

# TOGETHER WE CAN...

Nebraska Center for Research on  
Children, Youth, Families & Schools



2012-2013  
ANNUAL REPORT

**N** CYFS



TOGETHER WE CAN...

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# Message From the Director



**Susan M. Sheridan, PhD**

George Holmes University Professor  
& Willa Cather Emeritus Professor of  
Educational Psychology

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

Director, National Center for Research  
on Rural Education

The Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools owes its very existence to the spirit of collaboration that has since come to define us. Throughout our nine-year history, we have counted ourselves fortunate to foster and join many collective efforts to improve people's lives – efforts born of mutual goals, corresponding commitment and steadfast belief in the power of partnerships.

This belief has driven our formation of a multidisciplinary research network that catalyzes the conversations essential to spanning ever-narrowing gaps between psychology and sociology, early childhood and the economy, pedagogy and intervention. It has motivated us to help researchers, practitioners and policymakers consider their specific responsibilities in the context of those whose work inevitably shapes, and is shaped by, their own. It has encouraged us to unite families, schools and communities, sparking unprecedented understanding and continuity across classrooms and homes. And it has stimulated us to reach beyond the walls of our center, the edges of our campus, the borders of our state, and the boundaries of our country.

In these forms and many others, the principles of collaboration ultimately remind us of a past that shaped us, serve as a touchstone of the present that guides us, and offer a vision of the future that inspires us. The challenges facing children, youth, families and schools will continue to arise and evolve, demanding questions, insights and solutions that will likely prove too much for any one of us alone to overcome. Yet if the past nine years – and especially the past 12 months – have taught us anything, it is this: Together we can.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan M. Sheridan". The script is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial 'S'.

Susan M. Sheridan



## Our Mission

To advance the conduct of high-quality interdisciplinary research to promote the intellectual, behavioral and social-emotional development and functioning of individuals across educational, familial and community contexts. Central to this is enhancing our understanding of how these complex systems work dynamically to support the future of our nation.

### CYFS Annual Report Executive Staff

Dr. Gina Kunz, Editor-in-Chief  
Seth Teager, Designer  
Scott Schrage, Writer / Editor / Photographer  
Marj McKinty, Editor

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Jim Haldeman (flickr.com/jimhpa)*

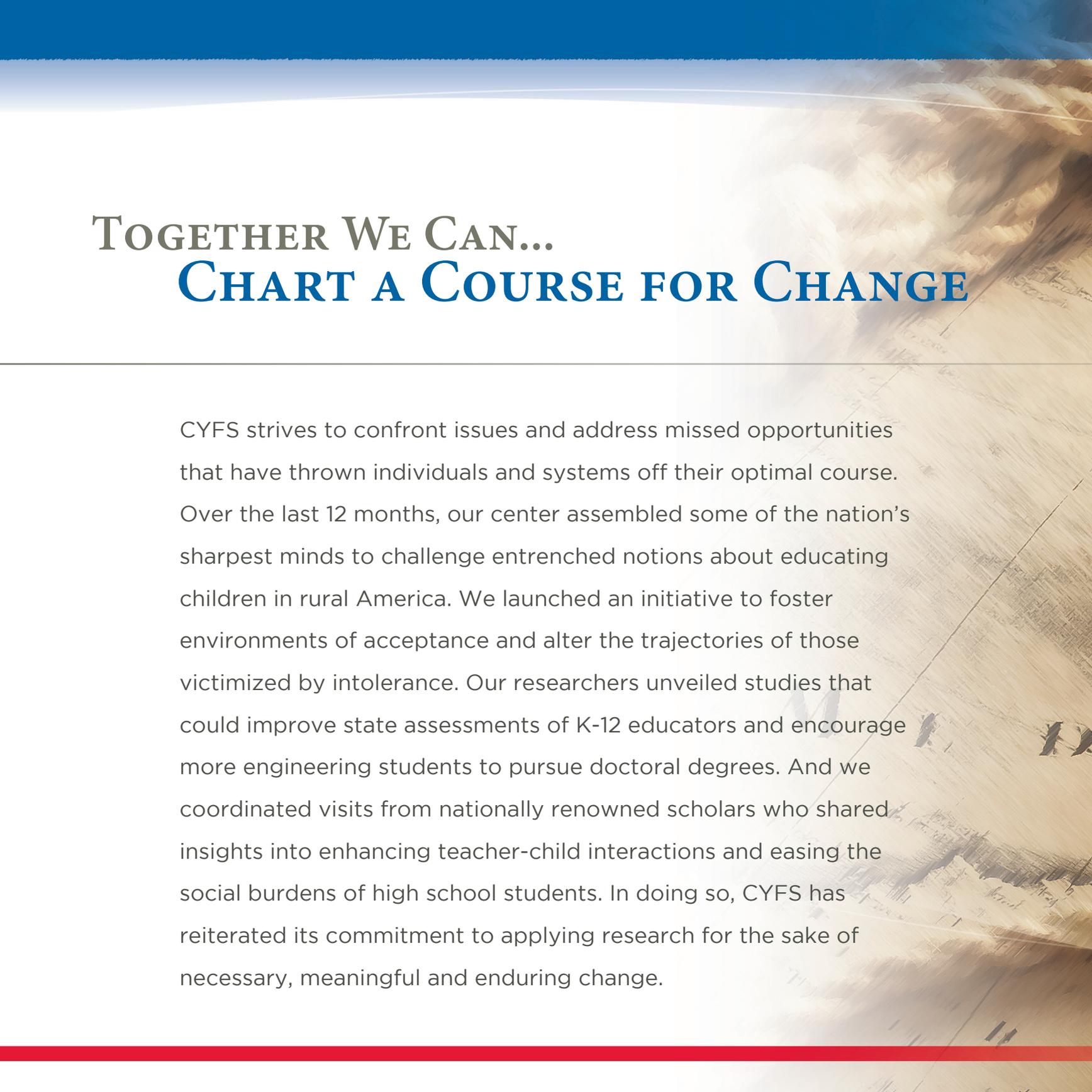
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## About CYFS

We create the context for researchers, in partnership with community stakeholders, to establish reliable findings; inform and influence the knowledge base; translate findings into evidence-based practices; and provide scientifically grounded education, leadership and outreach. The infrastructure of CYFS supports the establishment of prevailing initiatives to impact the lives of children, youth, families and schools.

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# TOGETHER WE CAN... CHART A COURSE FOR CHANGE

CYFS strives to confront issues and address missed opportunities that have thrown individuals and systems off their optimal course. Over the last 12 months, our center assembled some of the nation's sharpest minds to challenge entrenched notions about educating children in rural America. We launched an initiative to foster environments of acceptance and alter the trajectories of those victimized by intolerance. Our researchers unveiled studies that could improve state assessments of K-12 educators and encourage more engineering students to pursue doctoral degrees. And we coordinated visits from nationally renowned scholars who shared insights into enhancing teacher-child interactions and easing the social burdens of high school students. In doing so, CYFS has reiterated its commitment to applying research for the sake of necessary, meaningful and enduring change.

I T E R



# ADVANCING THE CAUSE OF RURAL STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The CYFS-housed National Center for Research on Rural Education (R<sup>2</sup>Ed) fostered dialogue and disseminated findings about factors influencing the academic success of rural K-12 students when it hosted 150 researchers, practitioners and policymakers for an April conference in Omaha, Nebraska.

Titled *Connect-Inform-Advance*, the 2013 National Conference on Rural Education Research generated discussion about the interrelated impacts of teaching, family engagement, school environment and contextual factors on rural student performance. The two-day event, which drew participants from 19 states, also featured nine research presentations that

covered issues ranging from teacher professional development and family-school partnership approaches to American Indian education initiatives, rural school reform standards, and methodological considerations.

Roundtable discussions and moderated panels followed each series of presentations, offering participants the opportunity to engage in dialogue while providing and receiving real-time reactions via Twitter. Multiple presenters and panelists emphasized the value in establishing partnerships among researchers, teachers and families that can lead to practical, effectual and sustainable solutions to long-standing challenges such as resource limitations and relative isolation.

“All of the conference participants attended because of a personal and vested interest not only in rural education, but also in the connections among research, practice and policy,” said R<sup>2</sup>Ed Director Susan Sheridan. “It is a shared interest in determining how these sectors inform, and are informed by, each other – and how they together can promote the academic experiences and achievement of students in rural communities.”

John White, Deputy Secretary for Rural Outreach at the U.S. Department of Education, gave a special address on increasing



*Researchers, practitioners and policymakers prepare for the start of Connect-Inform-Advance.*

*“The primary goal of the rural center is to uncover methods for enhancing educational experiences for the 9.6 million of our nation’s children who attend rural schools”*



*Interstate 35 Elementary in Truro, Iowa, represents one of the many schools to partner with the CYFS-housed National Center for Research on Rural Education, funded by the Institute of Education Sciences.*

interest in teaching careers and attracting talented educators to rural schools. Keynote speaker Roger Breed, Nebraska’s Commissioner of Education, discussed the challenges and opportunities inherent to rural schools in the Cornhusker State and nationwide.

“The primary goal of the rural center is to uncover methods for enhancing educational experiences for the 9.6 million of our nation’s children who attend rural schools,” Sheridan said. “We’re honored and excited that leaders and innovators from across the rural education spectrum contributed their collective experience and shared in our collective purpose.”



*Teachers share their thoughts on using evidence-based strategies to improve instruction in rural schools. Learn more at [r2ed.unl.edu/2013](http://r2ed.unl.edu/2013).*

# TAKING THE INITIATIVE TO FOSTER ACCEPTING COMMUNITIES



*"If we can empower individuals to stand up to the inequities they see and experience, then we can end many negative behaviors"*

*Susan Swearer (above) leads a workshop on the N-Lighten curriculum she co-developed with Paul Mitchell Schools.*

What do Paul Mitchell hairdressers, the Army National Guard and pop star Lady Gaga have in common? All have collaborated with the new CYFS-housed Empowerment Initiative to further its mission of supporting personal, cultural and social acceptance from childhood through adulthood.

Created by CYFS faculty affiliate Susan Swearer in early 2013, the Empowerment Initiative conducts research and outreach designed to foster positive communities free from bullying and other negative behaviors. Swearer and the initiative's roster of doctoral candidates study various facets of empowerment and bullying, from social anxiety, body image and family dynamics to college hazing, intimate partner violence and bystander behavior.

The initiative gained early momentum by teaming up with the nationwide network of more than 100 Paul Mitchell Schools. This partnership spurred the creation of N-Lighten, the first social-emotional skills curriculum designed for staff and students in a higher education setting. In July 2013, Swearer hosted an N-Lighten workshop for Paul Mitchell instructors, who will disseminate the curriculum to their approximately 16,000 cosmetology students. In turn, these students will eventually share N-Lighten's lessons with high schools in their local communities.

Together with the National Guard and the Harvard Graduate School of Education, the Empowerment Initiative has also guided the development of Helping Everyone Achieve Respect, an anti-bullying presentation created for high school students. The presentation features case studies and questions that help students identify causes and consequences of bullying, learn how



to react when encountering it, and communicate concerns with teachers and administrators.

Swearer, who chairs the research advisory board of Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation, also served as the behavioral health team leader for Gaga's Born Brave Bus Tour in early 2013. The series of pre-concert tailgates offered adolescents and young adults the chance to connect with their peers and receive information on anti-bullying efforts, suicide prevention and local mental health services.

Swearer believes these initial partnerships have already illustrated how research can help people from all stages of the developmental spectrum improve their outlooks and overcome challenges.

"If we can empower individuals to stand up to the inequities they see and experience, then we can end many negative behaviors," Swearer said. "The Empowerment Initiative will continue contributing to these efforts by conducting applicable research that reaches people where they live, learn, work and play."

To learn more about the Empowerment Initiative, visit [empowerment.unl.edu](http://empowerment.unl.edu).

# STABILIZING THE TEACHER GRADING SCALE

As states across the country look to improve their education systems, teachers accustomed to handing out grades now routinely find themselves on the receiving end of their own performance assessments.

*Hawley's approach may reduce the chances of undervaluing quality teachers and overrating substandard educators*

Leslie Hawley, a postdoctoral trainee with the CYFS Statistics and Research Methodology Unit, has published an award-winning dissertation that outlines a methodology for more precisely measuring that performance.

According to Hawley, many states assess teachers using “value-added” performance measures that place great weight on students’ standardized test scores, which often account for up to 50 percent of a teacher’s evaluation. Combining this information with other factors to construct a single evaluation score, however, requires making decisions and assumptions about data that can diminish the stability of the outcomes, she said. Her dissertation subsequently found that different methods of merging information can lead to significant fluctuations in where teachers rank among their peers.

Accordingly, Hawley explored the potential of “latent variable” methods – which incorporate multiple test scores – to reduce

measurement error and produce more consistent estimates of teacher effectiveness.

“No method is perfect,” said Hawley, “but I would hope that, if we had 300 teachers, it would be the difference between ranking a teacher 255th or 250th. But if a teacher is ranked 250th under one

set of assumptions and ranked second under another set, that’s a problem – one that was sometimes present in the results.

“When you use latent variable methods ... you are making fewer assumptions about how the information is combined. You’re essentially letting the data do a little bit more of the talking.”

Hawley’s results provided support for this hypothesis, with the latent variable methods yielding more stable teacher rankings across conditions examined in her study. This indicates that the latent variable approach could reduce the chances of undervaluing quality teachers and overrating substandard educators, she said.

“We’re making very high-stakes decisions,” Hawley said. “I feel very strongly that if we’re going to make these decisions – and states are going to use these methods – that they need to be done very carefully and cautiously. The methods need to be fleshed out and rigorously evaluated for all kinds of potential scenarios.”



*Right: Leslie Hawley*



# DECONSTRUCTING MISCONCEPTIONS OF ENGINEERING UNDERGRADS

In wrapping up her doctorate with an award-winning dissertation, CYFS project manager Michelle Howell Smith has helped reveal why undergraduate engineering students often shy away from pursuing a Ph.D. of their own.

Howell Smith, winner of the 2013 Outstanding Mixed Methods Dissertation Award from the American Educational Research Association, has refuted the prevailing notion that engineering undergraduates don't perceive any financial benefit to earning a doctorate.

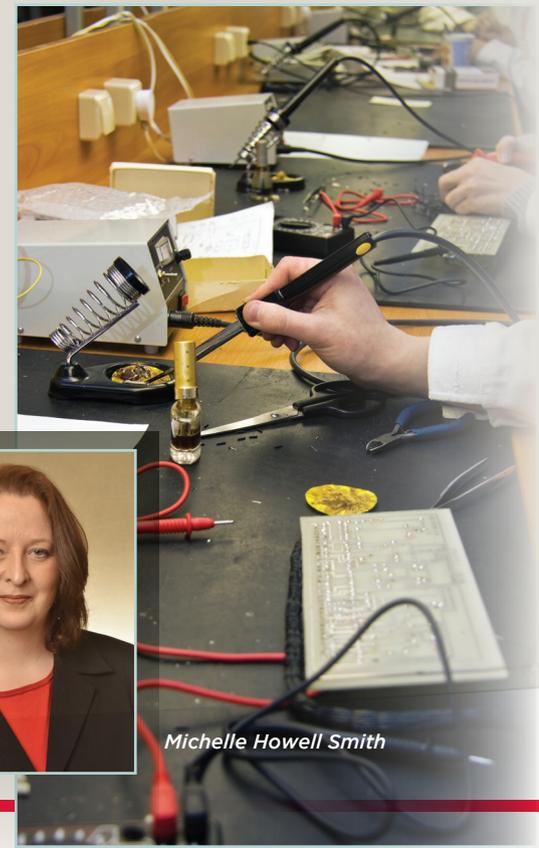
Though her study did confirm that an engineering doctorate confers little financial advantage, Howell Smith also learned that most undergraduates actually believe that doctorates lead to higher incomes. However, they often mistakenly assume that these terminal degrees lead only to careers involving syllabi, tenure and tweed, she said.

“What I really found was that undergraduate students don't understand the nature of Ph.D.-level work,” said Howell Smith. “Only about 20 percent of engineering Ph.D.s go into academia, so that means 80 percent of them are out there working in the ‘real world.’ But Ph.D.s are largely invisible to them, other than as faculty at the front of the classroom. And many undergraduate

students may say, ‘I don't want to be a professor, so I don't need a Ph.D.’”

Yet Howell Smith also found that students who know someone with a doctorate are more likely to consider the possibility of pursuing one themselves – a fact she hopes can help recruit future generations of engineers seeking more challenging and satisfying careers.

“That's where we can work on filling some gaps and getting the right people into Ph.D. programs,” Howell Smith said. “It's not really at all about the money; it's about quality of life and fulfillment with the work they're doing that drives the people who get their Ph.D.s.”



Michelle Howell Smith

## EXTENDING THE REACH OF RESEARCH

What's in a name? In 2013, "Robert" signified CYFS' ongoing commitment to hosting presentations that highlight research from the nation's most renowned scholars.

The University of Virginia's **Robert Pianta**, Dean of UVA's Curry School of Education, presented a decade of research on teacher-child interactions during a February symposium co-coordinated by CYFS. Pianta summarized findings gleaned from his Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), different versions of which have been used to measure and code interactions from preschool through high school.

In addition to examining the ways that instructional and emotional support can influence social and cognitive development, Pianta illustrated how classroom observations can be leveraged to improve early learning. Following the presentation, a series of four roundtable discussions covered topics that included the use of CLASS in early childhood settings, its capacity for evaluating classroom environment and teacher practice, and its application in research on teacher and student engagement.

In April, the University of Texas at Austin's **Robert Crosnoe** visited CYFS to outline how the social challenges of high school shape adolescent development. A professor of sociology at UT



*In April, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Office of Research & Economic Development funded a talk from **Robert Crosnoe** (left).*



***Robert Pianta** (above) presented his research as part of *The Helen Kelley Symposium for Excellence in Education*.*

Austin, Crosnoe laid out the lessons learned from ethnographic research in a large Texas high school and demographic research on national samples of adolescents.

Crosnoe focused especially on how the dynamics of peer interactions and social ostracism – often stemming from issues of body image and sexual orientation – can alter the long-term trajectories of teenagers' academic achievement. He also explored the impacts of social media, education reforms and demographic shifts on the experiences of high school students.

To watch videos of these and other CYFS-hosted research presentations, please visit [cyfs.unl.edu/resources\\_publications](http://cyfs.unl.edu/resources_publications).

# TOGETHER WE CAN...

## CULTIVATE PROMISING FUTURES

Research has demonstrated that early education and development can profoundly influence children's academic, social and professional prospects. When children fail to receive adequate support during their most formative stages, they may find themselves struggling to make up ground many years down the line. The proper resources and assistance, however, can equip children with the skills and mindset to excel through adolescence and adulthood. To this end, CYFS is quantifying the value of investments in early childhood programming - and following suit by supporting education in the Western Hemisphere's poorest country. Our scholars have also established how children benefit from family-school partnerships and begun exploring the academic links to their emerging personalities. Together, these efforts represent the center's multifaceted approach to giving children every opportunity to achieve their potential.



# FINDING THE VALUE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD INVESTMENTS

Conventional wisdom says that a penny saved is a penny earned. A CYFS research team is examining the other side of the coin by pinpointing the value of Nebraska's investments in early childhood.

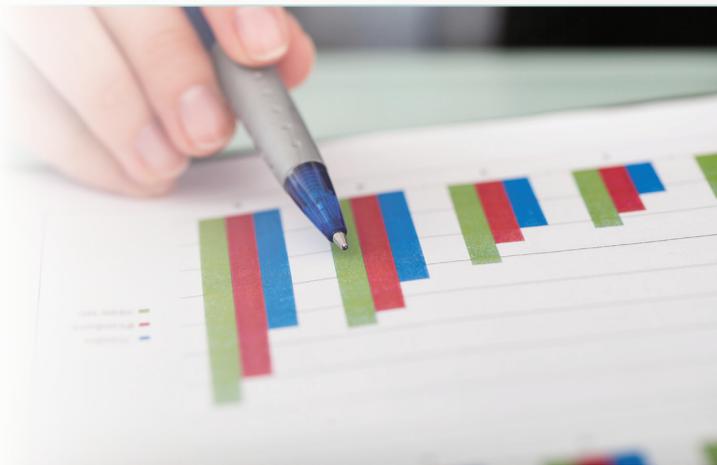
Lisa Knoche, a CYFS Research Associate Professor, has teamed with faculty affiliates David Rosenbaum and Eric Thompson to identify “economic indicators” that reflect future returns on funding early childhood education and programming in the Cornhusker State. These indicators range from children's academic achievement and educational advancement to their subsequent socioeconomic status, criminal activity and overall

well-being. The team has also identified parents' earnings, employment and health as meaningful indicators.

Knoche has reviewed dozens of studies that provide estimates for these indicators, specifically identifying analyses of states similar to Nebraska in terms of population demographics, economic climate and other relevant characteristics. These estimates are allowing Rosenbaum and Thompson to project the economic benefits – including reduced costs of education, crime and child welfare – that result from Nebraska's own investments.

The team's modeling approach will enable the researchers to dynamically predict the outcomes of each economic indicator – and its associated financial benefits – according to any change in early childhood funding. As an example, the team noted that if Nebraska were considering a funding increase that gave 10 percent more children access to early education, the model could calculate the economic benefits associated with increased rates of high school graduation and college completion.

Knoche also noted that the model will allow the researchers to calculate economic benefits over the span of an entire generation, from the cost savings of early childhood to the continued savings and increased earnings of adulthood. Consequently, it will also provide projections on payback periods and rates of return on investment.



The team, which received funding from the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, plans to translate its cost-benefit analyses into easily digestible formats that it hopes will inform the state's future policymaking.

“We believe we can show that these investments will yield a really positive, meaningful economic benefit,” Knoche said.

“The policymakers have enormous responsibility; they have many people talking to them about many different issues. If we can provide them with some compelling, informed data, we have a better chance of producing meaningful change in policy.”

## GOING THE DISTANCE FOR HAITIAN EDUCATION

After visiting Haiti's impoverished and earthquake-ravaged La Montagne (mawn-TYN<sup>®</sup>) region in late 2011, CYFS Director Susan Sheridan felt compelled to support the education of its children.

By collaborating with Comité Education La Montagne (CEL), an association of the region's educators and school administrators, Sheridan created the nonprofit Elevating Haitian Education initiative. This initiative has focused on assisting children whose families struggle to afford the tuition they need to attend school. In response, friends of CYFS have shown remarkable generosity, offering contributions that allowed 51 La Montagne students to enroll in the 2012-2013 academic year.

Sheridan returned to La Montagne in early 2013, visiting four schools and meeting more than 10 students who have personally benefited from the kindness of donors. Schoolteachers shared the documented progress of their scholarship students, whose

grateful parents have invested in their children by meeting regularly with educators and paying the costs of school supplies.

In tandem with CEL, Elevating Haitian Education now aims to continue funding the same promising students who received scholarships last year. The groups collectively hope to support these children through graduation, helping them earn a comprehensive education that will give them opportunities to improve their local communities from within.

To learn more about Elevating Haitian Education – and how you can provide another year of education for a La Montagne child – please visit [cyfs.unl.edu/haiti](http://cyfs.unl.edu/haiti).



*Elevating Haitian Education donors helped 51 Haitian children attend school during the 2012-2013 academic year. Visit [cyfs.unl.edu/haiti](http://cyfs.unl.edu/haiti) to learn more.*

# INFORMING VIEWS ON FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

A CYFS research paper that identified the rewards of connecting families and schools received its own recognition as Article of the Year from School Psychology Review, an academic journal published by the National Association of School Psychologists.

Lead author and CYFS Director Susan Sheridan accepted the award at NASP's 2013 Annual Convention in Seattle. The article outlines results from a large-scale experimental trial of Conjoint Behavioral Consultation, a family-school partnership model aimed at improving the behavior of students whom teachers have identified as disruptive in class.

The trial revealed that students whose parents and teachers participated in Conjoint Behavioral Consultation showed greater gains in prosocial behaviors and social skills than did peers in the control group. The researchers also found that CBC teachers reported improvements in relating to the parents of their students – and that this relationship facilitated CBC's impact on children's behavior.

“This award exemplifies the strength of collaboration and partnerships at many levels,” said Sheridan, who co-developed the CBC model. “The study was the first large-scale trial to demonstrate the benefits to struggling students when families and schools work together as partners, along with the strength



*From left: CYFS researchers James Bovaird, Amanda Witte, Susan Sheridan & Todd Glover. Not Pictured: S. Andrew Garbacz & Kyongboon Kwon.*

of the parent-teacher relationship in producing such important results.”

The article was co-authored by James Bovaird, Director of the CYFS Statistics and Research Methodology Unit; CYFS Research Associate Professor Todd Glover; CYFS project manager Amanda Witte; and former CYFS postdoctoral fellows S. Andrew Garbacz and Kyongboon Kwon, now Assistant Professors at the Universities of Oregon and Wisconsin-Milwaukee, respectively.

“This represents a truly collaborative effort among an incredible team of researchers, practitioners and families,” Sheridan said, “highlighting the power of partnerships between CYFS and our school-based colleagues.”

# MINDING THE MANNER OF PRESCHOOLERS

Some preschoolers listen to the teacher as others tune her out. While some stay within the lines, others color outside them. Some play by themselves; others share toys. And though some sit still, others fidget endlessly.

CYFS faculty affiliate Kathleen Rudasill sees these activities as a window into the emerging personalities of young children – one that could offer new perspectives on helping those from difficult backgrounds reach their potential.

With support from the American Educational Research Association and National Science Foundation, Rudasill has launched a study to determine how the temperaments of disadvantaged children influence their early academic performance. She's also exploring whether positive classroom environments can lower the risk of academic hardship that often hounds these children, many of whom come from low-income, single-parent households.

Rudasill noted that the challenges of poverty often prevent children from entering preschool with the skills of their more privileged peers. Temperaments that require more attention from teachers and caregivers, she said, only multiply this already significant developmental risk.

Given this, Rudasill is using data that followed more than 1,200 4-year-olds from Head Start through kindergarten to examine how

their literacy and math outcomes correlate with four temperament traits: attention, impulse control, sociability and activity.

*“We’re different from the second we’re born, but we often don’t teach individuals about how this may play out in their interactions with others”*

help overcome the potentially detrimental influences of traits such as shyness or hyperactivity.

Learning more about these factors could represent an important step in accommodating the role of temperament in each child's education and development, she said.

“We’re different from the second we’re born, but we often don’t teach individuals about how this may play out in their interactions with others or their way of handling classroom situations,” said Rudasill. “I believe we need to teach people that this is a real source of diversity in children.”

After analyzing the connection between preschool temperament and kindergarten performance, Rudasill will turn her attention to the influence of “classroom processes” – namely, the levels of instructional and emotional support provided by Head Start teachers. Rudasill said she's especially interested in whether higher-quality classrooms can

# TOGETHER WE CAN...

## REVEAL PATHWAYS OF PROGRESS

As a research center, CYFS has dedicated itself to identifying the most efficient, consistent and strategic tools for helping people flourish. The past year saw us field-test a model that promises to target early reading difficulties for children at various levels of risk. It marked the beginning of our study into whether preschool teachers implement reading curriculum as intended. And it saw us commence research on technology's capacity to share a family-school partnership approach with isolated rural communities. Whether devising novel paradigms, fortifying research validity or exploring new delivery systems, CYFS continually seeks out the paths to advancement that originate from the ever-expanding intersection of scholarship and practice.



# HELPING STRUGGLING READERS TURN THE PAGE

Over the past three years, a CYFS research team has worked to get all children reading from the same page by rewriting the narrative on early literacy support.

In collaboration with the University of Kansas' Juniper Gardens Children's Project, CYFS has developed and pilot-tested a three-tiered model designed to support preschool children at risk for reading difficulties. The model, known as Pre-3T, encourages teachers to monitor reading progress and make data-based

decisions aimed at helping children develop early language and literacy skills.

Pre-3T centers on delivering high-quality reading instruction to all preschool children. Students who exhibit signs of reading delays or disabilities subsequently receive more targeted support, with teachers implementing curricular changes among small groups of struggling readers and families providing opportunities for practice at home. To address the unique learning needs of

children who continue to struggle, teachers and parents collaborate with literacy consultants to develop individualized reading strategies.

Brandy Clarke, a CYFS Research Assistant Professor and Pre-3T project manager, cited this versatility as one of the model's signature – and most important – components.

“The responsive approach of the model, incorporated into specific processes and practices, is what I believe makes it particularly



feasible to implement and holds the greatest promise for its effectiveness,” Clarke said.

After implementing the model throughout multiple preschools in Nebraska and Kansas, the research team has found preliminary evidence that Pre-3T may combat the onset of reading disabilities by helping children make up ground before it’s too late.

Though roughly half of the study’s English-speaking preschoolers showed initial signs of reading difficulties, more than 90 percent met or exceeded reading standards by the time they were ready for kindergarten.

The team, which received funding from the Institute of Education Sciences, also discovered that Spanish-speaking children especially benefited from the responsive supports provided by the model. Clarke said these encouraging results also speak to the value of building partnerships and involving caregivers in the reading process.

“This model was developed through a collaborative effort between researchers and educators,” Clarke said. “By design, it was developed to be responsive to the needs of preschool programs, classrooms, children and families.”

## REPORTING EARLY RETURNS ON RESEARCH

The Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools strives to disseminate its research to the widest possible audience, thereby advancing the scientific knowledge base while informing practice, policy and future scholarship.

Earlier this year, CYFS unveiled its initial series of working papers – easily digestible study summaries that represent a significant cross-section of the center’s ongoing and completed research. Many of our current papers focus on engaging parents

in their children’s education and fostering family-school partnerships, two critical and interrelated strategies for supporting early development.

Our working papers can be found at the CYFS website ([cyfs.unl.edu/resources/resources\\_working\\_papers](http://cyfs.unl.edu/resources/resources_working_papers)) and via the Education Resources Information Center ([eric.ed.gov](http://eric.ed.gov)), the world’s largest index of education-focused research reports and journal articles.

# EXPLORING HIGH FIDELITY IN PRESCHOOL CLASSROOMS

Following directions may sometimes prove challenging for preschoolers, but a CYFS research team has cast its attention on how well their teachers do the same.

Dawn Davis, a CYFS doctoral student affiliate, is leading a study that explores how closely the implementation of literacy curriculum in a preschool Head Start program adheres to the curriculum's design. Davis is assessing this match between plan and practice – commonly called “fidelity” – to determine its influence on children's oral language, alphabet knowledge, print awareness and other literacy skills.

Measuring this fidelity should help Davis and her colleagues understand how much of the curriculum's impact – and room for growth – owes to its design versus its implementation.

“We want to be able to understand more about what's actually happening,” said Davis, who received a Head Start Graduate Research Grant from the Administration for Children, Youth and Families. “I think this can give us the confidence to say that we either know all kids received the same experience – or, if the experience varied, that we can see what effect it had.”

Davis, whose collaborators include CYFS faculty affiliates Helen Raikes, Tiffany Hogan and Lisa Knoche, is also reviewing



teacher interviews to establish whether their perceptions of the curriculum shape its implementation.

“Getting the teacher perspective is one way to [determine] what's really contributing to these differences in results that we sometimes see,” said Davis, who noted that logistics and differing interpretations of curricula are among common threats to fidelity.

According to Davis, the study should ultimately help account for the sometimes overlooked but significant realities of translating curriculum to the classroom.

“Many times, intervention designs don't include that fidelity component,” she said. “But not every teacher is the same; not every family is the same; not every school is the same. Keeping track of all those differences is hard to do, but it's important.”

# BUILDING BANDWIDTH BRIDGES TO RURAL COMMUNITIES

Miles or megabytes? Speed limits or bandwidth? Country roads or fiber optics?

For years, reaching out to families and schools in rural communities has meant long hours of costly travel. This reality has made distance technology an appealing alternative – and the dissertation focus of CYFS student affiliate Michael Coutts.

Coutts grasped the significant investments involved in supporting rural communities while contributing to several studies of Conjoint Behavioral Consultation, a family-school partnership approach co-developed by CYFS Director Susan Sheridan.

With grant support from the Society for the Study of School Psychology, he's now investigating whether delivering CBC via distance technology yields the same success and acceptance as the model's traditional face-to-face structure – in a fraction of the time and for pennies on the dollar.

The CBC approach typically calls for trained consultants to visit homes and schools, where they coordinate the efforts of parents and teachers to address children's troublesome behavior across both environments. Though ongoing research has suggested promise for CBC's effectiveness in rural settings, Coutts' study represents the first look into

whether technology serves as a viable delivery method.

If it does, Coutts said the technology could help overcome the prohibitive time and monetary costs associated with making regular on-site visits.

“If you're a consultant, technology opens up your flexibility to reach a wider number of children,” Coutts noted. “For one child, you might traditionally be traveling four hours there and four hours back from O'Neill, Nebraska. With technology, you can have that one-hour meeting from Lincoln – and then use those other seven hours to meet with seven other families and teachers. So it has the potential to really serve a greater number, and reach a wider array, of rural students.”



Michael Coutts

# Publications

*In disseminating important research findings, CYFS affiliates aim to advance the scientific knowledge base while informing practice, policy and future research related to children, youth, families and schools. Select publications are listed below, with faculty and student affiliates in bold.*

## SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

**Allen, K. D.**, Kuhn, B. R., DeHaai, K., & Wallace, D. P. (2013). Evaluation of a behavioral treatment package to reduce sleep problems in children with Angelman Syndrome. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 34*, 676-686.

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## RURAL EDUCATION

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# Landscape of Support

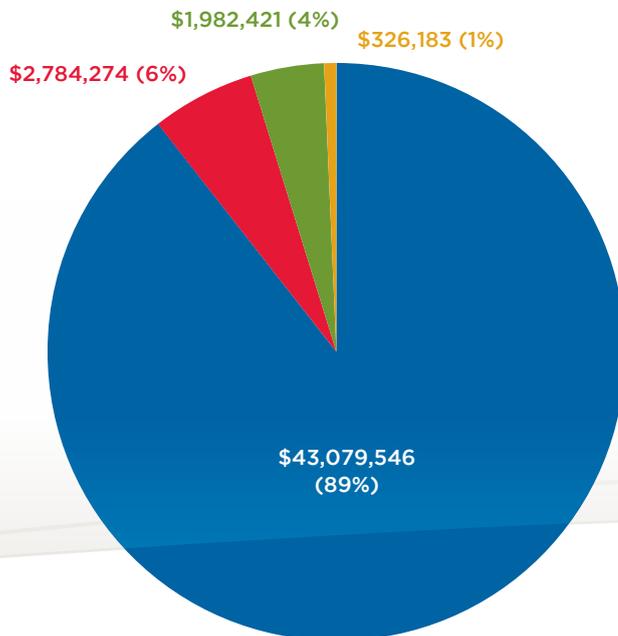
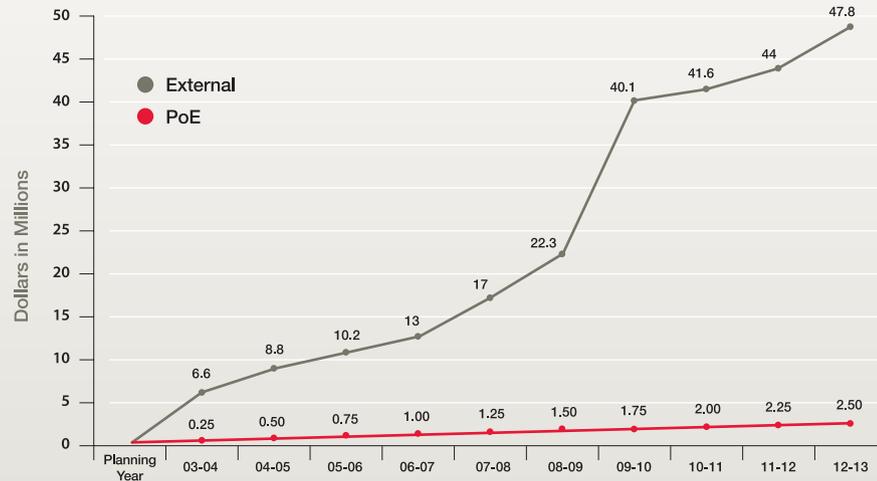
## SNAPSHOT OF CUMULATIVE CYFS GRANT ACTIVITY

Total Program of Excellence Funds to Date	\$2,500,000
Total Number of Grants Submitted through CYFS	258
Total Dollar Amount of Grants Submitted	\$214,783,804
Total Number of Grants Funded	109
"Hit Rate" of Funded Grants (based on known decisions)	44 %
Total Dollar Amount of External Grants Funded	\$47,846,241
Total Dollar Amount of Internal Grants Funded	\$326,183
Total Dollar Amount of All Grants Funded	\$48,172,424
Percentage of Grant Dollars from Federal Agencies	89%
Return Rate to UNL for Every \$1 Invested	\$19.14

Support for the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools (CYFS) is generated primarily through Program of Excellence (PoE) funds and external grants. The table above highlights information regarding grants submitted, grants awarded, "hit rate," total dollar amounts awarded, and return to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln since the center's inception in 2004.

### CUMULATIVE EXTERNAL GRANT DOLLARS VS. PROGRAM OF EXCELLENCE (PoE) SUPPORT

The line graph to the right illustrates the center's cumulative external funding (i.e., federal, state and foundation) relative to Program of Excellence (PoE) support from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.



### SOURCES OF FUNDING

The pie chart to the left shows the cumulative dollar amounts and proportions of funding that CYFS researchers have garnered from federal, state, foundation and internal (i.e., University of Nebraska-Lincoln) sources.

- Federal
- State
- Foundations
- Internal

\* Percentages rounded to nearest 1%

# Active Grants & Contracts

*The following grants and contracts received new or continued funding during the 2012 CYFS fiscal year.*

## FEDERAL AWARDS (\$27,486,057)

### Administration for Children and Families

*Identifying Risk for and Preventing Child Maltreatment in Early Head Start Families*

PIs: Grace Hubel, David Hansen, Lisa Knoche, Mary Fran Flood

*Intervention Fidelity, Teacher Perceptions and Child Outcomes of a Literacy Curriculum in a Head Start Program: A Mixed Methods Study*

PIs: Dawn Davis, Helen Raikes

*Parental Literacy Belief and Engagement in Homes of Dual Language Learners: A Mixed Methods Study*

PIs: Sandra Plata-Potter, Lisa Knoche

### National Science Foundation

*Central Great Plains Climate Change Education Partnership (CGP-CCEP) Proposal: Expanding our Reach and Research*

PIs: Lisa Pytlik-Zillig, Roger Bruning

*iLOG: Embedding and Validating Empirical Usage Intelligence In Learning Objects*

PIs: Ashok Samal, Leen-Kiat Soh, Gwen Nugent

*Scale-Up: National Robotics in 4-H: Workforce Skills for the 21st Century*

PIs: Bradley Barker, Viacheslav Adamchuk, Gwen Nugent, Neal Grandgenett, Bing Chen

### U.S. Department of Education

*A Meta-Analysis of Parent Involvement Interventions and Family-School Partnerships' Effects on Student Outcomes*

PIs: Susan Sheridan, Elizabeth Moorman Kim, S. Natasha Beretvas

*A Randomized Trial of Conjoint Behavioral Consultation (CBC) in Rural Educational Settings: Efficacy for Elementary Students with Disruptive Behavior*

PIs: Susan Sheridan, Todd Glover, Gina Kunz, James Bovaird

*Development of a Three-Tiered Model in Early Intervention to Address Language and Literacy Needs of Children at Risk*

PIs: Susan Sheridan, Lisa Knoche, Judith Carta, Charles Greenwood

*Efficacy of Supplemental Early Vocabulary Connections Instruction for English Language Learners*

PIs: J. Ron Nelson, James Bovaird

*Efficacy of the Getting Ready Intervention at Supporting Parental Engagement and Positive Outcomes for Preschool Children at Educational Risk*

PIs: Susan Sheridan, Lisa Knoche, Carolyn Pope Edwards, James Bovaird

*Language Bases of Skilled Reading Comprehension*

PIs: Tiffany Hogan, J. Ron Nelson, James Bovaird

*Mountain Prairie Upgrade Partnership-Itinerant (MPUP-I)*

PI: Malinda Eccarius

*National Center for Research on Rural Education (R<sup>2</sup>Ed)*

PIs: Susan Sheridan, Todd Glover, Gwen Nugent, Gina Kunz, James Bovaird

*Postdoctoral Fellowship for Research on Consultation-Based Interventions for Students with Social and Behavioral Concerns*

PIs: Susan Sheridan, James Bovaird, Todd Glover

*Training School Psychologists in Response-to-Intervention Implementation and Systems Change*

PIs: Merilee McCurdy, Edward Daly III, Tanya Ihlo, Gina Kunz

## STATE AWARDS (\$722,056)

### Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education

*Coaching for Sustainability: Peer Coaching Science Inquiry in Rural Schools*

PIs: SoonChun Lee, Gwen Nugent, Gina Kunz

*Coaching Science Inquiry Professional Development*

PIs: Gwen Nugent, Gina Kunz, Jon Pedersen

### Lincoln Public Schools

*LPS Building Bridges*

PIs: Michael Scheel, Gina Kunz

### Nebraska Department of Education

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

PIs: Todd Glover, Tanya Ihlo

## FOUNDATION / OTHER AWARDS (\$1,261,137)

*Building Bridges Through Relationships: A High School Dropout Prevention Program*

Funding Source: Woods Charitable Fund

PIs: Michael Scheel, Gina Kunz

*Bullying Prevention Center – Education and Outreach Division*

Funding Source: Andrew Gomez Dream Foundation

PI: Susan Swearer

*Child Temperament and Classroom Processes as Predictors of Academic and Social Outcomes in Preschool*

Funding Source: UNL Office of Research and Economic Development

PIs: Kathleen Moritz Rudasill, Victoria Molfese

*Conjoint Behavioral Consultation via Distance Delivery (CBC-D): An Evaluation of Efficacy and Acceptability*

Funding Source: Society for the Study of School Psychology

PIs: Michael Coutts, Susan Sheridan

*Distance Learning and Art Museum Education*

Funding Source: Windgate Charitable Foundation

PIs: Greg Welch, Leslie Hawley

*Early Childhood Course Conversion*

Funding Source: Buffett Early Childhood Fund

PI: Carolyn Pope Edwards

*Early Steps to School Success*

Funding Source: Save the Children Foundation

PI: Helen Raikes

*Identifying the Service Needs of Vulnerable Children and Families in Lancaster and Saunders Counties: A Comprehensive Community Needs Assessment*

Funding Source: Community Action Partnership of Lancaster and Saunders Counties

PIs: Maria de Guzman, Lisa Knoche, Rodrigo Cantarero

*Measuring the Impacts and Returns from Early Childhood Education and Programming in Nebraska: A Phase 2 Proposal to First Five Nebraska*

Funding Source: Nebraska Children and Families Foundation

PIs: Lisa Knoche, David Rosenbaum, Eric Thompson

*Temperament and Preschool Classroom Processes as Predictors of Kindergarten Achievement for Children with Demographic Risk*

Funding Source: American Educational Research Association

PIs: Kathleen Moritz Rudasill

## FACULTY AFFILIATES

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Susan M. Sheridan  
Director

Lisa L. Knoche  
Assistant Director for Research

Gina M. Kunz  
Assistant Director for Outreach

#### Research Faculty & Proposal Development/Coordination

James Bovaird  
Associate Professor

Brandy Clarke  
Research Assistant Professor

Todd A. Glover  
Research Associate Professor

Gwen C. Nugent  
Research Professor

Lorey Wheeler  
Research Assistant Professor

#### Statistics & Research Methodology Unit

James Bovaird  
Director

Amy Dent  
Research Assistant Professor

Greg Welch  
Research Assistant Professor

#### Project Directors

Lynette Block  
RTI Consortium

Andrea Boden  
RTI Consortium

Fran Chumney  
Project READERS

Keely Cline  
Getting Ready

Dawn Davis  
Language Bases of Reading Comprehension

James Houston  
CSI: Coaching Science Inquiry in Rural Schools

Michelle Howell Smith  
Project READERS

Loretta Tabor  
RTI Consortium

Amanda Witte  
CBC in Rural Communities

#### Web & Technology Support

Istiaque Ali  
Database Developer and Analyst

Padmaja Lokam  
Database Developer and Analyst

Jake Sjuts  
Computer Technology and Web Support Associate

Jason Leichner  
Computer Technology and Web Support Associate

#### Communications & Media Support

Melissa Money-Beecher  
Communications Database Manager

Scott Schrage  
Communications and Media Specialist

Seth Teager  
Web and Graphics Designer

#### Postdoctoral Fellows

Leslie Hawley  
SoonChun Lee  
Elizabeth Moorman Kim  
Kristin Rispoli  
Ji Hoon Ryoo

#### Grant Management & Post-Award

Ronda Alexander  
Grant Specialist (Pre-Award)

Rebecca Fulkerson  
Grant Specialist (Post-Award)

Sarah Giles  
Outreach Coordinator

Cindy Schuerman  
Grant Specialist (Post-Award)

#### Office Management & Support

Marj McKinty  
Office / Administrative Associate

Melissa Money-Beecher  
Research Coordinator



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The Nebraska Center for Research on  
Children, Youth, Families and Schools  
216 Mabel Lee Hall  
Lincoln, NE 68588-0235

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PHONE: (402) 472-2448 | FAX: (402) 472-2298 | E-MAIL: [cyfs@unl.edu](mailto:cyfs@unl.edu)

[cyfs.unl.edu](http://cyfs.unl.edu)