

Mission Statement

ESU 16 provides visionary leadership and equitable access to services for all learners.

2021-2022 **ANNUAL** REPORT

This Annual Report provides an opportunity for ESU16 to share with the community its current status. This report is also a requirement from the Nebraska Department of Education for accreditation. ESU16 serves a nine-county area in rural West-Central Nebraska.



*Focusing on
Leadership & Service*

These core values and guiding principles are fundamental to how we reflect on and engage in our shared work with student, family, school, and community partners. ESU 16 staff are **COMMITTED** to:

- Meaningful **RELATIONSHIPS** and mutual **TRUST** to ground our work with individuals, school districts and communities.
- **COLLABORATION** with colleagues and district partners to develop and deliver quality educational programs and services.
- Continuous **EVOLUTION** and **ADAPTATION** to ensure services and supports that are aligned to the unique needs of each learner and each context.
- **PROFESSIONALISM** evidenced by competence, integrity, and mutual respect.
- A foundation of **TEAMWORK** that synergizes individual expertise and collective resources.

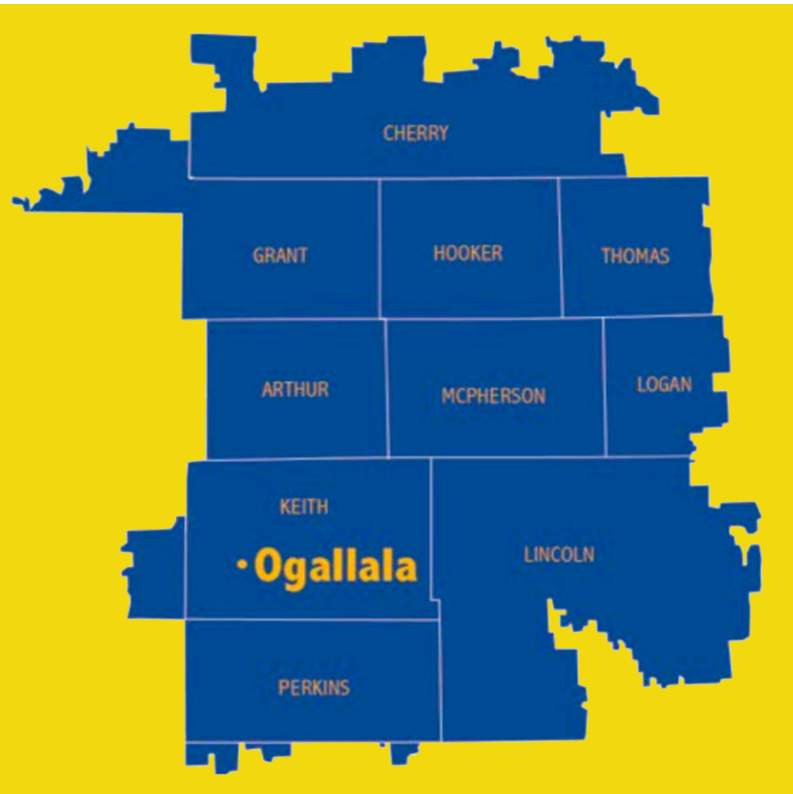
On behalf of the Educational Service Unit 16 Board and Staff, I hope this summary of services will assist you in your understanding of programs and services available through ESU 16.

It is the intent of the ESU 16 Board to plan cooperatively with local districts to meet the needs of students, teachers and administration within the service unit area. It is also a goal of the board to keep as many programs as possible under the control of local School Boards of Education.

The Educational Service Unit exists to provide services to support local school districts in their attempt to meet the educational needs of their students. These needs are determined through direct communications with school districts and an advisory council or representatives from the schools within the service unit area. Success in developing programs to meet the needs of the school districts is dependent upon effective communications. We need to know how we are doing in meeting the needs of schools, and likewise, we need the cooperation of schools to make the program work.

Deb Paulman
ESU 16 Administrator





Arthur County Schools
Brady Public Schools
Hershey Public Schools
Hyannis Area Schools
Maxwell Public Schools
McPherson County Schools
Mullen Public Schools
North Platte Public Schools
Ogallala Public Schools
Paxton Consolidated Schools
Perkins County Schools
South Platte Public Schools
Stapleton Public Schools
Sutherland Public Schools
Thedford County Schools
Wallace Public Schools
Four non-public schools

44 - ESU16 Employees
7,489 students
9 Counties
12,000 Square Miles

TRAININGS

ESU 16 provides several training opportunities for superintendents, non-certified staff, and board members. Trainings include asbestos care and removal, wellness training, dispensing medications, budget workshops, superintendent mentorship and board member workshops. Request for additional trainings may be made through the Advisory Council or by contacting the ESU 16 office directly.

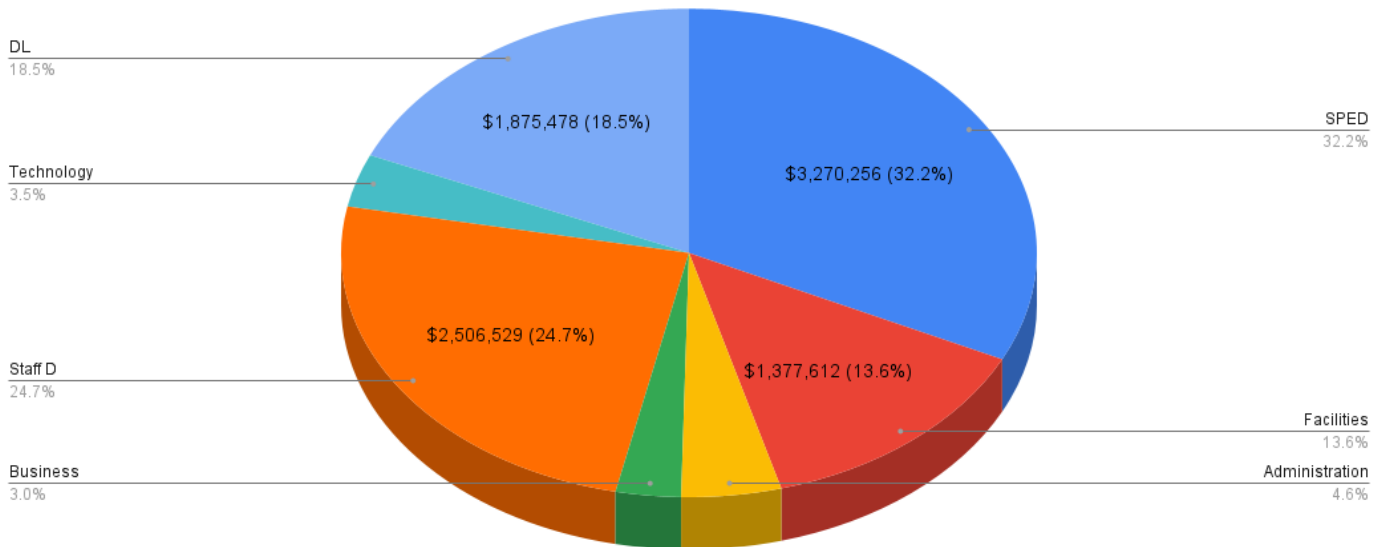
HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2021-22

- Implemented SIMPL Process with member district administrators to review programs and services for 2021-22.
- Coop Purchase savings to ESU 16 member districts topped \$236,372.
- Coop Purchase provided furniture, supplies, and materials to 19 school districts
- Conducted annual financial audit.
- ESU 16 staff logged 5,637 service hours supporting their school districts.
- Hosted an in person ESU 15 & 16 Board Member Workshop in February.
- Completed NPSSC renovations.
- Supported in-person instruction in member districts.
- Hosted an Advisory Council listening session for ESU 16 Superintendents and the District 42 and 44 Legislative candidates.
- Facilitated the development and pilot of statewide standards of performance for Educational Service Units.
- In early fall 2021, the ESU 16 Leadership team visited each member district as part of an agency wide listening tour that served to inform the goal setting phase of our strategic planning process.
- Worked closely with Instruction Partners, Melissa Engel (ESU 16 CIP co-lead), ESU 16 Directors, Steering Committee and staff to articulate three strategic goals for the 2022-2027 continuous improvement cycle.
- Facilitated staff review and articulation of our ESU 16 core beliefs.



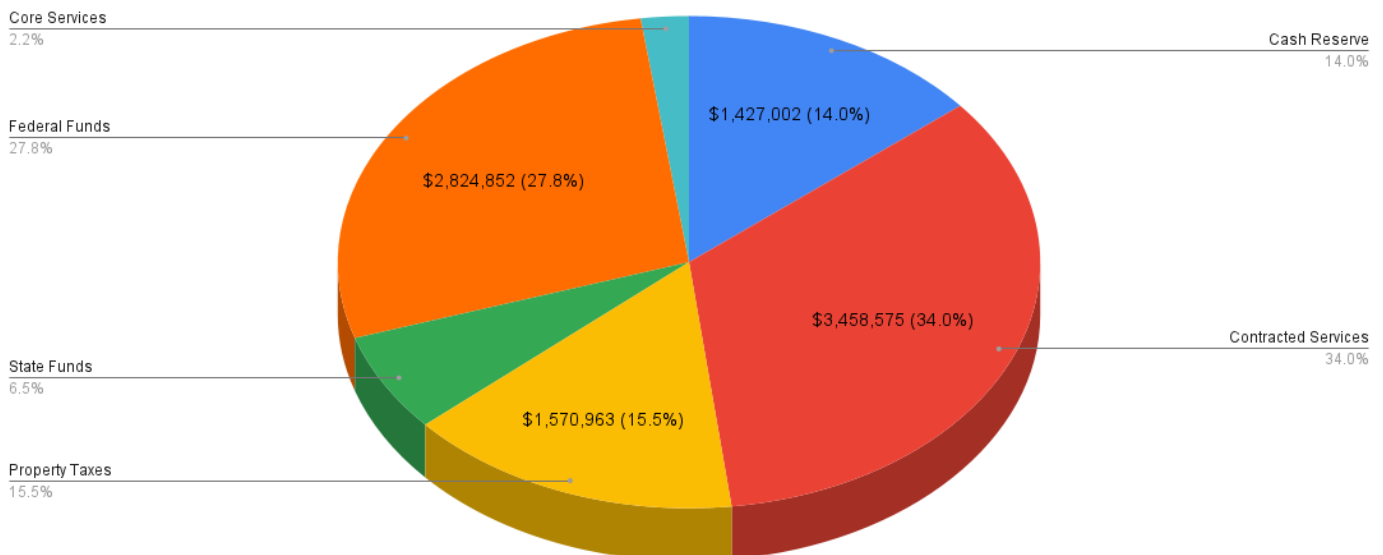
2021-22 Expenditures by Program

Total: \$10,165,116



2021-22 Budgeted Receipts by Source

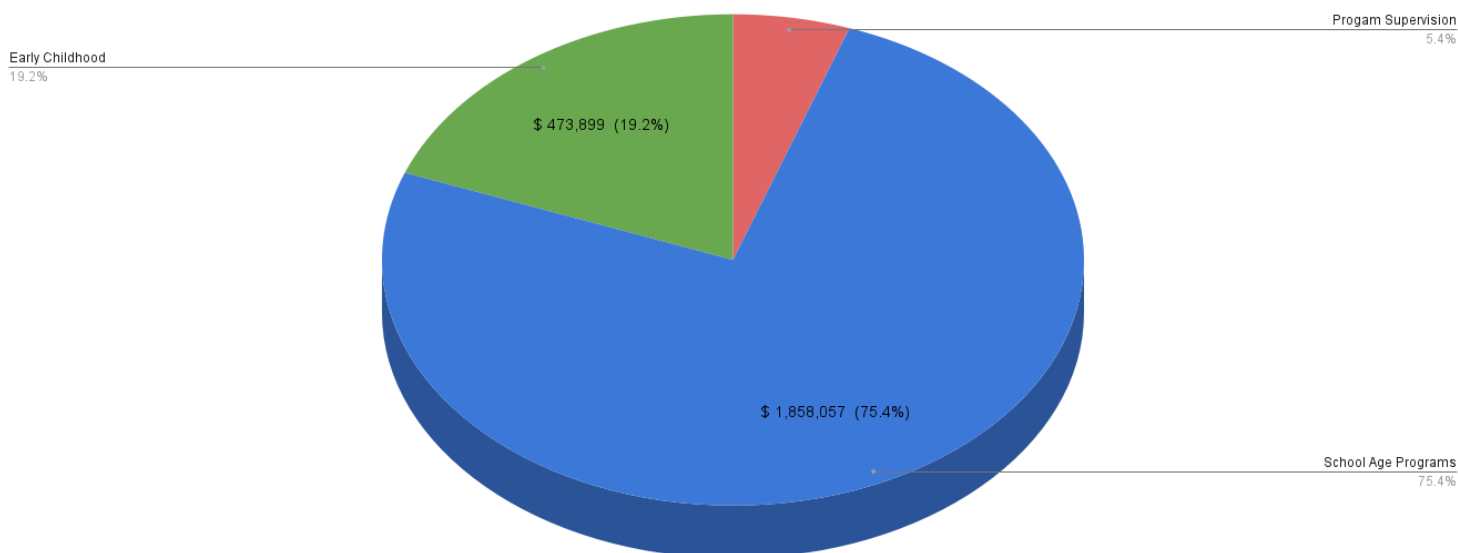
Total: \$10,165,115



ESU 16 employs a full-time Director of Special Services who is responsible for assisting all school districts to comply with requirements of LB 403, LB 889, PL 94-142, and PL 99-457. The Director ensures adherence to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Nebraska Rule 51 and Rule 52. The Director supervises and coordinates all special education and mental health services available through ESU 16. Assistance is given to districts on referrals, student progress, student program development, IEP writing, goal development, transportation, and overall compliance with special education law. The Improving Learning for Children with Disabilities Process required by the Nebraska Department of Education is coordinated and assisted.

SPED Contracts for 2021-22

Total: \$2,540,385



HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2021-22

- Provided mental health and special education supports to students birth through 21 years
- Installation of audiology suite in the North Platte Special Services Center
- Increased training, implementation, and fidelity across the region with routines-based early intervention strategies (i.e., routines based interview, getting ready)
- Implementation of Safe Dates (evidence-based dating violence prevention program) in classrooms
- Implementation of PEERS Social Skills Curriculum
- Hosted multiple inclusion and transition student activities throughout the year (e.g., Partner Up Rodeo, High School Talent Show, multiple job shadow days, etc.)
- Support to middle school teachers with the lowering of transition age services to 14 years as mandated in the passing of LB 527
- Contract established with NDE for improving mental health supports at the district level
 - ESU 16 Mental Health Institute scheduled for June 28-29, 2022
- Addition of two staff members to the ESU 16 mental health team
- Opportunities with Life Skills Transition Program held at Mid Plains Community College for 3 full-time students. Staff members completed transportation training.
- Hosted Fall & Spring SPED Pod Meetings in North Platte, Ogallala, and Thedford with a focus on MTSS and special education policies and procedures.
 - Kris Elmshaeuser presented in person at all 3 of the fall meetings
- In district support with targeted improvement plan development

GRANTS

- Promoting Engagement and Knowledge (PEaK) Project
- Applegate Grants-
 - SAEBRs (universal screener for social-emotional and behavioral problems)
 - CPI Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Instructor Certification & Renewal
- Planning Region Team Systems Support/Change
- Walmart Grant to support self-defense lessons at the culmination of the Safe Dates curriculum
- Western Region Transition Grant (shared grant with ESU 13)
- Nebraska VR (Vocational Rehabilitation Services) Grant to support the implementation of summer transition program

STATEWIDE INVOLVEMENT

- Nebraska Association for the Gifted Board member
- State Transition Advisory Board member
- Nebraska Youth Center Advisory Board member
- Systems of Care Region II participant
- Western Region Autism Team members
- Western Region ASD Advisory Council member
- Nebraska Association of Special Education Supervisors member
- Nebraska Speech Language and Hearing Association Regional Representative
- Western Region Transition Facilitator
- ESU SDA Regional Crisis Team member
- Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Instructor (CPI)
- Member & Ethic Chairperson for Nebraska School Psychologist Association (NSPA)
- Connection's Homeless Shelter Board Member

CONTINUING PROJECTS

- Assistance to schools with data collection and writing targeted improvement plans
- Assistance to schools with IDEA special education consolidated grant application, IDEA reimbursements, final financial reports, and other special education related reports
- Assistance to schools with maintenance of effort monitoring and completion of the compliance and eligibility reports
- Provide Crisis Prevention Training to district staff
- Provide training to special education paraprofessionals
- Continue to support district ADVISER data personnel with uploading special education data and data reporting
- Submit monthly Medicaid in the Public Schools data
- Attendance at agency meetings

Special Education Staff Development

ESU 16 takes part in the NDE Special Education Continuous Improvement Process. ESU 16 provides training to districts based on district determination needs and requests. Staff members are available to provide in-service and workshops on special education issues such as Student Assistance Team Training, Co-Teaching Methods, Severe Disability Models, Behavior, Classroom Management, IEP Compliance, Legislation, and Litigation. Schools may request training and consulting in any area of special education.

Speech Language Pathology

Speech Language Pathologists (SLPs) educate students with various identified needs. They address concerns in the areas of speech, language, fluency, voice, learning, social skills, executive functioning, and other developmental areas. SLPs evaluate children birth to 21 years and make recommendations to school personnel and parents. They develop educational plans, implement plans through structured intervention, and adjust curriculum to meet students' special needs.

Audiology

ESU 16 provides an Audiologist to assist ESU 15 and ESU 16 member school districts with students with hearing concerns. The audiologist is responsible for providing a comprehensive diagnostic testing in a soundproof booth. Consultation is provided to parents and teachers regarding the testing and the discussion of interventions that may include the use of assistive technology. The audiologist worked with the ESU 16 deaf educator in coordinating the use of assistive technology devices such as auditory trainers and hearing aids.

Deaf Education

The teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing assists school districts with verification and accommodations for students who are deaf and hard of hearing. The teacher assesses the needs for a sign language interpreter and works with the interpreter in order to meet the needs of each student. She helps the school in locating assistive technology equipment, classroom materials, and supports the classroom teacher in evaluating effectiveness.

Psychological Services

ESU 16 school psychologists complete cognitive/intellectual, social emotional, and behavioral evaluations with students to determine eligibility for special education services. They also assist school district resource teachers with the administration of academic assessments when needed. ESU 16 school psychologists support student data analysis and the development and implementation of behavior improvement plans. The school psychologists adhere to the referral process that is in accordance with NDE Rule 51. Districts' teams complete a problem-solving process prior to referral for a special education evaluation. School psychologists collaborate with the LIMHPs, PLMHP, School Social Workers, and districts' guidance counselors to support the mental health needs of students in districts.

Mental Health Team

ESU 16's mental health team is composed of two licensed independent mental health practitioners (LIMHPs), one provisionally licensed independent mental health practitioner, two school social workers, and two school psychologists. This team provides counseling to students with a mental health diagnosis. They are responsible for evaluation, risk assessment, and counseling to address students' needs socially and emotionally. Consultation is provided to educators, parents, and other professionals to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments for students. This team implements preventative curricula like the Safe Dates dating violence prevention program at the classroom level, and serves as liaisons between the school, community, and family.

Special Education Teacher Consultants

Teacher consultants assist school personnel in developing individualized education programs, progress monitoring, and assisting with specialized instruction. The consultant meets monthly with resource teachers to deliver important reminders, due dates, compliance information, and best practice suggestions. Contracts for teacher consultant costs are divided among school districts, based on the number of special education teachers.

Opportunity with Life Skills Program

The Opportunity with Life Skills Program (OWLS) is an enriched transition program for high school students with intellectual disabilities, age 16-21, located on the campus of Mid-Plains Community College in North Platte. The program aims to prepare students for the workforce through academic, social skills, life skills, and vocational development. It targets student growth in the following areas: increased independence, self-determination, self-advocacy, lifelong learning, and linkage to adult services.

Inclusion / Transition Services

This program assists school districts in providing services for students with more significant needs. This often includes students who have been verified with an intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, or autism. An inclusion/transition consultant travels to the school district to assist resource teachers, paraprofessionals, and classroom teachers in program planning for the IEP; conducting staffings; locating assistive devices; modifying curriculum, and conferring with parents.

Job responsibilities include assisting resource teachers with the development of transition plans, coordinating career assessments for transition planning, consulting with the area agency personnel regarding services available, and working cooperatively with special education staff, resource teachers, speech-language pathologists, guidance counselors, academic teachers, medical personnel, and administrative personnel to maximize available services to students with disabilities.

Early Development Network

ESU 16 received the contract with the Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services for service coordination. Service coordination is the identification, referral, and coordination of services for children, birth through the age of two, and families. The service coordinator serves as the single point of contact in helping parents gain needed services and assistance. This program is funded through the Department of Health & Human Services and is of no cost to the school districts.

Early Childhood Team

ESU 16 provides districts who contract for early childhood services with whatever service a student (birth-5 years) is identified as needing. This often includes services with an early childhood special education teacher or speech language pathologist. This may also include services with an occupational therapist, physical therapist, or deaf educator. The early childhood team implements the primary service provider model of service delivery for students. They are also trained in routines-based early intervention strategies. ESU 16's early childhood team also coordinates the planning region team meetings, PRT grant work, and targeted improvement plan development for PRT 16. They are actively involved in promoting childfind throughout the region.



The ESU 16 Teaching & Learning team positively impacts student achievement by providing educational leadership and supports to the faculty and administration in area schools. This team includes teaching, learning, and instructional technology specialists who provide professional learning opportunities, follow-up support and coordinate the exchange of knowledge and skills among ESU 16 educators. The team also supports development of instructional resources to enhance curriculum and instruction. We also facilitate local, state, and federal grant development.

HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2021-22

- Facilitated workshop series and instructional coaching for new teachers
- Provided assessment training to districts
- Worked with districts to align curriculum to the Nebraska standards in Mathematics, ELA, Science and Social Studies
- Provided updates to districts regarding the development and implementation of NSCAS Growth summative assessment
- Facilitated a series of principal meetings
- Continued customized support of the MTSS (Multi- Tiered Systems of Support) in schools
- Provided Title I support, reporting documentation, and coaching to contracted member schools
- Provided training specific to Reading, Math, Science, Social Studies, World Language, Differentiation, Behavior, Instructional Model, State-wide Initiatives, Instructional Materials Adoption and Implementation Process, Curriculum Specific (Standards Based Report Card), and Teacher personalized coaching support
- Math Acceleration Core team and work with Instruction Partners and district leadership within ESU 16
- Planned and developed a series of summer workshops for science, teacher leadership, curriculum development, instructional materials, ELA Foundational Skills, LETRS Administered Title II-A consortium support, Title I Contracted services in districts & fulfilled grant requirements
- Provided Instructional, Cognitive, and Principal Coaching
- Supported districts in Continuous Improvement Process
- eduCLIMBER series online, within district core teams, and “after hours” personalized support
- Provided trainings in all 15 districts for adopting high-quality instructional materials and implementation support (from vendor quote support to teacher and admin adoption and successful of implementation)
- Established ongoing training to develop foundational literacy skills through LETRS
- Planned, developed, and implemented data analysis with eduCLIMBER platform within districts
- Developed, Planned, and Implemented the regional Professional Learning Community for twelve districts 3x of the course of the year (450+ teachers, paraprofessionals, administration)

INVOLVED IN

- Revised Math Standards Rollout Committee
- Fellowship 2.0 core team developer (Instructional Materials Adoption/Implementation support to ESU's across the state)
- Math Acceleration Project core team
- Learning Acceleration Project Planning team and support within ESU 16
- High Quality Instructional materials and Professional Learning Core Team
- ESU standard rubric development
- Ag curriculum building
- Statewide webinars and podcasts with Andrew Easton
- Educator Effectiveness work
- State MTSS & MTSS Builders Group
- ESU Professional Development Organization, SDA and PDO
- ESU Content Cadres (Science, ELA, Math, MTSS, Data)
- NWEA Assessment Certified facilitators
- SIMPL Lead for ESU16
- Partnerships with vendors

CONTINUED SUPPORT IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS

Continuous Improvement

Curriculum Development

Assessment Development

Collaboration with T&L and Special Services and Mental Health Teams

Content trainings in all content areas (expanding beyond Math, ELA, Science, Social Studies)

Leadership coaching, cadre, and instructional leadership support

Classroom coaching

Instructional Materials Adoption & Implementation Process

Support for Needs Improvement or highest need districts

All content & pedagogy support

GRANT COOPERATIVE & CONSORTIA PROVIDED

Titles I; IIA

Carl Perkins Technical Education

Applegate Grants to support Staff Development trainings

ReVISION support



HIGH PLAINS EARLY LEARNING CONNECTION

ESU 16 employs a full-time Coordinator of the Early Learning Connection. Nebraska's Early Learning Connection (ELC) is an integrated system of early childhood professional development. It is designed as a system that supports the career and professional development of all who provide programs and services for young children birth through age eight.

The High Plains Early Learning Connections Partnership (HPELC) serves the counties in both ESU 15 & 16 which include Arthur, Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Grant, Hayes, Hitchcock, Hooker, Keith, Lincoln, Logan, McPherson, Perkins, Red Willow and Thomas.

The HPELC publishes a monthly newsletter with updates and training opportunities. For more information visit:

<http://highplainsearlylearningconnection.weebly.com/>

HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2021-22

- Pre-K Paraprofessional Workshop series. A total of 18 early childhood para-professionals attended from the following districts: Dundy County, Hershey, North Platte, and Perkins County. This year the series focused on the Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential. This rigorous learning series is the most widely recognized credential in early childhood education and is a key stepping stone on the path of career advancement. This workshop series supports paraprofessionals and districts in meeting Rule 11 requirements.
- National Speakers presented on the following topics:
 - Cari Ebert - *The Power of Play in the Development of Young Children* and *Wired Kids: How Screen Time Affects Early Childhood Development*. Bringing Ms. Ebert to the high plains was a collaborative effort between the HPELC and Planning Region Teams 15, 16, and 27.
 - Dr. Lori Desautels, Butler University professor - *How Our Brains Learn*. Bringing Dr. Desautels was also a collaborative effort between the HPELC and Planning Region Teams 15, 16, and 27.
- Crisis Prevention Institute Training
 - Initial Trainings on August 31 & February 8
 - Refresher Trainings on August 12 , October 27 & March 1

STATE & REGIONAL INVOLVEMENT

- State Early Childhood Partnership
- Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children (NeAEYC)
 - TEACH Early Childhood NE Advisory Committee
- NE Huddle
 - Child Care Referral Network Committee (CCRN)
- First Five Nebraska
 - Early Childhood Policy Leadership Academy Class 3
- West Ed/NDE
 - Nebraska Transition to Kindergarten Toolkit and Resource Guide Committee

ESU's 15 and 16 Involvement:

- Early Childhood Preschool Advisory Committees
 - Hershey
 - Sutherland
 - Wallace
- Planning Region Teams (PRT's)
 - ESU 15
 - ESU 16
 - North Platte
- Communities for Kids (C4K)
 - Keith County
 - North Platte
 - Red Willow County
- Rooted in Relationships (RiR)
- Early Childhood Multi Tiered Systems of Support (EC MTSS) Region 5
- School District Support on Early Childhood Content and Pedagogy
- Crisis Prevention Institute Training
- Keith County Interagency Work Group
- Keith County Family Block Party
- EdVenturous PLC Project



The primary goal of Network Operations staff is to provide support and safeguards through best practices and the appropriate use of technology within our organization and the ESU 16 school districts. Staff promote responsible digital citizenship and provide information, consultation, evaluation, research, and training with a current focus on responsible social networking and Internet safety.

Over 9,000 K-12 teachers, administrators, school personnel, and students are provided Internet access and digital assistance by the ESU 16 Network Operations team. Successful online student and staff projects are continually implemented and service opportunities are available but not limited to the following: Google Workspace for Education, learning management systems, student information systems, state/federal data collection, open educational resources, an online video delivery system, Erate assistance, and teleconferencing for meetings and classes.

ESU 16 provides a variety of online resources that can be easily accessed on its web page at: <https://www.esu16.org/page/media-technology>

HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2021-22

- Network Operations staff worked in conjunction with engineers from Network Nebraska to provide districts with digital security from denial of services attacks, ransomware, and phishing schemes utilizing Arbor Sightline, Fortinet, Dmarcian, Forticlient and other software and hardware products.
- Network Operations continued a digital safety public awareness and communication outreach through the ThrillShare and Apptegy platform.
- New team and program pages were designed and linked to the ESU 16 website, and staff were provided with licensing and training for Adobe Creative Cloud Suite and Canvas to produce outreach materials. Network Operations staff also participated in training and worked with tools to provide compliance with ADA technology standards.
- The Freshdesk ticket platform was utilized to assist staff and districts in requesting technical assistance and to remove duplicated input time into the Service Implementation Model Process and Log (SIMPL). This platform will be reinforced in 2022-23 with the addition of the registration database (ODIE) which is better aligned to the parameters of ESUCC statewide reporting of services.
- Network Operations staff has served on several statewide organizations, including ESU Professional Development Organization Planning Group, ESU PDO Teaching and Learning with Technology, Network Operations Committee, the Network Nebraska Advisory Group (NNAG), the Collaborative Aggregation Partnership (CAP), Nebraska Digital Learning Association (NDLA), and the ESU/NDE Data Cadre.

SOUTHWEST NEBRASKA DISTANCE EDUCATION NETWORK

HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2021-22

New reports for tracking and reporting Distance Learning exchanges were created, with districts qualifying for over \$200,000 from incentive dollars. These funds were reinstated into legislation in 2021 directly due to efforts of SNDEN staff in working with local legislators.

SNDEN currently manages the 35,000 Zoom licenses and associated services that Network Nebraska provides for Nebraska's K-12 and Higher Education members. SNDEN will take over as the purchasing and fiscal agent for Zoom products in 2022-23.

SNDEN personnel helped plan and oversee the 20th Annual Nebraska Digital Learning Association's conference held November 11th and 12th in Lincoln.

Director, Scott Jones, served as the past president of the Nebraska Digital Learning Association and a member of the Network Nebraska Advisory Group (NNAG) and Collaborative Aggregation Partnership (CAP) which play a pivotal role in the distribution of internet access and services across the state.

SNDEN provided assistance through it's HarmanMedia Suite to members and local service agencies to provide online video delivery service.

CONTINUED SUPPORT PROVIDED IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS

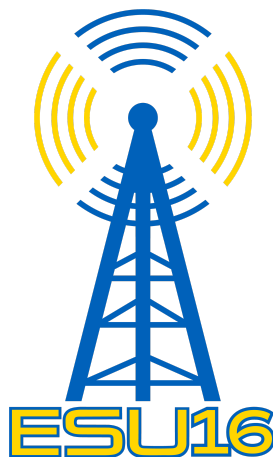
- Information Literacy training
- Technology, software, and network support
- Internet services
- Internet safety for students
- Technology planning for schools
- E-rate / USF Support
- Wireless site surveys and installation available at the schools upon request
- ADVISER training and assistance - In addition to hosting the statewide Zoom ADVISER workdays for all districts in Nebraska, ESU 16 personnel provides PowerSchool ADVISER support for 25 districts in western Nebraska.
- Support for schools using data for decision-making. This includes support for districts' school improvement processes. Network Operations staff serve on the ESU 16 continuous improvement steering committee and are instrumental in the implementation of the ESU 16 continuous improvement process.

- Training in cloud applications including web page publications, registration databases, email, Google Workspace for Education, and student/learning management systems
- Poster and vinyl printing
- Integration of technology and software
- Security for ESU and district wide area and local area networks and services
- Support for the Librarian Professional Learning Community at PLC days throughout the year. Network Operations also supported these districts through an Applegate grant that sponsored Battle of the Books.
- Support of OWLS students through a series of internet safety and information literacy lessons. The students also entered the Digital Citizenship Contest sponsored by the ESU PDO Teaching and Learning with Technology group.
- Administration of the ESU 16 Perkins Grant Consortium by writing the grant application and reports, and purchasing equipment for district participants.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

The Southwest Nebraska Distance Education Network (SNDEN) is a cooperative of public schools, colleges, and educational service units committed to the design, development, and delivery of two way interactive learning opportunities for students in 37 rural communities. It covers over 20,000 square miles in an 18 county area of southwest, west-central, and the Sandhills of Nebraska.

The primary focus of the network is to provide greater access to learning opportunities through collaborations and partnerships with agencies and individuals committed to an equitable distribution of educational resources. The network enables students of all ages to improve their access to learning opportunities and to achieve their lifelong educational goals. SNDEN provides a description of its goals, resources, and schedules on its website located at <http://www.snden.org>.



MEDIA/TECHNOLOGY