Purpose of the ELC

- Build a comprehensive, sustainable Early Learning System
- Focus on children birth to age five
- Partner with existing programs
- Provide parents & caregivers with the tools they need to be successful
Goal

All children are healthy and ready for school & for life
Walla Walla County
Demographics

- 3,515 Birth to Five
- 39% Hispanic
- 589 Enrolled in Public Kindergarten 2008
- 1,122 Potential Openings in Licensed Child Care
- 137 under 5 years homeless in 2008
- 4th Highest Teen Pregnancy Rate in the State
- 2nd Highest Low Birth Weight Rate in the State
Parents Needs Assessment

- Michelle Janning, Ph.D. & Lydia Hayes, Whitman College Department of Sociology
- August 2008 – March 2009
- 1,115 Parent Surveys Distributed (English & Spanish)
- 59 Stakeholders Responded
- 398 Total Surveys Returned
Parents are satisfied with access to medical care, but request more resources devoted to care of children with special medical needs.

- 10% do not have access to dental care
- 5% do not have access to prenatal care
- 5% do not have health/development screenings
Social, Emotional, & Mental Health

- 23% dissatisfied with children’s mental health services
- 18% do not know how to access community resources
- 18% do not have easy access to appropriate services and supports for children with special needs
Social, Emotional, & Mental Health cont.

- 15% disagree that many services are available to help identify special needs at an early age

- 10% disagree that the community supports emotional and mental health needs
Early Care & Education/Child Care

- 20% indicate child care/early learning centers are not easy to find
- 12% use child care that is not close to their home and not affordable
- 10% indicate the operating hours do not meet their needs
Parenting Information & Support

- 50% indicate parenting help is not available
- 46% do not use the public library
- 33% indicate no identifiable, accessible place to receive parenting information
Parenting Information & Support cont.

- 24% have not taken parenting classes
- 10% report lack of resources to prepare their children for kindergarten
Requested Parenting Resources

- 61% Affordable Childcare
- 53% In-Person Parenting Help
- 37% Access to Other Parents
- 36% Books, Magazines, Internet
- 33% Children’s Books
Overall Community

- 39% respond volunteerism is not strong when it comes to our youngest children
- 36% indicate family activities are not well advertised
- 32% note child-friendly environments/family-oriented activities are not abundant
- 10% report their child and family are not thriving
Comments from Parents

“Beyond basic pediatrics, many child-specific medical/mental health services are not available or very limited.”

“Very hard to find infant care.”

“I would like more access to parenting class, seminars, etc., and more info about if these opportunities even exist.”

“There is absolutely no place to take my very active preschooler to run off steam in the cold months.”
Kindergarten Readiness
Parents Perspective

- Very Ready, 51%
- Mostly Ready, 35%
- Not Ready at All, 6%
- Not Sure, 8%

Pie chart showing:
- Very Ready, 51%
- Mostly Ready, 35%
- Not Ready at All, 6%
- Not Sure, 8%
Areas for Growth
Parents Perspective

- Physical Growth or Health: 16%
- Social or Emotional Growth or Mental Health: 36%
- Academic Ability: 59%
- Not Sure: 17%
Recommendations

- Improve access to resources to prepare children for kindergarten
- Engage policy makers to improve conditions for local children and families
- Simplify access to resources for children with special needs
Recommendations cont.

- Create central and easy-to-access location for parent resources
- Increase year-round family activities for children birth to five
Next Steps

- Early Learning Event for Business Community, October 7th
Contact Information

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