

County Needs Assessment Report Draft

June 2012

Kindergarten Entry Assessment & Early Childhood Data Systems (KEDS)

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

County Profile

Lincoln County is the third largest of Nevada's seventeen counties, covering 10,634 square miles. Named for President Abraham Lincoln, the Nevada legislature established the county in 1867. It originally included a much larger southeastern portion of the state, including all of Clark County, which was detached from Lincoln in 1909.

Lincoln County includes the communities of Pioche (the county seat), Panaca, Caliente, Alamo, Rachel, and Ursine. U.S. Highway 93 traverses the region in a north-south direction, and for about 120 miles it is designated as a "scenic highway." The 2010 population was estimated at 5,345.

The northern half of Lincoln County lies within the high desert zone while the southern portion, lower in altitude, blends into the Mohave Desert and is more barren. Five of Nevada's 23 state parks—Beaver Dam, Cathedral Gorge, Echo Canyon, Kershaw-Ryan, and Spring Valley—are located within Lincoln County. The Key Pittman Wildlife Management Area lies in the central part of the county in the Pahrnanagat Valley.

Lincoln County Demographics

Total Population (2010)¹	5,345
Number of Children Ages 0-5 (2010)²	318
Median Household Income (2010)³	\$42,637
Homeless population (school age group)⁴	No data available
Food Insecure Children: Ages 0-18 (2012)⁵	430 or 27.1%
Enrolled in NV Checkup: Ages 0-18 (2012)⁶	21
Number of Children Receiving Early Intervention Services: Ages 0-3 (2010)⁷	2 (32 hours per child)

District wide, the percentage of children with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is lower than that of the state (8.1% compared to 10.8% statewide). Limited English Proficiency data was not available for Lincoln County.

¹ (Nevada State Demographer)

² (Nevada State Demographer)

³ (U.S. Census Bureau)

⁴ Rural Nevada Continuum of Care 2012 Point in Time Report

⁵ (Feeding America , 2012)

⁶ (Nevada Check up, 2012)

⁷ (Nevada Early Intervention Services, 2010)

Approximately 49.2% of children district wide qualify for free and reduced lunch (Nevada Department of Education). Qualification for free and reduced lunch is an indication that families may struggle to meet basic needs. These characteristics are important and related to kindergarten entry assessment, and, data suggests that children that experience one or more of these situations may be less likely to graduate from high school than those that don't. Meeting educational needs early in the child's life can help to correct for these disparities in graduation and academic achievement.

Racial/Ethnic Breakdown (2010)⁸			
		Total Population	% of Total Population
	Total	5,345	100%
	Asian	40	0.7%
	Black or African American	121	2.3%
	American Indian or Alaska Native	61	1.1%
	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	15	0.3%
	White	4,871	91.1%
	Other	116	2.2%
	Multi-Racial	121	2.3%
	*Population that identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino.	332	6.2%

Lincoln County: Snapshot of Early Childhood Education and Care

There are four elementary schools in Lincoln County: Caliente Elementary School, Pahranaagat Valley Elementary, Panaca Elementary, and Pioche Elementary. The most recent data available shows that 78 children were enrolled in pre-K and kindergarten in Lincoln County. Lincoln County elementary schools follow a four day school week. According to Nevada Annual Reports of accountability, the student to teacher ratio in kindergarten classrooms was 16:1. There is full-day kindergarten offered at Lincoln County elementary schools but, like all districts in Nevada, kindergarten is not mandatory.

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

County Early Childhood Education and Care Resources	#	Enrollment Capacity	Children Enrolled in District Classrooms (2011)	
			Pre-K	K
Public Schools (elementary)	4	N/A	16	62
Charter Schools (elementary)	0	0		

⁸ (Nevada State Demographer)

Private Schools (elementary)	0	0		
Licensed Family Child Care	0	0		
Licensed Group Child Care	0	0		
Licensed Child Care Centers	0	0		

Sources: Nevada Registry, Nevada Department of Education

School Readiness in Nevada

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

Feedback from Lincoln County stakeholders indicated support of the working Nevada definition of school readiness, which was formally adopted in June 2012 by the NECAC.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Stakeholders were provided information about the working definition of school readiness. Stakeholders in Lincoln County reacted favorably to the school readiness model.

Survey respondents supported the five domains in the school readiness definition, with “language and literacy”, “social and emotional development”, and “cognition and general knowledge” rated as the most important.

Kindergarten Entry Assessment

Description of Existing Kindergarten Entry Assessment

As a funded part of state pre-K, Lincoln County participates in evaluation. All projects are required to administer the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) and Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test (EOWPVT) at the beginning and end of the year. The PPVT is an untimed, test of receptive vocabulary for Standard American English and provides a quick estimate of their verbal ability or scholastic aptitude. The test is given verbally and takes about 20 to 30 minutes. No reading is required by the individual, and scoring is rapid and objective.

¹¹ Nevada working definition from bill draft request

Lincoln County conducts a Brigance assessment twice per year (pre and post). The assessment process takes approximately 45 minutes per student. The assessment is conducted during the first week of the school year. Sub-certified paraprofessionals are used to conduct the assessment.

In addition to the Brigance assessments, the following tests are administered in Lincoln County Schools:

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

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

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

Goals for a Common Kindergarten Assessment

The following were identified by stakeholders in Lincoln County as being the most appropriate goals for a common kindergarten assessment:

- Help guide individual instruction (this was identified as the most appropriate goal).
- Screen for potential special needs.
- Help guide planning for early learning investments.
- Help guide classroom instruction.
- Inform parents of strengths and areas of growth.

Attributes for a Common Kindergarten Assessment

The table below represents responses from a survey completed by parents in Lincoln County. Respondents indicated moderate to strong levels of agreement with all of the goals listed.

If you think a statewide kindergarten entry assessment is a good idea, which of the following goals do you think are important?						
Answer Options	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Response Count
Guide teachers to provide individualized instruction	100.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3
Support the child's transition from childcare or preschool to kindergarten	66.7% (2)	33.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3
Screen children for potential special needs	100.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3
Help families prepare children for kindergarten	100.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3

Inform parents of their child's strengths and areas for growth	100.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3
Help guide district and school planning	100.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3

Survey participants were asked to react to the following potential implementation approaches for a statewide kindergarten assessment process. While participants supported several options, respondents indicated that “one standard assessment process for all districts” would be the least favorable approach.

Summary of Assets

Key informants identified the following as assets in Lincoln County:

- Access to a local family resource center.
- A clear and direct chain of command.
- Wonderful volunteer capacity.
- Good communication and community relationships.
- Open door policies.
- Parent advisory councils.
- Trust and a time tested reputation.

The family resource center (FRC) serves ages 0 to 5 and participants “would love to keep this.” Participants stated that the FRC offers all kinds of programs including at home visits, readiness checks, and a welcome the baby kit. Participants mentioned that funding for this program is shrinking and “while big cities can fall back on other programs, this is all we have.”

Summary of Barriers

Stakeholders identified the following issues as potential barriers for implementing a kindergarten assessment in Lincoln County:

- Long distances.
- Cost to districts and schools.
- Training of teachers and assessors.
- Data analysis and reporting capacity.
- Teacher burden.
- Time away from instruction.
- Misuse of data.
- Privacy concerns.
- Security of data.

The superintendent of Lincoln County noted that gaining access to children under the age of three is very difficult; it is usually not until after age three when parents of young children request to enter into a program that accessing their child is possible.

Participants expressed dissatisfaction regarding the Brigance assessment and expressed an interest in using another assessment tool.

One survey participant wrote, “The most important thing that needs to be taken into consideration is that all of this needs to be created in a developmentally appropriate manner. There is NOTHING developmentally appropriate about having ALL kindergarten students reading independently at a DRA level 4 by the end of Kindergarten as is required at this time. The stress on staff and students is beyond ridiculous at this point and teacher morale is at an all time low. Something must change; I worry that by adding new assessments and data systems it is just going to keep driving this data frenzy that has nothing to do with the reality of what is happening in our classrooms in real life.”

Early Childhood Data System

Description of Existing Efforts Related to Early Childhood Data

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

Educational Technology	# of classrooms	# of classrooms with Internet access	# of labs, libraries and media centers	# of labs, libraries and media centers with Internet access	# of classroom instructional computers	# of classroom instructional computers with Internet access
C. O. Bastian	14	14	2	2	93	52
Caliente ES	7	7	2	2	172	90
Lincoln Co HS	12	12	1	1	41	26
Meadow Vly MS	6	6	1	2	2	2
Pahrnagat Vly ES	12	12	2	2	33	33
Pahrnagat Vly HS	12	12	3	3	108	89
Pahrnagat Vly MS	6	6	2	2	85	62
Panaca ES	8	8	2	2	46	46
Pioche ES	8	8	2	2	49	41

Elementary schools in Lincoln County utilize PowerSchool to store and track student information. Grades, parent contact information, and demographic data are the most common types of information stored in the PowerSchool system. If more preschool was available, it would be easier to link early childhood data to kindergarten.

Goals for Early Childhood Data System

Stakeholders in Lincoln County were asked their thoughts about 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.” They expressed support for information sharing to improve outcomes but also noted concern that the state provides support for the systems needed to share information.

Participants in Lincoln County identified the following as being especially important to know about students prior to entry in kindergarten:

- Language and early literacy.
- Approaches to learning.
- Cognition and general knowledge.

Attributes of an Early Childhood Data System

Participants in Lincoln County strongly endorsed the pre-K programs, stating that “students with pre-K experience are much better prepared. One year we did not have pre-K and we saw that those kids did worse than the children that participated in pre-K. The earlier you can intervene, the better.”

Participants from Lincoln County emphasized that data should be used to improve and inform learning. Stakeholders in Lincoln County also listed the following as desired attributes of an early childhood data system:

- Resources need to be available to support the system.
- Districts should be able to develop local procedures that meet specified criteria.
- Professional development for teachers to utilize the system should be available.
- Funding to support implementation is necessary if it is administered outside of the school year.

Summary of Assets

Stakeholders in Lincoln County listed the following as assets to the implementation of an early childhood data system:

- Lincoln County is not densely populated. Schools tend to have smaller class sizes and better teacher to student ratios.
- Access to a local family resource center.
- A clear and direct chain of command.
- Wonderful volunteer capacity.
- Good communication and community relationships.
- Open door policies
- Parent advisory councils

Summary of Barriers

The following were identified as the most significant concerns related to implementing a statewide early childhood data system:

- Cost to districts and schools.
- Cost to early childhood education and care providers.
- Time away from instruction.
- Teacher burden.
- Pressure on children.

One survey participant wrote the following: “I feel the parents should show more involvement in ECE, at home and in the classroom(s). There should be more ECE programs and more funding available so that young children can be shown how to learn so that when entering pre-K and kindergarten their minds will be advanced, at knowing how to learn and especially those with special needs. A database would help the communities and or races with disadvantages to learn on the same scale as all other children. And if more help is needed, it can be provided to help everyone's child regardless of race or financial family abilities.”

Needs Assessment Summary

Lincoln County School District stakeholders were supportive of implementing a common kindergarten assessment. LCSD administrators have demonstrated the commitment, enthusiasm, and infrastructure required to make such an assessment a success. At the same time, they identified a number of practical concerns which would have to be addressed for implementation of a common kindergarten assessment to be successful.

There is interest and strong leadership in Lincoln County to support implementation of an early childhood data system. Each of the four elementary schools in Lincoln County produces an annual improvement plan which enumerates goals. Many of the goals listed in the improvement plans align with and would support the implementation of an early childhood data system. Readiness to implement an early childhood data system in Lincoln County will be feasible if the proper resources and support are available to aid in implementation.

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 Lincoln County

Surveys

- ❖ As of June 30, 2012, two providers from Lincoln County had answered the survey.
- ❖ As of June 30, 2012, three parents from Lincoln County had answered the parent survey.

Key Informant Interview

Nykki Holton, Lincoln County School District Superintendent

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
- Lincoln County School District website: www.lincoln.k12.nv.us
- KEDS Parent survey results
- KEDS Provider survey results
- Nevada Annual Reports of Accountability, <http://www.nevadareportcard.com/>
- Nevada Department of Education, <http://nde.doe.nv.gov/SD.htm>
- Nevada Department of Education, <http://www.doe.nv.gov/Resources/QuickSTATS.pdf>
- Nevada Department of Education, NRS 387.303 Report for Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2011, http://nde.doe.nv.gov/SchoolFunding_Stats.htm
- Nevada Department of Health and Human Services
- Nevada Health Division, Licensed Child Care Facility List; <http://health.nv.gov/childcare/ChildCareFacilityList.pdf>
- Nevada Health Division Nevada Early Intervention Services Rural and Frontier Rate Study Report, 2011, http://health.nv.gov/PDFs/New/EI_RuralFrontier_v5.pdf
- Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy
- Nevada Registry: http://www.nevadaregistry.org/fb_files/State05.12.pdf
- Nevada State Demographer, 2010 Census Profiles by County, <http://nvdemography.org/nevada-2010-census/2010-census-profiles-by-county/>
- Running With A Spork: Nevada Child Nutrition Programs, 2009-10, Nevada Department of Education, Office of Child Nutrition & School Health