

*Carson City Needs Assessment Report Draft*

*June 2012*

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

**Developed for Carson City, 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 Carson City 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 education and care 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 Carson City, and concludes with a subjective assessment of the feasibility for implementing KEDS in Carson City.

# Carson City Profile

The following information was collected from existing websites and reports to put the Carson City community in perspective as compared to the other 16 Nevada counties that are part of this assessment.

Carson City is both a county and the capital of Nevada. The land area in square miles is 146. Carson City was founded as a community in 1858, seven years after the first settlement of Eagle Station trading post in 1851. President Abraham Lincoln, recognizing the importance of Nevada's silver and gold to the Union's Civil War effort, signed the proclamation that ushered Nevada into statehood on October 31, 1864. Carson City was selected as the state capital at the constitutional convention and has retained that honor to the present day.

## Carson City Demographics

Total Population (2010) <sup>1</sup>	55,274
Number of Children Ages 0-5 (2010) <sup>2</sup>	3,223
Median Household Income (2010) <sup>3</sup>	\$49,386
Homeless population (school age group) <sup>4</sup>	429
Food Insecure Children: Ages 0-18 (2012) <sup>5</sup>	3,960 or 29.6%
Enrolled in NV Checkup: Ages 0-18 (2012) <sup>6</sup>	749
Number of Children Receiving Early Intervention Services: Ages 0-3 (2010) <sup>7</sup>	79 (42.24 hours per child)

As of 2010, Carson City is home for 55,274 persons according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The majority of the population of the town lives in Eagle Valley, on the eastern edge of the Carson Range, a branch of the Sierra Nevada. The town is about 30 miles south of Reno. As of the 2010 census there are 55,274 people, 20,171 households, and 13,252 families residing in the city. The population density is 366 people per square mile.

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<sup>1</sup> (US Census)

<sup>2</sup> (US Census)

<sup>3</sup> (US Census)

<sup>4</sup> CCSD

<sup>5</sup> (Feeding America)

<sup>6</sup> (Nevada Department of Education, 2011)

<sup>7</sup> (Nevada Department of Education )

<b>Racial/Ethnic Breakdown (2010)<sup>8</sup></b>		
	Total Population	% of Total Population
Total	55,274	100%
Asian	1,181	2.1%
Black or African American	1,054	1.9%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1,306	2.4%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	101	0.2%
White	44,807	81.1%
Other	5,205	9.4%
Multi-Racial	1,620	2.9%
*Population that identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino.	11,777	21.3%

According to the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) report for 2011, there were 51 preschool students and 550 kindergarten children enrolled in public or charter schools in Carson City School District (CCSD) for Fiscal Year (FY 2011). The Nevada Annual Report of Accountability indicates that the student to teacher ratio in kindergarten classrooms was 22:1. The Striving Readers application from Carson City School District (CCSD), submitted in 2012 stated that approximately 30% of students entering CCSD at the preschool or kindergarten level possess literacy skills to effectively interact with the kindergarten curriculum.

The Striving Readers application noted that of the 7,400 students enrolled in CCSD in 2012, 49% are Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) eligible, 29.8% are Limited English Proficient (LEP), 14% are enrolled in Special Education, 6% meet the definition for homeless and 49% are of minority populations. With the exception of Carson High School, every CCSD school is eligible for Title 1 funds. (Nevada Department of Education ). Qualification for FRL 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.

According to CCSD school board minutes, as of January 10, 2012, there are 415 students currently being served through the McKinney-Vento program for homeless school aged children, plus another 48 students who have left the district since the beginning of school. Over the last three years, the services provided from FY 2010 have grown from approximately 250 students to the projected amount of 650 students by the end of FY 2012.

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### **Carson City: Snapshot of Early Childhood Education and Care**

In 2011-12, kindergarten was offered in Carson City at six schools. There is both full-day and half-day kindergarten available. The CCSD operates two state sponsored pre-K programs but only eighty students

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<sup>8</sup> (US Census)

or about 13% of the current kindergarten population are currently served by this program. According to the Striving Readers application, 65% of these students enter kindergarten on grade level. It also notes that the current pre-K program provides exceptional literacy development opportunities for students as well as special training programs for parents. Full-day kindergarten (FDK) is available based on a fee. Full-day kindergarten availability is determined by the following process:

- The site administrator determines that space exists at the site for the full-day program. The site administrator determines if one or more kindergarten teachers on the staff are interested in teaching a FDK program.
- The principal must follow the negotiated agreement between the CCSD and the Ormsby County Education Association when selecting a teacher for the FDK position. An informational letter is prepared by the principal to prospective kindergarten parents describing the full-day program and associated fees and expectations.
- At least 25 parents need to express interest in a FDK in order to proceed. Priority for enrollment is given to students currently residing in the school’s attendance zone. The principal must set aside a minimum of two seats in the FDK program for scholarship students.

Some schools in CCSD offer transitional kindergarten (two years of “first grade”) for children that come to school with late birthdays or that otherwise aren’t fully prepared to progress to the next class. As with every other county in Nevada, kindergarten is not mandatory.

There are currently six elementary schools that offer kindergarten in CCSD: Bordewich Bray, Empire, Fremont, Fritsch, Mark Twain and Al Seeliger. A Montessori school is also operated as a Charter School. There are 25 licensed early childhood education and care centers in Carson City including a Tribal Head Start.

Tribal Head Start reported an enrollment of about 55 and a waiting list of 100. That is the only Head Start available in Carson City. Demographics of attendees are estimated to be one-quarter Latino, one-quarter Native American, and the remaining half are other non native or Latino Caucasian. Head Start reported that they receive calls of interest for services frequently but lack the capacity or slots to meet the existing need. Head Start also reported they provide services in English-Spanish.

In a focus group, the representative from Tribal Head Start indicated that CCSD has provided information to Tribal Head Start on Math and English preparedness, which is reviewed with the education manager. Information shared is a form of assessment that indicates kindergarten entry readiness on skills.

County Early Childhood Education and Care Resources	#	Enrollment Capacity	Children Enrolled in District Classrooms (2011)	
			Pre-K	K
Public Schools (elementary)	6	N/A	51	591
Charter Schools (elementary)	1	N/A		
Private Schools (elementary)	4	N/A		

County Early Childhood Education and Care Resources	#	Enrollment Capacity	Children Enrolled in District Classrooms (2011)	
			Pre-K	K
Licensed Preschool	1	30		
Licensed Family Child Care	3	18		
Licensed Group Child Care	2	24		
Licensed Child Care Centers	19	1029		

Sources: Nevada Registry, Nevada Department of Education

Nevada Early Intervention Services (NEIS) Northwest Regions provides family-centered multidisciplinary diagnostic and early intervention services to Carson City. Staff includes developmental specialists, a pediatrician, speech, physical and occupational therapists, nutritionists, audiologists and social workers. Based on information from the Nevada Registry, there were a total of 1,101 licensed slots in Carson City as of May 2012. (Nevada Registry, 2012).

## 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 Carson City 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>9</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



<sup>9</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.

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.<sup>10</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
- 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>11</sup>

Empower Carson City 2017, the five year strategic plan for Carson City School District, which was adopted in 2012 stated the following beliefs that support the school readiness definition and equation:

- "Students must be empowered to achieve a healthy physical, emotional, and social lifestyle."
- "Students, Families, Schools, Businesses, and the Community must work in partnership to relentlessly pursue academic excellence."

Focus group participants reacted favorably to this definition of school readiness as did CCSD administrators and early childhood education and care (ECE) providers. This is also supported in the Striving Readers application which states that CCSD 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.

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<sup>10</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.

<sup>11</sup> Nevada working definition from bill draft request

The Striving Readers application also noted that students need to have age appropriate language and basic literacy skills when entering kindergarten.

Provider survey respondents also supported the five domains in the school readiness definition, with four of the five domains rating as “very important”. Physical development and health, while still deemed very or somewhat important, was not rated as important in comparison.

<b>Please indicate the importance of measuring the following areas of children's skills and development in a statewide kindergarten entry assessment process:</b>						
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Very Important</b>	<b>Somewhat Important</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Less Important</b>	<b>Not at All Important</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Social and emotional development	6	2	1	0	0	9
Language and early literacy	6	3	0	0	0	9
Physical development and health	4	5	0	0	0	9
Cognition and general knowledge	6	3	0	0	0	9
Approaches to learning	6	3	0	0	0	8
<i>answered question</i>						<b>9</b>
<i>skipped question</i>						<b>2</b>

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# Kindergarten Entry Assessment

## Description of Existing Kindergarten Entry Assessment

The Carson City School District contracts with NWEA to conduct the kindergarten Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment. The district noted in its Striving Readers application that it does utilize other assessments at the kindergarten level. Early literacy community partner groups also report that they have varying levels of assessments developed and available, but none administer a complete and comprehensive system in alignment with the Common Core State Standards. The CCSD pre-K program reported similar findings. Currently, the district does not share literacy readiness information with its preschool partners. Teachers complete an observational assessment in the fall with kindergarten students.

According to the Striving Readers application, the district utilizes Success for All (SFA) at five of the six elementary schools. The sixth school, Al Seeliger, does not have an aligned curriculum and the district had planned to use the Striving Readers grant to move the school to SFA. Unfortunately, CCSD did not receive a Striving Readers grant.

Success for All is a school-based achievement-oriented program for disadvantaged students in grades preschool through five. SFA is designed to prevent or intervene in the development of learning problems in the early years by effectively organizing instructional and family support resources within the regular classroom. In particular, the goal is to ensure that virtually every student in a high-poverty school will finish the third grade with grade-level reading skills. A “success for all” corollary is that no student will “fall between the cracks” on the path to acquiring good reading skills.

Success for All grew out of a partnership between the Baltimore City Public Schools and the Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools (CREMS), formerly at The Johns Hopkins University. The program was first implemented during the 1987-88 school year in Baltimore. To date, it has been fully implemented in 50 schools across 15 states. Program goals include to:

- Ensure that every student will perform at grade level in reading by the end of the third grade
- Reduce the number of students referred to special education classes
- Reduce the number of students who are held back to repeat a grade
- Increase attendance
- Address family needs for food, housing, and medical care to enable the family to support its children's education

The district has utilized SFA since the inception of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Fritsch and Seeliger elementary schools were both noted in the April 2012 CCSD Board meeting minutes as outperforming all of the Title 1 schools. Bordewich Bray Elementary School, a Title 1 school, also meets the criteria to be designated as a high performing school. Success for All was identified as supporting Empower Carson City, 2017, CCSD’s Strategic Plan, in the following areas: engaging parents and guardians; curriculum matters and exceptional administrators; and teachers and staff. CCSD’s Striving Readers application states that the SFA schools are not meeting current Common Core State Standards requirements, although they are reported to be relatively close to doing so. The district also identified the need to upgrade the SFA program at two schools to align the program to Common Core State Standards requirements.

CCSD indicated in a key informant interview that the district has moved to a report card that is standards-based to better align with the Common Core State Standards. Typically, teachers use assessment data to determine how to individualize curriculum to help children attain skills they will need to succeed in school. Carson Tribal Head Start uses the Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning (Dial -3) to assess children. DIAL-3 is an individually administered screening test designed to identify young children in need of further diagnostic assessment. The DIAL-3 subtests cover the five domains mandated by federal law: physical, cognitive, communication, social or emotional, and adaptive. The test also includes a 9-item rating scale of the child's social-emotional behavior and a rating of the child's intelligibility. This provides an opportunity for early intervention. In a focus group, the Tribal Head Start representative indicated that most children that receive interventions don’t need them by the time they reach kindergarten because they have made gains as a result of the intervention.

Child Find provides screening and assessment in Carson City through NEIS. As a funded part of state preschool Carson City 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.

Ten Carson City parents completed surveys about kindergarten entry assessment. Of the 10, eight indicated they felt a statewide kindergarten entry assessment was a good goal for the state. Two were unsure. Nine of ten parents surveyed felt that the main goals of the assessment should be to screen for potential special needs and to inform parents of strengths and areas of growth. This was further supported by eight of 10 parents indicating they did not feel that parents are provided enough information on what is expected for their child to be ready for kindergarten with two other parents unsure.

Half of the parents (5 of 10) felt strongly that parent input should be part of the assessment. This was also supported in a focus group with parents and providers who indicated they want family engagement to be a part of the assessment. In addition, family engagement is a theme in the CCSD strategic plan. The main concern that parents noted was the ability of schools and systems to assess children in a meaningful way. That being said, only four of the ten parents were very concerned about this issue.

The following table represents the survey responses of ECE providers in Carson City. The following information was collected from providers who identified informing parents of strengths and areas of growth, supporting the transition and alignment between ECE program and schools related to screening for potential special needs as the most appropriate purposes of an entry assessment.

<b>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.</b>						
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Help guide individual instruction	5	2	2	0	0	9
Support transition and alignment between early childhood education and care (ECE) programs and K-12 schools	7	2	0	0	0	9
Screen for potential special needs	8	1	0	0	0	9
Help guide planning for early learning investments	5	3	1	0	0	9

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.						
Help guide classroom instruction	6	3	0	0	0	9
Inform parents of strengths and areas of growth	8	1	0	0	0	9
Help guide district and school planning	7	2	0	0	0	9

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:

- Identify where a child is at developmentally without stigmatizing or making a value judgment about the child.
- Parents in a focus group indicated one goal would be to assess the social and emotional domain for children, stating, “We want to know how our children are treating others when we aren’t around.”
- Another goal from providers and parents is to engage parents in their children’s learning and preparation for kindergarten, giving them the information that they need to help prepare their child based on expectations.

Other goals from surveys included to:

- Collect data that would support the value and need for quality preschool.
- Screen for potential special needs.
- Help guide individual instruction.
- Support transition between early childhood education and care (ECE) programs and K-12 schools.

One issue raised by school administrators was to be clear about how the assessment would be used and to ensure that it not be used to exclude children from kindergarten.

**Preschool children and pre-K children need to be better prepared for entry into the school system. Parents are not given information they need to prepare their children. Children need to know more than ever before entering Kindergarten today. Parents and early childhood educators need to know what to teach and how to prepare these children for school. Information sharing is vital.—Carson City Parent**

### Attributes for a Common Kindergarten Entry Assessment

Interviews and focus group participants in Carson City expressed the following suggestions for a common kindergarten entry assessment:

- It needs to include some correlation between the Common Core State Standards and what will be required and ensure alignment. Ideally, it would be more parent friendly than the Common Core State Standards verbiage.

- Protocols should protect against the misuse of data and not exclude children or be used as a placement tool.
- Assessment must consider children of different cultures and languages and how these factors might impact the assessment.
- Child development providers noted that they want the assessment to incorporate research on approaches to learning and not be solely focused on math and reading.
- 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.

When asked to react to several potential implementation approaches for a statewide kindergarten entry assessment process, respondents expressed the greatest overall agreement with “one standard assessment process for all districts” choice and the least overall agreement with “all decisions made by districts with technical assistance from state or others”.

<b>What is your reaction to the following potential implementation approaches for a statewide kindergarten assessment process?</b>						
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
One standard assessment process for all districts	3	2	2	1	1	9
Districts choose tools and methods from a specified list	2	1	3	3	0	9
Districts develop local procedures that meet specified criteria	1	3	3	2	0	9
All decisions are made by districts with technical assistance from state or others	0	2	3	4	0	9
<i>answered question</i>						<b>9</b>
<i>skipped question</i>						<b>0</b>

Parents who completed surveys were informed that the Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council (NECAC) is considering a common kindergarten entry assessment for the State of Nevada. This would mean that in every district and school, readiness for kindergarten would be measured in a very similar way. In response to the question, “Do you think that statewide kindergarten entry assessment is a good idea?” ten parents answered the question. Eight responded yes and two were unsure.

Parents surveyed also supported the goals for the Kindergarten Entry Assessment as follows:

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Not Very Important	Not Important at All	Response Count
<b>Guide teachers to provide individualized instruction</b>	8	2	0	0	0	10
<b>Support the child's transition from childcare or preschool to kindergarten</b>	7	3	0	0	0	10
<b>Screen children for potential special needs</b>	9	1	0	0	0	10
<b>Help families prepare children for kindergarten</b>	6	4	0	0	0	10
<b>Inform parents of their child's strengths and areas for growth</b>	9	1	0	0	0	10
<b>Help guide district and school planning</b>	7	2	1	0	0	10

Survey comments reinforced that parent input should be used in a kindergarten entry assessment process.

### Summary of Assets

The CCSD Striving Reader application has led to increased collaboration and communication between providers and the district. This is an asset that, if parts of the plan are implemented in the future, can 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 support community outreach, guidance, and support for birth to pre-K providers and populations.

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

- A Tri-County Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) has been meeting since 2011 and supports the school readiness definition and implementation of a kindergarten entry assessment.
- An Early Literacy Advisory Group was convened as part of the Striving Readers grant application process and this new group is continuing to meet and develop some agreements.
- Children receiving early intervention are enrolled in Head Start so they can receive a full-day of high quality services / school.
- CCSD pre-K staff has been introduced to the Common Core State Standards and have also had training on kindergarten literacy expectations.
- CCSD, in its Technology Plan, notes that Professional Learning Communities (PLC'S) have been established in order to foster a collaborative environment amongst staff members.
- The current pre-K program of CCSD provides exceptional literacy development opportunities for students as well as special training programs for parents.

- The CCSD recently formed an early childhood education and care department within its Educational Services Department.
- Strong relationships already exist between CCSD and the birth to kindergarten service providers.
- Providers noted that, with the recent Striving Readers application, the timing for implementing a kindergarten entry assessment is good. , The district strategic plan and other efforts in Carson City are focused on young children and school readiness.
- The CCSD Strategic Plan, adopted in 2012, supports the school readiness definition and the use of assessment to prepare children for lifelong learning.

*Early learning is critical to future development. Kindergarten in NV needs to be mandatory for all children. -- Carson City Parent*

## Summary of Barriers

Stakeholders in Carson City cited the following as being barriers which may hinder the creation and implementation of a statewide kindergarten entry assessment. This information was provided via interviews with key informants, focus group with ECE providers and the ECAC, and from the Striving Readers application.

Tri-County ECAC members noted that:

- High unemployment has led to less demand for child care while at the same time a lack of preschool options was noted as a need.
- Many Latino children lag behind because they speak Spanish at home. They may not be able to afford preschool or even child care. They are likely behind when they start kindergarten; while other children have had access to programs and language.
- There is a large group of ‘latch key’ kids in Carson City who are cared for by older siblings rather than receiving care in a setting that supports the five school readiness domains.

According to the Striving Readers application:

- Approximately 30% of students entering the CCSD at the preschool or kindergarten level possess literacy skill to effectively interact with their kindergarten curriculum.
- Currently neither the CCSD nor its community partners is utilizing literacy curriculum aligned with the Common Core State Standards.
- A majority of community providers have not been introduced to the new Common Core State Standards curriculum and they have not been able to align their curriculum with kindergarten expectations.
- The Striving Readers application notes that the CCSD currently lacks a formative and summative assessment tool in its current practice.
- CCSD pre-K staff has not had sufficient time to reorganize their curriculum to align with the Common Core State Standards.

Focus group participants noted that:

- Funding to support the assessment and the resources needed to implement it is a major concern.
  - Lack of parent education and knowledge regarding child readiness and child development was a barrier highlighted by focus group participants as critical to improving school readiness.
  - Providers also noted that many parents believe that children need to know math and reading upon kindergarten entry which doesn't consider what is developmentally appropriate for a five year old.
  - Providers identified a decrease in children's cognition and general knowledge that they attribute to an increased use of technology.
- 

# Early Childhood Data System

## Description of Existing Efforts Related to Early Childhood Data

This section includes information from plans and various groups and individuals regarding the existing data infrastructure in Carson City.

District administrators utilize technology to collect, organize, disaggregate and report student achievement data. District administrators work with teachers and principals to analyze testing data so that informed decisions regarding curriculum and instruction are made.

All schools offer the ELLIS computer-based English-As-A-Second -Language program for limited English proficient students. Students can use this system on their own to gain additional practice outside of regular ESL classes. The program is interactive and provides individual practice and assessment. At this time there is no formal infrastructure to link the ECE providers and school. However, Tribal Head Start did note that they receive assessment data from CCSD so some linkages are in place. Currently, early childhood data is not formally linked to school data. Few linkages currently exist with private preschool and child care providers.

CCSD indicated in a key informant interview that the district has moved to a report card that is standards based to better align with the Common Core State Standards. Assessment data is input into PowerSchool. While not currently possible, administrators are hopeful that data provided by Success for All can interface with the PowerSchool student information system, which could potentially assist teachers in preparing student report cards.

Typically, teachers use assessment data to determine how to individualize curriculum to help children attain skills they will need to succeed in school. The CCSD 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. CCSD is aware of data development efforts at the state and is supportive of the implementation

of a data system. In terms of vendors, CCSD uses PowerSchool (Pearson) currently to make data available.

In 2009 CCSD adopted a Technology Plan. This Technology Plan is used by the Carson City School District as a “tool” as it plans and delivers 21st Century Learning Opportunities to all students. The plan utilizes technology to enhance learning, increase student engagement and achievement across all curricular areas.

The goals of the plan focus on the integration of technology into standards-based curriculum for all core subjects; increased accessibility to technology, increased achievement for all students, and providing sustained, high-quality staff development for teachers.

According to the Technology Plan, CCSD utilizes funding from a variety of sources—state, federal, and private—to secure additional technology for classrooms. This includes but is not limited to, computers, SMART Boards, CPS (Classroom Performance Systems), projectors, digital cameras, scanners, mobile labs, document cameras, and iPods. Schools use technology to support student learning in core curricula subjects:

- SMART Boards are standard in all classrooms and document cameras are becoming standard, providing an interactive environment for a variety of subjects.
- Mobile labs are available to all students at all school sites.
- iPods are used for music instruction through a pilot project.
- iPods are being used to enhance elementary instruction through a pilot project.
- Curriculum maps and pacing guides are being updated for all subject areas. They are required to align CCSD curriculum with Nevada state content and performance standards. This process is also being used to insure that curriculum is articulated between grade levels and establish collaboration between peers.
- The curriculum for Computer Technology K-12 is being revised and mapped so that it is aligned with the new state standards.

*This assessment process should be quantitative and easy to use. Guidelines should be provided to parents and preschool teachers as to what needs to be taught to the pre kindergarten children so that they are prepared for entry into kindergarten. Guidelines for the level of skills needed for each student should also be provided.—Carson City Provider*

<b>Educational Technology</b>	<b># of classrooms</b>	<b># of classrooms with Internet access</b>	<b># of labs, libraries and media centers</b>	<b># of labs, libraries and media centers with Internet access</b>	<b># of classroom instructional computers</b>	<b># of classroom instructional computers with Internet access</b>
Bordewich Bray ES	41	41	3	3	154	153
Empire ES	30	30	2	2	127	126
Fremont ES	23	23	2	2	104	103

Fritsch ES	22	22	3	3	139	137
Mark Twain ES	27	27	2	2	111	110
Seeliger ES	28	28	3	3	191	124

According to the Striving Readers application, CCSD is planning on building a data base and method of sharing and reviewing data with each of its preschool service providers. In addition, following recommendations from the strategic planning committee, the CCSD created a Data Based Decision Making Literacy Team (DBDMLT). This team will serve as a subcommittee of the District Improvement Planning Team (DIP).

Eight providers completed surveys and three of eight strongly and three of eight 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.” Two were neutral and no one disagreed with the goal.

<b>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?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Strongly Agree	37.5%	3
Somewhat Agree	37.5%	3
Neutral	25.0%	2
Somewhat Disagree	0.0%	0
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0
answered question		8

In reviewing the CCSD 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 would make teachers aware of the special needs and strengths of the children in their classrooms.
- Another goal would be to help guide instruction.
- Focus group participants indicated the goal would be to demonstrate the value of preschool and to give teachers information to customize curriculum to meet children’s needs.
- One goal of both providers and parents would be to identify children with special needs and be able to address their needs more quickly.
- CCSD administration identified a goal of the data system to assist the transition from ECE to the K-12 system and strengthen the sharing of data between systems.

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	7	2	1	0	0	10
Teachers are aware of special needs and strengths of the child	8	1	1	0	0	10
Preschools and childcare have information about how well they have prepared children for kindergarten so that they can make improvements	7	2	1	0	0	10
Districts and schools have more information for planning	6	3	1	0	0	10
It is easier for children to move among schools or districts	6	3	1	0	0	10
<i>answered question</i>						<b>10</b>
<i>skipped question</i>						<b>0</b>

Both parents and providers felt that the goals identified above for data sharing were important for an early childhood data system.

## Attributes of an Early Childhood Data System

Attributes of an early childhood data system identified by key stakeholders included:

- Parents and providers identified the need for a data system to be used to drive improvements.
- They also want there to be checks and balances in place to ensure it isn't exclusionary.
- They want an assessment that results in data that will drive curriculum and create opportunities to enhance the school system.
- They want teachers to know how to enhance learning on an individualized fashion.
- Child development professionals specifically want access to data that can help them individualize their approach with children.
- 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.

I hope this will be the first step to legitimizing the importance of quality preschool and all day kindergarten throughout the state. –Carson City Survey respondent.

## 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. They include:

- Willingness and interest on the part of CCSD to implement a statewide assessment was considered an asset.
- The desire to share information across districts and the benefits that would have for teachers and students was also an asset identified of such a system.
- In addition, CCSD has some new partnerships and collaboration in place as a result of the Striving Readers grant application process that could be built upon.
- The new CCSD strategic plan creates a climate that supports the school readiness definition
- This CCSD Technology Plan utilizes technology as a tool to enhance learning, increase student engagement and achievement across all curricular areas.
- CCSD is technology rich in terms of Smart Boards, projectors, Audio Enhancement units, document cameras, and laptop carts.
- The Nevada Department of Education is certified by the Schools and Libraries Division of USAC to approve technology plans for participation in the Schools and Libraries Universal Service Program. Carson City School District has a technology plan that has met the standards and criteria and received such certification.
- Finally, dedicated ECE providers 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 providers in CCSD, the priority issues that need to be addressed related to implementing a coordinated ECE data system include the funding issues and having sufficient infrastructure.

- The Technology Plan noted that a lack of a dedicated funding source is the major obstacle to maintaining and expanding the infrastructure, stating “while we have been able to provide basic technology to all our classrooms through one-time or one shot funding, this equipment is aging and is in need of repair or replacement”.
- While the district is somewhat technology rich in terms of Smart Boards, projectors, Audio Enhancement units, document cameras, and laptop carts, the Technology Plan notes that CCSD lacks the ongoing professional development to cultivate their use in instruction.
- At the same time, administration noted concern in the Striving Readers application about aligning curriculum with the Common Core State Standards. This issue must be resolved as it could negatively 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. Stakeholders in Carson City who agreed with a data system were then asked

to rate the relative significance of challenges related to implementing an early childhood data system. The following table represents survey responses of the six providers who agreed with the need for a statewide data system:

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	3	3	0	0	0	6
Cost to early childhood education and care providers	2	4	0	0	0	6
Misuse of data	4	1	0	1	0	6
Data analysis and reporting capacity	2	2	2	0	0	6
Time away from instruction	3	1	2	0	0	6
Teacher burden	2	2	1	1	0	6
Pressure on children	2	2	1	1	0	6
Privacy concerns	1	2	2	1	0	6
Security of data	1	3	1	1	0	6

Survey respondents identified the following challenges as being the most significant barriers to implementing early childhood data system process:

- Misuse of data.
- Cost to school districts and schools.
- Time away from instruction.

## Needs Assessment Summary

Carson City School District administrators and ECE providers expressed support for implementing a common kindergarten assessment. At the same time, they identified a number of practical concerns. Plans that would have aligned with such an assessment were part of their Striving Readers application. The fact this application was not funded means that preschool slots will not be expanded. This impedes the district’s ability to implement a number of strategies as outlined in their plan, and their readiness would be dependent on resources and support that is currently not available.

Support for a statewide assessment was exhibited in survey responses and also found in key informant interviews and focus groups. ECE Providers also indicated support. However, when providers were surveyed, there was little agreement about the amount of time teachers were willing to invest in the assessment process per child per year.

<b>How much instructional time per child are you willing to invest in the assessment process for one year?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
None	0.0%	0
Less that 30 minutes	0.0%	0
Up to 1 hour	22.2%	2
Up to 2 hours	11.1%	1
Up to 3 hours	0.0%	0
Up to 4 hours	0.0%	0
More than 4 hours	<b>33.3%</b>	<b>3</b>
Unsure	<b>33.3%</b>	<b>3</b>
<b><i>answered question</i></b>		<b>9</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>		<b>0</b>

For it to be feasible to implement KEDS, the following issues need to be address for Carson City:

- Carson City providers had a number of suggestions about the kindergarten entry assessment including that parents need to be made aware of development needs.
- Any assessment needs to acknowledge cultural differences and perceptions as they related to child development.
- Carson City School District administrators and providers demonstrated readiness and interest in implementing an early childhood data system.
- Parents also seem to identify and value the benefits of such a system.
- A majority of stakeholders support implementation with differing levels of agreement of the benefits of the assessment and system.
- There are some resources in place that will help facilitate infrastructure that can be leveraged such as the Literacy Council and the newly adopted CCSD strategic plan.

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 Carson City

### Surveys

- ❖ **As of June 30 2012, 9 providers from Carson City had answered the survey.** Providers represented ECE and K-12 teachers and administrators as well as two providers who were also parents of a child age 0 to 5.
- ❖ **As of June 30 2012, 10 parents from Carson City had answered the parent survey.** Description of respondents, including seven with children between the ages of 0 to 5. Two of the ten participants had also attended a focus group.

### Group Interview/Focus Group Participants

#### Interviews

Susan Keema, Associate Superintendent, Carson City School District

Richard Stokes, Superintendent, Carson City School District

#### Focus Group Participants

Andrea Doran, Western Nevada College, Child Development Center

Erik Hess, Western Nevada College, Child Development Center Parent Board

Cassandra Blankenship, Western Nevada College, Child Development Center

Sally Morgan, Western Nevada College, Child Development Center

Frances Sullivan, Head Start, Tri-County ECAC

Vicki Chandler, Carson City Health and Human Services, Tri-County ECAC

John Childress, United Latino Committee, Tri-County ECAC

### Other Information Resources

- Carson City Striving Readers Application project narrative and application
- CCSD Technology Plan
- Empower Carson City 2017
- ESEA Title 1 Allocations to Local Educational Agencies – NEVADA; <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/titlei/fy11/nevada.pdf>
- Food Bank of Northern Nevada
- Carson City School District website: [www.carsoncityschools.com](http://www.carsoncityschools.com)
- 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](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