Input from Child Care Providers  
(09-02-09)

We invited local child care providers who have expressed interest in the Coalition’s work to come to an evening session and share their ideas about our goals and efforts with us. While we had a small group, we were fortunate to have a diverse set of participants. Among participants were one family child care provider, one program staff person for Washington State Migrant Council, one program staff person from Benton Franklin Community Action Council and one community member who was a former preschool teacher attended.

Ideas about WHAT we are doing

We asked these stakeholders to review the four outcome statements in our Theory of Action

- Parents/Families have the skills and support to help their children to succeed
- Children learn and develop successfully
- Adults that work with children have the skills and support they need
- People in the Walla Walla Valley respect and understand the important role of parents and care givers

and identify things that they thought were different or missing from the goals that they have for their work. Among the things they felt were not adequately reflected were:

- Imagery/thinking about what the current experience of the child is (e.g. children have warm and nurturing interactions, child experience wonder in a play-filled environment)
- Language and theory behind strengthening families
- Parent participation in the growth, development and learning of their children
- How to inspire a love and reverence for the wonder of parenting
- Creating demand for professional supports among those who do not currently access supports or feel that they need them
- Increased understanding among generations and home cultures of how the parenting role and parent child interactions have changed and how to work with that

Ideas about HOW we would measure success

We asked them how they would know that these things were happening if we were successful (indicators) and they responded:

- We would see professionals taking advantage of/enrolling in professional development and education opportunities
- We would see more trust of local institutions and confidence in speaking out and participating among parents
- We would see more parent partnership efforts that engage diverse parents in planning and are held in places that parents feel most comfortable (e.g. dinners, barbecues, etc.)
- We would see increased awareness of how the parent-child relationship sets the stage for later learning
- We would see parents, child care providers, preschool teachers, K-3 teachers and other adults in children’s lives working together to support individual child development and learning, while acknowledging different cultural approaches to the same end
- We would see parents being accountable for their role raising children and the community being accountable for supporting effective parenting

Ideas about HOW we can best make this happen
We also asked participants to review the three priority areas in the Theory of Action:

- Support parents and families in their important role raising the next generation
- Encourage education, experience and fair pay among adults who care for children
- Increase awareness and knowledge of the importance of early childhood development and let community members know what they can do to help

and think about how they would see these things best being accomplished in the Walla Walla Valley. Among their ideas were:

Parents:

- Find a way to address the portability of family supports for those families who follow the harvests
- Consider disincentives for families removing children from school to take extended family trips (e.g. some districts do not allow children to re-enter if they are out more than X days that are not part of a holiday schedule)
- Consider school district partnerships with the “receiving” school districts in Texas, California or other places that migrant families go during harvesting times (like Pasco has done)
- Change the tone of how we interact with each other:
  - Raise awareness in the community that everything occurs in the context of relationships (children developing well, families engage and being good first teachers, child care providers advancing their competence, schools seeing individual children and being appreciated for their role, etc.)
  - Avoid ghetto-izing some families and using terms like “labor camps” to refer to the neighborhoods of agricultural workers
  - Change the community concept – do we want them to go back to their home country” or come to the school and participate? We are often sending mixed messages as a community to some families
  - Reduce isolation and segmentation of our community, by finding ways to celebrate the richness and wonder of our local diversity and heritage
- Help parents to understand children’s developmental stages:
  - How they can support learning
  - When to ask for help if there seems to be a delay or special need
  - See that every day items and interactions can provide simple learning opportunities (Like Magic of Everyday Moments, and Born Learning materials)
  - Make sure to work with dads to create opportunities that appeal to them as well

Professionals:

- Promote the path from GED through ESL to CDA, then to AA where appropriate
- Look for ways to adjust local, state and federal financial aid eligibility
- Increase the availability of scholarships
- Look for tax policy changes (like tax deduction for child care costs) that can support child care businesses by making high-quality child care more affordable to families
- Find ways to increase the supply of infant care (e.g. Can the policy be changed to allow 2 children under age 1 in family child care from the current rule of 1 child under 1?)
- Find ways to increase class offerings at times that allow working professionals to attend (e.g., evening, online, etc.)
- Create incentives for moving along a career ladder
- Encourage employers to offer time off for education and/or offer professional development opportunities. Consider providing tax credits to employers that make professional development opportunities available