

County Needs Assessment Report Draft

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Kindergarten Entry Assessment & Early Childhood Data Systems (KEDS)

Developed for Esmeralda County, Nevada



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Table of Contents

- Introduction 3
- County Profile 4
 - Esmeralda County Demographics 4
 - Esmeralda County: Snapshot of Early Childhood Education and Care 5
- School Readiness in Nevada 6
- Kindergarten Entry Assessment..... 9
 - Description of Existing Kindergarten Entry Assessment 9
 - Goals for a Common Kindergarten Assessment 9
 - Attributes for a Common Kindergarten Assessment..... 9
 - Summary of Assets..... 9
 - Summary of Barriers 10
- Early Childhood Data System 10
 - Description of Existing Efforts Related to Early Childhood Data 10
 - Goals for Early Childhood Data System 11
 - Attributes of an Early Childhood Data System..... 11
 - Summary of Assets..... 11
 - Summary of Barriers 12
- Needs Assessment Summary 12
 - Summary of Contacts and Information Sources for Esmeralda County 13

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 Esmeralda 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 Esmeralda County, and concludes with a subjective assessment of the feasibility for implementing KEDS in Esmeralda County.

County Profile

Esmeralda County, located halfway between Reno and Las Vegas, is home to many mining communities and ghost towns. Esmeralda County is in south central Nevada with California to the southwest. Boundary Peak (13,140'), the highest point in Nevada, is here.

Esmeralda County contains 3,588 square miles of land and almost no surface water. Its population was estimated at 783 in 2010 and it had the lowest unemployment rate in the state at 7.5 percent. At 0.194-people-per-square mile (in 2007), Esmeralda County has the second lowest density population in the 48 contiguous states. The county seat is Goldfield. Esmeralda County's largest population center is Goldfield with an estimated population of 307 in 2010. A very small part of Death Valley National Park lies in its southeast corner.

Esmeralda County Demographics

Total Population (2010)¹	783
Number of Children Ages 0-5 (2010)²	39
Median Household Income (2010)³	\$40,929
Homeless population (school age group)⁴	No data available
Food Insecure Children: Ages 0-18 (2012)⁵	40 or 26.9%
Enrolled in NV Checkup: Ages 0-18 (2012)⁶	18
Number of Children Receiving Early Intervention Services: Ages 0-3 (2010)⁷	Not applicable

There is currently no Head Start or Nevada pre-K available in Esmeralda County.

According to Nevada Annual Reports of accountability, the student to teacher ratio was listed for all classes for students that do not rotate to different teachers. This was not applicable to kindergarten classrooms. There is full-day kindergarten offered in Esmeralda elementary schools but, like all districts in Nevada, kindergarten is not mandatory. Esmeralda County utilizes a four day school week.

District wide data for the percentage of children with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is not available for Esmeralda County. A quarter of the children in the district (25.8% or 17) have limited

¹ (Nevada State Demographer)

² (Nevada State Demographer)

³ (U.S. Census Bureau)

⁴ Rural Nevada Continuum of Care 2012 Point In Time Report

⁵ (Feeding America , 2012)

⁶ (Nevada Check up, 2012)

⁷ (Nevada Early Intervention Services, 2010)

English proficiency, and approximately 66.7% of children district wide qualify for free and reduced lunch (Nevada Department of Education).

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.

Racial/Ethnic Breakdown (2010)⁸		
	Total Population	% of Total Population
Total	783	100%
Asian	3	0.4%
Black or African American	0	0.0%
American Indian or Alaska Native	33	4.2%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0	0.0%
White	661	84.4%
Other	52	6.6%
Multi-Racial	34	4.3%
*Population that identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino.	120	15.3%

Esmeralda County: Snapshot of Early Childhood Education and Care

The Esmeralda County School District's (ECSD) curriculum is based on the Nevada state standards. Power standards that are paced to their textbooks and other teaching materials are utilized to ensure that each student has the opportunity, preparation, and background to be successful. Significant progress was made in their annual test results throughout the District. Technology plays a large role in Esmeralda classrooms. Computerized programs assist teachers in meeting individualized student needs. Electronic white boards, Elmos, and other electronic devices play a vital role in all classrooms. ECSD set a goal to reduce the number of students who are non-proficient in core subjects as measured by the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) and Criterion Reference Test (CRT) tests. Another goal is to reduce the percentage of students who are below grade level (non-proficient) in math, language arts, writing, and reading by five percentage points as measured by the MAP and Nevada CRT testing.

There are three elementary schools in Esmeralda County: Goldfield Elementary, Dyer Elementary, and Silver Peak Elementary. Goldfield Elementary and Dyer Elementary are three-room, multi-grade, K-8 grade schools. Silver Peak Elementary is a one-room, multi-grade, K-8 school. According to the most recent data available, there are 12 children enrolled in kindergarten and no children enrolled in pre-K in Esmeralda County. There were not any public charter elementary schools, private elementary schools,

⁸ (Nevada State Demographer)

or licensed early childhood education and care centers located in Esmeralda County at the time of this report.

County Early Childhood Education and Care Resources	#	Enrollment Capacity	Children Enrolled in District Classrooms (2011)	
			Pre-K	K
Public Schools (elementary)	3	N/A	0	12
Charter Schools (elementary)	0	0		
Private Schools (elementary)	0	0		
Licensed Family Child Care	0	0		
Licensed Group Child Care	0	0		
Licensed Child Care Centers	0	0		

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 Esmeralda County 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:

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.

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.

"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 is 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

Esmeralda County leadership expressed satisfaction with this model of school readiness.

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

Kindergarten Entry Assessment

Description of Existing Kindergarten Entry Assessment

Esmeralda County utilizes MAP, Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), and CRTs for their K-2 students. Esmeralda County does not have a preschool or daycare.

The Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) benchmark assessments are used to measure student academic growth three times a year. The NWEA Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) inventories are computer-based and aligned with the Nevada state standards. The MAP assessments are designed to answer the question, “Are students gaining reading, writing, and math skills and content?” The MAP assessments are adaptive and measure the growth of each student based on his or her ability level in each subject.

The Criterion Referenced Test (CRT) measure what each child has learned on the Nevada State Standards in reading and math in grades 3 through 8 and in science at grades 5 and 8.

Some special education students may qualify for an alternative assessment called the Nevada Alternate Assessment (NAA).

Goals for a Common Kindergarten Assessment

The following were identified as the most appropriate purposes of a common kindergarten assessment:

- Help guide individual instruction.
- Help guide classroom instruction (this was identified as being the most important purpose of a common kindergarten assessment.)
- Inform parents of strengths or areas of growth.
- Help guide district and school planning.

Attributes for a Common Kindergarten Assessment

The following were identified as being important attributes of a common kindergarten assessment:

- It should be inexpensive to schools and the district.
- It should be reliable.
- The assessment should be informative and produce useful data.
- It shouldn't be overly time consuming.

Summary of Assets

Superintendent Gary Gazaway cited good communication with parents and lots of community engagement as two of Esmeralda County's chief assets. Esmeralda County has three elementary schools which are located in Goldfield, Silverpeak, and Dyer. Of the six kindergarten teachers in Esmeralda, one is located in Goldfield. It is common for the elementary teachers to teach multiple grade levels and subjects. Mr. Gazaway suggested that sharing resources between Tonopah and Goldfield could be a viable option due to their geographic proximity. In fact, the two towns already share one high school

which is located in Tonopah. Esmeralda County school district has an ELL program for their Hispanic population and there are bilingual personnel employed by the district to run the program.

According to ECSD on Nevada's Annual Reports of Accountability, "We are proud of the fact that for five years in a row all three schools met AYP goals. Dyer School was designated as "high achieving" and was nominated as one of Nevada's Distinguished Title 1 Schools."

Summary of Barriers

The following issues were identified as significant barriers to implementing a common kindergarten assessment in Esmeralda County:

- Lack of funding.
- Lack of ECE personnel.
- No preschool.
- Very limited K-12 staff and time.
- Costs to districts and schools.
- Training of teachers or assessors.
- Time away from instruction.
- Teacher burden.

Early Childhood Data System

Description of Existing Efforts Related to Early Childhood Data

Elementary schools in Esmeralda County utilize PowerSchool to store and track student information. Grades, parent contact information, and demographic data are the most common types of information stored in the PowerSchool system.

The Esmeralda County School District uses a variety of technological tools in classrooms every day. The following information was taken from the Esmeralda County School District website:

"Each classroom has an interactive white board, MOBI, ELMO, HD flip camera, infrared classroom response system, and full T-1 internet access. Students use computers on a daily basis to enhance their learning experience. In addition to the myriad of on-line programs available, students use networked computer programs including SuccessMaker Reading, SuccessMaker Math, Accelerated Reader, Accelerated Math, Math Facts in a Flash, Star Reading, and Star Math."

"District personnel are currently participating in the Nevada Pathway Project, a two-year professional development program focusing on technology skills needed to succeed in the 21st century.[1] This state-wide technology training project focuses on recognizing and addressing the needs of today's students for their success in the future. Thanks to the Pathway Project, staff and students at Silver Peak Elementary all received Apple iPads and iPod Touches to use on a daily basis. iPads and iPods greatly enhance the students' learning experience. These tools allow students to be creative in ways never before possible. Students can take virtual "tours" of places they learn about such as the Grand Canyon,

Eiffel Tower, and nearly anywhere the mind can imagine. This is a great asset for a geographically isolated district.”

“The future looks bright for Esmeralda County students, as plans are in the works to get iPads and iPod Touches into the hands of every student in the district!”

“Because our district is so geographically spread out, technology is also used among district staff to help close the physical distance between the district staff. Each school has video conferencing capabilities to facilitate inter-district meetings as well as training sessions on the State and university level. Every staff member has a video camera at a personal computer station with Skype capabilities that are utilized daily.”

The ECSD 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:

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
Dyer ES	5	5	0	0	37	37
Goldfield ES	3	3	0	0	24	24
Silver Peak ES	1	1	0	0	8	8

Goals for Early Childhood Data System

The Esmeralda County superintendent did not identify any particular goals for an early childhood data system; however, the superintendent did voice some concerns about a potential data system and indicated that if an early childhood data system were to be implemented in Esmeralda County, it would be important for the system to include the attributes enumerated in the section below.

Attributes of an Early Childhood Data System

The following were identified as being important attributes of an early childhood data system:

- Inexpensive to schools and district.
- Reliable.
- Informative/Useful.
- User friendly (not requiring high levels of training or technical expertise).

Summary of Assets

The following assets would support the implementation of an early childhood data system in Esmeralda County:

- Smaller community size makes it easier for teachers and administrators in Esmeralda County to be informed about their students.
- Esmeralda County Schools are technologically advanced.
- Esmeralda County School District staff has experience using technology to aid instruction.

Summary of Barriers

The following issues were identified as the most significant concerns related to an early childhood data system:

- Cost to districts and schools.
- Time away from instruction.
- Teacher burden.
- Pressure on children.

Needs Assessment Summary

Resources in Esmeralda County are relatively scarce; however, the high degree of technological advancement in the Esmeralda County School District would support the implementation of an early childhood data system. Ultimately the feasibility of implementing a kindergarten entry assessment and an early childhood data system in Esmeralda County will depend on the resources available, accessibility of the system, and the level of support for implementation of the data system and entry assessment from the staff and administrators in Esmeralda County. Resolving key issues of who does the assessment, which assessment is used, and when it is administered will also be a key to its feasibility in Esmeralda County.

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 Esmeralda County

Surveys

- ❖ As of June 30, 2012, 1 provider from Esmeralda County had answered the survey.
- ❖ As of June 30, 2012, no parents from Esmeralda County had answered the parent survey.

Individual Interview

Gary Gazaway, Superintendent of Esmeralda County

Other Information Resources

- 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
- Esmeralda County School District website: www.esmeralda.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
- Sage School Improvement Plan Template
- TITLE I - NRS 385 for Implementation in 2011-12