



# EDUCATIONAL SERVICE UNIT #5

## ANNUAL REPORT **2023-2024**

EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION  
FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

[www.esu5.org](http://www.esu5.org)

# From the Administrator

**Dr. Brenda McNiff**

This year has been one of growth and achievement as we align our goals and services to our mission: educational innovation for teaching and learning. One of the most notable achievements this year has been the steady growth of our distance learning World Language program. Starting with just one staff member serving two districts four years ago, we have now grown to seven teachers serving 15 school districts and over 500 students. This growth of this program is the result of ensuring we continue to deliver high quality instruction in real time to member districts. Additionally, we have continued to grow our EKCO (Exposing Kids to Career Opportunities) by bridging that gap between local industry and member schools to ensure students and local businesses have an avenue to communicate wants and needs.

We have made significant strides in supporting our instructional leaders through key projects, such as the newly created principal mentor program. All of our member districts participated in the program designed to promote student achievement by providing leadership and emotional support to the building. The results of the program were very positive and we anticipate continuing the program for years to come.

In closing, I want to express my deep appreciation to the ESU 5 Board and Staff who have contributed to the day-to-day success of our services and programs. It is through their dedication, support, and collaboration that we are able to provide high-quality educational services and support to every student every day. I am excited about the future and confident that, together, we will continue to achieve great things.



**3,011**

TOTAL SQUARE  
MILES COVERED



**53**

TOTAL ESU 5  
STAFF MEMBERS



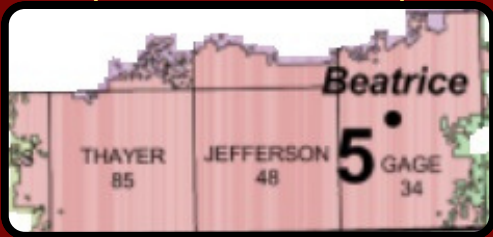
**453**

TOTAL TEACHERS  
SERVED



**5,877**

TOTAL  
STUDENTS  
SERVED



Educational Service Unit 5 serves the educational, social and emotional needs of students, teachers, parents and administrators in the Southeast corner of Nebraska. In the 2023-24 school year, ESU 5 served approximately 5,800 students and 550 teachers from the ten preK-12 public schools within our service area. The 53 staff members employed by ESU 5 work diligently to serve the needs of Gage, Jefferson and Thayer counties which cover approximately 3,000 square miles.

### **BETTY MEYER**

- District 1

### **VICKI HINZ-ENSZ**, Vice President

- District 2

### **TIM MCALLISTER**

- District 3

### **ROGER SMIDT**, President

- District 4

### **CARLA LOEMKER**

- District 5

### **JEANNINE MURPHY**

- District 6

### **DUANE SMITH**, Secretary

- District 7



**ESU #5 BOARD**



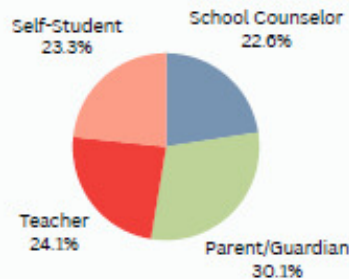
# ESU5 WELLNESS 4ALL

During the 2023-2024 school year, our team reached 5,000+ students and educators with presentations on suicide awareness, trauma-informed care, and educator well-being. We collaborated with TeamMates and welcomed Demoine Adams to launch Fairbury's Wellness Week. Freeman established a Wellness Crew and received recognition from Nebraska Public SchoolAdvantage. Throughout the year, we offered wellness challenges and community outreach opportunities.

## REFERRAL DATA

- 1 Anxiety/Worry
- 2 Depression
- 3 Stress

Top Three Reasons for Referrals



Top Referral Sources  
\*Can be more than one referral source

400+

Students supported

10%

Percentage of students on IEP

7%

Percentage of youth receiving outside therapy services



## CENTER FOR EPIDEMIOLOGIC STUDIES DEPRESSION SCALE & ROSENBERG SELF ESTEEM SCALE

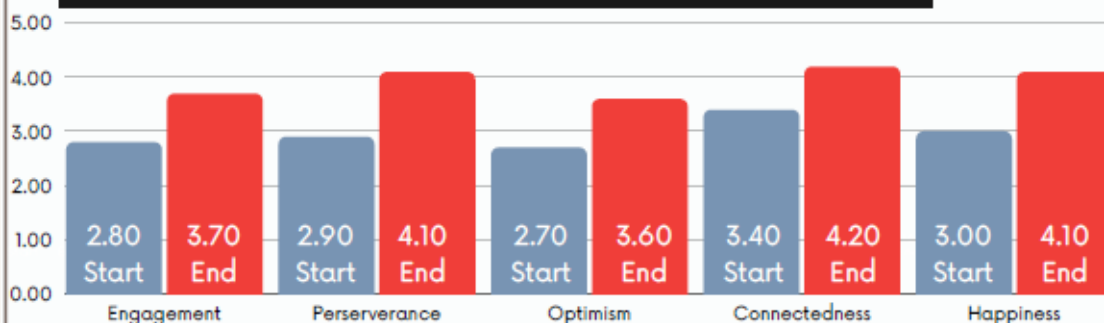


Rosenberg possible range is 0-30. A score of 15 points or lower suggests low self esteem.



CES-DC Possible range is 0-60. A score of 16 points or more is considered depressed.

## EPOCH MEASURE OF WELL-BEING: STUDENT REPORT



Across domains, each item is scored on a 1 to 5 scale (almost never/not at all like me = 1; almost always/very much like me = 5). Each domain is the average of four responses.



# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional Development Consultants operate with the best interest of school districts within ESU #5 as our guiding premise. We use data based decision making, research based practices and up to date information. An effective Professional Development program is characterized by alignment with statewide cadres, state projects and in collaboration both within and outside of the ESU 5 region. The Office of Professional Learning and Development creates, promotes, and fosters individual, school, and systems-level effectiveness by designing and offering an array of innovative and diverse programs for the educators and staff at the ESU 5 or in their home districts.

During the 2023 - 2024 school year conducted a needs assessment that informed the professional development opportunities. ESU 5 professional development included:

- Principal Leadership
- Provided professional development opportunities for Principals and Superintendents
- Facilitation of curriculum development
- Content area workshops/cadres
- Instructional Frameworks support
- New Teacher Academy
- Guidance through the School Continuous Improvement Process
- Assistance with designations
- Provided updates to districts regarding NSCAS Reading, Math, Science
- Proctor training for NSCAS
- Implementation of aligned curriculum to the Nebraska standards in Mathematics, ELA, Science and Social Studies
- Individualized district support for adoption & implementation of high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) in Math, ELA and Science
- Collaboration with ESU 5 MTSS team to offer customized support for the development and implementation of MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support)
- Provided Title I educator support
- Science of Reading Trainings
- Provide assistance in getting para professionals highly qualified
- Student events coordination



## SPECIAL EDUCATION

ESU 5 Special Education Department contracts with member school districts to provide special education services and support.

### A few of the areas support is provided include:

Supervision, Behavior Consultants, ILCD/ MTSS Collaboration and Supports, School Psychologist/Diagnostician services, Early Childhood Special Education and Services Coordination, Speech Language Pathologist, Teacher for the Blind and Visually impaired and Teacher for Deaf and hard of hearing. Because of the requests and needs of the schools, we have expanded our support in the area of Behavior Consultant, Speech Language Pathologists, Diagnostician, and Early Childhood Service Coordinator.

Part C (Ages birth to age 3) referrals for the 2023-24 school year.

YEAR	Referrals	PERCENTAGE of Students who were found eligible
2023-24	111	53%
2022-23	77	73%
2021-22	47	68%
2020-21	75	52%
2019-20	52	56%



# SPECIAL EDUCATION SPOT LIGHT

## Inclusionary Practices

ESU 5 Special Education staff continue to work with schools in the area of Inclusion. In an inclusive setting, students with special needs receive the support they need—such as accommodations, modified instruction, or assistive technologies—while remaining in the general education classroom. This often involves collaboration between general education teachers and special education professionals. Inclusion fosters a sense of belonging and encourages social interaction, helping students with special needs develop academic skills, social relationships, and self-confidence. It also benefits their peers by promoting understanding, diversity, and empathy.



## Motor Lab

ESU 5 Special Education staff continue to work with schools in the Ready Bodies Learning Minds Motor Lab. The goal is to help children develop the skills necessary for learning readiness, gain mastery of their environment, and to have fun while doing it! Many of these skills are motor based. Handwriting, sitting still, paying attention, speaking, and behavior are all performances based on a child's ability to maneuver and function in his /her environment. The more aware he/she is of his environment and the more he learns about the sensations of his own movement, the better he can control himself and accomplish tasks. Students rotate through the stations for 1 to 1 1/2 minute segments. These activities follow a progression from introductory to more advanced ones. As children begin mastering a skill, a new set of stations are used (approximately) every 2 weeks until we rotate through the entire series and start over again.

## TECHNOLOGY NEWS

Educational Service Unit No 5 offers a wide variety of services to all ten school districts, at no charge to the district. ESU 5 supported services may include school district support of their connection to the Internet. ESU 5 also provides Local Area Network (LAN) monitoring and support in which we monitor over 200 devices located in the districts using a PRTG monitoring server; devices include servers, switches, and firewalls.

The ESU 5 Tech Team has been busy helping get the New Beatrice Elementary up and running with Technology. Starting about 2 years ago the planning started with the Beatrice construction team, General Contractor, architects, and engineers to figure out the technology needs for the new building.

The ESU 5 Tech Team designed and planned for network drops throughout the building, wireless access point locations, copiers, sound systems, cameras, door access control, Intercom Systems, Interactive Panels, projectors and much more.

The summer of 2024 was spent installing Wireless Access Points for WiFi, Interactive Panels in the classrooms, projectors, Digital Signage TV's, and coordinating with Vendors on various other projects. Many items were configured and installed along side contracted vendors to save the district tens of thousands of dollars.





# WORLD LANGUAGE NEWS

ESU 5 seeks to address the acute teacher shortage of World Language teachers across rural Nebraska by providing access to high quality, synchronous classes conducted via Distance Learning. ESU 5's EL WL Program has grown from one teacher serving two school districts in the 2019-20 academic year to now employing 7 teachers serving 15 school districts in the 2022-23 school year. Educators teach from studios equipped with high quality audio visual systems at ESU 5 in Beatrice and at ESU 3 in La Vista.

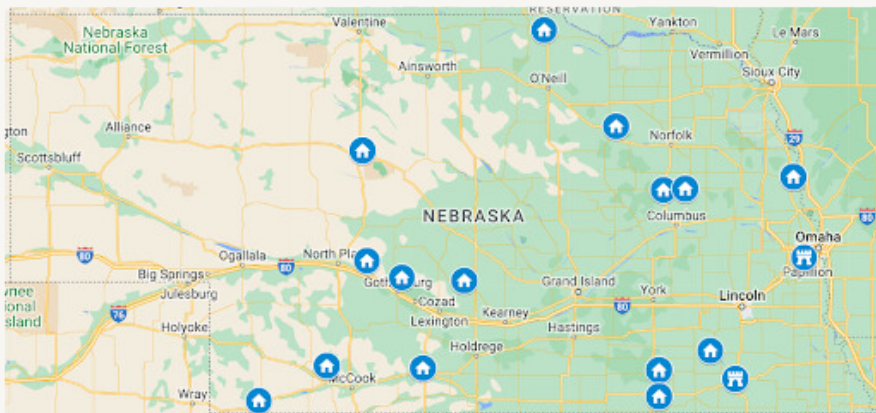
At ESU 5's World Language Program, we share three belief statements:

1. We believe All Students can be successful
2. We believe in a positive classroom environment
3. We believe in World Language best practices

Our curriculum focuses on fostering communicative ability in our students. This means, instead of emphasizing grammar rules, we engage students with activities promoting proficiency. Each unit begins with six days of instruction concentrating on helping students learn new vocabulary: words and phrases specific to the unit's topic. During this time, it is the students' responsibility to actively listen and participate in vocabulary memorization games. We then spend three days helping students use those targeted words / phrases in conversations among peers in the class and potentially across school districts. Finally, each unit includes a presentational piece asking students to produce the language in written and/or oral form. We wrap up units with empower learner activities engaging students in reflective practices, helping them to own their own learning.

The ESU 5 Distance Learning World Language Program is rooted in NDE's World Language Standards. We incorporate digital learning best practices into a distance learning context.

Program data indicates students enjoy our classes, are motivated to learn Spanish, value learning a second language, and succeed at acquiring the language.



School Districts participating in the ESU 5 World Language Distance Learning Program.

# ESU 5 PRINCIPAL MENTORING PROGRAM

At the start of the 2023 school year, the ESU 5 Principal Mentoring program was created. The ESU Principal Mentoring Program's mission is designed to promote student achievement by providing support for the building leader as well as the emotional growth and development of these educational leaders (principal) in all areas. The major goals of the program are:

- To enhance student learning and achievement.
- To ensure the retention of quality principals.
- To create a collaborative culture between all principals.
- To support and meet the needs of principals in a professional, non-supervisory, non-evaluative process through positive learning experiences.
- To develop a set of practices that supports building a positive culture within each building.

During the 2023-2024 school year, a mixture of full group meetings, virtual meetings, and one-on-one on-site meeting formats were used to help support the nine (9) new principals that were part of the program.

The book *Culturize: Every Student. Every Day. Whatever it Takes.* by Jimmy Casas was utilized as a book study to engage the new leaders on the importance of creating a positive culture within their buildings and with students, staff and parents. Leading questions were created and used during meetings to assist in the development of personalized plans in creating a positive learning environment in each, individual building.

The preliminary results of the program were very positive. Seven (7) of the principals were retained in the same position, one (1) principal moved to a new position closer to family, and one (1) principal moved into a similar position in the private sector. A feedback survey was given to the staff at each of the new principal's schools, focusing on four key areas: Culture – Building Relationships – Communication – Systems.

THE COMPILED RESULTS SHOW THAT THE IMPACT THAT THE PRINCIPALS AS A WHOLE MADE ON THEIR BUILDINGS WAS SUBSTANTIAL:

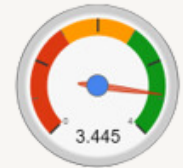
## COMMUNICATION



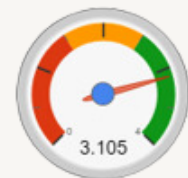
## CULTURE



## RELATIONSHIPS



## SYSTEMS



ALL FOUR AREAS SHOWED A POSITIVE IMPACT WITH AN AVERAGE SCORE OVER 3.0 ON A 4.0 LIKERT

SCALE. RELATIONSHIPS SHOWED THE GREATEST IMPACT WITH A SCORE OF 3.445, WITH COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE CLOSE BEHIND WITH A 3.256 AND 3.205 RESPECTIVELY. SYSTEMS TRAILED WITH A 3.105 RATING; HOWEVER, THIS AREA IS OFTEN TAKES THE MOST AMOUNT OF TIME TO CREATE AND DEVELOP.

# SCHOOL CLIMATE TRANSFORMATION GRANT

A request for competitive grant proposals for the School Climate Transformation Grant (SCTG) was extended by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education in 2019. The purpose of the federal grant is to support local educational agencies (LEAs) to develop, enhance, or expand systems of support for, and technical assistance to, schools implementing a multi-tiered system of support, for improving school climate. Eligible grantees are LEAs from across the United States.

Former ESU 5 MTSS Coordinator, Dr. Regina Oliver, read the application package and determined that funding through the grant could support the rural ESU 5 school districts in the region. The grant was written in less than a month and submitted in July of 2019 with notification of the grant award in late September of the same year. ESU 5 was one of 6 grantees in Nebraska and 1 of 69 in the U.S. for the 2019 submission.

The ESU was the first collaborative of its kind to be awarded the grant as other grantees were individual school districts. This allowed support for the 10 districts who would not normally be eligible for such a grant given the size and nature of the districts. The ESU 5 SCTG Project was awarded \$1.3 million dollars over the 5 year grant period. The grant provided funding for things such as personnel, travel, professional development, and a data visualization program for all districts.

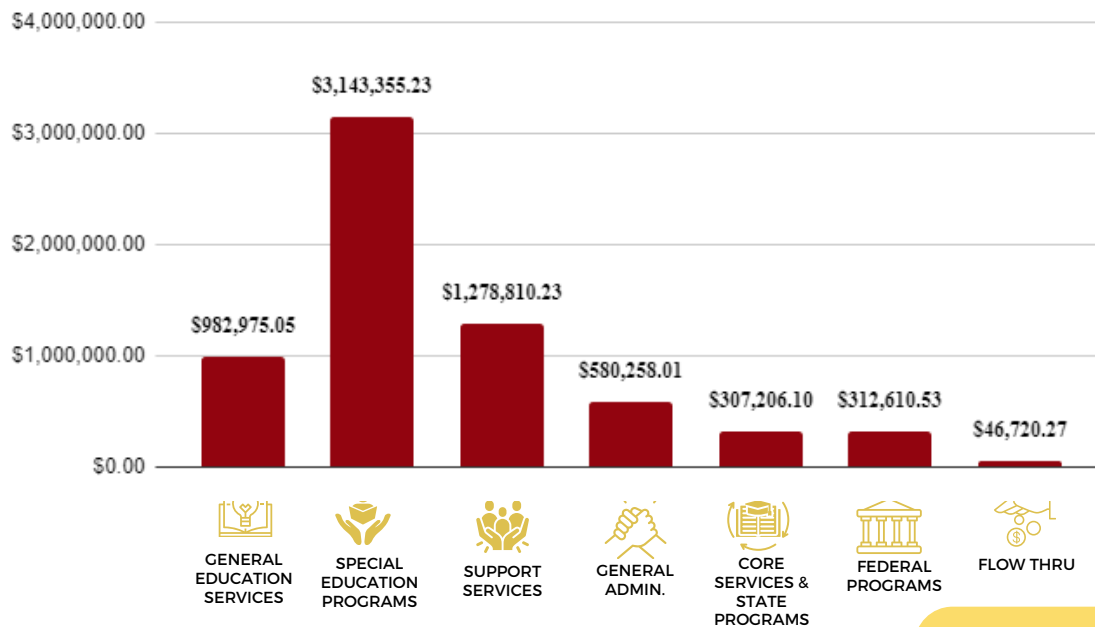
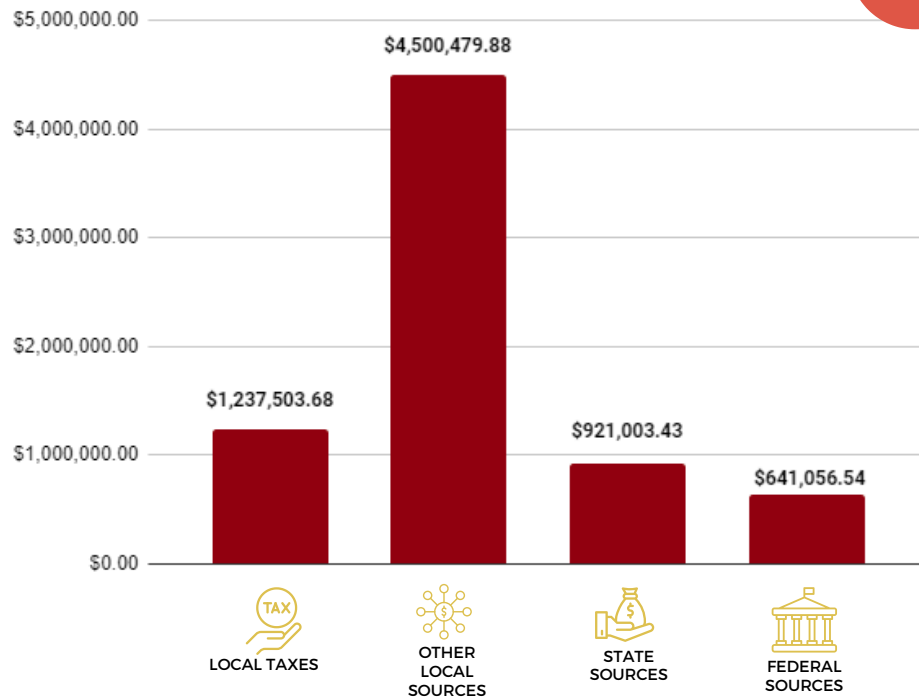
Dr. Oliver was asked to present the work of the ESU 5 SCTG Project at the SCTG Project Directors' meeting held in Washington, DC in October of 2020. In the third year of the grant, April 2023, a total of 26 individuals from across the ESU were funded to travel to the Association for Positive Behavior Supports International Conference in San Diego, California. The following year, one school team presented at the PBIS Leadership Forum in Chicago, Illinois about their work with trauma informed practices. Dr. George Batsche, a highly regarded researcher and educator from the University of South Florida, presented to school teams in the summer of 2023 over 2 days of highly valuable professional development.

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- **AWARD AMOUNT \$1.3 MILLION OVER 5 YEARS**
  - **BEGAN WITH 5 SCHOOLS TRAINED IN YEAR 1 (TIER 1 PBIS) AND YEAR 4 HAS A TOTAL OF 15 SCHOOLS - 200% GROWTH OF SCHOOL IMPLEMENTING PBIS**
  - **67% INCREASE IN FIDELITY OF IMPLEMENTATION OF PBIS**
  - **89% OF SCHOOLS REPORTED A DECREASE IN OUT OF SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS**



# FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

**\$ 7,300,043.53  
IN REVENUE**



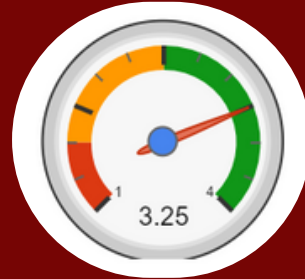
**\$ 6,651,935.42  
IN EXPENSES**

# ESU #5 CLIMATE



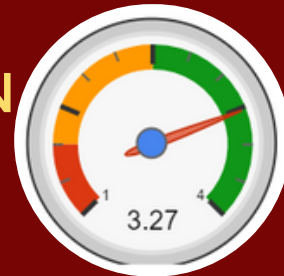
## ORIENTATION & TRAINING

3.25



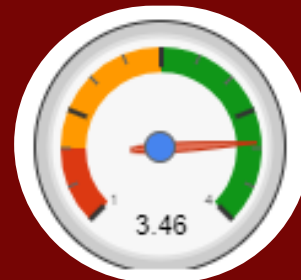
## COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

3.27



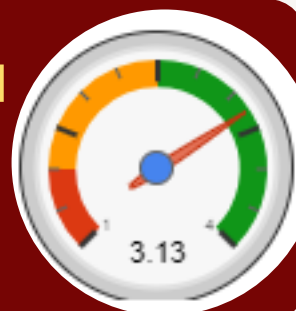
## CULTURE & CLIMATE

3.46



## COMMUNICATION

3.13



# LOOKING AHEAD

As we move into the coming year, our focus will be on building upon the successes of this past year and addressing the challenges that lie ahead. We will continue to focus on innovation in education, ensuring that all member districts have the tools and support they need so all students are prepared for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Our goals for the coming year include working alongside the department of education to expand literacy programs, prioritize requested programs and services of member districts and grow and support the programs we already have in place.

