

*County Needs Assessment Report Draft*

*June 2012*

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# Kindergarten Entry Assessment & Early Childhood Data Systems (KEDS)

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

# County Profile

Located in north central Nevada, Lander County encompasses 5,621 square miles. Over 85 percent of the County is currently public land managed by federal agencies. The Town of Battle Mountain is the seat of government for Lander County and is located in the northwest corner of the County, in north central Nevada. Strategically situated on Interstate 80 at the intersection with Nevada State Route 305, Battle Mountain is the approximate mid-way point on this important commerce route across the state, 55 miles east of Winnemucca and 67 miles west of Elko.

This small, rural community, is set amidst vast tracts of open range and mountain terrain. The population density in Lander is roughly .99 persons per square mile. Approximately 85% of Lander County residents live in the northern portion of the county. In addition to Battle Mountain, other communities in the county include the unincorporated communities of Austin and Kingston, both with populations under 400 residents. Lander County School District has agreements in place with several neighboring counties, which allows students to attend the school that is geographically closest to their community, even though it is located in a different county.

The Battle Mountain Colony is one of four separate colonies that comprise the Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone Indians, with tribal headquarters in Elko, Nevada. The Te-Moak Tribal Council has total jurisdiction over all tribal lands, though the colonies retain sovereignty over all the other affairs. The Battle Mountain colony has its own tribal council, and has a total reservation population of 165. The Battle Mountain Reservation is located on the west side of the city limits of the town of Battle Mountain, Nevada. It consists of two separate parcels of land totaling 683.3 acres.

In recent years Lander County's economy has been dominated by mining. Agriculture also plays a significant role in the local economy. High quality alfalfa and alfalfa seed is produced. As the dominant sector of the local economy, the mining boom during the past couple of years has had a direct impact on education. The positive impact is seen in increased funding resources for the school district and the local community, and of course in the economic status of many county residents.

However, there have also been challenges associated with an extreme shortage in affordable housing, forcing miners and their families to live and educate their children outside of the county. There is also a severe lack of infant/toddler care options, prompting nearly 30% of Lander County families to care for their children at home and defer enrolling them in school until kindergarten or first grade.

## Lander County Demographics

Total Population (2010) <sup>1</sup>	5,775
Number of Children Ages 0-5 (2010) <sup>2</sup>	452
Median Household Income (2010) <sup>3</sup>	\$70,176
Homeless population (school age group)	<i>Not available</i>
Food Insecure Children: Ages 0-18 (2012) <sup>4</sup>	340 or 24.7%
Enrolled in NV Checkup: Ages 0-18 (2012) <sup>5</sup>	33
Number of Children Receiving Early Intervention Services: Ages 0-3 (2010) <sup>6</sup>	93 (11.65 hours per child)

	Total Population	% of Total Population
Total	5,775	100%
Asian	21	0.4%
Black or African American	20	0.3%
American Indian or Alaska Native	242	4.2%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	1	0.0%
White	4,853	84.0%
Other	496	8.6%
Multi-Racial	142	2.5%
*Population that identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino.	1,219	21.1%

## Lander County: Snapshot of Early Childhood Education and Care

There are currently two elementary schools and one K-12 school in the Lander County School District (LCSD). Battle Mountain Elementary and E. Lemaire Elementary are both located in Battle Mountain, along with the district's administration offices. Austin School is located in Austin, Nevada and serves a total of approximately 40 students in grades K-12. Lander County does not currently have any state-funded pre-K classrooms, nor does it have any charter schools at this time. Lander County operates on a four-day school week, as do several other counties in the northeastern and central regions of Nevada. Kindergarten is operated on a partial day/partial year basis. As with every other county in Nevada, kindergarten is not mandatory.

<sup>1</sup> (Nevada State Demographer)

<sup>2</sup> (Nevada State Demographer)

<sup>3</sup> (U.S. Census Bureau)

<sup>4</sup> (Feeding America, 2012)

<sup>5</sup> (Nevada Check up, 2012)

<sup>6</sup> (Nevada Early Intervention Services, 2010)

<sup>7</sup> (Nevada State Demographer)

According to the Nevada Department of Education audited report for 2011, there were 13 preschool students and 105 kindergarten children enrolled in Lander County School District for Fiscal Year (FY 2011). This compares to a significant decrease (46.2%) in enrollment of preschoolers for FY 2012 and a slight increase (5.7%) in kindergarten enrollment for FY 2012. There has been an overall net decrease in Lander County’s student population, which is attributed to the extreme shortage of housing for miners and their families in Battle Mountain. As a result, miners are bused in from other communities in neighboring counties where they live and have their children enrolled in school.

There are two licensed preschool centers operating in Lander County, both located in Battle Mountain. Both centers offer partial day preschool programs and operate at full capacity with waiting lists. **Christ Lutheran Preschool** is a private center run by a local church that can serve up to 20 children ages 3 to 5 years. **Kids in Motion Preschool** is run by the Family Resource Center which is a program of the Boys and Girls Club. Kids in Motion can serve up to 15 children ages 3 to 6 years. Additionally, there is a “feeder program” available through Nevada Early Intervention Services (NEIS) that serves children from Lander County ages birth to 3 years that have special needs. The NEIS specialist is based in Elko, Nevada and travels to Lander weekly. In FY2010, eight Lander County children received services from NEIS.

Of the 70 children enrolled in kindergarten in Lander County for the FY 2012 school year, approximately 20 children (28.5%) have not had any preschool preparation. The Lander County School District Kindergarten Coordinator states that it can take up to nine months to bring these children up to the same level of readiness to learn as the children that have participated in preschool.

County Early Childhood Education and Care Resources	#	Enrollment Capacity	Children Enrolled in District Classrooms (2011)	
			Pre-K	K
Public Schools (elementary)	2	n/a	10	62
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	2	35		

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 Lander 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<sup>8</sup>:

**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,

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<sup>8</sup> 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.

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.<sup>9</sup>

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

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<sup>9</sup> 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.



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.<sup>10</sup>

School district administrators and educators in Lander County reacted favorably to this definition of school readiness. Kindergarten teachers in a focus group liked the fact that the school readiness definition addresses the role of parents and the community, noting that parents need a great deal of support and education in order to understand what they can do, beginning at birth, to support their child’s readiness to enter school. Additionally, there was broad support for the focus on multiple developmental domains, rather than a more singular focus on academic readiness.

## Kindergarten Entry Assessment

### Description of Existing Kindergarten Entry Assessment

Lander County School District utilizes the Gesell Developmental Observation – Revised (GDO-R) as the primary tool for assessing kindergarten readiness. More detail about the use and advantages of this tool as reported by school administration and early childhood education and care staff is summarized in the table below.

Lander County has developed a unique developmental kindergarten (referred to as “DK”) program for children that are not developmentally ready for kindergarten. Those interviewed report that, any given year, DK is typically indicated for about 25% of the children assessed for kindergarten entry. Over the years, ECE teachers in Lander have identified that a significant number of young children exhibit special education needs in early childhood and are in need of an additional year in kindergarten to “catch up” to grade level. As a result, they have built in an extra year of kindergarten – “DK” – for those children that need it. Kindergarten teachers are enthusiastic about the results it yields, and refer to it as the “gift of time”. This extra year has become part of the Lander model, and teachers have observed that parents are increasingly accepting of the recommendation to place their children in DK. The additional year, which was once associated with stigma, is now broadly accepted in the community as a valuable tool for helping children achieve readiness at the same level as others in their age group, without the need for special education.

Instrument/Tool	Used For Kindergarten Entry (Yes / No), and Other Key Traits	Notes
<b>The Gesell Developmental Observation-Revised (GDO-R)</b>	YES • Administered by	• The Gesell Developmental screening has been used by Lander

<sup>10</sup> Nevada working definition from bill draft request

Instrument/Tool	Used For Kindergarten Entry (Yes / No), and Other Key Traits	Notes
<p>©2010 involves direct observation of a child’s growth and development, as well as some measures of achievement. These GDO-R assessments are administered by teachers who have been trained through Gesell Institute workshops. (A refresher course is recommended every five years due to the complexity of the assessment’s interpretation and scoring.)</p> <p>GDO-R examiners make discriminating observations of a child’s behavior and then evaluate these observations through comparison with normative patterns for each developmental age.</p> <p>For more information, see website:  <a href="http://www.gesellinstitute.org/devasses.html">www.gesellinstitute.org/devasses.html</a></p>	<p>kindergarten teachers during the Spring prior to kindergarten entry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes approximately 45 minutes per child</li> <li>• Results are reviewed with parents at the time of assessment</li> <li>• the GDO-R gives an overall picture of the whole child's development, taking into consideration social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and adaptive development</li> <li>• Appropriate for ages 3-6 yrs</li> <li>• Assessment data stored in student’s file</li> </ul>	<p>County School District for 28 years to assess children for kindergarten entry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lander County School District chose the Gesell because they noticed that a significant number of children entering kindergarten were not developmentally ready.</li> <li>• The District brought in a speaker from The Gesell Institute, followed up with training and piloting over a couple of years.</li> <li>• The Director of Christ Lutheran Preschool has also been trained to administer the Gesell.</li> <li>• After kindergarten entry, additional screenings and assessments are administered throughout the year, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ a teacher-created assessment,</li> <li>○ standards based report card, and</li> <li>○ MAPS at end of year</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Goals for a Common Kindergarten Assessment**

The focus group conducted in Lander County included kindergarten teachers, the special education coordinator, and the elementary school principal, who noted several priorities and goals that should be considered related to implementing a common kindergarten assessment.

1. It is critical that educators and other early childhood education and care stakeholders at both the pre-K and kindergarten levels work more closely together, since there is strong evidence that kindergarten has more in common with preschool in terms of developmental goals, environments, and educational expectations than it does with the higher grades. Focus group participants feel strongly that professional development and training should be done jointly for pre-K and kindergarten teachers in order to foster a stronger connection and better continuity for children and their families.
2. From a developmental perspective, Lander County focus group participants underscored the importance of ensuring that kindergarten entry assessment should look at children holistically,

and that any tool or process needs to incorporate all of the domains noted in Nevada’s definition of school readiness.

3. From a parent and family perspective, Lander County focus group participants were emphatic that the assessment tool and process needs to be easy for parents to understand, and provide them with guidance that helps them support their child’s individual needs and growth.
4. From an educator’s perspective, participants want kindergarten entry assessment to leverage what is already working in Lander County (such as developmental kindergarten). Focus group participants stressed that the assessment tool and process should help them individualize instruction for children while also facilitating a better balance in the classroom so that students are progressing in a more even fashion as a result of improved school readiness.

### Attributes for a Common Kindergarten Assessment

In addition to the goals for a common kindergarten assessment identified above, Lander County focus group and interview participants noted a number of attributes that would be of value. These are enumerated below:

1. Pre-K teachers would like to see more tools for assessing the level of parent involvement in getting their child ready for school. Participants expressed that there are a lot of really young moms in the community that are immature and relatively unprepared to parent. These parents need a great deal of support and education, beginning prenatally.
2. The school district staff interviewed indicated that they would like to see resources go to early childhood education and care to facilitate better integration with older kids. Lander is currently looking at White Pine County School District’s model that has been successful in this regard.
3. Kindergarten teachers want to retain their role in conducting the assessment, and prefer a tool that combines an informal observation checklist with a research/evidence-based approach.
4. Teachers noted the rapid developmental pace of young children, and would like to conduct more frequent assessments that allow them to better understand developmental progression as it occurs (and identify any special needs earlier). They noted that certain tools offer a more holistic picture of the child than others, and would not be interested in adopting certain tools (e.g. the Brigance).
5. Teachers and Coordinators interviewed envision that a common statewide kindergarten entry assessment tool and process would offer an opportunity for more cross-county interaction and peer-to-peer learning. They are enthusiastic about the potential for this, and indicated that Lander County sees many advantages to developing relationships with other counties to exchange ideas and engage in planning and problem-solving around shared goals and concerns.

The primary concern for Lander County is that any statewide effort takes into account the unique needs of smaller counties. As one focus group participant noted,

***“Don’t assume that a one-size fits all approach will work. Lander needs are vastly different, and our formula is working well. Don’t mandate things that aren’t funded, and don’t fix what isn’t broken.”***

## Summary of Assets

The input gathered from Lander County stakeholders identified a number of assets in the current community and ECE environment that are of significant value to their current operations, and could also potentially facilitate Lander County's adoption of a statewide kindergarten entry assessment.

Parent engagement and support is reasonably good in the Battle Mountain community, as evidenced by 90-95% attendance at parent-teacher conferences and 70% attendance at the annual open house held in the fall of each school year. Lander County has implemented a model parent involvement program known as "Watch DOGS (Dads of Great Students). This program, modeled after a program started in Columbine High School after the infamous shootings there, is supported by the PTA and engages fathers to participate in classrooms and be on campus regularly. The program is currently operating in grades K-8, and will be expanding in the next year to incorporate high school grades as well. The Lander County School District Superintendent noted that this program has had a positive impact on increasing the number of parent volunteers (not just fathers) that are actively involved.

New Board members and a new Superintendent during the past year are looking at every opportunity and school need creatively. The superintendent notes that the School Board is very supportive and is "not taking anything off the table".

Technology is the top priority in a 5-year strategic planning process has just gotten underway in Lander County School District. While early childhood education and care is not specifically identified in the plan in terms of growth (or cuts), the resources that will be devoted to upgrading school infrastructure, including technology and facilities, will directly improve capacity for the district to adopt a common kindergarten entry assessment and participate in a coordinated early childhood data system. The superintendent noted that most of the district's plans related to ECE are imbedded in other components of the broader strategic plan.

Mining money is a big blessing right now for the entire community. However, the school board's plan is to maintain current resources and focus growth-related expenditures on infrastructure than can be sustained in the event that mining goes through a bust cycle.

Children with special needs and/or developmental delays have access to the services they need, and are afforded the opportunity to remain in kindergarten for an additional year (DK) to allow them the opportunity to catch up to their peers. 93% of parents with a child receiving special education services in Lander County report that the district facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities.

School district performance consistently meets or exceeds statewide standards, in terms of annual yearly progress (AYP), attendance rates (95%), graduation rates, and qualified staff (All members of the staff (includes aides) have achieved Highly Qualified Status.)

## Summary of Barriers

In addition to the assets noted above, those providing input for this needs assessment also noted some existing challenges that need to be considered when developing the implementation plans for a common kindergarten assessment.

1. The Board of Trustees is currently weighing the impact of their decision several years ago to adopt a four-day school week. The teachers note that it is not good for young children to be away from school for three days at a time, and observe that students lose the gains they made during the week and have to spend too much time getting back to the same level, only to have the cycle repeat. They indicated that it is hard on teachers as well. From the perspective of the mining community, the four-day week puts additional pressure on families related to child care.
2. Even though Lander has met or exceeded statewide standards related to its qualified teaching staff, focus group participants noted that there are more challenges involved with staffing pre-K classrooms, particularly at Kids in Motion, which has changed teachers frequently. This creates a challenge in terms of establishing and maintaining relationships that link pre-K and kindergarten in order to ensure a smoother transition for children and families. Focus group participants attribute this turnover to the overall lack of qualified teachers in the community that can meet the necessary certification standards. The superintendent noted that Lander County often has to contract for services that other districts have permanent staff in place for, such as grant writers.
3. There has been a long-standing challenge related to establishing a link between the district and the tribal government located in Lander County. According to focus group participants, the Battle Mountain Colony Tribal Government has been in a state of flux, and recently lost their educational consultant who served as the liaison to the district.
4. Lander parents need more education and engagement resources. A fair number of parents don't understand what is involved in ensuring that their child is school-ready, according to district personnel interviewed. Having a Nevada-specific definition of school readiness should help with this, as long as there are also resources devoted to a messaging effort for parents to educate them on what they can and should be doing to prepare their children for school. Lander County has recently hired a part-time parent coordinator using Title 1 funds to increase parent engagement efforts, but focus group participants are concerned that this is still not enough. Lander County is interested in investing more resources in parent engagement similar to the model that Washoe County has developed.

# Early Childhood Data System

## Description of Existing Efforts Related to Early Childhood Data

According to the Lander County superintendent and others interviewed, the technology infrastructure for the district is outdated and creates more problems than it resolves. This is particularly true of hardware available for student and teacher use in classrooms, which is reported to be so old that it is essentially non-functional for teaching or assessment purposes. Very little data is stored electronically at this time, and there is no formal infrastructure available to link Lander County's preschool providers to the school. All information sharing is done on an informal basis, and is heavily dependent on the degree to which relationships are in place that facilitate the exchange of information about a particular child.

For this reason, teaching staff is somewhat reluctant to consider changing the current assessment tool and process, at least until there is sufficient infrastructure to support the change. As noted earlier, improving technology is the top priority for the district in its current strategic planning process. The district does participate in uploading data to NDE's Bighorn Longitudinal Data System, but reports that the process is often problematic. As in many of Nevada's frontier counties, the SAIN Coordinator for Lander wears multiple hats and is only able to address data coordination issues on a part-time basis. Like most of Nevada's rural counties, Lander contracts with Oasis, a vendor based in Fallon, Nevada, to operate PowerSchool (a web-based student information system for K-12).

## Goals for Early Childhood Data System

As indicated earlier, Lander County School District has developed a technology plan as its top priority in its current strategic planning efforts, and intends to install a wireless router this summer that will serve the entire district. In addition, the plan calls for purchasing new monitors and updating other hardware in the classrooms this summer as well. Installation of updated hardware in the classrooms will support the use of the MAP assessment tool, which is currently used beginning in 1<sup>st</sup> grade. Due to difficulties with the hardware, the kindergarten teachers do not like MAP yet for use with their kindergarten students, noting that the outdated equipment is inadequate for teaching kindergartners how to use a keyboard. They are anticipating that the new computers will allow them to practice with MAP in the classroom and better prepare the children to complete the computer-based assessment.

District personnel expressed support and enthusiasm for information sharing between pre-K and K-12 to improve outcomes, noting that it would be helpful to have data about their students' progress after they have moved on to higher grades. Kindergarten teachers agree that having access to this kind of data about students would help them design curriculum and classroom environments to achieve better outcomes.

In focus groups and interviews, the following goals were identified related to implementing an early childhood data system:

- Whatever is adopted needs to be linked to the Common Core Standards.
- Data sharing and reporting need to be efficient for teachers and data entry staff.

- Counties need the ability to use the data for their own purposes.
- Data needs to be easy to understand and share with parents as well as students.
- Data should facilitate a better understanding of how Lander compares at every level – child, teacher, school, district, county, state and nationally – about performance, student achievement, and school readiness.

### **Attributes of an Early Childhood Data System**

According to school administrators and kindergarten teachers in Lander County, the priority issues that need to be addressed related to implementing a coordinated ECE data system include identifying how it will be funded and how to address the potential of lost instructional time. Both could impact implementation. Implementation of (and participation in) a coordinated statewide ECE data system would need to be supported with sufficient training and technical assistance support to ensure that teachers in both pre-K and kindergarten classrooms, as well as administration and support staff, could become proficient without taking away from instruction time. They also noted that the system should be designed to allow counties to continue utilizing effective practices and upload student information without having to revamp local tools and processes. The ability for individual counties to select tools and methods that met statewide criteria related to the data elements is considered ideal for Lander. Funding to support implementation is likely to be necessary.

### **Summary of Assets**

Assets in Lander County that can be leveraged to support implementation and participation in a coordinated ECE data system include:

- An existing plan to strengthen the district’s technology infrastructure.
- Relatively small student/county population allows for easier management of data entry and analysis.
- Strong culture for collaborative planning and peer-to-peer learning will support planning and progress toward data-driven decision making.
- Strong existing relationships with pre-K center administrators and teachers.
- High level of parent engagement already exists to facilitate community buy-in.
- Supportive Board of Trustees and forward-thinking Superintendent are willing to look at all options related to improving student, school, teacher and district performance.

### **Summary of Barriers**

The technology issues related to antiquated buildings, wiring, and outdated hardware, in addition to insufficient classroom and school resources, have already been noted. At this time, the burdens that currently exist in Lander County related to data collection and reporting on children participating in early childhood education and care programs include the lack of funding to support such an effort and the lack of formal coordination between pre-K providers and the K-12 system. School administrators also noted that they lack the capacity, in terms of staffing, training and technology, to use data to guide decision-making and performance improvement, which should be a goal for the system. Other concerns noted included concern about the misuse of data and the potential additional burden on teachers.

# Needs Assessment Summary

Overall, those interviewed in Lander County expressed strong support for participating in KEDS as a county. There appears to be a general willingness to explore participation in this statewide initiative, as long as it does not come in the form of an unfunded mandate or require implementation of tools and processes that don't make sense in Lander or negatively impact its students and staff. For it to be feasible to implement KEDS, the following issues need to be addressed for Lander County:

- Parent engagement in their child's education is relatively high, as indicated by stakeholder input, district reports, and participation in school-related events, volunteer opportunities, and parent-teacher conferences.
- District leadership (Board of Trustees, superintendent, and elementary school principal) is supportive of early childhood education and care and willing to invest resources if they are deemed to be of value.
- Early childhood education and care personnel are invested in the developmental progress of young children, and has demonstrated an interest in looking at model programs, working collaboratively with peers in other counties, and adopting innovative solutions (such as Developmental Kindergarten).
- District-wide strategic planning is underway that prioritizes improvements in technology infrastructure which, while currently inadequate to support participation in this initiative, will be built up over the coming 1 to 2 years.
- The community and district have relatively few resources in place devoted to early childhood education and care. However, the current mining boom might potentially serve as an asset to support community goals related to improving school readiness for children.
- No formal linkages exist currently between pre-K centers and K-12 programs. However, informal linkages are in place as a result of the relationships that have been developed.
- There appears to be a general willingness to explore participation in this statewide initiative, as long as it does not come in the form of an unfunded mandate or require implementation of tools and processes that don't make sense for Lander 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 a 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 in Lander County

### Interviews

Jim Squibb, Lander County School District Superintendent

### Focus Groups

Lorrie Sparks, Principal, District Homeless Liaison, Battle Mountain Elementary School

Cindy Obieta, Pre-K Coordinator, Battle Mountain Elementary School

Valerie Lane, Kindergarten Teacher, Battle Mountain Elementary School

Barbara McIntosh, Kindergarten Teacher (retiring), Battle Mountain Elementary School

### Participant in KEDS Information Meeting – Statewide Conferences

Doug Staton, PTA, Battle Mountain

### 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
- Insight, Center For Community Economic Development, The Economic Impact of Early Care and Education in Nevada
- KEDS Parent survey results
- KEDS Provider survey results
- Lander County School District website: [www.lander.k12.nv.us](http://www.lander.k12.nv.us)
- 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](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](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](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