



Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan

Professional Learning Catalog

Fall 2025



Buffett
Early Childhood
Institute

at the University of Nebraska

**learning
community**
DOUGLAS
SARPY

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About the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan

The Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan is a collaborative initiative of the 11 school districts of Douglas and Sarpy counties to develop early childhood programs for young children and families facing persistent economic and social disparities. The focus of the plan is on closing opportunity gaps so that all children can reach their full potential. In partnership with the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties, the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska provides leadership and support for the plan, which is an innovative and comprehensive approach to ensure early learning opportunities for all children.

The Superintendents' Plan is grounded in the understanding that local elementary schools can serve as community hubs that connect young children, birth through Grade 3, and their families to quality early learning experiences. It draws from decades of research showing that quality early childhood programming provides significant benefits to children.

About This Catalog

This catalog describes the professional learning opportunities offered by the Buffett Institute to the 11 school districts in the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties as part of the Superintendents' Plan. District and school leaders can choose from the list of offerings to address professional learning needs identified in their action plans.

The offerings are listed by title in alphabetical order, and each one includes a brief description, learning objectives, and the length of available professional learning workshops.

The appendix provides four tables summarizing how the professional learning offerings align with each of the following:

- ▶ **School as Hub for Early Learning Action Planning Framework.** This framework identifies three strategic impact areas that represent high-leverage areas of focus for improving professional practice (see the School as Hub for Early Learning Action Planning Guide for details).
- ▶ **Nebraska Department of Education Early Learning Guidelines.** These guidelines, which are based on research about child development and evidence-based practices that lead to optimal outcomes for young children, provide information related to seven domains of learning and development (<https://www.education.ne.gov/oec/early-learning-guidelines/>).
- ▶ **Nebraska Department of Education Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals.** The Core Competencies outline nine key areas of knowledge and skills that adults working with children must have to help children reach their full potential (<https://www.education.ne.gov/oec/core-competencies/>).
- ▶ **Child Development Associate® (CDA) Credential™ Competency Standards.** The most widely recognized credential in early childhood education, the CDA, is based on a core set of competency standards that guide early childhood professionals toward becoming qualified educators of young children (https://www.cdacouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/CDA-Competency-Standards-and-Subject-Areas_eng-spa_final.pdf).

Professional Learning Offerings

Questions or need more information?

Contact the Program Administrator from the Buffett Institute assigned to support your district action plan or contact Kimberlee Telford at ktelford@nebraska.edu.



Brain Architecture Game



Description

The Brain Architecture Game is a large or small group experience that builds understanding of the powerful role that experiences play in early brain development. This facilitated workshop is appropriate for early childhood professionals, educational leaders, community members, policymakers, and anyone that interacts with or cares about children.

Objectives

- ▶ **Explain brain development:** Participants will be introduced to the founding principles of physical brain development using accessible and clearly understood exemplars.
- ▶ **Identify developmental factors:** Participants will recognize and experience a variety of factors that will ultimately strengthen or weaken a child’s brain development.
- ▶ **Design a brain:** In this hands-on activity, groups will create a physical representation of a child’s brain development as it is shaped by genetics, environmental factors, and educational supports.

School as Hub for Early Learning Strategic Impact Areas and Strategies

▶ Leadership Effectiveness	▶ Instructional Excellence	▶ Family and Community Partnership
1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7 1.8 1.9
2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 2.6	2.1a 2.1b 2.1c 2.1d 2.1e 2.1f	2.2 2.2 2.3

For more information, see page 27.

Length Options

▶ Number of Sessions	▶ Session Length
1	1.5 hours
1	2 hours
1	2.5 hours

Child Developmental Screening Foundations: A Technical Training on School as Hub for Early Learning Screening Tools



Description

This interactive workshop is designed for all family engagement staff and other early childhood professionals who utilize the Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ-3, ASQ:SE-2) in partnership with ChildPlus data collection and the Growing Great Kids curriculum in School as Hub schools. The workshop provides foundational knowledge to support beginning professionals' understanding and application of the ASQ in the School as Hub context, as well as updated information that allows seasoned professionals to remain reliable in their screening processes.

Objectives

- ▶ **Identify the components of ASQs:** Participants will be introduced to all ASQ components through interactive learning experiences.
- ▶ **Practice the application of ASQs:** Participants will engage in hands-on activities and discussions that have been designed to enhance the understanding and application of the ASQ screening process.
- ▶ **Formulate ASQ evaluations:** Participants will be guided through the ASQ evaluation procedure as they score screening examples and interpret the results.
- ▶ **Manage and apply the ASQ data:** Exploration and documentation of multiple avenues of data application will be discussed and applied through large and small group activities.

School as Hub for Early Learning Strategic Impact Areas and Strategies

▶ Leadership Effectiveness	▶ Instructional Excellence	▶ Family and Community Partnership
1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7 1.8 1.9
2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 2.6	2.1a 2.1b 2.1c 2.1d 2.1e 2.1f	2.2 2.2 2.3

For more information, see page 27.

Length Options

▶ Number of Sessions	▶ Session Length
1	3 hours

Communities of Practice (CoP)



Description

Learn how a community of practice (CoP) serves as an effective and supportive platform that enhances professional learning, increases staff retention, improves family engagement, and strengthens community relationships. Analyze the characteristics of a successful CoP and design an individualized framework while you engage in the CoP process. Leave prepared to develop a CoP in your school or community.

Objectives

- ▶ **Identify the critical elements of a CoP:** Participants will explore the key factors of a successful CoP at all levels of engagement.
- ▶ **Practice strategies:** Participants will engage in activities designed to enhance understanding of community building and collaboration involving unique perspectives.

School as Hub for Early Learning Strategic Impact Areas and Strategies

▶ Leadership Effectiveness	▶ Instructional Excellence	▶ Family and Community Partnership
1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7 1.8 1.9
2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 2.6	2.1a 2.1b 2.1c 2.1d 2.1e 2.1f	2.2 2.2 2.3

For more information, see page 27.

Length Options

▶ Number of Sessions	▶ Session Length	
1	1 hour	General overview
1	2 hours	Experiential learning

Cozy Corners



Description

This workshop uses research to highlight the importance of incorporating “cozy corners” in curriculums and educational frameworks for all children from birth through Grade 5. Teachers and leaders will gain an understanding of cozy corner best practices and how they can be implemented in classroom settings.

Objectives

- ▶ **Analyze the importance of a self-regulation space:** Participants will explore the purpose of self-regulation and what is required to create an appropriate space for it.
- ▶ **Identify strategies for implementation:** Participants will be guided through implementation steps as they study and practice real-world examples.
- ▶ **Collaborate on an implementation plan:** Materials and support will be provided for teams to create their own individualized implementation plan.

School as Hub for Early Learning Strategic Impact Areas and Strategies

▶ Leadership Effectiveness	▶ Instructional Excellence	▶ Family and Community Partnership
1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7 1.8 1.9
2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 2.6	2.1a 2.1b 2.1c 2.1d 2.1e 2.1f	2.2 2.2 2.3

For more information, see page 27.

Length Options

▶ Number of Sessions	▶ Session Length
1	1 hour

Data Insights: A Technical Training on School as Hub for Early Learning Reporting Tools



Description

Technical training on using ChildPlus programming within the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan to collect and analyze family, school, and community. This training is intended for all family engagement staff and leadership at any Superintendents' Plan School as Hub site that utilizes ChildPlus.

Objectives

- ▶ **Identify family engagement aspects of ChildPlus:** Participants will partner with the facilitator to review the Superintendents' Plan functions of ChildPlus.
- ▶ **Dramatize data collection:** Guided opportunities will be provided to practice data entry.
- ▶ **Interpret and apply data:** Through conversation and activities, participants will explore the options ChildPlus provides for data interpretation and how it can be applied within the Superintendents' Plan.

School as Hub for Early Learning Strategic Impact Areas and Strategies

▶ Leadership Effectiveness	▶ Instructional Excellence	▶ Family and Community Partnership
1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7 1.8 1.9
2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 2.6	2.1a 2.1b 2.1c 2.1d 2.1e 2.1f	2.2 2.2 2.3

For more information, see page 27.

Length Options

▶ Number of Sessions	▶ Session Length	
1	2 hours	General introduction to ChildPlus
1-22	1 hour each	Individual detailed sessions (number of sessions based on program needs)

Developmental Lens (“Yardsticks”)



Description

This workshop utilizes Chip Wood’s “Yardsticks: Child and Adolescent Development” book to exemplify the importance that child development has on learning and behavior. Participants will gain a foundational knowledge of development and developmental norms for children beginning at age 4. They will then learn to apply this information to enhance classroom behaviors and enrich learning.

Objectives

- ▶ **Differentiate understanding children individually, culturally, and developmentally:**
Participants will discuss and define each component of understanding children and apply this knowledge to classroom practices.
- ▶ **Understand that a child’s development influences their behavior and academic performance:**
Participants will explore children’s developmental norms across ages and will collaborate with peers on strategies for supporting children’s success in the classroom.

School as Hub for Early Learning Strategic Impact Areas and Strategies

▶ Leadership Effectiveness	▶ Instructional Excellence	▶ Family and Community Partnership
1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7 1.8 1.9
2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 2.6	2.1a 2.1b 2.1c 2.1d 2.1e 2.1f	2.2 2.2 2.3

For more information, see page 27.

Length Options

▶ Number of Sessions	▶ Session Length
1	1 hour
1	3 hours

Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS-3) Application Within School as Hub for Early Learning Classrooms



Description

This workshop has been designed to support a general understanding and implementation of the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale, 3rd Edition (ECERS-3) standards within a School as Hub for Early Learning classroom. This workshop is intended to support early childhood classroom professionals and does not include training on conducting or analyzing the ECERS-3 assessment.

Objectives

- ▶ **Describe the importance of providing a high-quality learning environment:** Participants will engage in hands-on activities and discussion that exemplify the impact the environment has on a child’s learning and development.
- ▶ **Explain how ECERS-3 can be used as a guide for setting up a high-quality learning environment:** Exploration of the ECERS-3 tool will increase participants’ foundational knowledge of the standards, scales, and scoring.
- ▶ **Apply the information contained within ECERS-3 when setting up a classroom:** Practical application of ECERS-3 standards will support participants’ planning and implementation of ECERS-3 into their classrooms.

School as Hub for Early Learning Strategic Impact Areas and Strategies

▶ Leadership Effectiveness	▶ Instructional Excellence	▶ Family and Community Partnership
1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7 1.8 1.9
2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 2.6	2.1a 2.1b 2.1c 2.1d 2.1e 2.1f	2.2 2.2 2.3

For more information, see page 27.

Length Options

▶ Number of Sessions	▶ Session Length
1	1.5 hours
1	3 hours

Early Learning Through the Lens of the Child



Description

In this immersive workshop, participants will reimagine early childhood education by centering the child’s perspective. Through hands-on activities they will discover how to create engaging, developmentally rich experiences that spark curiosity and foster growth. With a focus on the five foundational concepts and the six essential child experiences, this workshop blends core knowledge with practical strategies to help participants design meaningful, high-quality learning opportunities. This powerful combination offers a clear roadmap for shaping vibrant early learning environments from birth through Grade 3.

Objectives

- ▶ **Identify the five foundational concepts and six essential child experiences:** Participants will investigate each concept and essential experience through the Lens of the Child to determine how they shape a child’s academic growth and developmental experience.
- ▶ **Formulate individualized, high-quality learning opportunities:** Participants will leave with practical strategies and a deeper understanding of how to create engaging, developmentally rich experiences that spark curiosity and foster growth.

School as Hub for Early Learning Strategic Impact Areas and Strategies

▶ Leadership Effectiveness	▶ Instructional Excellence	▶ Family and Community Partnership
1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7 1.8 1.9
2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 2.6	2.1a 2.1b 2.1c 2.1d 2.1e 2.1f	2.2 2.2 2.3

For more information, see page 27.

Length Options

▶ Number of Sessions	▶ Session Length	
1	45 minutes	Brief overview of the six essential child experiences
1	2 hours	General concept overview
1	4-6 hours	Detailed overviews (session length based on program needs)
6	6-9 moths	Intensive study (number of sessions based on program needs)

Enhancing Large and Small Group Activities



Description

Early childhood professionals will learn how to enhance large and small group activities to promote engagement, increase learning, and decrease behaviors that challenge us. During this workshop participants will evaluate their current group activities through the lens of the children in their classroom and will discover how to incorporate guided play strategies into group activities.

Objectives

- ▶ **Evaluate your group activities through the lens of a child:** Participants will engage in group activities as they learn using a child’s perspective.
- ▶ **Incorporate characteristics of play into group activities:** Characteristics of play will be reviewed and modeled with peers in both large and small group activities.

School as Hub for Early Learning Strategic Impact Areas and Strategies

▶ Leadership Effectiveness	▶ Instructional Excellence	▶ Family and Community Partnership
1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7 1.8 1.9
2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 2.6	2.1a 2.1b 2.1c 2.1d 2.1e 2.1f	2.2 2.2 2.3

For more information, see page 27.

Length Options

▶ Number of Sessions	▶ Session Length
1	1 hour

Essential Literacy



Description

This interactive workshop is designed for paraprofessionals working with PreK through Grade 6 students to deepen their understanding of essential experiences that foster children’s holistic development and learning. In this workshop, participants will learn to identify and engage children in learning through the six essential child experiences, which are foundational to creating an engaging and supportive learning environment. These experiences provide children with opportunities to explore, inquire, and grow, setting a solid foundation for academic and personal success.

Objectives

- ▶ **Identify the six essential child experiences:** Participants will be introduced to each of these essential experiences, exploring how they support child development and connect to literacy growth.
- ▶ **Apply these experiences to literacy activities:** Through hands-on activities, discussions, and practical examples, paraprofessionals will learn how to embed these experiences into literacy instruction. This approach will empower them to create meaningful, enriching literacy activities that engage students and reinforce essential skills.

School as Hub for Early Learning Strategic Impact Areas and Strategies

▶ Leadership Effectiveness	▶ Instructional Excellence	▶ Family and Community Partnership
1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7 1.8 1.9
2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 2.6	2.1a 2.1b 2.1c 2.1d 2.1e 2.1f	2.2 2.2 2.3

For more information, see page 27.

Length Options

▶ Number of Sessions	▶ Session Length	
1	45 minutes	General overview
1	2 hours	Experiential learning
1	3 hours	Experiential learning

Essential Math



Part 1

Description

This interactive workshop provides preschool professionals with helpful tools to recognize learning opportunities and enhance learning activities in their classrooms. Mathematical learning can be happening throughout the entire day, and in this workshop, participants will be able to connect that learning to the Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines, Teaching Strategies (TS) GOLD, and guided play practices.

Objectives

- ▶ **Connect children’s everyday experiences to early math learning:** Through hands-on activities, participants will explore how to draw on children’s home and community experiences to support early math development in alignment with Nebraska’s Early Learning Guidelines.
- ▶ **Identify Teaching Strategies GOLD math objectives in daily activities:** Practical classroom examples will demonstrate how mathematical learning is happening throughout the day and can be captured in TS GOLD.
- ▶ **Illustrate the importance of play in mathematical learning:** Participants will use the characteristics of play to create mathematical activities that are appropriate for their classrooms.

School as Hub for Early Learning Strategic Impact Areas and Strategies

▶ Leadership Effectiveness	▶ Instructional Excellence	▶ Family and Community Partnership
1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7 1.8 1.9
2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 2.6	2.1a 2.1b 2.1c 2.1d 2.1e 2.1f	2.2 2.2 2.3

For more information, see page 27.

Length Options

▶ Number of Sessions	▶ Session Length
1	3.5 hours

Essential Math



Part 2

Description

This workshop will briefly review the concepts from Part 1 and then build upon that learning through hands-on activities. Participants will gain an overall understanding of the six essential child experiences and, coupled with the learning from Part 1, will explore how all these elements can be incorporated into mathematical learning throughout the day.

Objectives

- ▶ **Identify the six essential child experiences:** Each essential child experience will be explored through evaluation of real-world classroom experiences and workshop activities.
- ▶ **Evaluate math activities for alignment with math standards and essential child experiences:** Participants will participate in, evaluate, and improve mathematical activities occurring during large group, center/choice time, transitions, small groups, outdoor time, and music/movement time.

School as Hub for Early Learning Strategic Impact Areas and Strategies

▶ Leadership Effectiveness	▶ Instructional Excellence	▶ Family and Community Partnership
1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7 1.8 1.9
2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 2.6	2.1a 2.1b 2.1c 2.1d 2.1e 2.1f	2.2 2.2 2.3

For more information, see page 27.

Length Options

▶ Number of Sessions	▶ Session Length
1	3.5 hours

Essential Social Skills



Description

This interactive workshop is designed for early childhood educators working with children from birth through age 5 to deepen their understanding of essential experiences that foster children’s holistic development and learning. In this workshop, participants will learn to identify and engage children in learning through six essential child experiences, which are foundational to creating an engaging and supportive learning environment. These experiences provide children with opportunities to explore, inquire, and grow, setting a solid foundation for academic and personal success.

Objectives

- ▶ **Identify the six essential child experiences:** Participants will be introduced to each of these essential experiences, exploring how they support child development and connect to literacy growth.
- ▶ **Apply these experiences to social skill development:** Through hands-on discussions and practical examples, educators will learn how to embed these experiences into teaching social skills. This approach will empower them to create meaningful, enriching literacy activities that engage students and reinforce essential skills.

School as Hub for Early Learning Strategic Impact Areas and Strategies

▶ Leadership Effectiveness	▶ Instructional Excellence	▶ Family and Community Partnership
1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7 1.8 1.9
2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 2.6	2.1a 2.1b 2.1c 2.1d 2.1e 2.1f	2.2 2.2 2.3

For more information, see page 27.

Length Options

▶ Number of Sessions	▶ Session Length
1	3.5 hours

Family Engagement



Description

This workshop is an introduction to family engagement for all school staff and leadership that utilizes the book “Everyone Wins!” by Karen Mapp. This workshop is broken down into four sequential 30-minute parts that can be facilitated together or as individual sessions.

Objectives

- ▶ **Reflect on the difference between family engagement and family involvement:** Hands-on activities and discussion will demonstrate the difference between engagement and involvement and lead participants to discover when to use each one.
- ▶ **Understand the Dual Capacity-Building framework for family-school partnerships:** The Dual Capacity-Building Framework will be broken down into parts and examined in each session.
- ▶ **Apply family engagement practices:** Participants will leave each session with next steps to apply in their daily practices.

School as Hub for Early Learning Strategic Impact Areas and Strategies

▶ Leadership Effectiveness	▶ Instructional Excellence	▶ Family and Community Partnership
1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7 1.8 1.9
2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 2.6	2.1a 2.1b 2.1c 2.1d 2.1e 2.1f	2.2 2.2 2.3

For more information, see page 27.

Length Options

▶ Number of Sessions	▶ Session Length
1	2 hours
4	30 minutes each

Guided Play



Description

Preschool and Kindergarten professionals will explore the effectiveness of guided play in promoting academic learning. Research shows that guided play outperforms direct instruction in fostering positive academic outcomes and enhancing critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. This workshop provides practical strategies for integrating guided play into educational settings to boost learning and development.

Objectives

- ▶ **Identify what play is and why it is important:** Participants will expand their knowledge and experience of guided play through discussion, activities, and video examples of guided play in the classroom.
- ▶ **Demonstrate how play is connected to learning expectations:** Guided play implementation tools and research will support professionals in embedding play into their environment and curriculum.
- ▶ **Illustrate fostering play in the classroom:** Participants will understand their role in fostering play in their classroom as they participate in a reflective activity.

School as Hub for Early Learning Strategic Impact Areas and Strategies

▶ Leadership Effectiveness	▶ Instructional Excellence	▶ Family and Community Partnership
1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7 1.8 1.9
2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 2.6	2.1a 2.1b 2.1c 2.1d 2.1e 2.1f	2.2 2.2 2.3

For more information, see page 27.

Length Options

▶ Number of Sessions	▶ Session Length	
1	2 hours	General overview
1	1 hour	Introduction to guided play
1	3 hours	Overview utilizing the books <i>Serious Fun</i> and <i>Purposeful Play</i>
1	3 hours	Experiential learning focusing on the book <i>Serious Fun</i>
9	30 minutes each	Utilizing the books <i>Serious Fun</i> and <i>Purposeful Play</i>

Principles for Elevating Student Strengths



Description

Every student brings unique strengths to the classroom, and recognizing these strengths is key to fostering engagement, confidence, and achievement. In this interactive workshop, participants will explore why a strengths-based approach is essential for student success. We will dive into the seven Principles for Elevating Student Strengths, examining each one through real-world examples and hands-on activities. Educators working with students from preschool through Grade 12 will leave equipped with practical strategies to apply these principles in their classrooms immediately, helping all learners thrive.

Objectives

- ▶ **Identify and explain the Principles for Elevating Student Strengths:** Participants will explore each principle in depth to understand its meaning and classroom relevance.
- ▶ **Analyze how recognizing strengths leads to greater student engagement and motivation:** Participants will investigate how a strengths-based lens supports increased student participation and reduces challenging behaviors.
- ▶ **Apply each of the principles:** Through hands-on activities tailored to various age groups and learning environments, participants will practice using the principles in real-world scenarios that reflect their own students and settings.
- ▶ **Develop a plan to integrate a strengths-based approach:** Participants will leave with a concrete, personalized plan they can implement right away in their classrooms.

School as Hub for Early Learning Strategic Impact Areas and Strategies

▶ Leadership Effectiveness	▶ Instructional Excellence	▶ Family and Community Partnership
1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7 1.8 1.9
2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 2.6	2.1a 2.1b 2.1c 2.1d 2.1e 2.1f	2.2 2.2 2.3

For more information, see page 27.

Length Options

▶ Number of Sessions	▶ Session Length
1	45 minutes

Rethinking Circle Time



Description

Circle time is an important part of the school day in all early childhood classrooms. This workshop will explore the purpose and essential elements of a high-quality circle time experience for young learners and focus on how to utilize circle time to foster classroom community and whole child development.

Objectives

- ▶ **Identify the purpose of circle time:** Hands-on activities will exemplify using circle time to build community in the classroom.
- ▶ **Review ways to make circle time more meaningful:** Participants will experience the four key elements of circle time and their importance.
- ▶ **Identify areas to adapt in individual circle time approaches:** Group activities will include reflecting on, sharing, and making plans to strengthen circle time practices and processes.

School as Hub for Early Learning Strategic Impact Areas and Strategies

▶ Leadership Effectiveness	▶ Instructional Excellence	▶ Family and Community Partnership
1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7 1.8 1.9
2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 2.6	2.1a 2.1b 2.1c 2.1d 2.1e 2.1f	2.2 2.2 2.3

For more information, see page 27.

Length Options

▶ Number of Sessions	▶ Session Length
1	1.25 hours
1	2.5 hours

School as Hub for Early Learning Approach Introduction



Description

This workshop provides an introduction to the School as Hub for Early Learning approach. The Superintendents' Plan is a collaborative initiative of the 11 school districts of Douglas and Sarpy counties to develop early childhood programs for young children and families facing persistent economic and social disparities. The focus of the plan is on closing opportunity gaps so that all children can reach their full potential.

Objectives

- ▶ **Identify the interconnected levels of support in the Superintendents' Plan which include:**
 - Customized assistance to districts
 - School as Hub for Early Learning programming for birth through Grade 3
 - Specialized professional learning
- ▶ **Recognize the four integrated components of the School as Hub for Early Learning approach:**
 - Two-generation programming, including home visiting and family facilitation
 - High-quality preschool experiences
 - Aligned Kindergarten through Grade 3 instruction
 - Intentional family-school-community partnerships
- ▶ **Identify effective collaboration strategies within and across districts to strengthen early childhood education partnerships.**

Length Options

▶ Number of Sessions	▶ Session Length	
1	30 minutes	Quick overview
1	3 hours	General overview
6	1 hour each	Detailed overview

Teaching Strategies GOLD Four-Step Assessment Cycle



Description

Teaching Strategies GOLD is an observation-based assessment that is mandated by the Nebraska Department of Education. By utilizing a four-step assessment cycle, early childhood professionals can more effectively collect, analyze, evaluate, and communicate these assessments.

Objectives

- ▶ **Explain practices and behaviors that take place during the four-step assessment process:** Hands-on activities and discussions will lead participants through the four-step assessment process.
- ▶ **Share documentation collection tools with colleagues:** Large and small group discussions will allow professionals to collaborate on implementing new GOLD collection tools in their classrooms.
- ▶ **Create a documentation plan for checkpoint periods:** Using shared resources, participants will create individualized documentation plans for an upcoming checkpoint period.

School as Hub for Early Learning Strategic Impact Areas and Strategies

▶ Leadership Effectiveness	▶ Instructional Excellence	▶ Family and Community Partnership
1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7 1.8 1.9
2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 2.6	2.1a 2.1b 2.1c 2.1d 2.1e 2.1f	2.2 2.2 2.3

For more information, see page 27.

Length Options

▶ Number of Sessions	▶ Session Length	
1	2 hours	Detailed overview
1	3 hours	Experiential learning

Teaming Matrix



Description

Positive and collaborative relationships among teaching teams are a vital component to a high-quality classroom environment, but they don't just happen on their own. This workshop provides educators with the tools and practices to create effective classroom collaborations.

Objectives

- ▶ **Review tools to promote positive and collaborative relationships with colleagues:** Using a classroom collaboration coupled with the dignity framework, teachers and/or teams will gain an understanding of the essential elements required for positive collaboration.
- ▶ **Explore components and formats of a teaming matrix:** Participants will explore the concept of a teaming matrix and utilize matrix considerations as they craft individualized matrixes.

School as Hub for Early Learning Strategic Impact Areas and Strategies

▶ Leadership Effectiveness	▶ Instructional Excellence	▶ Family and Community Partnership
1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7 1.8 1.9
2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 2.6	2.1a 2.1b 2.1c 2.1d 2.1e 2.1f	2.2 2.2 2.3

For more information, see page 27.

Length Options

▶ Number of Sessions	▶ Session Length
1	1 hour

Technology in the Early Years: Digital Storytelling



Description

This three-part series is a companion to the professional learning video hosted by Dr. Chip Donohue in partnership with the Buffett Early Childhood Institute. It is designed to build foundational knowledge around what digital storytelling is, why it is effective with young children, and how to get started.

Objectives

- ▶ **Identify the core components of digital storytelling:** Hand-on activities and discussion will introduce the digital storytelling concept and tools to participants.
- ▶ **Examine the importance of digital storytelling:** Participants will explore the benefits and advantages of using digital storytelling and digital tools and why digital storytelling matters to children.
- ▶ **Employ digital storytelling practices:** Through real-world examples, participants will delve into children’s literature, collect stories, and reflect on their current experiences and practices.

School as Hub for Early Learning Strategic Impact Areas and Strategies

▶ Leadership Effectiveness						▶ Instructional Excellence						▶ Family and Community Partnership									
1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.9
2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.6	2.1a	2.1b	2.1c	2.1d	2.1e	2.1f	2.2	2.2	2.3							

For more information, see page 27.

Length Options

▶ Number of Sessions	▶ Session Length	
1	1 hour	Overview for families
3	1 hour each	Sessions for professionals
3	2 hours each	Sessions for professionals with extension activities

Understanding Family Foundations: Connecting Home and Classroom



Description

A student’s learning and development are deeply influenced by their family background. In this interactive workshop, participants will explore how different aspects of a family’s foundation shape student behavior and learning experiences. We will identify and discuss the three Levels of Understanding a Family and use hands-on activities to apply these concepts, first reflecting on our own family foundations and then considering those of our students. Designed for educational professionals working with students from preschool through Grade 12, this session will provide tools for creating stronger, more supportive connections between home and school.

Objectives

- ▶ **Understand how various elements of a family’s foundation influence a student’s learning and development:** Participants will explore how family values, traditions, and experiences shape a child’s academic growth and classroom experience.
- ▶ **Identify key aspects of family background that impact classroom dynamics:** Participants will examine how the structural elements of family life affect student behavior and learning.
- ▶ **Apply the Levels of Understanding a Family to better support a student in their classroom:** Participants will leave with meaningful strategies and a deeper understanding of how to build stronger, more supportive connections with their students.

School as Hub for Early Learning Strategic Impact Areas and Strategies

▶ Leadership Effectiveness	▶ Instructional Excellence	▶ Family and Community Partnership
1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7	1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6 1.7 1.8 1.9
2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5 2.6	2.1a 2.1b 2.1c 2.1d 2.1e 2.1f	2.2 2.2 2.3

For more information, see page 27.

Length Options

▶ Number of Sessions	▶ Session Length
1	45 minutes

Appendix



Table 1. Alignment of Professional Learning Offerings With School as Hub for Early Learning Action Planning Framework

SCHOOL AS HUB FOR EARLY LEARNING STRATEGIC IMPACT AREAS, TARGET ZONES, AND STRATEGIES		PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OFFERINGS																				
		Brain Architecture Game	Child Development Screening Foundations	Communities of Practice (COPs)	Cozy Corners	Data Insights	Developmental Lens (Yardsticks)	ECERS-3 Application Within School as Hub	Early Learning Through the Lens of a Child	Enhancing Large and Small Group Activities	Essential Literacy	Essential Math 1	Essential Math 2	Essential Social Skills	Family Engagement	Guided Play	Principles for Elevating Student Strengths	Rethinking Circle Time	Teaching Strategies GOLD	Teaming Matrix	Technology in the Early Years	Understanding Family Foundations
LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS	District Organization and Capacity																					
	LE1.1 Mission						X															
	LE1.2 Leadership Structure	X																				
	LE1.3 Data-Driven Decisions		X		X														X			
	LE1.4 Professional Learning			X																		
	LE1.5 Community Partnerships													X		X					X	X
	LE1.6 Access Expansion					X	X	X						X	X	X	X				X	X
	School Leadership																					
	LE2.1 Leader Expertise	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X				X	X
	LE2.2 Data Application		X		X					X	X	X					X		X			X
	LE2.3 Family/Community Relationships			X										X		X				X	X	X
	LE2.4 Goal Alignment					X										X						X
	LE2.5 Resource/Opportunity Access			X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X		X
LE2.6 Shared Leadership			X																X			
INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE	Foundations for Early Learning																					
	IE1.1 Birth-to-School Pathway			X		X	X	X										X				
	IE1.2 Educator-Child Relationships	X	X	X										X		X					X	X
	IE1.3 Developmental Alignment		X		X	X		X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X			X	X
	IE1.4 Assessment for Integration		X		X	X												X				
	IE1.5 Relevant Materials			X	X		X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X				X	X
	IE1.6 Social Skills Support			X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X					X
	IE1.7 Play-Based Learning					X	X	X	X	X				X		X					X	
	Essential Child Experiences																					
	IE2.1a Experience-Connected Learning	X		X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X
	IE2.1b Communication						X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X				X	
	IE2.1c Critical Thinking						X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X				X	
	IE2.1d Peer Collaboration			X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X				X	
IE2.1e Learning Agency						X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X				X		
IE2.1f Creative Exploration			X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X				X		
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP ENGAGEMENT	Family Focus																					
	FCP1.1 Trust Building			X	X									X		X						X
	FCP1.2 Learning Partners													X								
	FCP1.3 Two-Way Communication													X							X	
	FCP1.4 Decision Involvement		X	X	X	X			X	X	X			X	X	X		X				
	FCP1.5 Broad Participation						X		X	X	X			X	X	X	X				X	X
	FCP1.6 Transition Support			X	X	X																
	FCP1.7 Barrier Reduction			X	X									X								
	FCP1.8 Family Education		X		X	X								X							X	
	FCP1.9 Outreach From Birth	X	X											X								
	Community-School Connections																					
	FCP2.1 Child Care Partnerships			X	X																	
	FCP2.2 Community Resources			X	X																	
FCP2.3 Community Knowledge			X					X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X			X		

X = primary connection X = secondary connection

Note. Professional learning offerings help educators develop knowledge and skills in the three strategic impact areas identified in the School as Hub for Early Learning Action Planning Framework. (See Action Planning Guide for more information about the framework).

Table 2. Alignment of Professional Learning Offerings With Nebraska Department of Education’s Birth to Five Learning and Development Standards

NEBRASKA’S BIRTH TO FIVE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS	PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OFFERINGS																					
	Brain Architecture Game	Child Development Screening Foundations	Communities of Practice (COPs)	Cozy Corners	Data Insights	Developmental Lens (Yardsticks)	ECERS-3 Application Within School as Hub	Early Learning Through the Lens of a Child	Enhancing Large and Small Group Activities	Essential Literacy	Essential Math 1	Essential Math 2	Essential Social Skills	Family Engagement	Guided Play	Principles for Elevating Student Strengths	Rethinking Circle Time	Teaching Strategies GOLD	Teaming Matrix	Technology in the Early Years	Understanding Family Foundations	
Social and Emotional Development																						
Self-Concept (SE.01)	X						X					X	X									
Self-Control (SE.02)				X		X	X					X					X					
Cooperation and Prosocial Behavior (SE.03)				X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	
Social Relationships (SE.04)	X				X	X	X					X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
Knowledge of Families and Communities (SE.05)	X						X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
Approaches to Learning																						
Initiative and Curiosity (AL.01)						X	X	X		X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sensory Exploration, Reasoning, and Problem Solving (AL.02)				X	X	X	X			X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X		X	
Health and Physical Development																						
Fine (Small) Motor Skills (HP.01)							X								X							
Gross (Large) Motor Skills (HP.02)							X								X							
Health and Safety Practices (HP.03)							X															
Nutrition (HP.04)																						
Language and Literacy Development																						
Listening and Understanding (LL.01)						X	X	X						X								X
Speaking and Communicating (LL.02)						X	X	X	X					X						X	X	
Phonological Awareness (LL.03)									X					X								
Book Knowledge and Appreciation (LL.04)							X		X					X								
Print Awareness and Early Writing (LL.05)							X		X					X								
Mathematics																						
Number and Operations (M.01)							X			X	X			X								
Geometry and Spatial Sense (M.02)										X	X			X								
Patterns and Measurements (M.03)										X	X			X								
Data Analysis (M.04)										X	X			X								
Science																						
Scientific Knowledge (S.01)							X							X								
Scientific Skills and Methods (S.02)														X								
Creative Arts																						
Music (CA.01)							X							X							X	
Visual Art (CA.02)							X							X							X	
Movement (CA.03)							X							X								
Dramatic Play (CA.04)							X							X							X	

X = direct connection X= indirect or potential connection

Note. Professional learning offerings help educators develop leadership and instructional practices to facilitate children’s learning and development across the seven areas outlined in Nebraska’s early learning guidelines (<https://www.education.ne.gov/oec/early-learning-guidelines/>).

Table 3. Alignment of Professional Learning Offerings with Nebraska Department of Education's Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals

CORE COMPETENCY AREAS	PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OFFERINGS																						
	Brain Architecture Game	Child Development Screening Foundations	Communities of Practice (CoPs)	Cozy Corners	Data Insights	Developmental Lens (Yardsticks)	ECERS-3 Application Within School as Hub	Early Learning Through the Lens of a Child	Enhancing Large and Small Group Activities	Essential Literacy	Essential Math 1	Essential Math 2	Essential Social Skills	Family Engagement	Guided Play	Principles for Elevating Student Strengths	Rethinking Circle Time	Teaching Strategies GOLD	Teaming Matrix	Technology in the Early Years	Understanding Family Foundations		
Early Childhood Core Competency Areas																							
Child Growth and Development	X	X		X		X	X									X	X					X	
Health, Safety and Nutrition	X	X		X			X																
Learning Environments	X			X			X	X	X				X			X	X	X				X	X
Planning Learning Experiences/Curriculum		X					X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X			X	X
Interacting with Children and Providing Guidance to Children	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Observation, Documentation and Assessment		X			X	X				X									X			X	
Partnerships with Families and Communities	X		X											X		X			X			X	X
Professionalism and Leadership	X	X	X		X	X	X			X	X	X		X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Administration, Program Planning and Development	X	X	X		X																		
School Age Core Competency Areas																							
Growth and Development	X	X		X		X	X									X							
Health	X	X					X																
Relationships	X		X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X				X	X
Learning	X							X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X				X	X
Professionalism	X		X		X									X						X			
Administration	X		X		X															X			

Note. Professional learning offerings help educators develop knowledge and skills that adults working with children must have to help children reach their full potential, addressing the nine areas identified in the Nebraska Department of Education Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals (<https://www.education.ne.gov/oec/core-competencies/>).

Table 4. Alignment of Professional Learning Offerings With Child Development Associate® (CDA) Credential™ Competency Standards

CDA SUBJECT AREAS	PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OFFERINGS																					
	Brain Architecture Game	Child Development Screening Foundations	Communities of Practice (CoPs)	Cozy Corners	Data Insights	Developmental Lens (Yardsticks)	ECERS-3 Application Within School as Hub	Early Learning Through the Lens of a Child	Enhancing Large and Small Group Activities	Essential Literacy	Essential Math 1	Essential Math 2	Essential Social Skills	Family Engagement	Guided Play	Principles for Elevating Student Strengths	Rethinking Circle Time	Teaching Strategies GOLD	Teaming Matrix	Technology in the Early Years	Understanding Family Foundations	
Planning a safe, healthy environment to invite learning	X	X		X			X															
Steps to advance children’s physical and intellectual development	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X				X	X
Positive ways to support children’s social and emotional development			X	X		X		X	X				X		X	X	X		X			X
Strategies to establish productive relationships with families		X	X		X					X				X		X						X
Strategies to manage an effective program operation			X		X		X												X			
Maintaining a commitment to professionalism	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Observing and recording children’s behavior		X			X	X				X								X				
Principles of child development and learning	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X		X	X	

Note. Professional learning offerings help educators develop core competencies represented in the Child Development Associate® (CDA) Credential™ Competency Standards (https://www.cdacouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/CDA-Competency-Standards-and-Subject-Areas_eng-spa_final.pdf).

Ready to Book the Next Workshop for Your Team?

Contact the Program Administrator from the Buffett Institute assigned to support your district action plan or contact Kimberlee Telford at ktelford@nebraska.edu.





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