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February 2022

News & Policy

THIS IS IT!

Your last chance to register for the February 25th *GetConnected* Statewide Afterschool and Summer Learning Conference at Omaha's CHI Health Center



The *GetConnected* conference, a partnership between Beyond School Bells, Nebraska Extension and the NE Department of Education's 21st Century CLC program, is just around the corner. Thankfully, if current trends continue, it seems that we may just be turning the corner on the latest COVID wave, and we will all be ready for an in-person gathering. However, given continued uncertainty about COVID and in recognition of individual health risks, *GetConnected* will be a hybrid event, with a full array of both in-person group sessions

and workshops. There are two options to join:

- In-person conference (\$80), including [Kit Workshops](#) where participants receive training and materials for implementing hands-on clubs in their programs and 25 [Walk N Talk](#) afterschool partner exhibits
- Virtual live-streamed (\$45) conference experience. The opening and lunch plenary and 18 breakout sessions will be live-streamed.

Both options include the [audiobook](#) *The Gifts of Imperfection* by Bene' Brown plus the opportunity to join an on-line book club discussion group.

More details and registration information are available on the conference website but you have to act soon - **Registration closes Tuesday, February 15th**, so now is the time to register for this important event!

Register Now!

Regent Emeritus Bob Whitehouse Expanded Learning Opportunity Policy Champion



2018 Recipient, Senator Merv Rippe with Regent Whitehouse and State Senator Anna Wishart



2019 Recipient, Mayor Chris Buetler with Regent Whitehouse

One of the highlights of this year's GetConnected event will be the naming of the 2022 Regent Emeritus Bob Whitehouse Expanded Learning Opportunity Policy Champion.

We are proud to announce that the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is this year's champion. Accepting the award on behalf of DHHS will be Nicole Vint, Child Care and Development Fund Administrator. It was an easy decision. During the on-going pandemic, DHHS has been actively working to provide school-age out of school time care and learning programs with the financial support they need to help overcome crushing financial challenges. Through various initiatives, DHHS has provided more than \$14 million in extra relief to Nebraska programs. DHHS is taking an aggressive, active role in helping providers overcome these challenges and is committed to working with diverse partners to build a future oriented school-age learning and care sector that meets the needs of all

Nebraska youth, their families and our communities.

ELO Policy Champion award is named after Regent Emeritus Bob Whitehouse, whose tireless work to enhance the lives of all Nebraska youth, from preschool to the University, through high quality formal and informal education has been an inspiration to us all. An active board member of Omaha's Collective for Youth and a member of Beyond School Bell's Executive Team, sadly Regent Whitehouse passed away last month. We will continue to honor his legacy by providing future ELO policy champion awards to individuals and organizations whose work exemplified Bob's commitment to creating policies that provide more youth across our state with the high quality, out of school time care and learning experiences they need to thrive.

Best Summer Ever!



Because COVID forced us to cancel earlier conferences, this is our first *GetConnected* conference held in February. This timing presented us with an excellent opportunity to focus on the upcoming summer programming window and the need, now more than ever, to provide all Nebraska youth with opportunities to have their **Best Summer Ever!** With all the disrupted learning they have experienced over the past two years, they've earned it. Now is just the right time for adults, in communities across the state, to roll up our sleeves and start designing and building a summer program will excite, engage and inspire youth in your Nebraska community.

We are looking forward to kicking off our work on **Best Summer Ever!** at *GetConnected*. Building on this start, we will be working with schools and communities across Nebraska to create opportunities for all NE youth. Fun, engaging, inspiring activities that will build memories that will last a lifetime. Jumpstart your summer program planning at *GetConnected* and keep us posted on your progress. Working together we can make the Summer of 2022 the **Best Summer Ever!** for an incredibly deserving group of youth across the state.

Resources & Opportunities

Reimagine Who Can Engineer, Build, and Make with MGM Resources



The [Million Girls Moonshot](#) seeks to re-imagine who can engineer, who can build, who can make. It will inspire and prepare the next generation of innovators by engaging one million more girls and underserved youth in STEM learning opportunities through afterschool and summer programs over the next 5 years.

This month, MGM partners are offering a wide range of professional development (PD) opportunities throughout both winter and spring. Check some of them out below:

- ACRES is a nationally acclaimed program that provides training to cohorts of interested professionals centered around facilitating STEM experiences in out-of-school-time programs for youth. Upcoming training programs typically run for three sessions each, about 2 hours per session. Options range from Modeling Engineering Practices to Elevating Youth Voice and Choice. For more information, visit their site [here](#).
- The [National Center for Quality After School](#) has developed PD guides for the subjects of literacy, math, technology, and the arts.
- [Here](#) is a toolkit created by MPACT to prepare rural middle school youth for careers in STEM through hands-on, minds-on projects.
- If you're looking to increase/strengthen your knowledge around building STEM transitions, handoffs, and coordination, [Hive Research Network](#) has created a toolkit composed of briefs and reports that focus on examples of pathways, design, and challenges.



Joyonna Gamble-George Health Scientist

In celebration of **Black History Month**, share materials from the IF/THEN collection with students about Joyonna Gamble-George, an IF/THEN Ambassador and health scientist. Access her [profile](#), social media [video](#), and [power pose](#), a combination that is sure to *inspire* young learners to aspire for the stars, like Joyonna.

Finally, [Math Communities](#) provides a space where K-12 students, families, and educators can play math games together! Participants access materials designed by professional

mathematicians and educators for free and join a virtual community where interest in math is supported, encouraged, and made fun. Finally, utilize a toolkit around four best practices for engaging families in mathematics education developed by researchers [here](#).

Nebraska ELO Programs: A Closer Look

TMC Spotlight: Walthill Public Schools



Omaha Nation's Project Washkon at Walthill Public School has been busy at work with their Think Make Create (TMC) lab for the last 12 months. Walthill received their TMC Lab in late 2020 and immediately put it to use in support of existing afterschool projects as well as using it for new activities in afterschool.

In May 2021, Walthill applied for and received a TMC Gardening upgrade from which they were able to expand outdoor and environmental engagement through things like the BioBlitz, Environmental scavenger hunt activities and many others. Shortly thereafter, they also applied to the Beyond School Bells Summer of Innovation grant and implemented a uniquely student-oriented garden project where students in Project Washkon worked with those in the school's shop class to build raised bed gardens as well as a garden shed to house the gardening tools that would not fit in their TMC. Students were able to put their TMC Gardening upgrade to immediate use by preparing the beds, planting various vegetables, and caring for the garden. In mid-summer, they built on their understanding of the biological factors that supported their gardens with a BioBlitz run entirely out of their TMC. Students were able to test their own soil texture and composition in addition to learning about groundwater, natural filtration and their local water sources.

After a summer full of outdoor, environmental, and gardening projects, Walthill was invited to serve as one of two pilot sites for the Beyond School Bells Grow NE project, which will explore future food systems through experimentation with innovative gardening tools and local experts and opportunities. This project will tie in TMC Lab activities, tools, and opportunities through the fall and even indoor activities through the winter. Stay tuned for news of continued food systems, gardening, and many other TMC activities out of Project Washkon - they don't have any plans to slow down!

- Dakota Staggs and Sandy Day, Beyond School Bells & Julie Boyle, Nebraska Extension

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TMC Newsletters



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