



WASHINGTON
COMMUNITIES
for CHILDREN



Early Learning Community Outreach SUMMARY REPORT

North Central

Prepared for the
Washington State Early Learning Plan Needs Assessment

Data gathered September/October 2019

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Background & Methodology

In 2018, Washington State was awarded the federal Preschool Development Birth Through Five Grant (PDG). The funding was allocated to the Department of Children Youth and Families (DCYF) to facilitate collaboration and coordination among existing programs of early childhood care and education. As part of the grant, DCYF partnered with stakeholders to conduct a comprehensive statewide birth through five needs assessment, followed by an in-depth strategic plan. The full strategic plan is still under development.

The Washington Communities for Children (WCFC) regions partnered with DCYF in the fall of 2019 to gather feedback for the Needs Assessment. In a one-month period, WCFC collectively hosted 90 listening sessions and gathered input from 931 diverse participants across Washington State. Types of providers interviewed included families, child care providers, social service organizations, early intervention providers, home visitors, school districts, play and learn groups, and others.

Every comment from every participant was reviewed and “coded” based on the five categories in the Strategic Organizing Framework. This framework was developed in collaboration with the project Steering Committee. The Framework will be used as the organizing structure for the Needs Assessment and the development of a statewide Strategic Plan. The five categories in the Strategic Organizing Framework include the following:

- **Powerful Communities & Responsive Early Learning System***
- **Healthy Children & Families**
- **Positive Early Learning Experiences**
- **Strong, Stable, Safe, Nurturing, and Supported Families**
- **Supported Early Learning Workforce***

**Note: For North Central, no comments were coded under these categories so they are omitted below.*

In addition, some comments from participants were coded as “Cross-Cutting” because they reflected overarching themes that transcend any of the five Framework categories.



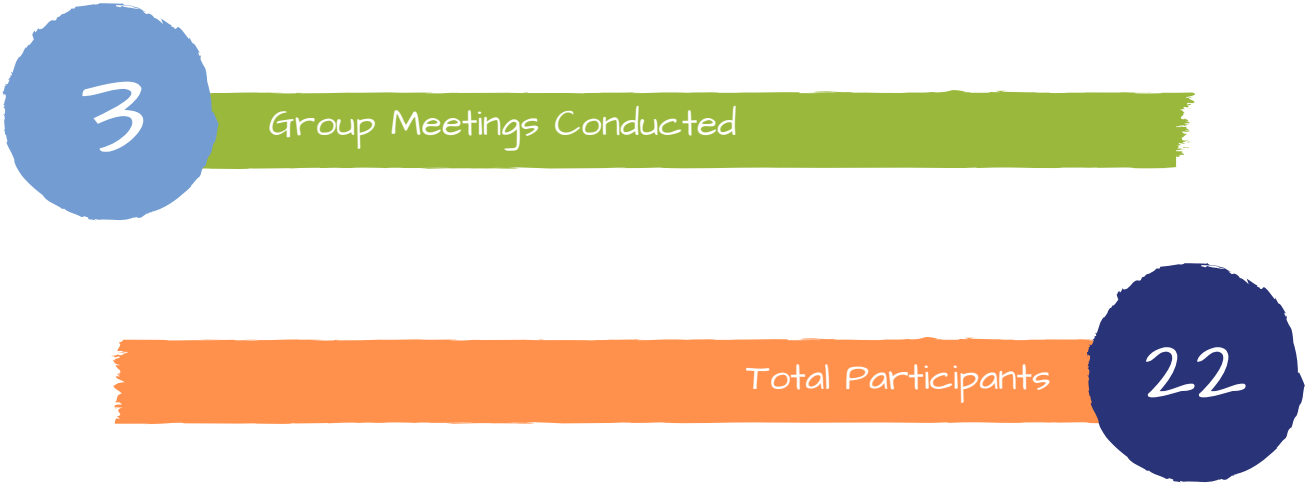
Background & Methodology (continued)

For each of the five Framework categories, and the Cross-Cutting themes, 10 – 20 specific codes were developed in order to consistently identify the subject of every comment. The codes were developed based on the issues being addressed in the Needs Assessment, and in collaboration with Washington Communities for Children (WCFC).

This report outlines the Needs Assessment results from the WCFC interviews, specifically from the **North Central Region**.



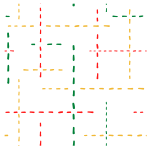
Data Sources



- **Self-reported race and ethnicity**



- **Meetings:** Group Meetings were hosted by Methodist Church and Play & Learn Group at HOPE Center
- **Respondent composition:** A mixture of parents and caregivers.



Cross-Cutting Issues

Affordability (17 comments) & Availability (8 comments)

Among parents there is a strong interest in more available and more affordable child care options – especially for working parents who do not qualify for state subsidies. There is interest both so the child “can be more independent” or “learn to interact with others” and so the parent “can also succeed in my career.”

“My three-year-old spends his day at home with me....he had no access to childcare due to not qualifying through the state and private pay was not a possibility”

Language & Cultural Competence (8 comments)

Language came up in two main ways – parents interested in English classes (ideally that is affordable and with accompanying child care) and pride in their children learning their own culture and language.

“I love my two boys and all the new things I am learning with them. I love that they are growing in a Mexican/American culture and teaching the importance of both.”

Poverty/Household Income (6 comments)

A few parents discussed the challenges of supporting their family, from the core needs - “there are times food can be hard to purchase”, rent, clothes, to interest in “more resources and educational tools...to help my boys learn.” Winter, when “there is less work” and need for new clothing was particularly tough for some.

“Being a parent isn’t hard, but sometimes I wish that I made more money every month. Living paycheck to paycheck can be very stressful when something happens, and I have to ask to borrow money from someone.”



Healthy Children and Families

Food Security and Nutrition (70 comments)

Food and nutrition came up in three ways – primarily, many parents discussed “good nutrition”, “eating healthy,” or “cooking with vegetables” as ways to support their children’s development; many also discussed community resources they rely on for food (WIC, food banks, charities) and others would like more assistance with food for their family.

“I always feed them fruits and vegetables. I give them a lot of water and food that helps them grow, be strong, and healthy.”

Physical Health (Pediatricians and Medical Providers) (50 comments)

Parents see keeping all medical appointments, and often immunizations, as an essential part of supporting their children’s development and frequently mention doctors or local clinic as resources they rely on.

“I support his health 100%. I am on top of his checkups. Both medical and dental. My son is up to date with immunizations. The same with his development at nine months old. I noticed that he was behind in his motor skills and I consulted with his pediatrician to have him referred to the proper resources. Soon after he started physical therapy.”

Positive Learning Experiences



Licensed Child Care (21 comments) & Non-Licensed Child Care (13 Comments)

Parents discussed a variety of solutions for childcare (babysitters, child care centers, in home providers, family and more) and several with there were more child care that was affordable or available for them.

“Having reliable childcare is probably the hardest thing I have to deal with raising children. Not qualifying for childcare stopped me from pursuing my career and retaining a job.”

Informal Activities (61 comments)

Parents use a wide array of informal activities to support and engage their children, from more centered on family and home (playing games, going to the park, long walks), to more organized (play groups) and visiting community resource (library, museum).

“I take them to the park, the library (for Storytime), to the museum (for Coyote’s Corner), to Play & Learn (where they have fun and learn).”

“To have more places where kids can go and learn. A kid’s museum and more programs in the library”

Play and Learn (54 comments)

Many parents mentioned Play and Learn group as an important part of supporting their child’s “early learning” and as a trusted resource in the community that they rely on. Some parents expressed a wished they had more time to bring their child to play groups.

“My son also benefited from the play groups. They were so helpful for his social and emotional skills.”

Positive Learning Experiences (continued)



Parental Choice / Family Engagement (54 comments)

Many parents drew strength from their family – as part of their childcare network, as part of their support network, as their source of strength. (“I love that we enjoy spending time together.”) In other cases, this came up as parents were clear that while some would want more access to child care, others, even if resources were not a barrier, would keep their younger children at home.

“Her mom doesn’t work because she’d rather be raising her own child than working just to pay for a daycare to raise her.”

“I want my children to be at home with their mom. It’s worked out well and I wouldn’t change it.”

K-12 System (18 comments)

School most often came up as (1) part of where their (older) children spent their days “so they can learn and prepare for the future,” and (2) as a place parents rely on (“I trust the teachers in the school”).

“It would be to go to my daughters’ school and learn from the teacher and it would be easier for me as a mom”

Head Start / Early Head Start (50 comments)

Parents with children in Head Start clearly value the program: “Head Start helps me a lot;” “I am very happy my child is in Head Start” and many list Head Start or Early Head Start as a program they rely on. In addition, many other parents expressed, that if resources were no barrier, they would want their child in head start, often with additional hours of care. .

“The home base Head Start program is amazing. It has helped my middle child get prepared for pre-school and my youngest child currently thrives on learning and enjoys every visit.”



Strong & Stable Families

Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development (42 comments)

Many parents showed their knowledge of parenting and child development through the care and support they provide (medical attention, play, nutrition, etc.). At the same time, some parents wanted more help on all aspects of parenting; when asked what would make being a parent easier, asked for more general support (“parenting classes/sessions with new parents,” or “workshops for parents”) and specific needs (e.g., “communicating with my adolescent” or “buying a present for my kid with special needs.”)

[“What would make being a parent easier for you?”]

“Advice to be able to mother my kids. Help in how to be able to bathe my kid. Talks in groups with more moms. Advice with my kids to know what to do when my kids are sick.”

Kinship Care/Extended Families (20 comments)

Many parents rely on grandparents and extended family for child care both out of necessity (“with my aunt because she can watch her”) while others were clear that their child would be with family members even if money were not a barrier.

“My family is the most important for me. I love that my kids listen to me, that my husband is responsible. That my mother in law helps me. That we are united as a family.”

Overall Family Stability (41 comments)

In response to “What do you love about your family” parents made clear families were sources of strength: “we are united;” “love and support where needed;” and “great communication.”

“We all support each other in our family. If one of us is down or needs help, we team up and help out.”



Strong & Stable Families (continued)

Parental Resilience (36 comments)

Parents show their resilience in the many ways they support their children, and overcome obstacles, even as they could use more time, more money, and more help. In the face of this, one parent says that what would help is “remember to take a breath” and “time for myself.”

“They are both with me 24/7. I am not currently working, therefore, am trying to homeschool my 4-year old and helping my 1 ½ baby develop her skills as much as she can. We spend our days at home, park, play and learn and at my mom’s house.”

“The union that we have as a family. The communication that we have to solve problems and topics.”

Family Economic Needs (35 comments)

Many of the parents rely on economic support such as WIC and federal assistance (SSI), - but also, would need more support for both basics (food) and to meet educational goals (“more resources and educational tools...to help my boys learn.”)

“Being a parent isn’t hard, but sometimes I wish that I made more money every month. Living paycheck to paycheck can be very stressful when something happens, and I have to ask to borrow money from someone.”



Strong & Stable Families (continued)

System Navigation / Resource Referrals (20 comments)

Even as they need more support, parents discussed their ability to find what they needed – food support, financial support, child care, classes, advices and more.

“What I do not have I look for in the support center. Help in satisfying the needs. Play group, HOPE, community help, English classes, and cooking classes.”





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