



ncfi ANNUAL
National Center for
Families Learning REPORT





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Mission and Vision

The National Center for Families Learning is a nonprofit organization that supports family success and well-being through education. We believe education is a shared responsibility and collaboration among families, schools, and community members that leads to powerful learning experiences. NCFL has worked for over 30 years partnering with educators, literacy advocates, and other community stakeholders to support multigenerational learning. When parenting adults and children are engaged in learning together, the whole family benefits, contributing to a thriving, equitable community.

Mission: NCFL works to eradicate poverty through education solutions for families.

Vision: By 2030, aligned and coordinated family learning systems are established in 60 communities, built with and for families, to increase education and economic outcomes, creating more equitable communities.

Pillars of our 2021-24 strategic plan

An Inclusive and Diverse Organization



Since its inception, NCFL has prioritized equity in its work by developing and scaling family-focused educational strategies that match intensity and duration with level of need. Looking ahead, we want to embed Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) principles into every aspect of our work, internally and externally, with concrete measurement tools.

Innovative and Inclusive Education Programming



NCFL envisions continuing its powerful legacy of scaling multi-generational programming and aspires to become a national leader in both program co-design and virtual learning.

Strategic, Diverse Revenue Streams



As NCFL looks to the future, we seek to continually diversify our revenue streams to ensure success and sustainability among community partners adopting our multi-generational approaches.

Strategic Policy & Advocacy



NCFL has a rich history of strong advocacy on behalf of low-income children and families, and we will continue those efforts. We seek to remain a leader in advocacy for family learning federal legislation and serve as a national model for programming to ensure embedding of family-friendly policies throughout our government systems.

Transparent and Efficient Systems



We envision a future where NCFL enhances its internal infrastructure and operations to improve upon our processes, workflow, and employee satisfaction.

Board Chair's Letter



Friends and family of NCFL,

It has been my honor to serve as the Board Chair for the National Center for Families Learning for 8 years and as a director for over 12 years. The past few years have been challenging and fulfilling as I have teamed with an incredibly talented and dedicated board in governing and supporting the organization through monumental societal events and organization-specific evolutions. It feels important to highlight the context of the last 24 months to accurately depict where we are today and portray the bright future ahead.

In 2020, we entered an unprecedented era with COVID-19 having a dramatic impact on the organization's work and the education field overall. While the circumstances were not welcome, we were pleased that NCFL's body of work could play a pivotal role in supporting families, schools, and communities in navigating the complex challenges with which we were presented related to educating our nation's youth. Family engagement in education and supporting the learning and career goals of all family members have been the cornerstone of NCFL's deep breadth of work since 1989. We were heartened that our strategies and services provided stability and impact during an incredibly difficult time.

Also in 2020, we began the important work of examining the organization's focus on, and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). While we had long been an organization focused on providing equitable opportunities for families furthest from opportunity, we had significant gaps in our knowledge and shortcomings in our programming that needed to be rectified. Since then, NCFL has dedicated financial resources to substantive staff training, created an Equity & Action Workgroup, overhauled its recruiting and hiring practices with a focus on mitigating bias and increasing diversity of its team, dedicated a position to focus on DEI, and established partnerships with external organizations to bolster its DEI knowledge and strategy. I am proud of how far we've come and acknowledge that we will forever be on a learning pathway to ensure our commitment to DEI is woven into the fabric of all we do.

In 2021, the board began to execute a succession plan with the retiring of Founder Sharon Darling. We started by paying homage to Sharon's remarkable career and dedication to the field of education. As a board, we came together to form the Sharon Darling Innovation Fund so that future generations benefit from her ever-present educational foresight and visionary leadership. Next, we tackled the vitally important task of hiring the ideal successor. The board felt immense pressure to find the exact right person capable of both building on Sharon's impressive legacy and forging the next chapter of NCFL. In reflecting on the first full year after Dr. Smith was named as the new president, I can say with elation and certainty that we got it right. NCFL is set up for continued impact, new growth, and pursuing a bold vision for its future.

All these events happened in close proximity to one another and yet the core work of NCFL remained intact. In 2022, we had considerable progress and growth including launching a new Colorado Statewide Family Engagement Center, forming an all-star Research Advisory Council to guide our thinking around evaluation of our programs, and establishing a clear and aspirational vision to guide the next decade of NCFL's impact. NCFL's Board of Directors is proud to play a small part in catalyzing educational innovation and impact by leading the organization through the challenging times and celebrating the successes of this amazing organization.

Please join us as we forge new paths built on a strong foundation.

Sincerely,

Richard E. Barr
Board Chair

President's Letter



Greetings to our community of families, practitioners, and supporters. This year has been a pivotal year of transformation for our organization, brought about not only because NCFL experienced a transition in leadership in the fall of 2021, but as a response to what we've learned from families and communities throughout the country.

Over the last few years, the pandemic heightened awareness of the severe inequalities in education. We have a stark view of the work needed to radically transform the learning experiences of adults and children in order to achieve truly equitable systems for academic and economic prosperity. This period of time has highlighted the need to extend and adapt where and when learning happens, including through lifelong learning opportunities and through community networks. And it has placed immense significance on the design of school-home-community partnerships.

NCFL staff and I have traveled to several communities and met with many community members, families, and partners. In these conversations, we learned that parenting adults and families desire comprehensive systems of support for learning and engagement, and for organizations to work more collaboratively in service to families. Too often, programs and services are fragmented, piecemeal, and inaccessible or irrelevant to families furthest from opportunity. The challenge is too big for one group or organization to tackle. Schools, community partners, and traditional stakeholders must work together in concert with parenting adults who have expertise and assets to contribute in creating solutions to challenges and barriers they are experiencing.

These conversations led us to our vision of establishing coordinated and aligned family learning systems in 60 communities by 2030, built with and for families, to increase education and economic outcomes and create more equitable communities.

Setting this bold vision requires us to hone and sharpen our scope of work, build our staff capacity, as well as secure partnerships that support NCFL's mission of driving equitable communities.

In 2022, we established a new way of working with our longtime partner, Toyota, through their Driving Possibilities initiative that is geared towards aligning and coordinating systems of equity. We've joined the Adult Literacy and Learning Impact Network (ALL IN), a national group of literacy-focused organizations which is leading efforts in implementing the National Action Plan for Adult Literacy together to elevate adult literacy and learning. And we're being thoughtful about curating partners to help us learn and lead by establishing the Family Learning Community Collaborative (FLCC). Seven inaugural collaborative members are committed to bringing resources and assets to the 60 communities that advance education attainment and economic prosperity.

Not only have we established or strengthened strategic partnerships, but our staff has engaged in deep, reflective work to lay the groundwork needed to fulfill our mission and vision.

To set ourselves up for success in scaling our work into 60 communities over the next decade, we re-organized our staffing structure to place greater emphasis on how the organization's collective efforts are in service of communities. With our new matrix design, our work is becoming more integrated, streamlined, and aligned. The progress we've made has helped NCFL tap all expertise internally. To continue to broaden our expertise, skills, and capacities, we've welcomed many new NCFL colleagues into our work.



In 2022, NCFL added 17 new positions to our organization and welcomed seven new staff to our team.

To increase NCFL's capacity and growth opportunities, members of our team have joined learning communities such as the Equity Lab's Nexus Fellowship and the Carnegie Corporation's Community of Practice, a national network of family engagement organizations. Participating in these networks allows NCFL team members the opportunity to engage in professional learning opportunities while also bringing this knowledge back into the organization to develop shared knowledge, language, and understanding about current theories and practices in the field.

All of this work, internally and externally, is an investment in service to families and communities that will compound each year. In order to redesign learning experiences within communities, we believe it is critical to create the conditions to address opportunities from a more systemic lens.

I am very committed to expanding NCFL's footprint by building on our legacy work and charting our course for the future. We remain focused on spreading and scaling solutions with and alongside families, ensuring that they have multiple entry points for accessing transformative opportunities.

NCFL's mission to eradicate poverty through education solutions with and for families is more important today than ever before. I hope you can sense my excitement and plan to join us on this endeavor!

Sincerely,

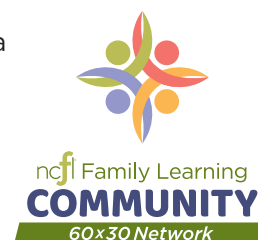
Dr. Felicia Cumings Smith

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Felicia C. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

President

A Vision for Equitable Communities

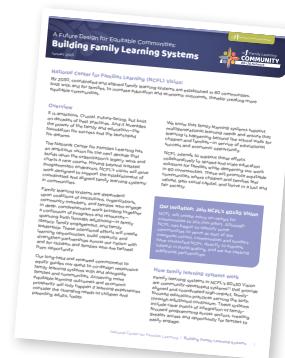
In late 2021, NCFL welcomed a significant leadership transition with Dr. Felicia Cumings Smith being identified as Founder Sharon Darling's successor. We spent most of 2022, Dr. Smith's first full year as president, planning for the organization's next chapter. As a result, NCFL developed a bold new "60x30" vision to establish coordinated and aligned family learning systems in 60 communities by 2030, built with and for families, to increase education and economic outcomes and create more equitable communities.



We are evolving to a more holistic and comprehensive systems approach to our work because we acknowledge the opportunity to better connect siloed services and supports for families. We also observe that current, fragmented systems are not set up to center families, their needs and solutions to challenges they are experiencing. With families, partners, and community stakeholders, our efforts to realize 60x30 will focus on authentically serving and engaging families as co-designers for different and more radically improved outcomes for education and economic goals.

While we will continue to spread and scale high-impact, multigenerational education solutions for families, we'll also create deep engagements in 60 communities. NCFL's work has traditionally impacted the family unit, program by program. Moving forward, we will more intentionally connect families with one another to facilitate their collective learning journey. Our evidence shows that informal family networks have long existed in our family literacy programs. Mothers, who have been participants in our programming, form social bonds and connections throughout their learning experiences which enable them to call upon and rely on one another as a community, enhancing their lived experiences and jointly navigating challenging community issues. Building upon this learning, NCFL will provide deliberate opportunities for networking parenting adults and caregivers within and among 60x30 communities. When individual families unite around shared goals across towns, regions, and the nation we will see increased equity and access to education and economic opportunities. To learn more about how family learning systems advance equity in communities, read NCFL's [Family Learning Systems brief](#).

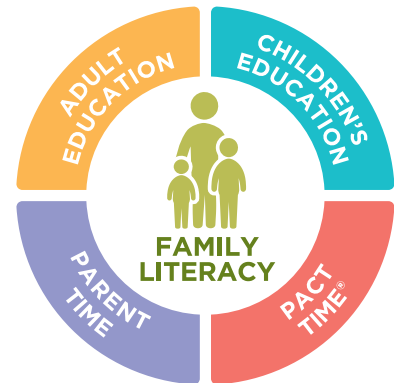
We cannot do this important work alone. Readers ready to embark on this work with NCFL can visit [FamiliesLearning.org/60x30](https://familieslearning.org/60x30) for more information.



[Bit.ly/ncfl-flsbrief](https://bit.ly/ncfl-flsbrief)

Family Literacy Programming

For over 30 years, NCFL has spread and scaled the four-component Family Literacy model that includes children's education, adult education, parent education, and interactive parent-child literacy and learning activities (Parent and Child Together [PACT] Time®). Because of the model's long history and efficacy, Family Literacy is the most foundational piece to building family learning systems. Following are examples of family literacy programming that happened in 2022:



Saints Peter & Paul Family Literacy Program, Omaha, Nebraska

Family Service Learning, a research-based PACT Time® strategy, has been essential to the Saints Peter & Paul Family Literacy Program in Omaha, Nebraska. Many participants who have been in the program for several years now have middle school-aged children. PACT Time® has evolved beyond the classroom and into the community for these families, where they work together through interactive Family Service Learning projects. In 2022 families worked on a service project for a local homeless shelter that supports pregnant women and single mothers. Students completed initial research on the need, identifying the shelter and working with the director to organize and hold a fundraiser to purchase items that mothers and babies needed. They were able to raise enough funds to purchase several items on the mother/baby wish list. This project helped bolster leadership and employability skills among parents and their children, parents were happy to see their children in active leadership roles, and the students were satisfied with their efforts and pleased with the happiness they saw from the beneficiaries.



Virginia Adult Education Family Literacy Program

One way that NCFL works to scale evidence-based strategies is by providing training and professional learning to communities. NCFL provided Foundations in Family Literacy Training and coaching to six Virginia-based programs that work with a variety of families including parents of preschoolers with special needs and middle school English Language Learners. The family literacy program at Waynesboro Public Schools focuses on career exploration and training opportunities for in-demand careers in the Shenandoah Valley area. The program enlists the support of many community partners including higher education institutions and commercial businesses. In the fall of 2022, Blue Ridge Community College brought their truck with three immersive learning simulators (CDL and Heavy Equipment) to class for the families to explore.

Collaborating with community partners is an important way to help ensure families, especially children and adults furthest from opportunity, gain access to opportunities that can set them on new pathways that are sustainable and lead to positive outcomes not only for them, but for their communities as well. This program's innovative method of weaving immersive technologies with learning ensures their participants have access to opportunities like sophisticated training programs and new technologies oftentimes used in the workplace today.



Family and Child Education (FACE) program

The Family and Child Education (FACE) program, the only early childhood program operated by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), is designed to provide culturally and linguistically responsive education, resources, and support for American Indian families with children from birth to grade three. Goals of the program include strengthening family-school-community connections and supporting and celebrating the unique cultural and linguistic diversity of each American Indian community served by the program. NCFL provides technical assistance and training for FACE program staff in service of families.



Over the course of the year, NCFL continued our efforts to broaden and deepen our work with and alongside indigenous communities by stewarding relationships with Daniel Vandever—author of *Fall in Line* and *Holden!* and *Herizon*—and Richelle Montoya—Vice President of Navajo Nation and the first female elected to the executive office of Navajo Nation. The two attended the 2022 Families Learning Conference to share their stories and insights with FACE program staff.

Just before concluding the 117th Congress, lawmakers came together in late December to approve a government funding deal for Fiscal Year 2023 that included landmark increases to programs that support high-impact family engagement and family learning. The FACE program received \$25.3 million, amounting to a \$3.6 million increase. In addition to engaging with our national partners to advocate for this funding increase, NCFL also conducted meetings with lawmakers and submitted feedback on Department of Education initiatives. We worked to showcase our successes and make the case for investments that elevate parent voice within the education system and support high-impact family learning systems.



Kentucky Adult Education virtual reality pilot

For the past few years, NCFL has been in a space of reciprocal teaching and learning for how to apply and utilize virtual reality (VR) for educational purposes. Recognizing that VR has great implications for broadening how and where families learn, we are striving to incorporate VR as a throughline across NCFL programming.

In 2022, NCFL staff completed a 15-week VR pilot in partnership with Kentucky Educational Development Cooperative (KEDC). NCFL met with instructors and students from three counties to explore how VR can be used to provide an educational experience for adult learners.

Together, the group co-designed a math immersive learning lesson with career readiness components for adults working to get their GED®. The project ended with a showcase and accompanying video, narrated by participating staff and learners, which walks participants through the experience set in a space station. NCFL will partner with Kentucky Adult Education to implement three additional pilots across the state in the 2023 fiscal year.



[YouTube.com/watch?v=xQVksCLZLT8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQVksCLZLT8)

“The best part of this project was seeing the students open up, explore, be creative, and gain confidence while building and using relevant life skills and 21st century skills.”
– Participating instructor

“This program has shown me what it is like to be a part of a team like this. In the real world there would be a lot of cooperation involved in building, medical care, and other things...”
– Participating adult learner

Family Engagement Programming

Strong family engagement efforts are designed in partnership with schools, districts, and community-based organizations, and are aimed at building dual capacity of families and educators. At NCFL, family engagement programming includes learning opportunities, events, activities, and strategies that are focused on developing oral language and literacy skills, achieving developmental milestones, and supporting child learning outcomes (P-12). In 2022, NCFL provided family engagement coaching and guidance to community organizations and school districts across the country, including:

Say & Play with Words, Louisville, Kentucky

In August, NCFL celebrated the finale of a multi-year initiative in which we were part of a national cohort of Bloomberg Philanthropies grantees focused on early literacy development. In our signature Say & Play with Words program, parenting adults with children aged birth to three years old learn how to support their children's early literacy development through talk, play, and conversations.



Objectives for Say & Play with Words

- Increase the abilities of families to talk more with their children, engage them in conversation, and target conversation to family routines and events.
- Improve young children's language abilities and, as a result, ensure readiness for kindergarten and reading proficiency in the primary grades.
- Improve parents' self-efficacy, engagement in their children's learning, and social capital.

Facilitators wrapped up the last playgroups in 2022 with ongoing partners (Family Health Centers, South Louisville Community Ministries, and Backside Learning Center) and one with a new community partner, the Southeast Louisville YMCA. Comments from surveyed participants show the multigenerational impact of Say & Play, indicating they see positive effects on not only their children, but on their own learning and parenting.



It is nice to talk to families and remember that I'm not alone in the challenges parenting brings."

- Say & Play with Words participant

For example, families in the Backside Learning Center group noted that they felt Say & Play did well at “teaching mothers how to interact with children” and that they “have learned many things about my child and how to talk to him.” In one of the Family Health Center groups, one parent wrote “It is nice to talk to families and remember that I’m not alone in the challenges parenting brings.” Many participants like these, focused on what they had gained from the program, demonstrating that Say & Play has an impact on them as parenting adults, not just on their children.



I think I’ve done better in creating opportunities for conversational turns. I am more intentional about reading and giving my children the opportunity to participate in reading in a way that works for them.”

– Say & Play with Words participant

Among surveyed participants

92%

of all families said the program met their needs very or extremely well

100%

of Hispanic/Latinx families said it is likely that they would recommend the program to a friend or family member with a young child

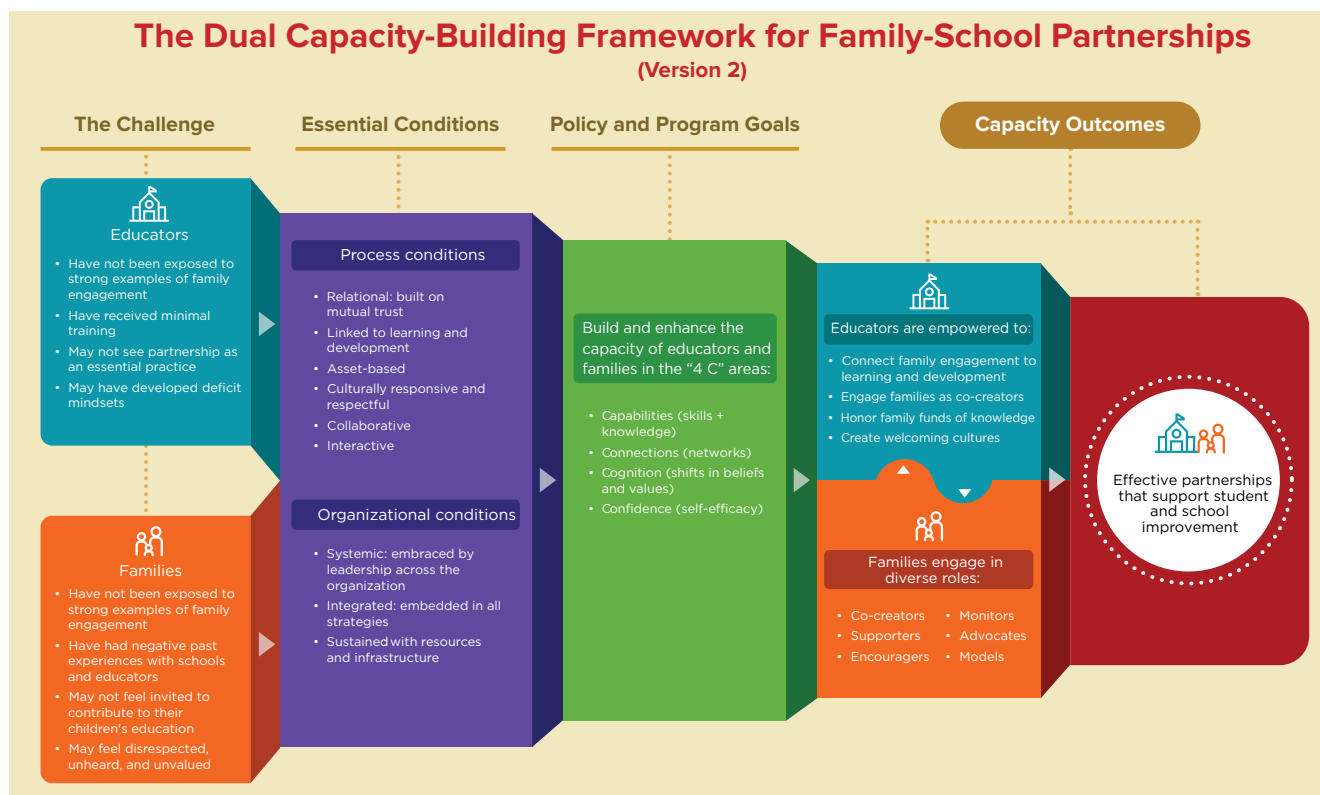
100%

of Black families said they have increased positive talk interactions with their child and spent more time reading with their child.

Akron Public Schools, Akron, Ohio

In 2022, NCFL continued its partnership with Akron Public Schools to build capacity in the district and advance school-level family engagement efforts. Participants in this year-long project engaged in three professional learning sessions. Through these sessions, participants created school-level family engagement teams, self-selected goals focused on family engagement, wrote action plans for implementing improvements, and identified their metrics for measuring success. Additionally, participants joined their peers for three group coaching sessions with NCFL facilitators, where they discussed their progress and challenges while getting supportive feedback.

Based on the participant survey data, the education leaders and families in Akron are developing their capacities to implement the conditions, policy and program goals, and capacity outcomes necessary for having a strong plan of support for family-school partnerships. This work has been guided and informed by Dr. Karen Mapp's Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships.



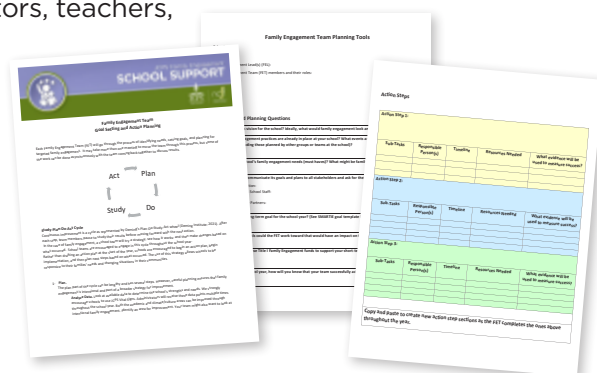
Mapp, K. L. & Bergman, E. (2021, June). Embracing a new normal: Toward a more liberatory approach to family engagement. Carnegie Corporation. <https://www.carnegie.org/our-work/article/how-schools-can-practice-family-engagement-dismantle-longstanding-educational-inequities>

Of surveyed participants, 88.9% indicated the sessions were highly effective. When asked if their understanding of family engagement has changed or grown, survey respondents remarked:

- "My understanding of family engagement has grown to think beyond our school walls."
- "I now have a greater understanding of why [family engagement] is important for all stakeholders, not just the family."
- "Understanding family engagement has helped me be more strategic in how I interact and network with community and families."

Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS), Louisville, Kentucky

NCFL continued its multi-year partnership with JCPS to bolster the district's capacity to support school administrators, teachers, support staff, families, students, and communities as they work to increase meaningful family-school partnerships. Through professional development and other services with varying levels of intensity and duration, NCFL provided strategies that support intergenerational learning and building agency including increasing intentionality of work across district-level departments; providing opportunities for families to develop a deeper understanding of district and school policies, procedures, and practices; and dual capacity-building professional development for school staff across the district and in targeted schools.



As part of our professional learning services, NCFL guides participants through goal setting and action planning.



Working with our community partners, which include NCFL, we have developed a toolbox of strategies to better engage all of our families. As a school that primarily serves minority families, it is critical that we develop the capacity of our school staff and families in order to engage as partners that advocate and support the academic and social-emotional well-being of all our students. Family engagement is not something that Grace James staff does to families, but something that we are developing and co-creating as a team in order to work together to ensure the mission and vision is attainable for all children."

- La'Tonya C. Frazier-Goatley, Assistant Principal,
Grace James Academy of Excellence, Jefferson County Public Schools



NCFL helped take our family engagement to a whole new level. As a result of our work with NCFL, we developed a family engagement committee with parents who met monthly to give feedback and insight. Our work with our district's family engagement specialist and NCFL helped us transition from doing school to families to doing school with families by engaging their voice on the front end of planning."

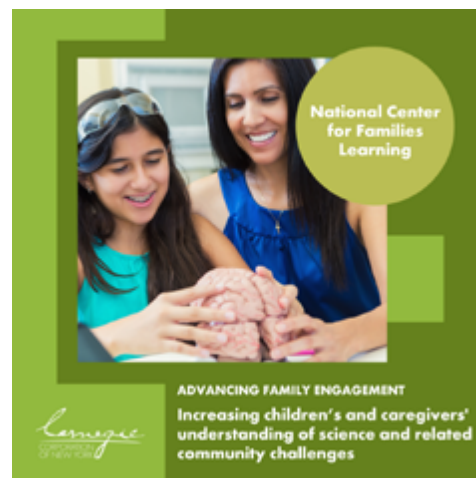
- Jill Handley, Principal,
Kenwood Elementary School,
Jefferson County Public Schools



[Bit.ly/ncfl22-fameng](https://bit.ly/ncfl22-fameng)

Carnegie Family Science

In March 2022, the Carnegie Corporation of New York selected NCFL to receive a Family Engagement to Improve Student Learning grant. NCFL's project is designed to support science education and address family engagement learning opportunities with middle grade students at Title I schools. The project is focused on new ways to enhance science education in connection with how science intersects with our daily lives. It is important for families to engage in science learning to understand the role they play in decision-making and problem-solving within the disciplines of science that impact their lives and future generations. In addition, educators and parenting adults can influence the choices that their children make about education and future career opportunities.



Some of the most powerful family engagement efforts, in partnership with educators and families, tie learning opportunities directly to the curriculum used within the school context. This creates deeper learning opportunities to help students and families learn together as partners. NCFL has made PACT Time fundamental in all of its programming. This multigenerational approach is our north star for transformative impact with children, families, and communities. Hence, this opportunity is spurring innovation through the application of virtual reality and the OpenSciEd curriculum implemented across the district. The project will culminate in a recognition event to showcase the families' work in partnership with NCFL.



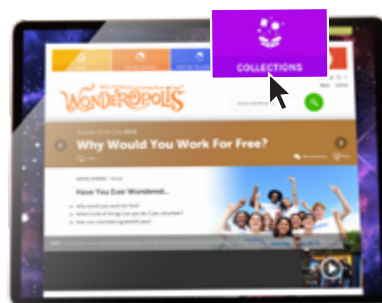
JCPS is excited to be partnering with NCFL to extend classroom experiences into the home, collaborating with families to enhance deeper learning in science education. This work will build on our existing partnership with NCFL ensuring families are central to advancing learning outcomes. All of us continue to be impacted by science-related challenges in our community, and students and families working together with educators will increase our collective learning and outcomes."

– Michelle L. Dillard, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning,
Jefferson County Public Schools

Wonderopolis®

Wonderopolis, NCFL's digital property that has welcomed more than 70 million visitors over the past decade, fosters natural curiosity and imagination through exploration and discovery for learners of all ages. New for 2022, Wonderopolis' Collections serve as a great solution to guided research on a topic and can help families and learners answer a multitude of curious questions using safe content from one launching point. To date, we've published Wonder Collections for Black History Month, Earth Day, and Hispanic Heritage Month, as well as in partnership with the USC Shoah Foundation. Each collection covers a variety of content areas to satisfy any curious learner.

WONDEROPOLIS®



[Wonderopolis.org/
pages/Collections](https://Wonderopolis.org/pages/Collections)

NCFL and USC Shoah Foundation partnered to develop resources that engage children and their families in literacy strategies while building empathy, resilience, and understanding for diverse perspectives and voices. The resources include facilitation guides for a workshop series grounded in the powerful Children of Willesden Lane story as well as several Wonders of the Day® on Wonderopolis.org. The workshop series was piloted at a Kentucky library in the spring of 2022. The goal for this work moving forward will be to enhance family engagement in this unique learning experience and apply some lessons learned we gained through the initial pilot. Our efforts in continuous improvement will guide our next interaction of this program for supporting families and communities nationwide.

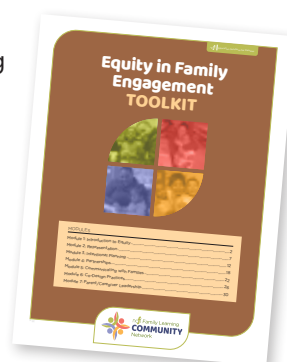


Bit.ly/ncfl22-shoah

Throughout the workshop series, family members strengthened relationships with each other through the sharing of stories, music, and texts that sparked meaningful conversations and personal connections.

Equity in Family Engagement Toolkit

Based on a Parent University collaboration with Kentucky-based Academy of Music Production Education and Development (AMPED) and the local school district, NCFL, parent participants, and stakeholders developed an Equity in Family Engagement Toolkit to support educators as they engage with families toward student learning and achievement. Through seven modules, participants learn the value of co-designing and the importance of integrating family voice to provide diverse and equitable educational environments. To extend the learning, the toolkit is divided into different portals in a virtual environment. Parent participants provided critical input, as co-designers, on elements to include in the modules and then learned skills necessary to create the elements in virtual space, elevating learning experiences within the toolkit. This toolkit was partially funded by resources made available through the Kentucky Collaborative for Families and Schools.



Bit.ly/ncfl-equitytoolkit



Participants utilized virtual reality to enhance the toolkit's learning modules.

Family Leadership Programming

NCFL sees assets in every parent and caregiver and strengths in every family. We know that challenges within communities are best solved by those who are closest to and experiencing those issues. Therefore, when traditional stakeholders in a community such as leaders in schools, government, and nonprofits are working to address challenges, families must have a seat at the table and possess shared power in decision making. Family leadership programs at NCFL are strategies and services that improve and enhance the leadership skills of parenting adults and are designed to support families in becoming better engaged advocates for themselves, their children, their families, and communities by making powerful, impactful changes on education issues alongside the systems that serve them. The programs are both local and national in scope.

NATIONAL MODEL: Activate! National Early Childhood Advocacy Network

In 2022, NCFL announced a three-year national initiative that brings together parents of young children and early childhood practitioners to develop inclusive and equitable early childhood programs in communities across the country. The Activate! National Early Childhood Advocacy Network is funded by W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the PNC Foundation in support of its early childhood education initiative, PNC Grow Up Great®. Each year the initiative brings together a cohort of pairs of parenting adults and early childhood practitioners who are connected to the same early childhood program. Thirty-seven participants from seven states made up the first cohort of Activate! National.



The first cohort of Activate! National focused on three issues, universal access to education, ITIN (undocumented parents and families), and mental and physical health.

Activate! National creates inclusive spaces that encourage authentic connections to be made between parenting adults and practitioners. NCFL incorporates equity design principles to foster safe spaces where cohort participants can engage in conversations about race, equity, and systemic disparities. The program builds upon the lived experiences of its participants to provide an increased understanding of research, policy changes, and proposals. The program also explores the impact of media and the influence of current and past messaging regarding the societal and cultural narratives that misrepresent the voices of the families and children.



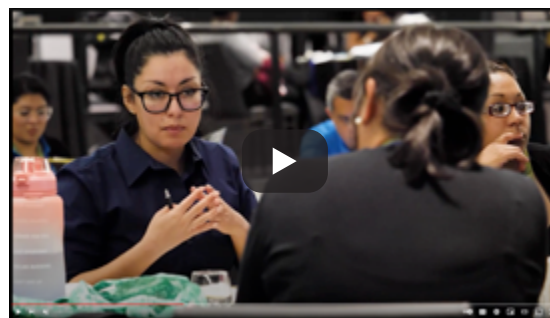
Activate National has a knack of ensuring that all parents, practitioners, and participants feel equal in [the] relationship. It cuts back intimidation and makes me feel safe to speak, to be heard and acknowledged.”

- First Cohort participant Diamond Miles

The second cohort began in November 2022 with 24 participants divided into pairs of early childhood practitioners and parenting adults. Participants represent communities in Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, New York, Tennessee, and Washington DC. The cohort has challenged themselves to assess educational constructs, develop learning materials, and learn how to advocate for equity issues that affect young children, especially those of color. Using a co-design process, participants have chosen five issues to focus on as they participate in the 9-month program: barriers to fair wages for early childhood educators and families, access to high-quality education, funding for education in low-income neighborhoods, juvenile injustice within communities of BIPOC children versus white peers, and access to mental health resources for children. Through professional development sessions and group work assignments, they'll dig deeper into the different aspects, factors and structures that influence early childhood education.



The second cohort of Activate! National launched in November 2022.



[YouTube.com/watch?v=81J8x1SMsIE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81J8x1SMsIE)

Shifting deeply held beliefs and biased, harmful societal narratives is a significant undertaking. When done successfully, it has the power to alter systems for families who have been furthest from opportunity. NCFL believes through education, learning, and experiences designed with and for families, it is possible to lift up the counter narratives to traditional deficit views of parents living in poverty.



I have been working in early childhood education for 24 years. This is the first time I've had the opportunity to connect on a national level with people from other states and places. We're all in this together, working toward common goals. It is powerful to have this platform.

- Participating practitioner



[Bit.ly/ncfl22-famlead](https://bit.ly/ncfl22-famlead)

LOCAL MODELS: Activate! Families Transforming Communities, Tarrant County, Texas

During the 2021-2022 Activate! Tarrant County cohort, 16 participants researched and investigated equity issues in their local community. Participants worked independently and in groups on the following seven issues: pedestrian safety surrounding the school campus, providing resources and information for families with children who have special educational needs, academic support for all students, providing a safe playground at their child's school, providing social-emotional support to children after elementary school, extending hours at their children's school, and equitable access to translation and interpretation services at their child's local school.

As an example, parenting adults who chose to improve challenges regarding pedestrian safety for their school had been concerned for the safety of their children walking to and from school due to the lack of traffic signals and accountability for incautious drivers. The group worked to develop a model process of making the school's surrounding area safer for pedestrians, with the intention of applying the model to other schools in their district. As a result of their project, the group was connected to leaders in their local district who are working to create safer streets. The group plans to continue partnering with the district for shared accountability and to elevate their voices to ensure ongoing safety for their children and others. This type of partnership allows parents to exercise their leadership skills and agency in creating safer places for learning.



A group of participants of Activate! Local presented their model for making it safer for pedestrians to walk to school.

Arizona Statewide Parent Leadership Council, Arizona

The Arizona Statewide Parent Leadership Council is composed of two parents from each of 12 Family Literacy sites across the state as well as parenting adults who are participating in early language and literacy programming. The goal of the Council is to help parents gain a sense of self-efficacy in their ability to influence decisions that affect their children.

This year was an exciting year for the Parent Leadership Council. Several parents participated in implementation of Parent Nation's Parent Village, a curriculum for parents to come together and push for positive change. NCFL has a strong partnership with the developers of Parent Nation, the TMW Center for Early Learning + Public Health and Dr. Dana Suskind, to advance a common agenda for creating new spaces for parents to engage deeply in transforming their communities.

The Parent Nation Parent Village curriculum is designed to support parents in being their children's primary brain architect, first teacher, and lifetime advocate and coach. Through fun and engaging discussions and activities, the curriculum helps foster community, forge collective



Members of Arizona's Statewide Parent Leadership Council participated in Parent Nation's Parent Village.

identity, and inspire parents to fight for change. Parents who participated in Parent Village not only felt heard but also empowered to share what they learned with other parents and create Parent Villages in their local communities.

Among surveyed participants

70%

of participating parenting adults feel medium to high confidence in making school choices for their children

88%

of participating parenting adults report that their child's school is safe and helpful.

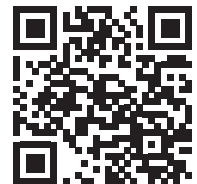
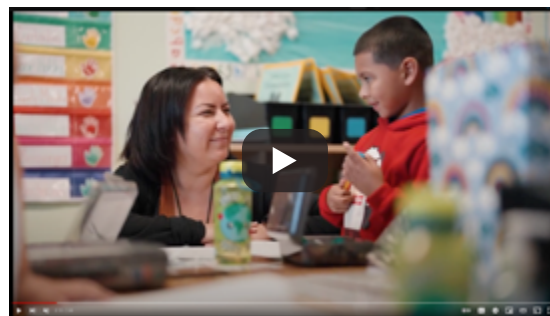
Building Networks for Community Impact

Collaboration in communities is key to transforming learning and educational opportunities, and for building coordinated and aligned systems of support for families. NCFL is committed to elevating what we learn from networking parenting adults and families with practitioners to inform a national conversation around family learning, and successfully scale and spread multigenerational learning to more communities across the country.



Arizona Communities - Arizona Statewide Family Engagement Center (SFEC)

Now entering its fifth year, the Arizona SFEC demonstrates how NCFL effectively partners with school districts and state and local organizations to develop larger systems of family engagement, family literacy, and family leadership that support equitable and thriving communities. Arizona SFEC is providing families in school districts across the state with opportunities to develop the skills and confidence to reach their goals and support their children's academic and social-emotional growth. Key initiatives that comprise the Arizona SFEC include early childhood language and literacy programming such as Raising a Reader (birth-preschool) carried out by Southwest Human Development, Arizona PBS, and Make Way for Books; NCFL's Family Literacy model carried out in Title I schools (K-6); emerging reader book distribution to families to build home libraries provided by Unite for Literacy; and NCFL's parent leadership programming that is offered to parent participants in family literacy programs. One particular success to note is that the Cartwright School District in Phoenix has expanded Family Literacy across the district by training Parent Liaisons to be responsible for implementing the Family Literacy programming in 12 new sites, which has the potential to impact 100 more families as the district moves forward.

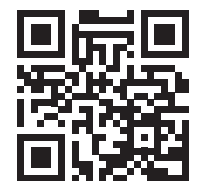


[YouTube.com/watch?v=PBfYmC9LFrA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBfYmC9LFrA)



The success of the model here is based on the fact that it's not just one entity, it is a group of organizations that see the vision of truly supporting children and a community at the same time."

- Dr. Betsy Hargrove, Superintendent,
Avondale Elementary School District



[Bit.ly/ncfl22-azsfec](https://bit.ly/ncfl22-azsfec)

Impact of AZ SFEC



32,000

books distributed to families across the state



12,500

hours of Adult Education offered to participating adults

94%

daily attendance rate of participating adults

66%

of participating adults read with their child 3 or more times a day

85%

of participating adults have achieved their goal of learning English

Number of Family Literacy Programs

13

Number of Participants Completing Program

154

65%

of participating adults made progress toward getting a better job

80%

of participating adults upgraded their skills to keep their current job

77%

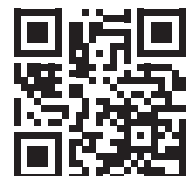
of participating adults report that they enhanced their capacity to work with their child's school and other service providers to meet the academic and developmental needs of their children.



Creation of the Family Engagement Center Portal which provides tools and resources to increase the capacity of all community stakeholders.

Colorado Communities - Colorado Statewide Family Engagement Center

Our work coordinating statewide collaboration of student and family learning systems continues. The U.S. Department of Education announced in the fall of 2022 that NCFL has been selected to create and lead the Colorado Statewide Family Engagement Center (CO SFEC). In partnership with Colorado Education Initiative, the Colorado Department of Education, the Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition, and the Black Parent Network, the CO SFEC will build the capacity of families, schools, and communities to address learning recovery and related impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as implement practices and systems to improve student development and family well-being.



[Bit.ly/ncfl22-cosfec](https://bit.ly/ncfl22-cosfec)

Native American Communities - Family and Child Education (FACE) Technical Assistance

The FACE teams, representing 46 Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools and tribal communities from around the country, came together in 2022 to learn, share ideas, and celebrate the learning impact for children and families in the FACE program. The FACE Technical Assistance Regional Days (Regionals) create a space for leaders to engage in professional development on topics relevant to their programs as well as networking opportunities. Regionals were facilitated by the FACE partners, the BIE, Parents as Teachers National Center (PATNC), the program's evaluator, and NCFL. The FACE teams devoted time for planning and designing learning experiences to enhance student and adult outcomes. A large part of the professional learning experience focuses on continuous improvement and leadership development.



Staff representing 46 FACE teams gathered in fall 2022 for professional development



Guest experts this year included Bill Mehojah—the now-retired director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs when the FACE program began, and founder of the First One Hundred Institute—and Dmitriy Neezzhoni—an education specialist in native language, culture, and history from the BIE.

Also this year, NCFL piloted a center-based FACE committee, consisting of 12 practitioners from 12 FACE sites, with the dual purpose of strengthening partnerships across programs and gathering input on center-based processes and professional development from practitioners. Throughout 2022, the committee met regularly to explore

innovative strategies to reach and engage families who can most benefit from participating in FACE, and their findings were shared with FACE staff across all 52 sites through monthly newsletters. The pilot was a valuable experience to committee members and their programs, and the committee will continue in 2023 with increased membership of 14 practitioners.

Kentucky Communities

Kentucky Statewide Family Engagement Center

NCFL serves as a partner in the Kentucky Collaborative for Families and Schools, Kentucky's Statewide Family Engagement Center. As a partner member of the SFEC, NCFL collaborates in the development of tools and resources that support schools in improving their family engagement practices. NCFL also coaches KY SFEC pilot schools in Jefferson County and Washington County. Six of the nine KY SFEC pilot schools coached by NCFL have received Family Friendly certification since the start of the process last school year. We anticipate that at least two additional schools will apply for certification this year. NCFL had the pleasure of working with the first Family Friendly Certified school (Kenwood Elementary in JCPS) as well as the first fully certified school district (Washington County). Through these coaching partnerships, NCFL has co-designed resources such as the Equity Toolkit that can be used by other family engagement teams throughout the country.

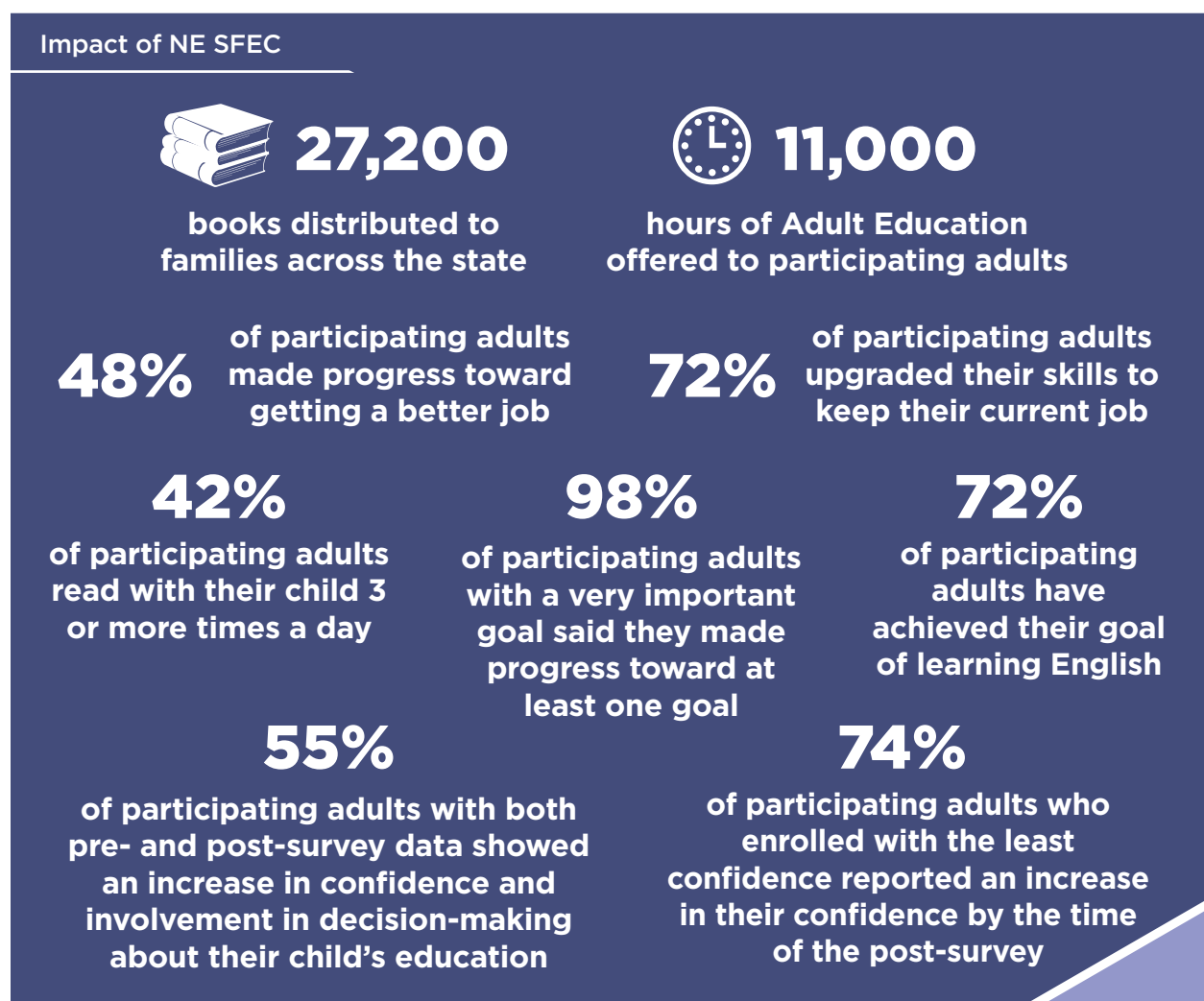
Kentucky Driving Possibilities Community Efforts

Emerging work, generously supported by Toyota USA Foundation, has launched in two Kentucky communities aimed at enhancing career readiness and community engagement. The vision for this multi-year, multi-state effort is to unite community stakeholders, educators, students, and families to determine short- and long-term opportunities for improving and diversifying the STEM talent pipeline while simultaneously removing barriers that hinder students and families from fully participating in academic and community resources.

NCFL serves as the facilitator, leading a collaborative community model in the Georgetown and Lexington communities. Importantly, NCFL is modeling co-design strategies and principles that work to mitigate bias and exclusionary practices. Through a series of participatory interviews, focus groups, and convenings, the community Driving Possibilities teams are identifying areas for growth, prioritizing next steps, and implementing solutions at the local level to prepare youth and families for the future of work. Toyota is committed to supporting communities in which it operates through the Driving Possibilities initiative. As a key national education partner, NCFL looks forward to supporting many more communities through this intentional and important work.

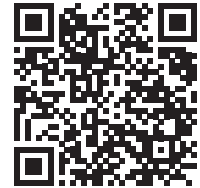
Nebraska Communities - Nebraska Statewide Family Engagement Center

The strong partnerships of the Nebraska Statewide Family Engagement Center (NE SFEC) are resulting in positive impacts on Nebraska families. Since 2018, NCFL has led the NE SFEC with partners Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, Nebraska Department of Education, Unite for Literacy, and the U.S. Department of Education. Each year the partners have worked to develop and grow a statewide network of Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) and have trained school district staff to implement high-impact family literacy programming for multilingual families. Reaching 14 school districts across the state in urban, suburban, and rural communities in 2022, this model for collaboration is shifting the narrative around children and families, particularly those living in poverty, from passively interacting with school, to developing greater agency and leadership to be equal partners in education. Surveys of participating families indicate that the programming is helping parenting adults to build confidence in themselves and gain knowledge in how children learn and how to interact with their children for language and literacy skill development.



Research Advisory Council

This year, NCFL launched its Research Advisory Council (RAC), a group of 12 experts from across the U.S. supporting NCFL's research and evaluation efforts that are crucial to spreading and scaling effective practices and programs rooted in the needs of children and families. This group of researchers will serve to advance a comprehensive agenda of family literacy, family engagement, and family leadership, as well as adult learning and emerging topics of interest for the field, that can inform essential policies to support the well-being of families nationwide.



[FamiliesLearning.org/
research_council](https://FamiliesLearning.org/research_council)



Dr. Lisa Gennetian
Duke University



Dr. Iheoma U. Iruka
University of North Carolina, Frank Porter
Graham Child Development Institute and
Equity Research Action Coalition



Dr. Kimberly Kelly
Michigan State University



Dr. Emily Markovich Morris
The Brookings Institution and Center for
Universal Education



Dr. Kristen H. Perry
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Dr. Shanette Porter
Director of Research and Senior Fellow
at Student Experience Research Network



Dr. Esther Prins
Pennsylvania State University,
Goodling Institute for Research in
Family Literacy and Institute for
Study of Adult Literacy



Dr. Beth Redbird
Northwestern University



Dr. John Sabbatini
University of Memphis



Dr. Steven Sheldon
Johns Hopkins University and
Center for School, Family, and
Community Partnerships



Dr. Ivory A. Toldson
Howard University and NAACP



Dr. Blaire Toso
WestEd



NCFL's Board of Directors is committed to supporting and learning from our newly formed Research Advisory Council. Drawing on the expertise of this council's members will ensure NCFL stays apprised of cutting edge, cross-disciplinary research that will enhance our development of innovative practices to help children and families transform their communities.

- Dr. Vikki Katz, Professor, Chapman University School
of Communication and NCFL Board member



Bit.ly/ncfl22-rac



Commitments to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

NCFL's work is grounded in equity and prioritizes the voices of children and families. Throughout 2022, we further codified how equity is at the forefront of everything we do and families' voices are always centered.

We are committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) by:

- Creating inclusive spaces which include language justice;
- Communicating with and including all stakeholders who represent a shared space;
- Encouraging family leadership through co-design in current and future partnerships;
- Embedding DEI into our programming evaluation metrics;
- Recruiting and retaining a more diverse staff;
- Focusing on diverse representation at all levels—including our board of directors, staff, organization leadership, programming, and educational materials;
- Deliberately seeking vendors that are owned by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and/or People of Color);
- Establishing a DEI training program for all employees; and
- Creating and publishing an annual DEI report.

Informed by authors and organizations with a focus area in equity, NCFL's Equity & Action Workgroup (EAW) developed a DEI Learning Agenda that serves to ensure that our commitment to DEI is woven into every aspect of our strategic plan and aligned activities. The Learning Agenda seeks to answer these questions:

- How is NCFL ensuring DEI capacity building is effectively leveraged to deliver culturally competent content and programming from planning to implementation?
- What strategies does NCFL use to identify and engage with underrepresented families, demographics, and staff in a collaborative and culturally competent way?
- How does NCFL, internally and externally, continuously identify DEI barriers during planning, implementation, and evaluation to offer solution-centered resources?
- How does NCFL measure success to ensure staffing, partnerships, and programming reflect NCFL's expressed DEI commitments?

The DEI Learning Agenda also includes specific actions NCFL will take to address each question as well as metrics to measure progress, internally and externally.

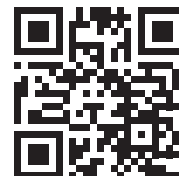
Toyota Family Teachers of the Year

For 26 years, NCFL and Toyota have partnered to recognize educators across the nation who use a strong multi-generational approach to learning and focus on building effective family-school partnerships that support student achievement and school improvement. Through the Toyota Family Teacher of the Year award, NCFL recognizes the positive impact of these teachers by granting the first-place winner \$20,000 and the runner-up \$5,000 toward their family learning programs.

We received an overwhelming response to our call for nominations in 2022, and through the selection process, learned of so many educators around the country doing inspiring work with students and their families. After time spent reviewing nominations, conducting interviews, and deliberating, NCFL and Toyota identified Ivonne Ortiz of Mesa, Arizona as the 2022 Toyota Family Teacher of the Year and Dae Selcer of Columbia Heights, Minnesota as runner-up.



Ivonne Ortiz and students in her family literacy class celebrated her award in October 2022



[Bit.ly/ncfl22-toy](https://bit.ly/ncfl22-toy)

The award announcement was made public during the 2022 Families Learning Conference by Michael Medalla, manager of Toyota USA Foundation + Workforce Readiness.

Ortiz is a family literacy instructor with Mesa Public Schools. She takes great joy in being part of her students' learning journey, helping them celebrate accomplishments along the way and encouraging them to keep going when they encounter setbacks. She doesn't give up easily if a student tells her they can't do it, and will help the student to understand the work takes time, helping them to shift their mindset towards growth.

She sees potential in all families and can envision the generational impact created by the work her students do today. As she puts it, "[With] the seeds I am planting, I know the harvest will be great."

Prior to becoming an educator, Ortiz was an adult student in the district's family literacy program. Drawing on her experience as a student helps Ortiz understand what families might be experiencing and the challenges or barriers they face in succeeding. Her story inspires students to believe that they, too, can achieve their goals.



Runner-up, Dae Selcer, was surprised at a school assembly in October 2022

Dae Selcer, a multilingual learner teacher and program coordinator at Prodeo Elementary Academy, was awarded runner-up for the award. Dae was selected for her commitment to co-designing an accessible and inclusive classroom in partnership with families. She highly prioritizes active listening, always asking her families for input, and building programming that is responsive to their needs rather than just offering a "bag of tricks." She says, "If you come in with an idea of what the community needs, it's a misstep."

Ortiz's school received \$20,000 to implement a family leadership program aimed at fostering authentic partnership among families and schools in her district. As runner-up, Selcer's school received a \$5,000 grant award to support her family engagement efforts.

Three finalists for this award include Renee Dawson (Atlanta, Georgia), Barbara Toure (Washington, DC) and Analía Wells (Greensboro, North Carolina). Since 1997, Toyota Family Teacher of the Year winners, runners-up, and their respective organizations have received \$650,000 and funded 52 innovative teacher-led projects.



[YouTube.com/watch?v=PDhP4Er5ET8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDhP4Er5ET8)

NCFL Ambassador Network

In support of NCFL's 60x30 Vision, the External Affairs team launched a network of ambassadors consisting of exemplary educators working with families in family literacy, family engagement, and family leadership settings to help us heighten awareness of NCFL and amplify our endeavor to identify communities poised to become a 60x30 community.



The inaugural cohort of the Ambassador Network consists of past Toyota Family Teachers of the Year. Throughout 2022, we encouraged them to share and amplify NCFL messages on social media and also provided opportunities for deeper engagement, including participating in the selection process for the 2022 Toyota Family Teacher of the Year and presenting best practices during the 2022 Families Learning Conference.

NCFL Ambassadors shared their strategies for engaging families virtually and in-person at the 2022 Families Learning Conference.

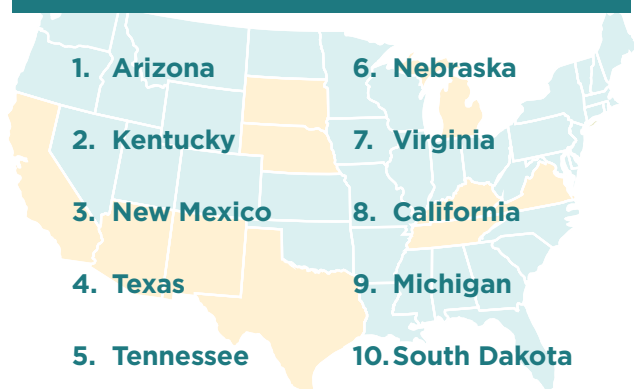
Professional Learning Opportunities

Families Learning Conference

Spanning three months and three different venues, the 2022 Families Learning Conference experienced 20.5% growth in attendance over our 2021 conference. Attendees gathered virtually October 25-26, met in Nashville November 4, and convened in Phoenix December 2. Participants had a vast array of workshops to experience, speakers to learn from, and fellow attendees to network with. Attendees representing 37 states, Washington, DC, Canada, and Wales joined the conference this year.



Top 10 States/Districts Represented



Top 10 attendee work categories:

- Education, K-12
- Community-based organization
- Education, Early childhood
- Education, Adult
- Library
- Education, Administrator
- Parent/family leader
- Business leader
- Education, Post secondary
- Research

61%

of attendees heard about the Families Learning Conference by word of mouth

91%

of virtual attendees said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the variety of sessions offered

94%

of in-person attendees said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the variety of sessions offered

97%

of virtual and in-person attendees said they are considering attending an NCFL Conference in the future



Thank you! You reminded me that I am doing great things with my families."

- 2022 Families Learning Conference attendee



This conference was wonderful! I appreciated the variety of speakers, particularly the examples of projects that are well done."

- 2022 Families Learning Conference attendee

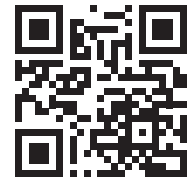


Leila Kubesch, NCFL Ambassador and 2020 Toyota Family Teacher of the Year, shared best practices in forming partnerships with families at the 2022 Families Learning Conference Nashville Regional Meetup.



This was my first time presenting and attending the conference. It was a wonderful experience, and I look forward to becoming more involved with your organization!"

- 2022 Families Learning Conference attendee



[Bit.ly/ncfl22-conference](https://bit.ly/ncfl22-conference)

National Webinar Series

NCFL's national webinar series highlights content from highly reputable experts, NCFL team members, and partners, focusing on best practices around family literacy, engagement, and leadership. Webinars provide learning opportunities and resources for practitioners working with families across the country and increase awareness of novel and innovative practices in the field. Topics explored in 2022 included activating family leadership, community evaluation practices, multi-lingual parent facilitation, family engagement at home and school, and centering family voice. Webinars in 2022 reached over 500 practitioners.



Together with our partners, NCFL presented best practices in high-interest topics through a series of webinars

Financial Reporting

July 1, 2021 — June 30, 2022

Income

Government Grants	\$2,040,222
Training Contracts	\$2,894,611
Contributions, Gifts and Grants	\$3,700,259
Other	\$437,213

Total	\$9,072,305
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Expenses

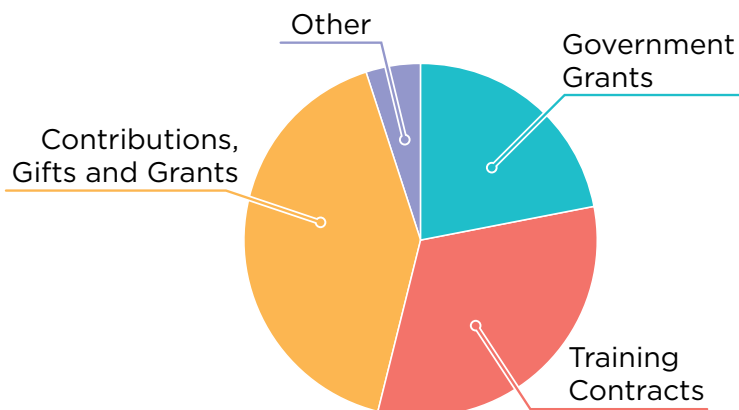
Programs	\$6,501,623
Administration	\$1,325,848
Fundraising	\$488,281

Total	\$8,315,752
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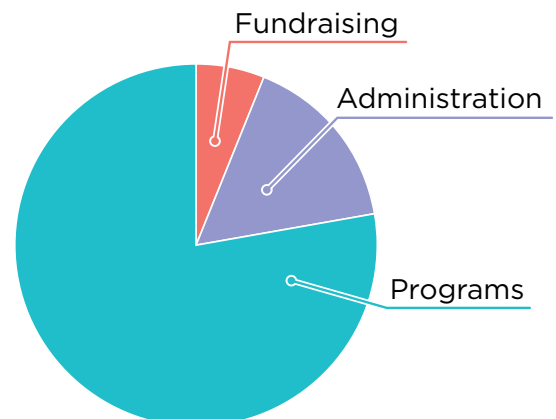
Change in Net Assets	\$756,553
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Net Assets End of Year	\$13,943,180
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Income



Expenses



Supporters



TOYOTA



The William R. Kenan, Jr.
Charitable Trust

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Donors

On behalf of our team and the families we work with at the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL), we thank the following donors:

\$1,000,000 or more

U.S. Department of Education
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Toyota

\$100,000 - \$999,999

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Katherine Tyler
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Lincoln Community
Foundation
Louise Rapp Wall Fund
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Sue Pon
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Vanessa Scott
Dr. Vikki Katz
Wendee Mullikin

\$1 - \$249

Allison Miller
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Amanda Free
Amazon Smile

Board of Directors

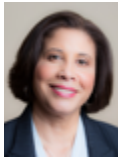
NCFL's board represents a group of national leaders who share their professional expertise across diverse fields to provide organizational governance and guidance. They dedicate their talents, time, and resources to support NCFL in fulfilling its mission. Our team is sincerely grateful for the generosity and energy extended by this incredible group of individuals who help ensure the longevity of our work.



Richard E. Barr
Retired Vice President,
Airline Operations, UPS,
Board Chair



Christopher Lehman
Founding Director,
The Educator Collaborative



Nicole M. Chestang
Vice President, Learning and
Leadership Development
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Sharon Darling
Founder, Retired



Meredith M. Parente
Financial Consultant; Retired Vice
President/Treasurer, Brown-Forman
Corporation



Deenie Espinoza
Former Family Literacy Student
and Operations Manager, Appriss



Holly Walters
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Jay W. Warren
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Counsel, LG&E and KU Energy LLC



Vikki Katz, Ph.D.
Professor
Chapman University School
of Communication



Mary Gwen Wheeler
Consultant
Education Policy Strategist

Sharon Darling Innovation Fund

The Sharon Darling Innovation Fund was established in honor of NCFL's founder and enables NCFL to test new family learning innovations throughout our national network. In 2022, we reached an important milestone by surpassing our goal of raising \$1 million for the fund. Readers interested in contributing to the Sharon Darling Innovation Fund are invited to visit FamiliesLearning.org/Donate.



