NCECBVI
In collaboration with the Nebraska Department of Education and Educational Service Unit 4

Sally Schreiner, Administrator
824 10th Avenue
P.O. Box 129
Nebraska City, NE 68410
402-873-5513
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Background Information

Founded in 1875, the Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired (NCECBVI) serves children from birth to age 21. NCECBVI’s program offers the expertise and specialized skills of the Center’s staff to students who are blind, visually impaired, and/or have multiple disabilities in residential, day, and outreach settings. Services are provided to local school districts, Educational Service Units, students, families, teachers, and other support staff.

Since 1999, the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) contracts with Educational Service Unit 4 (ESU 4) to implement the state plan for vision services. NCECBVI provides statewide services under the leadership of ESU4 and partners with NDE to serve students statewide with programs and services as prescribed in the state plan.

In 1997, the Nebraska Department of Education/NSVH conducted a study of vision services in Nebraska. A committee, made up of stakeholders, was selected to review current services and develop a new state plan for statewide vision services. This state plan was approved the Nebraska State Board of Education in December 1998, which created the Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired (NCECBVI). In 2004, the original stakeholders were invited back to NCECBVI to review the state plan and make any revisions needed to meet current needs. The revised state plan was approved by the Nebraska State Board of Education in September 2004.
Nebraska State Plan for Vision Services

The Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired provides a variety of services for students with blindness, visual impairments, and multiple disabilities on the campus in Nebraska City as well as statewide in students’ local school districts, homes, and communities. The chart below identifies the service components of the state plan for vision services.
NCECBVI Stakeholder Survey

As part of the Continuous Improvement Process (CIP) at ESU 4, NCECBVI asked stakeholders to participate in a survey related to the Mission Statement, “To improve the learning of children who are blind or visually impaired through a commitment to communication, accountability, and leadership.” Survey data was collected for each department within NCECBVI including: Administration, Outreach, Center-Based and Residential Programs, Health Center, and the Nebraska Instructional Resource Center.

Surveys were completed by the following groups: Special Education Directors (37%), Teachers of the Visually Impaired (23%), Parents/Guardians (8%), Agency Representatives (7%), Superintendents (5%), Orientation and Mobility Specialists (5%), Related Service Providers (2%), Support Staff (2%), Principals (2%), Special Education Teachers (1%), Consumers (1%), Braillists (1%), and Other (6%). Please Note: Not all individuals who completed the survey work with each department at NCECBVI, therefore indicating “Not Applicable.”

A summary of the survey findings is provided below regarding stakeholders’ overall impression of programs and services provided by NCECBVI, indicated by percentages out of 100.

**Communication**

- Strongly Agree: 50
- Agree: 25
- Disagree: 0.5
- Strongly Disagree: 0
- Not Applicable: 25

“Everybody is so willing to help where needed; it’s almost like they drop everything to help answer a problem or any concerns there are.”

“NCECBVI sends out information as soon as it’s available and encourages TVIs, COMS, and others to share with parents and students. Our state is well informed.”

“Every question that I have ever asked is answered quickly and in a pleasant manner. It is great to know that this resource is available...”

“Communication is consistent and thorough.”

**Accountability**

- Strongly Agree: 53
- Agree: 21
- Disagree: 0
- Strongly Disagree: 0
- Not Applicable: 26

“Staff are accountable to the needs of each student.”

“Parents always seem well informed by staff. Everyone I work with is extremely happy with the services, education, and communication NCECBVI provides their child.”

“I’ve personally heard people in different positions give credit where due, take responsibility for completing tasks, following up on those tasks, and accepting their part when things don’t go as planned.”

“The information they provide....is exceptional.”

**Leadership**

- Strongly Agree: 54
- Agree: 19
- Disagree: 0.5
- Strongly Disagree: 0
- Not Applicable: 27

“NCECBVI is our place to find all information concerning visual impairments.”

“They are the ‘go-to’ for all professionals in the field within the state of Nebraska. They are a great resource for help and information.”

“They are always at the forefront of learning what to do for students and parents...”

“NCECBVI has quality leadership, effective communicators, a statewide presence, and is knowledgeable.”
Instructional Materials and Technology Support

The Nebraska Instructional Resource Center (NIRC), housed at the Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired, supports local education agencies in providing students statewide with instructional materials and technology support needed for their education.

The Center:
- Acts as a liaison to the American Printing House for the Blind, Inc. (APH) Federal Quota program
- Serves as a resource for materials in braille, large print, recorded items, and tactile representations
- Maintains a statewide inventory of large print and braille materials available for loan from local school districts and educational service units
- Collaborates with the Nebraska Educational Assistive Technology (NEAT) Project regarding technology loan programs and technology support

School districts are required to register both their Legally Blind and Partially Sighted students annually with the Nebraska Instructional Resource Center.

Federal Quota funding from the American Printing House for the Blind is provided to each state annually for students registered as Legally Blind. In Nebraska, NCECBVI also monitors the number of students who qualify as partially sighted.

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Blind/Legally Blind</th>
<th>Partially Sighted</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>1997</td>
<td>384</td>
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A total of 862 students who are blind or visually impaired were identified in Nebraska in 2019:
- 401 students registered as Legally Blind
- 461 students registered as Partially Sighted

Categorization by age:
- Students ages birth-age 3: 31
- Students ages 3-5: 84
- Students ages 5-21: 747

Students were identified from 145 school districts and programs:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adams Central</th>
<th>Cozad</th>
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<th>Norfolk</th>
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<td>Humphrey</td>
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<td>Immanuel Lutheran</td>
<td>O’Neill</td>
<td>Superior</td>
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<td>Kearney</td>
<td>Papillion-LaVista</td>
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<td>Franklin</td>
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<td>Raymond Central</td>
<td>Wilber-Clatonia</td>
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<td>Callaway</td>
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<td>Millard</td>
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<td>Grand Island</td>
<td>Central Catholic</td>
<td>Neligh-Oakdale</td>
<td>South Central Nebraska Unified</td>
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</table>
Center-Based Programs and Residential Services

Students have the option of attending the Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired for specialized services based upon the student’s educational needs as indicated by the individual education plan. Full or part-time educational placement for varying durations is available. Residential services may be provided in addition to the center-based educational program. Residential services may include independent living training, social skill training, community participation, and recreation and leisure activities.

The Center provides:
- Academic programming
- Continuation of local school district academics
- Intense training in specific skills
- Assessments and evaluations
- Collaboration with educators and parents for the student’s return to local education agency
- Transition programming for adult life
- Partnerships with local public schools to provide educational opportunities
- Specialized services for students with blindness, visual impairments, and multiple disabilities

Enrollment
The Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired provides educational programs within the center-based school setting for students with visual impairments, including those with multiple disabilities. Residential services are also offered at NCECBVI which provides a comprehensive program for students with extended training opportunities in the area of independent living skills.

20 center-based students
**Indicates students new to NCECBVI in the 2018-2019 school year.**

16 of the center-based students received residential services.

17 school districts received these services:
Boone Central  Falls City  Red Cloud  Wakefield**
Crete  Hemingford  Sterling**  Waverly-Eagle**
David City  Nebraska City**  Syracuse-Dunbar-Avoca  Westside
East Butler  Plattsmouth  Thayer Central

Council Bluffs, Iowa
Treynor, Iowa

Number of Students Enrolled in NCECBVI Center-Based Program by School Year

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<td>Students</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

8
**Co-Enrollment with Local School District**

Placement at NCECBVI is always an IEP team decision and in some situations, students may attend their local school district classes on a part-time basis and attend NCECBVI the other part of the time. NCECBVI works closely with school districts to ensure consistency between the programs.

1 student attended both NCECBVI and their local district:
Plattsmouth

**Partnership with Nebraska City Public Schools**

NCECBVI serves students statewide and when they attend the center-based program and live in the residential setting, it may be a long distance between Nebraska City and their local community and school. When the IEP team determines it is appropriate for the student to attend classes at a public school, Nebraska City Public Schools has provided that opportunity for students who attend NCECBVI.

1 student participated in classes at Nebraska City Public Schools from:
Boone Central

**Transition Services**

Staff have been working closely with center-based students, their families, and adult service agency providers to coordinate transition services to the place students will attend once they graduate. The Transition Specialist, Principal, and teachers developed schedules so students attend NCECBVI but also have the opportunity to work at their service provider location one day a week. Certified teachers from NCECBVI and/or the students’ local school districts supervise programming on-site at these service agencies. These collaborative transitions have successfully happened for this year’s graduates from the communities of David City, Falls City, and Red Cloud.

In the residential setting at NCECBVI, each student has his or her own dorm room and for students who are approaching graduation, they have an opportunity to live in one of the apartment-like settings to prepare for life after school. When appropriate, students work closely with both center-based and residential staff members to learn how to keep their apartment clean, cook snacks and meals for themselves, take care of laundry, make schedules, pay bills, and plan social activities.

**Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)**

The ECC is a framework for educational planning for students with visual impairments. It consists of nine areas: Compensatory Academics, Orientation and Mobility, Sensory Efficiency, Career Education, Independent Living Skills, Recreation and Leisure, Assistive Technology, Self Determination, and Social Interaction.

The ECC is directly related to transition and preparing students for life after high school. This year, ECC assessments were completed by parents and staff members to determine priority needs for each student, which helped to drive IEP goals and objectives. The ECC is emphasized in all areas of a student’s education and services and is one of the unique and specialized features of a student attending school at NCECBVI.
Student and Staff Recognition—Locally and Nationally

Each month, the Principal gave Student-to-Student and Staff-to-Staff awards, with the intention of promoting recognition of contributions to the school and each other. In celebration of award winners, the Principal treated award winners to lunch or dinner in the community.

NCECBVI students and staff were proud to be featured in the American Printing House for the Blind’s promotional video about the InSights art competition. Nebraska was selected to be featured on the APH video due to the high number of participants NCECBVI has entered in this annual, national competition. In addition to the initial viewing of the video at the APH Art InSights Banquet in Louisville, Kentucky, during a lunch celebration at NCECBVI the video was shared with all students and staff and can now be viewed on the school website.

Summer Work Experiences

During the spring of 2018, the Transition Specialist from NCECBVI collaborated with staff from the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI) and local school districts/programs to set up 6 summer work experiences for students who attend NCECBVI. These experiences utilized 3 adult agency providers as work site skill trainers and 3 community-based work site skills trainers, and 7 businesses in 5 communities in students’ hometowns. A job coaching training was held in May to prepare for the summer work experiences.

In 2019, work experiences were again set up for several students in their local community, thanks to a partnership between NCECBVI and NCBVI. Examples of where students worked include: Pizza Hut in Crete, a veterinarian office in Wayne, St. Joseph’s Villa and Court in David City, Anytime Fitness and Taco John’s/Dairy Queen in Nebraska City, and a technology office and volunteer opportunity at a pet shelter in Lincoln.

Partnerships with the Community

NCECBVI is fortunate to have strong connections with the Nebraska City community and other towns in Nebraska. Examples for 2018-2019 include:

- Nebraska City businesses provided job experience opportunities for students—Arbor Day Farm, Anytime Fitness, Taco John’s/Dairy Queen, Ambassador Wellness Center, Brown’s Shoe Store, Buck Snort Restaurant, Lewis and Clark Visitor Center.
- NCECBVI hosted a Business ‘Thank You’ luncheon at the end of the year to celebrate the collaboration between NCECBVI and local businesses.
- NCECBVI hosted a community-wide Halloween Trick-or-Treat event.
- One student attended Catholic Mass with a community member.
- NCECBVI students participated on a Nebraska City Special Olympics Bowling Team.
- A First Responders luncheon was held at NCECBVI in honor of 9/11.
- The Vulcan Riders visited NCECBVI this fall and showed the students their motorcycles.
- ‘Transition Talks’ were held with two successful adults who are blind where students learned about having a job as a massage therapist.
- An NCECBVI Historical Marker unveiling and open house was held in December with more than 75 members of the community in attendance.
- NCECBVI attended the ARC holiday party.
- The NCECBVI Principal gave a tour to 40 senior citizens from the Fremont area who were interested in learning more about the school.
The Nebraska City Eagles group provided a holiday party for NCECBVI students. Carolers came to the dorm to sing holiday songs with students in December. NCECBVI rang bells for the Salvation Army during the holidays. An Eagle Scout representative learned about braille from NCECBVI students. Leadership Nebraska City learned about the history of NCECBVI as well as current programs/services. NCECBVI students were invited to a field trip at the Nebraska City Fire Station and Fire Museum. Residential students are ‘regulars’ for swimming at the Nebraska City Ambassador Wellness Center. NCECBVI students were invited to participate in the ‘Please Touch the Art’ exhibition at the University of Nebraska-Omaha. Artwork from some NCECBVI students was also on display as part of this event.

**Graduation Ceremony**
NCECBVI’s graduation ceremony was held in May. This event was held in collaboration with the students’ home schools with representatives from local districts and NCECBVI staff sharing stories about each graduate and awarding them with NCECBVI certificates of participation and diplomas from the local school district. An auditorium full of family, friends, and staff members congratulated the students before all joining in a celebratory luncheon.

**Class of 2019 Graduates**
NCECBVI staff aim to ensure a comfortable transition between public school and adult life. Parents, teachers, and adult service agency providers worked together to develop and implement students’ transition plans. Post-graduation plans for the class of 2019 graduates included:

AmeriServe in Council Bluffs, Iowa  
Quality Living (pending) in Omaha, Nebraska  
Region V in Auburn  
Region V in David City  
Mid-Nebraska Residential Services in Superior
One parent of a student attending NCECBVI stated, “My student feels safe and confident at school.”

“We are extremely grateful for all this school and the staff have provided for [our student]. We have seen huge strides developmentally and overall. Thank you for everything you do!” stated a parent.
Student and Family Support Programs

The Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired offers a variety of support programs for students and families throughout the year.

The Center provides:

- Skill Training—Braille, Orientation and Mobility, Independent Living, Vocational Training, Assistive Technology, Social Skills, Transitional Living
- Enrichment Activities—Outdoor Education, Arts and Crafts, Music, Sports, Recreation and Leisure
- Family Activities—Parent Training, Sibling Training, Family Networking

ACT Testing

NCECBVI serves as an approved proctor for the ACT test. NCECBVI staff partnered with students’ local school districts, parents, and students to complete the required paperwork for approved accommodations.

4 students participated from:

Bennington  Falls City  Southwest  Syracuse-Dunbar-Avoca

Sensory Safari East

This event was held at the Lincoln Children’s Zoo in Lincoln, in early October. Sensory Safari is a partnership between the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the Lincoln Children’s Zoo and promoted by NCECBVI. There were 476 students and staff members registered to attend, but more than 1000 Zoo guests who took part in the sensory zoo experience. Participants were encouraged to touch, hear, feel, and smell the exhibits. They had the opportunity to visit the interactive stations and talk with wildlife experts.

APH ArtInsights

The American Printing House for the Blind hosts this contest annually. This year, 12 students from Nebraska placed and/or were recognized in this competition. Four of the twelve students, along with their parents, traveled to Louisville, Kentucky, to receive their honors and participate in the national art show.

4 students and families traveled to Louisville, KY, from:

Crete  David City  Nebraska City  Council Bluffs, Iowa

Community Service Agency Tours

The NCECBVI Transition Specialist arranged tours in various areas in the state throughout the year, including Omaha, Lincoln, and Wayne. These tours were designed for parents and family members, and gave them the opportunity to learn more about what each program had to offer after graduation, as well as a chance to ask questions. Spending the day together also provided a beneficial networking opportunity for parents.
Nebraska Braille Challenge
NCECBVI hosted the 12th annual Nebraska Braille Challenge on campus in March, sponsored by the Braille Institute of America. Students competed in various contests including spelling, reading comprehension, speed and accuracy, charts and graphs, and proofreading. During the afternoon, students participated in interactive sessions with Outlook Nebraska focusing on various assistive technology devices, and another on audio description during a play, facilitated by Donna Hultman, NCECBVI Outreach Consultant. “The best thing about the day was seeing friends I haven’t seen in a long time,” said one of the students.

A parent workshop was provided during the day focusing on “Orientation and Mobility 101,” presented by Sara Reuss and Meagan Gerdes, both Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists at NCECBVI. One parent commented, “The O&M parent workshop was very informative and the hands-on experience was great.”

In total, there were 105 participants on campus for this year’s competition: 73 visitors in addition to 32 individuals from NCECBVI. Prizes were given to the first, second, and third place winners in each category and all students received a certificate of participation and a t-shirt.

22 students participated from:
- Ashland-Greenwood
- Blair
- Lincoln
- Millard
- NCECBVI
- Omaha
- Papillion-LaVista
- South Sioux City
- Syracuse-Dunbar-Avoca
- Waverly-Eagle
- Wayne
- Wood River

Number of Students who have Participated in the Nebraska Regional Braille Challenge by School Year

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National Braille Challenge
One Nebraska student from Lincoln Public Schools qualified for the national competition in Los Angeles this summer. Only the top 50 participants from state competitions in the U.S. are invited to attend this event. The student, his parent, and teacher of the visually impaired took part in the weekend competition and family activities sponsored by the Braille Institute of America.

Family Engagement Awareness Training (FEAT)
The NCECBVI Transition Specialist, a student, and her family, attended FEAT training, a 2-day workshop provided by the Parent Training and Information center (PTI) and designed to help families and service providers learn more about options for competitive employment as well as state and federal resources.

1 student and family participated from:
- Gretna
Nebraska Youth Leadership Council (NYLC)
The Nebraska Department of Education, Office of Special Education, along with Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation, sponsor the Nebraska Youth Leadership Council. The NYLC was created by youth, promoting leadership and advocacy for students with disabilities. They work with youth statewide to promote disability awareness and educate others about transition services.

1 student participated from:
NCECBVI/East Butler

Prom
“Under the Sea” was the theme for prom this year, held at NCECBVI in April. Students enjoyed a nice dinner and danced the night away, in addition to taking pictures, crowning of the King and Queen, and plenty of opportunities to socialize with friends from across the ESU 4 area. “The party bus was a blast!” declared one of the participants.

Also in attendance were several teachers and staff from area schools, as well as some parents. The idea of prom being planned to meet the special needs of students was noted by many who attended the event. One adult stated, “I loved that the kids were so involved.”

40 students participated from:
ESU 4 Life Skills  Johnson County Central  Nebraska City
Falls City  NCECBVI  Syracuse-Dunbar-Avoca

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4=Excellent</th>
<th>3=Good</th>
<th>2=Fair</th>
<th>1=Poor</th>
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<tr>
<td>3.61</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>3.71</td>
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Prom 2018-2019
Parent Workshop
This spring, Dr. Sharon Sacks, retired superintendent from the California School for the Blind, presented to parents about “Establishing Positive Social Relationships: Answering the Hard Questions.” Both parents and teachers of the visually impaired were in attendance to learn more about this topic from Dr. Sacks, who herself has a visual impairment. While the adults participated in the workshop, students took part in fun activities at one of the local apple orchards and in the sensory room at NCECBVI.

26 adults and 6 students participated from:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bishop Neumann/Wahoo</th>
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<th>NCECBVI</th>
<th>Papillion-LaVista</th>
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<tr>
<td>ESU 10</td>
<td>Millard</td>
<td>Omaha</td>
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Sizzlin’ Summer Camp
This annual summer camp was held in June at NCECBVI. The theme this year was “Work Hard, Play Hard!” New this year was a partnership with the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired who worked with staff to provide activities and experiences related to Pre-Employment Transition Services as part of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. In addition to traditional camp activities, students took part in career exploration and job experience training. “My favorite part of camp was seeing friends,” said several of the student participants.

24 students participated from:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Atkinson</th>
<th>Grand Island</th>
<th>Norris</th>
<th>Wood River</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Omaha</td>
<td>Syracuse-Dunbar-Avoca</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blair</td>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>Valentine</td>
<td>Waverly-Eagle</td>
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<td>Columbus</td>
<td>Millard</td>
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Sizzlin' Summer Camp
Overall Satisfaction, 2018-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Satisfaction</th>
<th>On-Campus</th>
<th>Off-Campus</th>
<th>Pool Day</th>
<th>Evening Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4=Excellent</td>
<td>3=Good</td>
<td>2=Fair</td>
<td>1=Poor</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>3.33</td>
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</table>
**Person-Centered Planning**

In the person-centered planning process, students with disabilities focus on themselves to build a personal profile using maps, plan for their future, and create an action plan to define next steps in the planning process. NCECBVI staff members from both the outreach department and center-based program have been trained in this process.

**2 teams participated from:**

  - Falls City
  - Gretna
Assessment and Evaluation Services

Educational assessments and evaluations are provided to assist local education agencies in order to provide educational services for students who are blind or visually impaired. These assessments may be provided in a variety of locations: in the local school district, in the student’s home and community, and/or at the Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired. The assessment team also coordinates with other professionals to provide a comprehensive evaluation.

The Center may provide:
- Low Vision Clinics
- Orientation and Mobility Assessments
- Functional Vision Assessments
- Learning Media Assessments
- Transitional Living Assessments
- Daily Living Assessments
- Vocational Assessments
- Assistive Technology Assessments
- Motor Assessments
- Psychological Evaluations
- Physical Therapy Evaluations
- Occupational Therapy Evaluations
- Speech-Language Evaluations

Low Vision Clinic
The clinics were held twice during the 2018-2019 school year at NCECBVI. Services and assessments were provided in the area of optometry and neuro-ophthalmology. These clinics provided parents, teachers, and students an opportunity to work directly with medical personnel and specialists to receive valuable information regarding the students’ vision and how the environment can be adapted to enhance visual learning. As one of the parents shared, “I would recommend Low Vision Clinic to anyone…it’s not like any other Dr.’s office…loved it.”

43 students participated from:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ashland-Greenwood</th>
<th>Falls City</th>
<th>NCECBVI</th>
<th>South Sioux City</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auburn</td>
<td>Grand Island</td>
<td>Nebraska City</td>
<td>Thayer Central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battle Creek</td>
<td>Humboldt (HTRS)</td>
<td>Norris</td>
<td>West Holt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crete</td>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>Pawnee City</td>
<td>Wood River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exeter-Milligan</td>
<td>McCool Junction</td>
<td>Pleasanton</td>
<td>York</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Categorization by age:
- Students ages birth-age 3: 3
- Students ages 3-5: 4
- Students ages 5-21: 36
Psychological Evaluations and Functional Vision/Learning Media Assessments

Psychological evaluations are offered on-campus at NCECBVI. Functional Vision/Learning Media Assessments and Orientation and Mobility Assessments are provided as an outreach service, completed at the student’s local district.

8 students completed a Psychological Evaluation from:
- Bruning-Davenport
- Kearney
- Norris
- Oakland-Craig
- South Sioux City
- Syracuse-Dunbar-Avoca
- Thayer Central
- Winnebago

10 students completed a Functional Vision/Learning Media Assessment from:
- Alliance
- Auburn
- Gretna
- Lewiston
- North Platte
- Pawnee City
- Sterling
- Thayer Central

5 students completed an Orientation and Mobility Assessment from:
- District OR 1
- Norris
- North Platte
- Pawnee City
- Sterling

Categorization by age:
- Students ages birth-age 3: 0
- Students ages 3-5: 2
- Students ages 5-21: 20
Consultation Services

The Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired provides consultation, advisory, and technical assistance for students, families, educators, local education agencies, and educational service units on a statewide basis.

The Center:

- Assists local education agencies in assessing a child’s needs and makes appropriate educational recommendations
- Facilitates student-family networking
- Provides classroom, community, and/or home observations
- Provides ongoing support and information for students, parents, and educators
- Works cooperatively with parents, local school district personnel, and others to implement appropriate educational programs and services
- Participates in multi-disciplinary team, individual education planning, individual family service planning, and individual program planning meetings
- Assists with statewide initiatives

Transition Consultation

NCECBVI’s Transition Specialist offers this service to students, teachers of the visually impaired, school district staff, and families. These consultations are individualized to meet the specific transition needs of the students and parents as well as the needs of school districts and ESUs.

6 districts/ESUs received this service from:
Falls City          Millard            Thayer Central
Gretna              Syracuse-Dunbar-Avoca

Mentoring Program

NCECBVI offers a mentoring program for teachers of the visually impaired. Mentoring can be of particular benefit to a new TVI, and/or individuals who have returned to a TVI position after recently working in another capacity, or a TVI who is in need of assistance in a particular area(s). The NCECBVI Outreach Consultant/Mentor provides support, encouragement, and assistance to the TVI to help the individual gain confidence and learn skills to effectively provide services to students with visual impairments.

5 individuals participated from:
Bellevue          Gretna            Westside
**Direct Service**

During the 2018-2019 school year, NCECBVI provided direct services from a teacher of the visually impaired and certified orientation and mobility specialists to several schools within the ESU 4 area. NCECBVI also contracts with two school districts in the ESU 3 area, one district in the ESU 6 area, and three school districts in the ESU 2 area to provide direct services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ashland-Greenwood</th>
<th>Falls City</th>
<th>Norris</th>
<th>Sterling</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auburn</td>
<td>Gretna</td>
<td>Oakland-Craig</td>
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<tr>
<td>District OR 1</td>
<td>Lewiston</td>
<td>Pawnee City</td>
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</table>

**40 students received services from:**

There were several positive comments received from school personnel throughout the year about NCECBVI outreach staff who served their district. One person noted, “I would like to let you know you have an amazing staff.” A special education director also commented, “The information the NCECBVI staff provided in a meeting was amazing. Their report was very thorough and they provided expertise throughout the discussions.”

Categorization by age:

- Students ages birth-age 3: 1
- Students ages 3-5: 5
- Students ages 5-21: 34
Professional Development and Training

The Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired provides and coordinates staff development opportunities statewide for educators, related service providers, parents, and agency personnel as needs are identified. In addition, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, in cooperation with the Nebraska Department of Education, the Kansas State School for the Blind, and the Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired, offers an endorsement program for teaching the blind and visually impaired.

The Center:
- Supports the UNL Vision Endorsement Program
- Provides training for regular and special educators, related service providers, and agency personnel
- Provides training opportunities for parents, families, and caregivers
- Provides statewide staff development opportunities for teachers of the visually impaired
- Seeks funding for teachers to receive certification in orientation and mobility

CVI (Cortical Visual Impairment) Work Group
This team is made up of TVIs from across Nebraska who take a special interest in CVI and are anxious to support their colleagues. In the fall, they reviewed position papers from two professional organizations, Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired and American Council of the Blind. They also began problem-solving conversations with other TVIs, providing suggestions and giving ideas for instructional strategies and assessments to use with students with CVI. These consultations continued throughout the school year. In the spring, the group made tentative plans for providing a statewide training to TVIs during the 2019-2020 school year.

8 individuals participated from:
- ESU 9
- ESU 10
- Lincoln
- NCECBVI
- Norfolk

District-Specific Training Focusing on Transition
Per request of individual districts, the NCECBVI Transition Specialist provided training specifically focusing on various transition-related topics, such as the transition page of the IEP, assessments/evaluations, making connections with service agency providers, and more.

6 individual participated from:
- Millard
- Omaha

Regional Conversations
TVIs across the state are invited to participate in discussions led by NCECBVI staff focusing on best practices for students with visual impairments. The conversations were guided by an agenda as well as the specific needs of the group and individual teachers. Together, topics were discussed, ideas were shared, and problem-solving took place. Meetings were held in different regions of the state both in the fall and spring.

27 individuals participated from these areas:
- Kearney
- Lincoln
- Omaha
- Norfolk
TOAST (Technology Outreach and Support Team) Work Group
This team is made up of TVIs in Nebraska who take a specific interest in assistive technology. In the fall, they reviewed the website they had developed previously, which supports TVIs by giving suggestions for assessments and tools to use with students who are blind or visually impaired. Throughout the year, they shared information about computer programming and discussed various case studies. Conversations were held about a multi-year project to develop an assistive technology lab at NCECBVI for the purpose of assessments with students and exposure to new devices and programs for TVIs.

7 individuals participated from:
ESU 4  ESU 10  Lincoln  NCECBVI  Private Provider

APH Scholar
The American Printing House for the Blind (APH) annually selects a small number of educators in the field to serve as an APH Scholar and attend the annual meeting in Louisville, Kentucky. Donna Hultman, NCECBVI Outreach Consultant, received this honor and attended the annual meeting and training sessions in October. In the spring, Donna was selected to attend the Educational Products and Educational Services Advisory Committee meeting at the American Printing House for the Blind in Kentucky. During these meetings, committee members provided APH with comments about products and services offered by the agency and developed recommendations for the future.

Fall Foliage Conference
This annual statewide conference focused on recognizing and managing sensory differences in students who are blind or visually impaired, presented by staff from Munroe-Meyer. Following the training, one participant stated, “I have always believed that kids have a reason for their behaviors, even if they can’t explain to us. This workshop gives me more insight into the sensory issues that play such an important part…”

Prior to the workshop, 88% of participants reported they had moderate or high knowledge about this topic, while at the conclusion of the workshop, the percentage rose to 94%. In a follow-up survey conducted approximately 6 weeks after the conference, 100% of participants reported they have used the information they learned at Fall Foliage, 89% were prompted to learn more about the subject, and 67% have seen an impact on student learning and behaviors as a result of the information learned at the workshop.

41 individuals participated from:
Bellevue  ESU 2  ESU 8  NCECBVI  Westside
Central City  ESU 3  ESU 10  Norfolk  Wood River
East Butler  ESU 5  Grand Island  Schuyler
ESU 1  ESU 7  NCBVI  Shelby-Rising City

Nebraska Paraeducator Conference
This fall, the NCECBVI Transition Specialist presented a session at this statewide conference, held in Kearney, in addition to providing information about programs and services at the NCECBVI vendor booth.
**Cane Quest**
An invitation was extended to NCECBVI staff to participate in the national Cane Quest competition in Los Angeles, as a training opportunity to learn more about the competition, in preparation for hosting this statewide event in the near future. Cane Quest is sponsored by the Braille Institute of America. The principal and two certified orientation and mobility specialists participated in the event and brought information back to share with O&M instructors statewide throughout the school year.

**Braillist Work Group**
Meetings are held twice each year specifically for individuals who serve as braillists or as paraeducators who provide braille to students. In the fall, this group focused on learning more about the Tactile Graphic Image Library available from the American Printing House for the Blind and requested further, more in-depth training to happen in the future. In the spring, they talked about braillist certification and discussed ways to support NSCAS(state) testing.

15 individuals participated from:
- Ashland-Greenwood
- Fremont
- NCECBVI
- Private Provider
- ESU 7
- Lincoln
- Norris
- Schuyler
- ESU 10
- Millard
- Omaha

**Braille Blaster Workshop**
Teachers and braillists were invited to attend a training about this no-cost, APH product, Braille Blaster, presented by William Freeman from the American Printing House for the Blind. In addition to Nebraska participants, individuals from Kansas and Iowa were also in attendance. “I came in with no knowledge of this product and learned so much from others in the training,” said a participant.

Prior to the workshop, 22% of participants reported having moderate or high knowledge of the product. At the conclusion of the training, 94% stated they had moderate or high knowledge of Braille Blaster.

21 individuals participated from:
- Ashland-Greenwood
- Fremont
- Lincoln
- Private Provider
- ESU 10
- Millard
- NCECBVI
- Schuyler
- Kansas School for the Blind/Kansas Instructional Resource Center
- Ankeny, Iowa
- Iowa Educational Services
- Williamsburg Community School District, Iowa

**Midwest Outreach Forum**
Now in its third year, the Midwest Outreach Forum was held at NCECBVI in January, with representatives from Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska in attendance. Topics discussed at this year’s meeting included: student and family programs, assessments and evaluations, Instructional Resource Centers, and professional development opportunities.
O&M (Orientation and Mobility) Community of Practice
In addition to planning for Cane Quest in the upcoming school year, this group spent time discussing the new UNL O&M program, caseloads, and problem-solving with colleagues. In the spring, they took part in a training provided by the Helen Keller National Center on haptics, specifically to use as part of future O&M lessons with students. NCECBVI provides CEUs for O&M instructors throughout the state through the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP).

14 individuals participated from:

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<tr>
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<td>Private Providers</td>
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Transition Work Group
When this group met in the fall, they continued their work creating a transition guide for TVIs related to activities and timelines for transition for students who are blind or visually impaired. The winter meeting was held via Zoom, where work continued on the transition guide. In spring, the meeting was held at the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Lincoln. The team participated in a tour of NCBVI’s transition program and spent time talking with the project director. Also as part of the day, the group took part in a presentation/discussion with a representative from Developmental Disabilities Services to learn about programs and services available.

8 individuals participated from:

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<td>Papillion-LaVista</td>
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<td>Millard</td>
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<td>Omaha</td>
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Nebraska Instructional Resource Center (NIRC) Advisory
The TVIs who serve on this committee met twice during the school year. During first semester, the agenda included conversations about the Federal Quota program, a review of policies and procedures, handling of materials, upcoming events and activities, and a review of APH products. Second semester, the team met via Zoom to again discuss the Federal Quota process and program, inventory recall, vision condition data for Nebraska, future paper orders, and new products.

13 individuals participated from:

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<td>ESU 1</td>
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<td>Hastings</td>
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<td>Falls City</td>
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<td>NCECBVI</td>
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<td>UNL</td>
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‘Vision 101’ Workshop
Upon request from the school district, training was provided to the Norris Middle School staff by an NCECBVI Outreach Consultant in anticipation of a new student starting school there mid-year. Basic information about braille, adapting materials, cane travel, and information about online training workshops were shared with staff.
Meetings with the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI)
NCCEBVI continued a positive partnership with the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired by meeting quarterly during the school year. Discussions included an overview of programs and services offered by both entities, NCBVI order of selection, summer employment opportunities, and discussions about supporting transition-age students and their families.

Nebraska Transition Conference
The NCECBVI Transition Specialist presented a session at this statewide conference, in partnership with the Transition Coordinator at the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. In addition, information about working with students with visual impairments was shared at the NCECBVI vendor booth.

Metro Transition Conference
The NCECBVI Transition Specialist participated in this conference, held at Metro Community College. Students and teachers from the Omaha and surrounding areas were in attendance. Information was shared with participants about services and programs offered through NCECBVI.

Spring Fling Conference
The statewide training, “Using the ECC Student Portfolio Framework: A Hands-On Introduction to Designing Engaging ECC Instruction and IEP Goals for Students with Visual Impairments,” was presented by Rachel Schles from the University of Pittsburgh. “What a great presentation with lots of useful information,” shared a participant.

Prior to the workshop, 65% of participants reported they had moderate or high knowledge about the topic. At the conclusion of the workshop, 89% reported they had moderate or high knowledge of sensory differences.

39 individuals participated from:
Bellevue  ESU 10  Hastings  NCECBVI  Omaha
ESU 3  Falls City  Lincoln  Norfolk  UNL
ESU 9  Grand Island  NCECBVI  Ogallala  Yutan

Tactile Graphic Image Library (TGIL) Workshop
Brailleists and teachers were invited to participate in this workshop focusing on the Tactile Graphic Image Library, a no-cost APH product, presented by Sally Hart from the American Printing House for the Blind. One person who attended the training said, “This is a great tool in my toolbox to help support students.”

Prior to the workshop, only 9% of participants reported having moderate or high knowledge of the product. At the conclusion of the training, 100% stated they had moderate or high knowledge of the TGIL.

21 individuals participated from:
Ashland-Greenwood  ESU 10  Lincoln  Norris
ESU 4  Fremont  Millard  Omaha
ESU 7  Hastings  NCECBVI  UNL
**Transition Discussions with Other Schools for the Blind**
The NCECBVI Transition Specialist initiated conversations with other transition specialists from schools for the blind across the U.S. to engage in discussions about services provided in their respective areas. These meetings will continue to be held on a regular basis using Zoom technology.

**All-ESU 4 Professional Development**
Following an opening session from the ESU 4 administrator, this workshop was held in the spring with employees taking part in sessions learning about the history of ESU 4, personal health and mindfulness, changes to tax laws, and information about technology.

**NCECBVI In-Services**
In the fall, NCECBVI spent time focusing on individual students regarding communication, behavior, and specific learning needs. During second semester, time was again devoted to discussions about individual students and specifically focused on their sensory needs, led by the NCECBVI physical therapist and occupational therapist. Teachers, paraeducators, residential staff, and administrators participated in these all-day trainings. In the spring, a half-day session was held for NCECBVI staff, where they spent time reflecting on the current school year and planning for the upcoming school year.

**NCECBVI Staff Participation in Professional Development**
This year, numerous staff members participated in a variety of trainings throughout the school year. Those included the following topics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Staff Evaluation</th>
<th>Transition Practitioners</th>
<th>School Safety</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Vision Resource Coalition</td>
<td>Community Safety</td>
<td>Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NASES</td>
<td>O&amp;M Symposium</td>
<td>Transition Conference</td>
<td>Yoga w/O&amp;M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESU Principals</td>
<td>Autism Conference</td>
<td>Transition Assessment</td>
<td>Continuous Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council of Schools for the Blind</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Nebraska Deaf-Blind Project

NCECBVI/ESU 4 serves as the fiscal agent for the state deaf-blind grant. During the first quarter, the annual Deaf-Blind Summer Institute was held focusing on early childhood for two days and haptics for another two days. The Project Director and Project Coordinator attended the OSEP conference in Washington D.C. where they collaborated with other projects across the U.S. Following a comprehensive application process, Nebraska was excited to learn they had been awarded another 5-year grant to continue the work of the state deaf-blind project.

The Project Director and Project Coordinator participated in an interagency meeting focusing on the needs of students who have a dual sensory impairment. In winter, the Project Coordinator participated in the Deaf-Blind Summit in Austin, along with other state projects, facilitated by the National Center on Deaf-Blindness and included representation from the federal Office of Special Education Programs. During the Summit, there was a focus on instructional strategies for students who are deaf-blind as well as performance measures for state deaf-blind project grants.

In the spring, extensive planning was done for the annual Deaf-Blind Summer Institute, the Project Director met with the CHARGE liaison, haptic training was held for the O&M community of practice group, and training occurred with a parent identified as the Family Engagement Coordinator for Nebraska. In late June, Nebraska joined other states in the region for the Midwest Transition Institute, held in Minnesota. Participating in MTI from Nebraska was a student with deaf-blindness from Lincoln Public Schools, along with her parent and teacher.
Other Notes of Interest

Collaborative Partnership with the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI)

NCECBVI is fortunate to have a positive relationship with NCBVI. There are several examples of ways the two programs/agencies partnered this school year:

- Four joint meetings were held with leaders from NCECBVI and NCBVI.
- NCBVI counselors from the Norfolk, Kearney, Scottsbluff, and Lincoln offices attended IEP/MDT meetings. Counselors also observed students in their classes at NCECBVI.
- NCBVI representatives provided quarterly Pre-Employment Transition Services for NCECBVI and shadowed students’ community-based work experiences.
- One NCBVI counselor attended the Career Challenge with NCECBVI students at Peru State College.
- NCECBVI students toured the NCBVI training center and a Nebraska State Office Building restaurant.
- NCECBVI students attended the NCBVI technology training event in March.
- NCBVI staff attended the Spring Fling conference focusing on the Expanded Core Curriculum.
- The NCECBVI Transition Specialist and various NCBVI counselors co-visited adult agency providers throughout the school year and made plans for community work experiences and independent living.

Positive Partnerships with Schools Locally, Statewide, and Nationwide

NCECBVI has strong relationships with other school districts. Examples of partnerships during 2018-2019 include:

- Ashland-Greenwood Public Schools—UNL campus visit
- Falls City Public Schools—class presentation with a student, UNL campus visit
- Freeman Public Schools—NCECBVI campus tour
- Gretna Public Schools—class presentation with a student
- Lourdes Central Catholic School—T4:12 student group, social activities, sporting events
- National Outreach Forum—outreach staff from schools for the blind around the U.S. collaborate and share ideas
- Nebraska City Public Schools—‘Be Kind’ movement, concerts, prom
- Papillion-LaVista Community Schools—White Cane Day, support for students with a class presentation class research project, and Boy Scout community project
- NCECBVI hosted a Shamrock Dance in March where students and staff attended from District OR 1, Wood River, and Nebraska City Public Schools.

Participation in NCECBVI-Sponsored Professional Development, Training, and Activities

During the 2018-2019 school year, NCECBVI collected data about how many teachers of the visually impaired and braillists are currently in Nebraska and of those, how many participated in an NCECBVI-sponsored activity, whether on-campus or off-campus.

- Of the 67 active TVIs, 61 participated in at least one activity with NCECBVI, equaling 91%.
- Of the 21 active braillists, 13 participated in at least one activity with NCECBVI, equaling 62%.
Active Partnership with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL)

Dr. Mackenzie Savaiano, Assistant Professor of Practice and Coordinator of the Vision Department at UNL, works closely with NCECBVI staff to support current and future service providers for students who are blind or visually impaired. In 2018-2019, examples of collaboration included:

- Dr. Savaiano applying for and receiving a federal grant to support the development of an orientation and mobility program in Nebraska. NCECBVI provided current demographics of O&M providers in Nebraska to Dr. Savaiano.
- The NCECBVI Campus Administrator supported Dr. Savaiano in working with the teacher certification office at the Nebraska Department of Education for certifying orientation and mobility specialists.
- NCECBVI staff were invited to be a part of the faculty interviews for the new UNL O&M position.
- Dr. Savaiano was a guest at the O&M Community of Practice meeting to share information about the new orientation and mobility program.
- NCECBVI extends an invitation for Dr. Savaiano and the UNL VI Mentor to attend all Regional Conversations and statewide conferences.
- The NCECBVI Campus Administrator serves on the Mid-Plains Professional Upgrade Partnership-Sensory Disabilities (MPUP-SD) advisory committee at UNL.
- Dr. Savaiano and NCECBVI staff work closely to provide support to students and their local school district administrators, as they are completing coursework for the VI endorsement program and/or graduate certificate program.

Vision Stakeholder Team

The Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired and the Nebraska Department of Education gather input on a regular basis regarding the programs and services for children with visual impairments in Nebraska through the Vision Stakeholder Team. This team is comprised of parents, consumers, school administrators, teachers, and other interested agencies and organization representatives in Nebraska. The Vision Stakeholder Team meets at NCECBVI one time per school year.

This year, the Vision Stakeholder Team met in November. This advisory group discussed what was new at NCECBVI then analyzed data from the annual report, which is based on the Nebraska State Plan for Vision Services. Input was given on all NCECBVI programs and services.

19 individuals participated from:

- Assistive Technology Partnership
- Boys Town National Research Hospital
- Centennial
- Lincoln
- McCook
- Millard
- National Federation for the Blind
- NCECBVI

Nebraska City
NE Comm. for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Nebraska Department of Education
Outlook Nebraska
Private Provider
Region V Services
Syracuse-Dunbar-Avoca
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
**Staff Evaluation**

One of the continuous improvement priorities identified as part of the AdvancED accreditation was ESU 4’s staff evaluation process. In 2018-2019, NCECBVI and ESU 4 administrators met periodically to develop a concise, consistent, and appropriate staff evaluation process ESU-wide. They were provided training on the Charlotte Danielson framework by Sue Pressler, an outside consultant, then continued the conversation as a team and solidified a plan for all ESU 4 employees, to be shared at opening meetings in August 2019.

**Facility Improvements**

The State of Nebraska continued with improvements with the NCECBVI facilities and campus. Phase II of the HVAC and electrical project was completed. The entire facility now has geothermal heating and cooling, new lighting, new electrical systems and some new flooring and paint. A generator was added and is operating in case of weather and/or other emergencies.

**2018-2019 NCECBVI Theme**

“Believe and Achieve: Each fall, monarch butterflies in Maine begin an unbelievable journey to a hilltop in Mexico. How do they do it? The focus on the goal, not the difficulties. Each day they take their bearings and set off, allowing their instincts and desire to steer them. They accept what comes; some winds blow them off course, other speed them along. They keep flying until, one day, they arrive. *Your determination makes the difference.*”

Ideas related to this theme were implemented into staff meetings, building decorations, and various activities with students.