



***“Creating Connections Now...”***



Dear Friends and Partners:

Merriam-Webster defines “**connect**” as “to join or fasten together usually by something intervening; to place or establish in relationship; to become joined.” A **connection**, therefore, occurs through conscious, deliberate efforts at bringing together individuals in relationship with one another. In the world of children, youth, families, and schools, connections add strength, structure, and stability to one’s day to day livelihood. They are the foundation upon which children thrive, families relate, and schools intersect.

The Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools is about ***Creating Connections***. This is accomplished through the multitude of research projects that aim to enhance the lives of children, youth and families by improving the environments within which they live, and the relationships among them.

It is accomplished through the generation of ideas that bridge disciplines, forge new directions, and offer new and more effective solutions. Connections are created for the purpose of joining unique ideas, perspectives, opinions, experiences, and knowledge, resulting in something new, different, and better than what might have occurred otherwise. Connections create partnerships, which provide unique and novel contexts particularly well-postured to support continued success. For children and families at a very personal level, this means success in school, in relationships, in life. For research teams at a macro level, this means success in uncovering innovations that can enhance societies for generations to come.

I am very pleased to present the 2006-2007 Annual Report of the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools. In it you will find numerous examples of our efforts to “create connections” as applied researchers. The various projects, initiatives, and priorities you will find described on the following pages elucidate our belief in, passion about, and commitment to connections. Whether the example highlights a research project that promotes connections to stabilize a child’s life (for example, CBC in the Early Grades), illustrates the work of a highly connected interdisciplinary team (such as the Math and Science Institute), or demonstrates our ongoing efforts to forge connections globally (including our developing collaborations with the University of Zambia), I am confident that the theme will resonate clearly. I invite you to connect with us in the days, months, and years to come.

Susan Sheridan

Director, Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools

Willa Cather Professor and Professor of Educational Psychology

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## **CYFS MISSION**

*...to conduct research that improves our understanding of optimal ways that parents, teachers and other service providers in family, school and community contexts can promote the intellectual and socio-emotional development and behavioral adjustment of children and youth. Central to this is enhancing our understanding of how these systems can work together to support the future of our nation.*



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## Community/University Connections

Many types of connections, at many levels, are important for kids. At a macro level, opportunities for community members and university faculty and staff to connect within a setting geared to enhance the knowledge and skills necessary to support children, youth, families and communities are essential. Our "Creating Connections Series" seems to be the perfect setting to foster interactions and partnerships among individuals who share common goals but approach their work from different vantage points. This is the beauty of interdisciplinary collaboration.

**Dr. Sue Sheridan,**  
Director of CYFS

Children and families live in dynamic environments that operate in tandem with one another. Positive interactions and relationships within and across these environments form the foundation for healthy growth and development – indeed, safety nets for children and families. Recognizing these realities, we have initiated the "Creating Connections Series" that focuses on research concerned with interventions, services, and supports for creating healthy connections for children. This series also provides the context for creating linkages among faculty and between University and community members, fostering the development of novel, cross-system interdisciplinary connections.



**Dr. Roger Weissberg,** Professor of Psychology and Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago, was the inaugural speaker in the Creating Connections series. Dr. Weissberg is President of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), an international organization committed to promoting evidence-based social, emotional, and academic learning in educational settings. He holds appointments as a Senior Research Scientist with both the American Institutes for Research and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Educational Laboratory for Student Success. Dr. Weissberg spent time at UNL discussing education and mental health research with CYFS faculty and student affiliates. His presentation, "Education that Gets Results: Social and Emotional Learning for School and Life Success" (co-sponsored by the Department of Educational Psychology) was well-received by a large audience of university and community members.



CYFS also co-sponsored with the Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders a presentation by **Dr. Jack Fletcher,** a child neuropsychologist and Distinguished University Professor of Psychology at the University of Houston. Dr. Fletcher is a nationally recognized expert in the development of reading, language, and other cognitive skills in children. At UNL, Dr. Fletcher interacted with numerous faculty, students, and community members. His presentation, "New Ways of Thinking about Learning Disabilities: Putting Instruction Back into the Definition," was very well attended and compelling in nature.

## Expanding University Connections

Thanks to Program of Excellence funding, CYFS doubled its space in 2007. Renovations took place in 303 Mabel Lee Hall as the home for the CYFS Statistics and Research Methodology (SRM) Unit and Database Development (**Istiaque Ali**). The SRM Unit is directed by **Dr. James Bovaird** and currently staffed by **Michael Toland** and **Kevin Kupzyk**. The SRM Unit coordinates their services with CYFS research faculty in consulting with faculty affiliates as they conceptualize their research, design the methodology, and determine appropriate data analytic procedures. The SRM Unit also assists faculty affiliates in data analysis and interpretation. In 2006-2007, the SRM Unit continued its Research Methodology Series, scholarly presentations on cutting-edge research methodologies and innovative data analytic strategies.

# Home-School Connections for Student Success

**How can I, as a teacher or parent, learn new strategies to help improve my student's behavior at school and home?** Behavioral



consultants from the **Conjoint Behavioral Consultation (CBC) in the Early Grades** project are in their second year of implementation to provide research-based behavioral interventions in the school and home settings for children in grades K-3. The main objective of this project, funded by the U.S. Department of

Education's Institute of Education Sciences, is to evaluate the efficacy of CBC as an intervention that addresses problems of students whose disruptive behaviors place them at risk of academic failure. Personnel leading this large-scale research project are **Drs. Susan Sheridan and Todd Glover**,



Co-Principal Investigators; **Amanda Witte**, School-based Project Coordinator; **Andy Garbacz**, Research-based Project Coordinator; and **Dr. Gina Kunz**, Research and Training Coordinator.

In CBC, parents are key partners in educational decision making and actively participate in educational

planning for their child. Unique to this project is the group format of the CBC meetings: parents of 2-3 students in a classroom meet with a consultant and teacher to address the identified behavioral needs of the students.

Parents and teachers were asked what they found to be the most helpful about this project. According to one parent, **"I liked sharing ideas with the teacher and other parents...there wasn't a time limit that we had to meet with the teacher like at parent-teacher conferences."** The teacher for this same child commented, **"The number of home contacts that the consultant was able to make that I as a teacher do not have enough time to make, increased the communication between home and school."**



*I liked the communication and touching base that the project allowed, and I enjoyed working together with parents and communicating between home and school.*

*Second grade teacher, Arnold Elementary.*

This study is innovative in several ways. It is the first to examine a conceptually sophisticated home-school partnership intervention for addressing achievement problems in early primary grades, and its effect on parents, teachers, and home-school relationships on behalf of children at risk for school failure. It is the first to use rigorous experimental manipulation to identify causal effects of home-school partnership activities. Finally, it is the first to determine the long-term effects of home-school partnerships on parents' continued involvement in their child's learning. Thus far, CBC staff have partnered with 11 Lincoln schools, 29 classrooms, and 67 families. Services are being expanded to include rural Nebraska schools outside of Lincoln in Elmwood/Murdock and Weeping Water.

# Connecting Middle School Students with Technology of the Future

**How can we make science more interesting for kids?** In an effort to motivate and instill interest in science and related fields, middle-school students from communities across Nebraska are learning how to build and program robots. The National Science Foundation funded the 3-year **Robotics 4-H project**, aimed at increasing students' proficiencies, knowledge and positive attitudes about science, math, technology, and engineering. A long-term goal is to foster students' interest in these fields as viable future career opportunities. Lead personnel responsible for development of curriculum and program implementation include **Bradley Barker**, Principal Investigator, from 4-H Youth Development, and **Dr. Slava Adamchuk**, Co-Principal Investigator, from Biological Systems Engineering. Evaluation and research activities are being conducted by **Dr. Neal Grandgenett**, Professor of Mathematics Education at the University of Nebraska-Omaha and **Dr. Gwen Nugent**, CYFS Research Associate Professor.

The program was piloted in two summer programs in 2007: a 4-H summer camp in Gretna and a community learning center in Grand Island, Nebraska. Students programmed robots, with the ultimate goal of integrating robotics with geospatial technologies as part of an informal learning environment. The curriculum is designed to be more interactive than a typical school-based program, engaging students in enriching and hands-on activities. Activities include the use of Lego Mindstorms™ NXT robotics, Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and Geographical Information Systems (GIS). In concert with the 21st Century Community Learning Centers that focus efforts on increasing the likelihood of academic success for at-risk youth, the current project is forming partnerships within communities and across Nebraska.



# Connecting Middle and High School Math and Science Teachers with Engineering Education and Technology

**When will I ever use these math and science formulas in real life?** Teachers hear this question and similar complaints from students all too often. With funding from the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, **Dr. Larry Rilett** (Mid-America Transportation Center in the Civil Engineering Department at UNL) and **Drs. Gina Kunz and Gwen Nugent** (CYFS research faculty), partnered to provide responses to this question. In the summer of 2006, civil engineering faculty from UNL provided resources for middle and high school teachers from Lincoln, Lexington, and Gretna, Nebraska who participated in the first **Professional Development Math and Science Summer Technology Institute**. **Dr. Larry Rilett** presented information on traffic signal timing, **Dr. Andrzej Nowak** presented information on bridge design, and **Dr. Ronald Faller** presented information on crash testing and safety barriers.



Teachers developed multi-media materials using technology as compliments to curricula that address math and science state standards. Lesson plans incorporated engineering content to help students learn how to develop hypotheses, conduct observations, collect data, analyze data, make predictions, and generate further questions. Resources provided by engineers helped convey the practical applications of math and science. Teachers experienced first-hand applications of otherwise static facts and figures as they toured the crash test facility in Lincoln. Teachers implemented their lesson plans with their students during the 2006-2007 year.

Through this program, we are creating a state-wide network of teachers with professional development in using state-of-the-art technology in math and science classrooms and a state-wide repository of middle and high school math and science lessons. This project also positions Nebraska as a model for professional development in use of advanced technology.

*The students were engaged the entire time, which is a difficult task for a group of 6th, 7th and 8th graders. We really generated excitement for our after school program. In fact, with the implementation of this activity-based learning, our student numbers have increased to over 50 (over 10% of our population).*

Mary Herrington, Culler Middle School



## Enhancing Students' Written Language Skills



### **What can we do over the summer to help with our child's academic needs?**

Parents often ask this question and search to find services to extend the academic gains students make during the school year. Reading and math have been the focus of many programs over the past several decades; however, written language skills continue to present a great challenge for students across all grade levels.

**Dr. Merilee McCurdy**, Assistant Professor in the School Psychology program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, is responsible for developing an initiative in response to

this question. Dr. McCurdy is the Project Director for the **Summer Writing Clinic (SWC)** aimed at identifying ways to increase writing proficiency among struggling students.



Funding from the *Woods Charitable Fund* supports this 2-year project conducted during the summer. Families of students in elementary through high school grades meet with student therapists during weekly sessions in the UNL Counseling and School Psychology Clinic.

Specifically, parents learn how to implement research-based intervention strategies for improving their child's writing skills in the home setting.

The 2007 Summer Writing Clinic was staffed by six student therapists: **Amanda Albertson** (Project Manager), **Courtney LeClair**, **Melissa Andersen**, **April Turner**, **Sarah Kupzyk**, and **Stephanie Schmitz**.

## Connecting Arts in Education

Rarely do core academic course teachers in elementary and high schools have the opportunity to include the arts as a method of instruction in their classrooms. **Nancy Engen-Wedin**, Lecturer in the College of Education and Human Sciences, together with the Lied Center for Performing Arts, are helping teachers in elementary, middle and high schools learn meaningful ways to integrate arts in their classrooms to enhance student learning.

These **Kennedy Center Partners in Education** and **ArtsREACH** projects are funded by the Kennedy Center National Partnerships Program and the U.S. Department of Education. Teachers in K-12 (classroom generalists and arts specialists) in Nebraska school districts serving majority-minority students, including Madison Public Schools and Umonhon Nation School District, participate in professional development activities and partner with experienced teaching artists to improve educational outcomes for students. These projects, spearheaded by the Lied Center for Performing Arts and UNL, represent a collaboration of several state agencies, including Nebraskans for the Arts, Nebraska Department of Education, and the Nebraska Arts Council. CYFS faculty are consulting on evaluation activities related to the impact of this experience on the educators, the teaching artists, and the students.

*CYFS has supported at least three different grant writing efforts to federal agencies for support of our project efforts. This is no easy process since our programs partner with several state agencies, including Nebraska Arts Council, Nebraskans for the Arts, Nebraska Department of Education, and majority-minority school districts and the Lied Center for Performing Arts. The relationship with the Center gives increased credibility to our projects, and has made a significant difference in what we have been able to accomplish in this short time. I look forward to continuing our relationship in the coming years.*

**Nancy Engen-Wedin** (Director, Indigenous Roots Teacher Education Program; Project Director, ArtsREACH and Kennedy Center Partners in Education Program)

# Connecting Pre-Service and In-Service Educators of Young Children with Hearing Impairments

**How can educators receive training to be optimally prepared to work with the specialized needs of very young children with hearing impairments?**



Recent legislation now requires all newborns to be screened for hearing loss. Once identified, families need qualified personnel to help address children's developmental needs. The **Mountain Prairie Upgrade Partnership – Early Childhood (MPUP-EC)** is increasing the number of trained personnel in Nebraska, Wyoming, and Iowa. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, this program provides tuition waivers and stipends for full-time graduate enrollment at UNL via distance education. Co-Directors are **Dr. Christine Marvin** (top left), Associate Professor, and **Dr. Malinda Eccarius** (bottom left), Senior Lecturer, in the Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders. They also serve as the advisors and instructors for the Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) and Deaf Education majors and courses, respectively. Supplemental funds are being provided by the *Nebraska Department of Education, Office of Special Populations*, to support Nebraska's Professional Upgrade Partnership (NE-PUP) for continuing education for Nebraska Deaf Educators and ECSE teachers who want to become more familiar with the deaf and hard of hearing population. The goal is to assure quality early

intervention for young children with hearing impairments.

MPUP-EC graduate students major in either deaf education (Pre-K–12) or ECSE (birth–grade 3) and are able to augment their discipline-specific studies with coursework and practica related to young children with a hearing loss (0-5 years)

and their families. Weekend, summer, online, and broadcast instruction provide added opportunity for establishing a community of learners for both MPUP-EC and NE-PUP students around shared interests in young children with hearing loss. Participants graduate with a master's degree and teacher certification. Twenty graduate students are expected to participate in the 4-year MPUP-EC project, including 12 ECSE majors and 8 Deaf Education majors. The NE-PUP funds have supported 12 Nebraska educators.

A unique feature is the interdisciplinary training between Early Childhood and Deaf Education majors. With this project, there is great potential for collaboration between the ECSE and Deaf Education teachers which is intended to continue beyond the formal university courses. Project efforts will lead to optimal development for children previously considered at risk for academic and social-communicative difficulties.

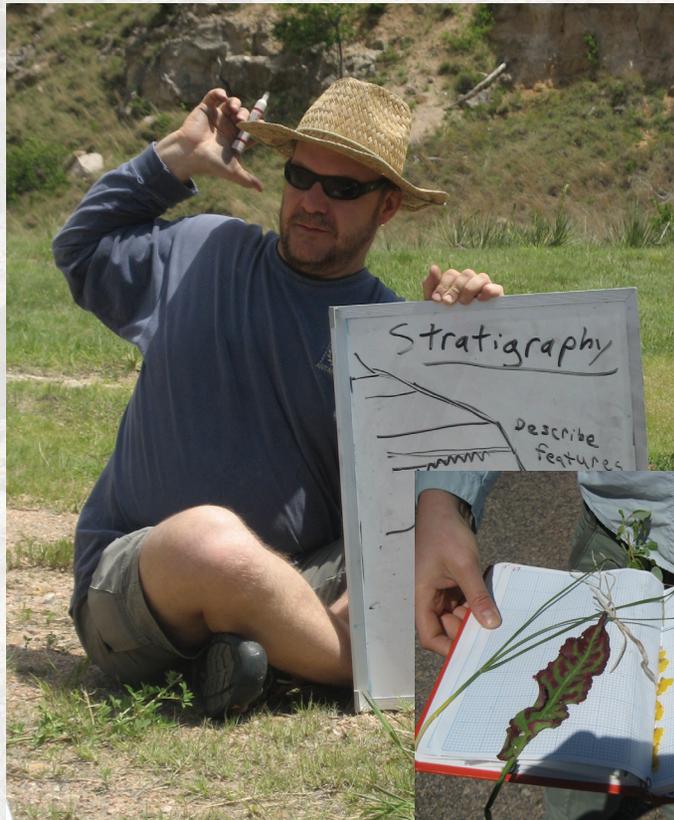
*The enrollment of Deaf Education majors in Early Childhood methods courses and Early Childhood majors in Deaf Education courses, together, helps the graduate students share the responsibility of learning how best to meet the developmental and communicative needs of this young population of children. The foundation for professional collaboration is being set.*

**Dr. Christine Marvin**

# Creating Connections in the Real World of Science for Pre-Service Teachers

Creating connections between geoscience concepts and the “real world” is often difficult. It is even more challenging for education majors to link geological concepts with their real-life applications when they become elementary and secondary classroom teachers. Fortunately, **Dr. David Harwood** and **Dr. Richard Levy** from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln’s Department of Geosciences and **Dr. Kathy Kitts** from Northern

Illinois University have found a way to meet these educational challenges. Using an inquiry-based approach, they have developed an undergraduate course using the outdoor surroundings of Nebraska, Wyoming and South Dakota as the classroom setting to enable their students to interpret geological history directly from the rocks. The class also provided opportunities for 18 pre-service teachers in May - June 2007 to practice implementing self-developed, inquiry-based, geology-focused mini-lessons with 55 middle school students who attended summer school at Lexington Middle School in Nebraska.



This is the fourth year that this field-based course has been taught at UNL. Together with education faculty from CYFS (**Dr. Gwen Nugent** and **Dr. Gina Kunz**), **Drs. Harwood and Levy** are completing a 2-year National Science Foundation grant-funded project to develop and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of this course on pre-service teachers: “Implementation of a Field-Based Inquiry-Focused Course for Pre-Service Teachers: A Plan to Improve Geoscience Education K-16.” Participating in the evaluation of the project are **Dr. Kay Rockwell** (UNL Emeritus) who served as an embedded reporter in the field; **Dr. Denise Green** (UNL) who received an NSF supplement to conduct a qualitative review of students’ field books and **Amanda Garrett**, a graduate student who helped analyze the qualitative results; **Jerrid Johansen**, a first-year K-12 teacher and teaching assistant for the course; and **Liz Sexton**, a UNL UCARE student who accompanied the class on their 3-week field-based course and conducted her own research project investigating gender differences related to science involvement. **Principal Dean Tickle** of Lexington Middle School enthusiastically opened his school to the university college students and faculty and provided his students the opportunity to participate in the 2007 Geosciences Experience Day.



2007 Geosciences Experience Day, Lexington Middle School

**And, what did the Lexington Middle School students have to say?**

Summer school students who participated in the geology activities reported that they liked the hands-on activities led by the pre-service teachers, learned a lot from them, and would like to participate in similar activities in their regular science classes.

Benefits of this course are far-reaching. The mission and focus of this course has garnered interest from industry and private sectors. The American Association of Petroleum Geologists (AAPG) donated \$9,000 to support the field effort in 2008. In addition, **Mrs. Marlys Spencer Christensen**, a retired elementary school teacher from Valentine, Nebraska, established an endowment with the University of Nebraska Foundation in 2006 to support the participation of future education majors who enroll in this course. Mrs. Christensen is a 1995 UNL Teachers College graduate, and her late husband **Dr. Richard (Chris) Christensen** holds 3 degrees from UNL in Geology, including a Bachelors of Science degree in 1956, a Master's degree in 1957, and a PhD in 1961.



*This is truly the best course I have ever taken. I have learned more in these three weeks (about geology, myself, others, life, etc.) than I EVER have or could have in one year. I thank everyone who made this possible.*

Pre-Service Teacher, 2007

Dr. Richard Levy (left); Mrs. Marlys Christensen; Dr. David Harwood (right)

# Continuing Connections with the University of Zambia

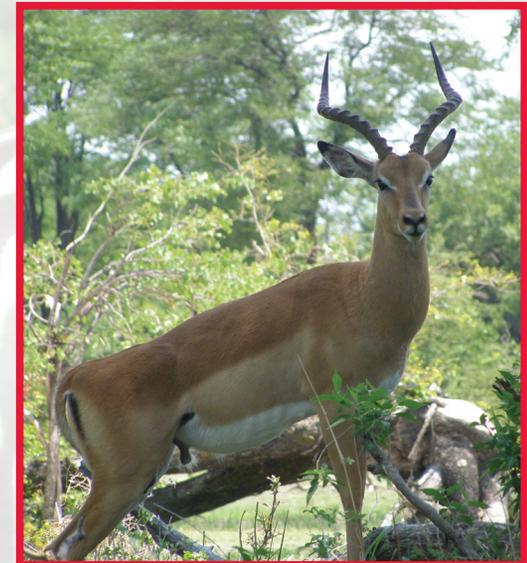
In November 2006, **Dr. Sue Sheridan**, Director of CYFS, visited the University of Zambia (UNZA) with UNL colleagues **Dr. Charles Wood** and **Dr. Ron Yoder** to meet with distinguished delegates and UNZA faculty in the fields of education and psychology, health care, and agriculture. The visit was part of an on-going collaboration that included a visit to UNL by UNZA collaborators during Zambia Week in May 2006. Dr. Sheridan has extensive research and clinical experience in early childhood education and intervention. Dr. Charles Wood, Lewis Lehr/3M University Professor of Biological Sciences, is the Director of the Nebraska Center for Virology. Dr. Wood has long-standing relationships with the UNZA medical community as he spearheads a large, NIH-funded grant to train Zambian physicians and scientists regarding prevention and intervention in the transmission of HIV. Dr. Yoder, Head of the Biological Systems Engineering Department and Professor at UNL, has extensive expertise in agricultural water and natural resources. The purpose of the trip was to continue the

development of a UNL/UNZA collaboration in three critical areas of need (health care, education, and agriculture) in response to HIV/AIDS in Zambia, using the expertise of UNZA and UNL to benefit Zambia. The overall objective of the long-term collaboration is to improve the economy and quality of life for the people of Zambia by (a) reducing the impact of HIV/AIDS across all sectors, (b) enhancing developmental and learning opportunities for young Zambian children and their families, and (c) providing sustainable agricultural production.

As an outcome of this visit, UNL faculty began to develop an understanding of the comprehensive needs of Zambian citizens, including a first-hand account of the “bigger picture” such as the infrastructure for educational and mental health service delivery in the country, and training needs of educational and mental health professionals. As a result, researchers from UNL and UNZA are working to propose a program aimed at enhancing developmental and learning opportunities for young Zambian children and their families. The program will respond to three areas of greatest need identified by the Zambians: a system for

providing early childhood education, especially for those children who have been affected by HIV/AIDS; identifying avenues to work with families to support learning and development for children; and determining ways to support early literacy, including literacy in the local tribal languages and in English.

The efforts to reform education in Zambia are led by the Zambians and supported by the faculty at UNL. These endeavors are in their infancy, but the collaborative partnership and the commitment for improvement are mature.



# Connecting Science Educators with Geoscientists in Antarctica through Research Immersion

The **ANDRILL Research Immersion for Science Educators (ARISE)** project provides the opportunity for science educators nationally and internationally to travel to Antarctica and participate on teams with scientists who are conducting research through ice core drilling. Through this prestigious experience, science educators become immersed in the science being conducted in Antarctica. The drilling efforts of ANDRILL are funded through a large, international grant by the National Science Foundation and led by researchers at UNL, including **Drs. David Harwood** and **Richard Levy**. ARISE is spearheaded by ANDRILL geoscience faculty and staff, including **Frank Rack**, ANDRILL CEO.

In 2006, six science educators from four countries became part of science discipline teams with 20 geologists in Antarctica who conduct ice core drilling and analysis to uncover the earth's history through geologic effects. Educators have used and continue to use the information gained through this experience to develop video journals, internet multimedia materials, and curriculum resources to educate students and the general public about Antarctica and the importance of the work being conducted in Antarctica.

**Drs. Gwen Nugent and Gina Kunz**, research faculty from CYFS, are coordinating evaluation activities related to the impact of this experience on science educators and research scientists, as well as educators' perceptions regarding the impact of their educational and outreach activities on their students and the general public. Evaluation results have shown a direct impact on both educators and scientists. Scientists and educators reportedly shared a mutual benefit from participation in this interdisciplinary experience, with educators learning more about polar geologic drilling and scientists learning more about classroom science instruction and educational outreach. Another team of science educators will accompany the ANDRILL team to Antarctica in the fall of 2007 and will develop additional educational content to inform and inspire students and the general public about the critical work being conducted in Antarctica.



# Future Research Directions: 2006 Faculty Affiliate Layman Recipients

Securing initial funding to support emerging lines of research can be daunting. The UNL Office of Research sponsors the Layman Grant, an annual competition that awards seed money to untenured faculty or tenured faculty who have not yet received an external grant. Applications undergo a rigorous review process. Recipients are expected to submit for external funding and produce prominent scholarly work. CYFS research faculty help faculty affiliates participate in this competition by assisting them with application preparations.



This year, **Dr. James Bovaird** and **Dr. Lisa Knoche**, two faculty affiliates, were among those awarded Layman grants. **Dr. Lisa Knoche's** project, "A Multi-component Parent Engagement Intervention: What are the Sustained Effects for Young Children and Families?" recognizes that active parent engagement during early childhood is foundational for young children's learning and is critical for positive development. A multi-component parent engagement intervention focused on child and family school readiness is

currently being implemented in several Nebraska communities as part of a federally-funded research study housed in CYFS, *The Getting Ready Project*. Initial results of this intervention are promising; however, no data currently are being collected to determine maintenance of effects one year after the intervention has ended. Dr. Knoche's follow-up study will examine the intervention's sustained effect on children's language and academic skills, parent's interactive behaviors, and affective parent variables (i.e., parent level of stress, depression, and parenting sense of competence) as participants (children ages 18 months to 6½ years) transition to new educational environments (i.e., preschool or kindergarten).



**Dr. Bovaird's** project, "Evaluating the Validity of Competing Methods for Measuring Cortical Activity," seeks to help social science researchers determine the best way to analyze their data when using neuroscientific measures of cognitive functioning. In collaboration with the Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience Laboratory at UNL, Dr. Bovaird's research seeks to clarify the properties of existing cortical measurement methods

in the *electroencephalograph* (EEG) modality to improve the use of neural measures of behavior as outcomes in social research. Doing so will improve researchers' ability to accurately capture individual variability and contextual (family, classroom, peer group, etc.) influences on behavioral outcomes.

*The collaborative relationships required for this research were facilitated by Dr. Sheridan. The conceptualization and editorial assistance provided by Dr. Kunz and Dr. Sheridan was absolutely invaluable. Dr. James Bovaird*

## Undergraduates Experience Research at CYFS

CYFS is excited to participate in a UNL program that offers unique opportunities for undergraduates to gain research experience. The **Undergraduate Creative Activities and Research Experiences (UCARE) Program** is operated through the Office of Undergraduate Studies. Students partner with faculty to learn about and engage in research. In their first year as UCARE students, students spend most of their time assisting faculty and learning about their research. During their second year, UCARE students develop their own research projects with assistance from their faculty advisors.

## Grant Writing for Graduate Students

**Liz Sexton**, a junior with a double major in History and English and a double minor in Anthropology and LGBTQ/Sexuality (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Sexuality) Studies, is a second year UCARE student with CYFS. She works most closely with “Development and Implementation of a Field-Based Inquiry Focused Geoscience Course for Pre-Service Teachers,” funded by NSF. While entering project data,

Liz noticed that there seemed to be gender differences in the way students interacted with the subject material, the course instructors, and each other. She conducted her project “Gender Differentiated Responses in Inquiry-Based Science Classes” during the summer of 2007, under the mentorship of **Drs. Gwen Nugent and Gina Kunz**.

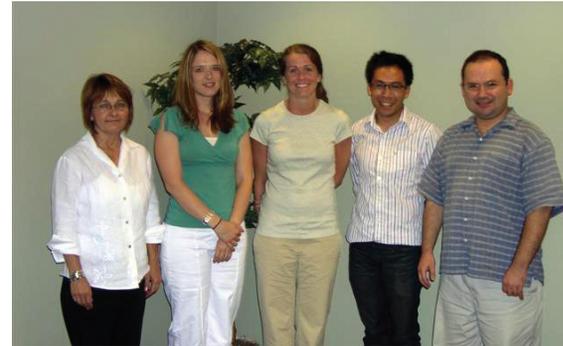


**Amy Ball**, a recent graduate from the inclusive early childhood education program in the College of Education and Human Sciences, participated under the guidance of **Dr. Lisa Knoche**. Amy viewed video-taped parent-child interactions collected as part of the “Getting Ready Project” to code parent level of warmth-sensitivity, support of children’s autonomy, and participation in children’s learning and literacy using a structured observational scheme. Amy established reliability with a team of students. The research experience helped her develop objective observational skills that she will use during formal and informal child assessments as an early childhood educator.



**Sarah Mullins**, a psychology major, works with **Dr. Todd Glover**. During her first UCARE year, Sarah worked on the “Conjoint Behavioral Consultation in the Early Grades” project. She also conducted a study with Dr. Glover investigating an approach used by college students to learn and remember categorical information. This year, Sarah will conduct an independent project investigating outcomes associated with variations in a Response-to-Intervention service delivery model implemented with at-risk elementary school students in Lincoln Public Schools.

In summer 2006, CYFS research faculty **Drs. Gwen Nugent, Gina Kunz, and Todd Glover** again offered a grant writing course geared for graduate students in the College of Education and Human Sciences.



This course (first taught in 2005) is designed to provide graduate students with experience in identifying funding sources suitable to their research, writing a grant application, and conducting peer reviews for their classmates’ proposals. Students experience the

*Students appreciate the unique opportunity to have multiple reviewers of their work and much support throughout the grant writing process.* **Michelle Swanger-Gagné**, school psychology doctoral student and class member.

practical aspects and logistical constraints, such as time, often experienced by researchers who write grants. Each

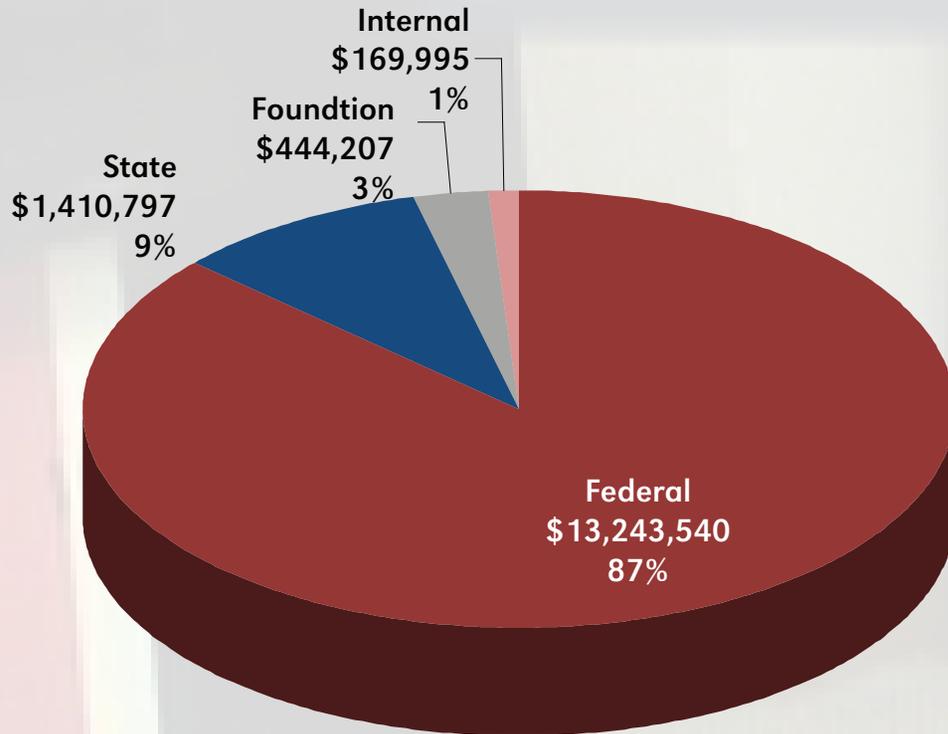
student identified a funding source for their project, conceptualized their project, wrote all major sections of the proposal and submitted the final proposal to class mock review panels.

*Students put tremendous effort into this course. We are encouraged that we are helping prepare researchers who will be able to obtain external funding for their research.* **Dr. Gina Kunz**, course co-instructor

# Landscape of Support

Support for the Center is generated primarily through Program of Excellence (PoE) funds through the UNL Administration and external grant awards. The information presented in the **“Sources of Currently Funded Grants”** represents the dollar amounts and percentages of dollars awarded in funds from various funding sources, including federal, state, foundation, and internal. The **“CYFS Snapshot of Grant Activity”** highlights cumulative information pertinent to grants submitted; grants awarded; current and total dollar amounts awarded in external funds; number of grants currently in submission; and return rate to UNL. **“Cumulative External Grant Dollars Relative to Program of Excellence (PoE) Support”** depicts growth in external funds awarded to UNL through the Center and dollar amounts relevant to Program of Excellence support.

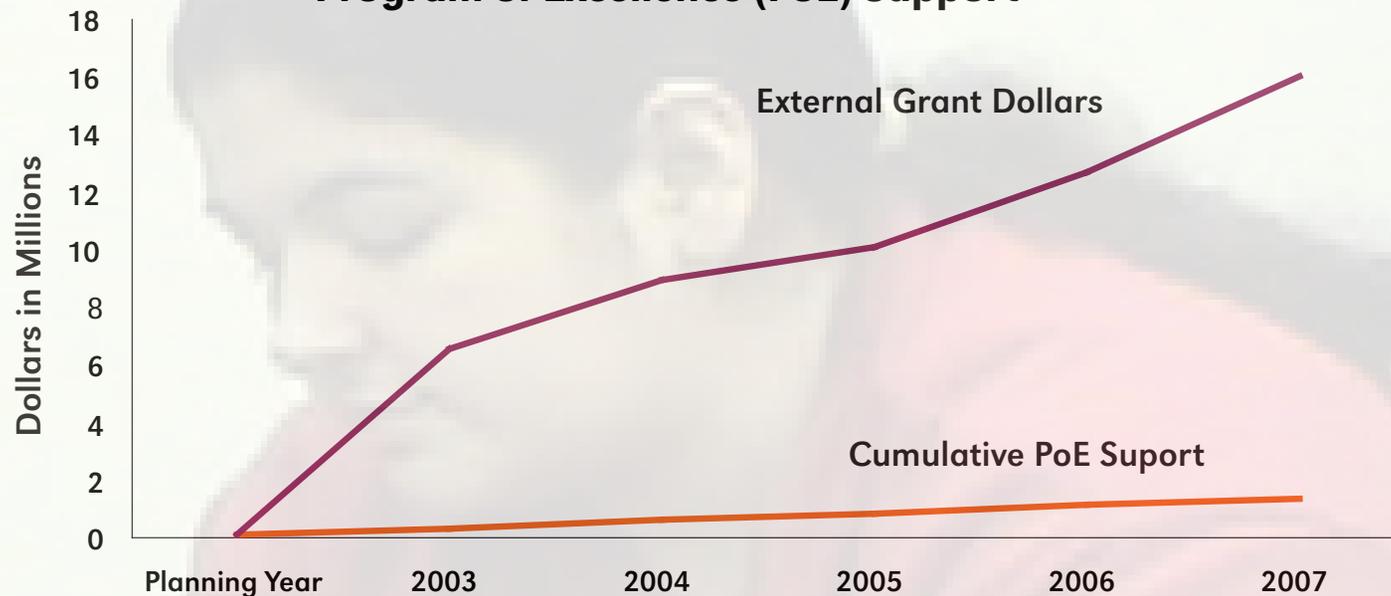
**Sources of Currently Funded Grants**



*The CYFS provides outstanding help to me as a pre-tenured faculty. I have received training and mentoring on obtaining federal and private grants. I have also received help from the CYFS staff in conceptualizing, writing, and submitting several grants. Their help has been truly invaluable to me as I learn to navigate the world of grant funding for my work.*

**Oksana Yakushko, PhD**, Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Psychology

## Cumulative External Grant Dollars Relative to Program of Excellence (PoE) Support



*The partnership between the Nebraska Transportation Center and CYFS over the past few years has been mutually beneficial for both of our respective research groups. We have successfully collaborated on a number of joint research projects, and I am convinced that our partnership made these efforts successful. More importantly, outcomes from our projects, particularly those involving bringing engineering concepts to middle and high school teachers, are having a measurable impact on the state of Nebraska. We have received fantastic support from the Nebraska business community, and we plan to continue to draw on the support we have received and our collective strengths to persevere in our efforts to impact teachers, their students, and our future leaders.*

**L. R. Rilett, Ph.D., P.E.;** Keith W. Klaasmeyer Chair in Engineering and Technology at UNL and Director, Mid-America Transportation Center

### CYFS Snapshot of Grant Activity Since 2003

Initiation of Program of Excellence	2003
Total Program of Excellence (PoE) Funds to Date	\$1,000,000
Total Dollar Amount of Grants Submitted	\$93,507,002
Total Number of Grants Submitted through CYFS	96
Number of Grants for which Decisions are Known	89
Total Number of Grants Funded	45
Hit Rate of Funded Grants (based on known decisions)	51%
Total Dollar Amount of External Grants Funded	\$15,993,045
Total Dollar Amount of Internal Grants Funded	\$179,917
Total Dollar Amount of All Grants Funded	\$16,172,962
Average Size of Funded Grant	\$359,399
Percent of Grant Dollars from Federal Agencies	86%
Number of Grants Currently in Submission	7
Total Dollar Amount of Grants Currently in Submission	\$8,803,248
Return Rate to UNL (based on external funds) returned for every \$1 invested	\$15.99

# FEDERAL (\$13,243,540 currently funded)

## **Health and Human Services**

*The Role of Tribal Child Care Programs in Serving Children Birth to Five*  
Carolyn Pope Edwards, Linda Willis

## **National Institutes of Health**

*Parent Engagement and Child Learning Birth to Five*  
Susan Sheridan, Carolyn Pope Edwards

*Parent Engagement and Child Learning Birth to Five – Diversity Supplement*  
Susan Sheridan

## **National Science Foundation**

*Field-Based Inquiry Focused Geoscience*  
Denise Green

*ARISE Evaluation*

Gwen Nugent, Gina Kunz

*Robotics and GPS/GIS in 4-H: Workplace Skills for the 21st Century*  
Bradley Barker, Viacheslay (Slava) Adamchuk

*Embedding and Validating Empirical Usage Intelligence in Learning Objects*  
Ashok Samal, Leen-Kiat Soh, Gwen Nugent

*Development and Implementation of a Field-Based Inquiry Focused Geoscience Course for Pre-Service Teachers*  
Richard Levy, David Harwood, Gwen Nugent, Gina Kunz

## **Institute of Museum & Library Sciences**

*Evaluation: Healthy Families Play Outside*  
Gwen Nugent

## **U.S. Department of Education**

*Rural Language and Literacy Connections*  
Lisa Knoche

*Project MPUP-EC: Mountain Prairie Upgrade Partnership – Early Childhood*  
Christine Marvin, Malinda Eccarius

*Evaluation of the Efficacy of CBC for Addressing Disruptive Behaviors of Children At-Risk for Academic Failure*  
Susan Sheridan, Todd Glover

*School Psychology Leadership Specialization in Family-Centered Interdisciplinary Collaboration*  
Susan Sheridan, Cynthia Ellis

*School Psychology Leadership Specialization in Response-to-Intervention Research and Systems Change*  
Edward Daly, III, Merilee McCurdy, Susan Sheridan, Gina Kunz

*Partners in Education Evaluation*  
Gina Kunz

*CYFS Evaluation for LPS Mentor Project*  
Gwen Nugent

## **U.S. Department of Transportation**

*Transportation Curriculum Development Using Technology Application in STEM*  
Laurence Rilett, Gina Kunz

*We enjoy the professional relationship we have with the CYFS faculty and staff. We appreciate their contribution to two of our projects in particular, the field-based geology course and the ANDRILL Research Immersion for Science Educators (ARISE). It is rare to have such wonderful opportunities to collaborate in a truly interdisciplinary fashion between science and education, resulting in strengthened ideas and project outcomes.*

**David Harwood, PhD and Richard Levy, PhD,**  
Department of Geosciences, UNL

## **STATE (\$1,410,797 currently funded)**

### **Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education**

*Professional Development Science and Math Summer Technology Institute*

Laurence Rilett, Gina Kunz, Gwen Nugent

*Professional Development Science and Math Technology Institute, Continuation*

Laurence Rilett, Gina Kunz, Gwen Nugent

### **Nebraska Department of Education**

*Nebraska Early Childhood Deaf Education Personnel Upgrade Project*

Christine Marvin

*State-Wide Response-to-Intervention Consortium for Training and Evaluation*

Todd Glover, Lisa Kelly-Vance, Edward Daly, III, Merilee McCurdy

*As faculty, I have found the Center to be invaluable. The Center has teamed with me in the exploration, design, writing, and implementation of grants, and I participate in a variety of training and educational experiences that help me stay on top of the changing worlds of research and grant-writing. Even more significantly, the people at the Center provide encouragement for my research efforts that help me to remain committed and focused in my pursuit of external funding. The staff and faculty of the Center offer the necessary support in multiple forms so that I can remain extremely effective as a researcher.*

**Dr. Michael Scheel, Counseling Psychology**

## **FOUNDATION/OTHER (\$444,207 currently funded)**

### **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**

*Early Childhood Initiative Evaluation Planning*

Helen Raikes, Brian Wilcox

### **Carnegie Foundation**

*Carnegie Network on the Professional Practice Doctorate*

Margaret Latta, Larry Dlugosh

### **Cooper Foundation**

*Project TEAMS Supplement*

Suzanne Kemp

### **Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts**

*ArtsReach Program Evaluation*

Gina Kunz

### **Harvard School of Public Health**

*National Forum on the Science of Early Childhood Intervention*

Helen Raikes

### **School Psychology Leadership Roundtable**

*School Psychology Futures: Family School Partnership*

Susan Sheridan

### **Society for the Study of School Psychology**

*An Extension of Response to Intervention: Moving Toward*

*Written Language*

Merilee McCurdy

### **Woods Charitable Foundation**

*Effective Treatment of Adolescent Sex Offenders: The Development and Implementation of a Risk Assessment Service*

Jodi Viljoen

*Summer Writing Clinic*

Merilee McCurdy

*Project TEAMS Adolescent Risk-Taking Behaviors and Outcomes: Reintegrating Juveniles into School Settings*

Suzanne Kemp

**University of Nebraska  
Medical Center**

**Munroe-Meyer Institute**

*Education & Child  
Development*

Barbara Jackson

*Behavioral Genetics*

Wayne Fisher

*Genetics*

G. Bradley Schaefer

*Psychology*

Keith Allen

Joseph Evans

Mark Shriver

Rachel Valleley

*Psychiatry*

Christopher Kratochvil

**University of Nebraska–  
Lincoln**

**Cooperative Extension  
Division**

*4-H Youth Development*

Brad Barker

Beth Birnstihl

Kathleen Lodl

**College of Education &  
Human Sciences**

Marjorie Kostelnik, Dean

*Educational  
Administration*

Jody Isernhagen

*Educational Psychology*

James Bovaird

Eric Buhs

Edward Daly, III

M. Meghan Davidson

Beth Doll

Todd Glover

Denise Green

Kenneth Kiewra

Lisa Knoche

Gina Kunz

Merilee McCurdy

Ian Newman

Gwen Nugent

Michael Scheel

Duane Shell

Susan Sheridan

Susan Swearer

Oksana Yakushko

*Family & Consumer  
Sciences*

Richard Bischoff

Kathy Bosch

Susan Churchill

Rochelle Dalla

John DeFrain

Maria Rosario T.

deGuzman

Carolyn Pope Edwards

Gloria Gonzalez-Kruger

Cody Hollist

Julie Johnson

Helen Raikes

Michelle Rupiper

Julia Torquati

Yan Xia

*Nutrition & Health  
Sciences*

Linda Boeckner

Georgia Jones

Nancy Lewis

Christina Perry

Kaye Stanke-Krogstrand

*Special Education &  
Communication Disorders*

Cynthia Cress

Malinda Eccarius

Joan Erickson

Suzanne Kemp

Christine Marvin

Reece Peterson

Dixie Sanger

Marilyn Scheffler

Ellin Siegel

*Teaching, Learning, &  
Teacher Education*

David Brooks

Edmund (Ted) Hamann

Ruth Heaton

Margaret Latta

Tom McGowan

James O’Hanlon

Kathy Phillips

Loukia Sarroub

Guy Trainin

Kathy Wilson

**College of Arts &  
Sciences**

Richard Hoffmann, Dean

*Center for Children,  
Families, and the Law*

Victoria Weisz

Brian Wilcox

*Communication Studies*

Dawn Braithwaite

Jody Koenig Kellas

Jordan Soliz

*English/Women’s Studies*

Amy Goodburn

*Geosciences*

Richard Levy

*Mathematics*

W. James Lewis

*Psychology*

Gustavo Carlo

Lisa Crockett

David DiLillo

Kimberly Andrews Espy

Julia Hua Fang

David Hansen

Marc Kiviniemi

Marcela Raffaelli

Anne Schutte

Jodi Viljoen

Sandra Wiebe

*Sociology*

Christina Falci

Dan Hoyt

Julia McQuillan

Rosalie Torres Stone

Kimberly Tyler

Les Whitbeck

*Sociology/Women’s  
Studies*

Helen Moore

**University of Nebraska  
Public Policy Center**

Denise Bulling

Mark DeKraai

**University of Nebraska at  
Omaha**

**College of Arts &  
Sciences**

*Psychology*

Juan Casas

Lisa Kelly-Vance

Lauree Tilton-Weaver

*School of Social Work*

Jeanette Harder

Gwen Weber

**Nebraska Center for Research on CYFS**

Tina Hoffman

*CYFS Statistics & Research Methodology Unit*

Michael Toland  
Kevin Kupzyk

*Individual Grant Submissions*

Brandy Clarke  
Kelly Haack  
Jody Lieske  
Kelly Love

*Grant Writing Class – Summer 2006*

Sharon Hoffman  
Michelle Swanger  
Ashley Rohlk  
Ignatius Nip  
Marat Sanatullou

*Grant Writing Class – Summer 2007*

Courtney Haines  
Courtney LeClair  
Ying Zhang  
Stephanie Schmitz  
Katie Woods  
Amanda Albertson  
Jamie Gonzalez  
Sandi Potter

*Parent Engagement and Child Learning  
Birth to Five (Getting Ready Project)*

Jenny Viessmann Burt  
Tara Hart  
Amy Chatelain  
Keely Cline  
Sandra Potter  
Sue Bainter  
Doug Oxley  
Anabel Tapia-Marin  
Ashley Rohlk  
Carlota Rodelo  
Allison Osborn  
Kelly Rasmussen  
Danielle Bauer  
Jamie Pointer

*Parent Engagement and Child Learning  
Birth to Five – Diversity Supplement*

Jaime Gonzalez

*School Psychology Leadership Specialization  
in Family-Centered Interdisciplinary  
Collaboration*

Katie Woods  
Carrie Blevins  
Katie Magee

*Evaluation of the Efficacy of CBC for  
Addressing Disruptive Behaviors of Children  
At-Risk for Academic Failure*

Andy Garbacz  
Lynae Frerichs  
Christina Meints  
Abby Bjornsen  
Michelle Swanger  
Breanna Gal  
Laura Mullaney  
Katie Gill  
Allison Bitz

*School Psychology Leadership Specialization  
in Response-to-Intervention Research and  
Systems Change*

Melissa Andersen  
April Turner  
Courtney LeClair  
Amanda Albertson  
Stephanie Schmitz  
Sara Kupzyk

*State-Wide Response-to-Intervention  
Consortium for Training and Evaluation*

Alexandra Sorman  
Ann Crawford  
Melanie McCoy

# The Nebraska Center For Research On Children, Youth, Families and Schools

## ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP

**Susan M. Sheridan**

Director

**Gwen L. Nugent**

Research Associate Professor

**Gina M. Kunz**

Research Assistant Professor

**Todd A. Glover**

Research Assistant Professor

## PROJECT DIRECTORS

**Lisa Knoche**

Research Assistant Professor  
Getting Ready Project

**Tanya Ihlo**

Research Assistant Professor  
Nebraska Response to Intervention  
Consortium

**Amanda Witte**

CBC in the Early Grades

**Kristen Werks**

Mountain Prairie Partnership

## POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWS

**Brandy Clarke**

## STATISTICS AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY UNIT

**James Bovaird**

Director

**Michael Toland**

Graduate Research Assistant

**Kevin Kupzyk**

Graduate Research Assistant

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**Ricky Keim**

Computer Technician

**Istiaque Ali**

Database Coordinator

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**Cindy Schuerman**

Grant Specialist

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**Holly Sexton**

Office Supervisor

**Tina Hoffman**

Graduate Research Assistant

## UCARE STUDENTS

**Amy Ball & Heidi Dostal**

Getting Ready Project  
Lisa Knoche, Faculty Supervisor

**Sara Mullins**

CBC in the Early Grades  
Todd Glover, Faculty Supervisor

**Elizabeth Sexton**

Geoscience Education  
Gwen Nugent & Gina Kunz  
Faculty Supervisors

**Tristan Weinmaster**

Math & Science Professional Development  
Gina Kunz & Gwen Nugent  
Faculty Supervisors



# The Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools

College of Education and Human Sciences

with

College of Arts and Sciences

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

*The Center is making excellent progress. I am especially pleased with the mentoring activities relative to graduate students, faculty and others across campus interested in cutting edge methodologies. The distinctive nature of the CYFS content and the focus on professional development in research methods are unique features of the Center. CYFS continues to be an exciting adventure.*

**Dr. Marjorie Kostelnik**, Dean of the College of Education and Human Sciences

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*“...and into the Future.”*