

# ESSER COLLABORATIVE ELO



SUMMER 2023 REPORT

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# ESSER OVERVIEW

The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER), administered by the U.S. Department of Education in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, provided emergency financial assistance to public school districts nationwide.

ESSER III funding allowed state and local education agencies to ensure safe in-person instruction, address unfinished learning, and support evidence-based, sustainable programs that mitigated the pandemic's impact on students.

In May 2021, the State Board approved the creation of the ESSER Collaborative ELO in partnership with Beyond School Bells (BSB)—Nebraska's statewide afterschool and summer learning network and a program of Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFF). This collaboration supported the distribution and administration of ESSER III funds for summer and expanded learning programs. The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) served as the fiscal agent, with NCFF-BSB providing technical assistance, support, and professional learning.



## ESSER COLLABORATIVE ELO COMMUNITIES

To identify highly impacted communities and sites, the NDE triangulated school identification (e.g., CSI, TSI, ATSI) and achievement data, COVID-19 impact, and measures of a community's ability to respond to crisis (social vulnerability index). ESSER III dollars were provided to highly impacted districts with pre-existing after-school and summer programs and to start new programs that would help students recover learning loss from the pandemic. Selected communities were categorized into Incubator, Accelerator, or Accelerator with Incubator sites.

**Incubator sites** are newly developed programs and/or sites that do not receive 21st Century Community Learning Center funds.

**Accelerator sites** are established programs and/or sites that receive 21st Century Community Learning Center funds in addition to ESSER funding.

**Accelerator with Incubator sites** are established programs that added additional new programming sites with ESSER funds.

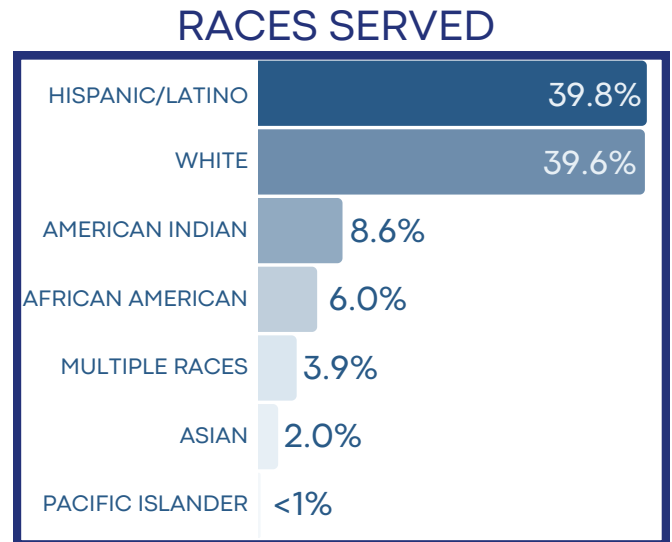
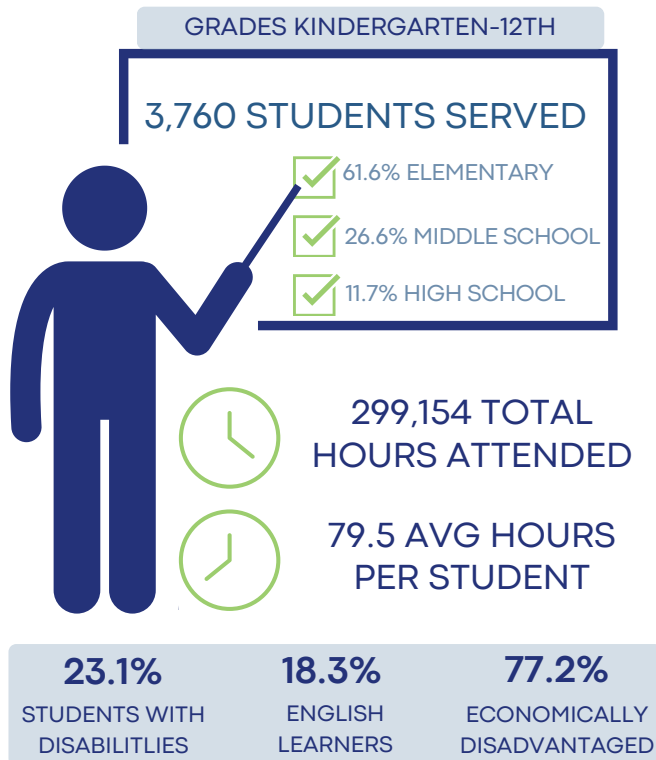


“ We had almost 100 students enrolled and participating all three weeks. Our last week we went on two field trips, had a picnic, and had a family showcase. Almost half of our families attended the showcase. Students were asking about next year's plans and were excited to hear that we have a program during the school year.

Of the 29 Incubator programs, 24 operated summer programming for the first time in 2023.

# WHO WE SERVED

## ALL ESSER-FUNDED SITES



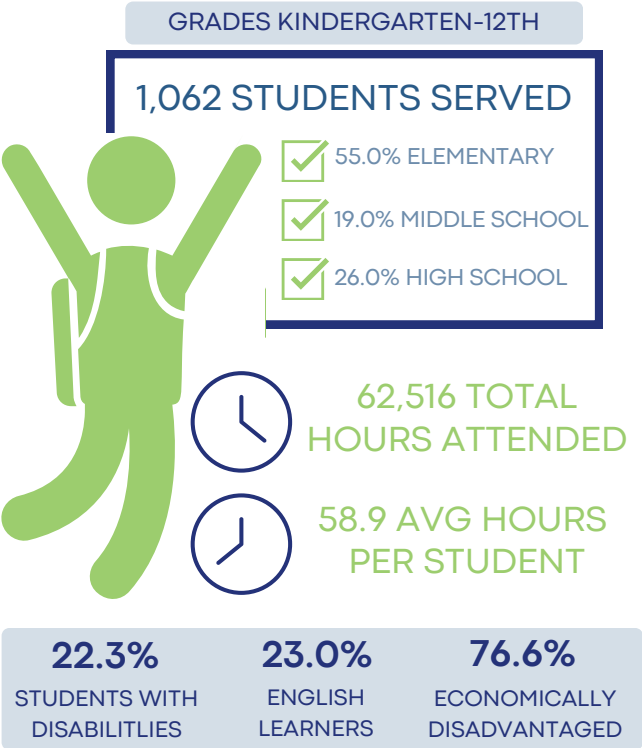
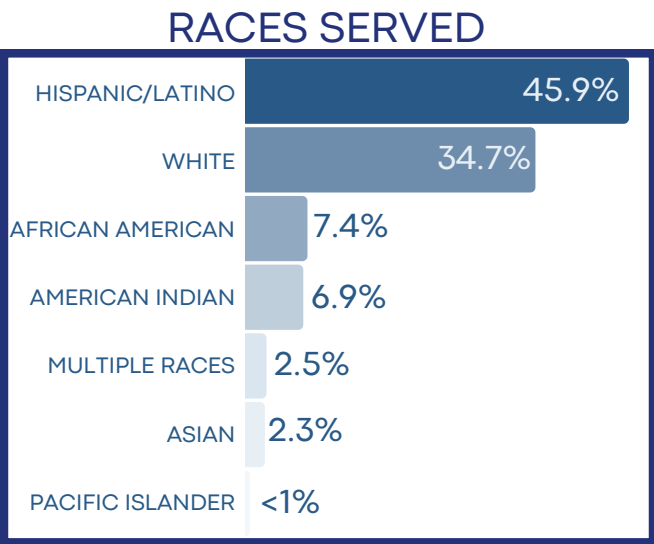
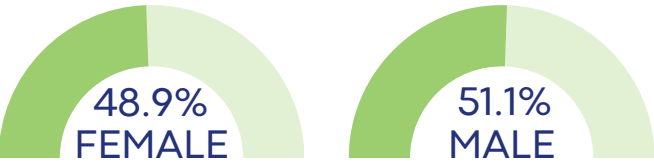
## SUMMER SITE LOCATIONS

### ESSER Collaborative ELO Communities

Summer 2023



# INCUBATOR SITES



# ACCELERATOR SITES

GRADES KINDERGARTEN-12TH

2,699 STUDENTS SERVED

- ✓ 64.3% ELEMENTARY
- ✓ 29.7% MIDDLE SCHOOL
- ✓ 6.0% HIGH SCHOOL



236,638 TOTAL HOURS ATTENDED

87.7 AVG HOURS PER STUDENT

23.4%

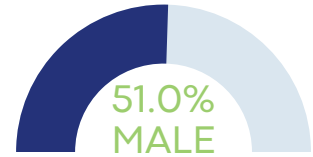
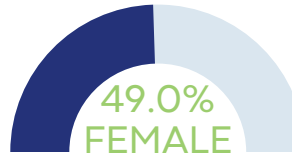
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

16.5%

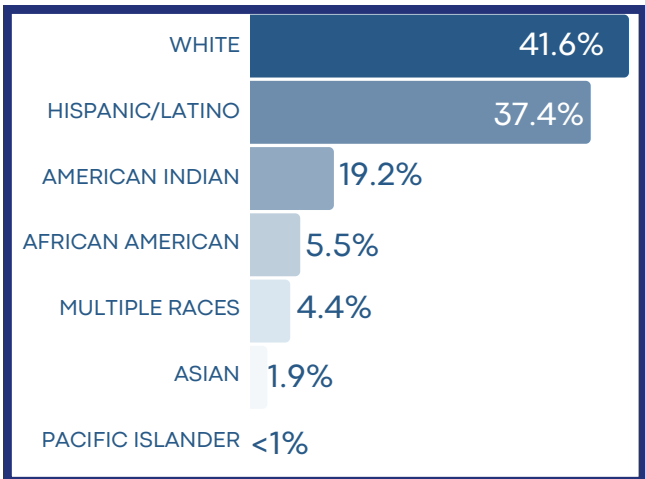
ENGLISH LEARNERS

77.5%

ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED



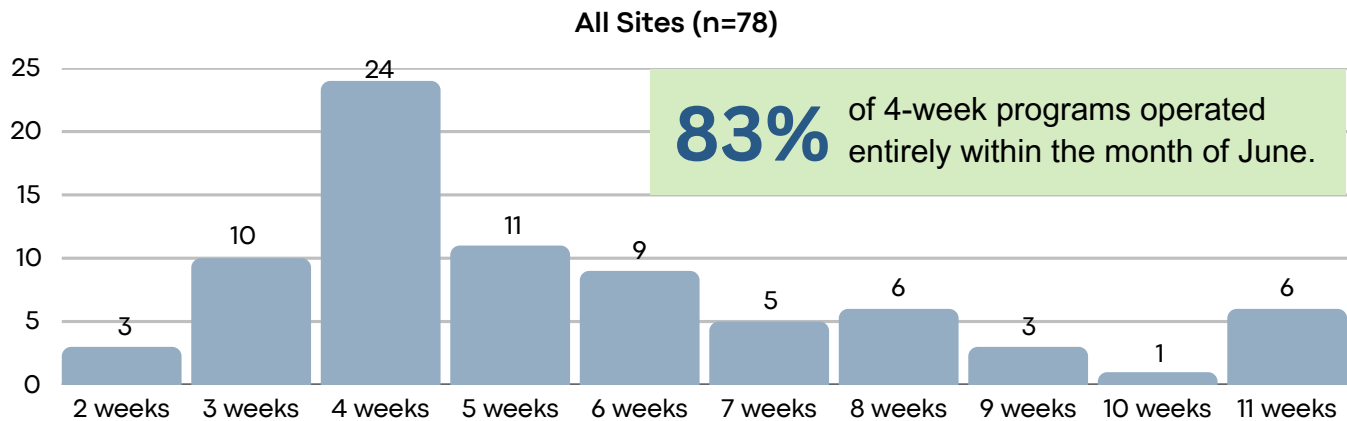
## RACES SERVED



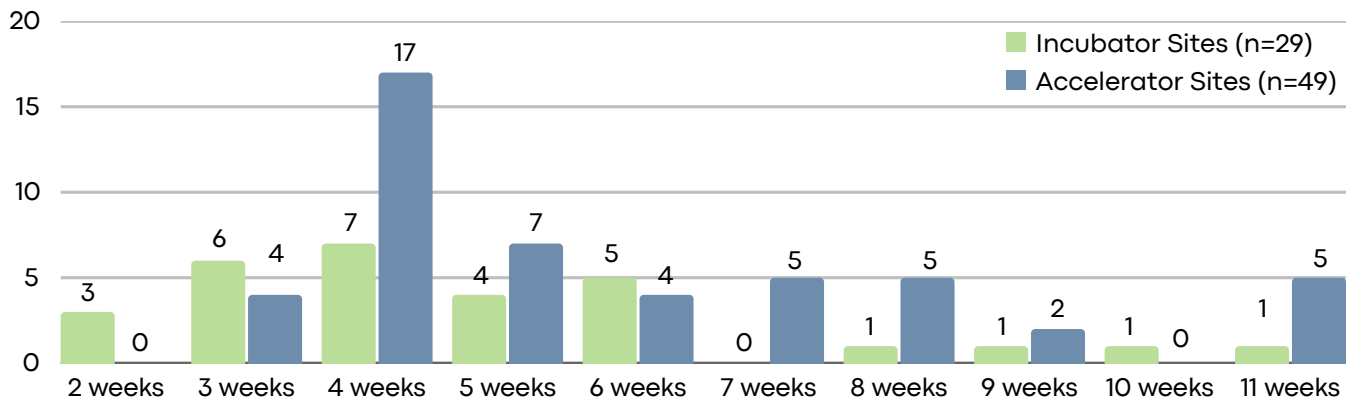
# SUMMER PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Communities saw a variety of summer operating schedules, with programs ranging from 2 weeks to almost 3 months. It was most common for programs to last about a month, with 45% of programs running for 4-to-5 weeks. Many programs planned their schedules to align with their district's summer school sessions.

Number of Weeks Sites Offered Programming



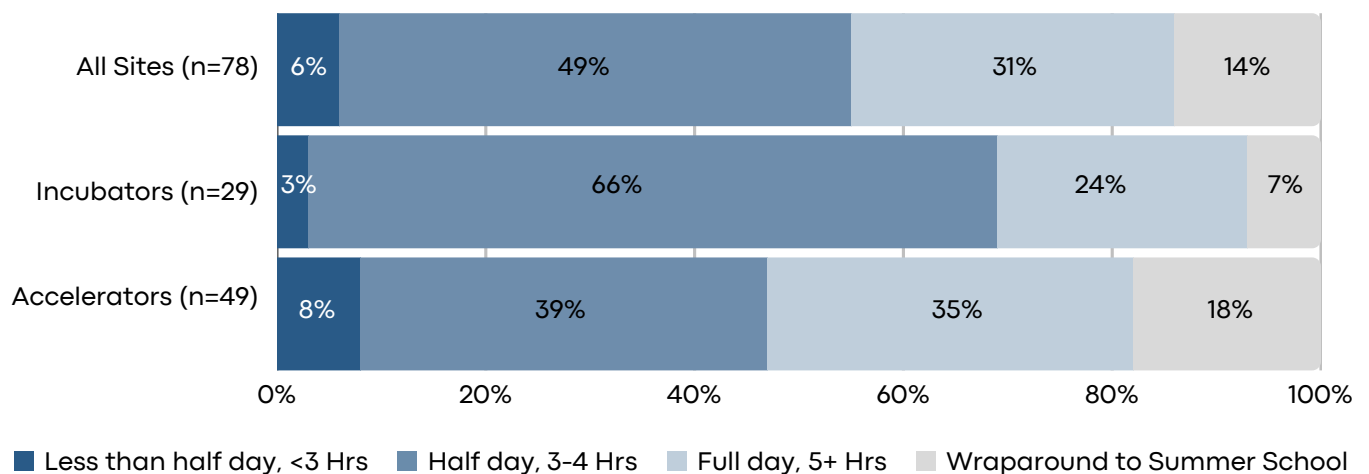
Program Length by Site Type





### Program Hours per Day

Most sites operated half-day or full-day programs. A higher percentage of Accelerator sites offered programming as a wraparound service to summer school compared to Incubator sites.

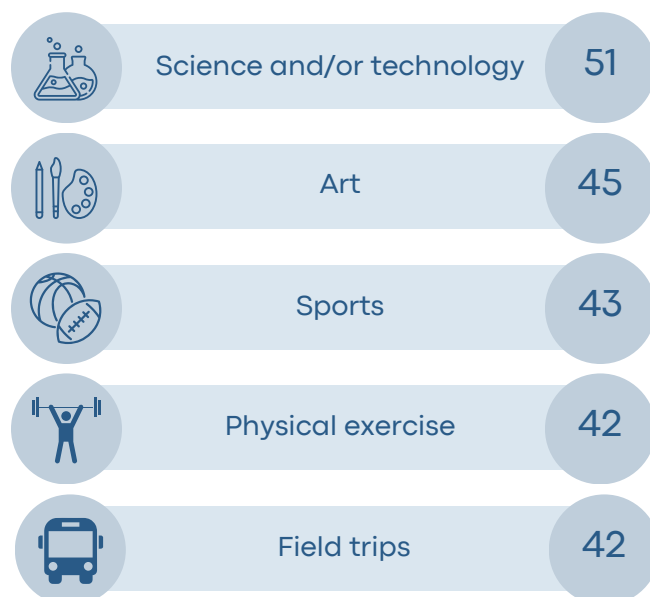


# ACTIVITIES

Participation in summer programming offers students access to engaging, hands-on, expanded learning activities. Many summer sites offer longer hours or themed weeks, so students may take part in extended, multi-day projects. And because summer often means warm, sunny weather, participants can engage with outdoor classrooms, gardens, or play spaces that they might not be able to access during the school year.



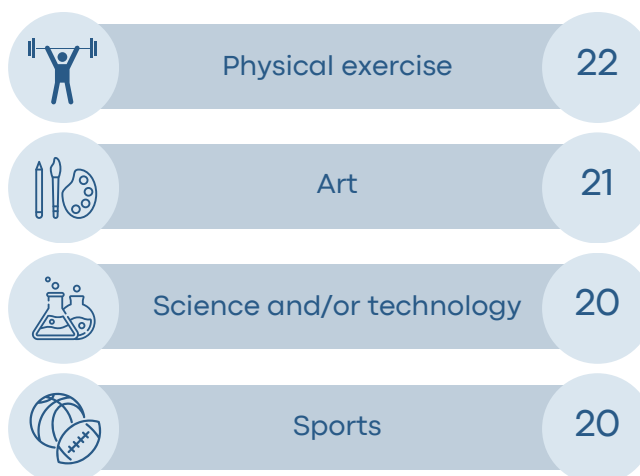
### Top 5 Club Themes



Additional themes included gardening, career exploration, entrepreneurship, cooking, and environmental conservation.



### Common Camp Themes



Additional themes included cooking, outdoor activities/nature exploration, engineering, eSports, experiential learning via local partnerships, and TMC activities.



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## CLUB AND CAMP HIGHLIGHTS

“We started an Engineering Club for students, and they enjoyed learning about Mars and the curriculum was very hands-on and engaging. Families were invited to an end-of-summer gathering for students to show off their projects.”

“Teaching the kids how to cook meals they might not be able to at home. Seeing them excited to try new things and want to take home some for their parents.”

“We were able to provide the clubs in English and Spanish.”

“We worked to build tables and continue to grow our outdoor education portion of our garden. We also completed the hoop house that had previously been partially built but was unusable previously. We were able to grow new variety’s of crops this summer to share with our students and our community.”

“We offered all our students swimming lessons, and we provided them with towels, swimsuits, and goggles.”

“Students were offered pallet art club. The students were able to use wood from pallets to build anything that they wanted. A group of students from the Dungeons and Dragons club decided to design and build a D&D table for them to use during their club. This was student-led learning. We are excited for the students to use this table for their club.”



Field trips are important experiences for students. They help broaden student horizons in many ways including familiarizing them with local industry and other potential future workplaces, exposing them to science-focused and other types of museums, and the arts. For students living in underserved rural areas, field trips sometimes offer first-time or rare exposure outside of the community and provide safe spaces to have fun learning experiences with friends that otherwise would not be available to them.



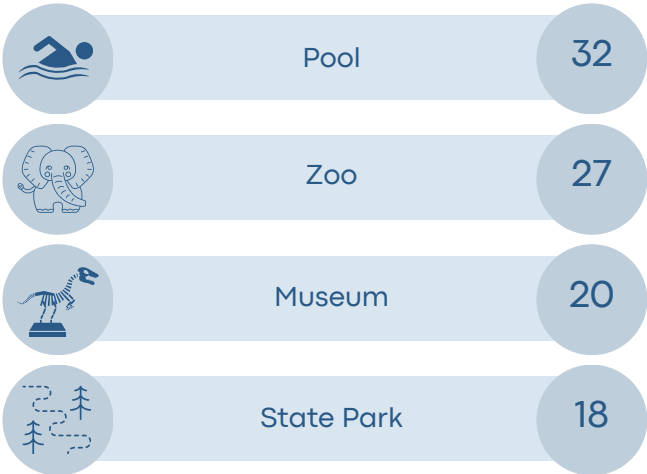
67.9%

of sites included field trips with students



## Field Trips

### Common Event Themes



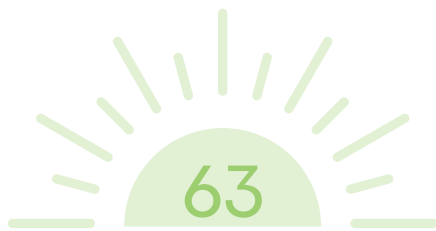
Other destinations included science centers, trampoline parks, local libraries, municipal buildings, bowling, and movie theaters.

### FIELD TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

“With so much local history in western Nebraska, students always enjoy learning more about the history and features of their region through trips to the Wildcat Hills and Legacy of the Plains Museum.”

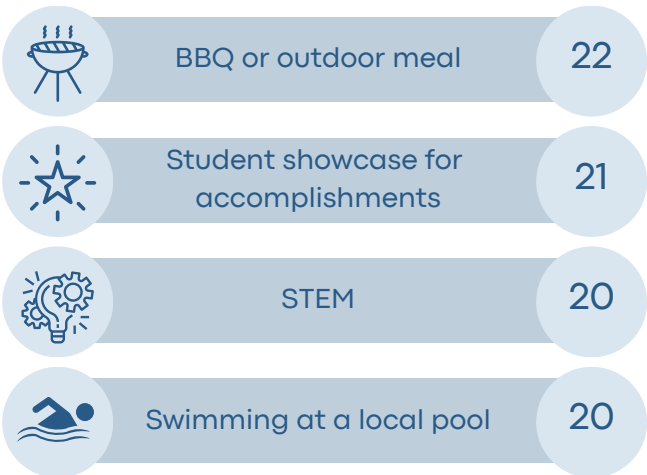
“On the wildlife safari field trip, students journaled what they saw on the field trip, and then reflected on what they experienced.”

Family engagement is about increasing the involvement of family members and caretakers in afterschool and summer learning programs. Partnership and coordination between afterschool programs, school partners, and families are key to the academic, behavioral, and social success of our students. Programs held 63 events over the summer, often in partnerships with key community stakeholders, for students and their families around a variety of themes and activities.

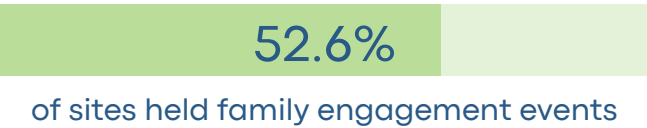


## Family Engagement Events

### Common Event Themes



Other events included summer kick-off events, student marketplaces, horseback riding, student theater, movie nights, and a carnival.



## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

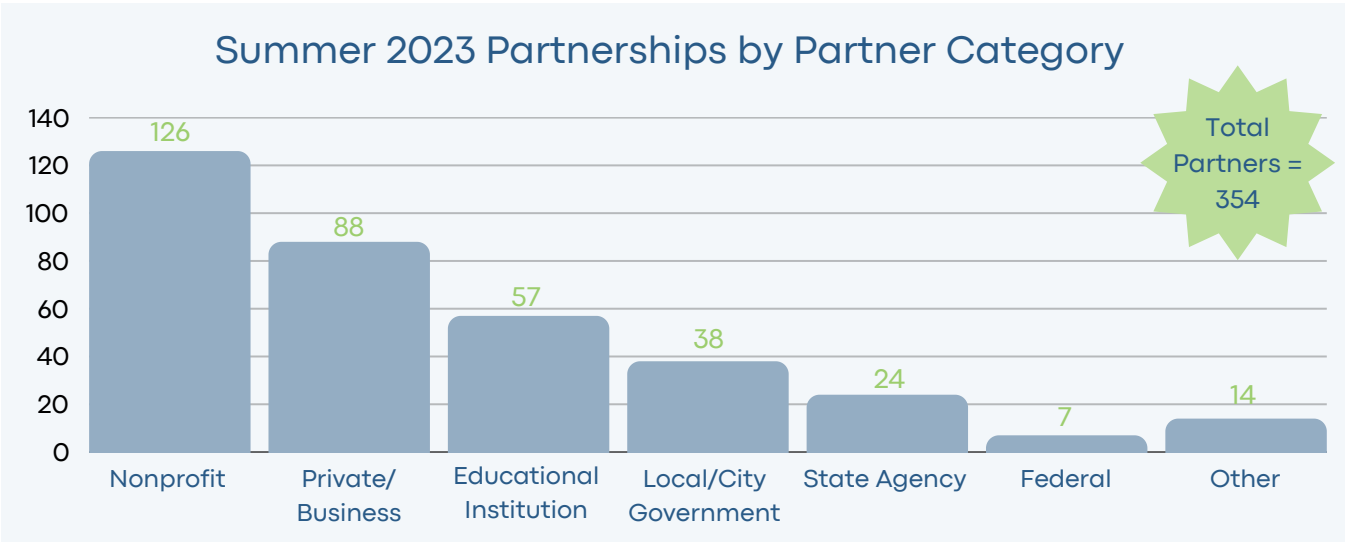
“Our end-of-the-year BBQ was a huge success. We had horseback riding, a color run, and tons of food. Lots of families attend this event to close out the summer camp.”

“We had a bicycle rodeo with an obstacle course for students with local law enforcement interacting and teaching the students about basic bicycle safety. We encouraged students to bring their own bikes, scooters, tricycles, etc. to participate, and we purchased a girls and boys bike for those students that did not bring theirs to participate in the event.”



# SUMMER PROGRAM PARTNERS

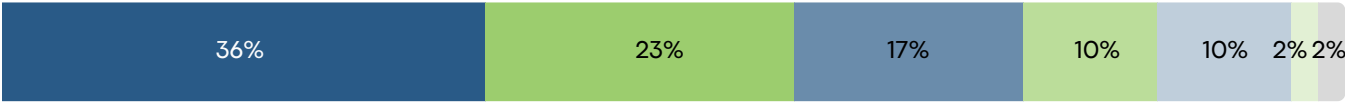
Partnerships within the community aid in the sustainability of afterschool and summer programs. Sites partnered with a variety of organizations and individuals in Summer 2024. Nonprofit groups (e.g., Boys and Girl Scouts of America and the YMCA) and private/business entities accounted for over half of all partners. Local and city government (e.g., chambers of commerce and city parks and rec) made up almost a fifth of partnerships. Educational institutions, community members and religious organizations (which fall into the Other category), and state and federal agencies were other common partners for summer programs.



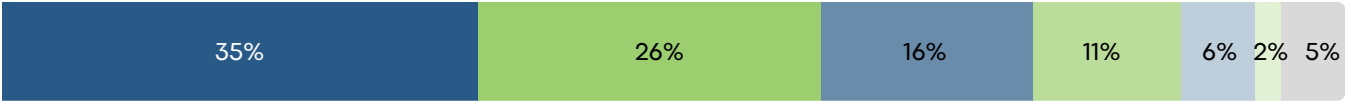
## Partnership Categories at Incubator and Accelerator Sites

The makeup of partnership types at Incubator and Accelerator sites was similar in Summer 2023. Nonprofit organizations and businesses were the most common partners, accounting for about 60% of partnerships in each group. State agencies (e.g., state parks or natural resources districts) represented a slightly higher percentage of partnerships at Incubator sites (10% vs 6%), and other partnerships (e.g., families or individual volunteers from the community) were more common at Accelerator sites (5% vs 2%).

Incubator Partnerships (n=100)



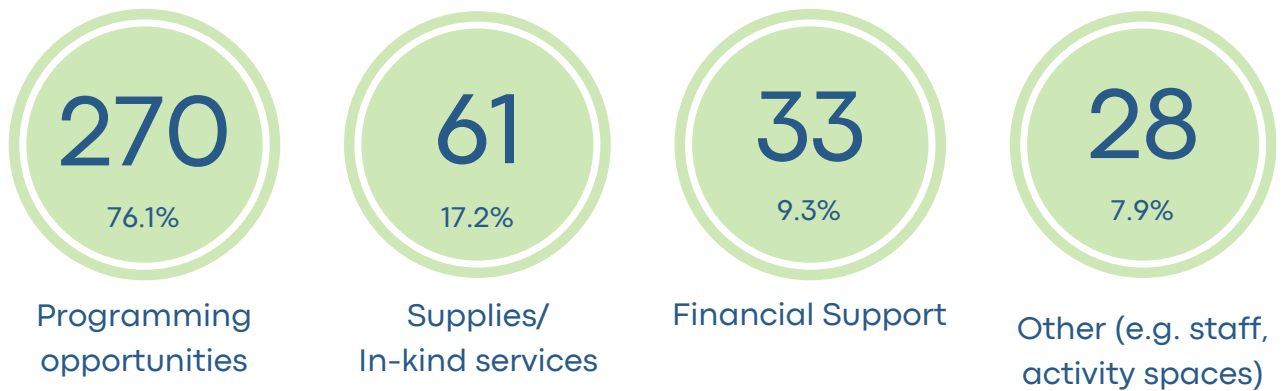
Accelerator Partnerships (n=254)



■ Nonprofit ■ Private/Business ■ Educational Institution ■ Local/City Government  
■ State Agency ■ Federal ■ Other

## Partners Supported Summer Programs in Many Ways

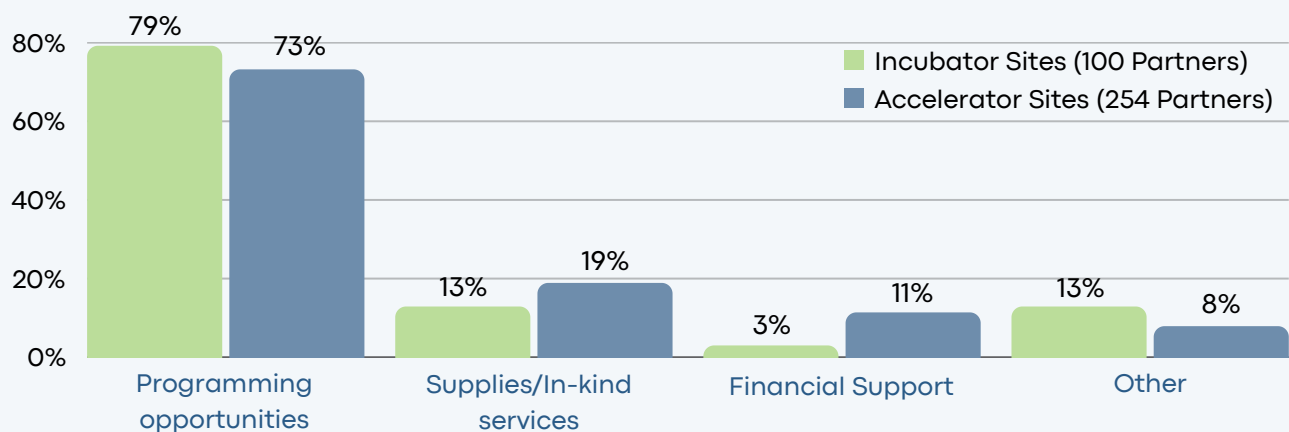
Partners provide funding and many different types of supplies and services that help sustain programs and increase the variety of programming and activities available to students and families. Programs reported partners who provided low-cost or free admissions or transportation for field trips, supplies for gardens and outdoor classrooms, food or prizes for family engagement events, or funds to spend on activities and events. Most partners directly supported programming, which included providing curriculum and leading clubs or activities (e.g., STEM clubs, cooking classes, and swimming lessons).



Sites reported receiving **\$568,900** in direct financial support from community partners

### Supports Provided, By Site Type

Programming opportunities were a common feature of partnerships for both Incubator and Accelerator sites. Partnerships where sites received supplies and in-kind services or financial support were more common at Accelerator sites. Incubator sites reported higher percentages of other supports, such as free or reduced-price program spaces or staffing.



Note: Some partners provided multiple types of support to sites

## What Does a Partnership Network Look Like?

Cozad Elementary School, an Accelerator program, reported 17 unique partnerships in Summer 2023. Partners represented a mix of categories, with most considered private businesses (7) or non-profit organizations (5). The network of partners provided students with programming opportunities, such as lessons about gardening and growing corn, up-close encounters with livestock and birds, and information on safety and nutrition. Partners donated food and activities (e.g., carnival games and dunking booths) for Family Fun Night and supported field trips by supplementing admission costs and donating buses.



Cozad Elementary School

### Local/City Agencies

- Dawson County Sheriff's Office ■
- Wilson Public Library ■

### Educational Institutions

- Cozad Community Schools ■
- Nebraska Extension ■

### Other

- Community member ■

### Private Businesses

- Artistic Innovations ■
- Culligan ■
- Fox Theater ■
- GCF Rentals ■
- Valley Vending ■
- Walmart ■
- Waypoint Bank ■ ■

### Non-profit Organizations

- Bloom Box ■
- Edgerton Explorit Center ■
- Farm Bureau Foundation ■
- Future Kids ■
- Kearney Children's Museum ■

Support types: ■ Supplies/In-Kind Services ■ Programming Opportunities ■ Other

*Note: Cozad did not report receiving direct financial support in Summer 2023.*

# SURVEY DATA

Surveys were distributed to all students enrolled in the ESSER Collaborative ELO summer programs. The parents or primary caregivers of enrolled students were also surveyed. Both surveys provided lists of statements regarding the quality of the program and asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with the statement. The following pages share the statewide results (Accelerator and Incubator sites together), Incubator-only results, and Accelerator-only results for the student and parent groups.

Surveys were given to students in grades kindergarten through 12th, and included five different statements. Students were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement, on a scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree. The statements focused on the areas of *education, program fun, peer relationships, staff*, and whether they would *recommend the program* to others.

The structure of the parent survey was identical to the structure of the student survey, but focused on the areas of *enrollment, their child's experience, school readiness, parent involvement, staff*, and whether they would *recommend the program to other families*.



“

My child participated in the STEM summer camp program. He absolutely LOVED it. The people were very nice and [my child] said it was one of the best experiences he has ever had.

”

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## STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS: ALL ESSER-FUNDED SITES

Across the state of Nebraska, a total of 1,478 surveys were completed by students in kindergarten through 12th grade who were enrolled in summer programming. The following results are from surveys collected from all ESSER funded programs and sites. The percentages below reflect the student's level of agreement with each of the five statements included on the survey.



88%

of students either agreed or strongly agreed that they learned something new during the summer program.



92%

of students either agreed or strongly agreed that they had friends and/or made new friends during the summer



92%

of students either agreed or strongly agreed that the summer program staff were good leaders



92%

of students either agreed or strongly agreed that the summer program was fun



88%

of students either agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the summer program to other students

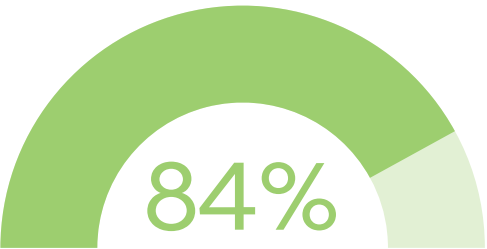
# STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS: INCUBATOR SITES

Incubator sites are those that are newly developed, and do not receive 21st Century Community Learning Center funds. Students from nine Incubator sites completed surveys. The student responses collected across these sites ranged from 1st grade through 12th grade.



87%

of students across sites either agreed or strongly agreed that they learned something new during the summer program.



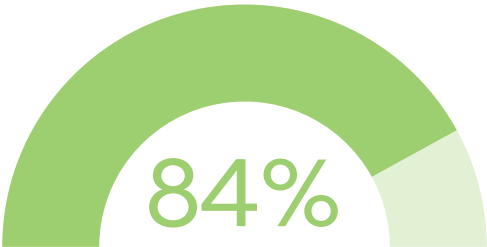
of students across sites either agreed or strongly agreed that the summer program was fun.



of students across sites either agreed or strongly agreed that the summer program staff were good leaders (friendly, prepared, and energetic).



of students across sites either agreed or strongly agreed that they had friends and/or made new friends during the summer program.



of students across sites either agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the summer program to other students.

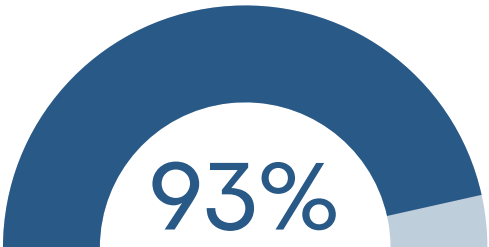
# STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS: ACCELERATOR SITES

Accelerator sites are established programs that receive both 21st Century Community Learning Center and ESSER funds. Thirty three Accelerator sites shared their student survey results. The student responses collected across these sites ranged from 1st grade through 12th grade.

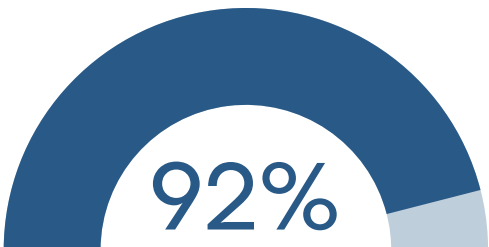


88%

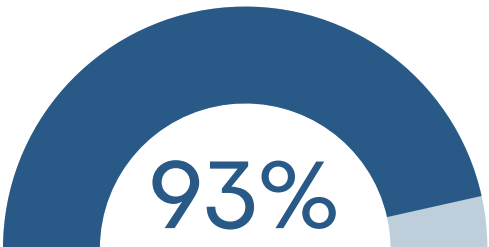
of students across sites either agreed or strongly agreed that they learned something new during the summer program.



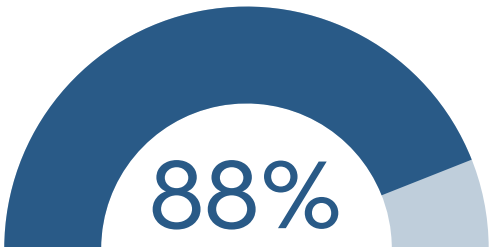
of students across sites either agreed or strongly agreed that the summer program was fun.



of students across sites either agreed or strongly agreed that the summer program staff were good leaders (friendly, prepared, and energetic).



of students across sites either agreed or strongly agreed that they had friends and/or made new friends during the summer program.



of students across sites either agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the summer program to other students.

## PARENT SURVEY RESULTS: ALL ESSER-FUNDED SITES

Across the state of Nebraska, surveys were completed by 891 parents of students enrolled in ELO summer programs. Similar to the student surveys, parents were given a set of statements, and asked to indicate their level of agreement with each on a scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree. The following results are from the surveys collected from parents with children enrolled in ESSER-funded programs. The percentages reflect the parent's level of agreement with each of the survey statements.

95%

of parents either agreed or strongly agreed that their child was highly engaged in the summer program and enjoyed attending.

93%

of parents either agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend this program to other parents.

94%

either agreed or strongly agreed that their child had increased opportunities to interact socially with others.

84%

felt satisfied with the level of communication from the program.

90%

either agreed or strongly agreed that the summer program staff were good leaders.

60%

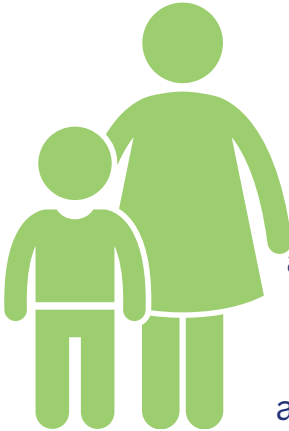
either agreed or strongly agreed that they had opportunities to get involved in the summer program.

81%

either agreed or strongly agreed that their child is more prepared for the upcoming school year.

# PARENT SURVEY RESULTS: INCUBATOR SITES

Twelve Incubator sites collected surveys from parents of the students enrolled in their programs. The following results reflect the parents' level of agreement with each of the statements regarding the summer programming.



**95%**  
of parents either agreed or strongly agreed that their child was highly engaged in the summer program and enjoyed attending.



either agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend this program to other parents.



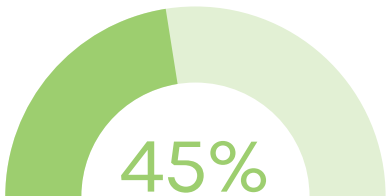
either agreed or strongly agreed that their child had increased opportunities to interact socially with others.



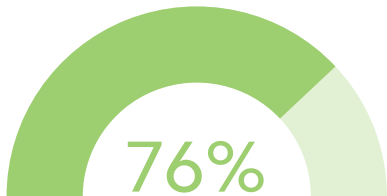
of parents felt satisfied with the level of communication from the program.



either agreed or strongly agreed that the summer program staff were good leaders.



either agreed or strongly agreed that they had opportunities to get involved in the summer program.



either agreed or strongly agreed that their child is more prepared for the upcoming school year.

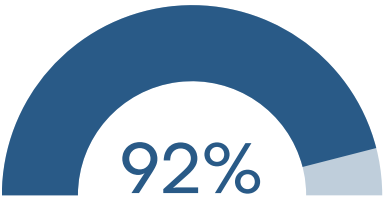
# PARENT SURVEY RESULTS: ACCELERATOR SITES

Forty five Accelerator sites shared their parent survey results. The following results reflect the parents' level of agreement with each of the statements regarding the summer programming.

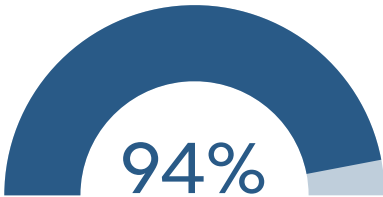


95%

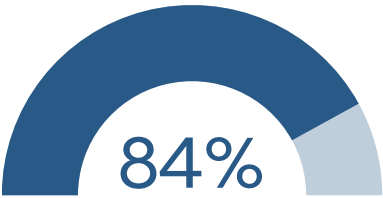
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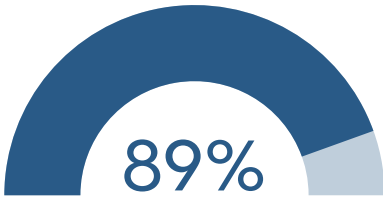
either agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend this program to other parents.



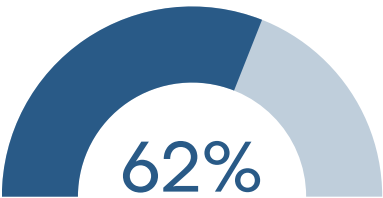
either agreed or strongly agreed that their child had increased opportunities to interact socially with others.



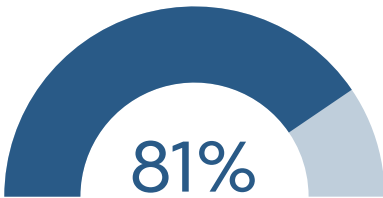
of parents felt satisfied with the level of communication from the program.



either agreed or strongly agreed that the summer program staff were good leaders.



either agreed or strongly agreed that they had opportunities to get involved in the summer program.



either agreed or strongly agreed that their child is more prepared for the upcoming school year.

# STORYTELLING PROJECT

To showcase some of the amazing projects Nebraska ELOs undertook with ESSER III summer funds to serve NE students and communities, Beyond School Bells (BSB) asked a select group of sites to pilot Summer Storytelling Projects. **The goal was to identify a need being met with the grant funds and to tell an informal, data-based story.**

In addition to ESSER III summer funds, some programs also received layered BSB *Summer of Youth* grants. Programs receiving BSB funds were asked to incorporate youth voice into their programming by either using statewide data previously collected by BSB or by holding their own Youth Brainstorming data collection processes.

**The project's intention was to provide staff with a simple, flexible, and fun storytelling structure.** Sites were given a planning template to guide them through who would be involved (as participants or data collectors) and how they could use qualitative and/or quantitative data to support their story.

Projects included creating a STEM Experience Library for programs to



## Storytelling Template

- **Introduction:** Context of the story
- **Initial Assessment of Need:** Description of the problem/need being addressed
- **Program:** Description of what was done
- **Impact:** Perceived immediate and future impact on wither the students, the community, or the program
- **Unanticipated Impact:** Lessons learned along the way
- **Final Comments:** Wrap up and final thoughts

## Participation in the Project


Fifteen stories were collected from both urban and rural summer program sites.

### Participating communities included:

- Humboldt Table Rock Steinauer – HTRS Elementary
- Lincoln – 21st Century Community Learning Centers (9 sites)
- North Platte – Kids Klub
- Omaha - Collective for Youth
- South Sioux City – South Sioux City Community Schools
- Valentine – Valentine Community Schools
- Wakefield – Wakefield Afterschool Program

share STEM activities, trainings, and resources; youth informed programming; STEAM programming; soccer clinics, swimming lessons, and other sports; enriching field trips; and community gardens, among others.

# Storytelling Project Spotlights



## Incubator Site South Sioux City

**Initial Assessment of Need:** Following the construction of an outdoor classroom in 2022, crushed asphalt was used to solve a problem with drainage issues around the space. The summer grant project allowed us to remove the crushed asphalt and turn the space into an inviting and relaxing space for students and staff to enjoy.

**Program:** South Sioux City Middle School hosted summer programming for 116 students in grades 6-8 from May 30 to June 22. Students had time each day to work on creating a garden space around the existing outdoor classroom. Students worked with local teachers and a master gardener to construct raised garden beds, plant 88 plants and grasses, mulch the area, assemble benches, and water the plants.

**Impact:** It is hard to put into words the impact this project has had on our students. There is a great sense of pride among them in completing the project. It was fun to see them transition from moans and groans from being told they were going to work on creating a garden space to looking forward to it each day.



Students put down their phones and picked up shovels to create something that is a benefit to their school, community, and fellow classmates. Even before the Ribbon Cutting, members of the community were seen using the space. The new space includes wheelchair accessible raised sensory garden beds, benches for reading & relaxing, and an assortment of perennial plants and grasses that will continue to grow each year.

On June 20, a Ribbon Cutting and Garden Party was hosted to dedicate the space and celebrate the students' hard work. It was attended by 99 students, 15 teachers, 7 district leaders & Board of Education members, 22 family members of youth who worked on the project, and 2 local media outlets attended and prepared news stories on the event.

“

...it was obvious that working in the garden space was a highlight of the summer enrichment experience for many of our youth.

”

# Storytelling Project Spotlights



Accelerator Site

Wakefield

**Initial Assessment of Need:** The Wakefield After-School Program was started in August of 2022. We have a high ELL population along with being a Title 1 school. Because of our diverse population, our students are lacking in life experiences and have academic needs that can be addressed during After-School Programming. We want to offer those experiences to students while also boosting academic skills. We have used ESSER grants along with BSB Summer of Youth Grant to keep our program sustainable.

**Program:** Our program had four overall themes including Arts, outdoor education and animals, reading, and STEM. Students were provided programming on campus for each of the themes and then were provided with hands-on learning days off campus including local business tours, spending a day at the Henry Doorly Zoo, visiting Majestic Theatre, and going to Washington Pavilion Science Center.



**Impact:** We were shocked by the amount of positive feedback we received about programming from students, parents, and the community and we were over the moon about the numbers of students showing up each day! We were able to provide programming for roughly 50 students in grades 3-6. Students experienced 40 hours of enrichment activities and learning experiences through our community partnerships.

Parents in the community shared that with the programming and supplies we provided they were able to extend learning at home as well. Ponca State Park provided each family with a park permit, fishing pole, tackle box, camping equipment, etc. Parents shared how they were able to take their children out to the park for hiking and fishing; an experience they may not have been able to provide without the supplies we gave them.

# Storytelling Project Spotlights



## Incubator Site HTRS Elementary

**Initial Assessment of Need:** The children in our communities suffered a great loss when our local swimming pool closed this year. Kids needed a place to go. The HTRS STEAM program provided a safe and engaging place for students to explore, learn, and play.

Students participated in a youth voice survey so that activities could be planned around student interests. HTRS staff incorporated the top 5 choices into summer programming through student-led themes of cooking and nature

**Program:** Students were most interested in cooking activities, so staff designed a "Nailed It" cooking camp. Students were given photos and were taught techniques to recreate the recipes. Students partnered with the Summer Lunch program and created desserts each day. They made fruit designs, cereal bars, and dessert pizzas, and the grand finale was a cupcake war!



Students also participated in a nature camp where they explored learning in and through nature-based activities. We concluded the week with a field trip to Arbor Day Farm.

Following this, in a "jump start STEAM style," students participated in grade-level based activities for math, science, literacy, and STEM. We concluded the summer with a theatre camp. We partnered with Missoula Children's Theatre to provide a week of auditions, rehearsals, and two performances!

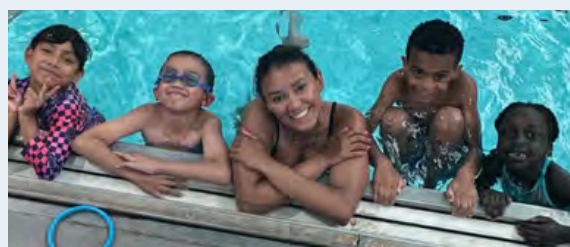
**Impact:** This summer was full of adventure for students at HTRS. Our goal was to serve 65 students; we had more than 80 students participate in the HTRS STEAM camp!



## Accelerator Site Lincoln

**Initial Assessment of Need:** After a quick survey we found out only a handful of students felt comfortable swimming without assistance so we knew lessons would be highly beneficial to most of the students in the program.

**Program:** In June 2023, Elliott CLC partnered with the YMCA to provide swimming lessons for every student in the Wrap Around Program. Each student was put into a group based on their swimming skills. We went through 4 weeks of quality swim lessons. Each group consisted of 5 kids, 2 certified swim instructors, and 1 program staff member, creating the perfect atmosphere to get these kids comfortable in the water.



**Impact:** After the 4 weeks more than half of our students felt comfortable being in the water.



### Swim Skills We Learned!

- Front & back floats
- Ice-cream-scoop paddle
- Blowing air out under water
- Diving for rings/toys
- Treading water
- Jumping from poolside or diving board into the water

# PHOTOVOICE PROJECT

Photovoice is a community-based project that gathers participant-taken photographs and narratives to translate experience into actionable knowledge and change. Photovoice puts cameras in the hands of individuals with a variety of experiences so that they may share their perspectives on health, family, community, and their futures.

In May of 2023, BSB offered support to 2 ESSER-funded programs willing to pilot photovoice with their students. Sites were provided support and training for students from the Munroe-Meyer Institute. MMI staff regularly checked in with program staff and helped sites troubleshoot issues. MMI staff trained students on the Photovoice process, as well as ethical and safety guidelines.

## Guiding Questions

1

What makes you feel excited about coming to your summer program?

2

Is there anything that makes you feel bored or feel like you'd rather be somewhere else?



## THE PHOTOVOICE PROCESS



LEARN ABOUT PHOTOVOICE



TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS



CHOOSE PHOTOS



WRITE CAPTIONS



DISCUSS AND GROUP PHOTOS



PLAN & HOLD AN EXHIBIT



CELEBRATE AND REFLECT

Wang, C., & Burris, M.A. (1997). Photovoice: concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Education and Behavior*. 24(3):369-87.



*“Me and my partner during City Build. We are cutting boxes. We were using teamwork. I wish there was more time in the day to build.”*

### Photovoice has three main goals:

- 1 Enable people to record and reflect on a community's strengths and concerns
- 2 Promote critical dialogue and knowledge through large- and small-group discussion of photographs
- 3 Reach policymakers

In the afterschool space, Photovoice is a fun, creative way to engage students to share what they see in their program through their eyes. The more students are heard and involved with key decision making, the more they benefit as learners, leaders, and individuals.

Through the photovoice process, the Super Kids Club in Broken Bow identified the need for transportation for their program. Situated across a



*“We were on a walk to the park. I’m flexing. My friends and I were just being goofy. I don’t actually like walking. I wish we could get a bus so we didn’t have to walk all the time.”*

highway, students cannot walk to experience opportunities in the community. The program staff led this project with the student support. Students compiled a video that was shared with community leaders about the need for transportation for their afterschool program.

Umo'ho<sup>n</sup> Nation embarked on a community-wide project structured around an afterschool club that planted, maintained, and harvested garden crops from the summer into the late fall. The harvest was shared across the community.



*"Thank you Mother Earth"*

### Project Strengths

- Staff were able to see what students see, which made them more aware of how the students perceive their programs
- Photovoice provided an opportunity to show the community that the afterschool/summer space is more than daycare and how the money provided to a program is being spent
- Students embraced the opportunity to show what is important to them and to have a method for telling their stories
- The Photovoice method was able to show how learning during the school day is extended into the afterschool/summer program

### Considerations for Future Photovoice Projects

- Involve sites much sooner (e.g., January for a summer project) so there is enough time to plan and recruit student participants
- Provide a dedicated camera for each student participant
- Provide training on camera use and how to troubleshoot issues
- Ensure there is repository for photos or an efficient way to share photos electronically (the photo files tend to be very large)
- If needed, assist sites with presenting the results of their Photovoice project

# SUMMER CHALLENGES

Several sites discussed challenges related to **enrollment and attendance**. Some programs had lower-than-expected enrollment because of competition with family vacations or activities offered by different groups during the summer. Others found it difficult to plan correctly for their daily activities because of inconsistent attendance or changes in families' summer plans without communication. Some programs experienced drops in daily attendance when summer school sessions ended.

Some sites discussed challenges with **finding, hiring, and training enough staff** to maintain ratios for all interested students. Staffing shortages

limited capacity and impacted programming as some sites lacked enough qualified staff to run all the activities they wanted to include. In addition, a few programs experienced changes in site leadership at the end of the school year, which meant summer staff assumed additional administrative duties while new leadership was hired and trained.

**Student behaviors** were a challenge at some summer programs. Situations involving severe behaviors were especially challenging when combined with staffing shortages or with a lot of new staff who had limited training on behavior management.

**Transportation** also presented challenges for summer programs. Some sites had limited or no access to buses during the summer, and buses presented financial and scheduling challenges for programs that needed to transport large groups for field trips. A few programs noted that federal money (e.g., ESSER grants) cannot be spent on transportation. In addition, some programs reported that interested students could not attend summer programming because busing stopped when summer school ended or because they didn't qualify for bus transportation during the summer.



Sites encountered **logistical challenges** related to use of program spaces and planning field trips. Many schools underwent renovations or deep cleaning to prepare for the next school year, which limited programs' access to classrooms and other school facilities. Some programs were unable to use their school-year sites during the summer and operated in new locations. In some cases, these sites partnered with other school-based sites to operate together in one shared space. Some programs were challenged with scheduling multiple field trips while also considering weather, transportation, and the seasonal schedules of their destinations.

Many sites wanted to include new expanded learning opportunities to take advantage of summer weather and longer operating hours. **Planning new programming** presented challenges with training staff to lead activities, keeping students engaged, and collaborating with community partners. Some staff noted the difficulty in coordinating with partners weeks or months ahead of time when they were unsure what their enrollment numbers would be, what spaces they would have access to, or if other partners would also need space and time to provide programming.

Challenges varied somewhat between Accelerator and Incubator sites. About

one-fourth of Accelerator sites reported no challenges during the summer or framed their reported challenges as successes (e.g., wanting more time to provide programming). Those sites that did report challenges focused mostly on staffing shortages, lower-than-expected enrollment or attendance, and behavior management. Accelerators were more likely to report transportation as a challenge. Incubator sites more commonly described their programs as “new” or “first-year” and described challenges with finding space, developing programming, and establishing partnerships. Like Accelerator sites, Incubators commonly experienced challenges related to staffing and enrollment. About 10 percent of Incubator programs reported no challenges in Summer 2023.



# SUMMER HIGHLIGHTS

Despite the challenges sites faced, many programs also shared shining moments from their summer programming. Several sites discussed the impact of **positive relationships** between staff and students, and among peers. Programs offered activities that helped students practice collaboration and sportsmanship, and some programs offered opportunities for students to coach one another. Sites expressed how they provided students with opportunities to connect with peers and how excited their students were to attend each week.

Many programs highlighted the **smooth operation** of their summer sessions. This was in large part because of great staff, collaboration with other ESSER Summer sites, and commitment to providing high-quality, engaging, and safe activities.

**New programming** that successfully engaged students, such as themed maker spaces and a weights and sports skills club, were highlighted. Community partnerships were praised for their support in programming. Organizing field trips and camps provided opportunities that were not available or practical to do during the school year. Sites that worked on the development of gardens or gardening



shared how their summer efforts would support learning throughout the year. Sites discussed how activities supported leadership, responsibility, perseverance, emotional regulation, problem-solving, and design thinking.

Several programs took pride in their **enrollment numbers and high daily attendance**. Many were able to maintain or exceed previous summers' attendance and enrollment. One program shared that they recorded their highest daily attendance since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. For some sites, their summer enrollment was higher than during the school year.

**Academic support** was a highlight for some sites. Programs reported that students used tutoring and academic support provided during the summer. This included working on building academic skills, credit recovery, and even college credit opportunities. Some sites provided topics in multiple languages to build students' academic and conversational language skills. Opportunities to grow social-emotional and academic skills were offered in engaging activities with many programs.

Many programs shared successes in **engaging families and community members**. One site reported that more than 200 family and community members attended their event. Programs established new community partnerships, which opened more programming opportunities. Sites reported positive community feedback from service projects and other programming. Overall, summer programs provided a positive community impact.

### Key Findings

- ★ ESSER funds supported a wide range of expanded learning opportunities for students enrolled in summer programs in 2023. Sites offered a total of 863 clubs, camps, field trips, and family engagement events.
- ★ Summer program partnerships provided additional materials, programming opportunities, and direct funds to sites. Nonprofit organizations and businesses made up more than 60% of summer partners.
- ★ Most students and parents rated summer programs positively and said they would recommend their programs to their peers. Both groups recognized the social benefits of attending summer programs.

### Recommendations

- ★ Many parents said summer programs lacked opportunities for parent involvement. Continue providing programs with family engagement strategies and opportunities to fund engagement events.
- ★ Summer programs were excited to offer fun and engaging activities that took advantage of extended operating hours and warm weather. Support programs' capacity to provide innovative, hands-on expanded learning opportunities through staff development and connections to new programming partners.
- ★ Some new programs experienced challenges with developing community partnerships and competing with other summer activities. Provide summer programs with marketing strategies or materials to increase their visibility with families and community stakeholders.

