



Washington State Department of Early Learning

Kids' Potential, Our Purpose.

**“Together, with
parents and
partners, we offer
children world-
class learning
opportunities so
they reach their
full potential.”**

Jone M. Bosworth, JD
Director

Summary of the 2008 Parent Needs Assessment

July 29, 2008
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SRI International



What was the purpose of the Parent Needs Assessment (PNA)?

- ❑ To enable DEL to better understand parent and family priorities, issues, strengths, and challenges.
- ❑ To identify ways in which DEL can support families by providing the information, skills, and services they desire as they nurture and educate their young children.
- ❑ To assist DEL in setting priorities and allocating future resources in ways that best support parents.



The PNA was guided by a set of principles.

- ❑ Use parents' expertise as children's first and most important teachers to inform DEL's work.
- ❑ Build on earlier research with parents in Washington.
- ❑ Focus on questions that have direct implications for DEL's decisionmaking.
- ❑ Obtain a sample representative of the state's families.
- ❑ Obtain information on special subpopulations.
- ❑ Include diverse types of families.



How was the PNA information gathered?

- ❑ Phone survey
 - △ Statewide sample (823 surveys)
 - △ Stratified by age, primary language, income-level, and type of community
 - △ Weighted data
- ❑ Focus groups
 - △ Eight focus groups
 - △ Five areas of the state





Families have participated in variety of early learning and parenting services.

- ❑ Play groups (65%)
- ❑ Preschool (61%)
- ❑ Reading programs (51%)
- ❑ Sports/music/art activities (43%)
- ❑ Child care (42%)
- ❑ Parenting classes or home visits (35%)
- ❑ Parent groups (33%)
- ❑ Services for disabilities/special needs (11%)



Parents have not used services for a variety of reasons.

▣ Reasons for not ever using services

- ▣ Uninterested in the services or no need for them (the most common reason cited)
- ▣ Not aware of any available services
- ▣ Child too young
- ▣ Inconvenient hours
- ▣ Too expensive

▣ Subpopulation differences

- ▣ Spanish-speaking and lower-income families are more likely than other families to report being unaware of services.



Parents want more early learning information about:

- ❑ Activities, events, and places in the community designed for families—80%.
- ❑ Ways to support children’s early reading skills and school readiness skills—more than two-thirds.
- ❑ Ways to help children’s social-emotional development, to use positive discipline, to keep children healthy, and to support children’s overall development—more than 50%.
- ❑ How to choose child care and resources for parents of children with disabilities and other special needs—more than 30%.



Parents with different primary languages and incomes want different types of information.

▣ Subpopulation differences

- ▣ Spanish-speaking families are more interested than English-speaking families in receiving all the types of information.
- ▣ Families living in poverty are more interested than higher-income families in receiving more information about:
 - ▣ Ways to support a child's early reading skills
 - ▣ Ways to support a child's development
 - ▣ Resources for parents concerned about their children's development or behavior
 - ▣ How to choose child care.



Parents want information from a variety of sources.

- ❑ There is no one source of information on early learning that all parents trust and want to use.
- ❑ Statewide, parents trust and want information “a lot” from:
 - △ Health care providers (71%)
 - △ Child care providers (53%)
 - △ Family member or friend (43%)
 - △ Their faith or religious community (40%).



Preferences for sources of early learning information differ by subpopulations.

- ▣ Subpopulation differences by age and family income
 - ▣ More parents of older children than parents of younger children trust and want information from their child care provider.
 - ▣ More families living in poverty than families with higher incomes trust and want information “a lot” from:
 - ▣ Home visits
 - ▣ Television or radio.
 - ▣ Fewer families living in poverty than families with higher incomes trust and want information from the Internet.



Preferences for sources of early learning information differ by subpopulations (cont'd.).

- ▣ Subpopulation differences by language
 - ▣ More Spanish-speaking families than English-speaking families trust and want information “a lot” from:
 - ⦿ Their faith or religious community
 - ⦿ Parenting classes
 - ⦿ Home visits
 - ⦿ Materials that come in the mail
 - ⦿ Television or radio
 - ⦿ A toll-free advice line.
 - ▣ Fewer Spanish-speaking families than English-speaking families trust and want information from their health care providers and the Internet.



Parents choose a variety of care arrangements to meet their needs.

- ❑ Half of all children under age 6 across the state do not participate in child care outside of their immediate family.
- ❑ Of the other half of children in nonparental care:
 - ▣ 30% are in a center-based child care or preschool program.
 - ▣ 15% are in informal care (i.e., a relative, friend, or nanny).
 - ▣ 5% are in a family-based child care program.
- ❑ Younger children are more often only in parental or informal care, and older children are more often in center-based care.



Parents pay attention to the quality of early learning programs.

- ❑ Parents pay attention to provider and program quality when selecting and keeping their current child care arrangement.
 - △ 97% rate having a clean and safe environment and the way the provider talks and plays with the child as “very important.”
 - △ More than 80% rate experience and training, the learning activities and materials children use, and the way children get along with each other as “very important.”
 - △ More than 70% rate a high staff-to-child ratio, respect for their family’s culture and values, having low staff turnover, licensing by the state, and experience with children with special needs as “very important.”



Most parents have access to ECE programs that meet their needs.

- ❑ Many parents consider program accessibility characteristics as “very important,” including:
 - △ Convenient or flexible hours (60%)
 - △ Convenient location (59%)
 - △ Language spoken by provider (54%)
 - △ Affordability (48%).
- ❑ 78% of families are able to find care for their child that meets their needs most of the time.
- ❑ However, almost 1 in 4 families have had a difficult time finding child care that meets their family’s needs.



Preferences for ECE programs differed by the primary language of the family.

- ❑ Spanish-speaking parents rate the following child care characteristics as “very important” more frequently than English-speaking parents do:
 - △ The way children play and get along together (99% vs. 83%)
 - △ The program’s respect for culture and values (93% vs. 74%)
 - △ A convenient location (92% vs. 55%)
 - △ Convenient and flexible hours (90% vs. 55%)
 - △ Affordable cost (82% vs. 45%)
 - △ The language spoken by the provider (78% vs. 51%).



Most preschool learning goals are very important to parents.

- ❑ Parents of children ages 3 through 5 years in ECE programs rate the following learning skills for their child as “very important”:
 - ▢ Being able to control one’s own emotions and behavior, and getting along and playing well with others (both 97%).
 - ▢ Persisting at tasks; knowing how to listen to and follow directions; being interested in books and reading; and knowing the alphabet, colors, numbers, and how to write one’s name (more than 85%).
 - ▢ Knowing how to ask questions and tell stories, developing fine and gross motor skills, and being interested in how things work (more than 75%).



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See full reports for more information about:

- ❑ Demographics of children in Washington State younger than age 6 and their families.
- ❑ Types of services and information parents use and prefer, and barriers to accessing those services.
- ❑ Parents' ideas and preferences about their children's early care and education.
- ❑ Parents' concerns about children's development.
- ❑ Family literacy practices.
- ❑ Variations in preferences and experiences by age groups, primary languages, income levels, and types of communities.

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