

Methow Valley

Early Childhood Education and Childcare Initiative

Community Needs Assessment

Why Are We Doing A Community Needs Assessment in the Methow Valley?

Community members told the Methow Valley School District that receiving high quality, affordable early (age 0-5) childhood education and childcare for all is a high priority. It is one of the six strategic focus areas of the Methow Valley School District. Sharing this common vision, Little Star Montessori, Room One, and the Methow Valley School District —organizations committed to the well-being of every child — came together in the first part of 2014 and found private funding to carry out a “community needs assessment.”

Who is Involved in the Assessment?

You are! We are involving a large part of the Methow community to make sure that we learn as much as possible and find answers grounded in this community. There are many different ways to share your voice.

Leading the work is a Steering Committee, made up of 12 community members including parents, teachers, and childcare providers.

With help from an expert consulting team, the Steering Committee will seek to ask the right questions, gather answers, and suggest changes that will benefit children and families in the Methow for years to come.

How Will the Assessment Be Done?

Listening sessions are being scheduled, including large community conversations, small group discussions, and one-on-one interviews. If you can't participate in these sessions, you can share your thoughts by going to the Methow Valley School District's website.

The types of questions we are asking are:

- What gaps are there right now in childcare and pre-school education?
- What is in the way of families getting quality and affordable childcare and early education for their young children?
- What steps do we need to take in order to turn our dream into reality?

How Long Will The Assessment Take?

The timeline for the assessment is summer 2014 to spring 2015. You are likely to hear most about the Initiative this October when we hold focus groups and public community conversations. A Springboard Report describing what we heard and Steering Committee recommendations will be shared with the community early spring 2015. You can keep up to date on progress via the school district's website: www.methow.org

How Do I Get More Information or Share My Ideas?

To learn more about why high quality childhood education is important, visit a recent story published on NPR <http://www.npr.org/blogs/ed/2014/04/22/304563233/what-exactly-is-high-quality-preschool> or you can visit www.methow.org to share your ideas.

What Is a Community Needs Assessment?

A community needs assessment is a way to learn more deeply about our community needs, our strengths and challenges, and what exists to meet those needs.

It is done by asking questions and listening to people in the community; and by researching what experts and other communities say.

Listening to people in our community takes place through focus groups (8-10 people) and community conversations (20-30 people) in a setting where people are free to talk openly in response to questions posed by a trained leader.