



# THE LEARNING CHILD TEAM IMPACT SUMMARY

## Early Years are Critical Learning Years!

The experiences children have during the first five years of their lives greatly influence how prepared they are to enter kindergarten and their future success. We recognize that parents are the child's first teacher. **Seventy-five percent** of children under the age of six in Nebraska are living in families in which all parents present are working, therefore requiring child-care outside the home. The lack of available quality and licensed childcare in NE often results in families using unlicensed or low quality care for their child(ren). Also, more than **one-third** of NE children under the age of five are at risk of not thriving in school and beyond. UNL Extension is helping to change that!

To help increase the quality of learning experiences for young children and support school readiness, The Learning Child (TLC) Team is committed to providing research based programs and resources to parents and early childhood professionals. In 2011, the primary goals were that families and early childhood professionals would implement strategies and gain necessary skills to support children's **holistic learning** and implement strategies for young children to have seamless educational **connections** between home and educational settings.



## TLC Team

### 2011 Improving Quality!

More than 6,000 early childhood professionals and families engaged in at least two hours of TLC programming across Nebraska. In most cases these program participants engaged in ongoing exposure to early childhood resources. These adults now have the essential knowledge and tools needed to support the healthy growth of the approximately 19,000 young children in their care!

## Public Value

TLC programs help to develop the critical skills adults need to create quality early care environments for young children. When you support these programs, you thereby increase the number of Nebraska children who are:

- ✓ **Prepared for Kindergarten**
- ✓ **Socially and emotionally healthy**
- ✓ **Successful**

Investing in early childhood education produces an average of 10% rate on return investment, reduces crime, promotes schooling and develops a skilled workforce.



## Striving towards healthy and successful children!

The Learning Child Team focused efforts this year in implementing over twenty programs, resources and community lessons covering a range of topics in child development. The following represent the team's signature programs in 2011:

- **Fun to Play Ready to Learn** is a program that features the latest brain development research and innovative strategies that support the optimal growth and development of young children.
- **Parents Forever** is a program that offers resources and support for families who are divorcing or seeking custody modification. This program also provides parents with strategies on helping their child adjust to the divorce or custody modifications in an age appropriate manner.

**Social-emotional Development** was another primary focus area in which programs and resources focused on how parents and early childhood professionals can build healthy, positive relationships with young children to support their social and emotional growth and school readiness.





TLC team is providing Nebraska families and professionals with quality and accessible learning experiences and resources. In 2011 there was an increase in the public's access and usage of print and electronic resources developed by The Learning Child Team. As a result, more than 7,500 families and early childhood professionals received TLC programming and/or multi-media resources.

## SUPPORTING YOUNG CHILDREN'S HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

"I learned how my interactions with children really do influence their lives and who they become!"

"You need to not only be responsive to the children's needs but their parents as well."

*TLC program participants*

TLC Educators helped to coordinate, lead, and/or facilitate regional early childhood conferences across Nebraska. Approximately, 1400 early childhood professionals received educational credits and professional development. Attendees of these regional conferences serve over 50% of the population of children in Nebraska who attend licensed and/or home based childcare.

On average 92% of participants indicated as a result of TLC programming, they will make changes and improvements to how they encourage young children's social and emotional growth and brain development.

Ninety four percent of early childhood professionals and parents engaging in TLC programs indicated they now have a greater understanding of how to create a more stimulating and responsive environment for the children in their care.

As a result of TLC programming, almost 18,000 children have access to early childhood professionals and parents who now feel more confident that their interactions with the children in their care will be more positive and appropriate to their needs and ages.

## LEADING THE WAY!

By supporting and participating in the Child Care and Youth Training and Technical Assistance Project, TLC team members are helping increase the quality of early childhood experiences of military children and families in Nebraska and 13 pilot states. This project trains early childhood professionals who care for children from off-installation military families.

### *National Project Impacts!*

**638** professionals trained in face-to-face programs

**95** publications and resources available to the public addressing early childhood topics

**658** professionals completing online training modules

Programming and resources developed from this project are also being used strategically in collaboration with community stakeholders to increase the number of Nebraska children who are healthy, safe and successful.



## POSITIVE COMMUNICATION AND CONNECTIONS

"I'm grateful that Nebraska provides classes like these to help educate parents of the needs and desires of their children"

" I will now talk and listen to my children and use age appropriate conversations and skills for them to understand."

*Parents Forever participants*

Each year over 2000 Nebraskans – many children - are appointed a guardian or conservator. In 2011, TLC Educators provided over 80 guardians of young children with resources on their new roles and responsibilities.

Of the 1,700 parents who attended the Parent's Forever program last year, 90% felt the instructor motivated them to improve their relationship with the other caregiver in order to support their child's healthy growth and development.

A sample of these program participants were surveyed six months later and results indicated 92% of the families actually made changes to improve and encourage their child's growth and development. Most parents commented they learned how to and are now keeping children out of the middle and as one parent reported, "My child was not transitioning well from parent to parent. I was able to talk to him (dad) and work it out".