Walla Walla Public Schools
Developing Washington's Most Sought-After Graduates

Early Childhood Education & Assistance Program
Washington State Department of Early Learning

Head Start/ECEAP Community Needs Assessment

April 2018

Sesame Street Family Night

Teaming up with Community Resilience Initiative, parent volunteers planned an event to educate Head Start/ECEAP families on how to build resilience and overcome trauma.

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Walla Walla County Community

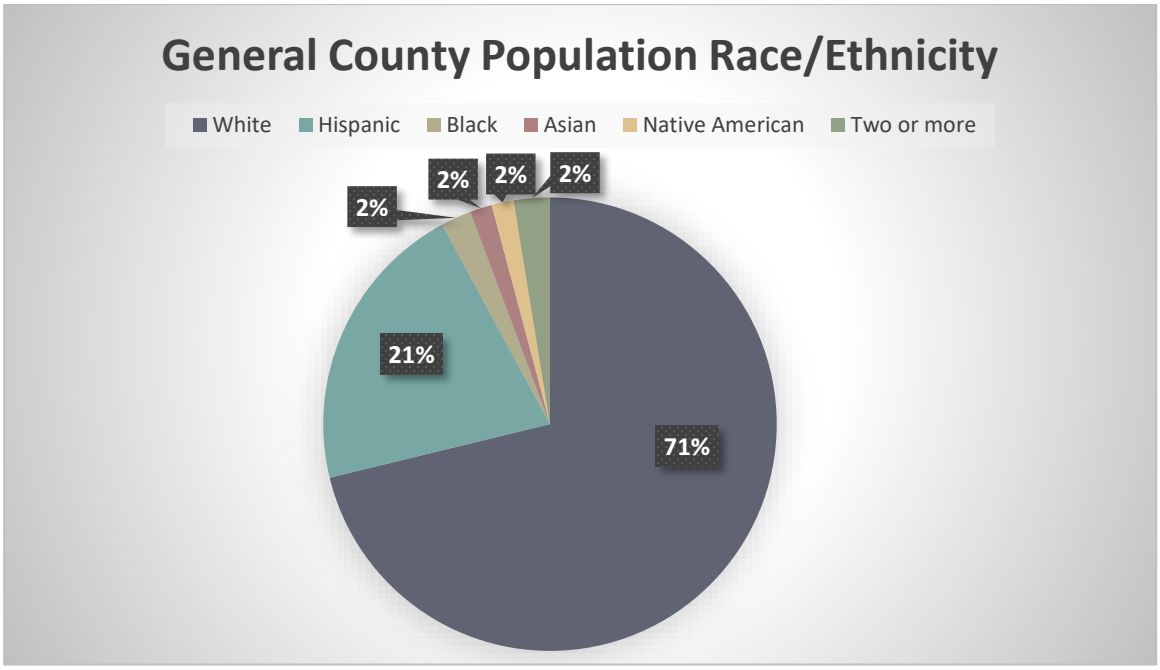
Walla Walla County, located in southeastern Washington, is a mostly urban community where scenic beauty, incredible wineries, enticing restaurants, cultural inspiration, outdoor adventures and small-town friendliness come together to create a caring environment for locals and visitors alike. The county encompasses 1,270 square miles of land and includes the cities of Walla Walla, College Place, Waitsburg and Prescott, as well as the areas of Touchet, Dixie, and Burbank. Agriculture is a mainstay of the area's economy, where two of the world's largest farms are located, the Snake River Vineyard and Broetje Orchards. However, a diverse economic base stabilizes the community, including the U.S. Corp of Engineers, State Penitentiary, three colleges and two hospitals.[i] Back to a pre-recession low, unemployment is currently at 4.54%.[ii]

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Walla Walla County has an estimated population of 60,567, a 3% growth since the 2010 official census. About half, 32,132, the county's residents live within the City of Walla Walla, with another 9,142, living in the adjoining City of College Place. The next largest population center in the county is the Burbank area, located 42 miles west of the City of Walla Walla and home to 3,300 people, followed by Waitsburg, 22 miles east of the City of Walla Walla and home to 1,200.

An estimated 5.7% of county residents, or 3,452, are children under 5 years of age. Approximately 1,380 will be preschool age this year. As Walla Walla Public Schools values early learning, recognizing it to be the first step in the journey towards its goal to "develop Washington's most sought after graduates", we need to ask: Are these children receiving all they need to be happy citizens and productive contributors in the future to our community? Are there gaps in services to these children and their families? This Community Needs Assessment will analyze the data and the social issues currently affecting young children and their families, as well as the services already available to them.

Demographic Data Analysis

In order to meet the needs of our community, we must come to an understanding of who we are, where we come from, what values we hold, and what goals we collectively have for the future. A broad overview of the county's demographic information is a starting point.



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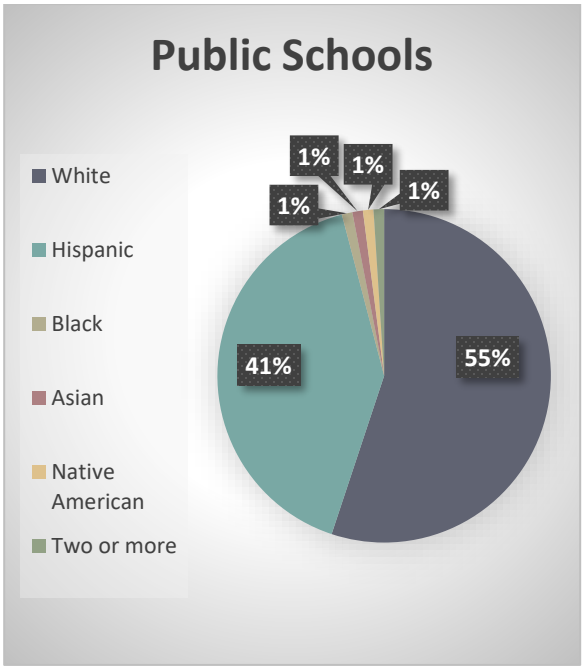
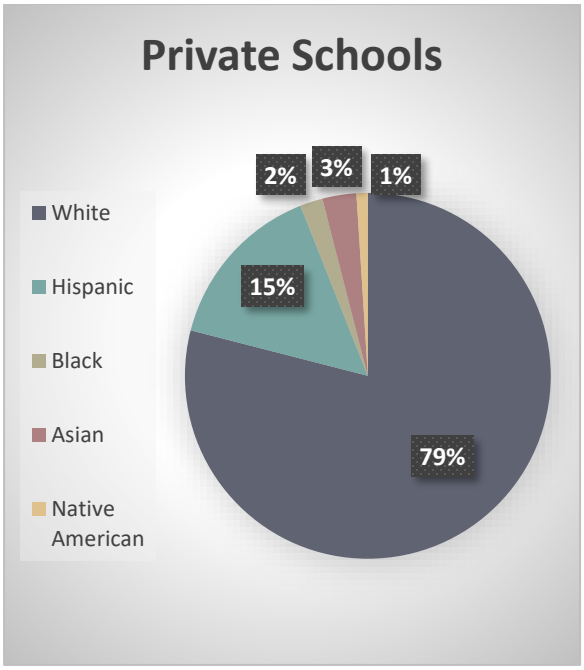
Population Characteristics	***County***	***Walla Walla***	***College Place***
Population estimates, July 2017	60,567	32,132	9,142
Persons under 5 years old	3,452	1,831	521
Persons under 18 years old	12,719	6,876	1,956
Persons over 65 years old	10,478	5,559	1,582
Veterans	5,080	2,763	739
Foreign born persons	5,996	3,663	1,060
Number of households	21,851	11,680	3,489
Average persons per household	2.49	2.36	2.28
Language other than English spoken at home, persons 5+	10,623 (18.6%)	6,787 (22.4%)	1,129 (13.1%)
Persons under 65 with a disability	10.6%	12.1%	9.1%
Persons under 65 without health insurance	8.2%	16.4%	14.6%

Public and Private Schools

Seven public school districts operate within the county, serving 8,702 students in grades K-12. Another 111 preschool students qualifying for special education are served by their local district. Private schools in the county serve 955 students in grades K-12 plus 62 preschool students.

The following graphs demonstrate the demographic make-up of public vs. private schools. In all schools, students with Hispanic ethnicity comprise a significant portion of enrollment. The demographics of the private school population more closely matches that of the overall county demographic, at 15 and 21 percent respectively, while public schools are nearly half Hispanic, demonstrating that the county Hispanic population is young, perhaps the majority being school-aged children. This trend should be considered when designing educational programs in order to meet the unique cultural and familial needs of Latino preschool-aged children and families. Walla Walla Public Schools has taken steps to meet this need by redesigning their Bilingual Education and Latino Outreach program under the leadership of Dr. Victor Vergara.





Preschools and Child Care

Child Care Aware of Washington reports that "in Walla Walla County, the number of child care providers has dropped from 56 with capacity for 1222 children in 2013, to 52 providers with capacity for 1261 children in December of 2017." v Of these, 14% serve school aged only children, leaving approximately 45 providers who accept all ages. Only 27 providers serve children of all ages and accept the Washington State Child Care subsidy, Working Connections. The median cost of care for preschool aged children is $758 per month for child care centers and $650 per month for family child care, representing 16-18% of median household income. "Approximately 79% of licensed child care providers in Walla Walla County are enrolled in Early Achievers. Early Achievers provides families with valuable child care program quality information so they can make informed child care choices. Early Achievers gives training, technical assistance, coaching, awards, scholarships, and other benefits to child care providers to improve the quality of their care."

Private preschool programs in Walla Walla that offer sliding scale fees or financial assistance include YMCA's Little Owls, Bright Beginnings at Walla Walla Community College, The Kids' Place at Whitman, YWCA My Friend's House and R-Kidz Early Childhood Center. Walla Walla Community College also offers a parent cooperative preschool program on campus, in College Place and Waitsburg, which offers enriched play experiences for children and parents to engage in parent education classes and practice those skills by working in the coop once a week. Other private programs include Betty's Preschool, Tiny Acres Preschool, Giant Steps Preschool and Childcare. Faith-based programs include Mustard Seed, The Early Learning Center at Assumption,

Head Start and ECEAP providers in Walla Walla County include Inspire Development Center, College Place Public Schools and Walla Walla Public Schools. Inspire Development Center in College Place offers a migrant Head Start program, which serves 150 children during the agriculturally active season of May through October, providing a safe and positive environment. In addition, they serve 40 preschool children in half-day ECEAP sessions October through April. Many of their students live within walking distance at the Walla Walla Labor Camp, and they are able to provide full transportation for those who live elsewhere in the community. College Place Public Schools will begin serving a small number of ECEAP students in a full-day program for the 2018-2019 school year.

Walla Walla Public Schools Head Start/ECEAP Program

The Walla Walla Public Schools Head Start/ECEAP Preschool Program is located inside Blue Ridge Elementary and provides free preschool classes for children ages 3 to 5 living in Walla Walla County for 233 children. Each class day is 3.25 hours and includes lunch and a snack for the children served family style in the classroom. Services the program provide include on-site health clinic, mental health counseling (play therapy), transportation, health screenings, child development screenings, disabilities services, parent education, family advocates/parent goal mentoring, service referrals and family activities.

The goal of the Head Start / ECEAP program is to promote school readiness and long-term success. This is achieved through a strong family development program that provides comprehensive education, health and social services for children and their families. Head Start/ECEAP provides early learning and school readiness by enhancing the cognitive, social, and emotional development of our students. The role of parents as their child's first and most important teacher is emphasized by the program's structure and activities. Staff strives to build relationships with families that support family well-being and positive parent-child relationships. Each family has access to a family advocate and encouraged to attend parent and family events.

The 233 enrollment slots include 136 funded by a federal Head Start grant (58%) and 97 slots (42%) funded by the Washington State Department of Early Learning Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP). The seven classrooms host 14 classes of 15-17 students each in two sessions per day, morning and afternoon. Each classroom is led by a certified teacher, assisted by at least one highly qualified para-educator, and has a Family Advocate who primarily provides family support but also assists in the classroom.

Meeting Language Needs

The majority of teaching assistants and Family Advocates are bilingual (Spanish/English). Spanish speaking students' language development is supported by both primary Creative Curriculum classroom instruction and specialized Estrellitas curriculum. The following table shows the ongoing need for bilingual language support in the classroom.

Language proficiency groups of enrolled Spanish-speaking children	**#**	**%**
Spanish-Proficient/English-Little or None	38	16%
Spanish-Moderate/English-Little or None	15	6%
Spanish-Proficient/English-Moderate	13	6%
Spanish-Moderate/English-Moderate	10	4%
Spanish-Proficient/English-Proficient	25	11%
Total (April 2018)	**101**	**43%**

This data supports the formation of up to six classes where the primary language of instruction is Spanish to support children's home language development and develop a strong base for English language development.

Maintaining Enrollment

Each year, approximately 130 children will transition to Kindergarten, creating the need to fill those spots with the next cohort of preschool-aged children. The remaining 100+ children automatically roll over to the following year in most cases. One vital function of the annual Community Needs Assessment is to identify how many potentially eligible children live in the program's service area and provide any information available that will help reach these families through recruiting efforts.

Families and children qualify for with one of the following categories: foster child, special education, homelessness, public assistance (SSI/TANF), or income below the federal poverty guidelines. If there are openings after all eligible applicants are enrolled, an additional 35% of children from low-income families (100-130% of federal poverty) and a maximum of 10% of over-income children may be enrolled. The graph below represents an estimate of children potentially eligible for Head Start and ECEAP based on U.S. census data.

Estimates of Preschool Aged Children Potentially Eligible for Head Start/ECEAP[vi]	**County**	**Walla Walla**	**College Place**
Estimated preschool age children	1,380	732	208
Households receiving public assistance (SSI, TANF, SNAP)	399	211	60
At risk for homelessness[vii]	21	11	3
Foster children	18	10	3
Children with disabilities	44	23	7
Total estimate of potentially eligible preschool age children	***482***	***255***	***73***

This graph is extracted from the 2017-2018 ECEAP and Head Start Saturation Study. In this study, it was assumed that a certain percentage of families would not be interested in preschool, reflected in a slightly lower number of estimated eligible children, 440 vs. the above estimate of 482.

School District Boundary Area	ECEAP & Head Start slots	Estimated eligible children	Percent Served	Unserved, eligible	ECEAP expansion priority
College Place	40	67	60%	27	2
Columbia	16	44	36%	28	4
Dixie	0	3	0%	3	1
Prescott	0	22	0%	22	3
Touchet	0	10	0%	10	4
Waitsburg	10	16	63%	6	3
Walla Walla	233	278	84%	45	3
Totals	**299**	**440**	**68%**	**141**	

Both these graphs indicate that there should be sufficient eligible children to fill the slots in Head Start and ECEAP programs, however, enrollment trends for WWPS Head Start/ECEAP over the last 5 years have shown decreasing numbers of eligible families enrolling their children in the program.

School Year	Over Income	Low Income
2017-2018	10%	18%
2016-2017	10%	17%
2015-2016	9.4%	22%
2014-2015	5%	21%
2013-2014	2%	16%

Reasons for this include a mixture of barriers and upward mobility. Families of who qualify for the Working Connections program often are unable to enroll into Head Start/ECEAP because of the 5-hour attendance requirement at their place of child care. Another barrier for these families is transportation. School district busing is available for the majority of students who need it but is not guaranteed. Approximately 140 children receive busing services and most would not be able to attend without it due to parents' work schedules or lack of family resources.

This same group of children would also benefit from a full day program if Walla Walla Public Schools was able to acquire the facilities and resources needed. Many parents interviewed have expressed the difficulty they have finding and affording part-day care before or after their child attends the program. In addition, the mid-day transition is not easy for many children and results in fatigue due to inadequate resting time.

Building Community Resilience

Walla Walla Public Schools is committed to meeting the social-emotional needs of students, and by extension staff, through implementing Trauma Informed Practice. The Head Start/ECEAP program began its journey in building resilience through Trauma Informed Practice back in 2015 with Trauma Smart training by St. Luke's Crittenton Center. As a program and a district, we strive to break trauma/poverty cycle, working closely with the Community Resilience Initiative to raise awareness of how trauma affects brain development, as well as how to lessen its blow through Trauma Informed Practice and building resilience through positive relationships.

Conclusion and Recommendations

1. Seek ways to remove barriers to enrollment for high needs families and marginalized groups, such as migrant families, homeless families, families bearing the burden of a disability or learning disorder, and single-parent families. Continue to seek viable options to provide at least some full day slots to meet the needs of children and families.
2. Look for ways to increase transportation options to improve enrollment and attendance for single parent working parents and families who cannot self-transport. This may involve increasing route services, excluding certain groups, such as over-income families, from transportation services, or implementing ridership policies to ensure that reserved spots are being utilized.
3. Increase awareness of trauma prevention among families and work to disrupt the cycle of intergenerational transmission of trauma. Continue to make trauma informed practice training a priority for on-boarding of new staff. Include requirement of using trauma informed practices in program policies across content areas. Continue to strengthen community partnerships with a focus on providing trauma-sensitive, wrap around support. Improve data collection and tracking of ACES scores for both children and families, interventions implemented and post-program data so that interventions can be analyzed in an aggregated manner for effectiveness, as well as to support community-wide data collection.
4. Actively seek out and connect parents to opportunities to advance their education, taking advantage of community partnerships, especially attainment of a bachelor's degree. Collect data about education levels, barriers to attainment of bachelor's degree, interventions/supports provided, and outcomes, so that this trend can be measured over time and interventions can be analyzed to determine effectiveness.

[i] (Walla Walla County)
[ii] (United States Department of Labor)
[iii] (U.S. Census Bureau)
[iv] (State of Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction)
[v] (Child Care Aware of Washington)
[vi] (U.S. Census Bureau)
[vii] (DeBolt)

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