



STATE OF OUR CHILDREN & FAMILIES Report 2017

SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON:
Clark, Cowlitz, Klickitat, South Pacific,
Skamania and Wahkiakum Counties



“The research is very clear that investments in early learning are directly related to long-term outcomes for children. Children who have access to high-quality early care and education are better prepared for school and are more likely to succeed, not only in school but ultimately in life. It is our collective responsibility to make sure that every child has these opportunities from an early age.”

Tim Merlino

Superintendent and Chief Executive Officer | Educational Service District 112



Introduction

The State of Our Children and Families Report

We are very fortunate to live in a beautiful community where many children and families are thriving with secure and stable housing, fulfilling careers and enrichment opportunities for their children. However, we know that many of our children and families do not have access to the same kinds of resources and opportunities and the effects of these challenges can have significant and lasting impacts for young children. These effects are not only detrimental to the child, as children who begin school behind their peers will likely never catch-up, but it has a broader impact on the entire community in the form of more resources needed to support remedial activities in school, increased high school drop-out rates, a less prepared workforce and higher incarceration rates.

We believe we have the power to positively impact outcomes for all children in Southwest Washington by intervening early and ensuring families have access to the resources and support they need before their children enter kindergarten. We invite you to join our coalition and our movement. Sign up for updates at selfwa.org.

Fall kindergarten assessment data indicates that only **42%** of the children in our region enter school with the foundational skills, knowledge and abilities they will need to be successful. This percentage is even lower for children living in poverty and children of color. **Research is clear that the achievement gap, which begins as an opportunity gap, is evident in children as young as nine months of age.**

Changing this trajectory will require us to take a broad community approach by focusing on the role that families, childcare and preschool professionals, K-12 educators, policy and business leaders and other community members can play.

Every day in Southwest Washington, parents, preschool teachers, librarians, and childcare providers just to name a few, are working to improve opportunities for our infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Even with all of the stories children read, songs they sing and houses they build with blocks, we are still faced with a large number of children that are not “ready” for kindergarten. **School districts will tell you it is extremely difficult to help these children “catch up” and many never make it. Research shows that children that are not “caught up” by third grade most likely will never catch up.**

Honestly, kindergarten “readiness” seems like something that would occur naturally. What we know is that a child being ready for kindergarten is actually the result of a complex set of processes and experiences. **Young children develop in a network of relationships, and the skills they bring with them to kindergarten reflect the lessons and experiences they have gained at home and in their community.** This is true not only for their language and cognitive development, but also for their self-confidence and self-control. Each of these skills, in turn, support a child’s success in kindergarten and beyond.

In a sense, a kindergarten-ready child is a reflection of a kindergarten-ready family, school and community.

So why are our children struggling? There are many reasons; however, as you will see in this report, race, ethnicity and family income have a significant impact in a child’s “readiness.”

This report contains data and information for the Southwest Washington region and is broken down into four sections...children, families, professionals and schools. Data for the report covers the counties of Clark, Cowlitz, Klickitat, Pacific, Skamania and Wahkiakum.

A complete listing of sources can be found at http://selfwa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/self_citations.pdf



An early learning story...

Home visitors often work with the families in greatest need. A home visitor in Klickitat County shared her experiences.

One of the families I work with is a single mom with five children and very few resources at her disposal. This family's home is very chaotic because the mom never learned the skills needed to teach her older children appropriate boundaries. As a result, she isn't able to provide a safe place on the floor for her six-month-old to play. The chaos and lack of safe play space has resulted in a six-month-old boy that typically should be developing is now developmentally delayed. There is a direct correlation between the home environment and the delays he is experiencing. It may seem hard to believe after having five children that his mom is lacking the skills and/or knowledge to provide him safe "tummy time." "Tummy time" is very important so a child can develop strength in their legs, arms and trunk.

During our home visits, I was able to help this mom problem solve a way to keep her baby safe, allowing him to experience important developmental play time. Some of the skills I've been able to demonstrate and teach her are:

- How to facilitate her child in propping on his elbows
- How to reach for toys placed in different locations
- How to get into a supported crawling position
- How to increase arm, neck and leg strength
- Different ways to hold him to encourage trunk stability
- How to help him get in a protective position when sitting, by placing his arms out when he starts to fall
- Different ways of using toys and materials to increase his visual tracking, his reach, his grasp, his manipulation of toys, his reaching across mid line (reaching across the middle of his body with both his arm and legs).

As a result of the home visits, this little boy has experienced significant developmental gains by providing his mom with skills, practice, knowledge, and problem solving in their own home.

Child and parent success increases dramatically when you can support a family in their own home, showing them how to work with their child, as well as how to use things in their own environment to encourage and support their child's skills and development. Modeling, teaching, practicing, and encouraging, problem solving are key components of a home visit.

This family's story is not an isolated experience. Most of the families I work with are surrounded by chaos and change with little capacity or skill to effectively manage in their situation.

ESD 112 B-3 Home Visitor | Klickitat County

Anyone that is a parent or has had a role in raising a child will tell you it's one of the hardest, most important and rewarding experiences of their life. Unfortunately, we are the least prepared for this role. Our communities don't have resources or systems in place that adequately help parents in this most important role. This leaves many families to fend for themselves often with results that can have devastating and long-term implications for a child. **We believe we can do better.**



What does kindergarten readiness look like?



Washington State Department of Early Learning recently set an inspirational goal...

"By 2020, 90% of five-year-olds will be ready for kindergarten with race, ethnicity and family income no longer predictors of readiness."

This goal aligns perfectly with our Southwest Washington vision of improving outcomes for all children.

There are many factors that contribute to child development and the data are clear that children with the lowest scores fall into these subsets: Black, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, homeless, limited English, low income, males, and special education. The children in our region in these subsets have scored lower than the regional average for kindergarten readiness.

As we continue to learn more about what we can do collectively to strengthen school readiness for all of our children, it is important to remember that in the State of Washington, children are ready for kindergarten entry if they are five years old on or before August 31. However, age is not the only predictor of what skills, knowledge and abilities children enter kindergarten demonstrating. Each year, 7,300 children enter kindergarten in Southwest Washington with a varying degree of skills that are largely shaped by the kinds of experiences they have had with their families and our community.

This report is designed to highlight the strengths and challenges young children and their families experience in our region. This information will be used as a launch point for additional conversations about how we can improve outcomes for our infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

The Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) is a statement approach to strengthen kindergarten transition for:

- **Family connection** -- Welcoming students and their families to kindergarten
- **Early learning collaboration** -- Encourages ongoing and continued collaboration between families and the teachers to support children and build on children's success in childcare or preschool
- **Whole-child assessment** -- Assessing students' strengths. WaKIDS whole-child assessment -- Conducted by kindergarten teachers in the fall using Teaching Strategies GOLD® assessment. This assessment is used to track "readiness" in six developmental domains: social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy and math. We are lower in almost every developmental domain than the state average.

For more information, go to <http://www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS/Data/default.aspx>



CHILDREN WHO ARE READY FOR KINDERGARTEN - COUNTY AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Definition: Children entering kindergarten who demonstrate characteristics of entering kindergarteners in all 6 WaKIDS domains, as measured by the WaKIDS assessment tool: Social-Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, and Math.

School Ready	WA State	Clark	Cowlitz	Klickitat	Pacific	Skamania	Wahkiakum
Percent who meet characteristics	47%	43%	33%	N/A+	56% [§]	N/A+	77%*
School District		Battle Ground 59% Camas 71% Evergreen 37% Green Mountain* 71% Hockinson 54% La Center 61% Ridgefield 47% Vancouver 32% Washougal 45%	Castle Rock 51% Kalama 65% Kelso 26% Longview 26% Toutle Lake 49% Woodland 44%	Bickleton N/A@ Centerville 18%* Glenwood N/A@ Goldendale N/A@ Klickitat N/A@ Lyle 9%* Roosevelt N/A@ Trout Lake 24%* White Salmon 50% Wishram N/A@	Naselle Greys River Valley 81%* Ocean Beach 49%	Mill A N/A@ Mt Pleasant N/A@ Skamania N/A@ Stevenson-Carson 62%	Wahkiakum 77%*
Note: Some of these figures were calculated from downloaded data files and may differ slightly to figures found online. Low-income students are those below 185% poverty level.							

Disparities	SW Washington
Percent who meet characteristics	42%
Number who meet characteristics	2,931
White	46%
Black	28%
Native American	29%*
Asian	49%
Pacific Islander	20%
Hispanic	26%
Limited English	22%
Female	46%
Male	37%
Low income	28%
Homeless	21%
Special Education	19%

Note: Some of these figures were calculated from downloaded data files and may differ slightly to figures found online. Low-income students are those below 185% poverty level.

* Figure is based on small numbers and should be interpreted with caution

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 + County-wide figure not available because so many school districts are missing
 @ Figure not available online
 § South Pacific County

CHILDREN WHO ARE READY FOR KINDERGARTEN IN SPECIFIC DOMAINS - SW WASHINGTON

Definition: Children entering kindergarten who demonstrate characteristics of entering kindergarteners in each of the 6 WaKIDS domains, as measured by the WaKIDS assessment tool: Social-Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, and Math.

Domains	Percent who meet characteristics
Social-Emotional	67%
Physical	78%
Language	80%
Cognitive	74%
Literacy	81%
Math	59%



Children

“We believe it’s vitally important for all families to have opportunities to benefit from high-quality early learning services that promote student success in kindergarten and beyond.”

Steven J. Webb, Ed.D.

Superintendent, Vancouver Public Schools

A higher percentage of children living in poverty are not kindergarten “ready.”

The number of licensed childcare providers and the number of childcare slots have decreased region wide. Licensed childcare is an indicator of higher quality care.

Custodial single mothers and their child are twice as likely to live in poverty.

The impact of childhood abuse and neglect, and the disruption of being removed from their home, can be seen throughout the victim’s lifetime, including affecting their ability to engage and succeed in school.



Children	WA State	Clark	Cowlitz	Klickitat	Pacific	Skamania	Wahkiakum
Number of children aged 0-4	440,331	27,749	6,017	1,063	960	517	145
Number of children aged 5-17	1,162,414	82,773	17,628	3,160	2,642	1,754	512
Percent of children aged 5-17 in poverty	16%	13%	23%	21%	28%	18%	24%
Percent of children 0-6 with all parents in workforce	60%	60%	59%	42%	56%	48%	61%
Percent of children 0-5 living with one parent	30%	30%	49%	41%	43%	N/A@	N/A@
Victims of child abuse and neglect, per 1,000	32	26	54	49	59\$	59	41
Children aged 0-17 in foster care, per 1,000	6	6	7	11	15	16	16
Percent of children 0-4 living in poverty	19%	15%	29%	35%	33%	30%	0%*

* Figure is based on small numbers and should be interpreted with caution

@ Figure not available online

\$ South Pacific County



Families

“I liked how every visit you showed me everything important about my pregnancy and my health, and for helping me out. Thanks for always hearing me out and giving me advice telling me what was best. Understanding my personal problems, supporting us. You’re a very caring, loving, kind nurse. I wish this day would never end. Thank you for everything and all the help. I’ve learned a lot. You taught me many good important things about being a mom, “Best Nurse Ever.”

“This program has helped me a lot in many ways. I get to learn many things about how my baby is growing and how to teach her stuff by only playing. The nurse that comes over is very friendly and very patient with me and my child. She looks and acts like she is interested in both of us. She is very nice and always has new things to talk about and things to do.”

Anonymous quotes from: *Pat Shaw, Manager*
Nurse Family Partnership clients, Clark County Public Health

Experiencing homelessness can create fear and anxiety for children which can inhibit their ability to engage and succeed in school.

Whatever the circumstances that led to the placement of the grandchildren with the grandparents, the children themselves will feel the effects. Children usually mourn the loss of parental presence, even if the parents were abusive or ineffectual. Even very young children can show the effects of a change in caregivers.



Families	WA State	Clark	Cowlitz	Klickitat	Pacific	Skamania	Wahkiakum
Number of people in homeless families with children under 18	6,798	308	181	<20	<20	<20	<10
Percent of grandparents who live with their grandchildren that are responsible for them	35%	39%	50%	50%	53%	59%	30%



Professionals

“In my opinion, the next big education initiative must be early childhood education. This is the critical step that must be implemented in order to level the playing field for children from all walks of life to receive the foundations necessary for them to compete in a global society and for us, as a nation, to compete with other industrialized nations.”

John Deeder, Superintendent
Evergreen Public Schools

Early Achievers is the system developed by Washington State to ensure that licensed childcare providers are providing high-quality childcare. Enrolling in this system is a way for a provider to demonstrate their commitment to quality.

Low wages for childcare providers make it difficult for the field to attract and retain talented professionals. The average childcare teacher makes \$28,846 less per year than a K-12 teacher (statewide).



Professionals

	WA State	Clark	Cowlitz	Klickitat	Pacific	Skamania	Wahkiakum
Percent of licensed childcare providers enrolled in Early Achievers	70%	60%	71%	60%*	75%*	80%*	50%*
Total number of licensed childcare providers	5,118	214	41	10	12	5	2
Number of childcare employees	18,360	979	202	44	39	N/A#	0
Average hourly wage for childcare employees	\$14.28	\$13.06	\$12.07	\$15.42	\$13.00	N/A#	N/A ^b
Percent of elementary school teachers who are white	N/A [^]	92%	96%	99%*	94%\$*	98%*	100%*

* Figure is based on small numbers and should be interpreted with caution

Figure not available due to small numbers

[^] Figure not readily available online

\$ South Pacific County

^b No childcare employees in this county



Schools

Nobel Laureate economist James Heckman states there is a **13% per year ROI** (return on investment) by starting early with comprehensive, high-quality, birth-to-five early education.

Children not reading at grade level by the end of the third grade are **four times** less likely to graduate high school on time—**six times** less likely for students from low-income families. High school dropouts were **63 times** more likely to be incarcerated than college graduates.

The Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) program identifies and treats developmental delays for children 0-3. Services to young children who have or are at risk for developmental delays have been shown to positively impact outcomes across all developmental domains.

Access to quality preschool benefits all children...children from low-income families benefit even more. High-quality preschool is a key strategy to ensure children are kindergarten “ready.”



ECEAP - Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program

ESIT - Early Support for Infant and Toddlers

Schools	WA State	Clark	Cowlitz	Klickitat	Pacific	Skamania	Wahkiakum
K-12 enrollment	1,083,696	79,309	16,986	3,038	1,459 [§]	1,069	458
Number of school districts	310	9	6	10	2 [§]	4	1
Number of elementary schools	N/A [^]	70	22	10	4 [§]	6	1
Percent of K-12 students in transitional bilingual program	11%	10%	5%	8%	5% [§]	2%	4%
ECEAP slots per 1,000 children aged 3-4	67	73	93	86	337	0	338
Head Start slots per 1,000 children aged 3-4	92	39	201	319 ^e	85	319 ^e	0*
Percent of children 0-3 participating in ESIT	2.7%	2.0%	3.8% ^h	4.6%	3.4%	2.3%*	3.8% ^h
Percent of 3rd graders who meet reading standards	54%	54%	44%	46%	44% [§]	33%	48%*
Percent of 3rd graders who meet math standards	59%	59%	50%	47%	50% [§]	43%	62%*

* Figure is based on small numbers and should be interpreted with caution

§ South Pacific County

^ Not readily available online

e Klickitat & Skamania counties combined

h Cowlitz & Wahkiakum counties combined



In the beginning...

Early learning describes that magical time period from birth to kindergarten. A time when immense brain development happens. The brain is a sponge soaking up love, family culture, word development, creativity and many other simple important life skills that will create a giant canvass and impact these bundles of joy for their entire lives. That's a lot to wrap your mind around. That means that these first five years need to offer learning in everything.

Early learning and Southwest Washington

For a mighty, small army of early learning professionals, none of this is new information. Since 2001, a number of organizations and individuals have been working together to share information, bring awareness and gather more people to move the dial for early learning. In 2001, Support for Early Learning & Families (SELF) was formed. About that same time, several other county-based coalitions began forming in the region. Each coalition started with a small group of people that knew they were "better together." In 2010, the State of Washington shifted the focus and funding from county coalitions to a regional focus. This shift prompted the formation of Southwest Early Learning (SWEL). SELF has been the fiscal agent as well as an active partner of SWEL from its inception. And so the journey began to build regional partnerships and priorities that align with and support the work in each county. Since that time, we have been working together on behalf of children and families throughout the region. We are thrilled to present this State of Our Children & Families report to our communities.

SELF Southwest Washington Partners:

Battle Ground Public Schools	Longview Early Education Partnership
Camas School District	Lower Columbia College
Children's Home Society	Lower Columbia College - B-3 Coalition
Clark College	Mid-Columbia Children's Council
Clark County Parent Coalition	Ocean Beach School District
Clark County Public Health	OK Committee - South Pacific County
Cowlitz County Public Health	Parents Place
Educational Opportunities for Children and Families (EOCF)	Parent to Parent of Klickitat County
Educational Service District 112	Progress Center
Evergreen Public Schools	Pacific County Health Department
Fort Vancouver Regional Library District	Skamania Klickitat Community Network
Gorge Early Learning	Southwest Washington Child Care Consortium
Healthy Living Collaborative	Stevenson-Carson School District
Innovative Services NW	St. James Family Center
Kelso School District	Support for Early Learning & Families
Klickitat County Parent Coalition	Vancouver Housing Authority
Klickitat County Public Health	Vancouver Public Schools
Latino Community Resource Group	YWCA of Clark County
Learning Avenues Childcare Center	Washington State University
Legacy Salmon Creek Medical Center	Woodland School District
Longview Public Schools	



*“Children are our greatest treasure.
They are our future.”*

- Nelson Mandela



selfwa.org