

Early Childhood in CEHS



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
AND HUMAN SCIENCES

cehs.unl.edu

Message from the Dean

Dear Friends and Colleagues:



The College of Education and Human Sciences (CEHS) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is united in enhancing the lives of individuals, families, schools and communities.

Although the College concerns itself with subject matter that traverses the lifespan, our faculty, staff, students and alumni are especially interested in the issues facing the youngest members of our society.

Our collaborative spirit is highlighted by a new academy for early childhood research and our partnership with the Buffett Early Childhood Institute. Early childhood is a significant focus for teaching and learning, research and creative work, and outreach and extension conducted within the College. This publication highlights some of that work.

Mission

The College of Education and Human Sciences is dedicated to enhancing the lives of individuals, families, schools, and communities and to strengthening the relationships among them.

Values

In pursuing our mission, the faculty, staff, students and graduates of the College of Education and Human Sciences are guided by shared values that inform every aspect of our work. Specifically, we value:

- Excellence in all aspects of the life of the College

Within these pages, you will discover that members of our CEHS community are implementing a variety of initiatives involving children birth to age eight, their families and the societal organizations that support them. These initiatives cover nearly every aspect of young children's development. What distinguishes these initiatives is their:

- Breadth (e.g., close to 100 courses taught across seven different departments in one college; research on young children conducted in all of our units)
- Depth (e.g., initiatives at the bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels; longitudinal research; longstanding programs in the community)
- Interdisciplinary nature (e.g., 2-by-2 agreements with community colleges; integration of subject areas such as early childhood education, special education and elementary education to create unified programs across multiple departments)



These qualities and our unified commitment to early childhood are helping make life better for Nebraska's children and families and are strengthening our state's reputation for the good life.

Sincerely,

Marjorie Kostelnik
Dean

- Innovation, creativity, and curiosity as we address the complex issues facing individuals, families, schools, and communities
- Respect for diverse people, ideas, voices and perspectives
- Multidisciplinary approaches to scholarship that integrate teaching and learning, research, and creative activity, outreach and service
- Working together to positively impact the lives of individuals, families, schools, and communities

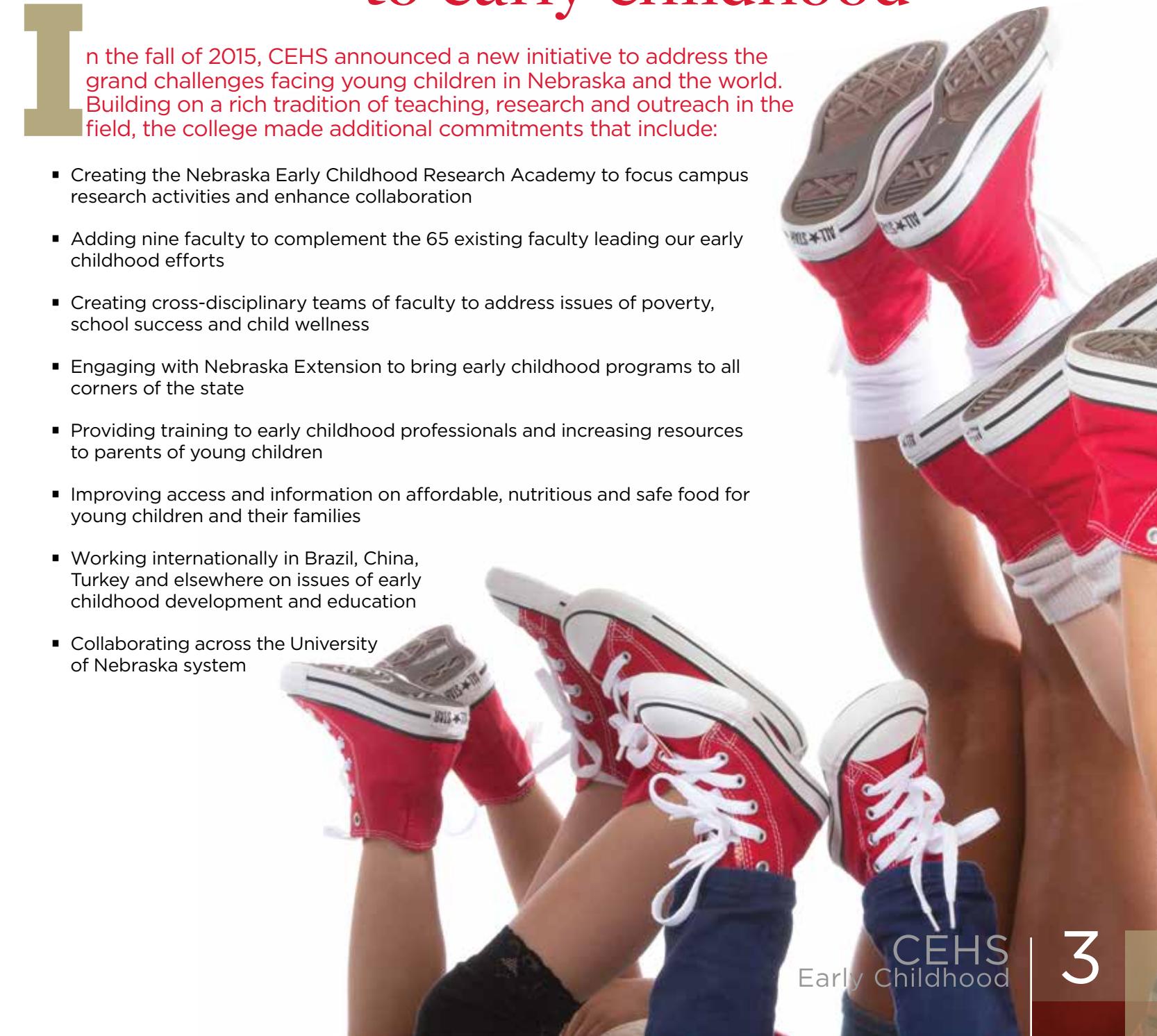
Our Mission and Values in Action
The mission and values of CEHS come to life through research/creative work, teaching/learning, and extension/outreach. Each of these functions informs and affects the others.

Stepping up our commitment to early childhood



In the fall of 2015, CEHS announced a new initiative to address the grand challenges facing young children in Nebraska and the world. Building on a rich tradition of teaching, research and outreach in the field, the college made additional commitments that include:

- Creating the Nebraska Early Childhood Research Academy to focus campus research activities and enhance collaboration
- Adding nine faculty to complement the 65 existing faculty leading our early childhood efforts
- Creating cross-disciplinary teams of faculty to address issues of poverty, school success and child wellness
- Engaging with Nebraska Extension to bring early childhood programs to all corners of the state
- Providing training to early childhood professionals and increasing resources to parents of young children
- Improving access and information on affordable, nutritious and safe food for young children and their families
- Working internationally in Brazil, China, Turkey and elsewhere on issues of early childhood development and education
- Collaborating across the University of Nebraska system





Focused

A significant and growing number of CEHS faculty focus their work on young children and families

These faculty come from all seven departments in the College:

- Child, Youth and Family Studies
- Educational Administration
- Educational Psychology
- Nutrition and Health Sciences
- Special Education and Communication Disorders
- Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education
- Textiles, Merchandising and Fashion Design

Their work addresses the following early childhood themes:

- Assessment and program evaluation
- Child development with a special emphasis on behavioral, language, social and neuroscience development
- Connections among families, pre-primary settings and schools
- Diverse learners with special emphasis on cultural and linguistic diversity, economic diversity, and diverse abilities and special needs
- Early childhood curriculum with a special emphasis on nature education, early literacy, and early mathematics and science
- Early childhood professional preparation and program/school leadership
- Physical and mental health promotion
- Reflective practices and documentation
- Addressing the opportunity gaps in childrens' lives



CEHS Facts

CEHS-based extension specialists and extension educators address all of these early childhood themes.

CEHS offers a wide choice of undergraduate and graduate programs involving early childhood

The College offers six undergraduate options, four endorsements, twelve master's areas, and eight doctoral specializations with an early childhood focus.

Master's Programs

- Child Development/Early Childhood Education
- Cognition, Learning and Development
- Family and Community Services
- Human and Family Services Administration
- International Family Studies
- Marriage and Family Therapy
- Nutrition and Health Sciences
- School Leadership
- Special Education
- Speech-Language Pathology
- Teaching, Curriculum and Learning
- Youth Development

Doctoral Programs – specializations encompass early childhood

- Audiology
- Child Development/Early Childhood Education
- Cognition, Learning and Development
- Educational Studies
- Global Family Health and Wellbeing
- P-12 School Leadership
- School Psychology
- Teaching, Curriculum and Learning

Undergraduate Degrees

- Child, Youth and Family Studies/Journalism and Mass Communications
- Early Childhood Education in a Mobile Society
- Elementary Education (K-6)
- Elementary Education and Special Education (K-6)
- Family Science
- Inclusive Early Childhood Education (Birth to Grade 3)

Endorsements

- Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Early Childhood Special Education
- Special Education (K-6)
- Visual Impairments

CEHS Facts

CEHS offers approximately 100 courses that address early childhood.

Specialized



Responding to a growing need

CEHS graduates
are successfully
serving children
in a variety of
roles

In the United States today, nearly half of all 3- and 4-year-olds (four million children) are enrolled in an early care/education program of some kind. The number of 5-year-olds in early childhood programs is even higher, reaching up to 80 percent of the total 5-year-old population. By age 6 nearly every child in the country is a "school" child.

- Alternative youth learning centers
- Child care centers
- Child support enforcement
- Churches
- Community health promotion programs
- Comprehensive mental health services
- Department of Social Services/Child Protective Services
- Education cooperatives
- Foster care
- Head Start/Early Head Start/Even Start programs
- Hospitals and clinics
- Nonprofit organizations – child specialist
- Preschools
- Schools
- Retail businesses
- Youth agencies
- Youth care

CEHS Facts

All seven CEHS departments conduct research that impacts early childhood in some way.



Specialized





Research, Teaching & Learning

New academy to advance early childhood research



A grand challenge demands a grand enterprise. The formation of the Nebraska Early Childhood Research Academy qualifies. The academy is stepping up UNL's commitment to early childhood by pursuing research to help policy makers, researchers and educators improve the trajectory of all young Nebraskans—especially those who face challenges in achieving success.

Housed in the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools

(CYFS) and led by Lisa Knoche, CYFS assistant director for research, the academy includes interdisciplinary partners across all University of Nebraska campuses, the Buffett Early Childhood Institute and community and state agencies. With this wide network of collaborators, it aims to advance the scientific knowledge base related to children's learning, development and interventions from birth to age 8.

"The academy will provide an enhanced means through which UNL scientists can pursue their research on early childhood systemically," said Marjorie Kostelnik, dean of the College of Education and Human Sciences. "It is interdisciplinary, it builds on UNL's proven track record in early childhood research, and it capitalizes on the many valued relationships we have established with early childhood professionals across the state, nation and globe."

To address chronic challenges faced by children, the academy will leverage the strengths of CYFS early childhood research programs; CYFS faculty and affiliates have received \$34 million in early childhood funding since 2004. The academy ultimately aims to enhance the research capacity of faculty and graduate students, assist in grant procurement and execution, and initiate outreach.

"We're bringing together researchers from traditional and nontraditional sectors who may not regularly contribute to the dialogue within early childhood," said Susan Sheridan, director of CYFS. "This will help us create solutions—innovative,

transformative approaches to better understand what works, for whom and under what conditions."

To extend the reach of its impact, the academy is also establishing international partnerships with early childhood researchers in Brazil, Turkey and China. These collaborations provide opportunities for reciprocal research and learning, said Sheridan, and illustrate the global

importance of early childhood education and development.



"We now know a lot about the early years and their impact on developmental trajectories that last a lifetime," Sheridan said. "A child's early education and development predicts almost every aspect of his or her life. We are committed to further researching, inventing and sharing the best ways to get children off on the right foot and to enhance their development."

For additional information, please visit go.unl.edu/necra.



CEHS Facts

Early childhood is a collaborative effort – across departments, UNL colleges, NU campuses, Nebraska Extension, nationally and internationally.



Research, Teaching
& Learning

Buffett Institute targets achievement gap and workforce development

For the past 50 years, evidence has been building about the importance of addressing the needs of children placed at risk due to poverty, familial and social challenges, and developmental delays. The evidence also teaches us that the most effective time to impact a child's future is from birth through age 8.

These lessons guide the work of the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, an endowed institute of the University of Nebraska. The Institute was established because of the shared vision of NU and Susie Buffett, a philanthropist and champion of early childhood education and development. Their vision was to transform early childhood development—especially for children at risk—by leveraging the resources of NU's four campuses and applying the best of what is known about the science and benefits of early childhood intervention.

The Buffett Institute focuses on applied research, professional preparation for early childhood educators and providers, public policy, and outreach. Dr. Samuel J. Meisels, one of the nation's foremost authorities on early childhood development, became the Institute's founding executive director in June 2013. With a major endowment, proven leadership, partnerships with the four NU campuses, and the university's support, the Buffett Institute is uniquely positioned to improve the lives of vulnerable young children and their families.

"Our goal is to help Nebraska become a national leader and model for the engagement of public higher education in early childhood," Meisels said. "I believe that no other public university in the nation has made a greater commitment to young children at risk than Nebraska."

The Buffett Institute's vision is that "Nebraska will become the best place in the nation to be a baby." The mission is to transform the lives of young children by improving their learning and development.

The Institute has identified two signature programs—the Achievement Gap Challenge and the Early Childhood Workforce Development Program. The institute's work on reducing the achievement gap is beginning in metro Omaha through the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan. The plan, created by the Buffett Institute in partnership with the 11 school districts of the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties, is an innovative, comprehensive approach to reducing achievement and opportunity gaps for children from birth through Grade 3. Eventually, the Institute intends to apply lessons learned in other areas of Nebraska, Meisels said.

The Institute is also partnering with NU campuses to develop its workforce development program, aimed at enhancing the skills and increasing support of those who work with young children.

"I've come to believe that Nebraska may be the ideal location for doing this work," Meisels said. "We have resources, we have leadership, we have a willing populace and legislative and policy environment, and we have a university commitment second to none. We will work with others to implement the best of what is known on behalf of those who need our help the most, and we will share what we learn in Nebraska and throughout the nation."

Educare partnership elevating research, teaching and learning

"It's very difficult to close the opportunity gap. Educare is doing it."



Research, Teaching
& Learning

Educare of Lincoln is part of a national family of state-of-the-art, year-round schools that serve at-risk children from birth to age 5. Not only does Educare of Lincoln provide a unique learning opportunity for the children it serves, but it also provides the same for University of Nebraska-Lincoln students and researchers. In a valuable partnership for both Educare and UNL, students in the College of Education and Human Sciences are getting relevant hands-on experience in child development and research while CEHS research faculty are exploring, observing and evaluating best practice in a preschool setting.

"We benefit because our students and faculty get to see programs operating and embedded in their communities," said CEHS Dean Marjorie Kostelnik who chairs the Educare Lincoln board. "It informs us and helps us in our teaching and research. In turn, we're able to offer expertise that the Educare programs can immediately translate into improved services for children, families and staff."

Kostelnik says the partnership represents the three parts of the land-grant institution mission and the holistic nature of the college

mission: research, teaching and outreach. Three of the college's departments are engaged in the partnership: Child, Youth and Family Studies; Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education; and Special Education and Communication Disorders.

Helen Raikes, Willa Cather Professor of Child, Youth and Family Studies, is heavily involved with Educare Lincoln as a researcher and by providing assessment and evaluation services to all the Educare facilities in Nebraska. In that role, she supervises graduate students who are trained and certified in classroom observation assessment. Working with graduate students and other faculty members, Raikes helps provide Educare with useful feedback through a "data dialogue."

"We don't determine what [Educare] needs to do," says Raikes. "We share suggestions and recommendations, but they decide how to use that information."

"Our graduate students love Educare. We are developing professors of tomorrow, so they need to learn each step of the process. Once they are properly trained, they give teachers immediate feedback."

Students also download and analyze data and write reports. Their work may even find its way into academic journals adding published articles to their resumes. Raikes is excited for her students and for Educare.

"Educare can have a real impact and make a mark on the field," says Raikes. "The work here is quite innovative."

A new study Raikes has embarked on has international implications. Acting on the university's emphasis on partnering with researchers in Turkey, she is working with colleagues at Hacettepe University in Ankara, Turkey on child self-regulation. Teams in both countries are creating "a whole new category of synergies and comparisons," says Raikes. "It's very exciting. I have gone to Turkey several times and some of our graduate students have also. We're hoping Turkey will soon visit here."

On another project associated with Educare, Raikes and colleagues were published in "Early Childhood Research Quarterly." The study demonstrates that the longer children are in Educare not only are their language scores higher, they are also very close to national averages.

This is evidence that Educare is having a significant impact on a population that has consistently challenged educators over the years. "It's very difficult to close the opportunity gap," Raikes says. "Educare is doing it."



photo credit: Star City Photography

Ruth Staples Child Development Laboratory: A new vision built on excellence

"Parents often express the outdoor space heavily influences their choice to enroll in our program."



Research, Teaching
& Learning

When talking about the future of the Ruth Staples Child Development Laboratory (CDL), Jenny Leeper Miller is clearly excited about plans for a new or renovated facility, but she has a keen eye on the past. As the CDL looks forward, Leeper Miller, director and master teacher, wants to preserve two important facets of the lab school that have made it so successful: its internationally known nature education program and its strong history of reaching out to form partnerships with others.

"Parents often express the outdoor space heavily influences their choice to enroll in our program," said Leeper Miller. "We are not just going out to play. Teachers, along with children, are learning. Preserving our nature education program is a key priority in the renovation. We're protecting that space. It's valued and we're also looking at ways we might update the indoor space to flow into the outdoor space."

The outdoor education curriculum has helped establish Ruth Staples as an innovative early childhood center. The current outdoor classroom was established in 2004 through the Angeline Anderson Garden Fund. More than a playground, it's an instructional space that fosters creative play and improves

interactions between children and adults. As children experience the outdoor environment, they begin to understand the principles of the natural world. A growing body of research suggests that outdoor play enhances a child's mental health and emotional well-being.

Currently, the CDL is serving 39 children ages 18 months to 6 years in two classrooms. Plans call for doubling capacity, which would also require a staffing increase and provide additional space for college students to do practicum work and student teaching. A private fund raising campaign is getting underway to make the renovations possible.

"We have a really strong curriculum and strong model of best practices," Leeper Miller said. "We just don't have the shell and the beautiful environment to support those best practices. It's showing its age and our spaces are hard to organize effectively because of building restrictions. We are challenged to showcase best practices in the current environment because of the quality of the building."

Built in 1970, the CDL building was last renovated in 1990. Leeper Miller estimates that the new facility will cost in the neighborhood of \$8 million to meet their needs. It's uncertain what the footprint of the building will be. Input from professionals, parents

and the community is being gathered and architects will soon be putting those ideas to paper.

In addition to providing high quality childcare, the lab school's mission is for pre-service teachers to learn teaching strategies in the early childhood classroom and to prepare them for their careers. Students in four departments from the College of Education and Human Sciences use the facility as part of their academic program.

Building partnerships and engaging with others has been another strength of Ruth Staples' history. The staff has taken advantage of on-campus resources to expose children to new learning experiences. Those partners have included the Larsen Tractor Museum, the International Quilt Study Center and Museum and Nebraska Game and Parks.

"We often go visit the locations," said Leeper Miller. "The children get new experiences and the partners learn how to interact with children so they can provide better programming."

Other outreach efforts include working with the Confucius Institute at UNL to teach basic Chinese language skills; an exchange program with East China Normal University-Shanghai; a partnership with Normal University in Nanjing, China to study best practice in nature education; and ongoing research with South Dakota State University using literacy to improve health and nutrition.



Study examines impact of child sleep on self-regulation



Any parent can attest to the behavior of a child who hasn't had a nap. Researchers in the College of Education and Human Sciences (CEHS) are taking a close look at the impact of sleep on children's self-regulation. Because self-regulation skills are important to school success, the hope is that this

research will inform the child development community in ways that improve school outcomes for young students.

Tori Molfese, Chancellor Professor in the Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies, and Kathy Rudasill, associate professor in the Department of Educational Psychology, are co-directors of the Early Development and Learning Lab in CEHS. Through a \$1.4 million grant funded by the National Institutes of Health, the two researchers are conducting this unique longitudinal study of young children's sleep. The research is in collaboration with Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana.

"Usually, it's older children who are studied for sleep," said Rudasill. "We're including the home context to study bedtime routines in toddlers. Visiting children's homes is a unique component since researchers usually study sleep in the lab."

By the end of the grant in August 2017, the researchers will have studied 400 children in Lincoln and Bloomington. The two sites not only provide more data for the research but also provide more diversity in family racial, economic and cultural makeup. It is hoped that findings may identify different sleep routines that could reflect cultural, social, socioeconomic or temperamental variations.

"Regular bedtimes and sufficient sleep make a difference," says Molfese. "When there's irregular bedtimes, it takes kids several days to get back in a routine. Parents often think their kids are getting more sleep than they really are. As part of the study, children wear an Actigraph device (an electronic device that measures sleep quality and quantity). Sometimes there's quite a bit of difference between the bedtimes that parents are recording in their journals compared to sleep onset times reflected in Actigraph data."

Molfese noted that families with young children may experience some chaotic events, such as changes in jobs and work hours, housing transitions, and new siblings.

"For some families, family routines seem to be fluid," she said. "We hope to learn more about sleep patterns and how family routines influence sleep."

Early results have shown a relationship between sleep and temperament for one age group. As the study matures, results will document self-regulation at three age points— $2\frac{1}{2}$, 3 and $3\frac{1}{2}$ years of age, and allow for examination of sleep and self-regulation patterns longitudinally.

"What we're seeing across that year is that kids are showing some interesting changes," said Rudasill. "Our 30-month-olds are showing some rudimentary self regulation skills, and by 36 and 42 months we are really seeing a lot of growth in skills."

The researchers are exploring if the home context influences these changes over time and if there are any



photo credit: Star City Photography

CEHS Facts

CEHS offers a total of 24 graduate and undergraduate degrees with an early childhood focus.



Research, Teaching
& Learning

patterns that correlate to development of self-regulation. The explorations of the home context, bedtime context, and daycare or preschool context may shed light on how children develop the self regulation skills needed for school readiness and school success.

"We're just now getting enough data to look at this," says Rudasill. "By the time we get three time-points of data for our participants, we can begin to answer the chicken or egg question. Does sleep effect self-regulation or does self-regulation effect sleep?"

More than Just Counting

"We want preschool teachers to be more intentional, planful, observant and reflective about math education."



Research, Teaching
& Learning

Michael Jackson had it almost right. "A B C, it's easy as 1 2 3 ..." goes the 1970 pop hit, implying that math and literacy are of equal importance in education. But math, easy? Instructors in Nebraska's Educare schools, which serve at-risk children from birth to five years old, might beg to differ.

"It's particularly challenging in that the teachers we're working with for the most part are quite fearful of math—they are intimidated by it," says Ruth Heaton, Gilmartin Professor in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. "The Educares have defined it as a real area of need."

Enter "Math Early On," brainchild of Heaton and colleagues Tori Molfese, chancellor professor in Child, Youth and Family Studies, and Carolyn Edwards, emeritus professor. With a grant from the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, the trio is partnering with Educare of Lincoln, and Kellom Elementary and Educare of Omaha, to plan and conduct up to eight professional development sessions in math content and pedagogy (learning about teaching) for Educare staff.

"We want preschool teachers to be more intentional, planful, observant and reflective about math education," Heaton says. "Carolyn and Tori know where young children are developmentally, and I know what these kids need to know to be ready to learn in kindergarten. It's important to begin as early as possible to give children the right start in terms of learning mathematics."

The 18-month pilot project targets Educare teachers of children three to four years old, and covers key concepts like sets, number sense, counting, number operations (addition, subtraction, etc.), patterns, measurement, data analysis and spatial relationships (shapes). Projected outcomes include:

- Better understanding of mathematical ideas among young children
- Improved attitude toward mathematics among teachers
- More intentionality in the way teachers plan mathematics lessons
- Increased recognition and utilization of impromptu opportunities throughout the day to help children think about math

"Over time, we hope math becomes as important in the children's realm as literacy," Heaton says. "We want math to get the same kind of attention as reading. And we want preschool teachers to see that they are capable of understanding mathematics in meaningful ways—just like they do literacy."

It's oddly apropos that the Jacksons' "ABC" climbed the Billboard Hot 100 to knock "Let It Be" by the Beatles out of the number one spot. Heaton, Edwards and Molfese, not content to let the status quo be, are optimistic about the success of "Math Early On." If all goes well, the Buffett Early Childhood Fund hopes to expand the program to Educares across the country and eventually to work with children all the way from birth to age 5.

"Math is more than just counting," Heaton concludes. "Our goal is to help children build a solid foundation from which to develop mathematical understanding as they move into the early years. And to help teachers understand what it takes to provide a rich and rigorous environment for math learning."





Research & Study Centers

Within the seven departments that make up the College of Education and Human Sciences, faculty and students engage in nationally recognized research and scholarship in early childhood studies. CEHS research and study centers support this work.

- **Bureau of Educational Research and Field Services** provides services to school districts and policy makers in Nebraska directed toward facilities planning, school re-organization and educational policy issues.

- **Buros Center for Testing** provides national leadership in the advancement of testing practice.

- Buros provides test reviews and information through authoritative reference materials including critical evaluations of commercially available tests. Buros publications comprise expert and independent sources of information about tests. Buros offers expert psychometric services to assist proprietary

testing programs and improve the quality of their programs and validity of results. Buros also provides instructional and educational resources that improve the ability of individuals to select, develop and use tests and assessments.



- **Center for At-Risk Children's Services** is a research center comprised of a team of experienced professionals committed to evaluating and developing services for children, families and communities.

- **Academy for Child and Family Well Being** is a collaborative project with Boys Town, Nebraska to enhance the well being of children and families by developing, implementing and evaluating services that empower families and youth, support educational providers and improve the quality of services.

- **Center for Instructional Innovation** applies basic research from cognitive psychology, linguistics, and cognitive science to the design and evaluation of educational practices in the nation's schools.

- **Early Development and Learning Lab** is geared toward understanding individual differences in children's temperament and self-regulation in home and school contexts as predictors of children's cognitive, social and behavioral outcomes in early childhood and beyond.

- **Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools** was designed to improve the understanding of how children and youth learn and adjust intellectually, socially, emotionally, physically and behaviorally; investigate the ecological contexts that influence the lives of children and youth; and explore interactions among them.

- **Nebraska Evaluation and Research Center** supports faculty and students with research projects by providing consultation and assistance with statistical analysis.

- **Ruth Staples Child Development Laboratory** provides high quality programs for preschool aged children, opportunities for UNL students to learn about child development and early childhood education, and excellent research facilities for faculty and students.



photo credit: Star City Photography



Early childhood research is a key focus of CEHS projects supported through external funding

Child Care and Youth Training and Technical Assistance Project, U.S. Department of Agriculture; Durden (CYAF)

Early Learning Contexts in Rural and Urban Nebraska, U. S. Department of Education – IES; Sheridan (EDPS/CYFS); Knoche (CYFS); Iruka (Buffett Early Childhood Institute); DeKraai (Nebraska Public Policy Center); Bovaird (EDPS/CYFS)

Early Learning Network Lead, U. S. Department of Education – IES; Sheridan (EDPS/CYFS); Knoche (CYFS); Welch (CYFS)

Efficacy of the Getting Ready Intervention at Supporting Parental Engagement and Positive Outcomes for Preschool Children at Educational Risk, U.S. Department of Education-IES; Sheridan (EDPS; CYFS); Knoche, (CYFS); Marvin (SECD); Bovaird (EDPS; CYFS)

Evaluation of Early Steps to School Success, Save the Children; Raikes (CYAF)

Evidence-Based Interactions between Indoor Environmental Factors and Their Effects on K-12 Student Achievement, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; Bovaird (EDPS, CYFS)

Food Safety for Diverse Families with Young Children, U.S. Department of Agriculture-NIFA; Albrecht (NHS)

Getting Ready 0-3 (GR03): Supporting the Development of Infants/Toddlers through an Integrated Parent-Teacher Relationship-based Approach, Agency for Children and Families; Knoche (CYFS); Sheridan (EDPS/CYFS); Raikes (CYAF); Marvin (SECD); Hawley (CYFS)

Innovation and Collaboration: Creating a Transdisciplinary Childhood Obesity Prevention Graduate Program, U.S. Department of Agriculture-AFRI; Carr, Fischer, Takahashi (NHS); DeGuzman (CYAF)

Language Bases of Skilled Reading Comprehension, U.S. Department of Education; Bovaird (EDPS, CYFS); Nelson (SECD)

Math Early On, Buffett Early Childhood Fund; Heaton (TLTE); Edwards, Molfese (CYFS)

NebraskaMATH, National Science Foundation; Heaton (TLTE); Edwards (CYAF)

Nebraska Multi-Tiered System of Support Implementation Support Team, Nebraska Department of Education; Ihlo (CYFS)

Early Head Start Home Visitors Identification of Risk for Maltreatment, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families; Schrier, Hansen, Flood (CYFS, EDPS)

Acronym Key:

CYAF – Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies

CYFS – Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools

EDPS – Department of Educational Psychology

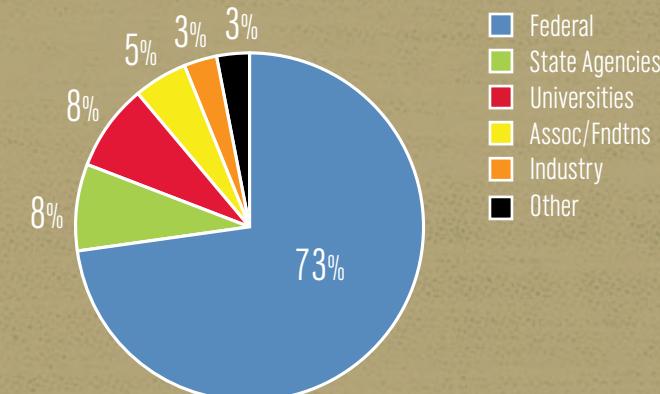
IES - Institute of Education Sciences

NHS – Department of Nutrition and Health Sciences

SECD – Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders

TLTE – Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education

Source of Extramural Funds



Research &
Study Centers



Outreach & Service

Gift of hearing changing the lives of children and families

Helping children get the best possible start in life is a common thread that helps weave the fiber of CEHS. A powerful example is HearU Nebraska, a service housed in the Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders that brings the gift of hearing to infants and children up to age 18.

Early detection of hearing loss and early intervention helps children with hearing loss avoid falling behind their peers in important developmental areas. Nebraska is a national model for getting infants screened within their first month. State data show 99.8% of babies in Nebraska receive early screening. When a hearing problem is diagnosed, that's when HearU Nebraska steps in to help families that cannot afford hearing aids.

"If a child is diagnosed early and treatment can begin before six months of age, these children develop very close to peers for overall speech, language and cognition," said Stacie Ray, associate professor of practice in Special Education and Communication Disorders and founder of HearU Nebraska. "We are doing a good job of screening, but what if a family can't afford hearing aids?"

The cost of hearing aids can be \$4,000 or more—beyond the reach

of many families who don't have Medicaid, other assistance or private insurance. HearU Nebraska provides hearing aids, earmolds, batteries and a parent kit at no cost to the family, and even pays dispensing fees to audiologists across the state. The hearing aids are considered on loan, but can be kept as long as the child needs them.

"We don't want any parent to have to decide between clothing and feeding their family and purchasing hearing aids for a child," said Ray. "We have never had to turn away a child in need."

The generosity of donors and a partnership with the state of Nebraska have allowed HearU Nebraska to fit 255 children with 420 hearing aids over the past eight years. The HearU Nebraska Fund at the University of Nebraska Foundation accepts tax-deductible contributions. In 2014, the Foundation's Women Investing in Nebraska group awarded the program \$75,950 to provide hearing devices for more than 30 children. The Early Hearing Detection and Intervention program at the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services provides additional funding and support.

From a public policy perspective, state funds for HearU Nebraska are a good investment. Early diagnosis and treatment of hearing disorders

can save the state hundreds of thousands of dollars in future education costs and job loss impacts over the course of a person's life.

For the first time, HearU Nebraska will soon have an international impact. A HearU International Fund is being established through the University of Nebraska Foundation to help Ray and other faculty members take students in the audiology program to Nicaragua to screen children for hearing loss and provide hearing aids, earmolds and other support. Ray is collaborating with faculty at the University of Nebraska at Omaha to serve Nicaraguan children in the city of León.

"There is one audiologist in the whole country of over 6 million people," says Ray. "There is great need for audiology services in Nicaragua, and this opportunity will give our students a meaningful education abroad experience."

CEHS Facts

Nebraska Extension reaches all 93 Nebraska counties through innovative issues-based programs focused on early childhood.



Establishing healthy eating habits at a young age is essential to lifelong health and wellness. If healthy habits aren't established early, it's challenging to break free from unhealthy routines. The goal of the federally funded SNAP-Ed program is to improve the likelihood that persons eligible for SNAP will make healthy food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles. Individual, community and policy level efforts include providing support to children, families, and early childhood care providers with education and resources to form lasting healthy lifestyles and to prevent obesity.



Providing services to a population of limited income, Nebraska Extension educators are focusing their efforts on children birth to age 5. SNAP-Ed, an acronym for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education, is a program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and used to be known as the Food Stamp Program, now called SNAP.

The Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2012 has allowed extension educators to expand their previous service to children and families into the early childhood provider setting. Nebraska SNAP-Ed offers a program called the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAP SACC) to childcare providers in centers and homes.

"If childcare providers serve families who meet income guidelines, the Nutrition Education Program (NEP) can now offer the NAP SACC program to them," said Donnia Behrends, extension educator from the College of Education and Human Sciences (CEHS). "We help walk them through a self-assessment to show them the nutrition and physical activity areas that they are doing well and the areas they could improve."

In addition, extension educators provide professional development workshops, intervention strategies and technical assistance to help providers improve the nutrition and physical activity environment of their childcare facility. Funding is provided in part by SNAP-Ed, Nebraska Extension, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and Nebraska Department of Education Team Nutrition.

"Our approach is a little different," says Extension Educator Jean Ann Fischer. "Our mission is to work directly with families but also the community and environment with which they live. We use evaluation tools to assess children directly and provide education, communication and interventions that help children and families acquire the knowledge,

skills, attitudes and behavior changes necessary to improve their health."

The additional engagement with childcare providers has only increased SNAP-Ed's impact in Nebraska, and Fischer and Behrends expect to see positive outcomes as the program matures.

"Having exposure in both places we should get better outcomes," said Fischer. "We will have metrics soon that should tell us more."

They say providers have been enthusiastic about recommended changes. In 2014-15, the program served 37 childcare centers and homes, 142 providers and indirectly impacted 2,388 children in 45 counties. Much of the impact reaches high risk, urban settings. For low-income families, the practical support can help break nutrition patterns that have been detrimental to family health and help families save money while eating more nutritiously.

"Menu planning and budgeting is one of the biggest challenges for families in poverty," said Behrends. "Parents are often working more than one job, working near minimum wage and really struggling to make ends meet."

Nutrition, physical activity and infant feeding are the essentials of NAP SACC and SNAP-Ed. With the assistance of partners, extension educators in CEHS are helping families take a more healthy approach to family nutrition, and their reach is now extending to a network of childcare providers. It's a recipe for a healthier Nebraska.



Education key to healthy living



CEHS Outreach Programs and Clinics Serve the Needs of Young Children and Families in the Community

The College of Education and Human Sciences provides outreach at the local, state and national level putting our experience and expertise to practical use. CEHS outreach programs serve more than 4,200 individuals and families each year through our on-campus facilities. These facilities serve individuals across the life span, including young children.

Barkley Center Speech-Language and Hearing Clinic provides services for individuals with speech, language, hearing and other disabilities. Services available include hearing evaluations, hearing aid selection, habilitation and rehabilitation for persons who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Counseling and School Psychology Clinic conducts psychological and educational evaluations of children and youth to address referral questions from parents/caregivers and/or schools.

Family Resource Center is a nonprofit family therapy center located on campus providing counseling and therapy for individuals, couples and families from the community.

Kit and Dick Schmoker Reading Center provides the tools and guidance leading to the achievement of critical literacy in the local community, the Midwest and the nation at-large through research, training and service. The center includes a reading center designed to serve elementary, middle, and high school students who are reading 1-3 years below grade level and whose primary difficulties in school result from reading problems.



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