage with their students at home. Learning Outside of School and Family Engagement Activities contain examples of the OST activities and resources that NCFL provides.
- The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation focuses on three main areas when it comes to advancing afterschool efforts: building an afterschool infrastructure, fostering afterschool policy, and improving afterschool quality & innovation.

Engaging Families in OST Programs

- The USDE 21st CCLC website, You for Youth, provides information and resources focused on family engagement in afterschool. This handout includes simple and easy ways to engage families.
- This resource created by the Harvard Family Research Project and BOSTnet focuses on building family-centered practices in afterschool.
- For engaging families who have students with disabilities, this article from Understood.org has some great suggestions for OST providers.

APPENDIX A

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This project would not have been possible without all of the people that supported it in every stage: formulation, writing, and revision. Thank you for all of the time and effort.

Names are listed in alphabetical order by last name. Names may be repeated if they assisted with more than one stage in the creation of the Nebraska School, Family, and Community Engagement Framework.

The organizations listed after names were the organization associations at the time of input, writing, or revision and may have changed. Additionally, some of the participants were parents and family members invited by their associated organizations. Not all participants from input sessions identified their organization association.

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