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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **National Center for Families Learning celebrates family engagement success in Arizona and Nebraska**

*Impact data from a 5-year study of Statewide Family Engagement Centers in each state demonstrates student and family gains*

**LOUISVILLE, KY (June 25, 2024)** - Recently published results from a five-year study of Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFECs) led by the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) in Arizona and Nebraska demonstrate important family learning gains. Parenting adults who participated in SFEC programming in both states demonstrated increases in their technology skills and their confidence to support their children's education, while also making progress towards other important goals, including earning a GED, improving their English skills, and becoming a better teacher of their child. Additionally, participating Nebraska children demonstrated reading score gains that surpassed matched peers.

Both the Arizona and Nebraska SFECs were established in 2018 thanks to five-year grants from the U.S. Department of Education; work was completed on each grant in late 2023.

NCFL established the Arizona SFEC alongside a consortium of state and local organizations—including Unite for Literacy, Southwest Human Development, PBS Arizona, Make Way for Books, Read on Arizona, and the Arizona Department of Education. During the grant period, NCFL and its partners created school-based family literacy programs in fourteen public schools across six districts; instituted a statewide professional development network for family literacy practitioners and educators; and developed a Parent Leadership Council to incorporate family voice into the education decision-making process.

- Watch the Arizona SFEC [impact video](#)
- Read the [Arizona SFEC impact fact sheet](#)

In Nebraska, NCFL worked alongside Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, Nebraska Department of Education, and Unite for Literacy to serve families across eight of the state's 19 Educational Service Units. Throughout the five-year grant period, NCFL and its partners developed a statewide professional development network to support family-school partnerships; instituted school-based family literacy programs in 14 Local Education Agencies (LEAs) across the state; and created parent leadership

opportunities through representation on the Nebraska SFEC State Advisory Board and other opportunities.

- Watch the Nebraska SFEC [impact video](#)
- Read the [Nebraska SFEC impact fact sheet](#)

The need for robust, cohesive family engagement systems is a longstanding one. In [A New Wave of Evidence](#), Henderson and Mapp note that children whose parents are more engaged with their education are more likely to have higher school attendance, achieve better learning outcomes, demonstrate improved social emotional well-being, and be more adaptable and comfortable in school settings. The Arizona and Nebraska SFECs worked to leverage the power of family engagement in education while centering socially, culturally, and economically diverse families who have been historically underserved. These efforts were grounded in the latest research and applied Mapp's *Dual Capacity-Building Framework* as the gold standard in family engagement practices.

Arizona PBS Senior Director of Education and Community Impact, Kimberly Flack, is pleased with the way the work of the Arizona SFEC helped expand access to early childhood education resources for the state's families. "We have been so appreciative of the opportunity to work alongside NCFL in community," says Flack. "We were already doing early literacy work with families to help children be prepared for kindergarten and to help parents realize how they can assist their child with learning with everyday activities. With NCFL, we were able to equip children and families with numerous resources to help make this learning even more robust."

"The partnership between Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFE), Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), and NCFL exemplifies the power of collaboration in addressing the educational needs of diverse communities and responding to the educational challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic," says Joe DiCostanzo, NCFE Vice President of Education. "This collaboration convened state-level decision makers, including legislators, to underscore the critical role of adult literacy in enhancing family success and improving student outcomes."

"Through initiatives like "Together Better" and the Afghan refugee family engagement program," says Zainab Rida, NDE Equity Officer & Administrator of the Office of Coordinated Student Support Services, "this partnership not only supports NDE's mission but also enriches the lives of countless families across Nebraska. By fostering meaningful connections and promoting cultural sensitivity, NDE, NCFE and NCFL are paving the way for a more inclusive and supportive educational landscape."

NCFL President and CEO Dr. Felicia Cumings Smith is pleased by the impact of NCFL's work alongside partners in both states. "Families reach their full potential when parents and children learn together," says Smith. "Thanks to the work of strong partners from across the state, both the Nebraska and Arizona SFECs provided literary opportunities for the whole family while also supporting parenting adults in developing the confidence to engage with and advocate for their children's education. At NCFL, we know that strong families are the foundation on which strong communities are built. By engaging children and

families in ways that are meaningful and relevant to their learning journeys, the Arizona and Nebraska SFECs have planted the seeds of lifelong success in communities across both states.”

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**About the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL)**

NCFL is a national nonprofit that has worked for more than 35 years to eradicate poverty through education solutions for families. We believe education is a shared, nonpartisan responsibility and that collaboration among families, schools, and community members can lead to powerful learning experiences. NCFL’s vision is 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. For more information on NCFL, visit [familieslearning.org](https://familieslearning.org). To learn more about our vision or become a Family Learning Community partner, visit [familieslearning.org/60x30](https://familieslearning.org/60x30).