

2021-2022

ANNUAL REPORT



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



College of Education
& Human Sciences

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*Addilyn and Ryker Derr, children of
Kristen Derr, CYFS project manager.*

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

As we move through another academic year, I remain proud, honored and grateful to work alongside the dedicated team at the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools.

Through all the societal changes and turbulence of the past few years, the center remains focused on leveraging research and collaboration to make a difference in the lives of others — from birth to adulthood.

Our center's faculty, staff and students, along with 100 research affiliates, work across disciplines to advance learning and development, and contribute solutions to social, behavioral and educational grand challenges that are important for us all. Through partnerships with countless participants, educators, administrators and policymakers, we are contributing solutions that impact lives.

Many of these solutions directly support the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's strategic initiatives centered on anti-racism and racial equity, early childhood education and development, health equity, and science and technology literacy. They also leverage and support the CEHS grand visions encompassing thriving young children, comprehensive health and well-being, and strong communities.

This work cannot be done in silos. Since its inception in 2004, our center's impact and growth has been fueled by diverse partnerships in research, practice and policy — partnerships that spark new ideas and opportunities to ensure our work supports meaningful change in our society.

This report provides a glimpse into some of these partnerships and the life-changing research they have helped generate in the past year.

You'll read about projects that support educators working with visually impaired children and youth; strengthen parent-teacher partnerships to improve educational outcomes in rural communities; use brain-connected interfaces to enhance communication among those with severe physical impairments; promote positive school climate for newcomer immigrant adolescents; and combat sex trafficking among Native Americans through Indigenous-led research. Examples of effective and accessible research communications and technologies are also highlighted.

As we steadily emerge from the pandemic, CYFS will continue to focus on partnerships and foster a vibrant, interdisciplinary research community committed to helping all children, youth, families and schools realize their potential and reach beyond.

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

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

SUPPORT CYFS

If you wish to support CYFS, please visit: cyfs.unl.edu/donate



Ryker Derr, son of Kristen Derr, CYFS project manager.

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

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.

GRAND CHALLENGES

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln has identified seven grand challenge thematic areas in which to focus its expertise and resources, as outlined in its N2025 Strategic Plan. CYFS is uniquely positioned to leverage interdisciplinary research and collaboration in the social, behavioral and educational sciences to positively impact these major societal challenges:

- Anti-racism and racial equity
- Climate resilience
- Early childhood education and development
- Health equity
- Quantum science and engineering
- Science and technology literacy for society
- Sustainable food and water security

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 that align with the grand challenges initiative. The 2021-22 Grand Challenges Catalyst Competition was the next step in UNL's pursuit to solve big, overarching issues that are important to Nebraska and the world.

Learn more about the Catalyst awards and planning grants on page 04.

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The research projects featured in this report are housed in CYFS. Learn more about our research support services at cyfsgrant.unl.edu.








UNL GRAND CHALLENGES

CATALYST COMPETITION GRANTS

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln’s 2021–22 Grand Challenges Catalyst Competition — the initial phase in university’s \$40 million investment in work that directly aligns with its Grand Challenges initiative — provided an exciting opportunity for our dedicated team of faculty, staff, students and research affiliates to come together, think boldly and leverage the university’s strengths, particularly in the social, behavioral and educational sciences.

Three 2021–22 Grand Challenges Catalyst Competition grants are housed in CYFS.

THEMATIC AREAS

-  **Anti-racism & Racial Equity**
-  **Climate Resilience**
-  **Early Childhood Education & Development**
-  **Health Equity**
-  **Quantum Science & Engineering**
-  **Science & Technology Literacy for Society**
-  **Sustainable Food & Water Security**



ESTABLISHMENT AND EVALUATION OF AN INDIGENOUS-LED CENTER TO PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE AMONG INDIGENOUS YOUTH ACROSS THE U.S.



Katie Edwards

Associate Professor, CYFS and Educational Psychology

CATALYST AWARD

In this Catalyst Award, researchers will collaborate with Native American partners to establish an Indigenous-led sexual violence prevention center on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. The center, which will be named by the community, will create jobs, provide training and education opportunities, and bring sexual violence prevention adapted from the IMpower program to K-12 youth across the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

The center’s Indigenous staff will work with other tribal/Indigenous communities across the United States to implement, evaluate and sustain the culturally grounded IMpower sexual violence prevention system.

This project aims to reduce — and strives to eliminate — sexual violence among Indigenous persons throughout the U.S., and to provide all Indigenous K-12 youth with the opportunity to receive a culturally adapted version of IMpower by 2045.

A key focus of the project will be the sustainability of the sexual violence prevention center as an Indigenous-led organization.

This project also includes a youth-led documentary component, in which Indigenous youth will learn about the filmmaking process, from conceptualization to shooting and editing, and will participate with elders in the premier of the film locally and nationally.



RISE WITH INSECTS (RESILIENCE IGNITED THROUGH SCIENCE & ETHICS)



Ana Maria Velez Arango

Assistant Professor, Insect Toxicology

PLANNING GRANT

After decades of work, many researchers believe climate change poses the greatest global threat to human health — and that children and youth are the most vulnerable to the impacts and most-dire consequences, both immediately and throughout their lives.

Black, Latinx, Native American and other youth of color may be disproportionately affected by climate change with deepening inequalities in access to clean air and water, healthy foods and forced migration.

For this planning grant, researchers will use an intercultural and interdisciplinary approach designed to integrate STEM learning — science, technology, engineering and math — on insects’ environmental resilience with restorative healing practices, mindfulness, art and social-emotional learning to provide the space to sit with difficult concepts, such as racism, privilege and the climate change crisis.

The research team aims to actively engage youth, their families and communities in systems thinking to empower them to be stewards of planetary health — the interconnectedness between natural and anthropogenic ecosystems.

The project emphasizes the interconnectedness between natural and anthropogenic ecosystems and ultimately lead to youth taking collective action to mitigate the climate crisis in Nebraska and beyond.



NEBRASKA COMMUNITY ACTION RESEARCH FOR EQUITY & SUSTAINABILITY (NE CARES) HUB



Sarah Zuckerman

Associate Professor, Educational Administration

PLANNING GRANT

In this planning grant, the Nebraska Community Action Research for Equity and Sustainability (NE CARES) Hub seeks to achieve collective action and shared learning by removing barriers that prevent collaboration and co-creation of solutions with practitioners and community members to reduce educational and health inequities.

The goal of the NE CARES Hub is to continually increase racial, economic and geographic equity in education and health access, opportunities and outcomes through collective action.

Barriers to collective action include traditional research paradigms, siloed academic disciplines, time-bound projects, narrow perspectives of

knowledge and faculty-driven priorities. These paradigms breed distrust between community members and researchers, creating social barriers to the collaboration necessary to solve complex problems.

For this project, the NE CARES Hub will build on existing strengths within the University of Nebraska system, emphasizing the development of intentionally horizontal structures connecting communities, university-based researchers and field-based practitioners in education, health and social services into networks.

The Hub will provide infrastructure and support for networks to engage in context-based, interdisciplinary problem diagnosis, solution generation and strategic implementation. This approach to knowledge generation, translation and use can support community-based approaches to creating healthy developmental and educational ecologies.

BRAIN-CONNECTED TECH OPENS COMMUNICATION FOR THOSE WITH SEVERE PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS

As computer technology continues to evolve and become more routine in daily life, researchers and engineers are working to find new ways to link computer technology with the human brain.

Using a direct communication pathway between a wired brain and an external device to produce commands is no longer the stuff of science fiction. Brain-computer interface, or BCI, is now an evolving reality — and one that promises enhanced quality of life for people with severe physical impairments (SPIs).

Kevin Pitt, assistant professor of special education and communication disorders, is leading a pilot project that uses this cutting-edge technology to facilitate communication for people with SPIs — technology which can greatly increase personal autonomy and mobility.

Pitt and his team are honing clinically based evaluation tools and assessment frameworks for brain-computer interface access to augmentative and alternative communication devices (BCI-AAC).

“BCI translates brain activity into computer control, so the user doesn’t need any physical motor movement to use a communication device,” Pitt said.



Kevin Pitt, principal investigator, fits a study participant with an electroencephalogram cap.

Pitt is using two to four age-matched individuals with SPIs, including spinal cord injuries, Parkinson’s disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis — most commonly known as ALS — or other severe physical impairments.

Participants are being tested at the Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Translation Lab in the Barkley Memorial Center on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s East Campus to develop user profiles based on participants’ cognitive abilities — attention, memory, number skills, executive function, motor abilities, motivation and other factors.

Researchers are using the P300 speller device, which records brain activity through electrodes in a non-invasive electroencephalogram cap. The device reads electrical signals generated by the brain when the user identifies something as novel or different, enabling the user to input texts or commands to a computer using thought-generated brain reactions.

The study is tracking users’ progress and learning with the P300 speller device, along with their satisfaction with the device.

Pitt is collaborating with Lincoln’s Madonna Rehabilitation Hospitals and the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) on the project.

Pitt aims to extend the reach of BCI technology.

“The next step is to expand to younger children, whose brains operate differently, so we can start to more broadly get BCI to other populations,” he said.

The project is funded by an Office of Research and Economic Development Layman Seed Award. Along with Pitt, the research team includes Dr. Susan Fager, Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital; Dr. Ezequiel Piccione, UNMC Department of Neurological Sciences; and graduate research assistants Amirsalar Mansouri, Austin Spoor and Kylie Weckwerth.

DIGESTING WHY CHILDREN, VEGETABLES DON’T MIX

Early childhood obesity is a major U.S. public health problem, afflicting children from low-income and minority families in rural areas disproportionately with an increased risk for long-term health disparities, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Children’s vegetable consumption has been consistently lower than nutritional recommendations, which has been linked to the higher prevalence of obesity.

Saima Hasnin, doctoral candidate in child development and early childhood education, is leading a project to better understand family child care home (FCCH) providers’ preparation and serving of vegetables, and their influence on children’s vegetable consumption.

Because child care providers and parents have reported that children often dislike the taste of vegetables, and that vegetables tend to be the most wasted food group in child care settings, Hasnin is examining how vegetables are being prepared and served to children.

She and other researchers are traveling to FCCH sites throughout rural Nebraska to observe 70 children for two days to see what the children are served and how much they eat, then calculate their average nutritional intake.

Data are being gathered using a Veggie Meter® — a portable device that enables rapid, non-invasive optical assessment of human skin carotenoids, which protect the skin from sunlight-induced oxidation effects.

Providers and parents are completing surveys about

their feeding practices, veggie preparation and serving processes.

With the help of Nebraska Extension, providers are being recruited as a part of a larger randomized control trial — the Ecological Approach to (EAT) Family Style project, led by Dipti Dev, associate professor of child, youth and family studies and Hasnin’s doctoral advisor.

EAT Family Style is designed to promote evidence-based, nutrition-related best practices in facilities

that care for children ages 5 and younger.

“Early childhood is when a person’s dietary habits are developed, and those habits continue into adulthood,” she said. “The habits someone develops as a young child have a long-lasting effect on their lifetime health and nutritional status.”

The project is funded by grants from the Buffett Early Childhood Institute and the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE), which is part of the Administration of Children and Families.



Saima Hasnin, principal investigator

RESEARCHERS, TEACHERS, ARTISTS COLLABORATE TO ENVISION FUTURE OF EMERGING MEDIA INSTRUCTION

From left: Guy Trainin, Lorinda Rice, HyeonJin Yoon and Kimberly D'Adamo.



Given the speed at which technology changes and evolves, one can only imagine what media will look like in five years — and beyond.

But Nebraska researchers are collaborating with the state's K-12 educators, artists and administrators to do just that.

Guy Trainin, professor of education in the Department of Teaching, Learning & Teacher Education, is leading a five-year pilot project to promote teaching innovation through arts and emerging media in Nebraska public schools. The project is a collaboration with the Johnny Carson Center for Emerging Media Arts within the Hixson-Lied College of Fine and Performing Arts.

Emerging media is loosely defined as communications of all types based on digital technologies, increasingly with interactive components. Virtual reality, social media apps, video technology and wearable media, such as an Apple Watch, are just a few examples.

The Teaching with Arts and Emerging Media (Art TEAMS) will establish a professional development curriculum for 40 Nebraska teachers to integrate arts and emerging media into their curricula. Researchers aim to foster inclusive, arts-based classroom approaches that embrace students' cultures and voices.

Beginning in summer 2022, the first cohort of 20 teachers recruited from public schools throughout Nebraska participated in an intensive, two-week curriculum at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Teachers work in pairs — a science teacher with an art teacher, for example — to encourage them to think about how their work can intersect.

"We also are integrating teaching artists, museum educators, school administrators and teachers from other disciplines so we can understand what art instruction looks like from every perspective," Trainin said.

During the 2022 and 2023 academic years, participants will receive coaching sessions from Trainin and his team, who will visit classrooms to observe teachers and provide feedback.

The curriculum also includes two exhibitions that display work from students participating in the educators' classes.

"The training is intense at the beginning," Trainin said. "Then we work with them throughout the school year to ensure they are supported, and that they have opportunities to consult with us and to grow their knowledge."

The second cohort will begin in summer 2023, following the same two-week instruction and coaching. Teachers who complete the two-year curriculum will earn 18 graduate-level credits.

Trainin notes that with such rapidly evolving technology, a sort of "fourth industrial revolution" is unfolding.

"In the future, we will automate whatever we can



Teachers realize how different the world is for their students, so they are looking for ways to connect and make school relevant.

automate," he said. "So where humans come in is where they can create and think in integrated ways. This is where kids can find a future."

One of the project's goals is to help teachers who are "digital natives" — those who have grown up in the digital information age — envision what skill sets are needed for students graduating in 2030 and 2040.

As the professional learning model matures, the goal is to share it with a broader group of teachers across the state and throughout the U.S.

"Teachers realize how different the world is for their students, so they are looking for ways to connect and make school relevant," he said. "With time, this curriculum will become more and more relevant for teachers, and more meaningful for their students as they prepare for their future."

The project is funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Along with Trainin, the research team includes Kimberly D'Adamo, TLTE graduate student/lecturer and former teacher; HyeonJin Yoon, MAP Academy research assistant professor; and Lorinda Rice, Lincoln Public Schools art curriculum specialist.



Guy Trainin leads the Art TEAMS Summer Workshop: Planning Curriculum.



Participants in the Art TEAMS Summer Workshop: Movement.

The guide provides information on the importance of quality in caregiving and how to find quality child care providers in Nebraska.



NEBRASKA EXTENSION EARLY CHILDHOOD TEAM DEVELOPS QUALITY CHILD CARE GUIDE

Access to quality child care is essential for working parents. Early care and education settings — including homes, child care centers and out-of-school programs — help Nebraska communities thrive by contributing to a strong workforce, while also providing children with safe and nurturing environments that foster their learning and development.

Demand for affordable and accessible child care is significant in Nebraska, where 75% of children under

age 6 live in homes where all adults in their family work outside the home.

Nebraska Extension's Early Childhood Interest group has published a new resource to help parents with children 12 and younger in their search for quality child care — an often daunting task.

"Child Care Essentials: Choosing Quality Child Care in Nebraska" is available online and is

being provided to parents of newborns at all Nebraska hospitals. The 31-page guide, developed by Nebraska Extension in collaboration with CYFS, provides parents with information on the importance of quality in caregiving and how to find quality child care providers. More than 400 parents and stakeholders across Nebraska provided feedback to inform its contents.

Holly Hatton-Bowers, associate professor of child, youth and family studies and early childhood extension specialist, and Jaclynn Foged, early childhood extension educator, spearheaded efforts to create the guide using a research lens.

"Research shows children's early relationships, environments and experiences, particularly in the first five years, have a profound impact on their development," Foged said. "This guide aims to help parents better understand why quality matters in child care and important factors to consider when deciding if a provider meets their family's needs."

The guide helps take some of the guesswork out of what "quality" means in different caregiving contexts. Age-specific sections describe aspects of early childhood and out-of-school programs that are important to consider. Each section provides a checklist of questions to ask potential child care providers in the search process, along with additional resources.

The guide also offers information on how to check whether a provider is licensed, report safety concerns, apply for child care subsidies and access other family support services.

View the guide at go.unl.edu/child-care.

The guide was funded by a Preschool Development Grant, and developed in collaboration with CYFS with support from partners in the U.S. Department of Human Resources Administration for Children and Families, Office of Early Childhood; Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services; Nebraska Department of Education; and Nebraska Children and Families Foundation.

STUDY EXPLORES SCHOOL CLIMATE FOR ADOLESCENT IMMIGRANTS

Adolescents who have recently immigrated to the United States comprise a large, growing population that faces a variety of academic and social-emotional risk factors.

A healthy school climate — norms, goals, values and relationships within schools, along with teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures — is a key factor in protecting these newcomer immigrant adolescents from risk and promoting their success in school and life.

However, research examining immigrant youths' perceptions of school climate has been sparse, which limits efforts to develop interventions designed to improve school climate.

Lorey Wheeler, MAP Academy co-director and CYFS research associate professor, is collaborating with Perna Arora, assistant professor of school psychology at Columbia University, to better understand how newcomer immigrant adolescents perceive school climate and to determine how

those perceptions affect their academic and social-emotional outcomes.

"For these immigrant adolescents, school is a primary environment that will shape their development," Wheeler said. "We want to understand their school experience and identify additional aspects of school climate that are culturally relevant to these youth that schools may be missing."

For the two-year pilot project, researchers are gathering data from 15-20 immigrant adolescents attending high school in the New York City area. Participating students are from Haiti, India, Latin America, Africa and China, and have been in the U.S. for five years or less.

Students are being interviewed about differences between their previous and present schools, and whether they feel supported in their new U.S. schools. The goal is to refine culturally and developmentally specific indicators of school climate.

For the second phase, 200-300 students are being recruited to provide insight on what an average school day looks like. They are sharing data about friendships and relationships within schools, how students relate to teachers and staff members and whether they are experiencing bullying.

Additionally, researchers are examining school documents, websites and other material to further analyze school climate.

Findings will help develop recommendations for school practices aimed at supporting immigrant adolescents' educational and mental outcomes.

The project is funded by a subaward from Columbia University through the Spencer Foundation.



Lorey Wheeler,
principal investigator

RESEARCHERS CONTINUE TO EXPAND REACH OF TAPP FAMILY-SCHOOL INTERVENTION



This intervention is aimed at supporting positive social-emotional health and wellness in children and youth.



A family-school intervention program that has seen success in Nebraska continues to expand its geographic footprint.

Susan Sheridan, CYFS director, and Amanda Witte, CYFS research assistant professor, are working with University of Wisconsin researchers to bring the Teachers and Parents as Partners (TAPP) intervention to schools in their state.

Previously known as Conjoint Behavioral Consultation, 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. It has been shown to enhance students' academic, behavioral and social outcomes, and strengthen parent-teacher relationships.

"This intervention is aimed at supporting positive social-emotional health and wellness in children and youth," Sheridan said. "We do that by supporting families and educators."

The project is designed to determine whether schools and practitioners can use TAPP in the context of their daily work.

Sheridan and Witte are training school-based practitioners — counselors, psychologists and social workers — to deliver the intervention, and are coordinating their coaching. Researchers then provide training, observations and coaching to specialists to promote the sustainability of evidence-based practices by integrating TAPP into

schools' standard student support structures.

The project is being implemented in 60 schools over two years to include 720 middle school students in the Madison Metropolitan School District and Milwaukee Public Schools. The project's scope within two major school districts sets it apart from previous TAPP studies, Witte said.

Implementation began with the first cohort of practitioners in summer 2022, with their casework beginning in the fall semester. The process will repeat in 2023 with the second cohort. Graduate assistants and TAPP coaches will help with implementation training and support.

Along with Sheridan and Witte, Andy Garbacz, associate professor of educational psychology at the University of Wisconsin, is a principal investigator. Garbacz earned his doctorate at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. During his time at Nebraska, Garbacz worked on the first large-scale randomized trial of TAPP and has been involved in the TAPP research throughout his professional career.

Sheridan and Witte are supervising collection of data relating to fidelity — the degree to which the school-based specialists are able to implement the intervention as designed — and will assess participants' satisfaction with training and coaching.

The intervention's effectiveness is being evaluated by the American Institutes for Research, separating the evaluation from the team that designed the intervention.



TAPP is a research-based, problem-solving intervention that builds on student strengths while fostering parent-teacher collaboration.

Other TAPP research includes ongoing projects in Nebraska and Colorado, such as TAPP Online, which utilizes online training modules to deliver professional development to school specialists. Sheridan said the parallel set of studies provides "an excellent window into the benefits of in-person vs. online training programs."

"Conducting these studies simultaneously gives

us an opportunity to learn from one another about best practices for providing professional development for school-based specialists in the areas of family-school partnership and behavior intervention," Sheridan said.

The project is funded by the Institute of Education Sciences, with the CYFS portion coming from a subaward from the University of Wisconsin.



Participants gather during the 2022 CYFS Summit on Research in Early Childhood at the Nebraska Innovation Campus Conference Center on April 13.

SUMMIT ON RESEARCH IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CONNECTS RESEARCH, PRACTICE, POLICY



Cynthia Osborne, professor of early childhood education at Vanderbilt University and director of the Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center, delivers the event's keynote address.

Creating connections among early childhood research, practice and policy — and how each can enhance the lives of young children and their families — provided the central theme of the 2022 CYFS Summit on Research in Early Childhood.

Nearly 200 attendees, including researchers from across the University of Nebraska system, practitioners, administrators, community partners and policymakers, gathered April 13 at Nebraska Innovation Campus for the daylong, sixth biennial summit, which highlighted the latest research to advance early childhood education and development, and implications for practice and policy.

“We are as committed as ever to keeping Nebraska at the forefront of groundbreaking early childhood research, and today’s event is one solid piece of the foundation on which that commitment is built,” said Sue Sheridan, CYFS director. “Through our collective, interdisciplinary efforts, we can generate bold ideas for the future and make meaningful progress in addressing this important grand challenge.”

University of Nebraska President Ted Carter



Our earliest experiences shape our lives. We know those first three years really set the trajectory for life and well-being.

welcomed attendees to the summit and praised ongoing efforts of early childhood research. He encouraged researchers to continue their work.

“The work in this space is so important,” Carter said. “Be energized and excited about what you learn here today so we can make a difference in these most challenging times for young children and their families. Your work truly drives the future.”

Keynote speaker Cynthia Osborne, professor of early childhood education at Vanderbilt University’s Peabody College of Education and Human Development, outlined the conditions in which children thrive and discussed the most effective state-level policies that help create those conditions.

“Our earliest experiences shape our lives,” said Osborne, who also serves as director of

Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center. “We know those first three years really set the trajectory for life and well-being. If you want to invest in children’s development, you should invest in their development in the first three years.”

Osborne said state policy choices can reduce family stressors and increase capacities, which have substantial impacts on children’s early development — and their health and well-being throughout their lives.

“If we get it right early, it makes things much easier down the road,” she said. “We need to be innovative and try new things, and focus on reducing disparities and closing gaps to ensure all children have their right to thrive from the start.”

Throughout the day’s breakout sessions and panel discussions, research topics spanned children’s school readiness, parent engagement, special education, health and nutrition, STEM, social-emotional development, and teacher training and professional development.

“What we are doing here is applying ideas and solutions to issues of concern to families with children, and to the nation overall,” said Sam Meisels, founding executive director of the Buffett Early Childhood Institute. “Our work is so important to the future of the nation.”

Matthew Blomstedt, Nebraska commissioner of education, shared closing thoughts, noting how early childhood research drives future success. He thanked researchers for their work and collaboration in aligning research, practice and policy.

“Just because you are dealing with small people, you’re not doing small things,” he said. “You have the chance to help develop leaders for the future.”

The summit was jointly sponsored by CYFS; the Nebraska Academy for Early Childhood Research (NAECR); the College of Education and Human Sciences; the Buffett Early Childhood Institute; and First Five Nebraska.



NAECR Policy Fellows and First Five Nebraska researchers participate in a panel discussion.

MULTI-INSTITUTIONAL STUDY EXPLORES HOW STUDENTS APPROACH COURSE WORK ONCE CLASS ENDS

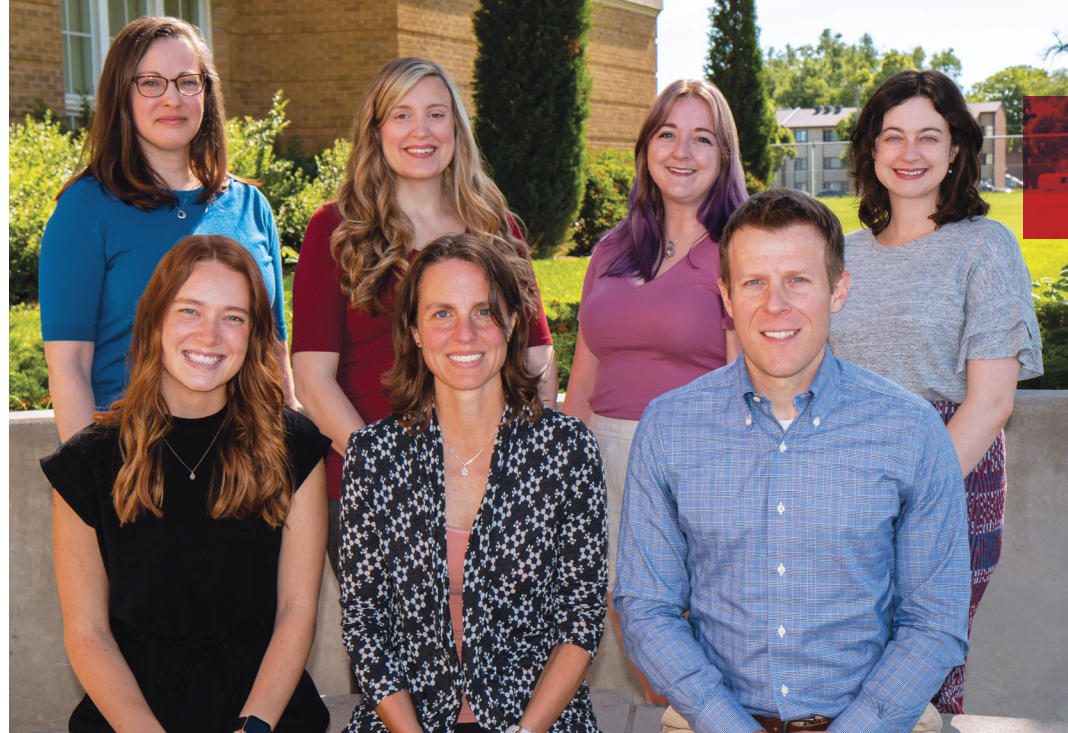
As learning environments increasingly rely on online course formats that work with busy college student schedules — particularly after disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic — a better understanding of how students complete out-of-class assignments is crucial to ensuring equitable opportunities for academic success.

Brian Couch, associate professor of biological sciences, is leading a collaborative, multi-institutional project to explore undergraduate students' strategies for completing out-of-class homework, including worksheets, take-home quizzes and online assignments — and what barriers they encounter.

The three-year project is a collaboration between University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL) and Southeast Community College (SCC). That collaboration, Couch said, enables researchers to gain broader insights while interacting with a range of students from different institutions.

Researchers are also investigating how external factors, such as job or family obligations, may affect a student's ability to access and learn from online course material — and whether those factors create disproportionate challenges for students from historically underserved socioeconomic backgrounds.

During the 2021-22 academic year, researchers gathered data from undergraduate biology courses at UNL and SCC. Using Zoom videoconferencing, the team watched students complete assignments live and recorded their interactions.



Top row, from left: Lorey Wheeler, Kati Brazeal, Sarah Spier and Gabrielle Johnson. Bottom row, from left: Allison Upchurch, Dana Kirkwood-Watts and Brian Couch.

Researchers surveyed more than 1,000 students in 12 courses and completed 25 virtual student interviews about perceived academic barriers to help clarify their learning behaviors, use of resources and associated challenges.

Although the project focuses specifically on undergraduate biology students, Couch said, the same potential barriers and solutions exist across other disciplines.

Once data are analyzed, the team will work with instructors to enhance their courses to ensure the most efficient use of time and resources — and to help students overcome potential academic barriers.

“Creating good assignments is one thing, but we also need to understand how to ensure that students have the right space, mindset and resources to access those assignments and use them productively,” Couch said.

The project is funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation. Along with Couch, the research team includes Kati Brazeal, associate professor of practice, biological sciences; Lorey Wheeler, co-director, MAP Academy, and CYFS research associate professor; SCC biology professors Gabrielle Johnson and Sarah Spier; and UNL graduate research assistants Dana Kirkwood-Watts and Allison Upchurch.

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACTS OF SEX TRAFFICKING ON NATIVE AMERICAN SURVIVORS

Although Native American women and girls experience disproportionately high rates of sex trafficking, little is known about the impact sex trafficking has specifically on Native survivors — or what Native survivors need to heal and achieve safety and justice.

In two related projects, researchers in three states are examining the impacts of sex trafficking on Native American survivors and communities. They are collaborating with Native organizations to better understand what survivors need to cope, heal and achieve safety and justice, and to determine how cultural differences and social inequalities shape available help for survivors.

“These projects are important because they provide opportunities to learn and develop ways to provide the best possible support and the most meaningful impact,” said Katie Edwards, director of the Interpersonal Violence Research Laboratory (IVRL) and associate professor, CYFS and educational psychology.

Guided by an advisory board comprised of practitioners, advocates and community members, many of whom are Native American, researchers are determining how Native Americans are recruited, groomed and coerced into sex trafficking situations, and are clarifying how survivors are identified by law enforcement, medical providers and advocates.

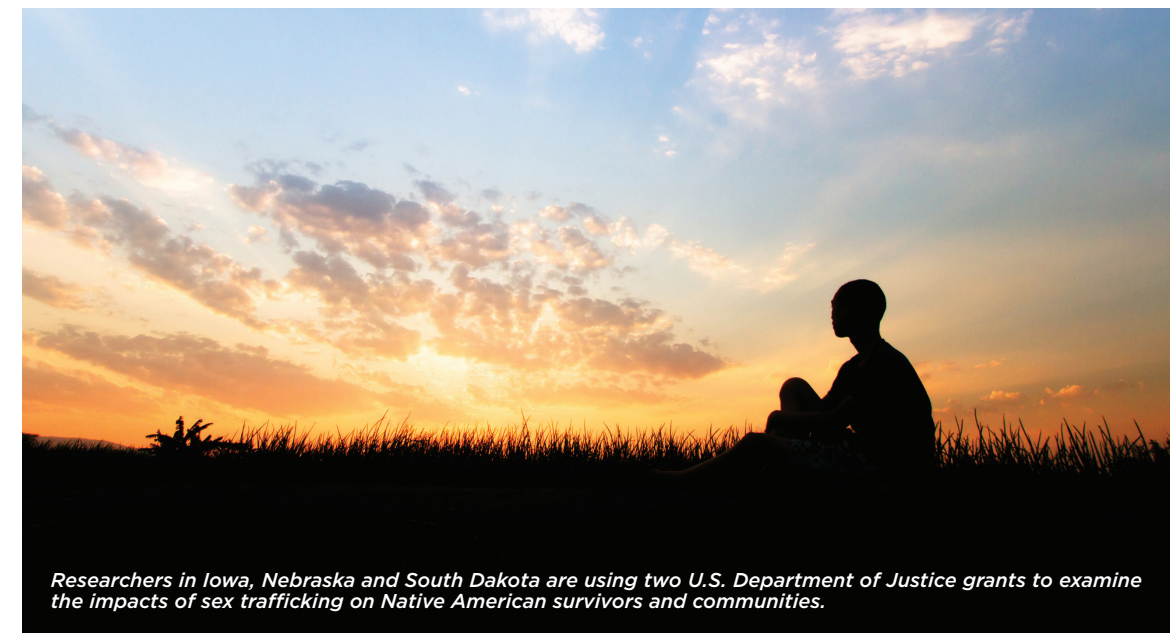
One project is Indigenous Voices Rising, a community-based, Indigenous-led study that is gathering data from 75 Native survivors of sex trafficking, age 18 and older, on four Native American reservations in western South Dakota.

Another study includes participants from 15 Native American tribes spread across the northern Great Plains and focuses on prevention and early identification of Native American survivors of sex trafficking.

For both projects, data are being collected from Native American adults who have experienced sex trafficking, either during childhood or adulthood — including those who did or did not access formal services. Participants are sharing their sex-trafficking experiences in person and via phone or videoconferencing.

“The survivors are the experts; we’re just providing the voice for them,” said Lenny Hayes, mental and chemical health therapist and project community partner. “My hope with this research is that this population will be seen and heard.”

The projects are funded by U.S. Department of Justice grants — one from the National Institute of Justice, the other from the Office on Violence Against Women. Along with Edwards and Hayes, the research team includes Bridget Diamond-Welch, director of research and innovation, School of Health Sciences, University of South Dakota; Anna Kosloski, associate professor at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs; Ramona Herrington, Oglala Lakota and IVRL’s cultural outreach manager; Colette Yellow Robe, Native American Studies affiliate professor and academic retention specialist; Pauletta Red Willow, director of Maggie’s House Youth Center; and Carmen O’Leary, director of the Native Women’s Society of the Great Plains.



Researchers in Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota are using two U.S. Department of Justice grants to examine the impacts of sex trafficking on Native American survivors and communities.

STUDY EXAMINES BONDS BETWEEN BABIES, PARENTS

It may seem obvious, but the emotional bond babies develop with their parents is crucial — not only for their survival, but also to ensure positive outcomes throughout life.

Less-obvious, however, is how this bond — known as attachment — develops.

Secure attachment during infancy predicts healthy social-emotional outcomes across the lifespan. Insecure attachment foretells less-positive developmental outcomes for children, such as behavioral and academic problems.

Patty Kuo, assistant professor of child, youth and family studies, is leading a pilot project to explore how attachment security to mothers and fathers develops in a baby's first 18 months — and how those attachment configurations predict outcomes in the child's first three years.

She is identifying key factors that influence how attachments are formed based on variations in parental sensitivity and availability, such as accessibility to the infant.

"While we know a lot about attachment security

to moms, we don't know much about attachment security to other caregivers, especially in family contexts," Kuo said. "But we do know the whole family unit matters to those relationships."

To better understand what is happening at home with children and their parents, Kuo recruited 50 parents — 25 couples — with infants in the Lincoln, Nebraska, area. For three hours a week in one-hour segments, the parents wear GoPro cameras to document their interactions with their children and each other in their home.

When the infants are about one year old, each parent will visit Kuo's lab individually with their child to complete a test that enables researchers to observe and measure attachment security in young children within the context of caregiver relationships.

To supplement her pilot study, Kuo also has been awarded a grant for a separate project to explore children's stress and health biomarkers. She and her team are collecting saliva and stool samples to study links between the brain's emotional and cognitive centers with peripheral intestinal functions.

Kuo aims to use findings of the two intertwined studies to expand her research to explore long-term impacts on children's bio-behavioral health, and to better understand attachment security in evolving caregiving configurations, such as with same-sex parents.

The pilot project is funded by an Office of Research and Economic Development Layman Award. The related children's stress and health biomarkers study is funded by an ORED Biomedical Research Seed Grant. Along with Kuo, the research team also includes Lorey Wheeler, MAP Academy co-director and CYFS research associate professor; Rebecca Brock, associate professor of psychology; Jessica Calvi, research assistant professor at UNL's Center for Brain, Biology and Behavior; and Jacques Izard, associate professor, Department of Food Science and Technology.



Patty Kuo,
principal investigator

INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAM TAKES LONG-RANGE VIEW OF VISUAL IMPAIRMENT INSTRUCTION

According to a recent study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association Ophthalmology, the number of American preschool children with visual impairment is projected to increase by more than 25 percent in the coming decades, with most visual impairment resulting from simple uncorrected vision problems that interfere with clear sight.

As the number of young children with visual impairments increases, the need for special educators trained to serve this group becomes more crucial.

Mackenzie Savaiano, associate professor of practice in the Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders (SECD), is leading a project to recruit and train new teachers of students with visual impairments. She aims to help ensure enough teachers and related service providers are available to infants and toddlers with visual impairments in Nebraska and the Midwest — and to develop quality, graduate-level interdisciplinary programs to prepare future special educators.

The project is a collaboration among the three



Mackenzie Savaiano, principal investigator

degree programs in SECD — early childhood special education, teachers of students with visual impairments (TVIs), and orientation and mobility (O&M). Its interdisciplinary collaboration among the three programs is key to training practitioners to provide the most comprehensive care for visually impaired children and their families, Savaiano said.

The five-year program will support 36 students — three cohorts of 12 students, with each cohort representing one of SECD's three programs — by covering the cost of students' tuition, textbooks, summer travel and lodging, and other academic expenses. Scholars are being recruited from the rural Mid-Plains region, where there are shortages of TVIs and O&M specialists.

The two-year curriculum is primarily online, with some collaborative in-person coursework and field experiences, and enables students to combine early childhood intervention coursework with their visual impairment training.

"Vision leads to children developing, growing, learning, watching, imitating — it's how children learn most of the time," Savaiano said. "Vision is critical, so having well-trained early interventionists in this area is so important."

The program is designed for non-traditional graduate students — typically, working teachers who are looking to slightly adjust their career focus.

The Children's Center for the Visually Impaired in Kansas City, Missouri — a preschool for children with visual impairment — serves as a practicum site for the project. At the end of the two-year curriculum, students will spend a week at the center with experienced early childhood educators who work with the visually impaired.

The project is funded by the U.S. Department of Education-Office of Special Education Programs. Along with Savaiano, the research team includes HyeonJin Yoon, MAP Academy research assistant professor; and Johanna Higgins, former associate professor of practice in SECD.



HyeonJin Yoon,
principal investigator

STUDY ASSESSES MODIFIED EVALUATION METHOD FOR STUDENTS PLACED AT RISK

HyeonJin Yoon, MAP Academy research assistant professor, is assessing the validity of a new evaluation method for targeted educational interventions for students placed at risk.

Regression discontinuity design (RDD) is an evaluation that assesses the impact of a need-based, targeted intervention. It relies on a cutoff point on a measure that evaluates participants' need, or threshold, above or below which an intervention is assigned. By comparing post-test

scores around the cutoff, researchers can identify the intervention's impact on a given outcome.

For example, in schools, students could be invited to an after-school reading program based on a cutoff of reading scores. If the intervention is assigned to students within a certain range above or below the cutoff, RDD can measure the group-difference in outcomes clustered in the small area on either side of the cutoff, where students are considered statistically comparable.

Yoon is using evidence-based, kindergarten math intervention data collected in 2016 and 2018 from Massachusetts and Oregon. She is working to demonstrate the application, analysis and interpretation of RDD with covariate matching (RDD-CM).

By matching covariates — independent variables that can influence the outcome of a statistical trial — Yoon aims to balance covariate distribution in the treatment and control groups. She will add covariate measures such as pretest scores and demographic information — data naturally collected in schools.

"That's an advantage of this method," Yoon said. "The covariates are already there. We just need to include them in the analysis."

Matching covariates helps identify causal effects beyond the treatment cutoff, and enables Yoon to assess the extent to which the method generates precise, unbiased estimates comparable to those from a randomized controlled trial (RCT) design.

"When you use RCT for program evaluation, you randomize students," Yoon said. "But with randomization, students assigned to a control group don't receive the intervention. If the RDD-CM method is found to be methodologically valid, and works as well as RCT, that solves much of the problem."

If RDD-CM is found to be sound, Yoon will develop simulations to determine the design and variable conditions that work for the application, such as the necessary sample size and other specifics such as optimal methods for handling absences of covariates.

"Educators and policymakers need to know whether an intervention works for everyone — especially those most in need," Yoon said.

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

2021-2022 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.



DENA ABBOTT

Assistant Professor, Educational Psychology

"Promoting Women's Sexual Wellness Using Comprehensive, Rights-based Adult Sexuality Education"

In the U.S., a sex-negative culture leads to limited access to comprehensive sexuality education and negative sexual

and reproductive health outcomes among women. Although mental health professionals trained in holistic wellness, advocacy and the culture-health connection make a cogent fit to address sexual and reproductive health inequities, access to resources needed to provide effective sexual wellness support is limited.

This project is designed to promote healthy, positive sexuality and reduce sexual and reproductive health outcome inequities by increasing sexuality competence among mental health professionals. It will be the first to utilize adult sexuality education to promote sexual wellness among women.

Abbott and a team of doctoral students in counseling psychology will adapt and facilitate a sexuality education course designed for young adults. With undergraduate participants, this pilot study will test how — if at all — adult-focused, comprehensive, rights-based sexuality education influences college women's sexual attitudes and sexual self-concept.

"Our Whole Lives," an adult sexuality curriculum, will be adapted into a short-term intervention to explore its efficacy in increasing positive attitudes about sexuality and improving sexual self-concept.

Results will inform the use of the curriculum by mental health professionals to promote sexual wellness in their communities.



TAEYEON KIM

Assistant Professor, Educational Administration

"Understanding Equity in Nebraska School Accountability: An Exploration of School Leaders' Narratives"

Aligning with the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, Nebraska policymakers and educational leaders redesigned the state's

school accountability systems to address educational inequalities.

While the Nebraska Department of Education frames equity as a critical commitment for accountability policy, how school principals define and facilitate equity along with the state accountability system is unknown.

This project explores school principals' understandings and practices of equity in K-12 schools under Nebraska's school accountability framework to address how school principals interpret and make sense of equity in the school accountability system; to understand how equity is defined and enacted in school leadership practices; and to identify what successful strategies are utilized to promote equity.

Researchers will collect in-depth, qualitative data through interviews, shadowing, artifacts and photo elicitation focus groups to expand knowledge and provide policy solutions to improve equity in student learning, given school principals' documented influence on instructional quality and student achievement.

Findings will also help inform how school districts and leadership preparation programs can strengthen diversity and inclusive excellence in school leadership personnel pipelines in Nebraska education and beyond.

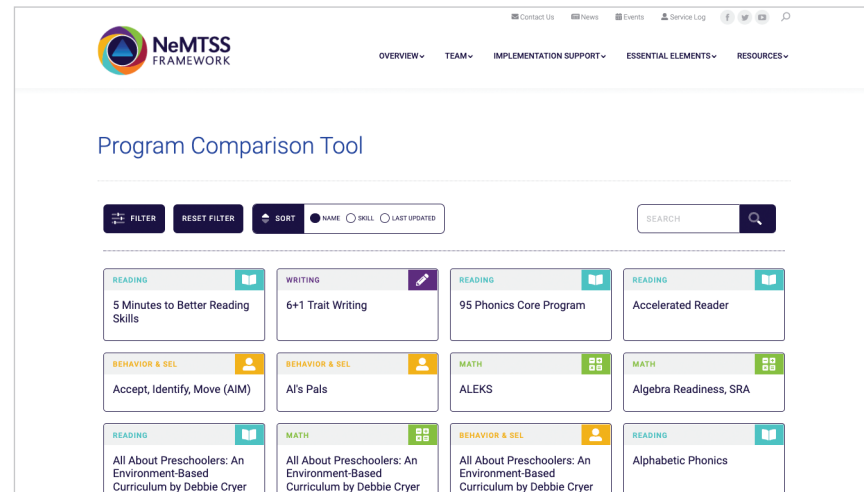


Addilyn Derr, daughter of Kristen Derr, CYFS project manager.

BRINGING RESEARCH TO REAL LIFE

Effective research communication is essential. CYFS personnel who specialize in communications and media, and database and research technologies, work with faculty and other partners to translate research in innovative and accessible ways — bringing research to real life. Web-based, multimedia tools can enhance the reach and visibility of research, while helping with recruitment, data collection and management, interactive learning and dissemination of findings. Here are some recent examples of effective research communications facilitated by CYFS.

Find more examples at cyfs.unl.edu/media.



PROGRAM COMPARISON TOOL

Nebraska Multi-tiered Systems of Support (NeMTSS)

Evaluating and selecting evidence-based programs and interventions to support students can be a time-consuming job for educators. The Nebraska Department of Education's NeMTSS team worked with CYFS to develop the Program Comparison Tool — a web-based resource that allows educators to compare more than 80 academic and social-emotional learning programs and interventions in one place. The tool features a dynamic search format for easy sorting and filtering across multiple domains, grade levels, populations and more.

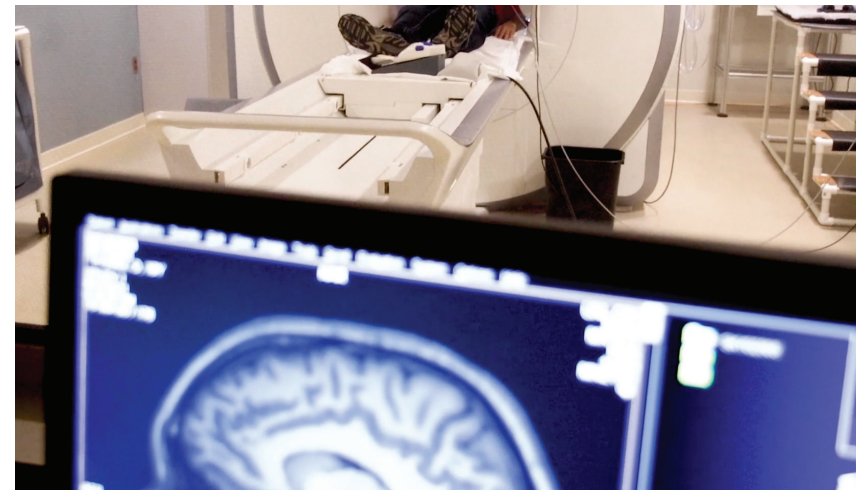
“The Program Comparison Tool, developed with support from CYFS, has received great feedback from educators across the state. This dynamic platform has made it easier for them to review and compare evidence-based programs and make informed decisions that will benefit school communities.”

-Amy Rhone, administrator/state director, Office of Special Education, Nebraska Department of Education



EXPLORE THE TOOL

go.unl.edu/comparison-tool



PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT VIDEO

Neuroimaging for Language, Literacy & Learning Lab

Recruiting research participants is often a challenge, especially when studies are limited to a small population. The Neuroimaging for Language, Literacy and Learning Laboratory called upon CYFS to produce a video to help participants know what to expect during its Brain Activation of Cochlear Implant Candidates (BACIC) study. The video provides step-by-step information on lab visits and requirements for participation in magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) technology to analyze the brain.

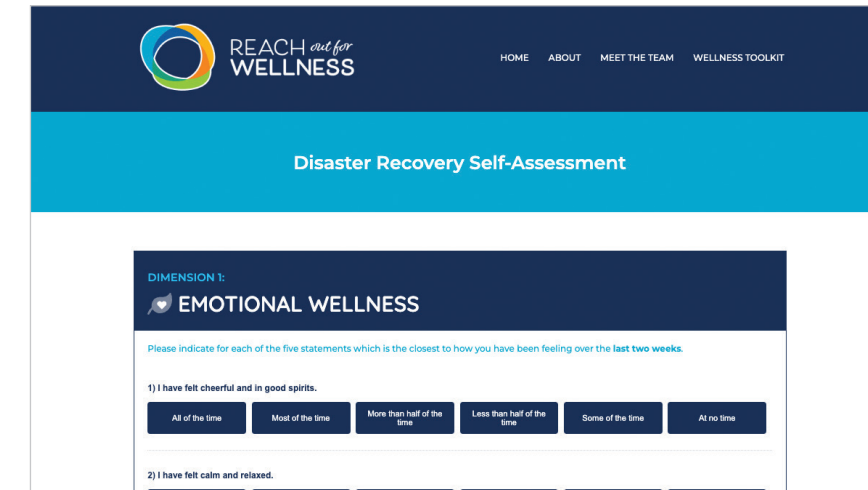
“The video produced by CYFS received many positive comments from our research participants and helped us explain our research to over 100 potential participants from over 10 counties across the state. We were able to recruit 60 participants in six months.”

-Yingying Wang, associate professor in special education and communication disorders



WATCH THE VIDEO

go.unl.edu/bacic-video



DISASTER RECOVERY SELF-ASSESSMENT

Nebraska Extension

Stress associated with natural disaster response and recovery can have serious health consequences. In collaboration with Nebraska Extension's Reach Out for Wellness project, CYFS developed an interactive Disaster Recovery Self-Assessment (DRSA) tool to support Extension staff who serve their communities following natural disasters. The DRSA asks users questions about their overall health and generates an individualized report with their wellness score, plus recommended strategies to address their wellness needs.

“The custom-built online assessment makes it convenient for Extension personnel and others across the U.S. to receive an individualized report with their wellness score and specific strategies to address their wellness needs. CYFS data support has been critically important in making this project a success.”

-Holly Hatton-Bowers, associate professor of child, youth and family studies



TAKE THE ASSESSMENT

go.unl.edu/extension-assessment

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

\$1,367,515

External grants funded

\$113,761,243

RESEARCH IMPACT

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

882 Total grants submitted

320 Total grants funded

38% Grant submission success rate (based on known decisions)

\$23.95

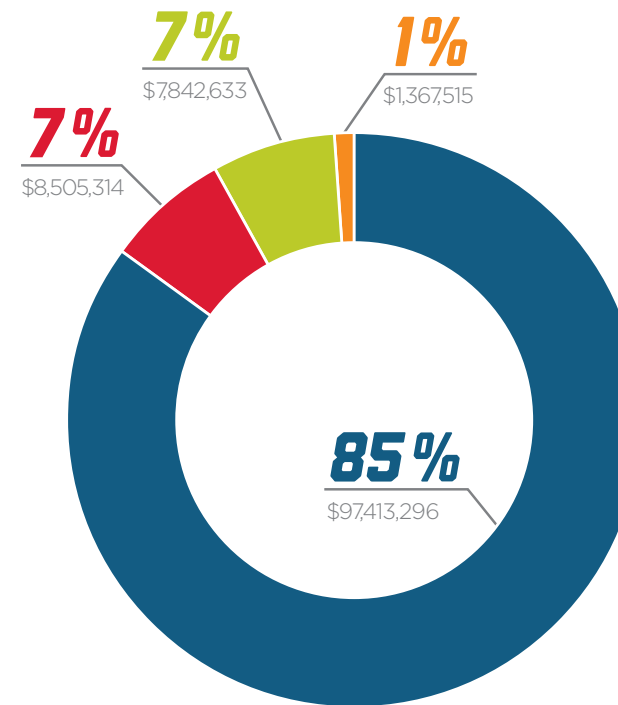
Return rate to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for every \$1 invested

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.

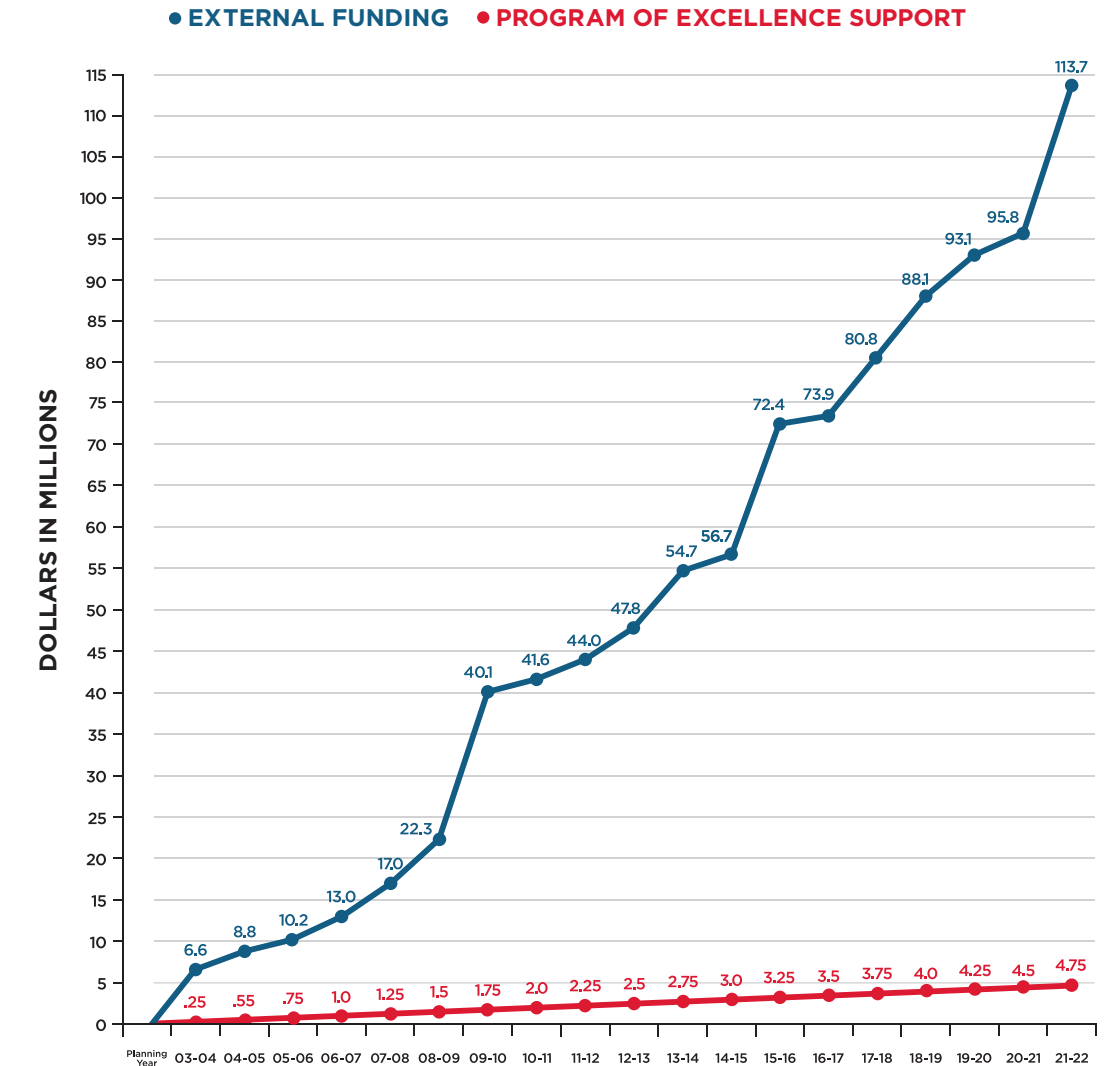
- Federal (135 grants)
- State (41 grants)
- Foundation (77 grants)
- Internal (67 grants)

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 the 2021-22 fiscal year.

Federal Awards

Administration for Children and Families

Can Family Home Child Care Providers' Preparation and Serving Practices Influence Children's Vegetable Consumption?
PIs: Saima Hasnin, Dipti Dev

Child Care Essentials: Choosing Quality Child Care in Nebraska (subaward through Nebraska Children and Families Foundation)
PI: Holly Hatton-Bowers

Cultivating Healthy Intentional Mindful Educators (subaward through Nebraska Children and Families Foundation)
PIs: Holly Hatton-Bowers, Carrie Clark, Lisa Knoche

Getting Ready 0-3 (GRO3): Supporting the Development of Infants/Toddlers Through an Integrated Parent-Teacher Relationship-Based Approach
PIs: Lisa Knoche, Susan Sheridan

Getting Ready Preschool Development Grant (PDG) (subaward through Nebraska Children and Families Foundation)
PI: Lisa Knoche

Go NAP SACC Online Tool and Evaluation (subaward through the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services)
PI: Dipti Dev

Help Me Grow Centralized Access Point Evaluation (subaward through Children's Hospital & Medical Center)
PI: Lorey Wheeler

Learning Social and Emotional Skills in Head Start: Influence of Familial Risk Factors and Classroom Characteristics
PIs: Kelsey McCoy, David Hansen

Mindfulness in Early Care and Education (subaward through Nebraska Children and Families Foundation)
PIs: Holly Hatton-Bowers, Carrie Clark, Katie Krause

Phase 2 PDG Database (subaward through Nebraska Children and Families Foundation- Buffett Early Childhood Institute)
PI: Lisa Knoche

Ready Rosie 2021-2022 (subaward through Nebraska Children and Families Foundation)
PI: Dawn Davis

Centers for Disease Control

Evaluating Practice-Based Sexual Violence Primary Prevention Approaches from CDC's Rape Prevention
PI: Katie Edwards

The Impact of an Adapted Version of the Strengthening Families Program on Reducing IPV among Caregivers and ACEs among their Children
PI: 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
PI: Katie Edwards

Development and Pilot Trial of an Intervention to Reduce Disclosure Recipients' Negative Social Reactions and Victims' Psychological Distress and Problem Drinking
PI: Katie Edwards

Evaluating Psychophysiological Mechanisms of Early Childhood Teachers' Stress Resilience and Their Relevance for Preschoolers' Self-Regulation
PIs: Carrie Clark, Holly Hatton-Bowers

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)
PI: Natalie Koziol

Help Me Grow (subaward through Children's Hospital & Medical Center)
PI: Lorey Wheeler

HOME C200KING: Creative Culinary Opportunities Offering Kids Inquiry-Based Nutritional Genius (subaward through the University of South Carolina)
PI: Kelley Buchheister

Neural Predictors of Speech Perception Outcomes in Adults with Cochlear Implants
PIs: Yingying Wang, Michelle Hughes

National Science Foundation

FIRST: The Math at Home Program: Promoting Parent-Child Math Engagement to Improve Young Children's Math Skills (awarded by Nebraska EPSCoR program)
PI: Amy Napoli

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

Nebraska STEM: Supporting Elementary Rural Teacher Leadership
PIs: Amanda Thomas, Guy Trainin, Wendy Smith

Research on Integrated STEM Efficacy (RISE): A Study of Elementary Preservice Teachers and Noyce Scholars
PI: Deepika Menon

The Role of Stigma in Partner Violence
PI: Katie Edwards

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Read for Resilience: Supporting Children after Disasters with Storybooks (subaward through Extension Disaster Education Network)
PIs: Amy Napoli, Holly Hatton-Bowers

Resource Toolkit to Support the Wellness of Extension Employees Following a Natural Disaster
PIs: 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)
PI: Natalie Koziol (formerly Ray Reichenberg)

Youth Civic Engagement Using Simulations and Design Thinking
PIs: 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
PIs: Alexandra Torkelson-Trout, Kristin Duppong Hurley

A Randomized Trial of Conjoint Behavioral Consultation (CBC) with Latino Students: A Replication Study
PIs: Susan Sheridan, James Bovaird, Lorey Wheeler

Art TEAMS: Nurturing Educators Who Integrate Art, Core Subjects, and Culturally Responsive Teaching to Support Students in Becoming Makers of Change
PIs: Guy Trainin, Kimberley D'Adamo, HyeonJin Yoon

Coaching in Early Intervention (CEI): Promoting Outcomes for Infants/Toddlers with Disabilities through Evidence-Based Practices
PIs: Lisa Knoche, Rachel Schachter, Susan Sheridan, Gwen Nugent

Early Learning Network Lead
PIs: Susan Sheridan, Lisa Knoche

Efficacy of the START-Play Program for Infants with Neuromotor Disorders (subaward through Duquesne University)
PI: James Bovaird

Efficacy of Virtual Professional Development in Rural Schools to Enhance Teacher-Parent Partnerships for Students with Behavioral Challenges
PIs: Susan Sheridan, Amanda Witte, Lorey Wheeler

Exploring Cognitive and Foundational Processes Underlying Pre-algebra among Students with and without Mathematics Learning Difficulties
PIs: Jessica Namkung, Wendy Smith

Interdisciplinary Training for Early Intervention and Visual Impairment (IT-EIVI)
PI: Mackenzie Savaiano

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

Learning Frontiers: Pre-K to Grade 3
PIs: Susan Sheridan, Lisa Knoche, James Bovaird

Nebraska Multi-Tiered System of Support Implementation Support Team (subaward through Nebraska Department of Education)
PI: Amanda Witte

Project VIEW: Visual Impairments Education in Writing
PIs: Michael Hebert, Mackenzie Savaiano

Retaining Special Education Teachers in Nebraska: A Comprehensive Retention Program (NCRP) (subaward through Nebraska Department of Education)
PIs: Amanda Witte, HyeonJin Yoon

School Characteristics, Classroom Processes, and PK-1 Learning and Development (subaward through the University of Florida)
PIs: Amanda Witte, Natalie Koziol

School Psychology Specialization in Concussion/Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (mTBI)
PI: Scott Napolitano

Systematic Efficacy Replication Study of Conjoint Behavioral Consultation in Elementary Schools (subaward through the University of Wisconsin-Madison)
PIs: Susan Sheridan, Amanda Witte

Testing the Efficacy of INSIGHTS for Promoting Positive Learning Environments and Academic Achievement in Nebraska: A Replication Study
PIs: Gwen Nugent, Susan Sheridan, James Bovaird

The Impacts of COVID-19 on Educators and Student Learning (subaward through Nebraska Department of Education)
PIs: Susan Sheridan, Gwen Nugent, Amanda Witte

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)
PI: Katie Edwards

Healing among Rural and Indigenous Women Victims of Domestic Violence: A Mixed-Methodological Analysis (subaward through the University of South Dakota)
PI: Katie Edwards

Identifying the Feasibility and Acceptability of Conducting Longitudinal Outcome Evaluation Research with Adult Survivors of Sex Trafficking

and Their Perceptions of a Comprehensive Service Model
PI: Katie Edwards

Indigenous-led Research on Sex Trafficking among Native Americans in the Northern Great Plains
PI: Katie Edwards

Indigenous-led Research on Sex Trafficking among Native Americans in Western South Dakota (subaward through the University of South Dakota)
PI: Katie Edwards

U.S. Treasury

ARPA Getting Ready (subaward through Nebraska Children and Families Foundation)
PI: Lisa Knoche

State Awards

Nebraska Department of Education

NDE Family Engagement Webinar
PI: Lisa Knoche

Foundation/Other Awards

Accountability for Equity?: Effects of External Control on Opportunities to Learn in K-12 Schools
Funding Source: UNL Research Council
PIs: 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
PIs: Natalie Koziol, Marc Goodrich

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
PIs: Hannah Kerby, Susan Sheridan

Attachment Security and the Gut-Brain Axis: A Nationwide Sample
Funding Source: UNL ORED Biomedical Research Seed Grant
PI: Patty Kuo

Can Family Child Care Home Providers Influence Children's Vegetable Consumption?
Funding Source: Buffett Early Childhood Institute
PIs: Saima Hasnin, Dipti Dev

Early Head Start University Partnership
Funding Source: ICF International
PI: Lisa Knoche

Educare Evaluation 2021-2022
Funding Source: Buffett Early Childhood Fund
PI: 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)
PIs: Amanda Witte, Amanda Morales

Exploring Principal Leadership's Longitudinal Impacts on High School Students' Racial Gaps in Mathematics: Evidence from National HSLSO9 Data
Funding Source: UNL Research Council
PI: Jiangang Xia

Exploring the Impact of Emotional Availability on the Efficacy of Physical Therapy Intervention
Funding Source: Academy of Pediatric Physical Therapy (subaward through Virginia Commonwealth University)
PI: Natalie Koziol

Exploring the Psychological Well-Being of Diverse U.S.-Based Atheists
Funding Source: UNL Research Council
PI: Dena Abbott

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
Funding Source: UNL Layman Award
PI: Katie Edwards

Improving Evaluation Methods for Targeted Educational Interventions
Funding Source: UNL Layman Award
PI: HyeonJin Yoon

Key Factors Influencing Infant Attachment Security with Mothers and Fathers
Funding Source: UNL Layman Award
PIs: Patty Kuo, Rebecca Brock

Mathematical Spiritual Wisdom Within Young People
Funding Source: UNL Layman Award
PI: Ricardo Martinez

Measuring Gross Motor Function Change in 3- to 24-Month-Old Children With or at High Risk for CP: Validation of the Gross Motor Function Measure-66 Item Sets
Funding Source: American Academy for Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine
PI: Natalie Koziol

Mindfulness and Mastery
Funding Source: Buffett Early Childhood Fund (subaward through UNMC)
PI: Dawn Davis

Project S.T.O.P.P. (Student Thoughts on Prevention Programming)
Funding Source: American Psychological Foundation
PI: Victoria Mauer

Promoting Positive School Climate among Newcomer Immigrant Adolescents
Funding Source: Spencer Foundation (subaward through Columbia University)
PI: Lorey Wheeler

Reading and Writing Profiles of Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
Funding Source: UNL Research Council
PIs: Derek Rodgers, Susan Loveall-Hague

Role of REV-ERBβ in Exosome Biogenesis and Release
Funding Source: UNL Layman Award
PI: Yongjun Wang

Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan Evaluation
Funding Source: Buffett Early Childhood Institute
PI: Lisa Knoche

The Associations between Early Numeracy Environments and Young Children's Early Numeracy Skills
Funding Source: Buffett Early Childhood Institute
PIs: 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
PIs: Theresa Catalano, Peiwen Wang

The Efficacy of Technology-Delivered Mental Health Services in Rural Nebraska: Addressing the Needs of Students, Families and Schools
Funding Source: UNL Layman Award
PI: 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
PIs: Dipti Dev, Santosh Pitla, David Dziewaltowski

Toward P300-Based Brain-Computer Interface Access for Those with Severe Physical Impairments
Funding Source: UNL Layman Award
PI: Kevin Pitt

Veggie Meter
Funding Source: Agricultural Research Division
PI: Dipti Dev

AFFILIATES & PERSONNEL

CYFS Research Affiliates

Research affiliates make up a network of 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

University of Nebraska Medical Center

Munroe-Meyer Institute

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
Gwen Nugent
Raymond Reichenberg
Lorey Wheeler
Amanda Witte
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