

REALIZING POTENTIAL REACHING BEYOND

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



2010 - 2011 Annual Report



Message from the Director

Since its formation in 2004, the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools has served as the nucleus of collaborative efforts to help its namesakes prosper intellectually, socially and emotionally. These endeavors have stemmed from the resolute belief that every individual and community has the capacity – and deserves the opportunity – to learn, grow and flourish. We have dedicated ourselves to ensuring that they realize this vast potential, especially when they might otherwise lack the resources or belief to manifest it. For us, there has been no more worthwhile enterprise, meaningful pursuit or gratifying journey.

In helping others fulfill their potential, CYFS has realized its own. But the success of our future efforts will spring only from a continued commitment to moving forward in our inaugural year as a member of the Big Ten Conference. With this philosophy as our guide, we are now reaching beyond prior notions of potential to help children, youth, families and schools do the same. In our world, this marks the crucial distinction between children tolerating diversity and embracing it; between students memorizing formulas and understanding them; between parents instructing children and engaging them; between students having to read and loving to read. In short, it's the all-important step from competence to excellence – which is, as always, our ultimate aim.



Susan M. Sheridan, PhD

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

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

Director, National Center for Research
on Rural Education

As we accelerate our pursuit of excellence by proudly joining the esteemed ranks of Big Ten scholarship, we welcome you to reflect with us on the year that lay behind. In doing so, we gratefully acknowledge all those who have helped us realize our potential – and inspired us to reach beyond.

Susan M. Sheridan





Our Mission

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

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About CYFS

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

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Research

Charting New Territory

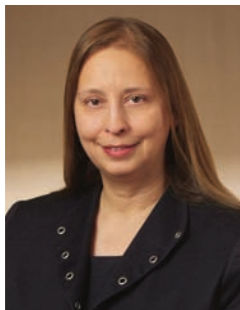


CYFS strives to provide its personnel and affiliates with the environment and resources to conduct innovative, methodologically rigorous research that generates relevant outcomes for those whose interests we continually aim to serve. We especially seek to design and assess strategies, techniques and tools that address the challenges facing disadvantaged and underserved populations throughout Nebraska and the United States.

Our research encompasses five major themes: early childhood and development, academic intervention and learning, social-emotional learning and development, rural education, and research and evaluation methods. This wide-ranging spectrum of research fosters novel, interdisciplinary approaches to asking questions and uncovering answers that ensure children, youth, families and schools realize their potential – then reach beyond it.

Bringing Early Literacy Home for Latinos

Sandra Plata-Potter wants to help first-generation Latino parents give their preschoolers a head start on literacy – and the resources to keep pace with their peers.



Sandra Plata-Potter, a CYFS Doctoral Student Affiliate, is exploring Latino immigrants' perspectives on early literacy. Her study will serve as the basis for her dissertation.

The CYFS Doctoral Student Affiliate is seeking to determine whether Latino parents' engagement in a Head Start project leads them to become more involved in literacy-related activities with their children. With the assistance of CYFS Research Associate Professor Dr. Lisa Knoche and Faculty Affiliate Dr. Helen Raikes, she is also examining whether these

home-based activities bolster children's "emergent literacy" – the knowledge and skills that serve as foundations for reading and writing.

Plata-Potter's study is employing both in-depth interviews and survey questionnaires to garner insights from Latino immigrant families living in a rural Midwestern community. She will assess the impact of parental involvement by measuring children's alphabet knowledge, word and rhyme awareness, vocabulary, and a variety of other emergent literacy

indicators. Her efforts are being funded by the Administration for Children and Families.

According to Plata-Potter, much of the motivation behind these efforts sprang from prior research on emergent literacy – research which has found that Latino dual-language learners often fall behind native English speakers before entering kindergarten.

"When children don't start kindergarten with those skills, they lag behind their peers, and it's pretty much a [process of] trying to catch up throughout elementary school," Plata-Potter said. "But they tend to not always catch up, so they need those emergent skills before they start kindergarten."

REACHING BEYOND THE NUMBERS

In addition to employing surveys and secondary analyses, Sandra Plata-Potter will conduct interviews with approximately 30 Latino families who have participated in the preschool Head Start program. She plans to solicit parents' opinions about their participation in Head Start-coordinated events designed to help them learn about emergent literacy.

Plata-Potter will also examine portfolios that encapsulate the parent-child activities – including reading, writing and goal-setting – that occurred in the home. By reviewing these portfolios with both parents and their children, Plata-Potter hopes to better understand how Latinos' beliefs and attitudes influence their literacy-related practices.



Plata-Potter is optimistic that the study will yield unique insights into how Latino families incorporate new emergent literacy philosophies into their existing beliefs and practices.

Plata-Potter believes this well-documented gap may be a byproduct of differences in cultural attitudes toward early education.

“[Latino parents] want their children to succeed, and they know that education is important, but they know how to approach it [only] from their perspective,” Plata-Potter said. “It’s not that they don’t care as much – it’s that they come from a [school of thought] that the teacher knows best, and so they will send their children to school to learn.”

The answers that Plata-Potter seeks are especially important within the context of rural communities, she noted, such as the one that houses her study’s Latino families.

“By the year 2025, the Latino population will be one of the biggest in rural America. They’re moving away from the big cities and into rural America, which changes the whole picture,” said Plata-Potter, whose Puerto Rican parents raised her in New York City.

Plata-Potter is optimistic that the study will yield unique insights into that picture – and meaningful perspectives on how Latino families incorporate emergent literacy philosophies into their existing beliefs and practices.

“By the year 2025, the Latino population will be one of the biggest in rural America. They’re moving away from the big cities and into rural America, which changes the whole picture.”

Game Plans for Early Childhood Coaching

For many Nebraskans, coaching has become synonymous with the state's much beloved football program. For Dr. Lisa Knoche, it will help shape the future of Nebraska's early childhood education.



Dr. Lisa Knoche, a CYFS Research Associate Professor, is evaluating the Nebraska Department of Education's Early Childhood Coaching Project.

The CYFS Research Associate Professor is wrapping up a one-year evaluation of the *Early Childhood Coaching Project* (ECCP). Developed by the Nebraska Department of Education, the ECCP trains early childhood professionals who work with teachers and parents to improve young children's development.

With the assistance of CYFS Consultant Sue Bainter, Knoche has focused on determining the extent to which these early childhood professionals adhere to the coaching practices and strategies on which they received training. In addition to considering which factors might affect adherence, the evaluation is examining whether current coaching models meet the needs and expectations of childhood professionals, parents and teachers.

Knoche noted that the project, which was funded by the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, has been a "springboard effort" to explore the many uncharted dynamics of early childhood coaching.

"In some ways, it's sort of a black hole: It's unclear what happens in a lot of coaching relationships," Knoche said. "[This project] is not really about holding people accountable; it's more about understanding what they are doing

so that we can continue to provide them the support that they need and adjust the actual coaching protocol to effect change."

Knoche's project has taken a three-pronged approach to achieve this understanding. The first consisted of surveying approximately 45 coach participants about their training and how it translates to work in the field. These coaches also supplied researchers with a variety of information related to their demographics and previous coaching experiences.

In part two, Bainter coordinated the quarterly videotaping of an additional 10 to 15 coaches working with the teachers and parents of young children. These coaching sessions, which took place at preschool and home sites throughout Nebraska, were analyzed for coaches' adherence to established protocols. The researchers paid particular attention to appropriate guidance of the sessions and responsiveness to participants' needs.

The evaluation's final stage solicited teachers' and parents' assessments of the coaching sessions, with teachers also offering insights into their work environments and professional satisfaction.

As the evaluation draws to a close, Knoche is hopeful that these collective efforts will soon shine needed light on how coaching can influence early education settings and children's developmental outcomes.

"[Early childhood researchers] haven't spent a lot of time defining coaching and really trying to understand what it takes to make change," Knoche said. "I hope that, at the end of the day, we have information that's useful in informing the kinds of supports that are available to both coaches and the agencies or programs that are supporting coaches."



Student Affiliate's Thesis Measures Up



Natalie Koziol earned the 2010-2011 Folsom Distinguished Master's Thesis Award from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. She is advised by Dr. James Bovaird, Director of the CYFS Statistics and Research Methodology Unit.

A CYFS Graduate Student Affiliate has already received high marks for her research.

Natalie Koziol, who earned her master's degree and is pursuing her doctorate in educational psychology, received the 2010-2011 *Folsom Distinguished Master's Thesis Award* from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. The Folsom Awards annually recognize an exemplary master's thesis and doctoral dissertation on the basis of scholarly content, methodology, clarity and contribution to the field.

Koziol's thesis addresses the statistical testing of measurement invariance, which assumes that the same scale used across time or groups measures the same construct. She specifically evaluated how several factors, including sample size and the non-normality of data, influence the validity of statistical conclusions. She also examined how the effects of these factors vary according to measurement models and estimators.

Based on the results of her analyses, Koziol's thesis makes recommendations for the appropriate use of statistical models across a range of scenarios commonly encountered by educational and psychological researchers. These recommendations should help researchers make more informed statistical decisions and increase the likelihood of meaningful conclusions about developmental trends and differences among groups.

Translation

From Research to Practice



Every study we conduct and program we develop is geared toward directly improving the well-being of children, youth, families and schools. By providing the framework to improve teacher instruction and cultivate family-school partnerships, our research and initiatives help preschoolers through adolescents develop essential skills in reading, science and mathematics. We also oversee the implementation of intervention-based efforts to encourage prosocial behavior, self-efficacy and self-esteem in the home, community and classroom.

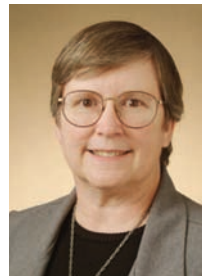
We believe these purposeful applications of theory and knowledge epitomize the concept of realizing potential. By supporting all those who admirably translate our research to practice, we are reaching far beyond the walls of academia to impact everyday life.

Amplifying Efforts in Deaf Education

American schools sometimes overlook and under-serve students who are deaf or hard of hearing. With the help of a four-year, \$1.2 million U.S. Department of Education grant, CYFS Faculty Affiliate Dr. Malinda Eccarius intends to change that.

Eccarius (right) has introduced a program that will prepare 25 K-12 instructors to assist students who are deaf or hard of hearing but take classes with their hearing peers. It is specifically primed to address the severe shortage of itinerant teachers that has resulted from retirements and the record number of deaf and hard-of-hearing students transferring to traditional classrooms. Along with earning a teaching endorsement in deaf education, participants who complete the program will have the option of obtaining a master's degree in special education.

The program will give participants the tools to cultivate listening and spoken language skills in a diverse range



of students who are deaf and hard of hearing, including those with multiple disabilities. It will also help participants collaborate with the families, classroom teachers and service providers who work with these students on a regular basis.

In addition to offering courses on instruction, consultation and multiple disabilities, the program will feature itinerant student-teaching opportunities and mentors who model effective practices. Eccarius is confident these experiences will pay dividends for both participants and their future students.

“Children who are deaf or hard of hearing often are isolated in the typical classroom,” Eccarius said, “because their teachers do not understand the impact of hearing loss on language development and day-to-day access to instruction and the conversation of their peers. The specialized content of this program will prepare itinerant teachers to work with [classroom] teachers and modify classroom environments to make learning easier.”

Malinda Eccarius is aiming to ensure that teachers are prepared to serve the many deaf and hard-of-hearing students now transferring to traditional classrooms.

The program is specifically targeting teachers from rural Plains and Midwestern communities, which are in especially dire straits due to the recruiting barriers of distance and limited resources. In order to overcome another obstacle – the busy schedules of many potential participants – Eccarius will offer the program's entire curriculum online.



In addition to offering courses on instruction, consultation and multiple disabilities, the program will feature student-teaching opportunities and mentors who model effective practices.

“Teachers who are most likely to want to work in rural areas are those who already live there,” she noted. “Living in a rural area, however, means not being able to attend on-campus courses. Distance education brings the classes to the students. They also do their practicum locally, making them highly visible to local administrators.”

Several CYFS Faculty Affiliates from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln’s Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders will teach the program’s courses. CYFS Research Assistant Professor Dr. Greg Welch, a member of the Center’s Statistics and Research Methodology Unit, will evaluate the results of the project.

Having previously assisted with two similar projects, Eccarius sees the current program as a natural continuation of her efforts to improve educational experiences for students who are deaf and hard of hearing.

“It’s an exciting, innovative opportunity,” she said, “to prepare today’s teachers to serve tomorrow’s deaf and hard of hearing children.”

A DECADE OF IMPACT

Of the 59 teachers who graduated from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln’s Deaf Education Program between 2001 and 2010, 46 participated in programs that Eccarius helped develop.



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Putting Statistical Tools to Use

The CYFS Statistics and Research Methodology (SRM) Unit launched its *Research Methodology Series* in 2006. The speaker series has since comprised 32 presentations designed to give researchers applicable insights into relevant, state-of-the-science techniques.

costs vs. benefits of evaluation, Welch gave an overview of three popular evaluation models and covered the politics and limitations inherent to assessment.

Dr. Matthew Grady, Visiting Assistant Professor of Educational Psychology, presented on multilevel modeling in March. He illustrated how such models can isolate the influence of important variables even when subjects are clustered into multiple contexts. Among other applications, Grady described how these tools help researchers compare high school students who attended different middle schools and analyze the academic performance of students taught by multiple teachers.

The series closed with an introduction to meta-analysis from CYFS Postdoctoral Fellow Elizabeth Moorman Kim. After defining meta-analysis and explaining its rationale, Dr. Moorman Kim presented scenarios suitable for meta-analyses and described conditions necessary for successfully conducting them. She also delved into the steps of the meta-analytic process, from specifying a problem and searching literature to developing coding protocols, analyzing data and presenting results.

These presentations illustrated the SRM Unit's commitment to providing researchers with the most advanced tools for digging ever deeper into issues of import for children, youth, families and schools.

LEARN MORE

For more information about the SRM Unit and future Research Methodology Series presentations, visit the CYFS website:

cyfs.unl.edu

The 2010-2011 edition featured a five-speaker succession of monthly presentations from December through April. CYFS Postdoctoral Fellow Ji Hoon Ryoo kicked off the series by addressing the properties necessary to ensure that assessment tools measure the same constructs when used over time or across groups. Dr. Ryoo then explored the use of Item Response Theory for making inferences and ensuring consistent measurement across the longitudinal data common to intervention and early childhood research.

Kevin Kupzyk, a Statistics and Measurement Consultant with the SRM Unit, resumed the series in January with an introduction to how mixture models can be used to identify groups and reveal patterns in large amounts of data. These features make mixture models especially valuable for recognizing the types of families and children who could most benefit from behavioral or academic interventions.

In February, CYFS Research Assistant Professor Dr. Greg Welch gave a primer on evaluation. Welch defined the concept, distinguished it from common research, and enumerated the reasons for conducting assessments. After discussing the needs, theory, implementation, impact and



*Left to Right,
Top to Bottom:*

Ji Hoon Ryoo

Kevin Kupzyk

Greg Welch

Matthew Grady

Elizabeth Moorman Kim

Building Bridges to Graduation

Graduating high school leads to much more than just pomp and circumstance, as earning a diploma not only improves career prospects but also reduces substance abuse and delinquency rates.



With this in mind, CYFS Faculty Affiliate Dr. Michael Scheel (left) and CYFS Research Assistant Professor Dr. Gina Kunz are coordinating the *Building Bridges* program, a three-year effort to improve graduation rates among freshmen attending Lincoln Northeast and Lincoln North Star High Schools in Nebraska's capital.

ing Lincoln Northeast and Lincoln North Star High Schools in Nebraska's capital.

To this end, the program offers a combination of weekly sessions with counseling psychology graduate students, classroom tutoring, field trips to colleges and universities, presentations on academic success, and parent outreach workshops. The program specifically targets freshmen who struggled academically during middle school and hence are at greatest risk for dropping out of high school.

The program is designed to do more than simply raise test scores, which research has suggested is not a sufficient deterrent to dropping out. Instead, Scheel and his team are looking to provide freshmen with the support they need to psychologically invest in school and develop the motivation necessary for achieving academic success.

"We are finding that when students find school meaningful, increase academic self-efficacy, and realize that

“ We are finding that when students find school meaningful ... their motivation for school increases dramatically. ”

adults in their school care about them and their welfare, then their motivation for school increases dramatically,” Scheel said. “Our program strives to promote each of these factors.”

The program, which is sponsored by the Woods Charitable Fund, features several elements especially geared toward providing this much needed support. Chief among these is a focus on encouraging students and emphasizing their successes to promote a sense of belonging in the school system. The model also advocates identifying and enhancing students' personal strengths to develop self-efficacy.

Scheel's team will evaluate the program's impact by measuring five related aspects of classroom behavior: student engagement, academic motivation, grade point average, attendance and number of course credits earned. A total of 50 freshmen from the two schools are being recruited to participate in the project, whose design was influenced by pilot versions previously introduced at both schools.

Though *Building Bridges* only recently graduated from a pilot to a full-fledged program, Scheel and his colleagues have already begun focusing on ways to improve it.

"We hope to expand our program this year by helping students form positive approach goals about school and achievable pathways to the goals they identify," Scheel said. "We will use these goals to help us more accurately assess the progress our students are making in the *Building Bridges* program."



Training Teachers, Empowering Parents

The road to school readiness may be paved in letters and language, but CYFS researchers know that the children traveling it also need plenty of parental support along the way.

Fortunately, administrators at Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) have joined CYFS to ensure this road map becomes reality. In conjunction with LPS' early childhood *ExCITE* program, a CYFS team spent the last year training Lincoln teachers and early childhood professionals in an intervention approach called *Getting Ready*. The approach aims to facilitate parental engagement and cultivate family-school partnerships, which research has suggested prepare children for school by enhancing their early language and literacy skills and social-emotional development.

Led by CYFS Research Associate Professor Dr. Lisa Knoche, the team coordinated three training sessions designed to give teachers and early childhood professionals – including home visitors and special educators – an orientation in the *Getting Ready* approach. The first session provided participants with guidelines for family-centered services and a general structure for conducting home visits. Session two introduced the fundamentals of observation and collaborative problem-solving with families, including the personalization of home-school plans designed to align the efforts of parents and teachers. The final session offered participants the opportunity to reflect

on the goals and *Getting Ready* strategies they employed to engage families during their home visits.

Knoche noted that this training has begun to fulfill *Getting Ready's* promise of supporting teachers and assisting parents and children on the journey to school readiness.

“We received positive feedback in terms of the teachers' ability to structure home visits and engage families,” Knoche said. “Ultimately, the intervention is going to make a difference for a teacher; it's going to make a difference for a family; it's going to make a difference for a child. That's what it's all about.”



“ The intervention is going to make a difference for a **teacher**; it's going to make a difference for a **family**; it's going to make a difference for a **child**. ”

“ I want them to see the importance of math and science in their lives today and for the future. ”



Jump-Starting Interest in Engineering

They may lack a driver's license and ride the bus to school, but students at Lincoln's Culler Middle School are using other forms of transportation to reach destinations further down the road.

With the support of CYFS, the Nebraska Transportation Center and the Mid-America Transportation Center, Culler completed the first year of an after-school engineering club that illustrated how math and science make modern transportation possible. Dubbed *Roads, Rails and Race Cars*, the weekly club offered interactive activities that helped Culler students grasp the diverse applications of algebra, geometry and physics they learned in class.

"I want to provide real-world experiences for the students at Culler," said Mary Herrington, a Culler science teacher who coordinated the Community Learning Center-sponsored club. "I want them to see the importance of math and science in their lives today and for the future."

To achieve this, Herrington drew upon six years of participation in the CYFS-co-directed *UNL Professional Development Math and Science Summer Technology Institute*. Many of the club's lesson plans were inspired by those developed at the summer institute, which annually provides the expertise of UNL's engineering faculty to middle and high school teachers throughout Nebraska.

With these lesson plans as a foundation, UNL engineering graduate students helped Culler middle schoolers construct miniature rafts, clock traffic speed with LIDAR guns, test out GPS technology, simulate car crashes, discuss threats to traffic safety, and much more.

Herrington noted that these activities were ultimately designed to encourage students to invest in their education. Based on their response, the students seemed to do just that – while enjoying the ride along the way.

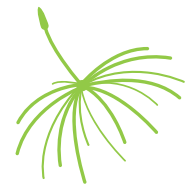
"The best part was seeing the students running down the hallway to get to the club," Herrington said, "and staying around long after the activity was over to talk with the adults."

This enthusiasm is shared by Herrington, who believes that the club – like transportation itself – can help students get from where they are to where they want to be.

"I want my students to build dreams for college and have hope that they can be successful in school," Herrington said. "This club provides a glimpse of what their future can look like if they work hard and never give up hope."

Collaboration

Extending Hands, Expanding Perspectives



At CYFS, we believe that collaboration is essential to enlightening our perspectives, disseminating important research and allowing us to better serve children, youth, families and schools. We constantly search for opportunities to cultivate meaningful and lasting connections with researchers, educators, parents, students and community leaders, all of whom have shown a remarkable willingness to share their unique insights and experiences with us.

To this end, CYFS regularly hosts and participates in meetings, conferences and speaker series that transcend institutional, thematic and geographic boundaries. These collaborations provide us with greater insights into front-line programs, models and philosophies that continually inspire us to embrace the possibilities of reaching beyond the status quo.

Foundations for Family-School Partnerships

The great irony of family-school partnership research is that its scholars have yet to fully tap the power of collaboration. Accordingly, CYFS has spearheaded a movement to forge ties and unify research among leaders of the field.

The Center catalyzed these efforts by hosting more than 20 family-school partnership researchers at a national meeting held in September 2010. The meeting served as a starting point for synthesizing and reconceptualizing definitions of family-school partnerships, identifying the means by which they function, and pinpointing methods for translating partnerships research into practice. In doing so, participants addressed research gaps that have slowed the discipline's progress and began mapping directions for future scholarship.

Consisting of 11 presentations and numerous roundtable discussions, the meeting featured researchers from 18 academic institutions. These scholars represented the full spectrum of academic disciplines – including education, psychology, early intervention, prevention, sociology and methodology – that have shaped the course of family-school research over the last 30 years.

"For me, the theme of partnership carried over to what was so great about the meeting: psychologists partnering with scientists from other disciplines, basic researchers partnering with interventionists, family-focused researchers partnering with school-focused researchers," said Dr. Robert Crosnoe, Professor of Sociology at the University of Texas at Austin. "These are the kinds of connections that need to be made if we are going to be able to under-

stand family-school partnerships from all angles and then do something with that understanding."

Broken into three sessions, the meeting's presentations encompassed a vast array of traditional and uncharted themes. The first session summarized several influential theories and models of family-school partnerships, including the role of teacher and parental efficacy in partnerships' success. It also touched on approaches for establishing teacher-parent relationships and involving family members in children's education.



Vanderbilt University's Dr. Kathleen Hoover-Dempsey was one of more than 20 researchers who lent their perspectives on family-school partnerships.

The second round of presentations focused on processes that have been shown to influence family-school partnerships. In addition to addressing parents' motivations and methods for promoting academic achievement, panelists also considered the psychological, cultural and demographic factors that affect parental engagement and subsequent student performance.



The meeting concluded with the proposed formation of the Interdisciplinary Alliance for Partnerships Research (IAPR), an academic network aimed at maintaining ties and encouraging further collaboration among the field's leading researchers.

Session three delved into the numerous practical, methodological and statistical challenges – and potential solutions – encountered by scholars attempting to conduct applied research. The panel also provided insight into the documented impact of family-focused programming and school-family partnership approaches on students' well-being.

The meeting, which was funded by the National Science Foundation and the American Educational Research Association, concluded with the proposed formation of the Interdisciplinary Alliance for Partnerships Research (IAPR) – an academic network aimed at maintaining the gathering's collaborative momentum. CYFS Director Dr. Susan Sheridan, the meeting's lead organizer, believes this momentum has the potential to carry the field forward in profound ways.

"I think we engaged in some really important and exciting and progressive conversations about where we're at as a field," Sheridan said, "and what our collective contributions can do to reshape and recreate the reality of research on family-school partnerships."

LEARN MORE

Learn more about this meeting, and view the presentations of participating researchers, by visiting the website of the Interdisciplinary Alliance for Partnerships Research:

iapr.unl.edu

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Spreading the Word on Rural Education



CYFS' National Center for Research on Rural Education (R²Ed) advanced its mission of disseminating innovative, important research by launching one speaker series and continuing another in 2011. Each featured a nationally recognized scholar whose work has influenced the development of rural-related research throughout the United States.

R²Ed kicked off the *Advances and Opportunities in Rural Education Research Speaker Series* with a January visit from Dr. Louis Cicchinelli, Executive Vice President of Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) and a member of R²Ed's National Leadership Advisory Board. Cicchinelli opened by discussing scholarly and everyday conceptions of rurality. After providing a background on McREL, he examined the need for quality rural education research and enumerated common topics addressed by rural scholars. He also delved into a recent co-authored meta-analysis, noting that much research clas-

sified as "rural" failed to truly address questions, issues, arguments or phenomena specific to rural communities.

In addition to reviewing practical limitations that have hindered rural research, Cicchinelli offered examples of creative approaches to overcoming such obstacles. He followed with an overview of reform priorities for rural schools and concluded with a potential rural research agenda focused on promoting quality teachers through policy studies, improving graduation rates with best practices, and ensuring equity for all rural students.

The *Creating Rural Connections Speaker Series* resumed in April with a presentation from Dr. Jim Knight, a Research Associate with the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning. Knight focused on Instructional Coaching, a form of teacher professional development that he has dedicated more than a decade to developing and studying. He began by covering the difficulties and potential pitfalls of professional development efforts, sharing quotes from teachers who expressed frustration with the limitations and impracticality of traditional professional development workshops.

Knight explained the advent of the Partnership Learning Approach, a forerunner of Instructional Coaching that emphasizes principles such as equality, choice, dialogue and reciprocity. He then discussed subsequent research findings that led to the development of Instructional Coaching, which promotes modeling, observation and teacher-directed goals to encourage buy-in from participants.

After reviewing the essential components and demonstrated impacts of Instructional Coaching,



Dr. Louis Cicchinelli, Executive Vice President of Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) and a member of R²Ed's National Leadership Advisory Board.



Knight (left) summarized efforts to continually refine and modify the approach according to feedback from coaches, teachers and students. He concluded by outlining plans for future publications and studies that will further evaluate and augment Instructional Coaching.

While introducing Cicchinelli, CYFS Director Dr. Susan Sheridan encapsulated the philosophy underlying these speaker series: “Our goal is to bring in the most prolific education researchers nationally, thereby building the capacity of researchers and educators to capitalize on current state-of-the-science research taking place in, and about, the rural education context.”

“ Our goal is to bring in the most prolific education researchers nationally, thereby building the capacity of researchers and educators to capitalize on current state-of-the-science research taking place in, and about, the rural education context. ”

ABOUT THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON RURAL EDUCATION

The National Center for Research on Rural Education (R²Ed) is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) and housed in the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools (CYFS) at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

The Center's long-term goals are to (a) improve students' acquisition of reading and science knowledge and skills by identifying effective practices that lead to the systematic provision of evidence-based instruction in rural settings; and (b) establish an infrastructure for conducting and disseminating nationally relevant, cutting-edge research and leadership related to rural education.

Learn more at r2ed.unl.edu



Recognizing Rural School Partners

The National Center for Research on Rural Education (R²Ed), housed within CYFS, has collaborated with regional schools in rural communities since its 2009 formation. These partnerships have profoundly informed the Center's efforts to improve rural classroom instruction and student achievement in reading and science.

Center personnel visited more than a dozen of these schools throughout 2011 to formally recognize their participation in several of R²Ed's intervention-based research studies. R²Ed Director Dr. Susan Sheridan, Rural Outreach and Coordination Director Dr. Gina Kunz and Project Leader Amanda Witte were among those who offered thanks and commemorative plaques to the teachers, principals and superintendents of participating schools.

The researchers also took the opportunity to solicit feedback about the intervention programs from the educators and administrators involved in their implementation.

"The teachers who became involved have had a positive experience," said John Mlinar, principal of Shell Creek Elementary School in Columbus, Neb. "There was also noted improvement in the students' behavior and success at getting the parents involved."

Jane Howerter, principal of Fort Calhoun Elementary, expressed similar sentiments about her school's participation in intervention-based efforts to foster meaningful communication between parents and teachers.

"I saw it as an opportunity for our students and families to get some help and direction with setting up home structure and behavior reinforcement plans," Howerter said. "Parents feel [that] the cooperative efforts between home and school have really helped their children find success in both environments."

According to Witte, the visits have reinforced R²Ed's collective belief in the value of collaborating directly with schools in rural communities.

"We have learned so much from our school partners; they generously share ideas and suggestions that truly inform our practices. By developing and maintaining close working alliances with rural schools, we are better able to help meet the needs of students and families in rural communities," Witte said. "I am struck by how committed our school partners are to providing the best education possible for their students. They not only have amazing policies and practices in place, but they also actively seek fresh perspectives and techniques. We are so lucky to have the chance to connect with these educators."



R²Ed researchers visited Nebraska's Fort Calhoun Elementary School in early May.



A Visit from the U.S. Department of Education



R²Ed outlined its efforts to assist schools, teachers and students in rural communities during an April meeting with the U.S. Department of Education's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Rural Outreach.

The CYFS-housed National Center for Research on Rural Education (R²Ed) received an April visit from John White, the U.S. Department of Education's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Rural Outreach.

White discussed challenges, opportunities and teacher development in rural schools with R²Ed Director Susan Sheridan, University of Nebraska–Lincoln Chancellor Harvey Perlman and College of Education and Human Sciences Dean Marjorie Kostelnik. The R²Ed Core Leadership Team of Drs. Sheridan, Todd Glover, Gwen Nugent, Gina Kunz and James Bovaird also provided overviews of the Center's ongoing research programs.

During the visit, CYFS Faculty Affiliates Nancy Engen-Wedin and Dr. Christine Marvin contributed insights into innovative teacher development programs designed to help rural school communities “grow their own” personnel resources that enhance classroom teaching, school leadership and special education services.

White also visited rural Nebraska's Winnebago High School and Madison Elementary School, both of which have participated in CYFS-affiliated research and received School Improvement Grants from the U.S. Department of Education.

By fortifying its connections with national policymakers, R²Ed is helping to ensure that students in rural communities throughout the United States receive the support they need to succeed – in the classroom and beyond.



*Left to Right:
Gwen Nugent
Todd Glover
Susan Sheridan
John White
Marjorie Kostelnik
James Bovaird
Gina Kunz*

Publications

A primary goal of CYFS is to advance the scientific knowledge base and inform practice, policy and future research in areas related to children, youth, families and schools. Disseminating important findings generated via ongoing research is a seminal activity of CYFS Affiliates. Select publications are listed below, with Faculty and Student Affiliates in bold.

EARLY EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT

Edwards, C. P. (2011). Do you want to rough and tumble? In D. Fernie, S. Madrid, & R. Kantor (Eds.), *Educating toddlers to teachers* (pp. 31-35). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Edwards, C. P., Sheridan, S. M., & Knoche, L. L. (2010). Parent-child relationships in early learning. In E. Baker, P. Peterson, & B. McGaw (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of education* (Vol. 5) (pp. 438-443). Oxford, England: Elsevier.

Raikes, H. H., Torquati, J. C., Wang, C., & Shegstad, B. (in press). Parent experiences with state child care subsidy systems and their perceptions of choice and quality in care selected. *Early Education and Development*.

Schutte, A. R., & Spencer, J. P. (2010). Filling the gap on developmental change: Tests of a dynamic field theory of spatial cognition. *Journal of Cognition and Development, 11*(3), 328-355.

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Torquati, J. C., Gabriel, M., Jones-Branch, J., & Leeper, J. (2010). Environmental education: A natural way to nurture children's development and learning. *Young Children, 65*(6), 98-104.

Torquati, J. C., Raikes, H. H., Huddleston-Casas, C., & Bovaird, J. A. (in press). Quality of child care for low-income children: Still inequity. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*.

ACADEMIC INTERVENTION & LEARNING

Hamann, E. T., & Reeves, J. (in press). Accessing high-quality instructional strategies. In T. Timar & J. Maxwell-Jolly (Eds.), *Connecting the dots and closing the gaps*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Hogan, T. P., & Thomson, J. (2010). Future advances in the early detection of reading risk: Subgroups, dynamic relations, and advanced methodologies. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 43*(4), 383-386.

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Macintyre Latta, M., & Baer, S. (2010). Aesthetic inquiry: About, within, without, and through repeated visits. In T. Costantino & B. White (Eds.), *Essays on aesthetic education for the 21st century* (pp. 93-108). Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Martens, B. K., **Daly, E. J., III**, Begeny, J. C., & VanDerHeyden, A. (2011). Behavioral approaches to education. In **W. Fisher**, C. Piazza, & H. Roane (Eds.), *Handbook of applied behavior analysis* (pp. 385-401). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

McKevitt, B. C., Elliott, S. N., & Kettler, R. J. (in press). Testing accommodations for children with disabilities. In D. Saklofske & V. Schwean (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of psychological assessment of children and adolescents*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Meadows, T., **Valleley, R.**, Haack, M. K., Thorson, R., & **Evans, J.** (2011). Physician "costs" in providing behavioral health in primary care. *Clinical Pediatrics, 50*(5), 447-455.

Miller, L. D., **Shell, D. F.**, Khandaker, N., & Soh, L. (2011). Teaching using computer games. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems, 39*(3), 321-343.

Pedersen, J. E. (2011). James Bean's integrative curriculum approach to engaging students in a study of social issues and community service. In S. Totten & **J. Pedersen** (Eds.), *Educating about social issues in the 20th and 21st centuries: A critical annotated bibliography*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

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Davidson, M. M., & Bowen, N. (2011). Academia meets community agency: How to foster positive collaboration in domestic violence and sexual assault work. *Journal of Family Violence, 26*(4), 309-318.

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Doll, B., Song, S., Champion-Wescott, A., & Jones, K. (2011). Classroom ecologies that support or discourage bullying. In D. Espelage & S. Swearer (Eds.), *A social-ecological perspective on bullying prevention and intervention in American schools* (2nd ed.) (pp. 147-158). New York, NY: Routledge.

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Kratochvil, C. J., Vaughan, B. S., Stoner, J. A., Daughton, J. M., Lubberstedt, B. D., Murray, D. W., Chrisman, A. K., Faircloth, M. A., Itchon-Ramos, N. B., Kollins, S. H., Maayan, L. A., Greenhill, L. L., Kotler, L. A., Fried, J., & March, J. S. (2011). A double-blind, placebo-controlled study of Atomoxetine in young children with ADHD. *Pediatrics, 127*(4), 862-868.

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Scheel, M. J. (2011). Client common factors represented by client motivation and autonomy. *The Counseling Psychologist, 39*(2), 276-285.

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Tyler, K. A., Brownridge, D. A., & Melander, L. A. (2011). The effect of poor parenting on male and female dating violence perpetration and victimization. *Violence and Victims, 26*(2), 218-230.

RURAL EDUCATION

Hamann, E. T., & Zúñiga, V. (2011). Schooling and the everyday ruptures transnational children encounter in the United States and Mexico. In C. Coe, R. Reynolds, D. Boehm, J. Hess, & H. Rae-Espinoza (Eds.), *Everyday ruptures: Children and migration in global perspective* (pp. 141-160). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

RESEARCH & EVALUATION METHODS

Bovaird, J. A., Geisinger, K., & Buckendahl, C. (Eds.) (2011). *High stakes testing in education: Science and practice in K-12 settings*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Bovaird, J. A., & Koziol, N. A. (in press). Measurement models for ordered-categorical indicators. In R. Hoyle (Ed.), *Handbook of structural equation modeling*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Bovaird, J. A., & Shaw, L. H. (in press). Multilevel structural equation models. In B. Laursen, T. Little, & N. Card (Eds.) *Handbook of developmental research methods*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Mi, X., Eskridge, K. M., Wang, D., Baenziger, P. S., Campbell, B. T., Gill, K. S., Dweikat, I., & Bovaird, J. A. (2010). Regression-based multi-trait QTL mapping using a structural equation model. *Statistical Applications in Genetics and Molecular Biology, 9*(1), 1-23.

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Landscape of Support

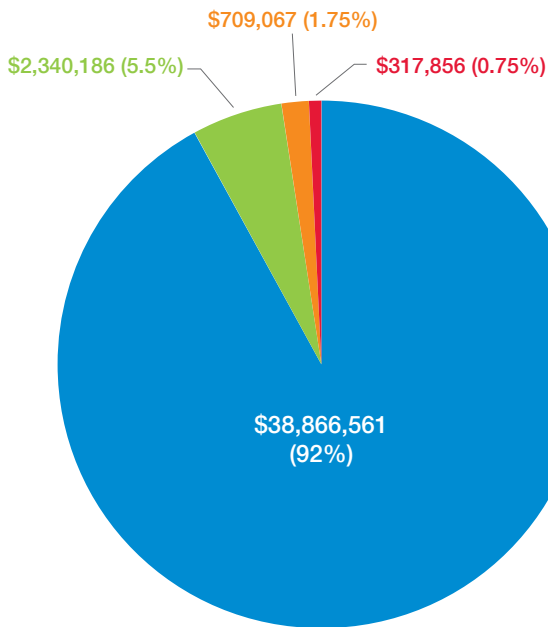
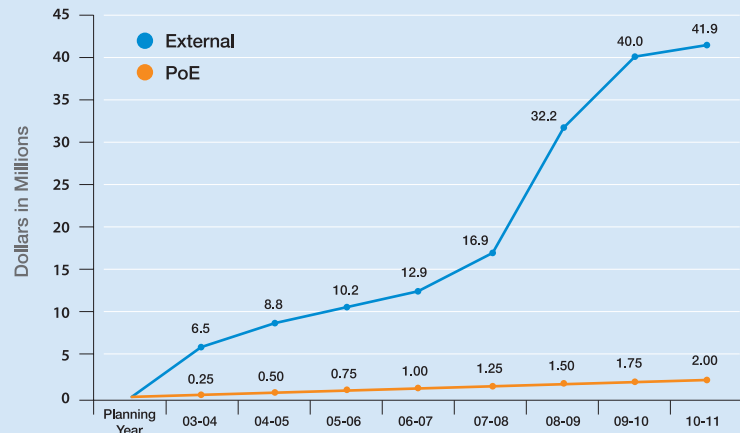
SNAPSHOT OF CUMULATIVE CYFS GRANT ACTIVITY

Total Program of Excellence Funds to Date	\$2,000,000
Total Number of Grants Submitted through CYFS	212
Total Dollar Amount of Grants Submitted	\$175,084,113
Total Number of Grants Funded	90
"Hit Rate" of Funded Grants (based on known decisions)	46%
Total Dollar Amount of External Grants Funded	\$41,915,814
Total Dollar Amount of Internal Grants Funded	\$317,856
Total Dollar Amount of All Grants Funded	\$42,233,670
Percentage of Grant Dollars from Federal Agencies	92%
Return Rate to UNL for Every \$1 Invested	\$21.11

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

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

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



- Federal
- State
- Foundations
- Internal

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

**Percentages rounded to nearest 0.25%*

Active Grants and Contracts

The following grants and contracts received new or continued funding during the 2010 CYFS fiscal year.

FEDERAL AWARDS (\$34,749,221)

Administration for Children and Families

Instruction and Emotional Quality of Parent-Child Book Reading and Early Head Start Children's Learning Outcomes
PI: Carolyn Pope Edwards

Parental Literacy Belief and Engagement in Homes of Dual Language Learners: A Mixed Methods Study
PIs: Lisa Knoche, Sandra Plata-Potter

Teacher-Child Interaction Training
PIs: Christopher Campbell, David Hansen, Mary Flood

Testing Thresholds of Quality on Child Outcomes Globally and in Subgroups: Secondary Analysis of QUINCE, Early Head Start and Midwest Child Care Research Consortium Quality Rating Systems Pilot Data
PIs: Helen Raikes, Julia Torquati, Greg Welch

National Institutes of Health

Parent Engagement and Child Learning Birth to Five
PIs: Susan Sheridan, Carolyn Pope Edwards

Parent Engagement and Child Learning Birth to Five: Diversity Supplement
PI: Susan Sheridan

National Science Foundation

Continuity Across Family and School Systems to Promote the Learning and Development of Children and Adolescents
PIs: Susan Sheridan, Gina Kunz, Gwen Nugent, James Bovaird

iLOG: Embedding and Validating Empirical Usage Intelligence In Learning Objects
PIs: Ashok Samal, Leen-Kiat Soh, Gwen Nugent

Robotics and GPS/GIS in 4-H: Workplace Skills for the 21st Century
PIs: Bradley Barker, Viacheslav Adamchuk, Gwen Nugent

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

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

U.S. Department of Education

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

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

Development of a Three-Tiered Model in Early Intervention to Address Language and Literacy Needs of Children at Risk
PIs: Susan Sheridan, Lisa Knoche, Judith Carta, Charles Greenwood

Efficacy of Supplemental Early Vocabulary Connections Instruction for English Language Learners
PIs: J. Ron Nelson, James Bovaird

Evaluation for LPS Mentor Project
PI: Gwen Nugent

Language Bases of Skilled Reading Comprehension
PIs: Tiffany Hogan, J. Ron Nelson, James Bovaird

Mountain Prairie Upgrade Partnership-Early Childhood (MPUP-EC)
PIs: Christine Marvin, Malinda Eccarius

Mountain Prairie Upgrade Partnership-Itinerant (MPUP-I)
PI: Malinda Eccarius

National Center for Research on Rural Education (R²Ed)
PIs: Susan Sheridan, Todd Glover, Gwen Nugent, Gina Kunz, James Bovaird

Postdoctoral Fellowship for Research on Consultation-Based Interventions for Students with Social and Behavioral Concerns
PIs: Susan Sheridan, Todd Glover, James Bovaird

Rural Language and Literacy Connections
PIs: Lisa Knoche, Helen Raikes

Training School Psychologists in Response-to-Intervention Implementation and Systems Change
PIs: Merilee McCurdy, Edward Daly III, Tanya Ihlo, Gina Kunz

U.S. Department of Transportation

Transportation Curriculum Development Using Technology Application and Student Experiences in STEM
PIs: Tony Glenn, Laurence Rilett, Gina Kunz, Gwen Nugent

STATE AWARDS (\$1,959,728)

Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education

Coaching Science Inquiry Professional Development

PIs: Sue Ellen DeChenne, Gina Kunz, Gwen Nugent, Jon Pedersen, Laurence Rilett

Distance Delivery of UNL's Comprehensive and High Quality Professional Development Math and Science Summer Technology Institute

PIs: Laurence Rilett, Gina Kunz, Gwen Nugent

Educational Service Unit #16

Technology Enhanced Spanish Program

PI: Lisa Knoche

Lincoln Public Schools

ExCITE Training

PIs: Lisa Knoche, Brandy Clarke

LPS Building Bridges

PIs: Michael Scheel, Gina Kunz

Nebraska Department of Education

Early Childhood Training Center

PI: Lisa Knoche

Nebraska Early Development Network Professional Upgrade

PI: Christine Marvin

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

PIs: Todd Glover, Tanya Ihlo

FOUNDATION / OTHER AWARDS (\$483,927)

Approaches to Teaching Young Children Science Concepts/Vocabulary and Scientific Problem-Solving Skills

Funding Source: UNL Office of Research and Economic Development
PI: Soo-Young Hong

ArtsReach and Partners in Education Program Evaluation II

Funding Sources: Dana Foundation, Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, LIED Center, Nebraska Arts Council, Nebraskans for the Arts Program
PI: Nancy Engen-Wedin
Evaluation Consultant: Gina Kunz

Building Bridges Through Relationships: A High School Dropout Prevention Program

Funding Source: Woods Charitable Fund
PIs: Michael Scheel, Gina Kunz

Developing a Comprehensive Model of School Readiness: Methodological Issues and Solutions

Funding Source: UNL Office of Research and Economic Development
PI: Greg Welch

Early Childhood Course Conversion

Funding Source: Buffett Foundation
PI: Carolyn Pope Edwards

Fresh Air and Sunshine: The Science Underpinning the Benefits of Nature for Children's Development

Funding Source: UNL Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources
PI: Julia Torquati

Investigation of Typically Developing Preschoolers' Attitudes toward Peers with Disabilities in Two Different Social-Cultural Contexts

Funding Source: UNL College of Education and Human Sciences
PI: Soo-Young Hong

Phase II: Coaching Support Evaluation

Funding Source: Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
PI: Lisa Knoche

Preparing Teachers to Train Parents in the Use of Evidence-based Tutoring Strategies

Funding Source: Wing Institute
PIs: Sara Kupzyk, Edward Daly III

Research Agenda on Family-School Partnerships: An Interdisciplinary Examination of the State of the Science and Critical Needs

Funding Source: American Educational Research Association
PIs: Susan Sheridan, Gwen Nugent, Gina Kunz, James Bovaird

Sherwood Foundation Project

Funding Source: Sherwood Foundation
PI: Todd Glover

Studies on Closing the Achievement Gap: Developing Methodologies and Conducting Exploratory Analyses Using the Nebraska Student Staff Record System Data (NSSRS)

Funding Source: UNL Agricultural Research Division
PIs: Helen Raikes, Greg Welch, Lisa St. Clair

The Efficacy of Conjoint Behavioral Consultation as a Collaborative Approach to the Treatment of Childhood Obesity

Funding Source: Society for Research in Childhood Development
PI: Carrie Blevins Semke

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