



2020-2021  
**ANNUAL  
REPORT**



NEBRASKA CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON  
CHILDREN, YOUTH, FAMILIES & SCHOOLS



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*Dev Pitla, son of Dipti Dev, CYFS research affiliate.*

## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The historic times in which we continue to find ourselves have been challenging, to say the least. But with those challenges has come resilience, innovation, optimism – and opportunity.

As long as the demand for high-quality, interdisciplinary research continues, the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools will strive to translate findings into practice and advance work that addresses the social, behavioral and educational needs facing communities in Nebraska and beyond.

Despite the unusual circumstances of the past year and a half, we have continued to find new and innovative ways to collaborate with our partners in research, policy and practice. The center's research continues to impact early childhood, racial equity, health and wellness, science and technology literacy, and communities, aligning with the priorities of the College of Education and Human Sciences and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Projects featured in this report include studies to strengthen teacher-parent partnerships using distance technology; enhance coaching of early intervention personnel who work with toddlers and infants with disabilities; prevent dating violence and problem drinking among LGBTQ+ youth; and explore ways to help children, parents and teachers navigate the ongoing pandemic – locally and globally.

As we move forward through still-uncertain times, CYFS remains focused on its core mission – to impact lives through research that advances learning and development. And we are committed to increasing the impact of our work and solving challenges critical at home and abroad.

Susan M. Sheridan



### **Susan M. Sheridan, Ph.D.**

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

Associate Dean for Research and Creative Activity, College of Education and Human Sciences

George Holmes University Professor of Educational Psychology

Dipti Dev and her son enjoy a book.



# ABOUT CYFS

CYFS was founded in 2004 as an interdisciplinary research center within the College of Education and Human Sciences at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. CYFS receives support as a UNL Program of Excellence, and its research programs are funded through external grants and contracts.

### CYFS conducts, supports and shares research in the following areas:

- Academic Intervention & Learning
- Early Education & Development
- Psychosocial Development & Social-Emotional Learning
- Research & Evaluation Methods
- Rural Education & Communities

Our vision is that all children, youth, families and schools have the opportunity to realize their potential and reach beyond.

We conduct research through grant-funded programs, provide comprehensive research support, and share research findings across audiences and platforms.

**Our mission is to impact lives through research that advances learning and development.**

# N2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln recently identified seven Grand Challenges — thematic areas in which to focus its expertise and resources — in its N2025 Strategic Plan. The Chancellor’s Office and the Office of Research and Economic Development have committed \$40 million over four years to invest in strategic, goal-based solutions.

Meeting the Grand Challenges provides an exciting opportunity for our dedicated team of faculty, staff and students to come together, think boldly and leverage the strengths of UNL. The center is uniquely positioned to build upon existing strengths in research and scholarship; support collaborative efforts with our diverse partners in research, policy and practice; establish and grow new multidisciplinary teams; and support competitive programs and proposals aligned with UNL’s various Grand Challenge themes.

Learn more at:  
[unl.edu/chancellor/n2025-strategic-plan](http://unl.edu/chancellor/n2025-strategic-plan)

# CONTENTS

TAPP Online brings enhanced support to rural families, schools	04
Mindfulness training available to Brazilian educators through CHIME	06
Bolstering early childhood numeracy skills	08
Assessing non-contact time among early childhood educators	09
Coaching model aims to enhance services for Nebraska infants, toddlers	10
Family adversity lowers children’s social-emotional functioning	12
Boosting children’s resilience in the face of socioeconomic risk	13
Prevention program aims to reduce dating violence, problem drinking among LGBTQ+ youth	14
Brazil research empowers vulnerable families, communities amid ongoing COVID-19 crisis	16
Eye-opening research helping agricultural workers get adequate sleep	17
Literacy a lifeline for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities	18
COVID-19 discourse on social media drives perception of Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders	19
Youth Arise encourages civic engagement, entrepreneurship	20
Study explores how school controls affect student learning	22
2020-2021 Layman Awards	23
Landscape of Support	24
Active Grants & Contracts	26
Affiliates & Personnel	28

The research projects featured in this report are housed in CYFS. Learn more about our research support services at [cyfsgrant.unl.edu](http://cyfsgrant.unl.edu)

# TAPP ONLINE BRINGS ENHANCED SUPPORT TO RURAL FAMILIES, SCHOOLS

Research shows rural students are experiencing social-behavioral and mental health challenges at unprecedented rates, placing them at risk for long-term negative outcomes.

With the documented effectiveness of family-school interventions in addressing social-behavioral and mental health needs at both school and home — especially in rural settings — professional development of rural practitioners is a priority.

Susan Sheridan, CYFS director, is leading research to identify an effective professional development approach to prepare school-based specialists to implement the Teachers and Parents as Partners (TAPP) intervention to address behavioral challenges presented by rural students.

TAPP is a research-based, problem-solving and decision-making intervention developed by Sheridan and other Nebraska researchers that builds on student strengths and fosters collaboration among parents and teachers.

*CYFS researchers are working to identify an effective professional development approach to prepare school-based specialists to implement the Teachers and Parents as Partners (TAPP) intervention to address behavioral challenges among rural students.*



*“We are convinced that delivering TAPP online is critically important — not only in supporting practitioners as they learn to deliver TAPP, but also the students they serve.”*

“We’re always thinking about the best ways to be responsive to the needs of specific communities,” Sheridan said. “We are convinced that delivering TAPP online is critically important — not only in supporting practitioners as they learn to deliver TAPP, but also the students they serve. Right now, those students are at a higher risk than ever before, so timing is critical.”

The efficacy trial of TAPP Online included 30 rural school-based specialists, or consultants, in Nebraska and Colorado, and 240 students. Through the virtual professional development platform — modules consisting of PowerPoint slides, video examples, practice guides and meeting protocols — consultants learn about TAPP’s principles and procedures associated with the development of family-school partnerships.

As consultants learn TAPP, they are paired with coaches who have completed the training. The coaches and consultants collaborate to ensure TAPP services are being delivered as intended.

Sheridan noted that in many rural communities, consultants may be responsible for several students scattered among multiple schools.

“They often have significant caseloads and are expected to do it all because they may be the only person in a small community with mental health training,” she said. “But because they already know the families, teachers and students, and have experience within their school system, TAPP Online will enable them to integrate TAPP in a much more fluid, seamless way.”

Sheridan is particularly optimistic about furthering

TAPP in the context of COVID-19.

“At the height of the pandemic, a lot of the services students were receiving in schools went dormant, because schools were closed,” she said. “In some areas, even when students returned to school, priorities shifted and many of their mental health needs were no longer being met.”

The ultimate goal, Sheridan said, is to provide direct benefits for rural practitioners — and indirectly help students, parents and teachers through partnerships.

“The real benefit will be the many other students, teachers and families that a trained TAPP consultant will be able to serve,” Sheridan said. “We expect as they learn and deliver TAPP and see its benefits, they will begin to use it much more broadly. It’s a matter of sustaining the intervention to benefit many others well into the future.”

*The project is funded by the Institute of Education Sciences. Along with Sheridan, the project’s co-PIs are Lorey Wheeler, CYFS research associate professor, and Amanda Witte, CYFS research assistant professor.*



*From left: Lorey Wheeler, co-principal investigator; Amanda Witte, co-principal investigator; and Susan Sheridan, principal investigator*

# MINDFULNESS TRAINING AVAILABLE TO BRAZILIAN EDUCATORS THROUGH CHIME



Children and their teacher, Elizinete Natália Queiroz de Araújo Souza, second from left, examine the garden at EMEI Ignacio in São Paulo, Brazil.

While great efforts are made to improve children’s well-being in child care environments, far less attention is paid to caregivers’ well-being. Evidence shows compassion- and mindfulness-based programs and strategies enhance both caregiver and child well-being, which may reduce burnout, stress and depression — and lead to children receiving more sensitive and responsive care.

Holly Hatton-Bowers, assistant professor of child, youth and family studies, is collaborating internationally with researchers to adapt compassion- and mindfulness-based programs developed in the U.S. to support caregivers, young children and college students in Recife, Brazil.

The team aims to cultivate resilience, compassion and kindness among caregivers to improve well-being and increase capacity to deliver high-quality care to young children by adapting Nebraska Extension’s Cultivating Healthy Intentional Mindful Educators (CHIME) program.

CHIME is an eight-week professional development program that provides education and guidance for practicing mindfulness and compassion-based strategies. It also provides time for caregivers to engage in reflective practice and use mindfulness with young children.

Engaging in mindfulness and reflective practice benefits the health and well-being of both providers and young children — including reduced stress, improved emotion regulation, better sleep quality, increased focus and attention, and enhanced relationships.

Through the Nebraska-Brazil Early Childhood Partnership, Hatton-Bowers has established relationships with several Brazilian colleagues interested in using compassion- and mindfulness-based strategies in education and medical settings.

Researchers aim to identify whether CHIME’s strategies are acceptable to early childhood caregivers and primary school teachers in Recife, Brazil, an area with children and families dramatically impacted by the country’s 2015-16 Zika outbreak. They also hope to eventually create and evaluate a mindfulness program for college students attending the Universidade Federal Rural de Pernambuco who plan to work in education.

Hatton-Bowers’ collaborators at Universidade

Federal Rural de Pernambuco include Pompéia Villachan-Lyra, and graduate student Ana Maria da Fonte Alves, who is also working on the project as a trained facilitator and helped translate the CHIME program into Portuguese.

In a recent survey of 237 early childhood teachers working in Recife as part of da Fonte Alves’ thesis, 19% of the teachers said their emotional health was poor or very poor, and 51% reported they were not dealing adequately with their stressors.

Hatton-Bowers began the CHIME professional development pilot in Brazil in fall 2021 after 55 early childhood teachers and caregivers expressed interest in participating in the all-virtual training

program. Initially, da Fonte Alves will deliver CHIME to small groups of teachers.

As a former early childhood educator, Hatton-Bowers has long been aware of the importance of teachers leading by example.

“During early childhood, children are rapidly developing important social-emotional skills, and they need caring, attuned adults to help them understand adaptive, healthy ways to regulate emotions,” she said. “The intention of CHIME is to support directors and early childhood educators to use mindfulness- and compassion-based strategies to be more emotionally regulated.”

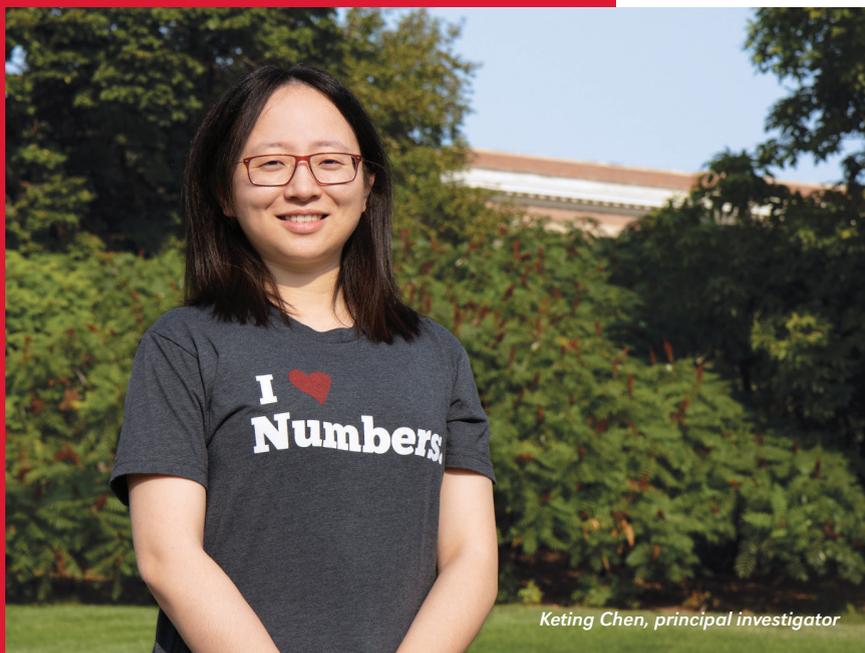
“During early childhood, children are rapidly developing important social-emotional skills, and they need caring, attuned adults to help them understand adaptive, healthy ways to regulate emotions.”



Holly Hatton-Bowers, principal investigator

# BOLSTERING EARLY CHILDHOOD NUMERACY SKILLS

For some young children, learning the basics of 1-2-3 can be easy as A-B-C. But because early numeracy skills often receive less attention than early literacy skills, children who lag in number comprehension may fall behind academically in kindergarten and beyond.



Keting Chen, principal investigator

Keting Chen, doctoral student in child, youth and family studies, is exploring how home and child care environments are associated with preschoolers' numeracy skills — the ability to understand and work with numbers — and how parents and teachers can ensure those skills are where they need to be once the children enter school.

Chen's work is designed to identify factors at home and in child care environments that predict children's numeracy skills, and how the two settings jointly contribute to early learners' number comprehension.

"Research indicates young children's numeracy skills are very important in predicting later academic success," she said. "We have found significant, individual differences among students upon entry into kindergarten, and I'm interested to learn why these differences occur so early."

Chen aims to identify important aspects of early childhood numeracy environments, such as parents' and teachers' early math knowledge, and frequency of numeracy activities. Her study includes 120 preschool-aged children

— and their parents and teachers — with diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

Parents and teachers will be asked to report how often they do numeracy activities, and children's numeracy skills will be assessed. Researchers will use video observations of parent-child interactions during those activities to examine both home and child care environments and their associations with children's numeracy development.

"Video observations help us better understand what numeracy activities look like — games, reading, cooking or other math concepts embedded in those activities," Chen said.

Not surprisingly, Chen said, studies show more-frequent home numeracy activities better prepare children to begin school. However, she said, research generally focuses on one environment — either the family or child care setting.

"I'm looking at both contexts to better understand how each context supports those skills, and whether they are supported similarly or differently," Chen said.

She noted that general math skills include many concepts — numbers, patterns, shapes, spatial ability — and an early understanding of number concepts and strong numeracy skills are important for future academic success.

*The project is funded by a grant from the Buffett Early Childhood Institute's Graduate Scholars program. Chen's faculty advisors are Amy Napoli, assistant professor of child, youth and family studies; and Julia Torquati, professor of child, youth and family studies, and CYAF graduate director and Buffett community chair.*

# ASSESSING NON-CONTACT TIME AMONG EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

Much attention is paid to the work early childhood teachers do in the classroom. But their tasks away from their students are just as essential to children's learning and development.

Unlike their K-12 counterparts, early childhood teachers lack dedicated time to address work demands beyond the direct care of children. Without formalized supports, out-of-classroom time may be sacrificed or interrupted as unexpected issues arise throughout the day.

Erin Hamel, doctoral student in child, youth and family studies, has experienced that time crunch herself, both as a graduate student and classroom teacher.

Now she is exploring workplace support of planning/non-contact time — a widely overlooked portion of early childhood teachers' workdays.

Non-contact time is a teacher's time away from children that enables them to address other work demands, such as crafting instruction plans, assessing children's development and communicating with families.

"It occurred to me that we need to know more about what teachers are doing with the time they have," Hamel said.

Her research assesses how much time early childhood teachers actually have away from their students — and how they use that time to address their work. Hamel also aims to establish terminology for how to refer to such time in a teacher's day, and to identify factors and expectations directors consider when allotting teachers' non-contact time.

"There simply isn't much out there about planning time in early childhood education," Hamel said. "I want to know the current state of non-contact time in early childhood education, and hopefully get some information out there to help inform decisions that support teachers."

With a projected shortage of almost 8,000 early childhood teachers across Nebraska, according to First Five Nebraska, recruitment and retention of educators is crucial. Ensuring supportive working conditions is key to retaining those much-needed early childhood teachers.

Using a publicly available National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) database, Hamel randomly selected 650 nationally accredited early childhood programs whose directors will receive requests for their teachers to complete her online survey.



Erin Hamel, principal investigator

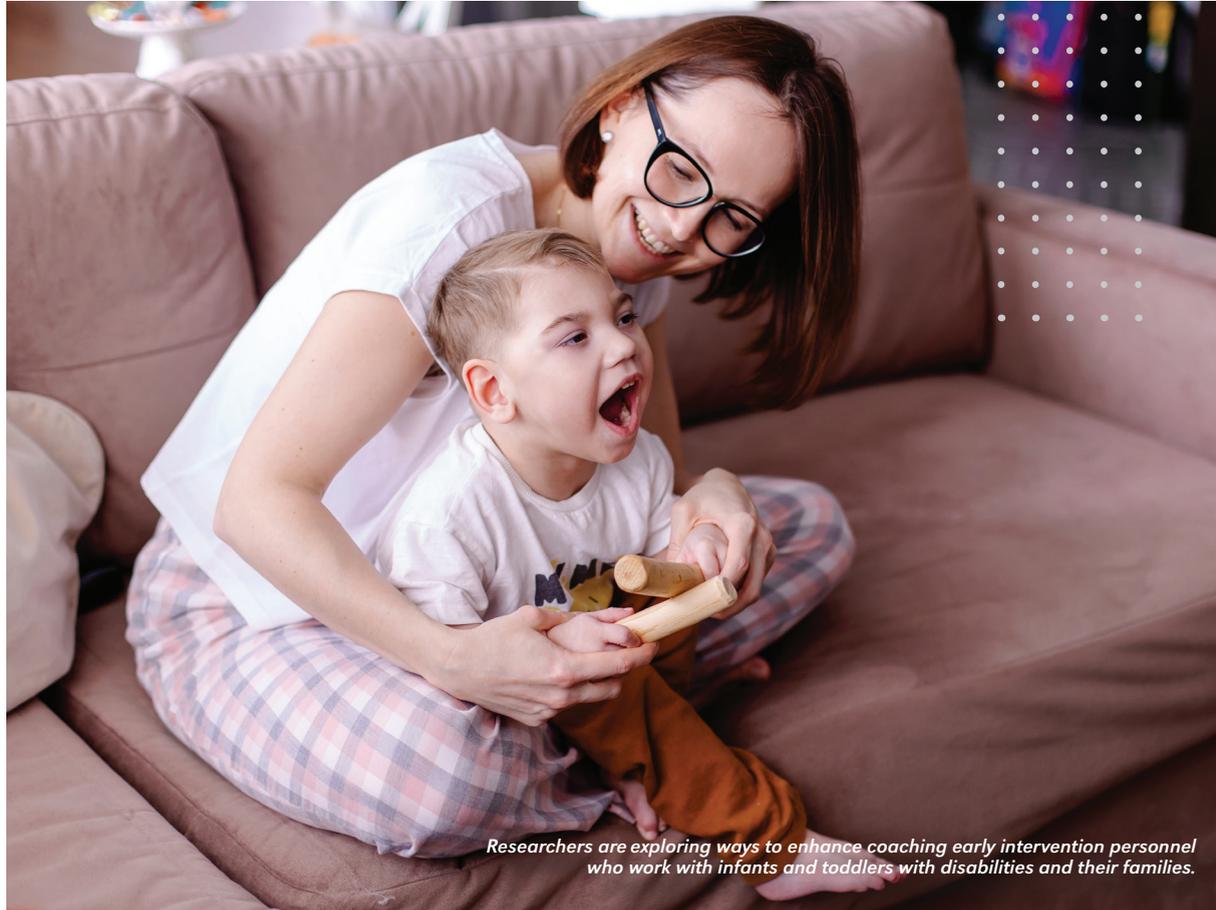
The survey asks open-ended questions to get open-ended responses. One example: "Think about the last time you had non-contact time and tell me what you did."

"I can then follow up with a list of what other teachers did with their non-contact time, and ask them to check what they also do," she said.

Hamel's findings could potentially improve working conditions for early childhood educators, which could bolster recruitment, retention and professionalization of the early childhood workforce.

*The project is funded by a grant from the Buffett Early Childhood Institute's Graduate Scholars program. Hamel's doctoral advisor is Rachel Schachter, associate professor of child, youth and family studies.*

# COACHING MODEL AIMS TO ENHANCE SERVICES FOR NEBRASKA INFANTS, TODDLERS



Researchers are exploring ways to enhance coaching early intervention personnel who work with infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.

In the United States, almost 400,000 infants and toddlers who are not developing typically receive services through the federal Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities.

Because these children and their families rely on early intervention services for optimal developmental outcomes, evidence-based solutions are crucial.

Researchers are exploring ways to enhance the services provided by state early intervention personnel who work directly with infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.

The project is a collaboration among CYFS, the Nebraska Early Development Network, the Nebraska Department of Education and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

The team will support providers' professional development by creating and evaluating a systematic, sustainable model to guide coaches who work with early intervention providers. Coaching in Early Intervention (CEI) launched in early 2021.

"We know what works in the field, but getting people to use what works is the hard part," said Principal Investigator Lisa Knoche, director of the Nebraska Academy for Early Childhood Research and CYFS co-director. "That's where the coaching framework comes in. We're implementing a structure that helps early intervention professionals use evidence-based practices with families."

*"We know what works in the field, but getting people to use what works is the hard part. That's where the coaching framework comes in."*

That professional development, Knoche said, will ensure ongoing, high-quality services for children and their families — and help develop and retain coaches.

Using the CEI model, a master coach will support site-based coaches with one-on-one instruction, including instruction delivered virtually. This professional development includes evidence-based coaching practices, such as relationship-building, observation, planning and goal-setting, feedback, reflection and modeling, and will help site-based coaches tailor their coaching to individual providers' needs.

Researchers will use the CEI model to identify and evaluate strategies to improve professional development for early intervention programs throughout Nebraska, and to ensure personnel in the field have a sustainable support system.

"What's exciting about this project is the opportunity



Lisa Knoche, principal investigator

to help service providers ensure their learning experiences are optimal, and that they're getting what they need," said Co-PI Rachel Schachter, associate professor of child, youth and family studies.

The pilot implementation of the four-year project includes 10 site-based coaches, 40 early intervention personnel and 160 infants or toddlers with disabilities and their families, who participate in activities that will evaluate the CEI model.

The project uses multiple strategies to deliver coaching services — both in-person and virtual —

that have helped researchers sidestep obstacles created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Strong research practice partnerships are born out of sustained, long-term relationships," Knoche said. "You forge mutual trust and understand one another's priorities and needs, and that paves the way for continued collaborations."

*The project is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education. Along with Knoche and Schachter, the research team also includes Gwen Nugent, CYFS research professor, and Susan Sheridan, CYFS director.*

## FAMILY ADVERSITY LOWERS CHILDREN'S SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL FUNCTIONING

Strong social-emotional skills have been found to impact children's development and later success.

Research also shows children exposed to adverse experiences — including maternal depression, poverty, parental substance use, physical abuse and neglect — are at risk for having lower social-emotional functioning compared to their peers.

Kelsey McCoy, doctoral candidate in clinical psychology, and David Hansen, professor of psychology, led a recent study to identify whether family risk factors predict rates of change in children's social and emotional skills, and how classroom experiences — teacher efficacy, curriculum adherence and classroom quality — may buffer or enhance those effects.

Findings revealed high rates of familial risk and adversity, with more than half the children having experienced seven or more family risk factors.

"We saw that these children who had increased exposure to adversity or increased familial risk exhibited lower social-emotional skills as reported by the teachers," McCoy said. "This highlights the need to promote healthy social-emotional development and trauma-informed practices."



Research suggests preschool children with increased exposure to family adversity exhibit lower social-emotional skills than their peers.

Researchers collaborated with preschool teachers from three Head Start centers, who assessed the social-emotional functioning of more than 100 children enrolled. Teachers also completed surveys on their perceptions of their own efficacy and satisfaction in the classroom.

Data on familial risk were collected from clinical records, and additional information was collected through juvenile justice system public records.

After the original longitudinal data collection plan was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, researchers added a qualitative component consisting of semi-structured interviews with teachers focused on their perceptions of facilitators

and barriers to social-emotional learning.

Teachers identified several barriers to social-emotional learning, including time constraints, limited parent engagement, language differences and lack of staff support. They also noted protective factors in supporting children exposed to adversity, such as structure and consistency, parent relationships and training.

McCoy will share her findings with Head Start administrators and staff to help enhance teacher training and inform practice changes.

*The project is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families.*

## BOOSTING CHILDREN'S RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF SOCIOECONOMIC RISK

Children who possess strong social-emotional skills in elementary school tend to experience academic and personal success. Children lacking those skills, however, often experience adverse outcomes — both short- and long-term.

To improve outcomes for children, it is crucial to understand factors associated with positive social-emotional development.

Hannah Kerby,  
principal investigator



Hannah Kerby, doctoral candidate in school psychology, is exploring how children's social-emotional skills are influenced by their residential neighborhoods and whether quality teacher-student and parent-teacher relationships can build resilience for children.

The study examines socioeconomic conditions of young children's neighborhood environments and how those environments relate to their social-emotional development. Previous research has found socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods tend to have negative effects on children's social-emotional outcomes.

"I'm taking a resilience perspective to identify whether relationships that already exist in a child's life — a child-teacher relationship, for example — might foster children's social-emotional development in the face of socioeconomic risk," Kerby said.

Kerby is using a sample of 234 second-graders and their parents and teachers participating in Learning Frontiers, a federally funded study of early education practices and policies. Parents and teachers provided ratings of the teacher-student relationship, parent-teacher relationship and children's social-emotional skills.

She also is using U.S. Census data to measure the socioeconomic conditions of children's

“Many studies will identify settings that put kids at risk for negative outcomes, but then stop there.”

neighborhoods, including poverty levels, median household income, employment rates and neighborhood education levels.

Resilience, Kerby said, is a crucial theme.

"Many studies will identify settings that put kids at risk for negative outcomes, but then stop there," she said. "I want to go further by understanding what processes are already happening in kids' lives, into which we can put efforts or intervention to boost their resilience in the face of disadvantaged environments."

Kerby experienced drastic change during her own childhood in Omaha, when she moved from a low-income to a high-income neighborhood.

"It was pivotal and definitely influenced my development," she said.

*The project is funded by a grant from the Society for the Study of School Psychology Dissertation Grant Award program. Kerby's doctoral advisor is Susan Sheridan, CYFS director.*

# PREVENTION PROGRAM AIMS TO REDUCE DATING VIOLENCE, PROBLEM DRINKING AMONG LGBTQ+ YOUTH

Nebraska and Colorado researchers are developing an online dating violence and problem drinking prevention initiative for LGBTQ+ youth.



For sexual minority youth, dating violence and problem drinking are frequently intertwined, often leading to depression and even suicide.

Katie Edwards, associate professor, CYFS and educational psychology, and Heather Littleton, associate professor and director of research operations at the Lyda Hill Institute for Human Resilience at the University of Colorado–Colorado Springs, are developing an online initiative for LGBTQ+ youth ages 15-18 to prevent dating violence and alcohol use.

The program is the first culturally adapted and affirming program designed specifically for sexual minority youth.

Research indicates strong evidence among LGBTQ+ youth that internalized minority stress — for example, feelings of shame about one’s sexual orientation and wishing it was different — and identity concealment, or reluctance to come out to others, increases risk for alcohol use and dating violence.

“Research shows traditional prevention programs



Katie Edwards, principal investigator

that work for heterosexual youth don’t necessarily work for sexual minority youth,” Edwards said. “We want to create a program that will not only reduce dating violence and alcohol use, but also provide hope for the future and ultimately save lives.”

Building resilience among LGBTQ+ youth, Edwards said, relies on reducing minority stress while bolstering LGBTQ+ sense of community. That, along with acquiring skills to promote healthy dating relationships and making wise decisions, she said, could ultimately reduce rates of dating violence, problem drinking and suicidal thoughts.

“We have consistently found that minority stress is a robust predictor of numerous negative outcomes for LGBTQ+ youth,” Edwards said. “At the same

*In rural communities, where LGBTQ+ resources are scarce, there is a dire need for programs that provide youth with resources and support.*

time, we recognize the tremendous resilience LGBTQ+ youth have. This program will capitalize on youths’ strengths.”

The program includes eight 45-minute telehealth sessions led by LGBTQ+ facilitators, which will be developed with help from LGBTQ+ youth and experts in the field.

The program features games, videos, breakout rooms and other experiential activities — all designed to enable participants to develop skills to build resilience and reduce negative outcomes, such as dating violence and alcohol use.

There is also a voluntary social media support network to help build a sense of community among participants.

Youth also receive information about resources to help them learn about ways to safely get help and connect with LGBTQ+ communities.

Once finalized, the program will be rolled out to 200 youth nationwide. Participants will be recruited on social media, with advertisements targeting LGBTQ+

youth across the country, particularly in remote or rural areas.

“In rural communities, where LGBTQ+ resources are scarce, there is a dire need for programs that provide youth with resources and support,” Edwards said. “For some, it will be the first time connecting openly with LGBTQ+ youth and adults.”

Edwards said the program puts the LGBTQ+ community’s strength and resilience at the core of the program.

“We want to give youth hope for the future, so they know things will get better and that there are communities that will accept them,” she said. “Ultimately, if we find this program is working, we can expand it to reach countless LGBTQ+ youth across the country.”

*The project is funded through the National Institutes of Health’s National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). Along with Edwards and Littleton, project collaborators at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln include Alex Farquhar-Leicester, doctoral student in counseling psychology; Jania Marshall, research associate; and Victoria Mauer, postdoctoral scholar. Clayton Neighbors at the University of Houston is a co-investigator.*

## BRAZIL RESEARCH EMPOWERS VULNERABLE FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES AMID ONGOING COVID-19 CRISIS

Efforts to help vulnerable communities are most effective when they actively engage community members, agencies and other stakeholders in solving complex social problems.

In many parts of Brazil, communities must find their own ways to address the needs of children and families with limited resources. Those needs have intensified since early 2020, as COVID-19 quickly spread throughout the country.

Cody Hollist, associate professor of child, youth and family studies, is working to improve educational outcomes for children and youth living

in Cachoeirinha, a high-risk, low-resource suburb of Porto Alegre, Brazil. He is collaborating with Bruna Seibel, postdoctoral researcher of Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul and the project's principal investigator.

Using a community-based participatory research approach, Hollist and Paul Springer, associate dean for student success and professor of child, youth and family studies, are leveraging their experience in working with community agencies — churches, medical clinics, police and schools — to improve outcomes for youth and families in vulnerable communities.

Researchers are working to identify the needs of relationships among families and community agencies, and their collective abilities and resources to address those needs — particularly, the mental health and self-efficacy of adolescents.

Before the pandemic, Hollist said, Cachoeirinha adolescents were more positive about the future.

“They reported having good friends and family they could rely on,” he said. “They had a good sense of community, which was a powerful protective factor for

them. They generally had hope for the future.”

But after more than a year of the pandemic, with Brazil particularly hard hit, optimism has faded.

“Family solidarity, social support and relationships, self-efficacy and hope for the future have been hugely impacted by the pandemic,” Hollist said. “If a 15-year-old has no hope for future, their investment in education, avoiding drugs and staying out of trouble declines.”

Seibel said she is concerned about even greater problems emerging in the poor communities.

“In this neighborhood, we have a high rate of drug trafficking, with adolescents becoming involved as early as age 11 or 12,” she said. “I’m concerned there will be an increase in drug trafficking, as well as school dropout rates.”

Since early 2020, because of the pandemic, the team has conducted research by phone and through local health clinics rather than collaborating in-person.

“I’ve seen things in those communities that would beat down and destroy many of us, but they smile, they hug and they grow,” Hollist said. “I have learned a level of resilience that helps inform how I teach, and how I work with clients to provide therapy.”

*This project is part of the ongoing Nebraska-Brazil Early Childhood Partnership. Learn more at [cyfs.unl.edu/brazil](https://cyfs.unl.edu/brazil).*

## EYE-OPENING RESEARCH HELPING AGRICULTURAL WORKERS GET ADEQUATE SLEEP

As anyone who has ever experienced insomnia knows, the lack of a good night’s sleep can make for a difficult morning.

According to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, side effects of sleep deprivation include lack of concentration, attention deficits, longer reaction times, distractibility, lack of coordination, poor decision-making and forgetfulness.

For farmers and ranchers who routinely work around machinery or livestock, any of these side effects can lead to injury — or worse.

Nebraska researchers are leading a project to collect objective sleep data from an agricultural worker population in Nebraska and the Midwest to investigate sleep quality among farmers and ranchers during peak and non-peak seasons.

Susan Harris, Nebraska Extension educator, and Amanda Prokasky, assistant professor of education and child development at the University of Nebraska Medical Center’s Munroe-Meyer Institute, are



*Sleep data from Midwestern agricultural workers will help researchers investigate sleep quality among farmers and ranchers.*

collecting data to determine the need, value and efficacy of potential educational interventions aimed at improving sleep among agricultural workers to reduce risk of accident and injury.

Farming and ranching are among the most dangerous occupations, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Harris said research has found a large proportion of agricultural workers surveyed suffer sleep deprivation during peak seasons, and are more prone to accidents and injury — partly because of sleep deprivation.

Participants include 41 Midwestern agricultural workers, male and female. Each is wearing an Actiwatch Spectrum Plus — a wrist device that monitors and records continuous data on daily motion and activity levels — for one week during

peak activity, such as harvest season, then again during a slower week.

The Actiwatch measures sleep and awake times, which enables researchers to compare data from both weeks to analyze whether there are significant differences in the amount of nighttime sleep, bedtimes and wake times, and the number and length of night wakings between peak and less-busy periods.

Researchers aim to use findings to develop educational outreach and intervention programs to help agricultural workers enhance their sleep quality to reduce risk of accidents and injuries.

*The project is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, through a subaward from the Central States Center for Agricultural Safety and Health (CSCASH) in the University of Nebraska Medical Center’s College of Public Health.*

# LITERACY A LIFELINE FOR STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Each year, approximately 7 million U.S. students receive special education services. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, 25% of those students have an intellectual or developmental disability (IDD), such as challenges with adaptive functioning, intelligence or conditions including Down syndrome or autism spectrum disorder.

Although special education services are designed to help students succeed in the general curriculum and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living, little is known about literacy development within this population.

Nebraska researchers Susan Loveall, assistant professor of special education and communication disorders, and Derek Rodgers, research assistant professor of special education and communication disorders, are developing a detailed literacy profile to identify strengths and weaknesses in reading, writing and cognition skills among students with IDD.

“We’re trying to help these students learn to read and write and set them up for success, and yet we’re doing that without foundational knowledge about their strengths and where they are struggling,” Loveall said. “Once we have that information, we can hopefully make a difference by improving the literacy instruction we’re providing those students.”

The study includes 50 students, ages 13-21, with IDD. Researchers are recruiting participants with the help of area school districts and groups representing children with autism, Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities.

No teachers will be surveyed or interviewed — only students with IDD.

Students will complete tests to evaluate their reading, writing, cognition and vocabulary skills. Data will be collected online, and findings will provide a clearer picture of the unique literacy abilities of students with IDD.

“For so long, the thought was that people with IDD could not learn to read or write,” Loveall said. “Of course, that’s wrong — they can. But now, because that belief permeated education for so long, we’re behind in research.”

Rodgers notes that academic instruction for students with IDD

traditionally has focused on teaching functional life skills so they can be independent.

“But you cannot be independent without reading and writing skills,” he said. “You may be able to tie your shoes or make your coffee in the morning, but if you cannot read or communicate through writing, there’s a vast avenue of independence that’s inaccessible to you.”

*The project is funded by an Office of Research and Economic Development Faculty Seed Grant.*



*Detailed literacy profiles are being developed to identify strengths and weaknesses in reading, writing and cognition skills among students with IDD.*

## COVID-19 DISCOURSE ON SOCIAL MEDIA DRIVES PERCEPTION OF ASIAN AMERICANS, PACIFIC ISLANDERS

While the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected people from all walks of life in the U.S., the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community has experienced an added share of hardships, according to recent research.

An analysis of the use of “China virus” and other racially charged terms by government officials and the media — and the resulting conversations online — revealed more evidence of social media’s powerful influence on public perception and the potential to stoke racist discourse online.

Theresa Catalano, associate professor of teaching, learning and teacher education, and Peiwen Wang, TLTE research and teaching assistant, analyzed the effects of such discourse regarding the coronavirus in a variety of news and social media sources, as well as public comments and conversations connected to those sources.

“We found that social media can be sites of resistance, but they are also sites where solidarity and uniting of racist thought can occur,” Catalano said.



*Social media discourse regarding COVID-19 has impacted the Asian American and Pacific Islander community.*

As the pandemic peaked in 2020, former President Donald Trump and some members of his administration, as well as members of Congress and the media, frequently referred to the virus as the “Chinese” or “Wuhan” virus.

Catalano and Wang examined how political rhetoric can shape policies, focusing on visual and verbal strategies used in U.S. media discourse to communicate about COVID-19, and how that communication influenced public opinion of the AAPI community.

The yearlong anti-China/Chinese discourse on social media, Catalano said, “has had dangerous effects on the AAPI community in the U.S.”

Since finishing their study, Catalano and Wang

have conducted several public presentations, including several for Lincoln Public Schools students and teachers.

“Many of the non-AAPI students in our classes were completely unaware that physical and verbal violence was happening as a result of COVID-19 and anti-Chinese discourse, since it had never happened to them,” Catalano said.

Catalano and Wang aim to use their findings to spread awareness about racism against the AAPI community — and to develop anti-racist curriculum for K-12 teachers.

*The project is funded by the UNL Office of Research and Economic Development COVID-19 Rapid Response Grant.*



Kieu-Anh Do, project coordinator, helps a student during the July 2021 Youth Arise camp in Scottsbluff, Nebraska.

## YOUTH ARISE ENCOURAGES CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, ENTREPRENEURSHIP

With the world becoming more complex each day, the importance of civic knowledge and community engagement is on the rise — especially among younger generations.

Nebraska researchers are leading a project designed to provide civics, entrepreneurship and leadership education to underserved youth through an innovative learning program based on interactive online games and simulations.

The five-year project, Youth Arise, targets children living in socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods. Participants in the pilot curriculum include at-risk seventh- and eighth-graders from Douglas and Scotts Bluff counties in Nebraska.

The curriculum eventually will be adapted for after-school programs and integrated into 4-H Extension programming.

The principal investigators are Maria de Guzman, chairperson of the Department of Textiles, Merchandising and Fashion Design, and Evan Choi, professor of social work at California Baptist University and former children and poverty Extension specialist in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies.

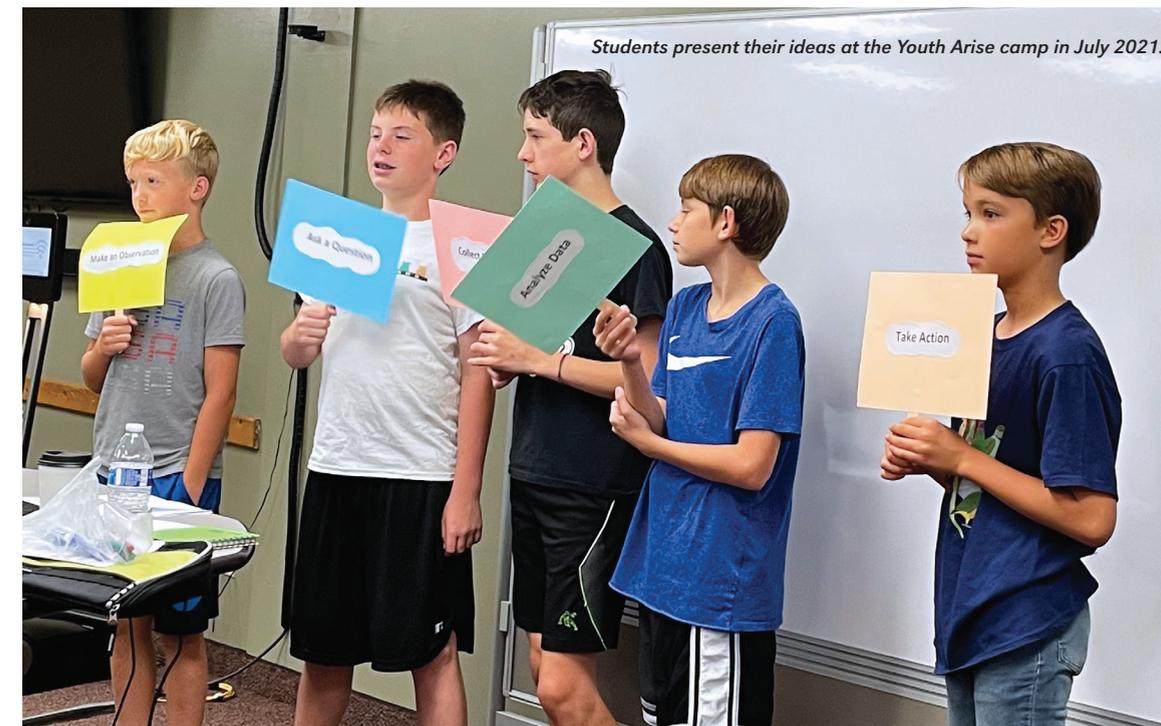
Kieu-Anh Do, project coordinator, worked with Nebraska Extension 4-H Scotts Bluff County to lead the first in-person cohort of 10 students through the course in July 2021 in Scottsbluff, Nebraska.

The students were members of the local FIRST Lego League, a global program sponsored by FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology), a non-profit designed to inspire young

people's interest and participation in science and technology, and Lego, the famed maker of toy blocks and kits.

"The students were very engaged, and their parents appreciate this program," Choi said.

The Youth Arise curriculum is designed for a five-day summer camp program with a variety of interactive and educational activities, including field trips, site visits, documentary film viewing, team building, idea brainstorming and group discussions. The program's graduates then visit the Nebraska State Capitol or a local legislative office to share their ideas with



*The students were very engaged, and their parents appreciate this program.*

lawmakers and other stakeholders.

Participants use a game-based learning model designed to help them engage with topics and ideas through interaction and simulation, rather than the more conventional textbooks, classroom teaching

and assignments. Two evidence-based curricula are used — iCivics and Lean LaunchPad.

iCivics is an online simulation tool that includes dozens of online games and other learning tools to promote citizenship and civic engagement. Lean LaunchPad is an experimental learning tool designed to improve entrepreneurial problem-solving skills.

A third curriculum, Youth Participatory Action Research, was recently added to give youth the skills to take action and advocate for change after they have gained civic knowledge.

After their baseline assessments, participants complete one-, three- and six-month follow-up assessments to measure program outcomes.

Along with enabling youth with the knowledge and skills they need to strengthen their communities, Youth Arise promotes STEM education and racial equity.

*The project is funded by USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Along with Choi, de Guzman and Do, other research team members include Surin Kim, assistant professor, textiles, merchandising and fashion design; Gilbert Parra, professor, CYAF; and collaborators Andy Larson, Nebraska Extension educator; Nathan Rice, Nebraska Extension educator, Scotts Bluff County; and Stephanie Thorson, Nebraska Extension educator, Douglas and Sarpy Counties.*

Internal school controls, such as guidelines implemented by a school's principal, can mediate the impact of external controls.



## STUDY EXPLORES HOW SCHOOL CONTROLS AFFECT STUDENT LEARNING

When it comes to measuring student outcomes, grading individual schools can be complicated.

Although federal, state and local mandates are continually added to school-based policies and practices used to measure student performance — and hold schools accountable — research indicates that such measures have mixed effects on student achievement, graduation rates and equity in learning.

A school's external controls include federal, state

and district-level mandates — for example, the federal No Child Left Behind Act and the Every Student Succeeds Act. Internal controls are guidelines and professional norms implemented by a school's principal, administrators and teachers.

Despite significant investment in accountability controls, little research has examined how controls at state, district and school levels affect student outcomes — particularly, equity in learning, or ensuring students have the support they need for

successful learning.

Taeyeon Kim, assistant professor of educational administration, and Jiangang Xia, associate professor of educational administration, are exploring the effects of accountability policies on students' learning opportunities. Using restricted data from the National Teacher and Principal Survey — a representative sample survey of U.S. K-12 schools — they aim to determine national trends and patterns of accountability and its implementation.

Kim and Xia are studying the extent to which external controls influence decision-making at the school level — and how a school's internal controls can mediate external controls' impact.

To ensure every student succeeds, Kim said, it is crucial to know how accountability controls at multiple levels affect equitable learning in schools. Debate continues over whether such controls make sense with shifting policies.

For example, after the No Child Left Behind Act promoted federal controls over teaching and learning, the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 transferred significant authority back to states.

"We are focused on equity measures instead of other achievements, such as graduation rates or academic scores, which have been measured in many previous studies," Kim said. "Our main focus is on the opportunities students have to learn."

*The project is funded by an Office of Research and Economic Development Research Council grant.*

## 2020-2021 LAYMAN AWARDS

Funded by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Office of Research and Economic Development, Layman Awards provide funding for projects that will enhance the recipient's ability to obtain external funding to support prominent scholarly work.

The following Layman Awards are housed in CYFS.



### KATIE EDWARDS

Associate Professor, CYFS and Educational Psychology

**"Formative Research to Inform the Development of an Initiative to Prevent Violence against Native American Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning and Two-Spirit Youth"**

Native American LGBTQ and Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2S) youth experience high rates

of violence, including bias-based victimization, dating and sexual violence victimization and perpetration, and self-directed violence, which leads to numerous potentially harmful outcomes, such as mental health problems and substance abuse. While there is a critical need to identify effective solutions to prevent violence against and among Native American LGBTQ2S youth, there is a lack of understanding of culturally grounded prevention methods.

Edwards and Ramona Herrington, cultural outreach manager at the Interpersonal Violence Research Laboratory, aim to develop and evaluate a communitywide, culturally grounded initiative to prevent violence and reduce health disparities among Native American LGBTQ2S youth.

They will collaborate with community partners to recruit participants — 20 Native American LGBTQ2S youth (ages 14-17) and 20 adults (age 18 and older) with connections to LGBTQ2S youth, all living on a South Dakota reservation.

Pilot data will be collected through art-based activities with LGBTQ2S Native American youth, and via talking circles with the youth and adults.



### RICARDO MARTINEZ

Assistant Professor, Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education

**"Mathematical Spiritual Wisdom Within Young People"**

This project takes an asset-based approach to working with marginalized high school- and middle school-aged youth by enabling them to take ownership in mathematical learning opportunities for their community.

Martinez will work with four high school freshmen to design a mathematics youth participatory action research (YPAR) summer program for Lincoln youth. The 10-day summer program's curriculum — co-authored by the youth and aimed at middle school-aged youth — will be enacted in partnership with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Lincoln/Lancaster County.

YPAR is an approach that seeks to provide solutions to real issues impacting youth and their communities by investigating the root causes.

Summer program participants will engage in rich multicultural mathematics while learning about issues in their school and community. Middle school students will then be trained as researchers to investigate the issues they identify and to provide solutions to issues impacting their learning.

# LANDSCAPE OF SUPPORT

## Snapshot of Cumulative CYFS Grant Activity

The graphic below highlights the total dollar amount of external and internal grants supported by CYFS since its inception in 2004.

Internal grants funded

**\$1,347,515**

External grants funded

**\$95,873,464**



## Research Impact

The figures below show indicators of cumulative research impact for CYFS.

**792** Total grants submitted

**295** Total grants funded

**41%** Grant submission success rate (based on known decisions)

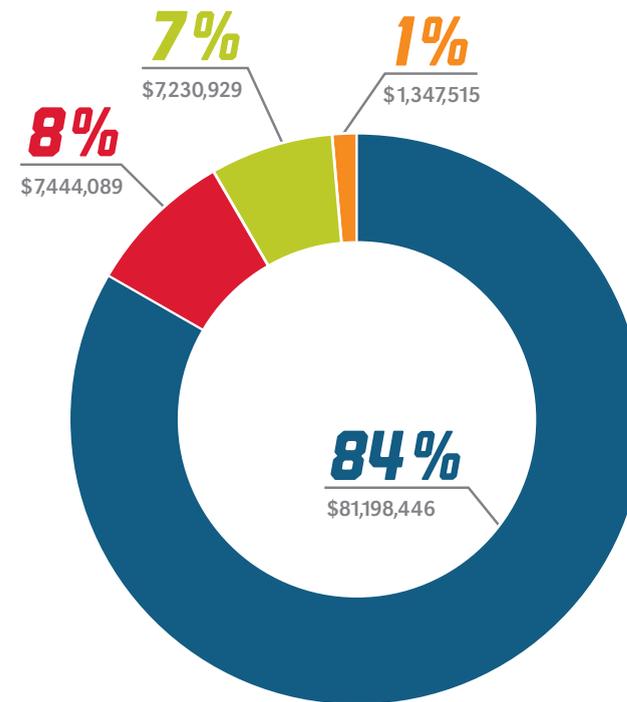
**\$21.60**  
Return rate to the University of Nebraska–Lincoln for every \$1 invested

## Sources of Funding

The chart below shows the total dollar amount of grants supported by CYFS since its inception in 2004, and the proportion of funding through federal, state, foundation and internal (i.e., University of Nebraska) sources.

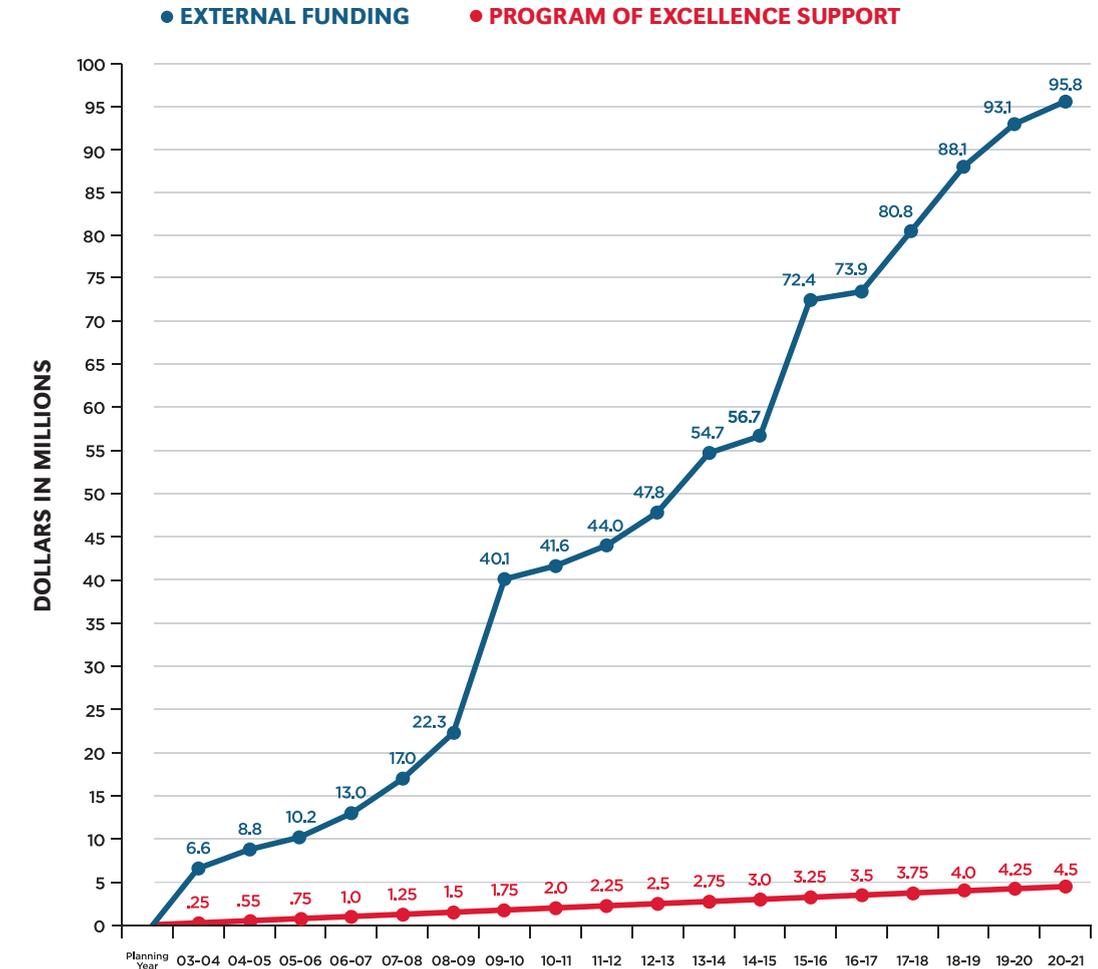
- Federal (115 grants)
- State (40 grants)
- Foundation (75 grants)
- Internal (65 grants)

Percentages rounded to nearest 1%



## Cumulative External Grant Dollars & Program of Excellence Support

The line graph below depicts the total dollar amount of external funding (i.e., federal, state, and foundation) supported by CYFS, relative to Program of Excellence funding support from the University of Nebraska.



# ACTIVE GRANTS & CONTRACTS

The following grants and contracts received new or ongoing funding during 2020-2021.

## Federal Awards

### Administration for Children and Families

*Cultivating Healthy Intentional Mindful Educators (subaward through Nebraska Children and Families Foundation)*

Pls: Holly Hatton-Bowers, Carrie Clark

*Getting Ready 0–3 (GR03): Supporting the Development of Infants/Toddlers Through an Integrated Parent–Teacher Relationship-Based Approach*

Pls: Lisa Knoche, Susan Sheridan

*Getting Ready Preschool Development Grant (PDG) (subaward through Nebraska Children and Families Foundation)*

Pl: Lisa Knoche

*Go NAP SACC Online Tool and Evaluation (subaward through the Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services)*

Pl: Dipti Dev

*Help Me Grow Centralized Access Point Evaluation (subaward through Children’s Hospital & Medical Center)*

Pl: Lorey Wheeler

*Learning Social and Emotional Skills in Head Start: Influence of Familial Risk Factors and Classroom Characteristics*

Pls: David Hansen, Kelsey McCoy

*Mindfulness in Early Care and Education (subaward through Nebraska Children and Families Foundation)*

Pls: Holly Hatton-Bowers, Carrie Clark, Katie Krause

*Ready Rosie 2020-2021 (subaward through Nebraska Children and Families Foundation)*

Pl: Dawn Davis

*Child Care Essentials: Choosing Quality Child Care in Nebraska (subaward through Nebraska Children and Families Foundation)*

Pl: Holly Hatton-Bowers

### Centers for Disease Control

*Evaluating Practice-Based Sexual Violence Primary Prevention Approaches from CDC’s Rape Prevention*

Pl: Katie Edwards

*The Impact of an Adapted Version of the Strengthening Families Program on Reducing IPV among Caregivers and ACEs among their Children*

Pl: Katie Edwards

### National Institutes of Health

*Development and Pilot Evaluation of an Online Intervention to Prevent Dating Violence and Problem Drinking in Sexual Minority Youth*

Pl: Katie Edwards

*Development and Pilot Trial of an Intervention to Reduce Disclosure Recipients’ Negative Social Reactions and Victims’ Psychological Distress and Problem Drinking*

Pl: Katie Edwards

*Evaluating Psychophysiological Mechanisms of Early Childhood Teachers’ Stress Resilience and Their Relevance for Preschoolers’ Self-Regulation*

Pls: Carrie Clark, Holly Hatton-Bowers, Gilbert Parra, Lorey Wheeler

*Evaluation of the Efficacy of a Physical Therapy Intervention Targeting Sitting and Reaching for Young Children with Cerebral Palsy (subaward through University of Southern California)*

Pls: Natalie Koziol, James Bovaird

*Help Me Grow (subaward through Children’s Hospital & Medical Center)*

Pl: Lorey Wheeler

*HOME C2OOKING: Creative Culinary Opportunities Offering Kids Inquiry-Based Nutritional Genius (subaward through the University of South Carolina)*

Pl: Kelley Buchheister

*Neural Predictors of Speech Perception Outcomes in Adults with Cochlear Implants*

Pls: Yingying Wang, Michelle Hughes

### National Science Foundation

*Analysis of Effective Science Coaching: What, Why and How*

Pl: Gwen Nugent

*Equity in Engineering: Understanding and Promoting All Elementary School Children’s Knowledge of and Motivation to Engage in Engineering (subaward through Arizona State University)*

Pl: Lorey Wheeler

*Maker Fridays: Engaging Rural and Under-Represented High School Students in Pre-Engineering Design and Creativity (subaward through Northeast Community College)*

Pl: Raymond Reichenberg

*Nebraska STEM: Supporting Elementary Rural Teacher Leadership*

Pls: Amanda Thomas, Guy Trainin, Wendy Smith

*The Role of Stigma in Partner Violence*

Pl: Katie Edwards

### U.S. Department of Agriculture

*Read for Resilience: Supporting Children after Disasters with Storybooks (subaward through Extension Disaster Education Network)*

Pls: Amy Napoli, Holly Hatton-Bowers

*Resource Toolkit to Support the Wellness of Extension Employees Following a Natural Disaster*

Pls: Holly Hatton-Bowers, Gilbert Parra, Michelle Krehbiel, Lorey Wheeler

*SBIR: STEM Lesson Creation Coaching Framework to Improve the Pedagogy of K-5 Teachers Implementing the NGSS (subaward through StarrMatica)*

Pl: Ray Reichenberg

*Youth Civic Engagement Using Simulations and Design Thinking*

Pls: Jeong-Kyun Choi, Maria Rosario de Guzman, Surin Kim

### U.S. Department of Education

*A Missing Link to a Better Tomorrow: Developing Health Literacy in Transition-age Youth with High Incidence Disabilities*

Pls: Alexandra Torkelson-Trout, Kristin Duppong Hurley

*A Randomized Trial of Conjoint Behavioral Consultation (CBC) with Latino Students: A Replication Study*

Pls: Susan Sheridan, James Bovaird, Lorey Wheeler

*Coaching in Early Intervention (CEI): Promoting Outcomes for Infants/Toddlers with Disabilities through Evidence-Based Practices*

Pls: Lisa Knoche, Rachel Schachter, Susan Sheridan, Gwen Nugent

*Early Learning Network Lead*

Pls: Susan Sheridan, Lisa Knoche

*Efficacy of the START-Play Program for Infants with Neuromotor Disorders (subaward through Duquesne University)*

Pl: James Bovaird

*Efficacy of Virtual Professional Development in Rural Schools to Enhance Teacher-Parent Partnerships for Students with Behavioral Challenges*

Pls: Susan Sheridan, Amanda Witte, Lorey Wheeler

*Exploring Cognitive and Foundational Processes Underlying Pre-algebra among Students with and without Mathematics Learning Difficulties*

Pls: Jessica Namkung, Wendy Smith

*Language Gains during Early Childhood: Prediction of Later Outcomes and Multiple-Methods Exploration of Relevant Classroom Factors (subaward through The Ohio State University)*

Pl: Rachel Schachter

*Learning Frontiers: Pre-K to Grade 3*

Pls: Susan Sheridan, Lisa Knoche, James Bovaird

*Project VIEW: Visual Impairments Education in Writing*

Pls: Michael Hebert, Mackenzie Savaiano

*School Psychology Specialization in Concussion/Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (mTBI)*

Pl: Scott Napolitano

*School Psychology Specialization in Toddlers with Autism Spectrum Disorders*

Pls: Edward Daly III, Therese Mathews

*Testing the Efficacy of INSIGHTS for Promoting Positive Learning Environments and Academic Achievement in Nebraska: A Replication Study*

Pls: Gwen Nugent, Susan Sheridan, James Bovaird

### U.S. Department of Justice

*A Process and Outcome Evaluation of a Transitional Living Program for Women with Histories of Substance Use Disorders and Sexual and/or Domestic Violence (SEEDs) (subaward through the University of New Hampshire)*

Pl: Katie Edwards

*Healing among Rural & Indigenous Women Victims of Domestic Violence: A Mixed-Methodological Analysis (subaward through the University of South Dakota)*

Pl: Katie Edwards

## State Awards

### Nebraska Department of Education

*Assessing Special Education Teacher Pre-Service Programs and In-Service Supports Available in Nebraska*

Pls: Amanda Witte, Susan Sheridan

*Nebraska Multi-tiered System of Support Implementation Support Team*

Pl: Amanda Witte

*The Impacts of COVID-19 on Educators and Student Learning*

Pls: Susan Sheridan, Gwen Nugent, Amanda Witte

## Foundation/Other Awards

*Accountability for Equity?: Effects of External Control on Opportunities to Learn in K-12 Schools*

Funding Source: UNL Research Council  
Pls: Taeyeon Kim, Jiangang Xia

*Advancing Measurement of Spanish-Speaking Students’ Mathematics Achievement: A Novel Approach for Controlling Selection Bias in Evaluation of DIF*

Funding Source: American Educational Research Association  
Pls: Natalie Koziol, Marc Goodrich

*An Exploratory Study of the Invariance of School Climate Measurement Across Face-to-Face and Online-only High School Students*

Funding Source: UNL Layman Award  
Pl: Ray Reichenberg

*At the Intersection of Neighborhoods and Schools: Relationships as Moderators between Neighborhood and Children’s Social-Emotional Development*

Funding Source: Society for the Study of School Psychology  
Pl: Hannah Kerby

*Building the Infrastructure for Early Childhood Executive Function Research in Nebraska*

Funding Source: NU Collaboration Initiative  
Pls: Carrie Clark, Jenna Finch

*Early Childhood Plan Evaluation*

Funding Source: W.K. Kellogg Foundation  
Pl: Greg Welch

*Early Head Start University Partnership*

Funding Source: ICF International  
Pl: Lisa Knoche

*Educare Evaluation 2020-2021*

Funding Source: Buffett Early Childhood Fund  
Pl: Dawn Davis

*Examining the Lived Experiences of BIPOC Initial Teacher Certification Candidates in Rural and Urban Nebraska*

Funding Source: NU Collaboration Initiative (subaward through University of Nebraska at Kearney)  
Pls: Amanda Witte, Amanda Morales

*Exploring NonContact Time in Early Childhood Education*

Funding Source: Buffett Early Childhood Institute  
Pls: Erin Hamel, Rachel Schachter

*Exploring the Psychological Well-Being of Diverse U.S.-Based Atheists*

Funding Source: UNL Research Council  
Pl: Dena Abbott

*Family Environments & Child Development during the COVID-19 Pandemic*

Funding Source: UNL Office of Research and Economic

Development, COVID-19 Rapid Response Grant Program  
Pl: Jenna Finch

*Improving Evaluation Methods for Targeted Educational Interventions*

Funding Source: UNL Layman Award  
Pl: HyeonJin Yoon

*Key Factors Influencing Infant Attachment Security with Mothers and Fathers*

Funding Source: UNL Layman Award  
Pls: Patty Kuo, Rebecca Brock

*Lens on Science Evaluation—Lincoln*

Funding Source: Buffett Early Childhood Fund (subaward through University of Miami)  
Pl: Dawn Davis

*Math Early On II*

Funding Source: Buffett Early Childhood Fund  
Pls: Victoria Molfese, Ruth Heaton, Jennifer Leeper-Miller

*Mindfulness and Mastery*

Funding Source: Buffett Early Childhood Fund (subaward through UNMC)  
Pl: Dawn Davis

*Mobilizing a Community of Practice for COVID-19 Social Support, Detection, and Disease Management among Im/migrant and Refugee Populations in Lincoln, Nebraska*

Funding Source: UNL Office of Research and Economic Development, COVID-19 Rapid Response Grant Program  
Pls: Julie Tippens, Elizabeth Mollard, Sheila Vinton Dorsey, Virginia Chaidez, Angela Palmer-Wackerly

*Project S.T.O.P.P. (Student Thoughts on Prevention Programming)*

Funding Source: American Psychological Foundation  
Pl: Victoria Mauer

*Promoting Positive School Climate among Newcomer Immigrant Adolescents*

Funding Source: Spencer Foundation (subaward through Columbia University)  
Pl: Lorey Wheeler

*Pursuing Causal Inferences with Complex Survey Data*

Funding Source: UNL Layman Award  
Pl: Natalie Koziol

*Reading and Writing Profiles of Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*

Funding Source: UNL Research Council  
Pls: Derek Rodgers, Susan Loveall

*Role of REV–ERBB in Exosome Biogenesis & Release*

Funding Source: UNL Layman Award  
Pl: Yongjun Wang

*Starting School Socially and Behaviorally Ready: The Impacts of Malleable Home-Based Relationships and Community Setting*

Funding Source: Society for the Study of School Psychology  
Pls: Rachel Schumacher, Susan Sheridan

*Superintendents’ Early Childhood Plan Evaluation*

Funding Source: Buffett Early Childhood Institute  
Pl: Lisa Knoche

*The Associations between Early Numeracy Environments and Young Children’s Early Numeracy Skills*

Funding Source: Buffett Early Childhood Institute  
Pls: Keting Chen, Amy Napoli, Julia Torquati

*The “Chinese Virus”: A Critical Discourse Analysis of U.S. Government Communication about COVID-19 and Its Impact on Chinese and Asian Americans in the U.S.*

Funding Source: UNL Office of Research and Economic Development, COVID-19 Rapid Response Grant Program  
Pls: Theresa Catalano, Peiwen Wang

*The Effects of COVID-19 on Education in Nebraska and the Potential for Recovery*

Funding Source: UNL Office of Research and Economic Development, COVID-19 Rapid Response Grant Program  
Pls: Susan Sheridan, Amanda Witte, Gwen Nugent, Lisa Knoche

*The Efficacy of Technology-Delivered Mental Health Services in Rural Nebraska: Addressing the Needs of Students, Families and Schools*

Funding Source: UNL Layman Award  
Pl: Amanda Witte

*The NU-SensiTray: Improving Feasibility and Validity in Children’s Dietary Assessment in Child Care*

Funding Source: Nebraska Center for Prevention of Obesity Diseases  
Pls: Dipti Dev, Santosh Pitla, David Dzewaltowski

*Toward P300-Based Brain-Computer Interface Access for Those with Severe Physical Impairments*

Funding Source: UNL Layman Award  
Pl: Kevin Pitt

# AFFILIATES & PERSONNEL

## CYFS Research Affiliates

Research affiliates make up a network of more than 100 diverse faculty from across the University of Nebraska system who make significant contributions to Nebraska’s interdisciplinary research community in the social, behavioral and educational sciences. Research affiliates are actively engaged with CYFS and are integral to our mission. Through their formal connection to the center, they also have opportunities to engage in valuable research exchanges, professional development, technical assistance and networking events, along with communications support to make their CYFS-housed work highly visible and accessible.

Explore the CYFS Research Network: [cyfs.unl.edu/research-network](https://cyfs.unl.edu/research-network)

## University of Nebraska Medical Center

### Munroe-Meyer Institute

**Education & Child Development**  
Barbara Jackson

**Nursing**  
Therese Mathews

**Psychology**  
Brandy Clarke

### College of Public Health

**Department of Health Promotion & Behavior**  
Abbie Raikes

### Office of Academic Affairs

**Interprofessional Academy of Educators**  
Michelle Howell Smith

## University of Nebraska–Lincoln

### College of Education & Human Sciences

**Dean’s Office**  
Paul Springer

### Nebraska Center for Research on CYFS

Lisa Knoche  
Natalie Koziol  
Kejin Lee  
Gwen Nugent  
Raymond Reichenberg  
Lorey Wheeler  
Amanda Witte  
HyeonJin Yoon

### Educational Administration

Elvira Abrica  
Deryl Hatch-Tocaimaza  
Taeyeon Kim  
Nicholas Pace  
Jiangang Xia  
Sarah Zuckerman

### Educational Psychology

Dena Abbott  
James Bovaird  
Eric Buhs  
Carrie Clark  
Edward Daly III  
Katie Edwards  
Matthew Gormley  
Neeta Kantamneni  
Kenneth Kiewra  
Scott Napolitano

Michael Scheel  
Susan Sheridan  
Hideo Suzuki  
Susan Swearer

### Child, Youth & Family Studies

Kelley Buchheister  
Jeong-Kyun Choi  
Rochelle Dalla  
Dawn Davis  
Dipti Dev  
Holly Hatton-Bowers  
Cody Hallist  
Soo-Young Hong  
Marjorie Kostelnik  
Patty Kuo  
Amy Napoli  
Gilbert Parra  
Helen Raikes  
Rachel Schachter  
Julie Tippens  
Julia Torquati  
Yan Xia

### Nutrition & Health Sciences

Lisa Franzen-Castle  
Georgia Jones  
Yongjun Wang  
Mary S. Willis

### Special Education & Communication Disorders

Cynthia Cress  
Kristin Duppong Hurley  
Marc Goodrich  
Susan Loveall  
Min Namkung  
J. Ron Nelson  
Kevin Pitt  
Derek Rodgers  
Amanda Rodriguez  
Johanna Taylor  
Alexandra Torkelson-Trout  
Yingying Wang  
Kristy Weissling

### Teaching, Learning & Teacher Education

Theresa Catalano  
Lauren Gatti  
Lydia Kiramba  
Lawrence Scharmann  
Amanda Thomas  
Guy Trainin

### College of Arts & Sciences

**Communication Studies**  
Jody Koenig Kellas  
Angela Palmer-Wackerly

**Computer Science & Engineering**  
Marilyn C. Wolf

### Psychology

Lisa Crockett  
David DiLillo  
Jenna Finch  
David Hansen  
Timothy Nelson  
Anne Schutte

### Sociology

Kimberly Tyler

### College of Business

**Bureau of Business Research**  
Mitch Herian

### Economics

Daniel Tannenbaum

### College of Engineering

**Civil Engineering**  
Laurence Rilett

**Durham School of Architectural Engineering  
& Construction**  
Lily Wang

### College of Journalism & Mass Communications

**Advertising & Public Relations**  
Changmin Yan

### Institute of Agriculture & Natural Resources

**Nebraska Extension**  
Bradley Barker  
Susan Harris  
Kathleen Lodl

**School of Natural Resources**  
Cory Forbes

## University of Nebraska at Kearney

### College of Education

**Communication Disorders**  
Philip Lai

**Kinesiology & Sports Science**  
Megan Adkins-Bollwitt

## University of Nebraska at Omaha

### College of Arts & Sciences

#### Psychology

Juan Casas  
Lisa Kelly-Vance  
Brian McKeivitt

### College of Education

**School of Health & Kinesiology**  
Danae Dinkel

**Special Education & Communication  
Disorders**  
Shari DeVeny

## University of Nebraska

### Buffett Early Childhood Institute

Kathleen Gallagher  
Samuel Meisels

## Student Affiliates

Jackson Abramo  
Baudelio Abrica Anguiano  
Kirstie Bash  
Rachel Beoney  
Hundter Biede  
Austin Boltin  
Denise Bradford  
Elizabeth Brower  
Karalynn Brown  
Anna Burton  
Mackenzie Callen  
Catherine Carney  
Donna Chen  
Keting Chen  
Dongho Choi  
Evelyn Estrada Gonzalez  
Kailee Groshans  
Bilal Hamada  
Erin Hamel  
Saima Hasnin  
Bailey Hinrichs  
Yuenjung Joo  
Hannah Kerby  
Samantha Kesselring  
Eastyn Klink  
Madison Lawler  
Sunhyoung Lee  
Alondra Magallanes  
Amelia Miramonti  
Briana Momchilovich

Samantha Moore  
Jayden Nord  
Victoria Oestmann  
Rebecca Overfield  
Abril Rangel-Pacheco  
Adella Smolsky  
Cody Salesbee  
Alexander Story  
Linnea Swanson  
Fabianne Tavares Gondim  
Ally Thomsen  
Renata Trefiglio Mendes Gomes  
Brittany Trvdy  
Emily Wilson

## CYFS Personnel

### Research Faculty

James Bovaird  
Director, Nebraska Academy for Methodology,  
Analytics and Psychometrics; Associate Professor  
of Educational Psychology

Katie Edwards  
Director, Interpersonal Violence Research  
Laboratory; Associate Professor

Lisa Knoche  
Co-Director, CYFS;  
Director, Nebraska Academy for Early Childhood  
Research; Research Associate Professor

Natalie Koziol  
Research Assistant Professor

Kejin Lee  
Research Assistant Professor

Gwen Nugent  
Research Professor

Raymond Reichenberg  
Research Assistant Professor

Susan Sheridan  
Director, CYFS; Associate Dean for Research and  
Creative Activity, College of Education and Human  
Sciences; George Holmes University Professor of  
Educational Psychology

Lorey Wheeler  
Co-Director, Nebraska Academy for Methodology,  
Analytics and Psychometrics; Research Associate  
Professor

Amanda Witte  
Project Director, Learning Frontiers: Pre-K to  
Grade 3; NeMTSS Implementation Support Team;  
Research Assistant Professor

HyeonJin Yoon  
Research Assistant Professor

### Project Managers

Jentry Barrett  
INSIGHTS in Nebraska

Kristen Derr  
TAPP para Familias Latinas

Sommer Fousek  
Early Learning Network-Lead, Nebraska Academy  
for Early Childhood Research

Lindsee Fryatt  
NeMTSS Implementation Support Team

Maureen Halpenny  
NeMTSS Implementation Support Team

Tamara Hechtner-Galvin  
Getting Ready 0-3

Ramona Herrington  
Rapid City Family Project

Skylar Hopfauf  
Youth VIP Project

Jim Houston  
Analysis of Effective Science Coaching

Amanda Prokasky  
OLOS in Nebraska; Getting Ready  
Preschool Development

Belle Scheef  
Superintendents’ Early Childhood  
Plan Evaluation

### Postdoctoral Researchers

Courtney Boise  
Victoria Mauer  
Natira Mullet

### Web, Technology & Communications

Istiaque Ali  
Database Developer & Analyst

Evan Coleman  
Computer Technology and Web  
Support Associate

Austin Druse  
Communications & Media Associate

Chuck Green  
Communications Associate

Matilda Kond  
Database Developer & Analyst

Dana Ludvik  
Communications & Media Specialist

Kyleigh Skaggs  
Visual Communications Designer

Seth Teager  
Communications & Media Manager

### Administrative Services

Julie Erickson  
Administrative Coordinator

Julie Gillmor  
Proposal Development Coordinator

Tina Horan  
Assistant Director for Research Operations

Braxton Lindhorst  
Grant Specialist

Marj McKinty  
Administrative Associate

Jeff Mueri  
Grant Specialist

Rebecca Voigtlander  
Grant Specialist (Post-Award)

## Annual Report Staff

*Chuck Green, Writer*  
*Dana Ludvik, Editor*  
*Kyleigh Skaggs, Designer & Photographer*

**Photography Credit**  
*Craig Chandler (p. 23)*  
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*Allison Shelley for EDUimages (p. 4, 22)*



**Nebraska Center for Research on  
Children, Youth, Families and Schools**  
160 Prem S. Paul Research Center at Whittier School  
Lincoln, NE 68583-0858



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CHILDREN, YOUTH, FAMILIES & SCHOOLS**

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**College of Education & Human Sciences**

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

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