



New statewide centers to focus on student achievement gap

80 percent of low-income students don't read at grade level by 3rd grade, 4X more likely to drop out of high school

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (October 9, 2018) – Across the U.S., there's a huge gap between the academic achievement of students living in poverty and those who have never lived in poverty. The latest Nation's Report Card (2017 National Assessment of Education Progress – NAEP) shows flat trend lines for improvement. Now, the U.S. Department of Education is targeting the achievement gap through a family engagement initiative in 11 states. The National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) will participate in three of the 11 grants, leading the creation of Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFEC) in Arizona and Nebraska. It will partner with The Prichard Committee to create an SFEC in Kentucky.

NCFL's research-based family engagement model has been proven to increase student attendance and academic success, create and improve family/school partnerships, and train educators to provide learning environments that support families' goals.

"Family engagement is key to a student's success," said Sharon Darling, NCFL president and founder. "These high-impact programs will lead to incredible changes for all families, as well as their schools, communities, and states. When families are engaged and empowered in their children's education, we see both parents and children better able to meet their potential. Real parent engagement can be a powerful tool in closing the achievement gap."

The five-year federal grants will total \$4.6 million in Arizona, nearly \$4.6 million in Nebraska, and \$5 million in Kentucky.

The Statewide Family Engagement Centers' goals are:

- Improve academic achievement for disadvantaged students;
- Empower parents of those students with the information and tools to make good choices for their child's education; and,
- Train local and state education providers to administer high-quality family literacy and family engagement services.

Low-income students across the U.S. face significant barriers to school readiness and academic achievement. These factors may include lack of exposure to books and other key resources, difficulty speaking and understanding English, chronic absenteeism, and lower graduation rate. Consider the following statistics:

- Research shows by age 3, children from low-income families are exposed to 30 million fewer words than children from high-income families.
- Children of professional and working-class families can understand 3,000 to 5,000 words at age 5. Children of low-income families can use 500 words at age 5.
- More than 80 percent of low-income children are not proficient at grade-level reading by the time they enter third grade. Those who don't read proficiently by third grade are four times more likely not to graduate high school.
- The mother's education is a primary indicator of a child's academic success.

The SFEC programs will ensure our next generation has quality early education experiences, and that parents have the skills and resources to support their children to create a solid foundation for future learning.

The Centers will give families access to digital resources to use at home as well as community family engagement activities. In addition, families in some communities will participate in an NCFL Family Learning model program. The program includes adult skill building, Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time®, and Parent Time in which participants learn how to better support their children in and outside of school.

The SFEC programs will be funded by the federal grant 100 percent the first year. In the following four years, the federal grant will cover 85 percent of programming and the other 15 percent will be provided by non-governmental organizations.

Over the past 30 years, NCFL has broken generational cycles of poverty through family literacy programs across the U.S. A pioneer in family literacy, NCFL's model programs have improved academic outcomes for children and fostered economic self-sufficiency in adults. Currently, NCFL is working with 330 partner sites in more than 150 communities in 39 states.

ABOUT NATIONAL CENTER FOR FAMILIES LEARNING

The National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) is a national nonprofit organization working to eradicate poverty through education solutions for families. Partnering with educators, literacy advocates, and policymakers, NCFL develops and provides programming, professional development, and resources from the classroom to the community that empower and raise families to achieve their potential. For more information on NCFL visit familieslearning.org.

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