County Needs Assessment Report Draft

June 2012

Kindergarten Entry Assessment & Early Childhood Data Systems (KEDS)

Developed for Douglas 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).

Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council

Introduction

This report summarizes the findings for Douglas 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 Douglas County, and concludes with a subjective assessment of the feasibility for implementing KEDS in Douglas County.

County Profile

On November 25, 1861, Douglas County became one of the first nine counties established by the first Nevada Territorial Legislature, with the county seat located in the town of Genoa. The county was retained when the territory became a state on October 31, 1864. Douglas County is the site of some of Nevada's earliest developments.

Many small communities are scattered along the base of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range, remnants of some of the first towns in the state. Genoa, originally known as Mormon Station, is the oldest of these and was settled in 1851. Today, the county seat is located in the town of Minden. Douglas County has no cities and includes three unincorporated towns; Gardnerville, Genoa and Minden. The population density was 58 people per square mile.

The county covers an approximate area of 751 square miles, and is located in the western portion of the State. Douglas County borders the State of California to the west, Lyon County to the east, and the state capital of Carson City to the north. Included within the County's boundaries are portions of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range, Lake Tahoe, Topaz Lake, and the Carson and Walker Rivers. Since statehood, the boundaries of Douglas County have only been realigned two times: between Douglas County and Ormsby County (now Carson City) in 1965, and between Douglas County and Lyon County in 1967.

Douglas County Demographics

Total Population (2010)[1]	46,997
Number of Children Ages 0-5 (2010)[2]	2,305
Median Household Income (2010)[3]	$57,176
Homeless population (school age group)	202
Food Insecure Children: Ages 0-18 (2012)[4]	2,480 or 27.0%
Enrolled in NV Checkup: Ages 0-18 (2012)[5]	230
Number of Children Receiving Early Intervention [6]Services: Ages 0-3 (2010)	43 (63.02 hours per child)

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[1] (Nevada State Demographer)
[2] (Nevada State Demographer)
[3] (U.S. Census Bureau)
[4] (Feeding America , 2012)
[5] (Nevada Check up, 2012)
[6] (Nevada Department of Education, 2011)

Racial/Ethnic Breakdown (2010)[7]		Total Population	% of Total Population
Total		46,997	100%
Asian		725	1.5%
Black or African American		201	0.4%
American Indian or Alaska Native		896	1.9%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander		66	0.1%
White		42,130	89.6%
Other		1,506	3.2%
Multi-Racial		1,473	3.1%
*Population that identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino.		5,103	10.9%

Douglas County School District (DCSD) has experienced an increase in the number of disadvantaged and at-risk youth enrolled in its schools. One indicator of the overall poverty level of Douglas County is its 13.8% current unemployment rate, one of the highest in the state. The following table shows the Title 1 targeting numbers across the last six years, including the data for the 2012-13 school year. The highlighted column indicates the growth in the 'low socio-economic status (SES)' calculation by school across the last six years. The current Title 1 served schools, two of which were Title 1 served six years ago, have grown by 24% and 27% while their enrollments have only increased by 50 students during the same time. The schools with kindergarten classrooms experienced the greatest increase in low SES enrollment. More information about at-risk students in DCSD in provided in the next section.

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[7] (Nevada State Demographer)

DCSD Title 1 Targeting Numbers - 6 Year Comparison

| School	Grade Span	ADA - 9-16-11	% Low SES for 2012-13	% Low SES for 2007-08	6 year difference	T1 Served 2012-13
C. C. Meneley	K-6	536	60.65%	36.65%	24.00%	X
Jacks Valley	K-6	510	59.77%	32.62%	27.15%	X
Scarselli	K-6	573	49.29%	24.29%	25.00%	X
Gardnerville	K-6	539	47.39%	34.65%	12.74%	
Minden	K-6	416	45.89%	24.63%	21.26%	
Zephyr Cove	K-6	206	41.99%	24.71%	17.28%	
Pau Wa Lu MS	7-9	608	38.16%	31.80%	6.36%	
Carson Valley MS	7-9	752	30.59%	24.37%	6.22%	
Douglas HS	10-12	1342	28.54%	19.65%	8.89%	
Whittell HS	7-12	233	21.46%	17.19%	4.27%	
Pinon Hills	K-6	495	17.58%	6.28%	11.30%	
	District Average		38.18%			

Douglas County: Snapshot of Early Childhood Education and Care

The Douglas County School District curriculum is based on District Competency Objectives and Nevada State Academic Standards. The district has implemented systems for the 10-11 and 11-12 school years to facilitate the transition from NV State Standards in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics to the newly adopted Common Core State Standards. Scope and sequence documents are written for each grade level and subject area based upon the competencies and standards. They will also be re-aligned to Common Core State Standards over the next biennium. Textbooks and other curriculum materials are selected using scope and sequence and standards as the guiding documents. Teachers use a wide-range of data and student benchmark expectations to determine appropriate interventions when differentiating instruction, providing remediation, and extending learning opportunities for students including reading camps, summer school, on-line course work and site competency seminars.

In 2011-12, all kindergarten in the district was half-day. As with every other county in Nevada, kindergarten is not mandatory. There are currently seven elementary schools: C. C. Meneley, Gardnerville, Jacks Valley, Minden, Pinon Hills, Scarselli and Zephyr Cove. Title 1 school for 2012-13 will include C.C. Meneley, Jacks Valley and Scarselli. According to Nevada Annual Reports of accountability, the student to teacher ratio in kindergarten classrooms was 23:1. There are 17 licensed early childhood education and care centers in the county including the Washoe Tribe, a Head Start grantee, located in Gardnerville. Based on information from the Nevada Registry, as of May 2012, these included three licensed family child care providers, one group child care provider, 11 center based child care provider, and two preschool programs.

DCSD applied received a Striving Readers grant in 2012 which will be implemented at three of the seven schools accompanied by full day kindergarten.

The total number of kindergartners in 2011-12 in DCSD was 408. According to the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) audited report for 2011, there were 61 pre-school students and 395 kindergarten children enrolled in public or charter schools in Douglas County School District (DCSD) for Fiscal Year (FY 2011).[8] Across the last three years DCSD has seen an uptick in the percent of individual education plan (IEP) students at the elementary and secondary levels. IEP students are 13% of the elementary student population. In the 2010-11 school year, the IEP population was 11% of the elementary student enrollment with similar data for the 2009-10 school year. Other special populations served through DCSD include Limited English Proficient (LEP) and students that qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL):

2011-12 Demographics - Elementary IEP, LEP, & FRL by School
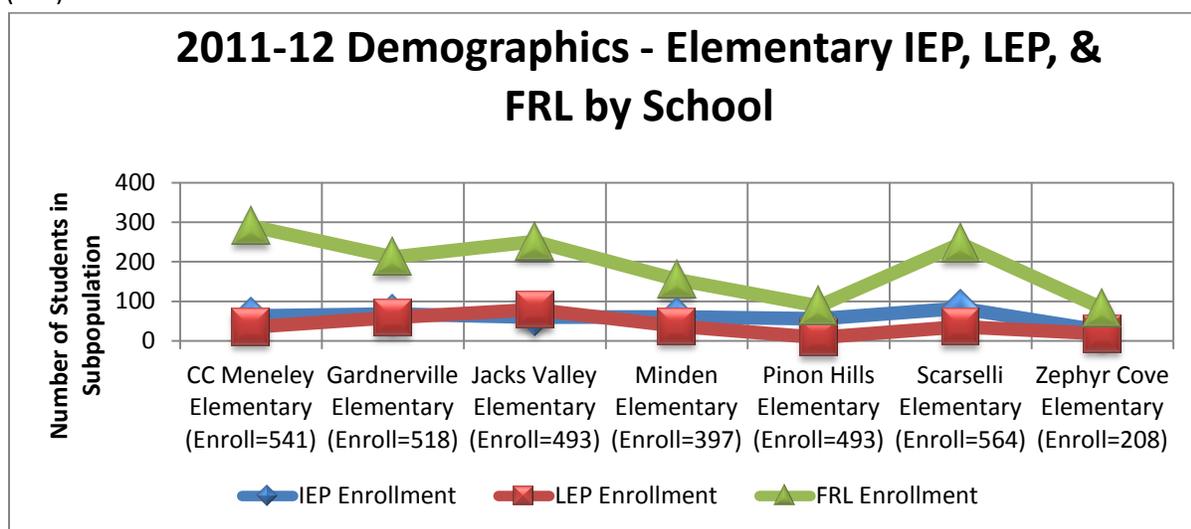
Qualification for Free and Reduced Lunch is an indication that families may struggle to meet basic needs. These characteristics are important and related to kindergarten entry assessment, and data suggests that children that experience one or more of these situations may be less likely to graduate from 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.

Nevada Early Intervention Services (NEIS) Northwest Regions provides family-centered multidisciplinary diagnostic and early intervention services to Douglas County. Staff includes developmental specialists, a pediatrician, speech, physical and occupational therapists, nutritionists, audiologists and social workers. In elementary schools in DCSD during 2011-12, the breakout of special needs was as follows:

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[8] From the report NRS 387.303 Report for Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2011, retrieved from http://nde.doe.nv.gov/SchoolFunding_Stats.htm

School	Total Enrollment in Kindergarten	IEP Enrollment in Kindergarten	% of Enrollment	LEP Enrollment in Kindergarten	% of Enrollment	FRL Enrollment in Kindergarten	% of Enrollment
CC Meneley ES	74	7	9.5	4	5.4	47	63.5
Gardnerville ES	63	9	14.3	12	19.0	26	41.3
Jacks Valley ES	64	13	20.3	10	15.6	29	45.3
Minden ES	44	6	13.6	10	22.7	15	34.1
Pinon Hills ES	62	6	9.7	1	1.6	10	16.1
Scarselli ES	78	11	14.1	7	9.0	28	35.9
Zephyr Cove ES	23	1	4.3	2	8.7	12	52.2
Total	**408**	**53**	**13.0**	**46**	**11.3**	**167**	**40.9**

In the future, with implementation of Striving Readers, DCSD will implement full day kindergarten – Title Schools plus two elementary schools that do not receive Title 1 funds but who have the highest percentage of disadvantaged students will add full day kindergarten. District sponsored preschool will be offered to students identified as at-risk using the following criteria:

- Low SES
- English language learners
- Children with language and receptive skill deficiencies
- Children of parents who lack a high school diploma
- Children of teen mothers
- Children identified through Child Find

Implementation of preschool through Striving Readers is planned as follows:

South Valley Preschool (Year 1)

5 days per week--Half-day program would serve 3 to 4 ½ year old students in the am, 4 ½ to 5 year old students in the pm

North Valley Preschool (Year 2)

5 days per week--Half-day program would serve 3 to 4 ½ year old students in the am, 4 ½ to 5 year old students in the pm

Central Preschool (Year 3)

3 days per week--Half-day program would serve 3 to 4 ½ year old students in the am, 4 ½ to 5 year old students in the pm and 2 days per week (am only) would serve students at Satellite Campus in Topaz Ranch Estates (partnership with Douglas County Parks and Recreation) with an additional two days per week (pm only) would perform community outreach to daycare providers, parents, community partners

The current early childhood education and care capacity in Douglas County is as follows:

County Early Childhood Education and Care Resources	#	Enrollment Capacity	Children Enrolled in District Classrooms (2011)	
			Pre-K	K
Public Schools (elementary)	7	N/A		
Charter Schools (elementary)	0	N/A		
Private Schools (elementary)	0	N/A	61	395
Licensed Family Child Care	3	18		
Licensed Group Child Care	1	11		
Licensed Child Care Centers	11	828		

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 early childhood education and care (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 Douglas 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 domains[9]:

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

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[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.

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.

"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.

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]

Focus group participants reacted favorably to this definition of school readiness, as did DCSD administrators and teachers. This is also supported in the Striving Readers application which states that DCSD believes that literacy must be a partnership between parents and schools in order to ensure a child's success and eventual reading and writing independence. The Striving Readers application also noted that students need to have age appropriate language and basic literacy skills when entering kindergarten.

Kindergarten teachers agreed that in a perfect world, every child entering kindergarten should be assessed across the five domains. However, they noted the time it takes to conduct an assessment which can be a barrier to implementing a comprehensive system. Survey respondents also supported the five domains in the school readiness definition, with language and early literacy being the most important. Survey respondents rated the importance of measuring the following areas of children's skills and development in a statewide kindergarten entry assessment process:

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[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.
[11] Nevada working definition from bill draft request

Answer Options	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Less Important	Not at All Important	Response Count
Social and emotional development	13	3	0	0	0	16
Language and early literacy	15	1	0	0	0	16
Physical development and health	12	4	0	0	0	16
Cognition and general knowledge	10	5	1	0	0	16
Approaches to learning	7	6	2	0	0	16
					answered question	**16**
					skipped question	**1**

Kindergarten Entry Assessment

Description of Existing Kindergarten Entry Assessment

Kindergarten teachers in DCSD administer a formative kindergarten assessment. The assessment in use was developed within the DCSD and was described as a living document that is used consistently across the district to examine language, early literacy and math. The process and approach varies by school according to DCSD kindergarten teachers. Teachers use a binder to collect and record information on students. The binder is referred to as the CPR. In addition, teachers in two schools (Pinion and C. C. Meneley) assess children when they sign up for kindergarten and use the results to inform parents what they can work on with their children prior to beginning school.

In addition, DCSD uses the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) for assessing and documenting students' development as readers over time. The DRA scores are then input into PowerSchool by teachers. DRA is used to group students in classrooms and is reported on the competency based report cards.

For children who have not had pre-school, the Brigance is administered. The Brigance Test of Basic Skills, also known as the Brigance Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills-Revised, is a criterion referenced assessment that identifies a student's academic level of functioning. It is also used as a tool in standardized assessment for identifying a student's strengths and weaknesses. The Brigance test is administered in a classroom setting. A teacher may administer the test to her own students. The Brigance assesses reading decoding, reading comprehension, writing, listening comprehension and math. Students may be assessed in a group setting or on an individual basis.

While not a kindergarten entry assessment, it is important to understand the system currently in use to see how a kindergarten entry assessment can be integrated with existing processes in use. The Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments are given

to students in grades 1-9 (gr 3-9 in 2009 and earlier) in the Fall of each year to determine that year's baseline or 'starting spot' for each student. DCSD kindergarten teacher report that they conduct the MAP in kindergarten to get a sense of where the children are at upon kindergarten entry. The Reading MAP RIT score provides an instructional starting point (what is the student ready to learn) for the teacher at the beginning of the year.

Typically, classroom teachers want an ongoing formative assessment aligned to the Common Core State Standards with a summative assessment to measure progress.

Child Find provides screening and assessment in Douglas County through NEIS. As a funded part of state preschool Douglas County participates 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.

 According to the Striving Readers grant, DCSD plans to use multiple assessments to determine literacy readiness. Students in the preschool programs will need to be assessed throughout the program in order to determine growth and readiness for the student. While summative data will be used, it is the formative data teachers collect that will evaluate students regularly and drive instruction best suited to meet the needs of each individual students. Data Based Decision Making Teams in the preschool program will receive support from the program coordinator, classroom teacher, Special Services department when appropriate, and a Speech and Language Specialist. The make-up of this team will be more fluid than that of a K-12 team because of the unique goals of this program.

The Douglas County School District has determined target scores to help teachers determine if a student is 'about on grade level' based on that student's score on the MAP test. These scores used with the NWEA instructional support materials in the DesCartes Suite provide school staff with a framework and resources to help determine what a student knows and is ready to learn at a given point in the school year. Instruction can then be differentiated to meet the direct needs of students. The MAP assessment can then be given during mid-year to determine if students are progressing academically and can provide one data point to help examine if changes in instructional strategies or interventions are helping a student progress. The MAP assessment is also provided at the end of the year to determine how much growth a student has realized over the course of the year.

Typically, teachers use assessment data to determine how to individualize curriculum to help children attain skills they will need to succeed in school.

Goals for a Common Kindergarten Entry Assessment

The following goals for a common kindergarten entry assessment were identified by focus group participants as the most appropriate purposes of a statewide kindergarten entry assessment:

- One goal would be to strengthen the legitimacy of kindergarten so it is thought of as important. Kindergarten teachers identified that an assessment could be a way to accomplish this goal
- Another goal of kindergarten teachers is to engage parents in their children's learning and preparation for kindergarten.
- Support transition and alignment between early childhood education and care (ECE) programs and K-12 schools.
- Collect data that would support the case for mandatory full day kindergarten. According to the Striving Readers application, the kindergarten Common Core standards alone justify the need for a full day of kindergarten. For all students, but especially those students at risk, there is not enough time to build foundational skills and provide interventions for students who are not ready to experience success in kindergarten.
- Allow teachers to better balance the mix of students in classrooms.
- Identify needed community programs to support school readiness.
- Address transiency and fill in the gaps on students' prior school or pre-school experience.
- Screen for potential special needs.
- Help guide individual instruction.
- Identify where a child has been enrolled in preschool.

One question raised by school administrators was to be clear about how parents and schools would use such an assessment when kindergarten isn't mandatory. One concern raised was that the assessment not be used to exclude children from kindergarten.

Attributes for a Common Kindergarten Entry Assessment

Focus group participants in Douglas County expressed the following suggestions for a common kindergarten entry assessment:

- The assessment n to include some correlation between the common core and what will be required and ensure alignment.
- The assessment should be administered by a district team. Suggestions for expertise needed on the team included a social worker, special education professional, nurse and kindergarten teacher (current or retired) along with a translator.
- Ideally the assessment should occur prior to kindergarten entry to ensure that it doesn't take away from instruction time.
- At the same time, it should not be used to deny entry to kindergarten.
- Training or certification should be required to be part of the team.
- Assessments should drive instruction (i.e., information gained through assessments should impact and shape the curriculum).
- Education of parents must be a component. A benefit for parents would be to have information to coach them on how to help ready their child for kindergarten.
- Parent input should be included as an information source in a kindergarten assessment process.
- The assessment should lead to consistent statewide data concerning the kindergarten readiness of our children and the ability to intervene at an early age to increase success in school.

It was noted that the ideal approach may be to complete an assessment prior to kindergarten entry. This would be particularly important for children with birthdays in June, July and August. When asked to react to several potential implementation approaches for a statewide kindergarten entry assessment process, respondents expressed the greatest overall agreement with the "one standard assessment process for all districts" choice and the least overall agreement with "districts choosing tools and methods from a specified list".

What is your reaction to the following potential implementation approaches for a statewide kindergarten assessment process?						
Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Response Count
One standard assessment process for all districts	9	3	2	2	0	16
Districts choose tools and methods from a specified list	3	5	2	2	3	16
Districts develop local procedures that meet specified criteria	1	7	2	3	2	16
All decisions are made by districts with technical assistance from state or others	1	7	2	3	2	16
					answered question	16
					skipped question	1

The following information was collected from providers and identified informing parents of strengths and areas of growth are the most appropriate purposes for an assessment. Screening children for special needs and supporting transition and alignment between early childhood education and care (ECE) programs and K-12 schools were also goals with which survey respondents strongly agreed. Ratings were as follows:

Another goal of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge was to develop a statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment. For each of the following choices, please indicate if you feel they are an appropriate purpose of a statewide kindergarten assessment process.						
Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Response Count
Help guide individual instruction	10	5	0	1	0	16
Support transition and alignment between early childhood education and care (ECE) programs and K-12 schools	12	4	0	0	0	16
Screen for potential special needs	12	2	0	0	0	16
Help guide planning for early learning investments	11	4	1	0	0	16
Help guide classroom instruction	9	5	1	1	0	16
Inform parents of strengths and areas of growth	13	2	1	0	0	16
Help guide district and school planning	7	6	2	0	0	16

All goals received some strong support.

Summary of Assets

The DCSD Striving Reader program is an asset that will provide systemic and comprehensive literacy strategies for students, targeted professional development and supports for teachers, interventions and supplemental strategies for at-risk students and populations, and will support community outreach, guidance, and support for birth to pre-K providers and populations. It will also add full day kindergarten and pre-school which are both assets for the district.

As noted in their successful Striving Readers application, DCSD has always valued professional development, providing three grant-funded trainers dedicated to supporting and training teachers at the elementary and secondary level. For over twenty years, the Professional Development Center (PDC) has supported teachers, pre-service teachers, para-professionals, and administrators by aligning training to each School Improvement Plan as well as the District Improvement Plan.

Stakeholders in Douglas County cited the following as being significant assets which will help facilitate the creation and implementation of a statewide kindergarten entry assessment:

- Kindergarten teachers were very positive about DCSD and described very dedicated kindergarten teachers.
- While opportunities exist for early childhood interventions for those students who are identified through Child Find and other community supports, early literacy instruction for all is a priority in DCSD. Because success for students depends on the school and parent as a team, DCSD plans to offer parent outreach at all grade levels with classes starting at three months of age. Classes will be offered in both English and Spanish to ensure all parents can participate.
- Developing a partnership with pediatricians in the immediate area to solicit parent participation will be the first step toward developing and supporting literacy in the home.
- Through Striving Readers, teachers will each be responsible for sponsoring three "Ready, Set, Read" nights open to the community for a total of nine outreach nights per school year.
- The district has worked closely with community and state programs to transition students from private programs to Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) programs beginning at age three, for students identified as falling behind same age peers, and is working toward establishing a birth to age three program.
- In order to run an effective birth to pre-K program, a program specialist will be hired to oversee the development of a birth to pre-K program based on sound educational research. This specialist would also serve as the district liaison responsible for building community partnerships with families and community birth to pre-K providers.
- An early childhood education and care specialist will also oversee the development of Parent University curriculum aimed at supporting early literacy development.
- DCSD believes students who attend Title 1 schools must have additional resources and time with concentrated literacy instruction. While currently, all students attend kindergarten for just a half

day, the implementation of Striving Readers will change that and be an asset to DCSD. For students attending a Title 1 school providing both lunch and targeted intervention time specifically designed around literacy will provide students with the boost they need to access standards at their grade level for the rest of their educational career.

- Students in full day kindergarten would receive additional literacy intervention/enrichment and they would begin working with domain specific vocabulary (math, science, social studies).
- All elementary teachers will receive professional development training with regularly scheduled follow-up trainings and coaching opportunities.

Summary of Barriers

Stakeholders in Douglas County cited the following barriers to creating and implementing a statewide kindergarten entry assessment. This information was provided via interviews with key informants, focus group with kindergarten teachers and from the Striving Readers application:

- Kindergarten teachers expressed concern that the assessment not be "dumbed down" to the lowest common denominator that all districts can agree upon
- Currently, there is no district-sponsored program for our birth to pre-K population. The consequences for not having birth- to pre-K programs in place have been evident in the lack of readiness in kindergarten.
- Many parents don't have the knowledge of how to share reading with their children in those pre-kindergarten years.
- With the increase in LEP, FRL and SIT populations, there has been a marked increase in students who leave kindergarten unable to meet the grade level exit benchmarks that define 1st grade readiness.
- Funding to support the assessment and the resources needed to implement it is a major concern. An unfunded mandate with no resources would be a major barrier to implementation. Provider surveys also identified this barrier with cost to districts and schools listed as a very or somewhat significant concern by all respondents.
- Training of teachers or assessors was listed as a very or somewhat significant concern by nine of ten respondents.
- Lack of parent education and knowledge regarding child readiness and child development (this barrier was highlighted by focus group participants as critical to improving school readiness).
- Low income and poverty is on the rise in Douglas County.
- IEP, LEP, and FRL students do not perform well on CRTs, HSPEs, State Writing, and local assessments compared to grade level peers.
- Additional formative assessment data points are needed to standardize the tracking of student literacy skills and growth.

> I feel that we already give up a lot of instructional time in order to assess our students for report cards, so I can't imagine giving up more instructional time in order to give additional assessments. With the new common core, we need all of the instructional time that we can get in order to prepare our students for first grade. That being said, I do feel that this process is important and would fully support giving time to conduct assessments before school starts.
>
> *--DCSD Kindergarten Teacher*

- One of the most at-risk populations in Douglas County as noted in the Striving Readers application is the English language learners. While some sites have an ESL teacher, not all classroom teachers know strategies or best practices to help support these students during instruction.
- Homeless numbers have gone up significantly for the district over the last 5 years, from a low of 12 students in 2007-08 to 280 students at the end of the 2010-11 school year.

Early Childhood Data System

Description of Existing Efforts Related to Early Childhood Data

This section includes information from various groups and individuals regarding the existing data infrastructure in Douglas County.

At this time there is no formal infrastructure to link the ECE providers and school. At the same time, it was noted that the community is small and people know who has gone where for preschool. However, this happens on an ad hoc basis.

Currently, ECE data is not formally linked to school data. There is good collaboration and coordination between DCSD and Washoe Tribal Head Start, but few linkages currently exist between the district and private preschool and child care providers. Communication with social services is informal and dependent on relationships between teachers and specific social workers. DCSD 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 is equipped as follows:

- As one survey respondent noted, "I feel that we already give up a lot of instructional time in order to assess our students for report cards, so I can't imagine giving up more instructional time in order to give additional assessments. With the new Common Core, we need all of the instructional time that we can get in order to prepare our students for first grade. That being said, I do feel that this process is important and would fully support giving time to conduct assessments before school starts."
  --Kindergarten Teacher

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
Gardnerville ES	37	36	2	3	176	104

Jacks Valley ES	24	24	3	3	121	102
CC Meneley ES	43	43	2	2	158	127
Minden ES	26	26	2	2	83	52
Pinon Hills ES	21	21	2	2	77	77
Scarselli ES	30	30	2	2	128	121
Zephyr Cove ES	10	10	2	2	73	19

The Striving Readers application identified that in the future, DCSD will be using eWalk as the main data collection tool will allow schools and teachers to use the data and target instructional intervention accordingly. Using this technology will allow the Project Manager to communicate real-time observation data with individual teacher and also use data to drive school and district-wide early childhood professional development. The iSS (iStartSmart) Mobile Tablet will provide students with a technology-based 'eBook'. Teachers and administrators will be able to gather data online to track student performance on skills-based and progress monitoring items. In addition, each principal receiving support from the grant will be required to oversee a Data-Based Decision Making (DBDM) Team. As a member of the team, the principal will work closely with reading specialists, grade level teachers, special education teachers and the site ESL teacher to make student intervention decisions based on data.

Using multiple assessments to determine literacy readiness, students in the preschool programs will need to be assessed throughout the program in order to determine growth and readiness for the student. While summative data will be used, it is the formative data teachers collect that will evaluate students regularly and drive instruction best suited to meet the needs of each individual students. Data Based Decision Making Teams in the preschool program will receive support from the program coordinator, classroom teacher, Special Services department when appropriate, and a Speech and Language Specialist. The make-up of this team will be more fluid than that of a K-12 team because of the unique goals of this program.

Collecting data on instructional practices within the classroom will be an important component to assess frequency and effectiveness of best practices. Using eWalk as the main data collection tool will allow schools and teachers to use the data and target instructional intervention accordingly. Using this technology will allow the Project Manager to communicate real-time observation data with individual teacher and also use data to drive school and district-wide early childhood professional development. The iSS (iStartSmart) Mobile Tablet will provide students with a technology-based 'eBook'. Teachers and administrators will be able to gather data online to track student performance on skills-based and progress monitoring items.

Renzulli Learning is a strengths-based learning system that provides unique tools for differentiation. First used for Gifted and Talented students, Renzulli Learning now supports the learning of all students. The system has a profiler, differentiation engine, personal success plan, and reporting tools that make this program ideal for students who need enrichment, students at risk, and teachers who are looking for an additional differentiation tool. In case studies across the country, students using Renzulli Learning

showed an increase of over 90% on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in oral reading fluency and reading comprehension. Renzulli Learning can be used in a classroom or in a computer lab depending on a teachers needs for personal differentiation.

Title I Schools will have a Reading Teacher/DBDM Leader at each site as well to monitor and manage the data systematically and efficiently. Regularly scheduled site meetings will be calendared and the team will also be expected to share results and data with the District Data-Based Decision Making Team.

The District Data-Based Decision Making Team will meet monthly. Participants will include the Program Coordinator, Assistant Superintendent of Education Services, principals, DBDM Leaders from each site, Director of Special Services, Director of Curriculum/Instruction/Title III, Director of Assessments and Grants, and district literacy trainers.

All of the above mentioned data system components are planned for implementation over the next three years. Integrating these efforts with any new data system will be critical for the system's success. It would be a missed opportunity not to align the implementation of systems related to Striving Readers with other data systems across the state.

Goals for Early Childhood Data System

Seventeen providers completed surveys and 11 strongly and 3 somewhat agreed with the goal that, "an early childhood data system for the state of Nevada would allow various systems to share information for the purpose of improving outcomes for children."

One of the goals from the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge was to develop a statewide early childhood data system. An early childhood data system for the state of Nevada would allow various systems to share information for the purpose of improving outcomes for children. What is your reaction to the idea of developing a statewide early childhood data system?		
Answer Options	**Response Percent**	**Response Count**
Strongly Agree	64.7%	11
Somewhat Agree	17.6%	3
Neutral	11.8%	2
Somewhat Disagree	0.0%	0
Strongly Disagree	5.9%	1
	answered question	**17**

In reviewing the DCSD Striving Readers application and analyzing data from focus groups and interviews, the following goals were identified for an early childhood data system.

- Ideally the system and assessment should include pre and post assessment information which will reduce the risk of a "one-shot" assessment being used to determine entry eligibility.
- One goal of both providers and parents would be to identify children with special needs and be able to address their needs more quickly.
- Assisting the transition from ECE to the K-12 system was another clear goal of the early childhood data system that had support from providers.

Parents surveyed indicated that there are a number of goals of the system that would be very or somewhat important:

If you think data sharing across different systems is a good idea, which of the following goals do you think are important?						
Answer Options	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Not Very Important	Not Important at All	Response Count
Teachers have information about the child to help guide their instruction	3	2	0	0	1	6
Teachers are aware of special needs and strengths of the child	4	1	0	0	1	6
Pre-schools and childcare have information about how well they have prepared children for kindergarten so that they can make improvements	4	1	0	0	1	6
Districts and schools have more information for planning	3	2	0	0	1	6
It is easier for children to move among schools or districts	3	0	1	0	1	6
					answered question	6
					skipped question	0

One of the six parents that responded questioned the usefulness of implementing such a system, stating that parents should give teachers information to help their children rather than that information coming from an assessment. That parent did not feel any of the goals listed were important.

Attributes of an Early Childhood Data System

The DCSD plan for a data system as it relates to the Striving Readers program is divided into three areas, screening, diagnostic and formative/summative assessments. For screening, DCSD will use the Brigance for identification and the Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals (CELF). In terms of a diagnostic tool, DCSD envisions using the CELF to identify possible "instructional match" before kindergarten starts. Formative/Summative Assessments will include the COR. DCSD will utilize non-assessment data such as observational, implementation data and student work.

Related to literacy specifically, the Striving Readers grant noted that they plan to implement Renzulli Learning. Collecting data on instructional practices within the classroom will be an important component to assess frequency and effectiveness of best practices. eWalk will allow schools and teachers to use instructional data to target instructional intervention accordingly. Using this technology will allow the principal to communicate real-time observation data with individual teachers and also use data to drive school and district-wide balanced literacy and/or HQSI professional development.

In terms of Vendors, DCSD felt that it could approach the parent company of PowerSchool (Pearson) if a mandatory system were in place to renegotiate the existing contract and transition to a new system. Focus group participants noted the importance of considering the medium and tools used to complete an assessment, stating that computers may test mousing skills rather than cognitive ability.

Web-based applications are not a challenge for DCSD, but that is dependent on the volume of data being collected and reported. Another key decision point is whether the data will be housed at the district or elsewhere. The following attributes of an early childhood data system were identified by key stakeholders.

> **I hope this will be the first step to legitimizing the importance of quality pre-school and all day kindergarten throughout**

- DCSD school administrators noted that it would be best if a statewide system were adopted that all districts could implement.
- DCSD key informants and teachers agreed that the system should be mandatory and include resources to support its implementation. DCSD recommended that ideally the system would be planned by working backwards. This begins by identifying what the assessment and corresponding data system is how it works and what it would cost. Once this is known, it will be easier to define what it would take for each district to implement. They noted that, to make inroads on impacting risk factors related to the socioeconomic status of Nevadans, a statewide system has to be mandatory.
- It was noted that a state system could allow data to be transferred in from other school districts, which would aid teachers when they get new students.
- DCSD suggested that it would be idea to be able to share PowerSchool records throughout the state.
- At the same time the platform for collecting and reporting data should be relatively universal. Rather than having a prescribed platform, they prefer using their own devices and that whatever system is adopted can be universal but the device should be selected by the district.
- One critical point of interest for DCSD is clarity about what components are planned to be collected and where they need to reside.
- School administrators questioned how parents and schools would use such an assessment when kindergarten isn't mandatory.
- One concern raised was that the assessment not be used to exclude children from kindergarten.

Summary of Assets

Some assets, including infrastructure and leadership, were identified by key informants and focus group participants as being in place and supportive of a common, statewide data system. Willingness and interest on the part of teachers to implement a statewide assessment were considered assets as well. Information sharing across districts is seen as having benefits for teachers and students.

The Striving Readers grant and the additional resources and infrastructure it will afford DCSD will be an asset in implementing a data system that links to the State. In addition, DCSD currently partners well

with Washoe Head Start and will be implementing greater linkages with preschool and parents through the Striving Readers grant.

Finally, dedicated teachers support the school readiness definition and want information to help children and their parents prepare for kindergarten entry and beyond.

Summary of Barriers

According to school administrators and kindergarten teachers in DCSD, the priority issues that need to be addressed related to implementing a coordinated ECE data system include the funding issues and the issue of lost instructional time. Both could impact implementation. At this time, the burdens that currently exist for providers related to data collection and reporting include the lack of funding to support such an effort and the lack of linkage and integration between ECE and public school systems. Some key informants noted that many kindergarten teachers don't ask if a child went to preschool unless the child is identified as needing an IEP.

Stakeholders in Douglas County rated the relative significance of challenges related to implementing an early childhood data system. The following table represents survey responses of providers in Douglas County.

Do you have concerns about any of the following issues related to an early childhood data system? If so, how important are they to you?						
Answer Options	Very Significant	Somewhat Significant	Less Significant	Not Significant at All	Don't Know	Response Count
Cost to districts and schools	6	7	3	1	0	17
Cost to early childhood education and care providers	6	7	3	1	0	17
Misuse of data	7	6	3	1	0	17
Data analysis and reporting capacity	10	4	2	1	0	17
Time away from instruction	12	3	2	0	0	17
Teacher burden	10	4	3	0	0	17
Pressure on children	8	6	2	1	0	17
Privacy concerns	3	4	9	1	0	17
Security of data	5	5	6	1	0	17

Survey respondents identified the following as being the most significant barriers to implementing early childhood data system process; time away from instruction, data analysis and reporting capacity, and teacher burden. Two parents noted that they were very concerned about the possibility that people will misuse children's assessment information and that an assessment would put pressure on young children to do too much too soon.

The major challenge identified during a focus group with kindergarten teachers included what would be required and how it would be used. As one participant noted, "I am concerned about getting all this

great data but having it not be used. For example, what if we identify children who are not ready for kindergarten? What can we do for parents to help them? Will any programs or resources be available to them? Why collect data if we can fix the problem?"

Needs Assessment Summary

Douglas County School District administrators and kindergarten teachers were very supportive of implementing a common kindergarten assessment. They feel they have the dedication, willingness and infrastructure in place to make such an assessment a success. Six parents of children between the ages of 0 to 5 completed a parent survey in Douglas County. Four of the six parents agreed with Nevada adopting a statewide kindergarten entry assessment. One disagreed and one was not sure. Support for a statewide assessment was also found in key informant interviews and focus groups.

At the same time, they had a number of practical concerns. Teachers in focus groups identified time away from instruction as a major challenge for implementing a kindergarten entry assessment. According to survey responses, many teachers were unsure of the time they would be willing to invest in the assessment process per child per year. There was agreement that assessments completed prior to entry in kindergarten would resolve this concern.

How much instructional time per child are you willing to invest in the assessment process for one year?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
None	12.5%	2
Less that 30 minutes	0.0%	0
Up to 1 hour	43.8%	7
Up to 2 hours	0.0%	0
Up to 3 hours	0.0%	0
Up to 4 hours	0.0%	0
More than 4 hours	0.0%	0
Unsure	43.8%	7
answered question		16

For it to be feasible to implement KEDS, the following issues need to be address for Douglas County:

- Teachers in focus groups identified time away from instruction as a major challenge for implementing a kindergarten entry assessment.
- It was noted that the ideal approach may be to complete an assessment prior to kindergarten entry. This would be particularly important for children with birthdays in June, July and August.
- Teachers and administrators both identified that implementation would have different implications for half day versus full day kindergarten teachers, since with a half day program and rigorous standards; there is no time to spare for additional assessments.

- The preference for completing the assessment prior to entering kindergarten was expressed by multiple kindergarten teachers.
- Resolving key issues of who does the assessment, which assessment in used and when it is administered will be a key to its implementation in Douglas County.

In the Striving Readers application, several goals speak to the readiness for DCSD to implement an early childhood data system. One goal is to establish Data Based Decision Making (DBDM) Literacy Teams at schools that are aligned with a Response to Intervention (RTI) framework and maintain a purposeful, respectful environment in which data can be collected, analyzed, and used to continually improve literacy achievement. Objectives that will be implemented in conjunction with this goal include:

OBJ. 1: Collaborate with the National Center on Response to Intervention and LEAS to design, produce, and implement a plan to support school Data-Based Decision Making (DBDM).

OBJ. 2: Establish DBDM teams that use formative and summative assessment data to measure student progress, determine content mastery, and make instructional decisions.

OBJ. 3: Use data to monitor progress and improve instruction.

Ultimately, this will result over the next year in the creation of DBDM Team at each preschool. Each DBDM Team will identify and assess students needing intervention in order to be on target for kindergarten readiness.

These objectives align with the implementation of an early childhood data system. If efforts can be coordinated and not duplicative, DCSD appears to support and be prepared to implement such a system.

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 Douglas County

Surveys

- ❖ **As of June 30 2012, 17 providers from Douglas County answered the survey.** All 17 represented either K-12 or ECE teachers with 13 representing the kindergarten teachers in Douglas County.
- ❖ **As of June 30 2012, 6 parents from Douglas County had answered the parent survey.** All six were parents of children ages 0 to 5 and none of them had attended a KEDS focus group.

Group Interview/Focus Group

Interviews

Kerry Pope, DCSD Director of Curriculum

Brian Frazier, DCSD Director of Assessment and Grants

Jan Visger, DCSD Director of Special Services

Susan Moore, Professional Development Trainer

Lyn Gorrindo, DCSD Assistant Superintendent

Focus Group Participants

Karen Backenbacker, Douglas County Social Services, Tri-County ECAC

Laura Williams, Jacks Valley Elementary School

J. Michelle Norris, Pinon Hills Elementary School

Brooke Wood, Jacks Valley Elementary School

Kay Kocian, C. C. Meneley Elementary School

Kathryn Oxoby, C. C. Meneley Elementary School

Melinda Neilander, Minden Elementary School

Mary Kay Dale, Jacks Valley Elementary School

Konnie Susich, Zephyr Cove Elementary School

Leslie Flynn, Gardnerville Elementary School

Kathy, Great, Scarselli Elementary School

Valerie Wilkinsin, Scarselli Elementary School

Other Information Resources

- Douglas County Striving Readers Application
- ESEA Title I Allocations to Local Educational Agencies – NEVADA; http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/titlei/fy11/nevada.pdf
- Food Bank of Northern Nevada
- Douglas County School District website: www.dcsd.k12.nv.us
- KEDS Parent survey results
- KEDS Provider survey results
- Nevada Annual Reports of Accountability, http://www.nevadareportcard.com/
- Nevada Department of Education, http://nde.doe.nv.gov/SD.htm
- Nevada Department of Education, http://www.doe.nv.gov/Resources/QuickSTATS.pdf
- Nevada Department of Education, NRS 387.303 Report for Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2011, http://nde.doe.nv.gov/SchoolFunding_Stats.htm
- Nevada Department of Health and Human Services
- 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 Institute for Children's Research and Policy
- Nevada Registry: http://www.nevadaregistry.org/fb_files/State05.12.pdf
- Nevada State Demographer, 2010 Census Profiles by County, http://nvdemography.org/nevada-2010-census/2010-census-profiles-by-county/
- Running With A Spork: Nevada Child Nutrition Programs, 2009-10, Nevada Department of Education, Office of Child Nutrition & School Health