

County Needs Assessment Report Draft

June 2012

Kindergarten Entry Assessment & Early Childhood Data Systems (KEDS)

Developed for Churchill County Nevada



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This document contains information collected during the planning process that is specifically from and related to the county. Assets and needs are documented for the purpose of understanding the existing systems and circumstances within each of Nevada’s counties. The ultimate goal of the project is to support the development of a **statewide kindergarten entry assessment and early childhood data system that supports school readiness toward long-term success of each child.**

This project was funded with federal stimulus funds (under the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act). It was envisioned and made possible by the Early Childhood Advisory Council, which is managed by the Nevada Head Start Collaboration and Early Childhood Systems Office (HSC & ECSO).



Introduction

This report summarizes the findings for Churchill County that are the result of a statewide needs assessment conducted in the first half of 2012 related to the Kindergarten Entry and Data System project (KEDS). “KEDS” is a statewide effort to build a comprehensive early childhood education and care (ECE) system that supports the ability of all children in Nevada to enter kindergarten ready to learn. The Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council, (NECAC) managed by Nevada’s Head Start Collaboration and Early Childhood Systems (HSC&ECS) Office, in collaboration with the Nevada Department of Education (NDE), is leading this effort, which has identified two major components of system change as priorities for implementation:

- a) Adoption of a Common Kindergarten Entry Assessment; and
- b) Development of a Coordinated Data System that links pre-K to K-12 (and beyond) in order to support early childhood educators to understand and utilize child assessment data to improve programs, curriculum and environments.

The vision for this project, known as KEDS for short, is defined by the NECAC as follows:

Nevada’s statewide data system leads to a shared understanding of school readiness. Everyone who touches children’s lives will have a broad awareness of the strengths, needs and status of Nevada’s children; and information that improves children’s development and learning.

To carry out this vision, a comprehensive needs assessment was launched in January 2012 with a focus on determining the feasibility at both the state and county level for adopting a statewide approach. To ensure that every one of Nevada’s 17 counties were represented in the needs assessment process, an extensive effort was made to obtain local stakeholder input regarding county-level needs, assets, and buy-in related to participating in the implementation of a Statewide Early Childhood Data System and a Common Kindergarten Entry Assessment.

The needs assessment process included focus groups and site visits in all 17 counties and school districts to understand current practices, resource needs, specific barriers, and level of willingness to participate in this statewide systems change initiative. This needs assessment will allow Nevada to determine the most sensible approach for improving each county’s ability to ensure that its children enter kindergarten ready to learn, socialize, and thrive. This report summarizes the needs assessment process and findings specifically for Churchill County, and concludes with a subjective assessment of the feasibility for implementing KEDS in Churchill County.

County Profile

Churchill County is located in Northern Nevada approximately one hour east of Reno. It encompasses approximately 4,900 square miles of fertile agricultural lands, desert, mountains and valleys, and contains only one urban area, the city of Fallon. The most current population estimate of the county is 24,877 persons. Of that number, approximately 8,606 persons reside within the city limits of Fallon, the county seat.

Churchill County is also the home of the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe, a number of lakes, expansive wetlands and wildlife refuge areas, and the U.S. Naval Air Station Fallon where the Naval Strike and Air Warfare Center and TOPGUN host Naval and joint combat training. Agriculture is an important component of the overall economy. Additionally, Churchill County is a leading producer of green energy.

Churchill County Demographics

Total Population (2010) ¹	24,877
Number of Children Ages 0-5 (2010) ²	1,676
Median Household Income (2010) ³	\$51,597
Homeless population (school age group) ⁴	118
Food Insecure Children: Ages 0-18 (2012) ⁵	1,330 21.5%
Enrolled in NV Checkup: Ages 0-18 (2012) ⁶	177
Number of Children Receiving Early Intervention Services: Ages 0-3 (2010) ⁷	45 children (24.77 hours per child)

Most people in Churchill County (82%) identify their race / ethnicity as white. Approximately 12% identify themselves as Hispanic / Latino. American Indians, people that are multi-racial, or people that identify themselves as another race (“other”) each make up between 4 and 5% of the total population in Churchill County. The demographic profile is presented as follows.

¹ (Nevada State Demographer)

² (Nevada State Demographer)

³ (U.S. Census Bureau)

⁴ (Social Entrepreneurs Inc., 2012)

⁵ (Feeding America , 2012)

⁶ (Nevada Check up, 2012)

⁷ (Nevada Early Intervention Services, 2010)

Racial/Ethnic Breakdown (2010)⁸

	Total Population	% of Total Population
Total	24,877	100%
Asian	665	2.7%
Black or African American	395	1.6%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1,129	4.5%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	51	0.2%
White	20,407	82.0%
Other	1,183	4.8%
Multi-Racial	1,047	4.2%
*Population that identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino.	3,009	12.1%

Churchill County: Snapshot of Early Childhood Education and Care

Churchill County is unique from most other districts in Nevada in that nearly all kindergartens within the county are located at the same school, Northside Early Learning Center. In addition to kindergarten classrooms, Northside Early Learning Center has preschool classrooms and special education programs for children 3 to 5 years of age. Full-day kindergarten is available for a fee. Head Start administered through CSA is also located at Northside. When children finish kindergarten, they go to any one of the elementary schools in Churchill County (E.C. Best, Lahontan, Numa, or West End). In 2011-12 there were 452 children enrolled at Northside. Northside Early Learning Center is in school Monday thru Thursday. Breakfast is served each day. There is also a Tribal Head Start is operated through Inter Tribal Council of Nevada (ITCN) at Lahontan.

In 2010, there were 73 children in Churchill's state funded pre-K and 279 enrolled in kindergarten (Nevada Department of Education, 2011). District wide, there were 4,168 children enrolled in all schools during 2010-11. Of this total, 14.3% of students had an IEP (compared to 10.8% statewide), and 6.6% were limited in English proficiency. Slightly less than half (45.5% were eligible for free and reduced lunch). Qualification for free and reduced lunch is an indication that families may struggle to meet basic needs. These characteristics are important and related to kindergarten entry assessment, and, data suggests that children that experience one or more of these situations may be less likely to graduate from high school than those that don't. Meeting educational needs early in the child's life can help to correct for these disparities in graduation and academic achievement.

⁸ (Nevada State Demographer)

There are also many private providers of early childhood education and care, including seven licensed centers that can support children, three licensed family providers, and one family group provider. Together this supports a licensed capacity of 373 slots (Nevada Registry, 2012).

According to Nevada Annual Reports of accountability, the student to teacher ratio in kindergarten classrooms was 20:1. There is half-day kindergarten available for all, with a fee-based full-day kindergarten, but, like all districts in Nevada, kindergarten is not mandatory.

County Early Childhood Education and Care Resources	#	Enrollment Capacity	Children Enrolled in District Classrooms (2011)	
			Pre-K	K
Public Schools (elementary)	5	X	79	273
Charter Schools (elementary)	0	X		
Private Schools (elementary)	2	25		
Licensed Family Child Care	3	18		
Licensed Group Child Care	1	12		
Licensed Child Care Centers	7	343		

Sources: Nevada Registry, Nevada Department of Education

School Readiness in Nevada

An important goal of the county-level needs assessment for this project was to solicit feedback from stakeholders at the local level in order to support adoption of a Nevada-specific definition of school readiness. A working definition was developed and shaped at a statewide School Readiness Summit held in February 2012, and subsequently reviewed by hundreds of ECE stakeholders, including parents and providers, who were asked to provide input on the working definition as well as to validate the need for a common statewide kindergarten entry assessment and coordinated early childhood data system.

Feedback from Churchill County stakeholders indicated support of the working Nevada definition



of school readiness, which was formally adopted in June 2012 by the NECAC.

There is consensus, based upon a wealth of research, that a child’s readiness for school should be measured and addressed across five distinct but connected domains⁹:

Physical Development and Health--This domain covers such factors as health status, growth, and disabilities; physical abilities, such as gross and fine motor skills; and conditions before, at, and after birth.

Social and Emotional Development--This domain combines two interrelated components affecting children’s behavioral health and learning. Social development refers to children’s ability to interact with others and their capacity for self-regulation. Emotional development includes children’s perceptions of themselves, their abilities to understand the feelings of other people, and their ability to interpret and express their own feelings.

Approaches to Learning--This domain refers to children’s inclination to use skills and knowledge. Key components include enthusiasm, curiosity, and persistence on tasks.

Language and Early Literacy Development--This domain includes communication and emergent literacy. Communication includes listening, speaking, and vocabulary. Emergent literacy includes print awareness, story sense, early writing, and the connection of letters to sounds.

Cognition and General Knowledge--This domain refers to thinking and problem-solving as well as knowledge about particular objects and the way the world works. Mathematical knowledge, abstract thought, and imagination are included.

As the graphic on the previous page indicates, Nevada’s definition of school readiness incorporates these five domains into the following equation: **READY FAMILIES + READY EDUCATORS + READY SCHOOLS + READY COMMUNITIES + READY SYSTEMS = CHILDREN ARE READY FOR SCHOOL**. Each factor necessary for the outcome that “Children are Ready for School” is further defined below:

“**Ready Families**” have adults who understand they are the most important people in the child’s life, understand age appropriate development, and support the child’s school readiness. Adults recognize their role as the child’s first and most important teacher, providing steady and supportive relationships, ensuring safe and consistent environments, promoting good health, and fostering curiosity, excitement about learning.

“**Ready Educators**” are skilled teachers, who understand age appropriate development, possess the skills to develop appropriate curriculum based on children’s development, recognize, reinforce, and extend children’s strengths and who are sensitive to cultural values and individual differences, including children with special needs.

⁹ Based on findings from the National School Readiness Indicators Initiative: A 17-State Partnership and reviewed and revised at the Nevada School Readiness Summit, 2012.

“Ready Schools” accept all children and provide a seamless transition to a high-quality developmentally appropriate learning environment by engaging families and the whole community. A ready school welcomes all children and their families with opportunities to enhance and build confidence in their skills, knowledge, and abilities. Children in ready schools are led by skilled teachers as defined above.

“Ready Communities” play a crucial part in supporting families in their role as primary stewards of children’s readiness. Ready communities, including businesses, faith-based organizations, early childhood education and care service providers, community groups and local governments, work together to support children’s school and long term success by providing families affordable access to information, services, high-quality child care, and early learning opportunities.

“Ready Systems” describes the availability, quality, and affordability of proven programs that influence child development and school readiness. It also includes the degree to which public and private agencies promote policies and practices including data collection that enhance access to needed supports, information and tools that help all other components (family, educators, schools and children) be ready for children to be ready for school.¹⁰

Children’s readiness for school is made up of multiple components and shaped by numerous factors. Improving school readiness, therefore, must address children’s development of skills and behaviors as well as the environments in which they spend their time. Early childhood education and care leaders at the state and national level agree that efforts to improve school readiness must address three interrelated components:

- Children’s readiness for school.
- School’s readiness for children.
- The capacity of families and communities to provide developmental opportunities for young children.

Ultimately the goal is that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children’s learning, and schools are ready for children. School readiness is an ongoing process from the moment of birth, to prekindergarten, and through the transition into elementary school and beyond. It is the foundation defined by the intersection of two critical components:

- 1) Children’s condition to learn based on the five identified domains of learning, and
- 2) The school’s capacity to meet the needs of all children to prepare them for future school success and the 21st century.

¹⁰ Bruner, C. and Coperman, A. (2003, March). Measuring children’s school readiness: options for developing state baselines and benchmarks. A paper prepared for the State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistance Network, pp. 1-2.

This includes, but not limited to providing access to high quality services for all children including aligned standards and curriculum, supportive relationships, engaging environment, smooth transitions and strong family and community connections.¹¹

This definition was shared with the principal at Northside School and with Head Start. There were no concerns noted with the definition.

Kindergarten Entry Assessment

Description of Existing Kindergarten Entry Assessment

There are several assessments currently in place to use with pre-K and kindergarteners in Churchill County.

1. As a funded partner of state pre-K, Carson, Churchill, Clark, Elko, Humboldt, Mineral, Nye, Pershing, Washoe and White Pine counties participate in evaluation. All projects are required to administer the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) and Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test (EOWPVT) at the beginning and end of the year. The PPVT is an untimed, test of receptive vocabulary for Standard American English and provides a quick estimate of their verbal ability or scholastic aptitude. The test is given verbally and takes about 20 to 30 minutes. No reading is required by the individual, and scoring is rapid and objective.
2. All children entering kindergarten receive a basic assessment in May as part of the registration and enrollment process. Kindergarten teachers perform this assessment of the child's skills (for example, letter recognition, writing one's name, identifying the colors of crayons, and counting objects). The assessment was recently developed at Northside Early Learning Center to provide information prior to entry that also aligns to the state pre-k standards. The assessment can occur with the parent in the room in either English or Spanish. After the brief assessment (about 10 minutes) the teacher provides the parent with information about what the child did well, and what he or she can work on over the summer. The teacher reviews basic information about the school and answers any questions the parent has. Prior to this assessment the DIAL-3 didn't link to the Common Core State Standards. Teachers also do exit assessments.
3. Children may be screened using the DIAL-3 if there is concern or delay suspected. Child Find events also exist within the county and help to identify children with special education needs.
4. Within a few weeks of kindergarten entry, the Title 1 teacher tests letter awareness and sounds with each child. Many have made considerable progress over the summer. This helps to direct the teacher to provide customized instruction for the child.
5. Children develop a writing portfolio over the kindergarten year.
6. PALS-K ("KPALS") to assess children during kindergarten. This is not computer based. The PALS (Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening) is used to assess kindergarten readiness, in conjunction with an informal observation checklist.

¹¹ Nevada working definition from bill draft request

7. Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing for Math and Literacy takes place 2 to 3 times per year depending on the classroom. This data is used to understand the child's progress; it also provides information to compare to national norms. This testing is computer based.
8. Information from assessments is used both at the school to improve instruction, and data is also provided to the elementary school where he or she will attend.

Goals and Attributes for a Common Kindergarten Assessment

Assessments before and during kindergarten play an important role at Northside Early Learning Center. They are used to help prepare teachers for the new incoming class, set expectations with parents, and help with placement.

Because early childhood education and care is also onsite, information can be used to understand how to improve and enhance readiness for the students that participate prior to kindergarten. Stakeholders expressed interest in a new tool and process for kindergarten entry that aligns to pre-K standards and the Common Core State Standards.

Assessment data is envisioned to support measurement of where children begin (baseline), how to direct instruction to meet children's needs, and, to measure progress. There is also interest in tools like MAP that can provide comparison information to state and national averages. The principal of Northside Early Learning Center emphasized the importance of objectivity for assessments, and the importance of high quality assessment that can be used to shape instruction. Assessment needs to be available English and Spanish.

Summary of Assets

- Pre-K, CSA Head Start, and district kindergarten are at one site, with opportunities for full-day kindergarten. Co-location of these programs means that there is coordination of efforts and work on school readiness goals as a school.
- Staff at Northside Early Learning Center (and on-site Head Start) utilize and value assessment. Several different instruments are used, with information from assessment shared to improve education. There is an existing practice of assessment and use of data for the purposes of classroom and program improvement.
- Prior to kindergarten children complete a basic assessment of skills and knowledge. The family is able to attend and learn strengths of their child, as well as expectations for the school year. Staff at Northside Early Learning Center is currently working to improve the tool and the process, so the statewide (KEDS) planning project comes at a good time.
- The Churchill County Early Childhood Advisory Council is emerging and may also be able to provide leadership around Kindergarten Entry Assessment, helping to bridge private providers with these initiatives.

Summary of Barriers

- A new assessment will require training and potentially new technology or infrastructure. No major barriers were noted, apart from resources to assist with implementation.

- Outreach to private providers as well as tribal Head Start would be important to implementing a district-wide process.

Early Childhood Data System

Description of Existing Efforts Related to Early Childhood Data

The Churchill County School District provides information via Bighorn, the Nevada Statewide Longitudinal Data System. It provides a living academic history for each student, and their teachers and schools, from 2005 to the present. Bighorn serves Stakeholders, Districts, Schools, and Teachers by providing automated tools and information to help them improve academic outcomes in Nevada. In terms of technology, the district’s elementary schools equipped as follows:

Educational Technology	# of classrooms	# of classrooms with Internet access	# of labs, libraries and media centers	# of labs, libraries and media centers with Internet access	# of classroom instructional computers	# of classroom instructional computers with Internet access
Best	26	26	5	5	821	390
Lahontan	29	29	2	2	138	138
Northside Early Learning Center	22	22	2	2	76	67
West End	28	28	2	2	110	110

Goals and Attributes for Early Childhood Data System

The district is interested in data to improve programs and fully prepare children for success in school. A data system would allow the school to more easily streamline assessment data and use it to improve programs. Objectivity is concerned very important, and data collection (e.g. assessment data) may need to be collected by a person other than the child’s primary teacher.

Summary of Assets

The District is unique in that so much of the early learning takes place at Northside Early Learning Center; the concentration of early childhood education and care at one site helps to facilitate collaboration toward student outcomes. Data collected throughout the year is used to improve instruction, set expectations among teachers, and to compare school averages to other populations.

Pre-K and kindergarten programs share data. The principal is aware of the demographics and progress of children within the school. Assessment information is used to help improve instruction and the overall programming.

When a child transitions from kindergarten to the elementary school, a sheet of information is sent that includes summary information: MAP score in reading and math; KPALS score, whether the child is an English Language Learner (High, Medium, Low), whether they have an Individualized Education Plan by

type, positive traits, behavior issues, and who if any placement suggestions (e.g., a child that the student should not be placed with). This information is provided on paper.

At this time, data from assessment is compiled in spreadsheets and reports are provided back to teachers for the purpose of improving instruction and outcomes. There is existing coordination among the pre-K, Head Start, kindergarten, and elementary schools. Information from assessment is provided to elementary schools, but this is paper-based. Northside does not currently provide data directly to NDE (except on the state pre-K evaluation as collected). If a new data system (or data request) was in place, there would likely be a need for training and new infrastructure.

The principal takes measures to ensure that data from assessment is objective.

Staff at the Northside Early Learning Center is enthusiastic about moving forward with a high quality Kindergarten Entry Assessment. It is of interest to the school to have information that can be shared across school and district boundaries.

The district is interested in data to improve programs and fully prepare children for elementary school. Comparison data is also valued so that the school can see where students and set goals for improvement. A data system would allow the school to more easily streamline assessment data and use it to improve programs.

The district currently uses the Nevada pre-K standards and aligns curriculum to reach them. At the Head Start Site, they use Teaching Strategies and Child Plus data system.

Summary of Barriers

There are few barriers noted:

- Existing infrastructure is limited. Northside has a new computer lab, but, experienced problems administering MAP assessment due to limitations of technology this year. Improvements to technology and infrastructure may be needed utilize computerized testing.
- Transiency is an issue for many children; they may not be at the school or in the district before having to move.
- The existing system is paper-based with some exceptions. This works well because the district is small and relationships are in place.

Needs Assessment Summary

Staff at Northside Early Learning Center is enthusiastic about moving forward with a high quality Kindergarten Entry Assessment that is statewide. For it to be feasible to implement KEDS, the following issues need to be address for Churchill County:

- Continued input of Churchill County ECE experts.

- Improvements to support technology.
- Additional resources (staff, training or both) may be needed to support assessment and a data system, depending on complexity of assessment and time needed to collect record and maintain data.

As part of implementation, the factors will be re-assessed to determine feasibility of a statewide kindergarten entry assessment and data system in the fall of 2012. Using the results from the first phase of this project, the findings for each county will be synthesized and prepared into a preliminary paper to frame draft goals for both Early Childhood Data System and Kindergarten Entry Assessment System, including recommendations. The results will then be documented into implementation plans and implementation templates for each individual county. After distributing the template to the counties, SEI consultants will work with them to provide assistance and direction in completing their plans, based on their readiness and unique needs.

Summary of Contacts and Information Sources for Churchill County

Surveys

- Four provider surveys were completed from Churchill County. Of these none participated in a focus group. Two parent surveys were completed. These parents also did not attend a focus group.

Outreach

- Superintendent Dr. Carolyn Ross
- Joanne Everts

Interview/Focus Group

- Principal Greg Malcovich – Northside Elementary School
- Renee Bybee – CSA Head Start Northside Early Learning Center (via phone)
- Leanna Hale and Lynn Houghton, CSA Head Start

Observation

- Kindergarten Entry Assessment (May 2012)

Other Information Resources

- Feeding America. (2012). *Children are at Risk of Hunger in Every County*. Retrieved 6 20, 2012, from <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap.aspx>
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<http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/titlei/fy11/nevada.pdf>
- Churchill County School District website: www.churchill.k12.nv.us
- Nevada Department of Education, NRS 387.303 Report for Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2011,
http://nde.doe.nv.gov/SchoolFunding_Stats.htm
- Nevada Health Division, Licensed Child Care Facility List
<http://health.nv.gov/childcare/ChildCareFacilityList.pdf>
- Nevada Health Division Nevada Early Intervention Services Rural and Frontier Rate Study Report, 2011, http://health.nv.gov/PDFs/New/EI_RuralFrontier_v5.pdf
- Nevada State Demographer, 2010 Census Profiles by County, <http://nvdemography.org/nevada-2010-census/2010-census-profiles-by-county/>