
Beyond School Bells Newsletter – March 2025

From Beyond School Bells <bsbinfo@nebraskachildren.org>

Date Mon 3/3/2025 7:26 AM



March 2025

News and Events

Nebraska's Expanded Learning Opportunities Innovation Invitational:
Innovation amidst Uncertainty
Last Chance to Register!



NEBRASKA'S
EXPANDED LEARNING
OPPORTUNITIES

Innovation
INVITATIONAL

MARCH 10-12, 2025

UNL Innovation Campus
Lincoln, NE

3, 2 – and 1. Today is the last day to register for Beyond School Bells' third Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Innovation Invitational, which will be held from March 10 – 12th at UNL's Innovation Campus. If you haven't already done so use **this link** to reserve your place now.

The focus of next week's gathering is ***Innovation amidst Uncertainty*** and we will use our time together to explore how Nebraska's afterschool and summer programs can continue to thrive in times of great change.

This free event provides opportunities for afterschool and summer program practitioners and advocates to come together alongside Nebraska youth and community, state and national leaders to exchange ideas and participate in hands on workshops exploring the critical role that exciting, engaging and inspiring afterschool and summer programs play in the lives of children, families and communities across our great state. Given all the challenges confronting youth and families today, we are honored to be in a position to facilitate this important conversation.

For more information on this exciting event, go to our conference website at <https://beyondschoolbells.org/innovation-invitational/>

Register Today!

Michelle Arehart ELO Administrator Fellows

Beyond School Bells (BSB) is proud to announce the launch of the Michelle Arehart ELO Administrator Fellows. Named after Michelle Arehart, the long-serving director of the Kearney CLC program who was tragically killed in a car accident last fall, the year-long Michelle Arehart ELO Administrator Fellows will consist of between 6 to 8 experienced ELO program administrators selected from a statewide applicant pool to work as a cohort to learn about other Nebraska ELO programs, explore common challenges and propose solutions related to Nebraska's ELO programs. Importantly, in their applications, prospective Fellows will be asked to identify a challenge to ELO programs in our state that they would like to explore via their participation in the Fellowship program.

Elements of the Fellowship include:

- \$5,000 stipend per Fellow
- In person kick off meeting to design parameters, identify priorities
- Regular site visits at the Fellows home sites
- On-line, problem solving meetings between site visits
- Recognition at the 2025 GetConnected conference and
- Development and presentation of a final group product at state conference(s)

For more information, contact Patricia Sanchez Stewart at psanchezstewart@nebraskachildren.org
Applications available at <https://forms.gle/5B8gQxKrUbr7stFw8>

Apply Today!

Collective for Youth's Nicole Everingham Selected as Nebraska's Afterschool Ambassadors



The National advocacy group Afterschool Alliance selected Nicole Everingham, Development Director at Collective for Youth, to serve as a 2025 Afterschool Ambassador – one of only 15 leaders in the country chosen for the honor this year.

“We are absolutely delighted that Nicole Everingham will serve as a 2025 Afterschool Ambassador for the Afterschool Alliance,” said Jodi Grant, Afterschool Alliance executive director. “This is going to be a pivotal year when we simply must continue the progress in making afterschool and summer learning programs available to more students.”

“I am excited to have the chance to work with the Afterschool Alliance to increase awareness and support for afterschool and summer learning programs this year,” said Everingham. “Now more than ever, students and families need the consistent support and enriching opportunities that afterschool programs provide. Policymakers need to double down on funding prevention programs that work, like afterschool, which not only keep kids safe and engaged but also help them thrive academically and socially. I’m incredibly proud to be part of the afterschool movement and to serve as a 2025 Afterschool Ambassador, advocating for these vital programs that make a real difference in the lives of our young people.”

Congrats Nicole! Click below to read the full press release announcing her selection and the work ahead.



Press Release

NET Support for Environmental Afterschool and Summer Projects

Thank you to the Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET) for their support to expand environmental education in afterschool and summer programs across the state. Beyond School Bells is honored to announce NET support for the Nebraska Youth Conservation Initiative. This support will directly contribute to conservation experiences, food systems clubs, student leadership, and opportunities to connect afterschool to Farm to School.



SUMMER!

BSB Funding Opportunity: Summer of Exploration



Just like afterschool learning, we believe summer programs are best with a student-centered approach. Following insight provided by Stephanie Malia Krauss in chapter 8 of *Whole Child, Whole Life*, BSB will offer summer program grants based on Student-Centered Learning and strategies to make the most of out of school time opportunities. BSB will support projects that:

- Utilize Youth Voice and Choice
- Engage in Community-Connected, Age-Appropriate, Real-World Learning
- Foster Lifelong Learning and Pursuits.

Grants will be funded up to \$15,000 and will be limited to one per community. Eligible applicants will be school- or community-based Expanded Learning Opportunity programs serving school age youth. BSB will require all applicants to show youth voice and local support for their summer program and awarded projects must facilitate a youth brainstorming activity and develop a story-telling one pager (templates provided for each). Find more information on our website [here](https://www.bsb-ne.org), or reach out to Dakota Staggs at dstaggs@nebraskachildren.org or Alana Pearson at apearson@nebraskachildren.org

[Learn More](#)

2025 Conservation Management Experiences



To kick off conservation programming in 2025, BSB will be continuing our Conservation Management program including “Conservation Experiences” this April and May. For these experiences, BSB will coordinate afternoon or weekend career introductions in the field for groups of 3-5 HS student leaders with conservation professionals like biologists, conservation photographers, environmental educators and more. BSB will also offer a separate, 2-week internship this June – internship information, fliers, and an application will be released in March and shared in the April newsletter. If you have high school students interested in learning about conservation careers or want more information, reach out to Dakota Staggs at dstaggs@nebraskachildren.org.

NEW: Summer Literacy Mini-Grants

Get ready for an exciting Summer of Reading Exploration: We are offering literacy-focused mini grants Summer 2025! These funds can support innovative literacy projects linked to your Afterschool program. Choose from a range of creative pilot projects—from eye-catching Book Stands (a display of books available for use in your program and for young readers to take home) to engaging clubs and dynamic family events.

Curious to learn more? Join us for an Innovation Invitational workshop on Tuesday, March 11 at 1:15 pm or contact Stephanie Vadnais at svadnais@nebraskachildren.org. Already sure you want to apply? Fill out our interest form here: <https://forms.microsoft.com/r/xnvwY8zxYD>.

Interest Form

NSLA's Summer Planning Bootcamp

March 13-14, 12-2pm CT

Looking for help to plan for summer 2025 programming? [Register](#) for National Summer Learning Association's annual, virtual “Summer Planning Bootcamp” on Thursday March 13th and Friday March 14th from 12-2pm CT. You may also want to check out their newly updated [Destination Summer Learning Program Planning Guide](#).



Register

REGISTRATION OPEN: Young Professionals Leadership Camp

Camp Comeca | August 6-8, 2025



We encourage you to register for the BSB Young Professionals Leadership Camp August 6-8, 2025, at Camp Comeca near Cozad, NE. This experience will bring high school and college-age afterschool professionals together for training, connection and leadership development.

To learn more and to register, visit <https://beyondschoolbells.org/resources/young-professionals-leadership-camp.html>.

To join our planning team, please reach out to Alana Pearson at apearson@nebraskachildren.org.

[Learn More](#)

Resources and Opportunities

Afterschool Program Site Visits for Afterschool Professionals April 2025

Join us this April for an exciting opportunity to explore six high-quality afterschool programs in action!

These visits will provide a firsthand look at the incredible work happening in afterschool programs across our state. Afterschool Site Visit Hosts will share best practices, creative programming, and successful strategies that engage children and youth, and strengthen communities.

Stay tuned for more details, including site locations and dates. Registration will be available at the Innovation Invitational and on the Beyond School Bells website after the conference.

National Afterschool Program Cost Study Complete the Survey by Friday, March 7

Your input is vital for shaping the future of OST funding and policy nationally.

We need your help to update the national OST cost calculator! Complete the [Program Survey](#) today to make sure your program is included in the national study. Surveys must be completed by Friday, March 7 and eligible programs will receive a \$50 gift card!

By participating, you will help shape the future of OST programming, ensuring that tools like the OST cost calculator continue to meet the needs of programs across the country.



OUT-OF-SCHOOL COST STUDY: PROGRAM SURVEY

[Complete the Survey](#)

Available for Check-Out:
Think, Make, Create (TMC) Trailer



Fully stocked Think Make Create (TMC) Labs are available for programs to check out. If your program is looking for ways to incorporate hands on learning experiences for students in your program, check out the TMC Lab. <https://beyondschoolbells.org/mobile-maker-space/>

If you would like to bring this resource to your program, please complete the interest survey below!

Interest Survey

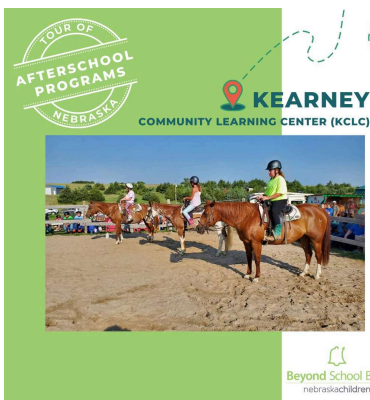
Program Spotlight

Tour of Nebraska Afterschool Programs

A celebration of high-quality afterschool and summer learning programs across Nebraska



Next Stop: **Kearney Community Learning Centers (KCLC)**!



Saddle up for an unforgettable ride! The **Kearney Community Learning Center (KCLC)** is all about innovation, community, and hands-on learning. This stop on our tour highlights KCLC's **5th-grade horseback riding program**—where students do more than ride. They learn farm care, responsibility, and get up close with animals in a way they never have!

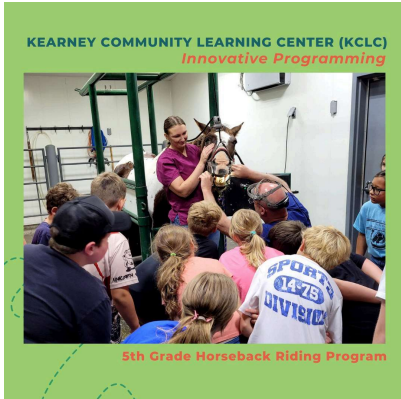
"Our students love this opportunity, as many of them have never been to a farm or ridden a horse." – Allison Morris, Park Elementary Site Coordinator



We asked Allison what she hoped for the future of afterschool. Here's what she said:

"The future of afterschool programming in Nebraska is bright! I hope we can continue to expand opportunities to reach as many students as possible, to be able to offer affordable educational programming."

Providing young students with a safe place to go afterschool is so crucial to their development. I would love to see communities come together and support their local afterschool programs and continue to help them grow."



Now in its 20th year, KCLC serves 10 schools and over 500 students daily!

"Our longest-serving site director has been with the program for 19 years, and most other site coordinators have served for 10 or more years."

We routinely have students who begin in our program in kindergarten, and stay with us all the way through 8th grade. We have past students who come back in high school and college to work for us!"

We are proud of our partners throughout the state and look forward to continuing our tour of Nebraska programs. Follow along to see our next stop ([Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [X](#), [LinkedIn](#))!



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