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# **ESU #1 Annual Report 2022-23**



# ESU #1 Annual Report 2022-23



Bill  
Heimann

## a note from the administrator

This annual report serves the following purposes:

- ▶ to provide an overview of the services offered by Educational Service Unit #1;
- ▶ to meet legal requirements as set forth by state statute; and
- ▶ to provide information about ESU #1 activities to area schools, our board of directors and the public.

ESU #1 provides assistance to local school districts through core services, which include staff development, technology and media services. We provide the educational programming and services necessary for area school districts to reach their goals of improving student learning and enhancing the capacity and skills of their staff. We respond to the requests of the 23 public K-12 school districts in ESU #1, and our highly qualified staff partner with them to deliver services efficiently and effectively.

In addition, contracted special educational services are provided to schools, as well as grant activities and cooperative purchasing programs. ESU #1's Tower School is a Level III program for students. Tower staff also conduct outreach for schools to support student needs. The Migrant Education Program and Early Learning Connection are located at ESU #1 and serve an area covering multiple ESUs to give support to schools, students and their families.

Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) Rule 84 establishes a level of performance for ESU accreditation. We provide financial support for projects on behalf of all public schools, such as internet filtering, ACT preparation through OnToCollege, PowerSchool support, instructional leadership training, AIMSweb, board policy, legal updates and much more!

On behalf of the ESU #1 Board of Directors, I am pleased to present this annual report that highlights the efforts of our staff in assisting area schools to make a difference in the lives of both students and educators. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Dr. Bill Heimann, Administrator



# ESU #1 Annual Report 2022-23

## about ESU #1



ESU #1

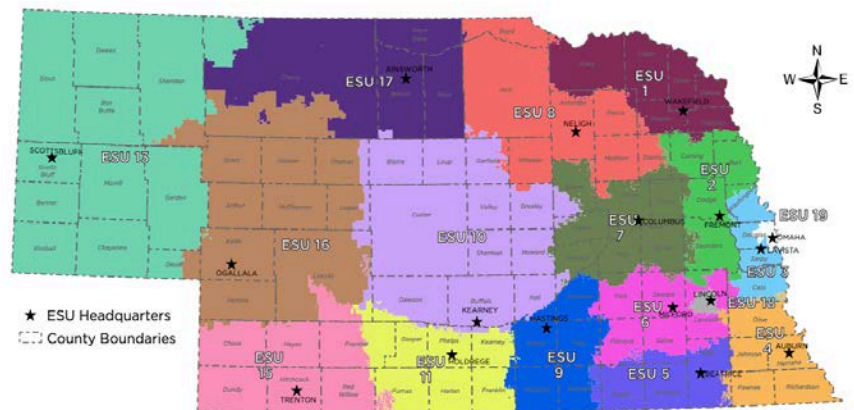
Educational Service Unit #1 provides services to the local school districts in Cedar, Dakota, Dixon, Knox, Thurston and Wayne counties in northeast Nebraska. ESU #1 is one of 17 Educational Service Units statewide.

The service units were created by the state Legislature in 1965 and later placed under the jurisdiction of the Nebraska Department of Education.

Historically, the purpose of the ESUs has been to provide services that individual school districts can't economically or efficiently provide for themselves. As school districts identified new needs, the diversity of services offered by the ESUs evolved.

ESU #1 is headquartered in Wakefield and provides a variety of special education, staff development, technology and media services to the 23 school districts in its six-county area. ESU #1 also operates the Level III program at the Tower School in Wayne.

The ESU #1 service area covers 2,926 square miles and includes more than 11,500 students and approximately 1,200 teachers. Moreover, the ESU #1 service area includes three Native American reservations: the Santee, Winnebago and Omaha.



## board of directors



Board



ESU #1 Board of Directors members are elected to four-year terms, one representative from each of the 10 election districts.

The board meets in regular session on the second Tuesday of each month at the Central Office in Wakefield. Board members during the 2022-23 school year were:

- ▶ Adrian (AJ) Johnson, president (District 8)
- ▶ Sally Reinert, vice president (District 2)
- ▶ Susan Strahm, secretary (District 5)
- ▶ Josiah Boneschans (District 1)
- ▶ Jim Gonsolley (District 3)
- ▶ Duane Krusemark (District 4)
- ▶ Traci Haglund (District 6)
- ▶ Tucker Hight (District 7)
- ▶ Tabitha Gilsdorf (District 9)
- ▶ Shannon Johnson (District 10)



*Our mission:  
Providing innovation,  
leadership and service.*



# ESU #1 Annual Report 2022-23



## advisory council

Council

ESU #1 is accredited by the Nebraska Department of Education and is assisted by an advisory council composed of area superintendents, one each from the six counties we serve, representing both large and small school districts.

The council reviews, recommends and supports the services offered by ESU #1. Advisory council members during the 2022-23 school year were:

- ▶ Ashley O'Dell, chair (Dakota Co.)
- ▶ Jeremy Christiansen (Cedar Co.)
- ▶ Stacie Hardy (Thurston Co.)
- ▶ Matt Farup (Wayne Co.)
- ▶ Chris Look (Knox Co.)
- ▶ Brendan Calahan (Dixon Co.)



Ashley  
O'Dell



Jeremy  
Christiansen



Stacie  
Hardy



Matt  
Farup



Chris  
Look



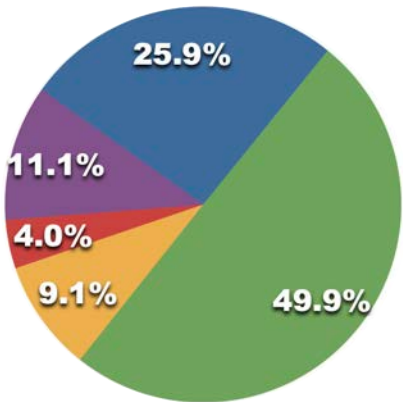
Brendan  
Calahan



## budget

Budget

Each ESU is financed through a combination of property tax funds, state funds and service contracts with individual school districts. Because the ESU #1 service area includes several counties, the modest contribution by taxpayers provides a base from which the unit functions.

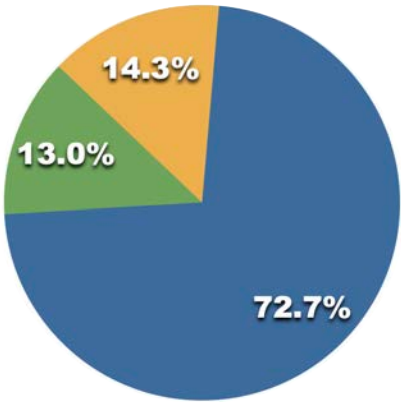


### Budgeted revenue

- ▶ General fund/carryover ... \$5,000,000
  - ▶ Local receipts ..... \$9,611,286
  - ▶ Property tax..... \$1,756,059
  - ▶ State receipts..... \$765,781
  - ▶ Federal funds ..... \$2,141,200
- TOTAL .....\$19,274,326**

### Budgeted expenditures

- ▶ Local ..... \$14,015,826
  - ▶ State/federal/local ..... \$2,508,500
  - ▶ Cash reserve..... \$2,750,000
- TOTAL.....\$19,274,326**



## early learning connection professional development system grant



### Northern Early Learning Connection Partnership

The Northern Early Learning Connection (ELC) grant is designed to ensure that educators who work with children birth to age 8 have access to high quality professional development opportunities. According to the Nebraska Early Childhood Record System, there were 2,394 participants who attended more than 300 professional development events in the Northern Region from July 2022 to March 2023. A majority of these events were offered at no cost to the participants. The Northern Region events were attended by participants from 62 counties across the state. Our web presence, including the ELC Facebook page and a monthly newsletter, impacts approximately 1,600 early childhood professionals in the Northern region.

### PreK-2 Professional Development Specialist

Kary Pfeil, the PreK-2 Professional Development Specialist, offers support for school districts and their partners to improve early childhood practice, instructional quality and transitions for young children. Through professional development and coaching, support is available in the following areas: appropriate teaching practices, curricular support, formative assessment and observational assessment, Pyramid Model practices, transition practices, school and out-of-school time continuation, and family engagement. The PreK-2 Professional Development Specialist also assists with the New Teacher Cadre training provided by ESU #1.

As of September 2023, 11 districts or programs have received support including administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, service providers, and childcare directors. In total, 96 participants have participated in training or services being offered. These supports were offered through professional development opportunities, coaching, leadership meetings, informational meetings, and classroom observations for a total of 286 hours of services.

### Early Childhood MTSS Facilitation

The Early Childhood MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) Implementation Facilitator for region 3 is Meagan Rodriguez. She supports leadership teams at a systems level (childcare programs, school districts, Head Start programs, and state and local agencies/organizations within the region) to implement the Pyramid Model Framework to ensure that a comprehensive array of early childhood supports that contribute to positive outcomes for programs, children and families.

As of January 2023, Meagan has added two districts that have begun implementation, facilitated four Leadership Team meetings and provided four additional districts with an Early Childhood MTSS overview. Of the four overviews, two of the districts have committed to beginning the Early Childhood MTSS process.

### Early Childhood Coach Consultation

The ESU #1 Early Learning Connection Coach Consultant works collaboratively within ESUs 1, 7 and 8 to ensure an equitable comprehensive array of support that is responsive to the needs of coaches who serve early childhood educators and parents caring for children (birth through age 8) within family childcare homes, centers and preschool programs. Services provided include one-on-one coaching sessions, small group coaching sessions and large group coach cadres meetings.

During the 2022-23 school year, the coach consultant provided 44 one-on-one coaching sessions, 21 small group coaching sessions and two large group coach cadre meetings.



MEP

## title IC migrant education grant

### Migrant Education Program

The ESU #1 Migrant Education Program (MEP) works to ensure that migrant children fully benefit from the same free public education provided to other children. To achieve this, the MEP provides supplemental educational and support services to help reduce disruptions to learning and other concerns that result from repeated moves and/or the migratory lifestyle.

Our focus areas are school readiness, math and English language arts instruction, and graduation or services to out-of-school youth. In addition to providing educational and support services, the MEP sponsors family literacy services for migrant children and their families through Family Engagement Meetings. During the most recent reporting year, our team achieved a number of successes for our program and the students we serve.

- ▶ Increased child count from 450 in the previous reporting year to 519.
- ▶ We delivered 294 instructional services.
- ▶ We delivered 910 support services.
- ▶ 94% of 3-5 year olds who received preschool services from MEP staff were proficient or showed a 10% gain in their post assessment.
- ▶ 90% of kindergarten through 12th grade students that received instructional services were considered proficient on post assessments.

Services provided to our students included, but were not limited to, assistance with obtaining health services; translation and interpretation services; in-home instruction to pre-K students, school-aged students and out-of-school youth; purchase and supply of learning materials; purchase of clothing; parent training related to math and reading at home; and referral services from agencies and organizations all over northeast Nebraska. We also hosted a Migrant Education Summer School for students in Wakefield, Wayne, and Emerson. Ten of our high school kids attended the Close Up Program in Washington, D.C.

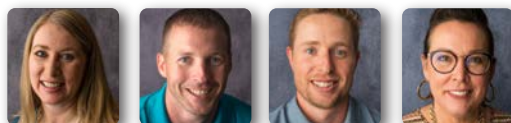


Migrant Education Program



Vision, Deaf Education, Transition and Audiology



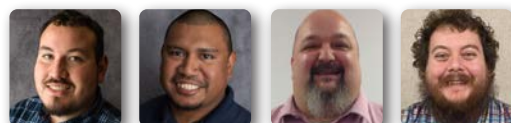


Amy  
Mundil

Kellen  
Conroy

Derek  
Lahm

Sheri  
Fillipi



Andrew  
Contreras

Jesse  
Titiml

Scott  
McIntosh

William  
David

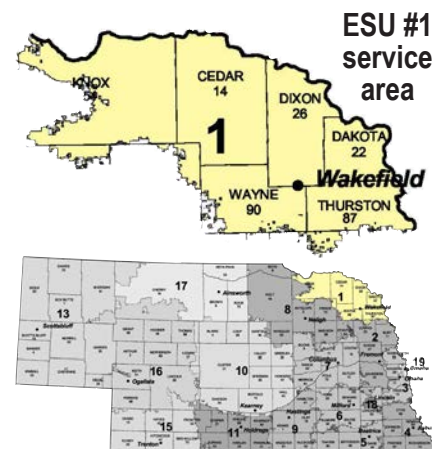
ESU #1 core services includes the Professional Services Team. The team collaborates to provide integrated support for partner districts and includes Teaching and Learning, Technology, Communications and Media. Core services provide the following:

- instructional training for administrators and teachers to ensure student learning and success;
- technology training and support for districts, administrators and teachers; and the provision of ancillary resources through the media center.

## Teaching and Learning Team

Our Teaching and Learning Specialists make a concerted effort to assist districts at ESU #1, in local school buildings and virtually. They've hosted more than 3,600 total participants, including teachers and administrators, through 307 virtual and/or district on-site training events during the 2022-23 school year.

- **NSCAS Growth (Nebraska Student Centered Assessment System)** — As Nebraska continues to transition to the NSCAS Growth Assessment Model, which combines NWEA MAP Growth (Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress) and Nebraska's Statewide Summative Assessments, the ESU #1 Teaching and Learning Team provides support to area schools. Support includes assisting schools in reading and analyzing reports, providing schools with considerations on using reports for instructional planning and participating in training in order to meet the needs of area schools.
- **Principal Instructional Leadership Series** — Phil Warrick facilitated a two-day Principal Leadership Training in June 2022. In the 2022-23 school year, ESU #1 partnered with Phil Warrick to provide principals with support relating to instructional walkthroughs focusing on high-quality teacher feedback. In addition, Principal Zoom Groups, consisting of small groups of administrators, met monthly via Zoom for focused conversation supporting instructional leadership.
- **OnToCollege (John Baylor)** — ESU #1-area districts participated in OnToCollege during 2022-23. OnToCollege is an online resource that prepares juniors and seniors for the ACT Test. All participating districts have access to instructional videos, quizzes, sample tests, test-taking strategies and individual and aggregate results data.
- **MTSS** — ESU #1 provides training and coaching support to more than 26 schools. Multi-Tiered System of Supports is a systematic framework of providing high-quality instruction using evidence-based practices tailored to meet the academic, behavioral and social-emotional needs of all students across three tiers of support. Data-based decision making and problem solving assist in identifying supports, and classroom coaching ensures fidelity of implementation. An MTSS Google Site contains training resources, and reading intervention training and support is provided. LETRS professional development focuses on the science of reading and quality reading instruction at the elementary level.



# ESU #1 Annual Report 2022-23

## Instructional materials

ESU #1 provides a variety of instructional materials to school districts in Cedar, Dakota, Dixon, Knox, Thurston and Wayne counties. As a participant in IMat (a subgroup of Nebraska's Teaching & Learning with Technology affiliate group), ESU #1 secures digital rights to instructional video titles and services to benefit students. Other services include access to online content such as World Book Online.

## Media center

The ESU #1 Media Center provides instructional assistance for schools in northeast Nebraska by supplying professional development resource materials, programs and inventory distribution for assistive technology and special education department inventory and equipment, as well as Real Care Baby checkout to area districts. The Media Center also fills individual orders of binding and laminating for administrators, teachers and staff at schools in the ESU #1 service area.

## Technology infrastructure

The Technology Department has helped with technology and infrastructure at our schools by supporting a streamlined deployment of firewall, filtering and other security and technology tools. During the past year, we have expanded our technology support services for all ESU #1 districts.

Collaboration is a big part of what we do at ESU #1 and in the Technology Department. During the 2022-23 school year, ESU #1 conducted nine LAN (Local Area Network) manager meetings. These meetings are valuable because they allow area districts to communicate and plan for new technologies and security threats.

We also continue to help most of our schools with their E-rate needs. This funding request year, we helped schools save up to \$240,661.







## special education services

ESU #1 Special Education staff are committed to meeting the diverse needs of the families, students and schools in our service area. Our expert service is focused on increasing student achievement through collaborative problem solving and relationship building. It is a privilege to serve the districts and families in the ESU #1 service area.

### Audiology

The ESU #1 Audiology Department, consisting of one full-time certified/licensed audiologist and assisted by the speech/language pathologists, serves children with audiological screening, testing and follow-ups in their homes, schools and in a soundproof testing suite at the Wakefield office.

More than 13,750 screenings and follow-up tests were completed during the 2022-23 school year. In addition, the ESU #1 audiologist serves students involved in the Northeast Regional Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

### Deaf education

The ESU #1 Deaf Education Program provides direct and consultative services to students from birth to 21 years of age who have a verified hearing loss. The program offers in-services to staff; provides input at Individual Education Program (IEP), Multi-disciplinary Team (MDT) and Student Assistance Team (SAT) meetings; assists schools with equipment needs students; and advocates for families and children who have a hearing loss.

During the 2022-23 school year, the ESU #1 Deaf Education Program consulted on and served 48 children.

### Early Childhood (ECSE) and Early Development Network (EDN)

The Early Childhood Special Education Program (ECSE) provides services to children with disabilities from birth through age 5 using a Primary Service Provider (PSP) approach.

Families receive support from one of four geographically based teams that minimally consist of an early childhood special education teacher, occupational therapist, physical therapist, services coordinator and a speech language pathologist. In addition, the teams have access to a vision consultant, deaf educator, audiologist and school psychologist as needed. One team member is selected as a primary provider to work closely with each family while receiving support from an entire team of experts.

Together, the child's parents and the PSP develop child and family outcomes and goals. The PSP uses evidence-based intervention practices to work toward achieving those outcomes and goals. This approach focuses on relationships with families, building the capacity of the child's parents, caregivers, and/or preschool teachers and increasing opportunities for growth within the context of everyday routines and activities.

The Early Development Network (EDN) provides services and supports specifically for children birth to age 3 and their families. The goal of the EDN is to provide coordinated services for families as conveniently as possible. EDN Services Coordinators are instrumental in working with agencies in the community that provide services to make sure the child and family get the help they need.

During the 2022-23 school year, ECSE/EDN served 194 children by providing evaluations, consultations and/or direct services. Of the children served, 85 were birth-2 years old and 109 were 3-5 years old. ECSE and EDN also assisted with early childhood screenings, kindergarten roundups, teacher trainings and pre-service presentations at local colleges, community nights, school registration nights and pre-natal/post-natal health fairs.

## Physical and occupational therapy

Three physical therapists and eight occupational therapists served approximately 300 school-aged students and completed dozens of evaluations during the 2022-23 school year. Through consultations with students and their families, as well as school personnel, therapists work to enhance learning and participation, achieve physical milestones and to foster independence. PTs and OTs completed more than 50 early childhood evaluations using the Primary Service Provider model and provided services for more than 150 families.

## Program supervision

The primary function of the Special Education Director is to recruit qualified personnel to fulfill the requirements of contracting districts, in addition to the assignment, supervision and support of staff. A secondary function is to provide consultation to area districts on matters that include budget assistance, student placement, federal and state mandates and other related issues.

## School psychology

The ESU #1 School Psychology Program provides services in consultation, assessment and intervention to assist educators, parents and other professionals in understanding the learning, social-emotional and behavioral needs of students, and in identifying effective strategies to help children be successful learners.

During the 2022-23 school year, ESU #1 school psychologists conducted nearly 500 academic and behavioral evaluations, provided individual and group counseling sessions to over 100 children and adolescents, completed over 100 behavioral intervention plans and/or functional behavioral assessments and collected data on over 3,500 students in the area of reading fluency, reading comprehension and math to help guide instructional decisions and changes.

ESU #1 psychologists continue to implement and encourage the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and the development of mental health supports.

## Speech/language

The ESU #1 Speech and Language Department consists of 24 speech and language pathologists (SLPs). The department focuses on a team approach, working together to provide assessment and intervention services to students from birth to 21 years of age. The SLPs serve students in areas that adversely affect student's education, such as articulation, language, phonology, apraxia, voice, fluency, literacy readiness, hearing, social skills, autism and other disorders.

Assisted by the audiologist, they also participate in providing hearing screenings to all students in ESU #1 districts. They work as a team with local school districts in providing direct and consultative services, as well as advocate for families and children with speech, language and hearing disorders.

During the 2022-23 school year, the ESU #1 SLPs served 1,141 children.



## Tower School Level III Program

Tower School in Wayne, Nebraska, was built during the fiscal year of 1992-93 and provides contracted services to school districts in an alternative setting and on an outreach basis. The Tower School program consists of two specialized classrooms with students placed in classrooms based on individual needs.

The services Tower School provides focus on applied behavior analysis, social skills, functional skills, daily living skills, job skills and transition skills and ultimately prepares students to be contributing members of society and experience success in a variety of settings.

During the 2022-23 school year, four certified teachers, along with other itinerant service providers and paraeducators, served a total of 24 students from 12 area school districts in-person at Tower School. In addition, Tower School staff provided outreach supports and services to 13 area school districts.



## Transition

The ESU#1 Transition Program helps students with disabilities, 14 or older, bridge the gap between school experiences and adult life, and helps students function as productively and independently as possible. More than 120 area students received transition services during the 2022-23 school year, either through Zoom or in-person visits, using transition assessments, mock and informational interviews, information about college programs and outside agency programming.

Our transition specialist made 164 in-person or Zoom visits to ESU #1 districts this school year, coaching teachers to assist students, parents and general ed teachers in completing formal and informal transition assessments to have data-based post-secondary transition goals, plans and activities.

ESU #1 hosted an Indicator 13 workday in February to assist districts with reviewing student transition plans.

## Visual/orientation & mobility services

The ESU #1 Vision Program provides individualized learning environments, working to meet the unique and individual needs of students with verified visual impairments.

Services provided include direct teaching in the areas of braille instruction, low- vision devices, orientation & mobility, technology access and services in areas of the expanded core curriculum for the blind and visually impaired. Consultation, material preparation/adaptation, braille and large print textbook sourcing, functional vision assessments and orientation & mobility evaluations were also provided.

During the 2022-23 school year, two teachers of the visually impaired provided direct or consultative vision services and evaluated 33 students in 14 different school districts in ESU #1. Orientation & mobility services were provided to 2 students in 2 districts within the ESU #1 area, as well as to 2 students from ESU #8.



*Our vision:*

*ESU #1 will model excellence by helping schools increase educators' effectiveness and student learning as a result of expert services.*



## special education teams



### Improving Learning for Children with Disabilities (ILCD)

According to 92 NAC 51 004.13, all districts must participate in an ongoing review of their special education programs using the Improving Learning for Children with Disabilities (ILCD) process. This process involves analyzing data, identifying a focus area for improvement, developing a Targeted Improvement Plan (TIP) and implementing the TIP. This matches the general education school accreditation process to emphasize the importance of ILCD being a part of — not separate from — overall school improvement. ESU #1 takes a collaborative approach to supporting district teams in every stage of the TIP process to ultimately have a positive impact on outcomes for students with disabilities.

### Assistive Technology Team

The goal of the ESU #1 Assistive Technology Team is to provide assistance to districts in the determination of a student's need for assistive technology.

During the 2022-23 school year, team members provided services that included assistive technology consultations within individual districts they serve and short-term equipment loans.

### Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Team

Autism is a behaviorally defined disorder that is generally recognized by disturbances in communication, social interaction and perceptual organization or patterns of behavior. Diagnosed individuals may exhibit a variety of symptoms, ranging from mild to severe, and may display a wide range of skills and deficits.

The ASD team is composed of the region's ASD coordinator, school psychologists, speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, early childhood specialists and special education teachers. This year, the ESU #1's ADOS team, administered the assessment seven times this year, five of which occurred in South Sioux City school district.

ESU #1 has also worked to increase local capacity by encouraging other staff members to receive training in the administration of the ADOS-2, as well as other autism screening assessments. Further, the ASD team regularly convened regarding information of state updates and professional development. ASD team members continued to provide supports (i.e., evaluation and programming) to ESU #1 schools for those students who were demonstrating characteristics of autism.



## Brain Injury Regional School Support Team (BIRSST)

Nebraska is divided into five regional Brain Injury School Support Teams (BIRSST). The Northeast Region BIRSST team includes members representing ESU's #1, 7 and 8. BIRSST teams provide support to schools that teach students who have sustained mild (e.g., concussion) or severe traumatic brain injuries. The teams also assist Nebraska educators, parents and Concussion Management Teams (CMT) by providing consultation, trainings and resource materials.

During the 2022-23 school year, the Northeast Region BIRSST team provided education to schools by promoting the use of NDE's Return to Learn-Bridging the Gap from Concussion to the Classroom 2nd edition and NSAA endorsed REAP manual. The BIRSST team also collaborated with NDE to promote the new Teacher Acute Concussion Tool (TACT), which assists teachers in providing individualized educational services to students in the classroom setting. Additionally, BIRSST grant funded resources, including the document "Brain Injury in Children and Youth: A Manual for Educators" and the assessment tool "Wide Range Assessment of Memory and Learning-2nd Edition," were utilized by school-based professionals to assist students with brain injury.

A BIRSST webpage ([www.esu1.org/birsst/](http://www.esu1.org/birsst/)) assists area schools in navigating Return to Learn and Return to Play protocols, concussion management and concussion law. A comprehensive list of brain injury related resources are also included.

## Usher Syndrome Team

Usher syndrome is an inherited condition that affects both hearing and vision. Currently, there is no cure, which makes early identification paramount in providing appropriate educational programs. The main purpose of the team is to screen those children and youths who are hearing impaired and who fit the profile for Usher's for visual acuity difficulties.



## Implementing an early intervention approach

ESU #1 provides early intervention and special education services according to what research indicates as best practice for children birth through age 5. Specifically, ESU #1:

- ▶ collaborates with area school districts to ensure that children who are eligible for early intervention services or children with disabilities and in need of special education and related services are identified and located;
- ▶ connects with families to share information about available services/resources and initiates relationships with families;
- ▶ seeks to understand child and family priorities by conducting an assessment called the Routines Based Interview (RBI);
- ▶ evaluates children's needs to determine eligibility for Early Intervention (age 0-2) or Special Education (age 3-5) services;
- ▶ develops and implements Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs) and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) focused on child and family outcomes/goals;
- ▶ gives all eligible children and families a primary point of contact for support while also providing access to all disciplines utilizing a Primary Service Provider (PSP) approach to teaming;
- ▶ builds capacity of the adults interacting with the child most frequently by using coaching as the primary style of interaction; and
- ▶ provides evidence-based intervention, supports and services in natural learning environments (those places where children and their families live, learn, play and interact) to positively impact child growth, development and progress toward outcomes/goals.

ESU #1's approach to early intervention aligns with the Nebraska Department of Education's plan to address the federal initiative, Results Driven Accountability (RDA). The goal of RDA is to improve educational results, functional outcomes and overall demonstration of growth over time for all infants and toddlers with disabilities.



Improvement

## agency improvement process

### Our mission: Providing innovation, leadership and service

Our Professional Services Team (PST) and LEaD as 1 team (Lead, Explore, and Develop as 1) meet monthly to facilitate the agency improvement process and activities for ESU #1. The teams consist of administration, teaching and learning specialists, special education department coordinators, migrant education and technology personnel. These teams provide guidance, leadership and facilitation to keep continuous improvement activities moving forward.

During the monthly meetings, the teams review ESU, district and other stakeholder data, organize and plan all-staff days, and participate in annual data-retreat activities.

All ESU #1 employees support the continuous improvement process through department goal-setting, participation in all-staff days and data-retreat activities.

Our vision — *ESU #1 will model excellence by helping schools increase educators' effectiveness and student learning as a result of expert services* — and our mission — *Providing innovation, leadership and service* — guide our agency improvement efforts and keep our focus on the needs of our partner districts.