



# Early Childhood Alaska: A Strategic Direction for 2020-2025 Planning Process Report and Appendices

**JUNE 2020**

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## INTRODUCTION

Alaska's statewide strategic plan for early childhood was developed in 2019 and 2020 through partners working together and committed to hearing input from statewide stakeholders and using that input to design an actionable early childhood strategic plan for Alaska. This strategic plan is built on, **A Needs Assessment of Alaska's Mixed-Delivery System of Early Childhood Care and Education**, which was finalized in December 2019. This important work provided the foundation for conversations with Alaskans about the early childhood system in the state. Surveys were taken, and work sessions were hosted with parents, caregivers, and system professionals to hear their ideas about how Alaska's children and families can thrive. This report provides a summary of the plan development and stakeholder engagement activities that are the basis of the final strategic plan document.

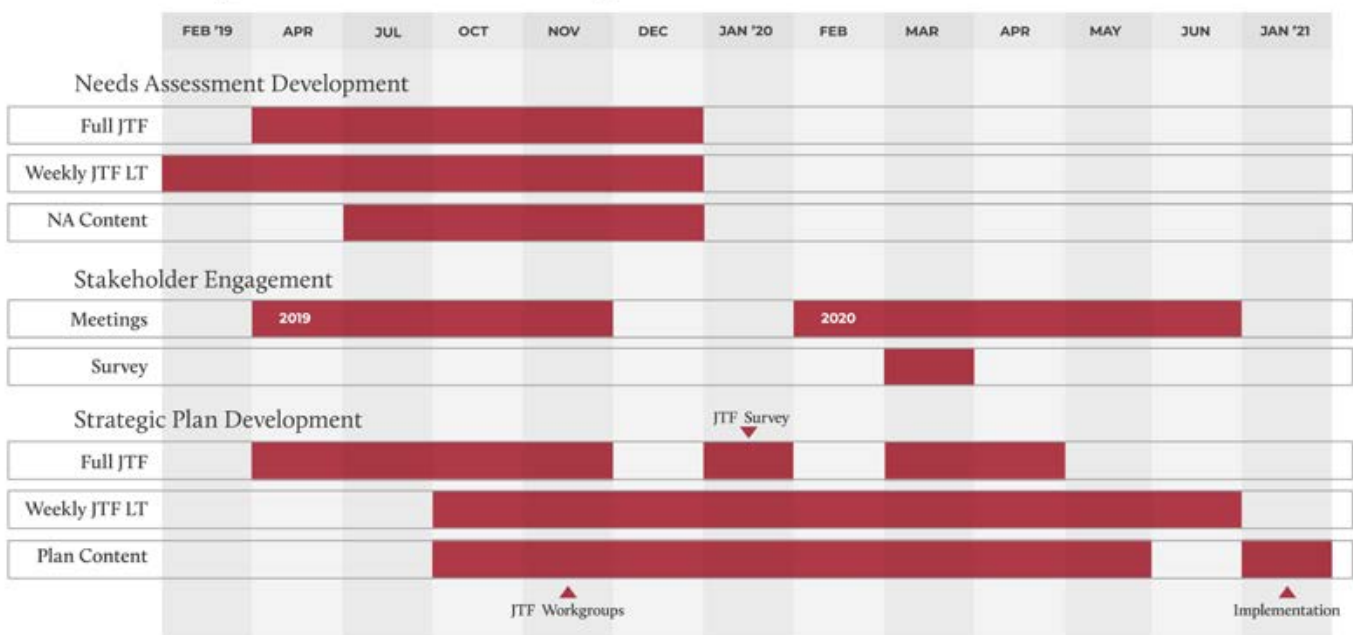
## STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

### Alaska Early Childhood Joint Task Force (JTF) and Leadership Team

The Alaska Early Childhood JTF has an 8-member Leadership Team, which in turn engaged with and guided a full 40+ member JTF, which formed to align work on the early childhood needs assessment and strategic plan. This was coordinated among three grants: the initial Preschool Development Grant received by the Department of Early Education and Development (DEED) and jointly managed by DEED and the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS); an Impact Project grant from the State Capacity Building Center to align Early Care and Education (ECE) systems with programs and services, led by the DHSS Child Care Program Office; and an Indigenous Project LAUNCH grant to prepare Alaska Native children 0-8 with skills to succeed in school, led by Southcentral Foundation, a health and wellness organization serving the Alaska Native population in Southcentral Alaska.

### Strategic Plan Activities

*Early Childhood Alaska Strategic Plan Timeline*



## JOINT TASK FORCE (JTF) STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT

**Alaska Early Childhood JTF Meetings:** JTF representatives, the Leadership Team and the full JTF provided advisory support including plan content, framing, and editing throughout the planning process. Strategic planning activities began in spring 2019 through a workshop on governance. In fall 2019, other state plans were reviewed, and the beginning stages of a vision, guiding principles and stakeholder engagement began. By early 2020, a draft strategic plan framework was developed using responses from an extensive JTF survey and initial 2019 stakeholder engagement guidance. This draft framework became a helpful way to organize the many stakeholder engagement discussions that occurred between February and April 2020.

**JTF Survey:** In January 2020, a survey of the JTF was conducted to solicit input on draft plan framework used to develop the plan content and the stakeholder engagement approach.

**JTF Workgroups:** In January 2020, members of the Joint Task Force (JTF) volunteered to participate in three work groups, each focused on the draft goal areas of the strategic plan. An in-depth briefing paper was provided for each workgroup prior to the meetings, outlining some draft objectives and actions, and tying to relevant information from the needs assessment. The January 2020 workgroups were a critical step in the stakeholder engagement process, and this work became the foundation of the strategic plan content.

**JTF Leadership Team:** The JTF Leadership Team met weekly to consider input received from the stakeholder engagement activities and from the full Joint Task Force. Once the stakeholder engagement results had been analyzed, the themes were then considered alongside the documents from the workgroups. Through a series of 3-6 hour work sessions, the leadership team used the draft framework, the workgroup input, the input from the JTF survey, the meeting reports, and the stakeholder survey to recommend content for inclusion in the final strategic plan document.

### Plan Framework

Development of a draft plan framework began in late 2019 by first conducting a nationwide scan of other plan documents and through ongoing JTF engagement. An initial stakeholder engagement process asked questions on what should be included in the state plan. Meetings were held with the Association of Alaska School Boards at its annual conference, the Anchorage Kindergarten Ready Network and three onsite meetings in Kodiak with families and people working in the system. The initial framework provided a foundation for the JTF workgroups, and for the 2020 stakeholder engagement sessions. All 2019 and 2020 session reports can be found in the Appendices. Once stakeholder engagement was completed, the Leadership Team reviewed the reports and developed themes that became the basis for building out the objectives, strategies and actions in the plan document.

### Early Childhood Alaska Strategic Plan 2020-2025



## Plan Review Process

In March 2020, a first draft of the plan document was completed. Two joint JTF and Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC) meetings were hosted to present the draft plan content, and workshop remaining sections. The feedback from these sessions was then considered by the JTF Leadership Team to complete a second draft.

A final review process was conducted with an identified list of reviewers. The plan draft was shared with reviewers, and a videoconference session with questions and answers was hosted. Reviewers were provided a series of open ended questions and responded through an online survey tool. The Leadership Team considered the responses received and developed a final draft of the plan document before the document went to the design phase.

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

During 2019 and 2020, face to face and virtual meetings were held with parents, families, community members, and people working in the early childhood system. Nearly 300 Alaskans responded to an online survey and there were 288 participants who signed in to statewide in-person or virtual stakeholder meetings. A few individuals participated in more than one meeting, and some participated in both the survey and a meeting. The exact number of participants is unknown, yet the total number of people who provided input is conservatively estimated to be at least 500. The information gathered through this process was reviewed and considered in developing the strategic plan goals, objectives, strategies and actions.

### MEETINGS AND SURVEY

**Family Friendly Community Gatherings** - Parents, foster parents and caregivers participated in meetings in Kodiak, Kotzebue and Bethel. Due to COVID-19, family friendly meetings were hosted virtually in Anchorage, Minto, and other Interior communities.

**Early Childhood System Meetings** – Tribal, state, local government, and non-profit program administrators who work in a wide range of systems that support children and families convened in-person and via video conferencing. Most regions in Alaska provided input.

**Alaska Early Childhood Online Stakeholder Survey** – An online survey was circulated to school boards, child care providers, superintendents, tribal governments, and others. The survey was also posted on the Early Childhood Alaska web page. There were 301 responses submitted.



## By the Numbers

Hundreds of Alaskans were involved in helping develop the strategic plan.

**500+** *Alaskans provided input* including parents, caregivers, providers, tribal representatives, program administrators, educators, and state and federal representatives engaged the development of the plan.



**5** *family friendly community gatherings* were held with **73** parents, caregivers and community members  
2 were held via videoconference



**3** *JTF Workgroups*  
Held **5** meetings and provided written edits to early draft plan content



**4** *Statewide Video Conferences with 60 early childhood system professionals.* (2 statewide tribal early childhood system videoconferences. 2 regional early childhood system videoconferences.)

**6** *Alaska Early Childhood Joint Task Force meetings*  
were held to provide advisory guidance on the strategic planning process



**22** early childhood professionals from the Joint Task Force responded to an in-depth on-line survey about state priorities, system related issues and to review previous state plan documents.

**155** *early childhood system professionals participated in*

**10** *in-person stakeholder sessions*



**299**



*Alaskans responded to the Alaska Early Childhood Online Stakeholder Survey*



**50+** *Alaska Early Childhood JTF Leadership Team Meetings*  
were held to discuss stakeholder and full JTF input and revise plan content

SESSION	#	LOCATIONS/REGIONS/ORGANIZATION
<b>2019</b>		
Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB), Early Childhood Conversation, 4/6	23	School Districts: Anchorage, Bristol Bay, City of Cordova, Denali Borough, City of Dillingham, Fairbanks North Star, Juneau, Ketchikan Gateway, City of Klawock, Lake & Peninsula, Lower Kuskokwim, North Slope Borough, Southeast Region, Southwest Region, Yukon Koyukuk
Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) Conference, Early Childhood Strategic Plan Luncheon, 11/8	19	School Districts: Chugach, Hydaburg, Fairbanks North Star Borough, Lower Kuskokwim, Aleutian Region, Juneau, Anchorage, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Southwest Region, Yupiit, Sitka. Alaska Council of School Administrators, State Board of Education
Anchorage Kindergarten Ready Network, 11/21	19	Anchorage, Mat-Su
Kodiak System Luncheon, 12/10	28	Kodiak
Kodiak Rural Videoconference, 12/10	7	Port Lions, Old Harbor, Akhiok
Kodiak Family Friendly Community Gathering, 12/10	16	Kodiak
<b>2020</b>		
Bethel Early Childhood System Meeting, 2/4	16	Bethel, Napakiak, Atmautluak, Nightmute, Eek
Bethel Family Friendly Community Gathering, 2/4	12	Bethel
Anchorage Association for the Education of Young Children (AAEYC), 2/6	9	Aleutians, Yukon Kuskokwim, Bristol Bay, Northwest Arctic, Utqiagvik, Kodiak and Southcentral
Anchorage Association for the Education of Young Children (AAEYC), 2/7	9	Aleutians, Yukon Kuskokwim, Bristol Bay region, the Northwest Arctic, and Southcentral Alaska
Kotzebue Early Childhood System Meeting, 2/10	11	Kotzebue
Kotzebue Family Friendly Community Gathering, 2/10	34	Kotzebue
Alaska Early Childhood Tribal System Meeting Statewide Videoconference, 2/20	16	Bristol Bay Native Association, Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Pribilof Islands Aleut Community of St. Paul Island, Arctic Slope Native Association, Organized Village of Kwethluk, Kenaitze Indian Tribe IRA, Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, Copper River Native Association, Yakutat Tlingit Tribe, Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association Head Start
Alaska Early Childhood Tribal System Meeting Statewide Videoconference, 2/24	3	Kodiak, Mountain Village
Statewide Early Childhood System Meeting Alaska Head Start Directors Association, 2/24	14	Kawerak (Norton Sound), Association of Village Council Presidents (Bethel region), RuralCap (statewide rural), Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (Southeast), Kids Corp, Inc. (Anchorage), Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments (Interior), CCS Early Learning (Mat-Su), Tanana Chiefs Conference, (Interior) Chugachmiut (Nanwalek, Tatitlek, Valdez, Chenega, Port Graham, Eyak), Bristol Bay Native Association, Fairbanks Native Association.
Klawock/Prince of Wales Island Early Childhood System Meeting, 2/26	9	Craig Public Health, Community Connections, SEARHC, Craig City School District, Head Start, City of Hydaburg, Haida Language Immersion Preschool
Early Childhood System and Family Friendly Videoconference, Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) Communities, 4/17	32	Fairbanks, Galena, Grayling, Holy Cross, Huslia, Kaltag, Nenana, North Pole, Northway, Nulato, McGrath, Minto, Tetlin
Anchorage Family Friendly Videoconference, 4/23	6	Anchorage, Eagle River
Minto Family Friendly Videoconference, 4/27	5	Minto, Eureka



## Early Childhood Alaska Stakeholder Meeting Themes

A session report was developed for each meeting and sent to participants. All reports can be found in the Appendices and are posted online. The content includes summary level meeting highlights, followed by longhand notes and available photos of the meetings.

Meeting highlights and reports were reviewed, and a list of themes was developed to summarize what was heard across the state.

THEME	PLAN DOC.
<b>STRONG &amp; RESILIENT FAMILIES</b> Families in Alaskan communities are nurturing, loving, engaged, and active. Extended family networks are an important part of early childhood and make families stronger and more resilient.	Vision + Guiding Principles, Goal 1
<b>STRONG &amp; RESILIENT COMMUNITIES</b> Communities in rural Alaska encourage healthy children and families by providing strong support networks, opportunities, and help in times of need.	Vision + Guiding Principles, Goal 1
<b>BASIC NEEDS</b> Children, families, and communities are stronger when their basic needs are met. Safe housing, food security, behavioral health services, and equitable access to basic public services supports healthy and resilient communities.	Goal 1
<b>CULTURE &amp; TRADITION</b> Families and children are strengthened when there are connections to culture and tradition; especially speaking indigenous languages and practicing subsistence activities. Early childhood education is better when it is culturally relevant and place-based, by the community for the community.	Vision + Guiding Principles, Goals 1 + 2 under parent engagement, supports
<b>ACCESS TO QUALITY CARE AND EDUCATION</b> Quality childhood care and education across Alaska, especially in more rural and remote communities, remains inaccessible and unaffordable for many families. The early childhood system in Alaska needs more equitable access to quality care and education for all families, regardless of location or income-level.	Goal 2
<b>AFFORDABILITY</b> Income-level requirements for childhood care & education are a challenge for many families and children in accessing care. Families should be more informed about available resources and assistance.	Goal 2
<b>WORKFORCE REQUIREMENTS</b> Programs report across the board difficulties attracting and retaining qualified staff. Long turnaround times for background checks result in a loss of qualified candidates for early childhood workforce positions.	Goal 3
<b>TRAINING</b> Required staff trainings are costly and require time away from the job, yet taking the trainings online is burdensome and often inaccessible in places without reliable internet or limited bandwidth.	Goal 3
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b> Getting children to early childhood programs can be a challenge for parents in smaller communities; a lack of reliable transportation limits access for many families.	Goal 3
<b>FACILITIES</b> Communities across rural Alaska would like to expand early childhood programs and increase accessibility for families; however, there is often a lack of physical space that meets program requirements.	Goal 3
<b>GOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION &amp; ALIGNMENT</b> Alaska residents, especially those working in tribal early childhood systems, would benefit from improved governmental coordination with responsibility at all levels and this would result in a more functional early childhood system. Alignment of Head Start and PreK programs is an area that could be better coordinated.	Goal 3
<b>LICENSING &amp; REGULATIONS</b> State and federal credentialing requirements are often difficult to navigate, costly, and burdensome, which prevents many rural Alaskan communities from expanding child care options and programs.	Goal Area 3

THEME	PLAN DOC.
LOCAL CAPACITY BUILDING Tribes and organizations want to develop more localized strategies to address unmet needs, which would require investment into capacity building and program development.	Goal Area 3 - Funding
COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIPS Early childhood system workers and providers want collaboration and partnerships at the local level through better communication and stronger networks. Parents, programs and communities want access to resources in order provide caregiver supports that meet families where they are at and address children's developmental needs.	Goal Area 3

## EARLY CHILDHOOD ALASKA STAKEHOLDER ONLINE SURVEY

### Introduction

An online survey was developed and implemented as a part of the stakeholder engagement strategy. The survey was used to gather input from Alaskans interested in the early childhood system, including parents and families, educators, tribal representatives, administrators, and child care workers.

### Approach

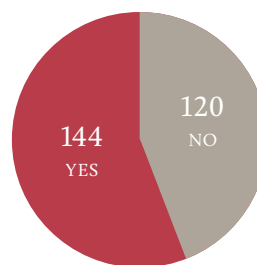
The Early Childhood Alaska Stakeholder Online Survey was distributed to Joint Task Force networks, through email, and through targeted social media outreach to communities. The survey was also hosted on the Early Childhood Alaska website. The online stakeholder survey was distributed and open for a two week period in early March 2020. The online stakeholder survey included 26 quantitative and qualitative questions which followed the framework of questions asked of community participants during in person and virtual stakeholder engagement activities. The survey did not ask detailed demographic information and was a non-probability sample and therefore not representative of the population. The primary purpose of the survey was for use as a tool for stakeholder engagement

### Survey Respondents

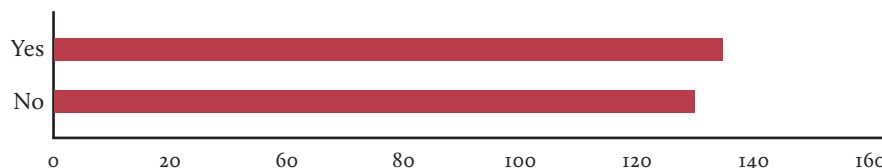
The following questions were asked of participants to understand whether they have young children living at home and whether they work in the early childhood system in Alaska and if so, in what way.

144 people answered that they have children under the age of 9 living with them at least part time. 133 people answered that they work in early childhood, and 74 answered that they work directly with children. 88 noted that their workplace focuses on supporting Alaska Native families and children. Of the 292 responses to the question asking what village, town or city people lived, 147 answered that they live in more populated places\*.

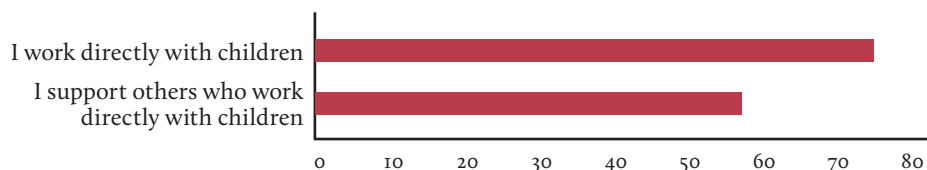
**Are there any children under the age of 9 who live at least part of the time with you?**



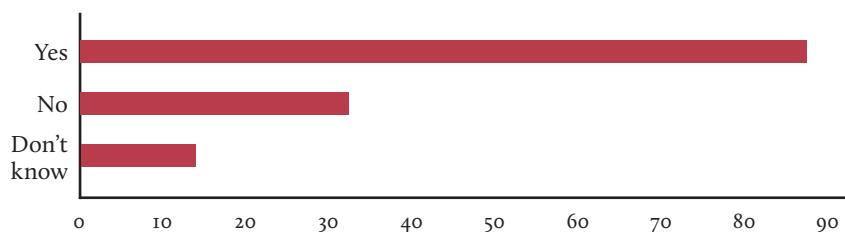
**Do you work in early childhood (serving children birth through age 8)?**



**What is your main role at your workplace?**



**Does your workplace focus on supporting Alaska Native families and children?**



## SURVEY PARTICIPANTS BY COMMUNITY

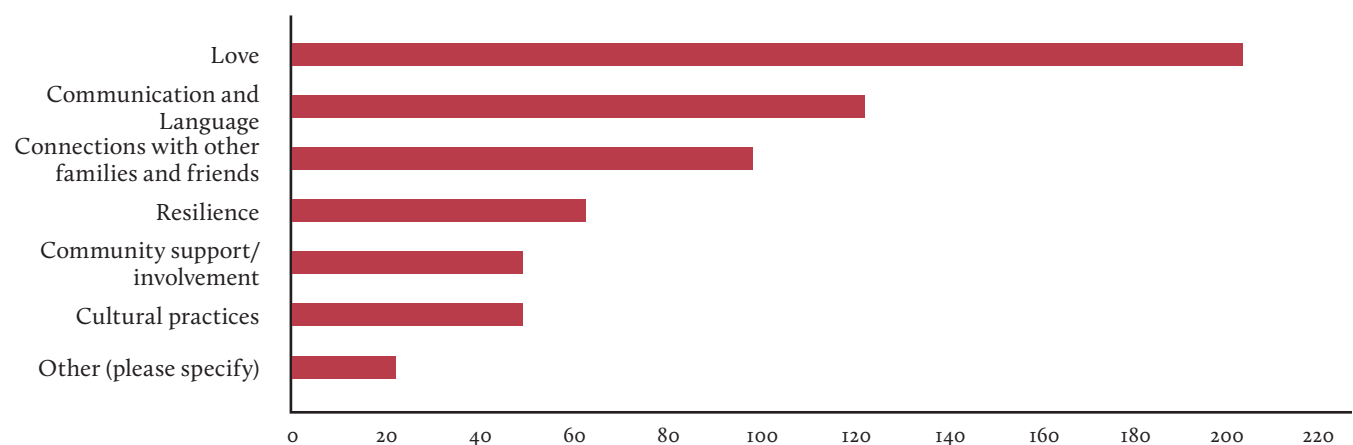
Anchor Point	2	Hooper Bay	5	Metlakatla	2	Scammon Bay	1
Anchorage*	53	Houston	1	Minto	1	Sitka	3
Bethel	6	Juneau*	27	Mountain Village	2	Skagway	6
Big Lake	1	Kasilof	1	Naukati	1	Soldotna	3
Chugiak	3	Kenai	10	Nenana	3	Sterling	2
Coffman Cove	1	Ketchikan	6	Newhalen	1	Talkeetna	2
Craig	3	Kiana	1	Nikiski	3	Tok	3
Dillingham	10	King Salmon	1	Northway	1	Utqiagvik	1
Eagle River*	2	Kipnuk	1	North Pole	12	Wasilla*	24
Fairbanks*	24	Klawock	5	Palmer*	17	Whittier	1
Ft Wainwright	1	Kodiak	14	Petersburg	6	Willow	1
Healy	1	Kotzebue	6	Russian Mission	1	Wrangell	1
Hollis	1	Manley Hot Springs	1	Salcha	2		
Homer	2	Meadow Lakes	1	Sand Point	1		

## Survey Highlights

Respondents indicated that families and communities are best able to support young children when cultural practices are encouraged and celebrated. This includes but is not limited to; an emphasis on early childhood programs and resources available in the language predominantly spoken at home, accessible outdoor activities for households with young children; and community events and spaces that are welcoming to households with young children.

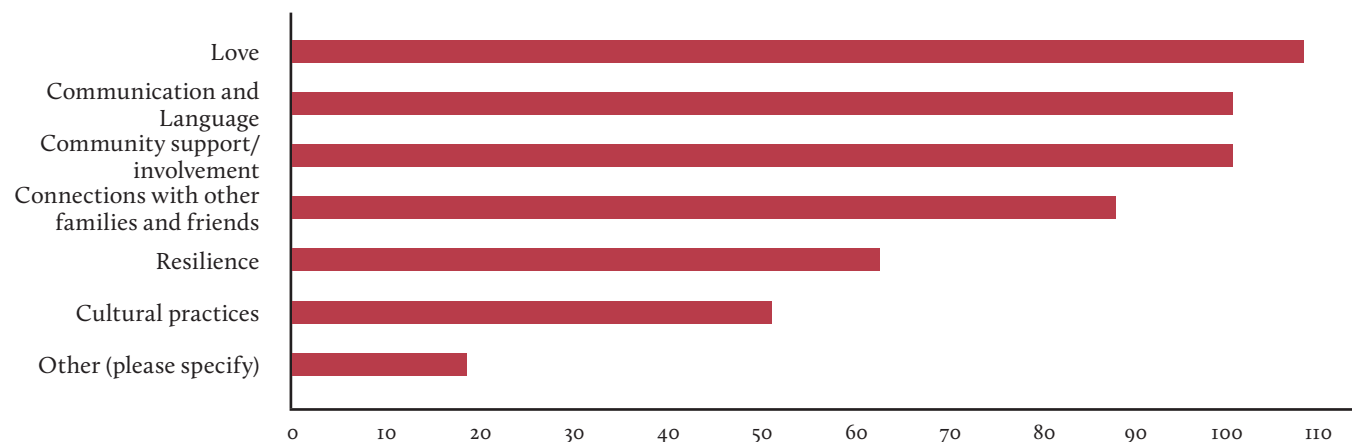
## What makes families strong?

Survey respondents identified love, communication and language and connections with other families and friends as what keeps their families strong.



## What helps to keep the families you serve strong? Please select two that are most important to you.

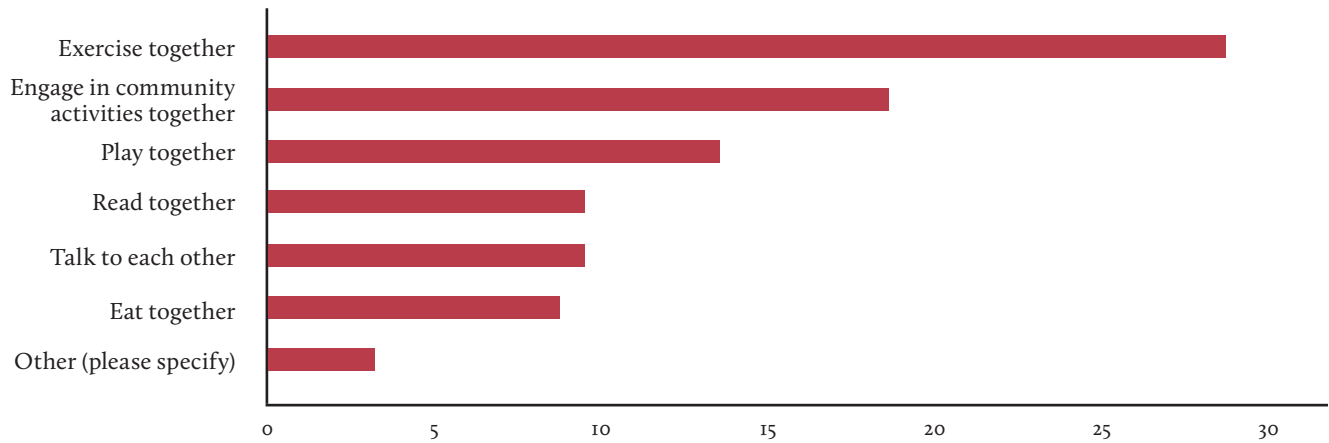
Survey respondents who work in the early childhood system identified love, community involvement as well as communication and language as what makes the families they serve strong.



## What do you wish you could do more of to increase your family's health?

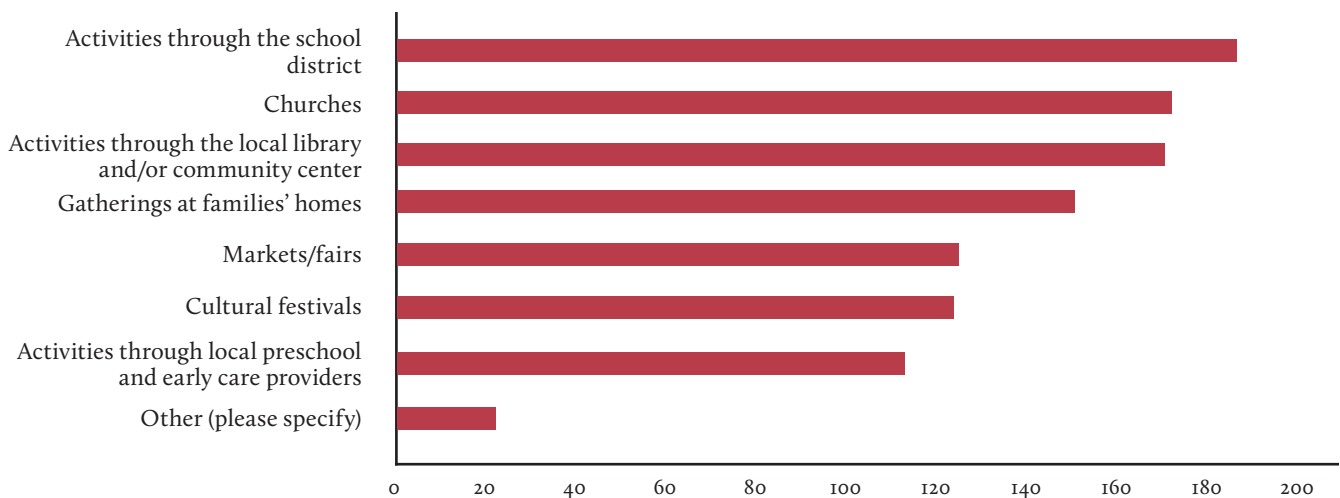
### Check all that apply.

Survey respondents identified exercising together, engaging in community activities together, and playing together as activities that they wish they could do more with their families to keep their families healthy.



## What opportunities are there in your community for families to connect with each other? Please select all that apply.

Survey respondents identified activities through the school district, faith communities and local community centers/libraries as opportunities for families with young children to connect with one another.

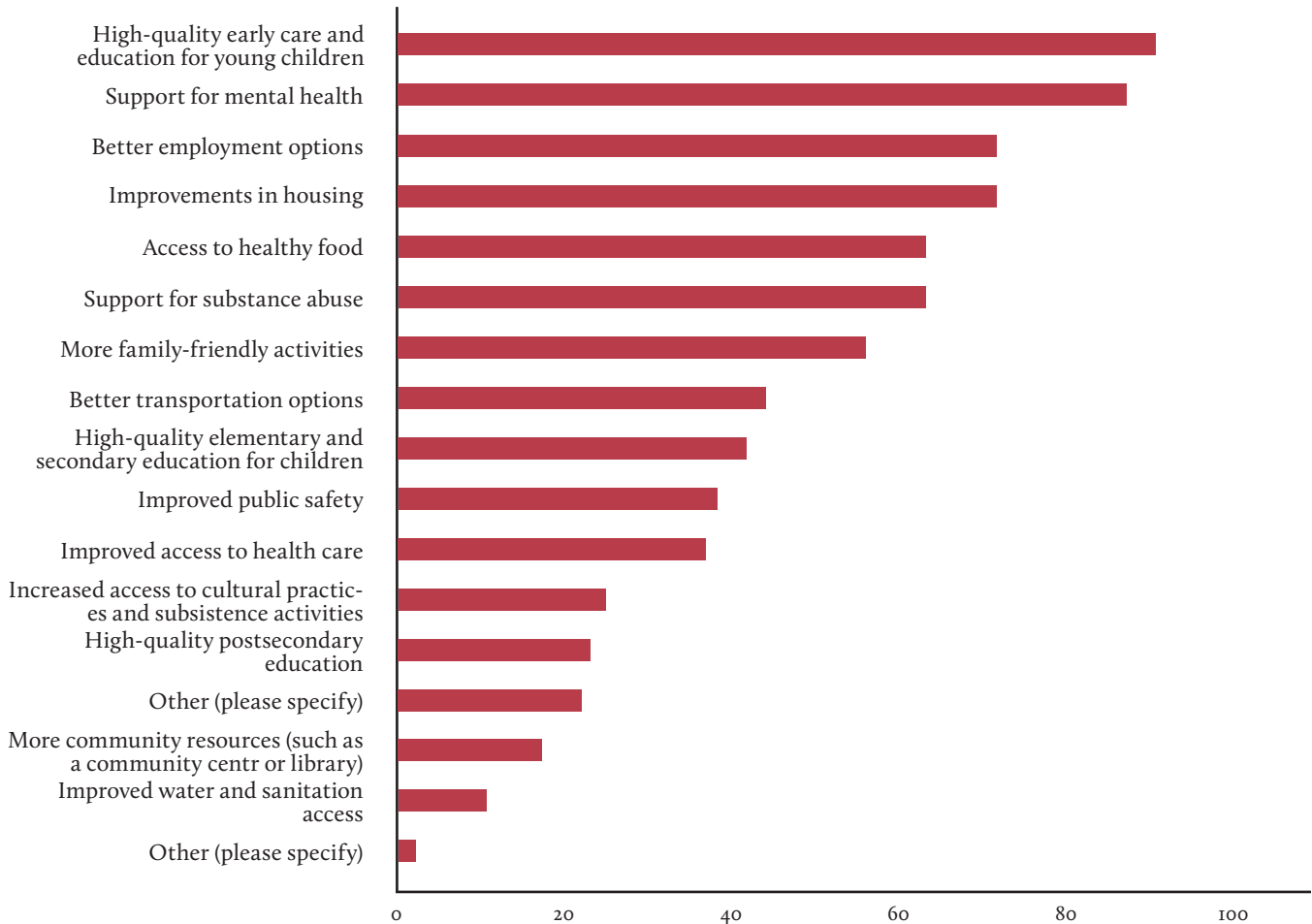




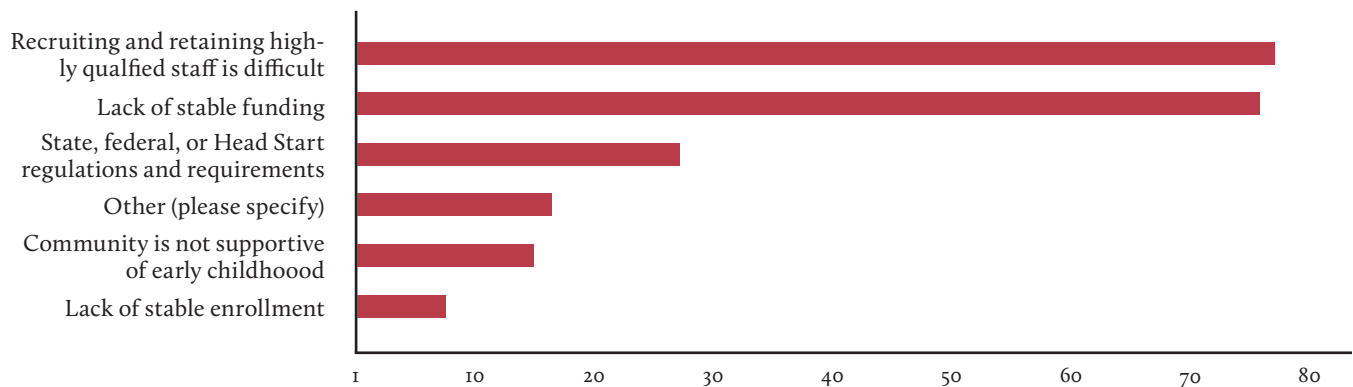
## What does your community need to support safe, stable, and healthy families?

### Please select the 2 most urgent needs for your community.

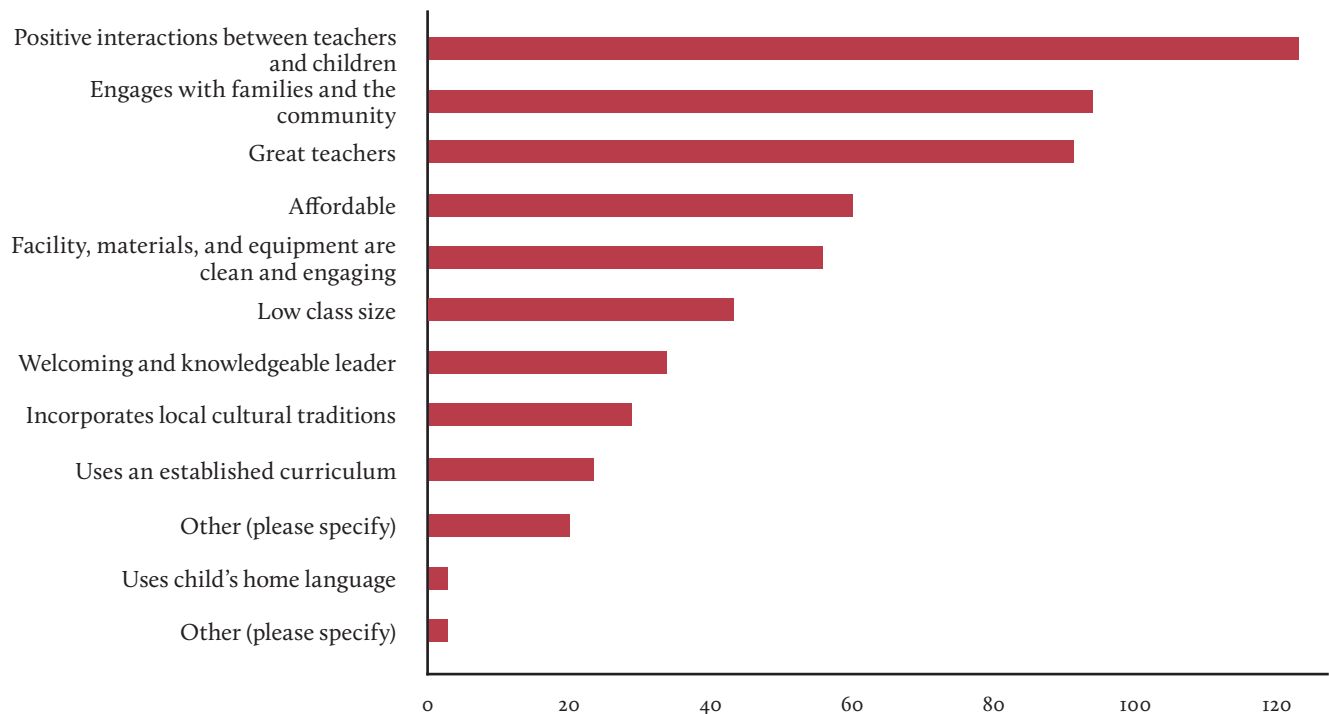
Survey respondents identified high quality early care and education for young children, support for mental health, and improvements in housing as the top three needs their communities need to support safe, stable and healthy families.



## What factors make it challenging to offer a high-quality early learning program in your community?



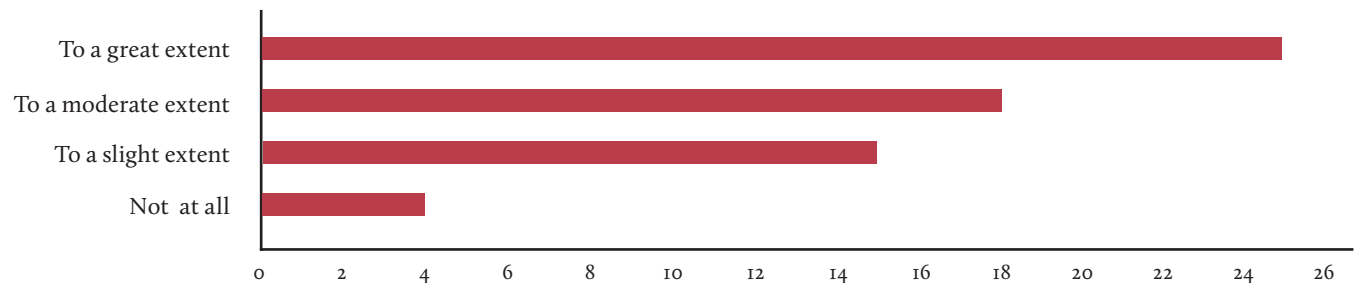
## What do you think makes an early learning program high-quality? Please select the two items you think are most important.



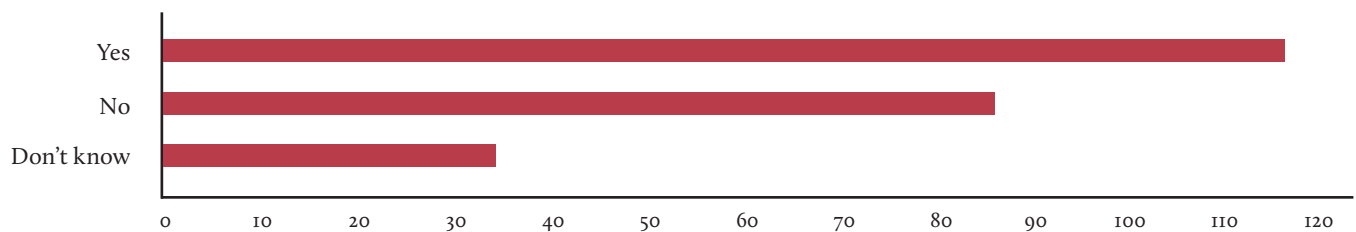
## Accessibility and Affordability

If child care is available in a community, survey respondents indicated that the cost of child care places a significant burden on families and households with young children.

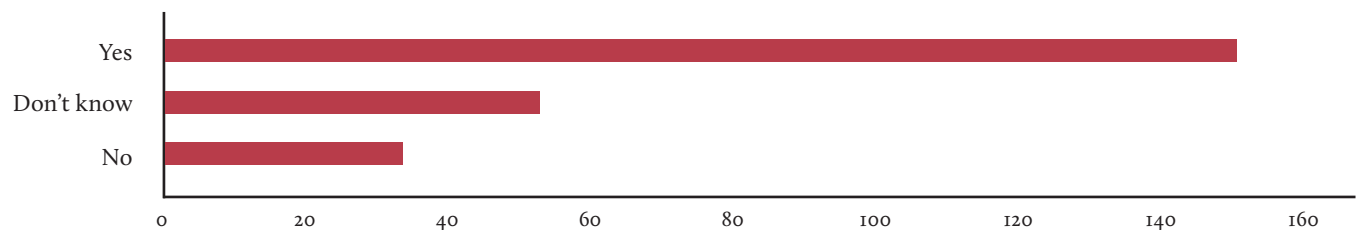
### To what extent do the costs of paying for child care or early childhood education interfere with your other family plans?



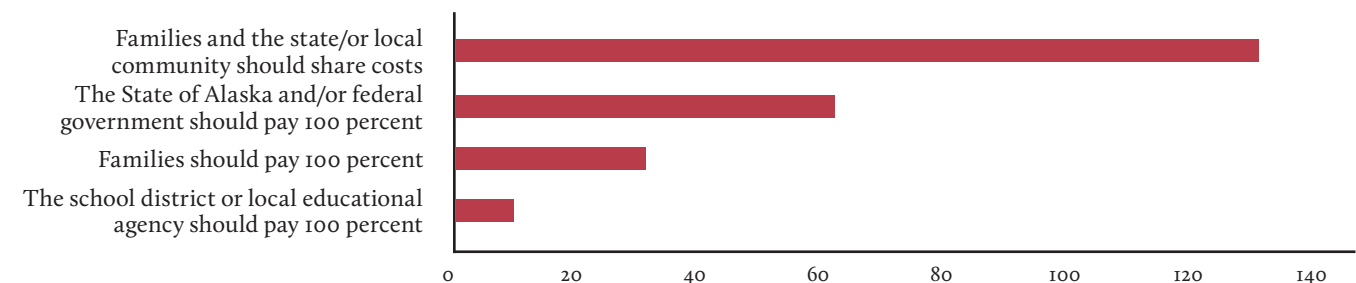
### Do you think there are affordable early learning options in your community?



### From your perspective, do the costs of paying for early learning programs make it so people don't use programs they need?



### Who do you think should pay for child care?



## **Survey Conclusion**

Survey responses confirmed concerns and strengths identified by participants in other stakeholder engagement activities. Survey respondents indicated that love is the foundation for strong families, there is a need for more opportunities for families to exercise/play together and that families can thrive when they have strong connections to their community. Communities, providers, and families are eager to bolster their support for young children and their households through access to affordable and quality early childhood programs, and meeting basic needs like housing and hunger are important to these Alaskans. Funding of early childhood care and education and ensured access to basic needs, including full spectrum health care, were consistently identified by survey respondents as priorities for communities to be able to better serve young children and their families. The survey responses were considered along with the stakeholder session themes as the plan content was developed, reviewed and finalized.

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING NEXT STEPS**

The stakeholder engagement activities and JTF efforts during 2019 and 2020 were integral to the development of Early Childhood Alaska: A Strategic Direction for 2020-2025. During March 2020, final plan content was refined after consideration of all the collected data and stakeholder input. This Strategic Planning Process Report and Appendices will be available as a reference to all Alaskans as the early childhood strategic plan is implemented.



EARLY CHILDHOOD ALASKA: A STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR 2020-2025

# Appendix A

## 2020 Stakeholder Engagement Reports



# Bethel Early Childhood System Meeting Bethel, Napakiak, Atmautluak, Nightmute, and Eek, Alaska

February 4, 2020, 1:00-3:00 PM

Lower Kuskokwim School District Board Room



## ABOUT THE MEETING

**16** *Participants*



In Bethel, people working in the early childhood system convened to provide feedback on the statewide early childhood planning process. In addition to 10 individuals representing local early childhood entities, video conferencing allowed for participation of individuals in Napakiak, Atmautluak, Nightmute and Eek. This discussion provided valuable insights for consideration in the strategic plan. Highlights are summarized below, followed by long-hand notes of the meeting.



## MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

### CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ARE HEALTHY, SAFE + STABLE

Resilient, loving, and connected families make the community strong.

Speaking the language, maintaining connections to culture, and being strong in one's identity supports healthy and stable families.

Harvesting and eating local subsistence foods and providing other fresh, nutritious options in the community will benefit both parents and children.

Affordable transportation, running water, and suitable housing would go a long way towards meeting the basic needs of families in Bethel and the surrounding communities.



## QUALITY EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Quality early care for both the child and the mother begins in the womb.

Cost should not be a barrier to quality early learning.

A system that teaches the child about culture, language, and tradition from the very beginning will benefit the whole family.

New, functional, and spacious facilities for pre-K, transitional preschool, and afterschool activities would allow for higher quality care.

Access to services is hindered by lack of transportation.

Transitions could be made easier on parents, teachers, and children by having a familiar and calming presence, like an elder, involved and in the classroom.

Transitions are also made easier when there is communication and coordination across agencies.

Being involved in the community, learning and speaking the Yup'ik language with the children, and the support of colleagues make early childhood system workers happy in their jobs.

Worker wellness depends on self-care, stepping back when needed, supportive co-workers and leaders, and having some degree of autonomy.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

Basic infrastructure including clean water/sewer, housing remain a need, especially in villages.

The federal, state, and local systems need to be aligned.

Funding should be shared and leveraged, and programs need to be held accountable.

## LONGHAND NOTES

### IN ATTENDANCE

Carolyn Peter (Children's Advocacy Center-Tundra Women's Coalition), Nicole Mochin (CAC), Carmen Pitka (CAC), Jeremy Brink (CAC), Elona Aluskak (CAC), Dianna St. Vincent (Office of Children's Services), Beverly Turner (Association of Village Council Presidents), Carol Hunter (AVCP), Kristin Henke (Lower Kuskokwim School District), April Blevins (LKSD)

### IN ATTENDANCE VIA VIDEO/TELE-CONFERENCE

Sally Benedict (LKSD, Napakiak), Pauline Wasaka (LKSD, Atmautluak), LeAnn Aper (LKSD, Atmautluak), Georgia Berry (LKSD, Nightmute), Rayna Hartz (LKSD, Eek), Lisa Covey (LKSD)

### OTHERS

Denali Daniels and Erin Willahan (Denali Daniels and Associates), Betsy Brennenman (Association of Alaska School Boards)



## OVERVIEW

Early childhood system participants from the Bethel region and surrounding areas gathered in person and via video/teleconference to discuss Alaska's early childhood system, strengths and challenges, and their experiences working in early childhood systems.

## INTRODUCTION ACTIVITY

Participants engaged in an introduction and livepoll activity as an icebreaker.

## STRATEGIC PLAN DISCUSSION

A discussion was facilitated through a series of open-ended questions. The discussion that emerged from these questions is documented below.

### What keeps the families you serve strong?

- Language
- Resiliency, being able to bounce back after anything difficult
- Communication
  - » Triad of communication between parents, children, teachers
- Love
  - » Even through trauma and chaos, legal guardians still love their children
- Asking parents what they need makes a big impact with what's going on internally (in themselves and their home unit)
- Families' needs are all different
- Asking how can I help you? What do you need?

### What makes families healthy?

- Involvement
  - » Causes a chain reaction to find more services and get families to a more stable place
- Building a relationship of trust and love
  - » Once families trust you, you can help one another
- Identity

- » Knowing and understanding, being able to be open
- » Language
- » Being strong in their identity
- Visits to build relationships
  - » Open mindedness
  - » Honesty
  - » Identify with families

### What things do you do or want to do to support families?

- From birth up, start with the mother (prenatal)
  - » Support development
- Not just during school year but all year round
- Giving suggestions, not telling them what to do or how to do it
  - » Respecting and honoring families
- Language skill development in whatever language is the language of the family

### What do healthy mealtimes look like for children and families?

- Varies from home to home
- Predominantly subsistence
  - » Anything caught in our region in the wild is healthy
    - Harvested eggs, seal, etc.
- Home cooked and around the table
- Enough
- Substituting sweets, soda, candy with something healthy
  - » Having that routine and educating parents on suggestions
- Having families share with you: what do you feed your child?
  - » Suggesting and recommending ways of healthy eating
- School program offers a great breakfast and lunch but doesn't offer snacks for preschool kids during school
  - » Don't get any fresh fruit or veggies, don't

know why that disappeared

- WIC - Nutrition education
  - » Challenges:
    - If we are doing nutrition education have to check off lists to meet funding requirements
    - Need the mom there to get credit for doing it
    - Requires strategic planning
  - » WIC would love more info from folks
  - » Food security is a big deal

**Family connections in the community- what opportunities are there for families to connect with one another? What are the opportunities in your community?**

- Examples: Kids Fair, Bethel with Kids, Toddler Time, Readings at the library, Saturday markets, etc.
- A lot of opportunities out in the community but the resources that families lack here can be a barrier to attendance to community gatherings:
  - » Transportation with kids can be risky
    - Percentage of people who want to make it but can't
- In the villages there is stuff happening all the time
  - » Inter-family gatherings
  - » Always that opportunity in the villages, thru schools too
- Migrant ed and early childhood monthly activities
- Preschool family engagements

**Transportation**

- If you don't own a car, there are cabs
  - » \$24 one way to get to preschool- can end up costing \$60/day
- City bus only runs certain locations and certain times

» Doesn't hit all the major locations you need it to hit

- New schools are far away from village sites
  - » Attendance rates would severely drop if bus was shut down for a month
- Preschoolers not allowed to ride the bus

**Thinking big- what ideas do you have to support safe, stable, healthy families?**

- Health in my village would mean having running water
  - » We are still hauling water and sewage- health means water
- VPSO or troopers
- Transit of going from Anchorage to Bethel to village to village
- A lot of families served by AVCP need better living situation for their kids
  - » Housing
  - » Home renovations where children are being served
    - AVCP child care staff have been traveling to the homes and doing inspections to see where to make renovations

**What does high quality early childhood education look like to you?**

- Very free
  - » Doesn't cost anything
- Starts from the beginning in the womb
- Tradition, culture, letting the child know about seasons right from the beginning
  - » Child acquires an ear for learning
- Letting him/her know their language right from the beginning
- Individualized
  - » Kids are at different paces, allow for kids to learn at their own pace
- Involves the whole family- parents and children
- Young children coming in and learning through exploring



- » A lot of movement
- » Parents are right there along with them working as a team to develop their education
- Independence
  - » All young kids should be taught independence

### **What are the barriers to high quality childhood education?**

- Money, policies, rules, regulations
- Income requirements
  - » Everyone should qualify, regardless of income
  - » Families who fall thru the cracks
  - » Only guideline should be their age
- Transportation issues
  - » Parents who want their kids in early learning program and have no way to pick them up
- Stability in funding
  - » If you had a stable funding foundation, you would have a stable staff

### **Who should pay for early childhood programs?**

- BIA
- Changes to eligibility requirements
  - » Find ways to make parents and families eligible to come into the program
- Redoing 3-yr plan (AVCP)
- Parents and teachers (need) college courses
- Partners?
- AVCP will be traveling out with Head Start to see if there's space available to renovate into a child care center
- LKSD runs into capacity and now funding
  - » "If we want strong families and children who are ready for school, federal and state governments need to be willing to pay for programs and hold programs accountable"
    - It's alright for state or feds to want ac-

countability

- Funding for prenatal, early care, all the way up

### **When children experience a transition into a new situation, what are the best practices currently in place to make these transitions most smooth?**

- Longevity and sustainability
  - » Working thru situations from the beginning
  - » How can we work thru something and then build from that?
    - How to work thru strengths and weaknesses in a way that is respectful, mutual, and unbiased
- All of these different types of transitions being experienced
  - » Transitional preschool classrooms
    - Smaller and more staffed
    - Spots for kids housed at TWC and OCS
  - » Families who we know are transient- making sure service is continued when families move
  - » Takes extra communication, but is also about building trust and communication
- OCS is trying to do a lot smoother transition
  - » Prepare ahead of time and give trainings to mitigate behavioral issues
  - » Getting staff and foster parents more training
  - » Working with LKSD a lot more
  - » Teacher aides who kids can identify with or relate to
    - A familiar face helps transition more smoothly
- LKSD allows me as a parent or grandparent to help with that transition; can go into the classroom and let that child know its ok and safe here
- Having an elder in our program really helps
  - » Presence of an elder will calm the whole situation down



- Preschool in the elder's home

### **What makes you happy in your job?**

- Knowing roles and responsibilities and having the ability to use Yup'ik language and work together
- Support
  - » From staff, colleagues, supervisors
  - » Having that support mirrored back from others who do the same type of victim service work
- Teamwork and support
  - » Village staff who stepped up and came to Bethel to train us (AVCP)
    - Aniak, Kasigluk
  - » Able to call village staff; we all work as a team

### **If resources were not an issue, what would you prioritize?**

- Quality Teachers
  - » Dedicated, trained to do best practices, who love working with children
- Self-care
  - » If you don't have that you won't be fully functional to help others
    - Knowing if there's something you need to work on within yourself, or triggers, you can have space to step back and process that in a healthy way
  - » Support
  - » Teacher time-out
  - » This can be heavy work that can wear on you
    - Helping others, but neglecting self
  - » Working with programs and adults, wellness comes in when I spend time with the children
    - Focus on the child, the children
- More time in the day, so we can get more done

with the kids

- » Dedicated teacher for morning and afternoon child care, with their own space, adequate space,
  - Barrier: New school not allowed to budget in any room for PreK
- Nightmute changed the design for its new school and added an extra room for PreK that wasn't in the design initially
- More parent involvement
- If given limitless funds, would divide it up to everybody
  - » Every agency and staff and individual families
    - Autonomy
- Money to turn K-12 system into PreK-12; "so every village in the Delta has a beautiful classroom and dedicated teacher for 3 and 4-year-olds"
- OCS Services
  - » We (OCS) have to outsource to Anchorage and Fairbanks
  - » Long-term, in-patient treatment
  - » Having to outsource pulls them away from connections in tribes and communities and cultures
  - » Local is better
- Afterschool programs for older kids
- Space for children
  - » Early child care centers in each village
  - » If given limitless funds would want a room dedicated for preschool; where parents could come for 3 hours and get paid, with a paid sitter provided for other kids, and healthy food and health aides
  - » Sheltered playground or play deck designed for young students
  - » Child care centered in the communities, for parents with kids under 3 so they have time to work and look for work, and a playground for young children.

# Bethel Family Friendly Community Meeting Bethel, Alaska

February 4, 2020, 5:30-7:30 PM

Orutsararmiut Native Council (ONC) Multipurpose Building



## ABOUT THE MEETING



This meeting brought together members of the Bethel community, including families with children, to provide input on the plan for early childhood. Children were offered activities during the meeting and were free to come and go on their parents' laps during the discussions. Community members talked about their experiences with local early childhood systems, including strengths, challenges, needs, and visions for the future. Meeting highlights are included below, followed by longhand notes from the meeting.

## MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

### CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ARE HEALTHY, SAFE + STABLE

Subsistence activities are spiritual and sacred practices that are positive and uplifting for families and the community.

Traditions, like Yup'ik dancing, cutting fish, Yuuyaraq, Cama'i, and other ways for people to gather keep the community connected and strong.

Yup'ik immersion and spending time with elders are important parts of connecting with traditions and culture.



Yukon-Kuskokwim  
HEALTH CORPORATION



## QUALITY EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Indigenizing child care programs and using best practices developed by the community (like Qasgiq) will benefit children and families in Bethel.

Waiting lists and the lack of quality and licensed facilities limit the ability to provide services.

Loan programs and other financial assistance have barriers to use.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

Departments, like the tribe, council, state and federal government need to be aligned and work better together.

Transportation options are expensive and limited.

Advocacy needs to happen on behalf of the community at the local, state and federal level.

More schools like the Yup'ik Immersion School can help with transitions and tying the community together.

## LONGHAND NOTES

### OVERVIEW

Community members in the Bethel area gathered to discuss their experiences with local early childhood systems, including strengths, challenges, needs, and visions for the future. After introductions, attendees engaged in a focused discussion around questions organized by a draft strategic plan framework. The discussion is summarized below.

### STRATEGIC PLAN DISCUSSION

#### What keeps families strong in Bethel?

- Subsistence
  - » Keeps your family unit working together for the same common goal
  - » Very spiritual and sacred
  - » Always a positive and uplifting practice
- Tradition
  - » Eskimo dancing during the winter
  - » Connection with elders
  - » Yup'ik immersion, with elders in the room
  - » Cutting fish and giving to the elders
- Keeping the community connected
  - » Involvement with groups
  - » Participation in activities
  - » Gathering
  - » Keeping families and communities strong
- Need for spaces to gather in
  - » The community has already identified we need a gym or place that's accessible to meet and be a community
    - Community gym would be really positive place
    - Fees are a huge barrier to current gym space
- Need for gainful employment, but also flexible employment
  - » High cost of living and high poverty rate

#### What do healthy mealtimes look like?

- During evening time
- If we have subsistence activities, we eat when it's all done
- Bethel is small, but we are all pretty busy with extracurriculars
- Always at the table together
  - » No tv or electronics
- Dinnertime is a healthy mealtime, even if its late



#### What are other opportunities for families to connect?

- Tribal government is doing a lot of community outreach
- Traditional ways of gathering, teaching, and being together
  - » Qasgiq
  - » Alternative way of healthy living based on our values
  - » Yuuyaraq
  - » Festivals 3-4 times a year
- Meeting the community's needs and being flexible to the participants
- Subsistence coordinators
- Healing to wellness program
  - » Reunification with community and family
- Churches
- Family nights at schools

- Community activities include:
  - » Library- toddler time, winter fest
  - » 4H Club
  - » Sports- wrestling, basketball, etc.
  - » Cama'i Festival

### **Where do you want to see early childhood in 2030?**

- Indigenizing child care programs and expanding ONC programs and models
    - » “ONC is dreaming big, our dream is to have a very indigenized child care program and expand in all areas where we can meet tribal youth and families where they are at”
    - » Not necessarily about best practices being brought into our community from outside
      - History of outsiders coming in to implement ideas and those not taking off
    - » Already have own best practices
      - Qasgiq
      - Form of being in tune with who you are as a Native person
    - » Many lessons of our (ONC's) Healthy Families program that most importantly benefit our tribal population
    - » Council administration and departments working together
      - Building within the tribe
  - Improving histories of chronic absenteeism
    - » Big shift in the culture of the high school from twenty years ago until now
      - More delinquency and absenteeism
      - Not as much importance placed on education and graduating
      - Native kids not believing in themselves or dreaming big
  - Internal multi-disciplinary approaches
    - » Serving sensitive populations
      - Culture shock going from the village to Bethel
    - » Servicewise we (ONC) do a great job wrap-
- ping around child care
- Also have our social service dept and one-on-one counseling
  - » ONC has child care providers but it's limited
    - Sometimes the issue we have is families being apprehensive because of negative experiences with other agencies like OCS, etc.
  - Housing crisis in the region as a whole
  - Need for a licensed daycare center
    - » Pre-school waiting lists are prohibitively long
      - One parent didn't get in until December, still didn't have anywhere for youngest to go
    - » Some co-workers can't work fulltime because they don't have child care
      - YKHC needs a child care facility
    - » Centering pregnancy – prenatal
      - Sometimes moms can't come because they don't have child care
  - Child care that has
    - » Equitability
    - » Licensing
    - » Afterschool options
    - » Stability
      - The same people, no screen time (phones, etc.)
    - » Bright, positive environment
  - Existing child care systems and challenges:





- » Currently two options- AVCP Head Start and LKSD Center
  - Child care assistance
  - Loan programs to help pay for child care
  - Subsistence as a way to half day pre-school program
- Migrant education subsistence program requirements: participants need to spend 7 overnights, at least 20 miles away. They must participate in berry picking or fishing.
- Waiting lists for all preschools. Over 6 months wait for child to get any kind of education
  - » Over \$500/month per child
  - » Income-based eligibility makes preschool inaccessible to many
- Income requirements meant child couldn't go to school because both parents worked
  - » Other barriers include staffing
  - » Importance of dedication, reliability, training, positive attitude
- Indigenous-led and designed programs/integration of Alaska Native culture in programs
  - » Example: 1960s Head Start program in Nunapitchuk
    - Doubtful there was any real cultural initiative or Yup'ik-driven thought put into design from the top
    - But it was all staffed by local Yup'ik men in this community, this meant:
      - Fresh black fish every day
      - Traditional foods
      - Language
  - » "These programs have come a long way, for Alaska Natives especially"
    - Yup'ik people being more encouraged, and designed into programs (Local control over program design and implementation)
- Very positive foundational experience for children at this age
- » No matter who they are or where they come from
- » Encouraging the integration of Alaska Native culture as early as possible
  - "In true Yup'ik tradition, the training started from the womb, before the child is born...I encourage that thought to be incorporated"
- » The other part that drove that program to success was how close the communities and families were
  - The community was closely tied together
- » "I don't like to say we are missing that, but things are changing and have changed"
- » What better way to bring that connection to our children than to instill that right from the get-go
- » Parent of non-Native LKSD pre-schooler: Non-Native kids also having opportunity to learn so much about the culture here
  - "Really glad my son is going to school and getting that cultural education...The pro-







gram my son is in has been really great...  
I'm grateful for the cultural experiences  
being taught to my kids"

- LKSD Teacher had the experience and knowledge of Bethel to bring in elders from community. Also, that the teacher welcomed and encouraged parents to participate
- Love
  - » A sign kids feel happy and safe is when they want to go back to school
    - Knowing your kid is safe, happy, loved
- Universal PreK
  - » Developing partnerships to give children the best that we can
  - » Some states pay for pre-school
- Transitions
  - » Early Start as helpful to transition into Kindergarten
  - » Yup'ik immersion school – "we got really lucky with his teacher"
    - "She recognized he didn't go to preschool and was able to meet his needs"
    - Having parents sit in the room is helpful

#### **Ideas for moving forward if funding were not an issue**

- Higher education
  - » We can help someone go to school to become teachers or child care providers

- Commitment to good grades, scholarships, rental assistance
- » Specializing some scholarships for specific work fields to meet the needs of our community
  - The students who plan to come back to our community are the students who we will be funding
- Child care centers for major employers
  - » Strategically placed in neighborhoods on the way to work
- Transportation concerns
  - » Transportation is always the first question asked when processing applications
  - » Really expensive to live here
  - » Some of the ONC programs do offer cab slips
  - » Bussing system is hard when it's cold, especially if you have kids
  - » Less cabs here than before, and they are more expensive
- Boys and Girls Club?
  - » Expensive to run and there's no adequate space in the community
  - » Always open to discussing if more commercial space becomes available, but this is a challenge
  - » Teen Center- limited by age
- Opportunities for older kids to engage





- » Changing start times to allow older kids to get out of school earlier to watch younger kids at home
- » Older kids teaching younger kids, teaching them good values
- » Program for high schoolers to help with the child care
- Incorporating early child care class into high schools
  - » Scholarships if they want to go on to early childhood later
  - » Highschool students helping run preschools
- There is a lot of advocacy that can be done at local, state, and federal level
  - » Knowing when that advocacy needs to take place
  - » Collectively, alongside other tribes and agencies
- Collaborating with different programs, working together, harder
- Helping parents heal from trauma they've had as children
- More activities for younger children
  - » Can't do anything until you're 4 years old (swimming, etc.)
- Yup'ik Immersion in Bethel
  - » Founded by parents coming together
    - Strong commitment from parents

because we all signed a contract to be supportive parents

- Turnover and changes
- Academic Policy Committee
- Parent involvement
  - » Crucial
  - » In Yup'ik culture that's always been taught
  - » Incorporating parents as much as possible, because it's obvious that it's necessary and will give a whole lot of benefits to the children
  - » Trying to maneuver through these technicalities now to make it work
    - Providing parents with an invitation for specific dates, times, activities, reason, and to know why is helpful for getting them in the door
      - ◇ Every month there is a different event we are invited to – LKSD does a good job of that
      - ◇ Grandmother being invited to join in on class time
        - \* Honoring that short relationship with this visitor
  - » Parents as Teachers curriculum
  - » Parent involvement for older kids too
    - Just because kids are older doesn't mean it's not still important to engage parents.



# Statewide Early Childhood System Meeting Anchorage Association for the Education Young Children (AAEYC) Conference Anchorage, Alaska

February 6, 2020, 9:45-11:45 AM



## ABOUT THE MEETING

**9** *Participants*



**aaeyc**

Anchorage Association for the  
Education of Young Children

During the Anchorage Association for the Education of Young Children (AEYC) Early Childhood Conference attendees from a range of geographic locations in Alaska gathered during a dedicated break-out session. Regions included the Aleutians, Western Alaska, the Bristol Bay region, the Northwest Arctic, Utqiagvik, Kodiak and Southcentral Alaska. Participants discussed the statewide strategic plan, the

strengths and challenges of the current early childhood system, and their experiences working in the early childhood system in Alaska. Facilitators guided the group in a discussion by asking questions relevant to the draft plan framework. There were many engaged and enthusiastic conversations around early childhood, best practices, hopes and dreams, and big picture ideas.

## MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

### CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ARE HEALTHY, SAFE + STABLE

Healthy families are families where the parents are involved, the family members are connected, and they have strong and supportive relationships with others around them.

Families need to both be aware of available resources and be able to access them through a resource hub, community center, or other centralized access point.

Having parents involved in education from the very beginning is essential. Providing parental education opportunities and having books in the home will strengthen families overall. If it isn't co-created with them, it is happening "to" them.

### QUALITY EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Quality learning for young children is language-rich, culturally relevant, consistent, and play-focused.

Barriers to affordability, accessibility, and quality are transportation, program funding, and an educated and engaged workforce.

CDL certification is unavailable off the road system, making bus drivers difficult to recruit.

Communities too small for Head Start do not have services.



## INFRASTRUCTURE

For successful transitions, ideas like a kindergarten “on-ramp,” having more parental involvement, and orientations could support parents and children during these times.

The early childhood system workforce benefits from more access to state-provided education and incentives, reflective supervision, funding for travel and administrative support.

The workforce can avoid burnout through → better self-care → creating a positive program culture → conscious discipline → reducing compassion fatigue

Grant requirements hamper programs’ ability to provide consistent early childhood programming.

Alaska needs a functioning, comprehensive early childhood system, and funders need to know that change is what the families we serve want and need.



## OVERVIEW

Early childhood system professionals from across Alaska attended the Anchorage Association for the Education of Young Children Conference. A self-selected group of conference attendees gathered in person to discuss Alaska’s early childhood system, strengths and challenges, and their experiences working in early childhood systems.

## STRATEGIC PLAN DISCUSSION

A discussion was facilitated using a series of questions organized by the draft plan framework. The discussion that emerged from these questions is documented below.

### When you think about the families you serve, what makes families strong?

- Strong home stability: steady income
- Employment
- Kids know where mom and dad are
- Resources
- Strong community
- Parenting and early childhood development education available for parents and guardians
- Community resources known and available in crisis

## LONGHAND NOTES

### PARTICIPANTS

Nancy Roman (thread, Anchorage), Christina Eubanks (Hillcrest, Anchorage), Hilary Seifert (Aleutians East Borough School District), Sandra Main (Lower Yukon School District), Amber Kresl (Lake Peninsula School District), Amanda Sanford (Kodiak Island Borough School District), Tanya Wimer (Chugach School District), Candice Kelsey-Baldwin (Nikaitchuat Ilisagviat), LaRel Woods (Northwest Arctic School District)

### OTHERS

Denali Daniels, Britta Hamre (Denali Daniels + Associates) and Christina Hulquist (Alaska Department of Health and Social Services)

- RELATIONSHIPS
  - » between parent and child
  - » between like-minded families
- Access and connection to resources available
- Barriers: time, language, labels
- Trauma/institutional involvement/intervention
  - Crisis → increased need [for resources] → less time and energy [in households and families] → diminished capacity to access/receive support
- Connectedness
- Need for a hub for mental health resources for families
- Expanding community centers

QUALITY LEARNING EXPERIENCES	
Quality	Barriers to Quality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language rich</li> <li>• Play focused</li> <li>• Culturally relevant</li> <li>• Intentional</li> <li>• Responsive [relationships, to children and family needs]</li> <li>• Access to nature</li> <li>• Continuity</li> <li>• Consistency (w/ in programs)</li> <li>• Reflective supervision</li> <li>• Vision</li> <li>• Youth cohort/peer consistency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost</li> <li>• Educated workforce</li> <li>• Physical space</li> <li>• Time and cost; time to be intentional, planning time, mental health supports for workforce</li> <li>• Grant funding specifics; what is followed is not best practices, but grant requirements</li> <li>• Funding</li> </ul>
Accessibility	Barriers to Accessibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employer sponsored</li> <li>• Private → elite programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Without grant funding early childhood program doesn't exist</li> <li>• Communities too small for Head Starts</li> <li>• No space for Head Start, same locations</li> <li>• Workforce and support staff training</li> <li>• Bus drivers (CDL certification availability in off road system communities)</li> </ul>
Affordability	Barriers to Affordability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If school doesn't provide early childhood programming, affordable programming doesn't exist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost of transportation</li> <li>• High cost of private care and afterschool programs</li> </ul>

**What do you do or wish you could do to support families?**

- Have books in the home
- Reading to children
- Offering food and child care when parenting resources are offered
- Offer supports such as: transportation, food and child care

**What do healthy mealtimes look like?**

- Depends across the state
- Families need to perceive that something is added value to their life
- Food brings community together
- Economic/cultural bias/negative messaging
- Institutional trauma

**What opportunities do you have to ask the families that you serve how you can better incorporate their family/community's culture into your program?**

- Meal time
- Connecting in communities
- Social media
- IRA, study nights, snacks [Selawik]
- PTA events [Kodiak]

**What is the difference between quality and high quality?**

- Funding
- Time
- Increased capacity of support services
- A high-quality program has the resources to have enough staffing for time to be intentional
- Quality is not harmful
- The more you can pay for quality teachers the better your program can be
- Support for PreK educators
- Turnover impacts quality

**Transitions and/or turnover best practices?**

- Child in transition support
- “3-year old program”, once a week meeting with parents and kids in the classroom (prior to PreK enrollment)
- Preschool starts 2 weeks later than other grades in Kodiak Island Borough School District, pre-school staff support students during the Kinder transition
- Kinder “on ramp”, four-week transition to full school day
- ILP communications, IEP by age is not happening (remote areas especially)
- Continuing work the state is doing to reduce preschool suspensions → teaching behaviors as a foundation
- Abrupt shift to kindergarten
- Kids that need a hand-off
- Continuity of care
- Flexibility in educator's schedule
- Parents presence in/for transitions
  - » feasibility in schedule
- Affordability
- Parents may struggle with transition more than child

**Workforce**

- Extensive training [state provided]
- Access to reflective supervision
- More admin support positions and funding for said positions

**What's working?**

- Grant funding that allows traveling → relationships with all staff and training for workforce
- thread coaching + quality initiatives

**Benefits/Wages**

- Compensation for professional development
- Not eligible for same benefits as K-12 peers

- Potential to reduce turnover
- Support state's technology infrastructure
- No school psych training in state
- Leadership investment/development
- Avoid burnout → self-care → creating a positive program culture → conscious discipline → reduce compassion fatigue

### **Infrastructure**

- Functional comprehensive early childhood system
- Funders need to know that system change is what families need

### **Funding**

- Ensure economic diversity in the classroom
- Family and child education
- PreK population included in child count
- Universal PreK
- Set funding (reliable)
- "Not so grant reliant"

### **Data**

- Income of households that are being served
- Cost of care (ask funders what we NEED, not what we anticipate receiving)
- Ability to define quality and high quality
- Risk factor tracking
- Need data to create vision and to gain buy in

### **Governance**

- Messaging and packaging of data

### **Who makes decisions?**

- School boards
- Voters
- Governor
- State legislators
- Congress



# Statewide Early Childhood System Meeting Anchorage Association for the Education Young Children (AAEYC) Conference Anchorage, Alaska

February 7, 2020, 9:45-11:45 AM



## ABOUT THE MEETING

**7** *Participants*



**aaeyc**

Anchorage Association for the  
Education of Young Children

For a second day in a row, during the Anchorage Association for the Education of Young Children Conference (AEYC) in Anchorage, conference attendees from Aleutians, Western Alaska, the Bristol Bay region, the Northwest Arctic, and South-central Alaska. Participants discussed the statewide strategic plan, the strengths and challenges of the current early childhood system, and their experiences working in the early childhood system in Alaska. Facilitators guided the group in a discussion by asking questions relevant to the draft plan framework.

## MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

### CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ARE HEALTHY, SAFE + STABLE

Families are healthy, safe, and stable when their basic needs, such as food, security and housing, are met.

Strong community connections, social supports, clear roles and responsibilities, and the ability to access resources are important for families to succeed.

Having providers that are community-based and that understand, and respect culture allows parents to build trusting and collaborative relationships with providers.

The state should pursue cooperative partnerships with local tribes and councils where possible, so that communities have a say in the system.

### QUALITY EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Quality education is culturally responsive, supportive, and the education model meets the needs of each child.

The state licensing regulations, the duration of background checks, and access to training limit the ability of early childhood programs to hire qualified staff and provide quality care.

Investment in early childhood needs to come from families, but we should also look for solutions and potential partners from within the business community.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

The statewide workforce shortage and the loss of early childhood education programs at UAA are cause for concern when looking toward the future.

A framework with established roles and expectations for automatic onboarding and training for early childhood program staff that includes reflective supervision would benefit the entire early childhood workforce.

Alignment is needed within the early childhood system including: funders, rural and urban communities, state and local governments, tribal organizations and all of the various programs working in the field.

## LONGHAND NOTES

### PARTICIPANTS

Cedric Houston (Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation), Mandy Evans (Sitka School District), Beverly Mierzejek (Aleutian Pribilof Islands Head Start), Robin O'Mara (Joy Child Development Center), Mary Taylor (Joy Child Development Center), LeEsia O'Sullivan (Southwest Region Schools), Christina Hensley (Native Village of Kotzebue), Joy Lyon (AEYC/ thread Southeast), Susan Jensen (Bayshore Early Learning Center)

### OVERVIEW

Early childhood system professionals from across Alaska attended the Anchorage Association for the Education of Young Children Conference. A self-selected group of conference attendees gathered in person to discuss Alaska's early childhood system, strengths and challenges, and their experiences working in early childhood systems.

## STRATEGIC PLAN DISCUSSION

A discussion was facilitated using a series of open-ended questions. The discussion that emerged from these questions is documented below.

### Children and families are healthy, safe and stable

- Financial stability
- Loving parents
- A home
- "Each person in the house has a responsibility to make a house a home."
- Responsibility + roles + structure
- Parents trust providers
- Parents request resources
- Strong communities
- Communication between centers and families (both ways)
- Equity of access to high quality early childhood programming
- Quality early learning experiences happen everywhere!
- Understanding and respecting cultures
- Basic needs are met
- Food security

### Supports for families to be healthy, safe and stable?

- Food banks, Child and Adult Food Care Program



- Statewide access, improved communication and connections
- Families in need, hindered by income limits
- If we don't co-create with families it will be happening to them, not with them
- Conversations with tribal leaders and councils asking, "what do you want partnership to look like?"
- Need system alignment (rural and urban)
- Providers need to be community based
- Limited space
- Communication and collaboration efforts

QUALITY LEARNING EXPERIENCES	
Quality	Barriers to Quality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not just in one setting</li> <li>• Training and education opportunities (money, technology)</li> <li>• Culturally responsive</li> <li>• Education model meets needs of each child</li> <li>• Head Start is best practice and great resource</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competition between PreK and Head Start</li> <li>• Parent/family perspectives on what education is</li> <li>• State licensing: immersion school → limits workforce</li> <li>• Lack of continuity (workforce)</li> <li>• Service cut off at age 3; summer months gap</li> </ul>
Accessibility	Barriers to Accessibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation</li> <li>• How do we support parents as kids' first educators?</li> <li>• We want families to invest in some shape or form</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce not available to provide needed services</li> <li>• Public transportation doesn't provide access</li> <li>• Families need care for older siblings in summer</li> </ul>
Affordability	Barriers to Affordability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look at K-12, higher education funding</li> <li>• Costs associated with immunization</li> <li>• Increased reimbursement rates</li> <li>• How much do we want to invest in our future, as a society?</li> <li>• [Look at] Best Starts for Juneau</li> <li>• Solutions from local community, business community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delay in tuition assistance puts burden on families</li> <li>• Travel cost to access/join Head Start</li> <li>• Families with two or more kids, "can you afford to work?"</li> <li>• Communities understanding the barriers/concepts</li> </ul>

### **What is the difference between quality and high quality?**

- The responsive aspect, place based, rooted in the values of your community
- Everybody wants to be connected to place
- Sense of being connected, showing that you care
- Accreditation, public perspectives
- Focus on social emotional skill development
- Programs match families'/child's need for growth
- "Warm hand-off"
- Continuity of care
- Seeking and incorporating information
- High quality comes from experience; ease, classroom based, home visiting, staff able to manage different roles in the community and classroom

### **Transitions**

- Gap in services at age 3
- Program to program transition deserve a warm hand off
- Bigger system is built on a medical model
- Community partnerships
- Services meeting children where they are at
- Learn & Grow → reduce (harm from) transitions
- Early childhood learning experiences not communicated to school districts
- Does everyone involved in the transition understand the developmentally appropriate behavior/needs of the child?
- Is the school ready for the child vs. is the child ready for school?

### **Workforce**

- Statewide workforce shortage
- Duration of background checks is a barrier in the hiring process
- Access to training for individuals in communities that want to be early childhood educators
- UAA/UAF providing distance ed.
- Need a BA at UAA

- Hire more staff at a competitive salary, why do we (early childhood) have to compete with the school districts?

### **What's working?**

- Framework with established roles and expectations and automatic onboarding and training
- Reflective supervision
- Educational opportunities

### **Benefits/Wages**

- Health insurance/benefits
- More time off
- Supports for staff that are also parents/guardians
- Wages!
- Equity of pay
- Recognition of professionalism → ability to join teachers' union
- Student loan relief
- Creativity in benefit packaging

### **Strategic Funding**

- Partnership with IHS
- Community investment
- Business community ↔ employer/state partnership
- Credit Union I model
- Local/state/fed/family formula

### **Data**

- In other states what do funding structures look like?
- Intervention tracking
- Social /emotional learning (K-12 catching up)
- Individual child identifier
- Wage delineation



# Kotzebue Early Childhood System Meeting Kotzebue, Alaska

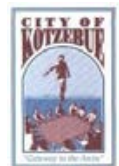
February 10, 2020, 1:00-3:00 PM  
Northwest Arctic Borough School District Board Room



## ABOUT THE MEETING

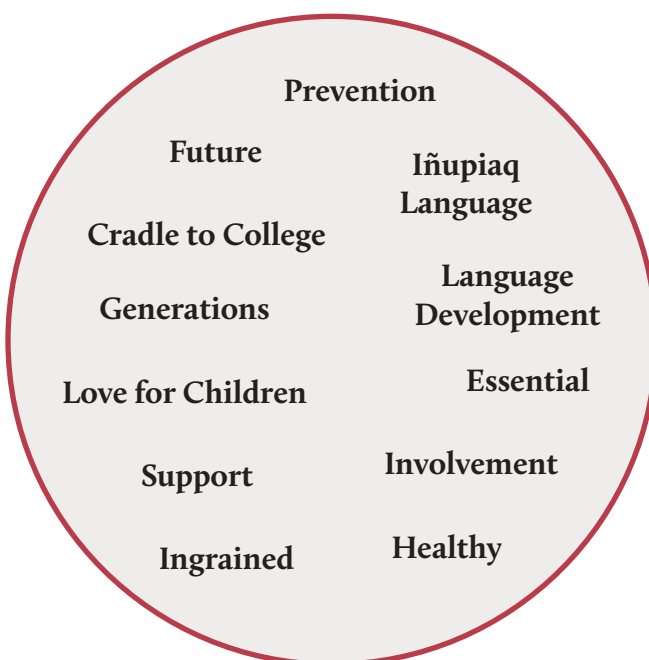


Eleven participants from across the education, health, and management sectors came together at the school district to discuss their experiences with local early childhood systems, including strengths, challenges, needs, and visions for the future. Meaningful and productive conversation took place both as an entire group and through small group conversations.



## MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

**Ten years from now, what does a successful early childhood system in Alaska look like?**



### CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ARE HEALTHY, SAFE + STABLE

Having love at home, communication systems, a safe place to be, extended family support, and a strong community support network makes families healthy and stable.

Community events like Toddler Time and Family Movie Nights bring children, parents and elders together. Opportunities, like the 3-year-old program and culture camps are beneficial to the children and support strong families.

The community values and would like to offer more programs and opportunities that focus on traditional knowledge and place-based education in order to strengthen family and community connections.

## QUALITY EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Quality education in the community should be highly language enriched and based on culturally relevant material, and classes could be held outside, on the beach or the tundra. Teachers would have access to the needed materials and supplies.

There is a desire to adjust formal education programs to meet community needs and better support the ways community members already connect and interact.

Ideally, families would have access to reliable transportation and more child care options for working parents; this is a barrier to accessing resources in the community.

Available early childhood care options are based on a sliding scale, and someone to help the families navigate the paperwork would help them access care.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

There is a need for facilities as well as logistically simple avenues of support with limited barriers.

Funding would be available to community members for system improvements and locally based projects that build capacity. For example, elders could work with coordinators and design learning programs, funding would be available for field trips, gas and food.

## LONGHAND NOTES

### PARTICIPANTS:

Nauyaq Wanda Baltazar (Northwest Arctic Borough School District Early Learning & Family Program/Infant Learning Program Birth – 3), Tracy Gregg (Maniilaq WIC), Charlene Ferguson (Maniilaq Workforce Development), Martha Lee (Northwest Arctic Borough School District), Reid Magdanz (NWABSD), Steven Morrison (ELP-Kotzebue, ILP-Sitka), Josephine Oke (PHN, Maniilaq), Ariel Sollis (Boys and Girls Club), Marin Strong (PHN, Maniilaq), Paul Tallman (Kotzebue City Parks and Recreation), Joy Williams (NWABSD)  
Facilitation team: Denali Daniels, Erin Willahan (Denali Daniels and Associates)

### OVERVIEW

Early childhood system participants and practitioners from the Kotzebue region gathered to discuss their experiences with local early childhood systems, including strengths, challenges, needs, and visions for the future.

### STRATEGIC PLAN DISCUSSION

A discussion was facilitated through a series of open-ended questions based on the draft plan framework. Participants discussed as a whole group and also broke out in groups of 2-3 at various points during the meeting.

### What keeps the families you serve strong and healthy?

- Love at home
- Strong communication systems set-up
- Safe place to be
- Check-ins/Making plans as a family
- Extended family support
- Community involvement to make sure our kids are safe
- Community school program
- Accessible schools
- Buildings being used for the community
- Multi-use facilities
- Parent group
- Afterschool program



- Kids under 6
  - Preschool run by high-schoolers
  - High-schoolers running summer programs
  - Strong communication between partners
  - Network, structure
  - Connections
    - » Toddler Time
    - » Family movie nights
    - » Clubhouse internships
    - » Food Bank
    - » Torch Club
    - » Youth program still a need...not available in villages
  - Hunger
    - » Food pantry in summer
    - » Options for food for youth are for teens
    - » Breakfast/lunch program (no seconds and only for school-age)
    - » Limited food bank through churches
    - » Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDIR) Restrictions
    - » Chukchi sustainable food options
  - Big Ideas
    - » Summer camps
    - » Delivery of sustainable food box
    - » Involve kids
    - » Ownership/responsibility
    - » Elders first
    - » Meat sharing food lists
    - » Common kitchen area to come prepare food/mingle
    - » Ways formal programs can support people connecting in informal, more personal ways. Not just institutions
    - » Fish camp
    - » Food sharing
    - » Services hard to sustain through institutionalized programs
    - » How formal structures can sup-
- port what is already going on via personal connections/community interaction
- Quality means:
    - » Present, safe, engaging
    - » Interacting
    - » Time schedules
    - » Team work
    - » Place-based education – adjust education to meet community needs/culture (rather than the other way around)
    - » Preschool outside
    - » Classroom on tundra, beach
    - » Schedules/timeframes
    - » Play-based
    - » Highly language enriched
    - » Family engagement
    - » Culturally relevant
    - » Access to materials and supplies
    - » Teachers go through protection of minors safety training
    - » Community safety
    - » Having elders around
    - » Traditional knowledge providers
  - Barriers
    - » Right people in a room together at the right times
    - » Funding





- » Hiring/maintaining high qualified staff
- » Attendance
- » Drop after 10 days
- Accessibility means:
  - » Walking school bus?
- Barriers
  - » Transport when cold
  - » Daycare options for working parents
  - » Kids under the age of 6 without a care place available
  - » Facilities
- Affordability means:
  - » Sliding scale
  - » Barriers
  - » Facilities
  - » Paperwork
  - » Need someone to help families navigate system/options
- Other
  - » Bring back the 3-yr. old program

## INFRASTRUCTURE

- Funding
- Transportation (Bus, cooperative effort)
- Parent/teacher associations
- Food program (nutritional- breakfast, lunch, etc.)
- More support for early-ed in schools
- Village improvement fund- pots of money acces-

sible for informal ideas and projects

- Logistically simple avenues for support with limited barriers
- Capacity building (camps, demonstrations, trainings, go-to people)
- Hiring qualified staff
- Good benefits, affordable housing
- High school programs
- Flexible with time
- Facilities fund in design
- 3 yr. old program
- Ramp up Early Learning Framework program
- Parent training
- Facilities, manpower, supplies
- Re-engaging existing programs
- Adding coordinators
- Culturally place-based learning with coordinators working with specific communities/elders to design programs. Money for cultural education (for gas, etc.)
- Daycare center
- 10 teachers- spread across age groups from o.
- Vans
- Summer Pals
- Teacher housing (built by city)
- Activity center for play, etc.,
- Pool
- Language Nest
- Outdoor learning
  - » 24/7

## WORKFORCE

- Teacher retention
- Lack of LTE
- Lack of affordable housing
- Quality training
- Pay: low-paid positions

- Connection
- Lots of interest in running a program but perception that license is needed
- Program with on-the-job training/licensing
- Giving people tools to run programs in their own communities, place-based education and cultural knowledge
- Cycle of barriers
- Can't build big institutions, need flexibility

## **TRANSITIONS**

- Male role models (sewing example)
- Communication
- Rules/expectations
- Planning for support for kids/families through transition
- People trust and know people
- Turnover
- Staff transitions → loss of programs
- Cultural immersion for new teachers from Outside
- 3Cs

## Kotzebue Family Friendly Community Meeting Kotzebue, Alaska

February 10, 2020, 5:30-7:30 PM  
Kotzebue Boys and Girls Club



### ABOUT THE MEETING

*Participants:* **34** adults + **30** children



Community members gathered at the Boys and Girls Club (BGC) on a weekday evening. In addition to the 34 community members who attended, the space was also shared with at least 30 kids brought along by parents, grandparents, and guardians, and youth of all ages using the afterschool and evening services provided by BGC. The meeting was lively and at times loud while creating an energetic atmosphere. Hav-

ing so many kids in the room offered a poignant reminder of the children at the center of this work. The adults were divided into three large groups, and each group was given one of three topics using draft plan framework questions, then reported out to the full group. Individuals were provided stickers to place on their favorite priorities, of which a new city-operated child care program received the most stickers.

### MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

#### CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ARE HEALTHY, SAFE + STABLE

Using Iñupiaq values as a foundation, healthy, safe and stable families have active and engaged parents/caregivers who model love at home.

The community needs more afterschool and summer options for children; ideally there would be more early child care and education options with flexible hours to accommodate all families. The vision is to create a child care and education center that would be open to all families and that would serve as a location for more family-centered events.

The community could also offer a year-round kids' meal program, and programs that incorporate Iñupiaq dancing, basketball, weights, and other indoor gym activities. These activities contribute to strong and healthy families.



## QUALITY EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Quality educational experiences are interactive, and involve parents, teachers, and children. They are community-based and include culturally relevant learning materials.

Providers should increase regular parent meetings to ensure consistency, and should make trainings and parent education opportunities available to all families in the community on a regular basis.

Things like an early childhood community newsletter for parents, a resource hub, summer reading programs, safety trainings, dancing nights, drum-making, berry-picking, etc...could be events that model healthy lifestyles and provide quality early learning experiences.

Affordable child care options should be determined on a sliding income scale, with support from state and federal programs.

Providers need assistance navigating the licensing requirements and background check process. This is a barrier to offering more services in the community. For example, licensing and early childhood education credit requirements may be a barrier to successful implementation of Iñupiaq language immersion programs.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

### If thinking big, where do we want to be in 2030?

Local organizations should collaborate and ensure that all needs in the community are being addressed. Alignment within the system is important for addressing gaps.

There is overwhelming support for the city to establish a child care center using the Boys and Girls Club facility which is owned by the city.

## LONGHAND NOTES

### OVERVIEW

Community members in the Kotzebue area gathered to discuss their experiences with local early childhood systems, including strengths, challenges, needs, and visions for the future. DDA introduced three categories for discussion: Healthy, Safe, and Stable; Quality Early Learning Experiences; and 2030: If resources were not an issue, how would funding be distributed?

Attendees divided into three groups, and each group engaged in a discussion around one of the topics. Groups selected a note-taker and one member from each group shared out to the room at the end. After each group presented, all participants were provided three stickers to place on their favorite idea. The number of stickers placed beside each item is noted in parentheses.

### Healthy, Safe, and Stable

- Use the Iñupiaq values as a foundation (4)
- Model love in the home (2)
- Establishing a good, healthy routine at home
- Development of an early child care and education center with flexible hours to accommodate all families (1)
- To include lesson plans for all ages
- Afterschool and summer programs for kids of all ages with different clubs, etc.
- Active parent involvement with support from extended family members and community
- Need more coordinated physical activities throughout town. Such as Eskimo dancing, basketball, weight lifting, etc. (1)





- Current Activities include Toddler Time, Native Youth Olympics,
- All local organizations collaborate services to ensure all needs/services are offered
- Year-round kids' meal program needed (2)

### **QUALITY EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES**

- Offers an interactive educational experience, which involves teachers, parents, and children
- Includes open-community curriculum. (Community-based)
- Indoor gym and activities (2)

### **Barriers**

- Unqualified staff/teachers from local pool
- Our local colleges do not currently offer early-childhood classes/training
- We lack local authority on selection of local hires
- Determination of costs for low-income families
- Transportation (costs)
- Lack of parent involvement in teaching
- State of Alaska work with immersion schools on license requirements (e.g. background checks, 12 ECE credits) (4)

### **Causes**

- Lack of parental involvement. Lack of funds/moneys to operate the building and meet the needs.
- Lack of qualified volunteers (1)

### **Accessibility**

- Culturally relevant learning materials
- Support from tribal school, team with Nikaitchuat
- We would need regular parent meeting to ensure consistent teaching/behavioral-social skills
- Mommy & me programs
- Villages should have access if/when needed

### **Affordability**

- Yes
- State and other entities for low income families
- Cost should be determined by salary/income (sliding scale)
- Volunteer time and work to support ECE school
- Access to school building with policy in place,





through community education dollars, and organizational support (2)

**2020-2030 – If resources were not an issue, what would we do?**

- Day Care Center (9)
- More activities (organized, child-centered)
- Parent education and involvement with child care center
- Public transport (4)
- Water safety – lessons – swimming (2)
- Seasonal safety – ice safety
- Summer programs for school-age kids (2)
- More educational opportunities for 3-yr. olds (1)
- Early-childhood newsletter for community
- Family events- movie, crafts, games (1)
- Rec Center – family focus
- Free lunch program in summer and week-ends (1)
- Summer reading program/library or school sponsored
- Family oriented summer events
- More community-wide events for kids in addition to sports. (crafts, drama, etc.) (1)
- Awareness of inclusion of special needs kids in all activities
- Healthy family lifestyles (1)
- More cultural events – dance, storytelling, drum-making, berry picking, etc.
- Culture camp in Kotzebue
- Food pantry and clothing- outside of church (1)
- Homeless shelter (2)
- Hygiene education and availability of laundro-



# Alaska Early Childhood Tribal System Meeting Statewide Videoconference

February 20, 2020, 9:00-11:00AM  
Zoom



## ABOUT THE MEETING

**16** *Participants*



Individuals working in the tribal early childhood system were invited to participate in a series of statewide videoconference presentations and discussions and to include colleagues from their communities wherever possible. There was a rich geographic representation in this session from all corners of the state: Western Alaska, the North Slope, the Copper River region, Aleutian Islands, Bristol Bay, Southeast, Kenai Peninsula and Anchorage. Just as in the in-person meetings, the discussion was guided by the strategic plan framework. While programs in these communities face challenges, several programs and initiatives that were working well were highlighted as making a difference in these places across Alaska.

## MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

### CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ARE HEALTHY, SAFE + STABLE

Knowing who they are and how they fit in to their family and community puts young people on the path to success. Having a modern education that is place-based along with having an understanding of one's culture and the web of interconnectedness is important.

Children can be grounded in culture through language immersion programs that preserve both the language, and the meaning of words.

Early childhood providers want to care for and educate children in a way that enriches them and gives them confidence. It is important for communities to have a multi-tiered system of support so that families don't feel alone, and they can access resources when they need them.

### QUALITY EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Access to quality care is limited in rural areas. Budgets limit the ability of providers to travel for trainings and accessing trainings online is difficult with limited internet access and bandwidth in rural areas.

Due to licensing regulations and the lengthy background check process, it is hard to find qualified providers and staff. There are people who would be excellent providers who aren't able to navigate the credentialing process.

Many early childhood providers have designed and implemented their own transition processes; these have proven to be effective in successfully transitioning children into kindergarten. These can be replicated in other communities.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

It is important for programs to collaborate and not duplicate services. When programs receive funding there should be a requirement for partnerships and collaboration.

It should be possible for tribes to license child care in their own communities. If they can license families for foster care why can't the tribes license child care providers?

There should be an option for tribally administered background checks.

## LONGHAND NOTES

### In attendance

Anne Shade (Bristol Bay Native Association), Brittney Suralta (Cook Inlet Tribal Council), Charlene Naulty (Pribilof Islands Aleut Community of St. Paul Island), Josh Stein (Arctic Slope Native Association), Senka Guy (Organized Village of Kwethluk), Sara Battiest (Kenaitze Indian Tribe IRA), Paula Pinder (Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association), Mark Wasierski (Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association), Kimber Olson (Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association), Samantha (on behalf of Kathy McConkey, Copper River Native Association), Penny James (Yakutat Tlingit Tribe), Bonnie Mierzejek (Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association Head Start), Alicia Kanayurak, Shelly Kaleak, Stephanie Leavitt (Arctic Slope Native Association), Sheriden DesGranges (Pribilof Islands Aleut Community of St. Paul Island)

Others: Denali Daniels, Elizabeth Shea, Britta Hamre (Denali Daniels + Associates), Lori Grassgreen and Betsy Brenneman (Association of Alaska School Boards, Chelsea Burke (Department of Health and Social Services.)

## OVERVIEW

Early childhood system leaders from across the state came together by phone to discuss Alaska's early childhood system, strengths and challenges, and their experiences.

## INTRODUCTIONS

After a brief overview of the strategic plan process, participants were asked to introduce themselves and describe the early childhood system in their region.

- Arctic Slope Native Association - they serve all of the outside villages
- Kwethluk - new to early childhood system, learning about the programs
- CITC - we are a consortium tribe, serve outlying villages
- Pribilof Islands – located far from everything, makes it more difficult
- Kenaitze Indian Tribe – we are excited about education programs, new building to house all programs to expand and offer more services, longer hours are going to be offered



- Aleutian Pribilof Islands Assoc.- we are all islands and headquarters are in Anchorage, it is interesting and complicated to serve communities far away
- APIA - it is hard for parents to find a job, child care is the #1 barrier, it's hard to get licensing, too many requirements
- APIA – we have the most remote Head Start in the country; looking to expand, challenges are license requirements/income requirements
- APIA – enrollment issues among community members are a challenge
- Bristol Bay Native Assoc. - we also have remote Head Start, we struggle with background checks, has decimated our home child care system; income requirements are also a challenge
- Copper River Native Assoc.- we have a child care development center here in Glennallen. We are building a new building that will be open to the community; education level of children 1-2 years old are speaking and signing, it's great to see them thrive and transition successfully, they are advanced in skills
- Yakutat Tlingit Tribe – we have a child care center servicing employees only so far, but there is a very high need, but they are working toward expanding services

## STRATEGIC PLAN DISCUSSION

A discussion was facilitated using a series of open-ended questions guided by the draft strategic planning framework.

### Healthy, Safe and Stable

- Culture, kinship relations, love, thinking beyond the individual you need strong communities, resources and support in order to thrive
- Resilience and the Alaska Strengths Book. Helps keep them healthy; language and the culture.
- Transforms a community when the language is

lost, if things are translated wrong the meaning is lost

- There is a huge need to be place-based, they needed to happy and collaborative and we strive for them to have a sense of community
- Removing barriers to access care
- Knowing who you are and how you fit in to family and community puts the young person on a path to success; having a modern education but place-based; an understanding of Tlingit culture and the web of interconnectedness is important; by preserving the language and the meaning you can be grounded in culture
- We want to foster the children in a way that enriches them and gives them confidence
- Having a multi-tiered system of support so that families don't feel alone and that they can get it at any time
- Kind of like a bullseye, first immediate family, then child care system they are accessing, then they feel supported by community initiatives
- They need a strong immediate family, parents need to feel supported and need to know about best practices, need an environment that is nurturing, no violence. You can't teach anything else if the home environment isn't warm and loving
- PATS program (Parents as Teachers) they have a monthly meeting; also Baby Raven Reads which is an outreach program, these programs are culturally relevant and place-based. We are trying to make it work even better, developing more curriculum that is new and related to culture

### Big Ideas

- Income guidelines are hindering ability to provide services to families. The state caps everyone out so it is a challenge to provide the support they really need.
- We are struggling with families leaving communities and schools closing.



- We are being held back by regulations around income, keeps us from revitalizing communities.
- Get federal representatives to advocate with our reps to change the guidelines for income, make it more specific to Alaska. Maybe this group could be a good start.
- Need resources. We need to find other ways, maybe through advocacy and lobbying.
- Provide community with leadership training so they can speak for themselves.
- Grant-specific funding limits spending and it's hard to advocate for remote Alaska.
- Finding places to house child care centers, the regulations and income guidelines for licensing are really difficult.

### **Barriers**

- Facilities are always an issue, space is very limited, high prices for rent and utilities, finding people who are interested in providing services is a challenge.
- Some people aren't interested in providing or having formal child care, licensing is a problem.
- We partner with school district to provide services; we can't do full day care, rooms are being used. Space is limited, licensing regs are so impossible.
- We can only certify relative providers, it's too hard to get provider's licensed; background checks are impossible.
- Bandwidth problems limit trainings, waiting for background checks. It's really frustrating, the federal government is acknowledging the problems of background checks, but state is not.

### **What would help?**

- We do a tribal background check through a system. We have policies that protect children in the meantime.
- It's hard to roll fingerprints, we can't keep up

with the compliance, so employees often leave.

- Paying for travel is difficult, training people to roll fingerprints but they get bounced back. We had a traveling team that did a bunch of people but that is expensive, it is getting impossible to run child care.
- It is super expensive for background checks, it is a problem in Alaska but also nationally, this is causing massive issues for employment.

### **Quality Early Learning Experiences**

#### **Quality**

- Look at ACEs work on Alaska; document just released covering ACEs info specific to Alaska.
- Broadband is a huge challenge
- It's hard to get qualified staff, so hard to recruit people, always having to start over with new employees.
- Not as big a struggle in Anchorage, but in the remote village it is so hard to find people who are qualified, hard to find administrators when they are licensed.
- Villages that are off the road system – it's really hard to get teachers trained, because then the teachers are out of the classroom, when they do it online they struggle with broadband connection.
- As they say, "safe setting safe people", when these are difficult to find you can't build a workforce.
- Often have to start over when employees leave the community, training requirements are restrictive. We have put an intern on our staff and it has been helpful, provides us support and also gets the intern started with training. Looking at what CITC is doing, funding is also important.
- Echo what others have said, having qualified staff is HUGE problem.

#### **Accessibility**

- All of it is hard to access.



- Especially in rural areas – big problem to access.
- 477 has allowed some tribes to offer more access.
- ALL SERVICES are hard to access.

### **Affordability**

- Many programs have difficulty operating in the black.
- They use up all funding, it's not a money-making situation.

### **What other input do you have that might not be in these categories?**

- The credentialing requirements are way too strict, some people with amazing skills and great teachers haven't been allowed to teach.
- People are scared away from applying because they are scared of costs and requirements of certification. We are losing people with lifetime experience.
- We are not using the (human) resources we have available in the communities.
- We did a partnership with the school district, this has allowed us to leverage more resources and have certified teachers working with our kids.

### **Infrastructure**

#### **Transitions**

- I think we do transitions poorly. We (staff) have been encouraged to attend family/teacher events, this is a start so that people feel supported, they see familiar faces, a community of support.
- Getting out of the office and showing up for the kids, make yourself more available so that they know there is a stable group of people that are there for them, rather than just a quick hand-off.
- Events are like family meeting, we are trying to coordinate with other stakeholders to offer different events; would love to start home visits. We could sponsor family nights and nurturing the parents as well.

- One thing we do in our community: we have a transition dinner, the families are there and then all the Head Start kids and the teachers from the school, kids get to meet the kindergarten teachers. There isn't a huge amount of relationship building but it does allow for kids to then see familiar faces.
- In our region there is 6-month transition planning, Clare Swan, they are talking with parents and teachers and caregivers at the new location. Want to make sure that the kids are ready.
- Important for kids, teachers with parents go to new location to meet new staff/teacher, allow for a "warm hand-off" feels supported by all in his life.

### **Workforce**

- Higher pay; most of staff qualify for child care assistance.
- Funding is a struggle, there has to be a release; someone who can be there for relief, the ability of teachers to step out and take some personal time.
- We want employees to have a work/life balance, plan ahead for time off. We are looking right now for training programs, we will have staff trained up for when others need to be absent. This is the busiest time of year for us, we need to keep up with the services.
- We need more ways to incentivize staff.

### **Clear, Coordinated and Accountable Governance**

- Important to figure out how to not duplicate services, funding should be a requirement for partnerships and collaboration.
- Incentivize braiding and blending funding.
- Head Start Association – we need to have a formal way to have MOA's and that there is more than lip service to partnerships in grants.
- It would be helpful for tribes to be in receipt of both discretionary and mandatory funding.

- Let tribes license child care in their own communities, if they can license foster care why can't we license child care?

### **Closing Remarks from Participants**

- How can we be innovative and use ideas from the villages? They are doing amazing work, how can we better support child care in villages; be more intentional about connecting and finding ways to assist rural Alaska caregivers.
- We need to create CCDF plan, coordinate with other agencies, tribes need to be in the room with other decision-makers, we need to have a role in monitoring.
- Kids and parents need more info on cultural connectivity, emphasis on the language and culture of their people.
- Appreciated being part of this today and want to continue to collaborate. Taking away some barriers to providing child care while still providing quality care, if the state could recognize these are barriers and maybe we can find an alternative.
- We need more resources for child care programs.
- Even though new to the field, I learned a lot today that is relevant to my area.
- Would like to see more collaboration with community programs, streamline health and safety requirements, also recognize that some of the licensing requirements just won't work in rural Alaska – need to come up with some exemptions in order to make the programs work.

# Alaska Early Childhood Tribal System Meeting Statewide Videoconference

February 24, 2020, 9:00-11:00AM  
Zoom



## ABOUT THE MEETING

**3** *Participants*



This meeting was the second in a series of sessions in which individuals working in the early childhood system were invited to participate in a series of statewide videoconference presentations and discussions and to include colleagues from their communities wherever possible. While only two communities were represented in this session, the discussion was rich in content. Just as in the in-person meetings, the discussion was guided by the strategic framework.



## MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

### CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ARE HEALTHY, SAFE + STABLE

Collaboration between programs and providers is really important, especially for smaller communities in Alaska.

Kodiak offers programs that encourage families – programs that address dental, medical, and behavioral health. The tribe also offers youth employment, child care assistance, and events open to the community. These programs are designed to support and strengthen families.

Subsistence resources are important to families, harvesting resources creates connections to culture and increases the quality of food for children. Communities need to work together to eliminate barriers to accessing subsistence resources.

### QUALITY EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Programs in communities are constantly looking for ways to improve, and providers want to collaborate more with the state and federal government in order to find ways to increase quality and capacity.

Affordability and access to employment opportunities in rural Alaska are challenges for parents; assistance programs are a valuable resource but few and far between.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

Providers are dedicated and qualified, but it is difficult for them to connect the learning component to what they are doing on the ground. More training would be beneficial but resources for trainings and development are limited.

The community has ways to offer assistance to early childhood providers through trainings, help with health and safety supplies, and quality improvement programs. There is a desire to expand these types of programs and be able to offer more assistance in rural Alaska.

The system needs to allow more ways to connect and collaborate. In rural Alaska, it feels like administrators and coordinators don't want to travel or get stuck, so there isn't as much in-person time. If early childhood system leaders from the state could travel to rural communities more often and spend in-person time in the communities they serve, programs would feel less distant.

## LONGHAND NOTES

### PARTICIPANTS

Heather McEwen (Child Care Assistance Program, Kodiak Area Native Association, Kodiak), Sharon Hunter (Asa'carsarmiut Tribal Council, Mountain Village).

### OTHERS

Denali Daniels, Britta Hamre, Erin Willahan (Denali Daniels and Associates), Christina Hulquist (Department of Health and Social Services), Betsy Brenneman (Association of Alaska School Boards).

### OVERVIEW

Early childhood system leaders came together by

phone to discuss Alaska's early childhood system, strengths and challenges, and their experiences.

### Something unique about your community as it relates to the early childhood system?

#### *Kodiak*

- Unique remote region
- Infant Learning Program (ILP), Head Start
- Work with providers

#### *Mountain Village*

- Population of about 800
- Work with 10 providers in the area

## STRATEGIC PLAN DISCUSSION

DDA facilitated a discussion through a series of open-ended questions guided by the three areas outlined in the draft strategic plan framework:

### Strong Communities

#### *Kodiak*

- We have a lot of support for families and children
- KANA serves all aspects (behavioral, dental, etc)
- Support keeps community strong
- Support from all the different programs around the island
- Collaboration really important especially for smaller communities in AK
- KANA collaborates with ILP, Head Start, OCS

#### *Mountain Village*

- Small clinic and local Head Start
- Indian Child Welfare Act program

### Healthy mealtimes

#### *Kodiak*

- We are not really involved in mealtimes- training for ILP more involved
- ILP does a lot of work with children in child care setting and home
- Subsistence is really big in Kodiak

- Quality of food in Kodiak is more limited, expensive to buy
- Have a limited co-op for organic foods
- Subsistence is a huge factor
- A lot of barriers families face, if they don't have the ability to do subsistence it's detrimental to families

## **Community Connections**

### *Kodiak*

- KANA has a playgroup, community baby shower, etc.
- Try to do a lot in the community to involve families but it is limited by resources
- Wish it was more, and new stuff
- Collaborate with different programs on new stuff
- But there are ways to connect
- Movie nights, community dinner, etc.
- Help communities to be safe and stable
- Families being able to take advantage of available resources
- We are looking at different quality improvement ideas
- We collaborate a lot, but may be more limited on what we can do in our programs
- Open to new ideas and brainstorming

## **Quality Early Learning Experiences**

### *Kodiak*

- Barriers include accessibility
- Scholarship programs exist but are few and far between
- Need more collaboration with the state and outside sources
- The people who are here are so busy with what they do, it's hard to do extra
- More accessibility, more affordability

### *Mountain Village*

- Never have more than 10 providers

- We try to make it as affordable for our parents as possible
- Most of our community knows about our child care program and Early Head Start program
- Have parents who lost their jobs, give them a number of months before we terminate them from program

### *Kodiak adult and youth employment program*

- If enrolled, they can get child care assistance if they are actively looking for a job
- But KANA only one that offers that
- Don't have a lot of people who utilize it
- We see a lot of patterns of going in and out of employment (fishing) and are in and out of program a lot.

## **Transitions**

### *Kodiak*

- We work with families who use child care
- Infant Learning Program works with children in those transitions.

## **Workforce**

### *Kodiak*

- Child care providers- we have a lot of different cultural backgrounds.
- All the providers are great but the learning component is still disconnected
- It's hard to connect material with what they are doing
- Chaotic; on the ground the last thing they are thinking about are the tools from the provider training
- Lots of turnover in the child care centers
- Quality falls by the wayside
- Resources are limited
- Formerly had quarterly training, but not anymore
- A lot of providers do training online now which is ok but not quality



- Left up to KANA to use training
- Disconnect that can affect job satisfaction

#### *Mountain Village*

- We monitor our providers, doesn't take long to go over to their house
- Help them with health and safety supplies
- Couple of other people working with me on the other side of the building
- 10 home providers

#### **Infrastructure**

- KANA- program for licensed providers to be able to apply for quality improvement funds (\$2,000)
  - » We have already implemented this as a grant opportunity both in 2018 and 2019 for licensed child care providers here on the island. This year we plan to work on the quality improvement idea (listed below), by doing individual assessments for each provider and using quality funding to support improving the quality of their care. This will combine the quality improvement grant into this new idea.
- More collaboration
- thread
- More communication and more collaboration with other programs that could teach us
- If we had more knowledge on how to implement different programs we could take that on
- We need more resources and more people to come here and be hands on.

#### **Governance**

- Difficult to travel here and it feels like people don't want to travel here or to get stuck, stigma
- More in-person, one-on-one, hands-on, personal collaboration in the here and now
- From state and other levels, if people would just come here and spend some time with the community people would feel more a part of this

- » We suffer from not getting face to face
- » Programs feel very distant

#### **Closing remarks from participants**

##### **KANA quality improvement idea**

- Conducting an individual assessment for each child care provider (licensed and approved) in the area to find out what they might need to improve the quality of their care
  - » Instead of grouped together, individualized, personal trainings
- We have ILP program but their availability might not be open, would need more than one
- Identifying who we can collaborate with to get training specifically for that provider
  - » Would love to collaborate more with the state

# Statewide Early Childhood System Meeting Alaska Head Start Association Meeting

February 24, 2020, 3:00-4:30PM  
Juneau, Alaska



## ABOUT THE MEETING

**14** *Participants*



Directors of the Alaska Head Start Association from across the state came together during their annual meeting in Juneau to discuss Alaska's early childhood system, strengths and challenges, and their experiences working in early childhood systems in Alaska. The geographic representation of this session provided a spectrum of valuable perspectives from across the state, and at a level uniquely positioned to provide input on Alaska's early childhood system.

## MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

### CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ARE HEALTHY, SAFE + STABLE

When children are participating in Head Start programs, when parents are active and engaged, and when communities are building on their strengths and growing resilience, families are healthy, safe and stable.

Communities need to have resources for mental health and substance misuse for families "stuck" in trauma. Providing resources, like secure housing, for families in need is an essential part of supporting families through difficult times.

Strong families in our communities are "tied to the land, tied to the culture."

### QUALITY EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Caregivers and teachers understand child development and culturally appropriate practices, they establish trust with families and meet them where they are. No judgements are passed on our families, and providers are helping them to become self-sufficient. High income doesn't mean a family doesn't need support.

Remote communities face regulations that often can't be achieved – the process for getting background checks, the training requirements, the safety and CPR requirements are difficult to navigate and take time and resources to complete.

Cost of operating in rural Alaska is high and not affordable; and low cost can mean we may sacrifice quality



## INFRASTRUCTURE

There are so many players involved in the system, but no one entity or organization holds all the pieces. The system needs alignment and governance.

Statutes and regulations need revision and/or to be followed; specifically, the Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council needs authority from the state, and the Head Start Collaboration Office should be elevated.

Communities have been marginalized, and it should be demonstrated that voices are heard and that they understand how to bring their voice to the table.

## LONGHAND NOTES

### IN ATTENDANCE

Deborah Trowbridge (Kawerak), Sam Alexie, Janet Andrew, and Eliza Tunuchuk (Association of Village Council Presidents), Tina Carpenter (RuralCap), Amber Frommherz (Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska), Dirk Shumaker (Kids Corp, Inc.), Rhonda Pitka (Council of Athabaskan Tribal Governments), Mark Lackey (CCS Early Learning), Jennifer Russell (Tanana Chiefs Conference), Mary Ellen Fritz (Chugachmiut), Anne Shade (Bristol Bay Native Association), Katrina Nunemann (Fairbanks Native Association), Sarah Newton, (Thrivalaska).

### OTHERS

Denali Daniels, Britta Hamre (Denali Daniels + Associates), Betsy Brenneman (Association of Alaska School Boards)

### OVERVIEW

Directors of Head Start Programs from across the state came together in Juneau to discuss Alaska's ear-

ly childhood system, strengths and challenges, and their experiences working in early childhood systems in Alaska.

## INTRODUCTIONS

After a brief overview of the strategic plan process, participants were asked to introduce themselves and share what makes their region and communities unique.

## STRATEGIC PLAN DISCUSSION

A discussion was facilitated using a series of open-ended questions based on the draft strategic plan framework.

### What makes kids and families in your community healthy, safe & stable?

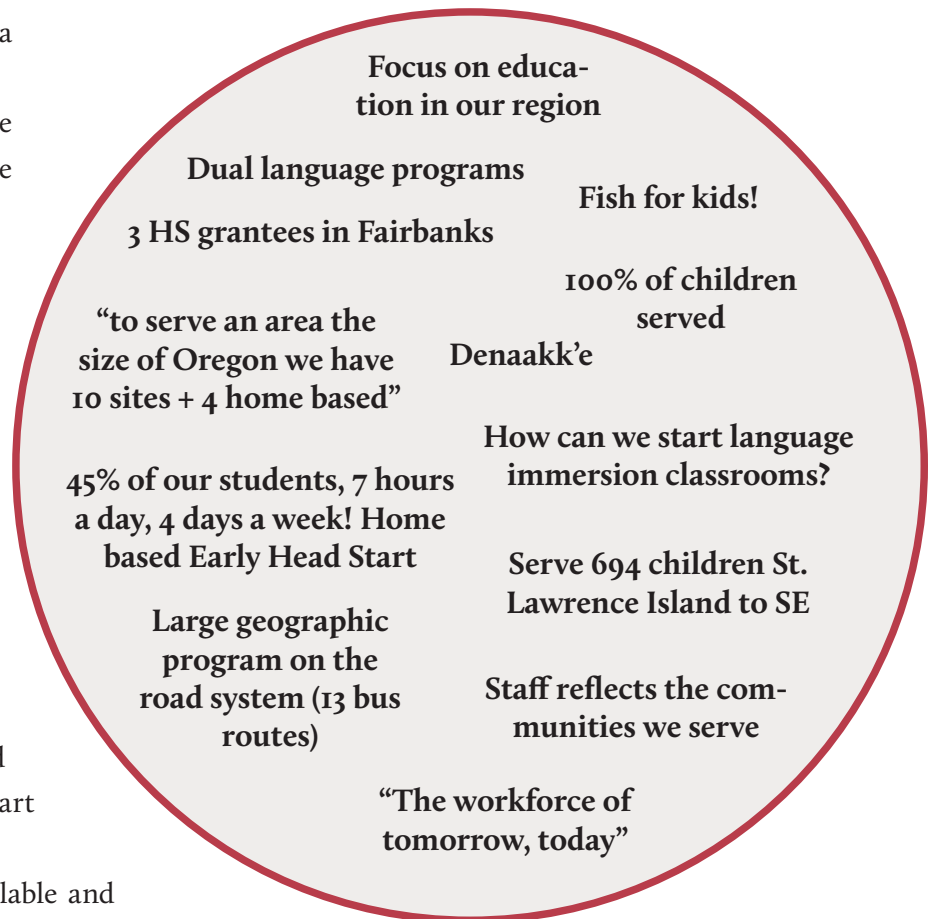
- Kids are participating in our programs regularly.
- Parents are active in their child's and family's lives.
- We are providing for families
- Fish camp, everyone has a role, happy kids in the summer fishing, it doesn't look like 30 kids sitting in a classroom for 8 hours.
- Tied to the land, tied to our culture.
- Families look different, but are strong in their own ways.
- Communities have resources for mental health and substance use treatment for families stuck in trauma.
- Building on strengths, encouraging and growing resilience.
- Communities are supporting and raising children.
- Programs interacting with caregivers regardless of relation to child.
- Families teach and guide our kids.
- Not missing any chance to make a connection, with families, with children.
- We are role models.

- Full reimbursement for HS.
- Sense of discernment, “not just one way to do a home visit, be a caregiver, etc..”
- The point is to empower the family, building this intuitive relationship and intelligence.
- Parents and families have opportunities to connect.
- Reschedule timing of parent meeting every year, working around their schedules.
- Sharing information about and being present for community events.
- Socials that respond to kids’ and families’ needs.
- School districts listen and don’t place PreK in Head Start communities.
- Community services are available and reliable (addiction, mental health)
- Inclusive classrooms, we need to serve all kids in our communities
- Families with connections to our communities.
- Well trained, well compensated professionals
- Secure housing
- Adequate infrastructure (tech, communication, training, sanitation)

### Quality:

- Teachers understand development and culturally appropriate practices
- Teachers understand how to meet needs, relationship-based.
- Partnership and trust with families, not passing any judgment on families, meeting them where they are, helping them to be self-sufficient

### What makes your region and communities unique?



### Accessibility:

- Family income doesn’t mean family doesn’t need support
- Remote sites face regulations that can’t be achieved – background checks, training requirements, CPR requirements
- The feds get that Alaska is different

### Affordability:

- Cost of operating high cost = unaffordable; low cost = sacrifice quality

### Strategic Funding

- Top-down communication (permitting)
- Bureaucracy and expectations aligned
- Assess which communities are served/under-

served

- A logic to distributing resources
- OCS charters a plane, other organizations are invited to join
- Nobody wants to cost allocate
- Great if people realized the federal dollars that come into the state via HS



### **Clear, coordinated and accountable governance**

- AECCC needs authority from the State.
  - » Intent of regulation is good
- Collaboration with tribes; WITH not TO
- Background check turnaround time

### **Workforce**

- UAA losing education department
- Staffing challenges in rural Alaska

### **Other thoughts not covered?**

- PreK funding hasn't been strategic
- If you are going to make child care providers

mandated reporters you should have public safety officials present in the communities

- VPSO supports OCS supports providers
- There are so many players involved but nobody holds all the pieces regarding requirements, particularly state requirements
- Head Start Collaboration Office, collaborative voice needs to be at a higher level
- Zero to 5 funding, includes zero to 3
- What is in it for communities that have been marginalized, how are we going to ensure that their voices are heard, that they can bring their voice to the table?
- State QRIS is not inclusive of Head Start



# Klawock/Prince of Wales Island Early Childhood System Meeting Videoconference

February 26, 2020, 9:00-11:00AM  
Zoom



## ABOUT THE MEETING

**9** *Participants*



An in-person meeting was originally planned with people working in the early childhood system in Klawock and nearby communities on Prince of Wales Island. However, weather prevented the facilitation team from traveling. Instead, a teleconference was held by phone and through the web. The participants had many ideas and perspectives to share, some that were unique to their specific location and some that were relevant to providers and programs from other communities across Alaska. The input from this meeting provided valuable insights for consideration in the strategic plan. Highlights are summarized below, followed by long-hand notes of the meeting.

## MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

### CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ARE HEALTHY, SAFE + STABLE

Loving families who genuinely care for their children and who engage with them in activities are healthy, safe, and stable.

When parents are invited to participate in something meaningful, like donating subsistence foods for culture camp and engaging in family activities, they strengthen connections within the family and community.

Kids and families thrive when they participate in activities together. There is an interest in having more opportunities for playing outdoors, playgroups or crafting nights.

Providers need to establish trust with families and maintain regular communication; technology like apps and reminder programs can assist in getting parents engaged.



Photo: Mack Lundy

## QUALITY EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES

The cost of child care interferes with the ability of parents to access quality programs in the community.

The cost of running a child care facility is high (insurance, maintenance, payment for quality staff members).

Programs cannot attract highly qualified, dependable people for the long term because programs are unable to pay them well or provide adequate training.

Licensing requirements are difficult and prevent many potential providers from applying.

Transportation in communities on Prince of Wales Island is a barrier to access; parents are often unable to get child to school when bus is not available and it is difficult to find qualified employees.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

Having more data on demographics, resources available, program effectiveness, and other system information would be a useful resource that could be used to reach out and get a sense of what nearby communities are doing and how they are doing it - that could help the community with the next steps.

A clear, coordinated path for the strategic plan and for the early childhood system needs to be a statewide effort.

Infrastructure needs to be built as part of state government's responsibility.

## LONGHAND NOTES

### IN ATTENDANCE

Kara McCoy (PHN, Craig Public Health), Mindy Trozelle (Community Connections), Shirley Harris (ABCED Consulting), Trina Williamson (Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium), Tanya (last name unknown), Chris Reitan (Craig City School District), Candace Kavanaugh (Head Start), Benjamin Young (Hydaburg, Haida Language Immersion Preschool), Marita Tolson (Haida Language Immersion Preschool)

### OTHERS

Britta Hamre and Erin Willahan (Denali Daniels + Associates), Betsy Brenneman (Association of Alaska School Boards)

### OVERVIEW

Early childhood system leaders working on Prince of Wales Island came together by videoconference and phone to discuss Alaska's early childhood system, strengths and challenges, and their experiences.

### INTRODUCTIONS

After setting group agreements, participants briefly introduced themselves and their organizations.

#### *Craig City School District*

- Working on how to partner better between Craig City School District and Head Start (Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA))
- Early ed and PreK thru 12 alignment
- The better the alignment the better the outcomes

#### *SEARHC*

- Parents trying to connect with the early childhood system and supports

#### *Craig Public Health Center*

- Work with families and support school districts
- Community Connections*
- Rise of families with kids under 3 who are ready to be out doing things with their children
  - Parents wanting a good head start

#### *ABCED Consulting*

- Visually impaired and orientation mobility, early childhood assessments

#### *Head Start*

- Eligibility, recruitment, attendance

#### *Hydaburg, Haida Language Immersion Preschool*

AASB then introduced the Klawock/Prince of Wales Island 2-page early childhood landscape document and the data dashboard concept. Initial commentary on what might be missing from this document was requested.

- Parents as Teachers Program could be identified specifically
- Is there a mental health program for younger children?
- Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health
- Work to bridge gap for children's mental health

### **STRATEGIC PLAN DISCUSSION**

A discussion was facilitated using a series of open-ended questions based on the draft strategic plan framework.

#### **What keeps families you serve strong?**

- Love for each other, genuine care for kids
- Long tentacles of family tree on the island, support across the island
- When parents are able to participate in something meaningful, having the door open for them,
  - » Last year I allowed parents to donate subsis-

tence food so that the kids could process it during a culture camp we held

- » Making sure that parents are involved in their kids' education
- Having a person with knowledge of special needs, resources
- Measured safety in the community, feel like the community looks out for the kids also the kids have more freedom to play outdoors
  - » Safety net of the community

#### **What does play look like?**

- Play looks like people on the water, trails, organized sports, getting outside in nature
- Crafts, not just at home but within the community
- Any sports that are in season, races, basketball, etc.

#### **What are you doing and what would you like to do?**

- We still have a number of families who are underserved, maxed out space, we don't have funding for preschool
- Optimize funding for 3-4-year olds
- A preschool would be awesome,
- Well attended weekly playgroups
- Getting kids out with their families together
- Support for parents
  - » Getting more parents pulled into that, breaking down stigma that it is a "parenting class"

#### **What are ways for families to stay connected in the community?**

- Craig library
- Playtime
- Local church playgroup
- Harder to get the parents who are not yet engaged
- A lot of play for families means a device in their

hand

- How to engage families beyond “frequent flyers”
- One strategy I’ve utilized is the Remind app to keep in regular communication with parents
  - » They type in their email and the app allows you to send out group messages
  - » Works really well for Baby Raven Reads events, spirit week, etc.
  - » Has been good for making sure parents are well aware
- The families that are really hard to engage with there is a trust thing there
  - » I need to go to their house and build rapport
- If the kids are really on board it makes it harder for the parent to not bring them to the event
  - » Try to make what I’m doing more exciting
- Good communication, and enthusiasm
- No cellphone electronic zone in the classroom, sends message to parents of teachable moments

### **Quality, accessibility, affordability**

- There are a number of underserved families island-wide because of lack of options and cost of child care; biggest issue is access to high quality child care that is affordable and provides options for families
- I don’t know if the other communities have child care facilities, but we have one (Craig) and it is barely surviving
- Limited space and support staff
- We (Craig) are trying to partner with Tlingit and Haida but are not quite there yet
- Infrastructure and facilities are our biggest nemesis at this point
- Thorne Bay is only child care center
  - » It’s not licensed
- Really difficult to get fire marshals here to inspect these buildings
  - » Biggest barrier to approval for licensed daycare
- Multiple small home settings where people take kids in but a huge issue
- Only have two Head Start programs
  - » Makes it really hard to get kids in because of availability
- Preschool-type program out at Thorne Bay school?
  - » Just started back up- no availability caps
- A huge barrier is child care worker education
- Costs a lot to have employees and feed children
- Hard to connect kids when licensing is a barrier
- Food program has to meet certain guidelines, then community partner needs to review those guidelines to keep program afloat
- Cost of paying for child care interferes with access
- Cost of running child care facilities (insurance, maintenance, payment for quality staff members)- cannot attract highly qualified, dependable people long term because cannot pay them, plus infrastructure costs
- Property insurance, maintenance, facility agreements,
- Federal grant funded child care program in Galena, once that funding was gone could not support program (not self-sustaining)
- Boils down to money, the state would need to step up and provide that funding
- Food program because it’s so difficult to keep up with
- Quarterly we hear possibility of the child care shutting down due to funding
- Pulltab funding- easier to get by during those months
- Being able to get access to a licensed center relieves the amount the parents have to pay
- Parents can’t get the funding for home providers from the state to pay for care that is unlicensed
  - » Difficult licensing process
- Thorne Bay is in partnership with Forest Service



- so don't have to pay rent, maintenance
- » But all the other costs besides facility care and they still struggle to make it

### Transitions

- Kindergarten step-up days in Craig where kids come in and spend time in classroom with the teacher
- Nice intro into a school, would be nice if kids had more than just that one day
- Partnering more for those transitions
- Thorne Bay playgroups went into kindergarten more frequently
- Summer camps, cultural experiences that children can attend, family visits are great ways to bridge the gap between those transitions
- Tracking attendance; having conversations about good habits, why it's important
- A lot of communication on all parts, child care provider, HS, school all being able to communicate as well
  - » Adds to workload but has to be done
- Assessments up to date, providing strategies and services, smoothing the transitions, accommodations for classroom, are really important
- Community Connections has done a really good job with the families they serve. For student who might already be in our system but receiving services from multiple agencies on the island, making sure everyone is at meetings and services are being aligned. Making shifts in that direction

### Transportation

- Transportation is a barrier. School District can't always provide the transportation, kids missing school because parent is unable to get child there on their own
- Finding bus drivers has been a problem
  - » Island has organization that provides

CDL training on the island

- » Difficulty is in finding people who want those jobs, often they spill off into opportunities for construction jobs, etc.
- Cost of buses, maintenance also a barrier

### Workforce

- If there was consistent funding for early education programs, school readiness early on would support the whole k-12 system
- Daycare issue; can't get a job if you can't find care for your kids
- Lack of child care impacting attendance
- Magic wand: workforce
- Ultimately being able to provide more money, they are making so little and are not valued
- Some of our support specialists go through expensive training with wages that do not really compensate the job that they do
- Have to do online training or travel to the trainings
- Having meaningful trainings- spec ed in pre-school all the time
- Local in-service training?
  - » Would be helpful





- Early Childhood Mental Health Training, ILP Conference- I don't see our child care providers there. Don't know the reason why.
- Resiliency Summit – 2 days of training at Community Connections
- Care providers watching kids in the daytime would have trouble attending in-service during the day, evening training also a challenge after a full day of child care

### **What do we value most about the ECE system and the individuals who are doing this work?**

- Early intervention; that's what it's about, seeing families grow and change through the support of their experience with whatever they are doing

### **Infrastructure**

- Early intervention and funding for that is critical and on up the levels of education
- Cuts are coming down across the board and we are all feeling strapped, making sure we can communicate that to the governor and state officials
- More preschools in school districts is a huge piece of it
- Kids starting behind
- How do parents learn what they need to ready their kids for school?
- Parents as Teachers program
- Also, families who do not connect with certain services
- A barrier is that tools and info about kindergarten readiness are not readily available to parents
- A lot of where they get their info is from community and each other (FB, flyers, referrals, etc.)
  - » The best way is when parents are hearing it from each other
- Tabling, being represented at bazaars, health fairs

### **Data**

- When I need more data/info I reach out to Alaska Superintendents Association. Broader info we have that can be shared across associations; reaching all communities and programs not just those we are part of
- Demographics give us a sense of what's in POW and Hyder Census Area
- Pocket of positivity that we can use to reach out and get a sense of what others are doing and how they are doing it that can help us with our next steps
- At one time there existed a directory (Association for the Education of Young Children) and community collaboration meetings, build those relationships
- Local level info sharing could definitely get better
- Steps being taken
  - » Alaska Reads Act (SB 6)
  - » Some funding for early elementary programs is in there
- Support is critical, but we have to do it right
- Clear, coordinated governance
- Clear, coordinated path needs to be a statewide effort
- Infrastructure needs to be built as part of state government's responsibility
- Flyer or list for communities with all the resources available that can be handed out to parents
- POW Youth Activity Book- old
- Governor put a hold on our funding, teachers didn't have training to start the year, were unable to come into Juneau for training
- Had an impact on a lot of things

# Early Childhood System and Family Friendly Videoconference Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) Communities

April 17, 2020 2:30-4:00PM  
Zoom



## ABOUT THE MEETING

**32** *Participants*



Both parents and individuals working in the Head Start System and affiliated with the Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) were invited to participate in a presentation and discussion around the proposed framework for a statewide strategic plan. Many Interior Alaska communities were represented during this session, with participation from: Fairbanks, Galena, Grayling, Holy Cross, Huslia, McGrath, Minto, Nenana, North Pole, Northway, Nulato and Tetlin. The discussion was guided by the strategic framework. While programs in these communities face challenges, the social and family networks that people rely upon in times of need are strong.

## MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

### CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ARE HEALTHY, SAFE + STABLE

The communities in Interior Alaska rely upon strong support for each other, especially when people are in need of help. Families care for each other and those around them with both material and emotional support and assistance.

Local culture, traditional beliefs, and family mealtimes are especially important to keeping families in the communities healthy, safe and stable.

People in communities come together and maintain connections through family nights, traditional gatherings, holidays, and activities like culture camp, picnics, and school socials.

### QUALITY EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Many participants agreed that high quality learning relied upon engaged teachers, sufficient space, and stimulating learning environments.

Those working in the system would like more training and professional development opportunities, and also hope to offer more parenting classes, supports, and resources.

Support for children with special needs is challenging to find and there is a need for more professionals trained in mental health.

### INFRASTRUCTURE

There are opportunities in the communities to increase capacity and quality education through more space for the children, state of the art Head Start facilities, and a focus on center-based care.

Participants mentioned the need for parenting supports like access to addiction treatment, help navigating through paperwork, and follow-up support as priorities for helping families in Alaska thrive.

## LONGHAND NOTES

### INTRODUCTIONS

Participants shared which communities they were from, and something unique about their community:

- Fairbanks weather, it can go from 90 degrees to -70 degrees.
- Nulato: people really stick together and support each other in times of need, community always comes together.
- Nulato: situated on Yukon River, only accessible by air and boat, very isolated.
- Fairbanks: The weather here is just so crazy, it goes from slushy to frozen to muddy, now everything is just melting fast.
- Galena: Everybody is willing to help each other and we are always there if someone needs help fixing something, relationships here are really special.
- Nenana: Home of Nenana Ice Classic – hope to see the ice go soon!
- Minto: We are on the road system!
- Northway: On the Alaska Hwy near the border.
- McGrath: Can only get in by airplane, on the Iditarod and Iron Dog Race Trail routes.
- Northway: Village is entirely surrounded by a wildlife refuge.
- Tanana: Lived there my whole life, the community is always working towards teaching the younger ones the traditional way of life, this past winter the whole community worked together to help each other out. Now with virus there are still people out helping.
- Galena: The community events and how it actually feels like a community.
- Nenana: Very diverse, tight-knit but like to learn from each other.
- Tetlin: Very happy to be working as the home visitor.
- Nenana: On the river, yet they are still on the road and can still drive to Anchorage and Fairbanks.
- Kaltag (but lives in Fairbanks): The seasons are unique in this area, Fairbanks is a big village, there are Native people from all over Alaska.
- Nenana: They have an airport, and are between two rivers (Nenana & Yukon).
- Nenana: The whole community is like having a large family.
- McGrath: At the top of the Kuskokwim River.
- North Pole: Spirit of Christmas all year long.
- Grayling: No matter what happens, we are always there for one another even if we don't talk or see each other often.
- Nenana: Government uses data from Nenana for ice and climate change studies.
- Huslia: Was the home visitor in Huslia, now at the Head Start in Fairbanks.
- Huslia: The majority of population is kids, but we don't let them know that (joke).
- Nenana – Parents; involved with Head Start and now on the village council.

### STRATEGIC PLAN DISCUSSION

The facilitator provided context for the meeting and defined the early childhood system. The discussion then moved into the framework for the strategic plan.

#### **What makes families strong, what makes families healthy?**

- Spending time together as a family, communicating well and having stable relationships.
- Time together.
- Local traditions/culture.
- Support.
- Working together, traditional beliefs.
- Resilience; supporting each other.
- Sharing experiences.

- Being together as family, spending time together, having grandparents nearby.

#### **What do healthy mealtimes look like for children?**

- Having a set time that families sit and eat together.
- Sitting together at the table, no electronics.
- Sitting at a table together is the most important.
- Multiple options, fresh ingredients, homemade.
- Doesn't matter where or what, but they have to be calm and conversational.
- Talking about what foods are healthy.
- Everyone sitting together, unplugged and talk together about their day.
- Keeping it stress free/relaxed.
- My daughter mentioned eating traditional food while living here in Fairbanks.
- Having kids help make the meal.
- Children helping with meal prep.

#### **What are opportunities for family connections in your community?**

- Group texts and FaceTime.
- Monthly family fun nights, there is usually food and snacks, crafts and games.
- Church, ice-fishing.
- Traditional gatherings and culture camp; holi-

day events.

- Birthday dinners or family gatherings; sewing days.
- Holiday events.
- EHS/HS socials twice a month.
- In the village they go on picnics, go to collect berries and things for school projects.

#### **Big ideas:**

- Keep in contact, have open communications.
- Community garden with Head Start and the families.
- Being a person that anyone can come and speak with; parent involvement.
- Materials, time, staff.
- Keeping families informed of resources out there.
- Continued participation and volunteering.
- See what the needs are and find support from there; building relationships.
- Hiring/keeping good teachers; appropriate opportunities for career growth and professional development.

#### **What does high quality education look like and what are barriers?**

- More attention to special needs children, services are hard to get.
- Creating a stimulating learning environment and having structure in the system.
- Teachers who take advantage of learning moments.
- Weekly home visits and being willing to listen to the parents about wants and needs; making sure there is good communication with families.
- Community involvement.
- Training/staff education.



**What are services that are needed and that are hard to access?**

- In McGrath there is a real need for affordable child care.
- Special needs, specific services are hard to get in the villages.
- I think parenting classes are really needed.
- Having enough space for all of the children.
- Educated help in the villages, such as mental health.

**Do costs interfere with ability to access – do parents pay too much?**

- Limited space, most of the programs are Head Start, which are free in the village.
- TCC helps with the cost.

**What would you do if resources were unlimited?**

- Hire more experienced teachers.
- Go from home-based to center-based care.
- State of the art Head Start buildings in each site.
- More teacher and subs, so it's not an issue of whether or not we should go in sick or close

class.

- Direct funds to EHS/HS rather than PreK through school systems because the schools are not able to provide as many wrap-around services.
- More state of the art buildings.
- Training.
- It would be nice to have our Head Starts in their own buildings. It would be easier to offer classes for older and younger students for longer hours.
- More intensive training opportunities for substitute teachers, people from the villages could step in to help at the schools.

**Clear, coordinated and accountable governance  
Are there instances of people coordinating well?**

- Communities need support for parents entering treatment; the path to getting help is complicated, they have to get in trouble in order to get help. There are too many obstacles to parents seeking treatment; there has to be a better way for parents to get help.
- TCC does a good job of coordinating with communities and their people.



# Anchorage Family Friendly Videoconference Anchorage, Alaska

April 23, 2020; 5:00 – 6:30PM  
Zoom



## ABOUT THE MEETING

### 6 *Participants*



Parents in urban Alaska were invited to this session, which was organized in partnership with thread, Alaska's child care resource and referral organization. The discussion was guided by the strategic planning framework and began with a discussion about Alaska's early childhood system. Parents were asked to discuss various parts of their experience and ideas for system change.

## MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

### CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ARE HEALTHY, SAFE + STABLE

Families are healthy, safe, and stable when they communicate frequently and openly. The 4 S's (seen, safe, soothed, secure) are a favorite approach, and spending time recreating at neighborhood parks and outdoor spaces is valued.

Preparing meals together, limiting screen exposure, and teaching children through chores and responsibility are all ways parents in Anchorage are raising their children to be self-sufficient.

Family activities in Anchorage can increase connections and build community, although some options aren't accessible for working parents. Valued activities include team sports, museums, parks and nature centers, child-focused activities, cultural events and festivals, Facebook group for parents, and seasonal activities like sledding and berry-picking.

### QUALITY EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Many parents highlighted the need for more accessible types of daycare; for example, child care options that are compatible with flexible work schedules and options that offer more collaborative opportunities for parents and caregivers.

High quality child care options teach the children more than just the basics: they allow the children to build confidence and character, teach self-awareness, respect for others, and creating social connections.

Barriers to accessible quality care include affordability, not having a well-compensated early care and learning workforce and the need for more societal awareness of the importance of development in early childhood.

### INFRASTRUCTURE

Parents in Anchorage are concerned about transitions and kindergarten readiness, and how that is affected by not having a well-trained and high quality workforce.

A centralized location, either physical or online, where parents could access resources like child care options, events and activities, training and educational opportunities, and demographic data would be useful for everyone.

## LONGHAND NOTES

### INTRODUCTIONS

Participants shared their names; ages of children, and a silver lining of sheltering-in-place:

- I've been surprised by the number of family and friends who have checked in, people are contacting each other more. It has caused people to be kinder and be more connected.
- I get to hug my child more often these days.
- I am saving a lot of money on gas not having to get to work.
- I work in healthcare, so I still go in to work, but after work I notice there is more quality time.
- I am developing a children's curriculum, so I've been able to do that full time and it's been a blessing.
- We have more of a daily routine; sheltering-in-place has allowed us to find a rhythm as a family.
- I've been able to interact with my child more; I can be present and more involved.

### STRATEGIC PLAN DISCUSSION

The facilitator defined the early childhood system as an inclusive approach for this planning process to provide context for the discussion. The planning team is working toward alignment with plans and communities across the state. The discussion then moved into the framework for the strategic plan.

#### **That makes families strong, what makes families healthy?**

- Awareness of who they are as family unit; how they work together.
- Quality time, family dinners, the simple things that are easy to overlook like mealtimes.
- Supporting each other, having outside resources and a strong support network.
- Good communication, letting the child feel

comfortable coming to you and asking for things.

- The 4 s's – seen, safe, soothed, security; these create a state of resilience for child and families.
- Parks where children can play; families in my neighborhood find solace and enjoyment in the parks nearby.
- Parks in Eagle River, people leave warm clothing for each other. We moved here for the family environment, we see things here that are good teaching moments.
- Unconditional love.

#### **What do healthy mealtimes look like for children?**

- We cook together, no television, quiet time together to eat nutritious meals.
- Being a full time working single mom; my daughter appreciates mealtime and that we sit down together, it was great to hear about from my teenager.
- My focus is on teaching my child to be self-sufficient; one of the chores he has is to prepare one of the family meals each week; it was good to have a chance to pass on knowledge and teach him to take care of himself.

#### **What are opportunities for family connections in your community?**

- Summer sports are a good opportunity for families to connect in smaller groups; not really neighborhood-based but having things like leagues in the neighborhood create connections.
- There are a lot of festivals and events, we've been to Bear Paw, Halloween activities, being outside, went to a Greek Festival and there are many other events like this that allow us to connect.
- It varies by season, but in winter we go sledding, in the summer taking the kids fishing, meet new people berry picking or doing other subsistence activities. Has found it hard to make friends and

connect coming from rural Alaska to an urban lifestyle.

- Schools have some really good sledding hills behind them.
- Having kids in a stable environment and at one school; kids are in Japanese immersion school and there is so much community through the school and the program.
- Southcentral Foundation used to have “toddler time” we loved going to those; also taking the kids to the museum.
- There are unique programs for kids based more on specific interests, and connections are made there; some of those are income-based and can be a stretch financially.
- The coastal trail is available to everyone and a good place to meet people; Harry McDonald center – a rec center in Eagle River, there are some in Anchorage as well.
- It really has been a struggle to connect here in Anchorage, the museum has been a great place to interact with others. There are events on base (JBER) like the Child Development Center and it is really easy to connect there but hasn’t really happened at other events outside in Anchorage. Found sense of community at church and at child-centered events.
- There is an “Anchorage Moms” Facebook page and there are tons of activities through this page, also an “Anchorage Dads” page. Activities are coordinated here.
- These groups are great but they meet during the week and it isn’t accessible for working parents.

### **Big ideas**

- Having a preschool at every elementary school, starting at 5 is too late.
- Early learning centers have age limits and my daughter is aging out, it would be great to have access to more programs.

- I am looking at what we need here in Alaska – I have built a curriculum based on many different models – called compassionate connections. Now that we know about ACE’s, we can teach parents and children resilience in a meaningful way.
- A new approach to daycare, there are opportunities for more collaboration, where parents play a more active role in taking care of children.

### **What does high quality care & education look like and what are barriers?**

- Lower child to teacher ratio in schools.
- The focus is the child discovering the world around them, how to connect and respect each other; also confidence and character-building .
- Quality isn’t having the child be able to repeat numbers and letters, it is being able to make connections with others and transfer knowledge.
- Programs that teach practical skills and environmental awareness.
- Barriers can be money and funding; teachers aren’t paid very well so it is difficult to find quality teachers who will stay around; children aren’t getting as much quality attention or value.
- A paradigm shift for society – we need to realize how important early childhood development is – has long-term implications for everyone.
- A barrier is that I don’t have enough time to spend with my child.



**What are services that are needed and that are hard to access?**

- Discussion about quality, affordability, and accessibility (the three-legged stool). These are all interrelated.

**Do costs interfere with ability to access – do parents pay too much?**

- Child care was available, but it was difficult to find the kind that suited my needs; for example there wasn't any part-time daycares within my budget.
- It would be great if providers could offer some education to parents; raise the educational bar. Parents are paying way too much for the level of care.
- Yes, parents are paying way too much for child care. Going back to accessibility – there are situations where coordination of care within family units is difficult, all children at same facility.
- It was hard to find weekend care, working in healthcare there are varied schedules and no options that meet these needs.
- If a child has a stressed-out home life, any quality education won't sink in. Many of these things/priorities are backward.
- Will my child be ready for kindergarten from his preschool learning? I know I will be teaching my child but at preschools there are no educators, only daycare providers. Yes, children learn during play, but do we know if they are ready to succeed in the system?

**What are any examples of transitions that have been successful for your child?**

- At the facility my daughter is at she is trying to figure out social interactions and it was helpful for her to transition with other children in a group.
- My son had to go in to a new class where he

didn't know anyone; but his teacher from before was able to drop by and see him, it helped that there was someone there to help him transition.

**If resources were unlimited, how would you suggest that funding be distributed; what would we prioritize?**

- Focus on the family unit, funding that somehow allows parents to spend more time with their children.
- Pay caregivers more, invest in the workers because then they invest in the children.

**Do you feel like you have enough information on programs in Anchorage?**

- thread has been a great resource; having information all in one place would be really helpful – having first-hand knowledge from other parents about their experiences would be great.
- What would be useful to know is more data on families; a place to learn that is centralized and that would have all the data and information in one place and that was accessible.

**Conclusion**

- AASB shared that one of the things in development from the needs assessment is a model dashboard that would have the basics on programs for early childhood sorted by region and community. thread does have a data dashboard, this would be similar but would have more about the landscape and data on early childhood and not just care resources. Everyone seems to want more data, sometimes there are privacy concerns, if we had information about children and if we could track them long-term we could have data on what works and what doesn't. It is not in existence yet and may be launched as a prototype. We are pointing out "what could be."



# Minto Family Friendly Videoconference Minto, Alaska

April 27, 2020 2:30 – 4:00PM  
Zoom



## ABOUT THE MEETING

### 5 Participants



For this meeting, parents and caregivers from Minto were invited to participate in a presentation and discussion around the proposed framework for a statewide strategic plan. The agenda followed the strategic plan framework and began with discussion of Alaska's early childhood system. Parents were then asked to discuss various parts of their experience and ideas for system change.

## MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

### CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ARE HEALTHY, SAFE + STABLE

Eating together, sitting down at the table, turning off electronics, and teaching children to help with preparation are all ways that families can enjoy healthy meals together.

Teaching our children about how to hunt, gather and prepare foods like moose, salmon, and berry-picking is a way to involve them in cultural traditions and to prepare them for the future.

Our community would benefit from an afterschool program where the younger kids could stay at the school and there would be activities for them to participate in. Often the younger children want to stay after school but the school doesn't have the staff, resources, or volunteers to supervise them. A summer program that allowed them to participate in outdoor activities and subsistence traditions would also be great for the children of Minto.

### QUALITY EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES

The programs that we have in the community, which include Head Start home visiting and a PreK program, help the children learn fine motor skills, how to be around other children and in the classroom, and make a huge difference in preparing them for kindergarten and elementary school.

Quality early learning experiences in the community would be improved and strengthened if children and families were able to access supplies and materials at home. Being able to send a collection of supplies like scissors, crayons, and things for them to use their hands with would be very beneficial and would contribute to early learning and preparing for better transitions.

### INFRASTRUCTURE

Increased funding for materials and supplies, as well as for reliable child care programs and providers, would be beneficial to the children and families of Minto. Providing internet to every family in the community is also necessary to achieve equitable access to resources with urban centers like Anchorage and Fairbanks.

More information on parenting skills and programs, through newsletters or other printed materials, has been useful to families in the community.



## LONGHAND NOTES

### INTRODUCTIONS

Participants shared names and something unique about their community.

- We have really awesome parent involvement and support.
- We are on the road system!
- Right inside of the lakes.
- Actually from Eureka; loves teaching the children in the school.
- The view here is really nice!

### STRATEGIC PLAN DISCUSSION

The facilitator defined what an early childhood system was to provide context for the discussion. The planning team is working toward alignment with plans and communities across the state. The discussion then moved into the framework, goals, and discussion points for the strategic plan.

#### **What makes families strong, what makes families healthy?**

- Kids are involved in cultural traditions, kids have strong family ties, people stay away from drugs and alcohol.
- Families here support each other; there are strong networks of support.

#### **What do healthy mealtimes look like for children?**

- Eating at the table together, no electronics; whole family together.
- Having meals together, so many people are plugged in and distracted, it's a rule at our house that no one can be on their devices.
- Getting kids involved in planning and preparing meals, getting them to choose healthy meals and learning how to cook; especially things we gather here in Minto, fish, moose, berries – things from the land. Last night my family had salmon and we have enough to prepare chowder; my

kids are older but I'm still trying to teach them to cook.

- My mom and I feed the kids cut up veggies, fruit; things that are fresh, try to limit sugar intake.
- Especially Alaska Native foods and during COVID-19 it's even more important

#### **What are opportunities for family connections in Minto?**

- School activities there are very family oriented; potlaches are good examples of celebrations that everyone comes out for.

#### **How can we best support children and families, what are some BIG IDEAS:**

- An afterschool program for the kids in community, a place where the kids can do fun things. The kids want to be at the school all the time, but we don't have the staff or volunteers to make that happen. We do have sports, but that is more the middle and high school, this would be for the younger children, an extension in the afternoon.
- My son did sports this year so I was there after school, the kids are always there and want to be at the school. It would give them something to do.
- Something more for the kids in the summer, some kind of camp or something to keep kids active. Also participate in subsistence activities, I have them participate at least once, it is a way for them to learn to provide in the future for their families. Hunting for moose and fishing in the summer, also berry-picking.
- Having things like monthly cookouts or bonfires. Kids sometimes leave in the summer and go to other communities. Kids can also do things like camping and gym nights.
- As a Head Start coordinator she works with the

kids all year round, even in the summer. There is space available, it is the parent's choice if they want the kids to participate. I come into the home and help the parents become teachers, we do this all year round.

### **What does high quality care and education look like and what are barriers?**

- Having the programs in place that the children and parents can participate in, getting the children ready in PreK to go to school, I taught kids at this age and it was exciting to see the kids be ready for kindergarten and elementary school.
- There are 5 PreK kids, we have really neat stuff for them to have in the classroom, making it fun for them is really important in getting them ready for school.
- My children have all participated in Head Start – I really like the early childhood programs, I have seen a major difference in my children and they have been ready for school. I have seen them learn throughout these programs, they would work on things like colors and simple things, but it was a start to get them ready for preschool and then kindergarten.
- As part of Head Start programs; we teach things like using scissors and holding a pencil so they can be ready for school, teach them how to serve themselves and learning how to be around other children in a classroom. I can see the difference in my own children, how they are strengthening their fine motor skills even though they are just playing with Play-doh.

### **What are some of the barriers to education?**

- There is a difference in the children when early childhood education isn't available; having the programs in place makes a huge difference and the kids are really supported.
- It is a barrier when there isn't enough informa-

tion on the programs for the parents.

### **What are services that are needed and that are hard to access?**

- In our community the programs are accessible and easy for parents to enroll in. It would be most helpful to have paper information, not everyone has internet so that wouldn't be a great option.
- Most child care options are informal and expensive for parents.
- This is something that the village council might get involved in, they would decide the space and whether it could be supported. If someone wanted to open a child care facility that would be a great thing for the community.

### **Do costs interfere with ability to access – do parents pay too much?**

- There isn't a cost for the Head Start and PreK, but child care options are limited and there are some issues with that. Sometimes TCC will help out if family is eligible.
- It is hard to find people who are reliable, there aren't very many options that are available to begin with.
- I have a 20-month old, sometimes I have to call up to 7 people before I can find a babysitter. They are usually friends and family; I have to pay out of my own pocket, TCC does offer help but there are income guidelines.

### **Information – what would be helpful?**

- There is a newsletter that is sent out monthly; it has recipes and lessons on different subjects, many of the parents really like the newsletter. It is printed and we pass it out, send it home with the parents.

### **If resources were unlimited, how would you sug-**

**gest that funding be distributed; what would we prioritize?**

- I would want to keep the programs we have, the Head Start and PreK.
- If every child could have enough supplies, like scissors and crayons and crafts; a tub of tools like Play-Doh; a tricycle for them to ride. That would be really helpful for them to learn at their own homes.
- Keep both programs in the community, also having more supplies for the kids to take home. We are lucky to have the two programs that we do have, the kids are way better prepared for school, I hope these programs stay in the budget and there are no more cuts. We tried to send home supplies at the start of the quarantine, but we'd love to be able to offer more, anything that gets their hands moving. Also, if the kids could all have bicycles to be able to get out and to get exercise.
- If we could provide internet for each home, even if young kids can't use it yet, just having the option would be helpful. Here our kids are doing homework by paper and pencil, not able to use things like Zoom like kids in Fairbanks and Anchorage.
- Would also add child care to the list of things that we would want to have in the community to support the children.

**Would having a regional/community/school district database be useful to you? What kind of information would you like to have included?**

- Betsy Brenneman – we would have loved to come to Minto and have the meeting there to get face-to-face feedback. One of the things that has come up over and over is that there isn't a central place people can go to get information about young children: what seems to be working for young kids, what is making them successful.

Alaska is behind on sharing and integrating data about young children. One of the things we are working on is a data dashboard that would centralize all the program and services information like parent education; child care availability (preschool and child care slots); information on transition supports; special education supports. There are privacy concerns that have to be overcome. But would this type of information be useful for people in Minto?



- In response: It would be helpful for funding requests, sometimes the village council needs information for grants and program funds, to have this all available is always useful. As far as transitions, we do socials between the programs, they have exposure to each different levels and programs so that they become used to the location and the environment.

**Is coordination working well in Minto?**

- There could be more coordination between TCC and the school district; although for the most part it is working really well.



EARLY CHILDHOOD ALASKA: A STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR 2020-2025

# Appendix B

## 2019 Stakeholder Engagement Reports



# Early Childhood Conversation

Association of Alaska School Boards Spring Academy

April 6, 2019 • Baranof Hotel, Juneau, Alaska

*Sponsored by the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) with funding from the Preschool Development Grant B-5 from the AK Dept of Education and Early Development (DEED)*

## Our Agreements

- In every chair, a leader.
- Speak to be understood, listen to understand.
- Be present, be engaged.
- Value our time together.
- Challenges → Solutions
- Takest thou hats off.
- We are responsible for our experiences.
- This is a safe space for meaningful conversation.



This was an opportunity for school board members and superintendents from around the state to collaborate to identify early childhood care and learning needs to help AASB put together the picture of early childhood from birth to five in Alaska. AASB is coordinating the creation of a statewide needs assessment and strategic plan for DEED in order to streamline early care and learning systems and improve access to high quality affordable programs especially for low income, rural, and disadvantaged families.

Feedback from participants will help shape AASB's work, fill in gaps, provide a context and an understanding for how well it is going for young children in school districts around the state, and point to what is needed.

## OVERARCHING QUESTION

**What kinds of early care and learning will best prepare young children for school and life?**

### Current early care and learning programs in Alaska are:

- Licensed child care centers
- Licensed family child care centers
- Private preschools
- Homeschools
- School district pre-elementary

- Military child care
- Tribal child care
- Early Head Start
- Head Start
- Early Intervention/Infant Learning
- In-home visiting
- Library story time
- Imagination Library

### Participants said we should add:

- FIT (Family Infant Toddler Program)
- Stand-alone SpED programs
- Sunday schools



## QUESTION #1

**What early care and learning programs or initiatives are working/not working well for families wanting services?**

### Working Well:

- Effective high-quality teachers with ability to build relationships
- Programs of good quality
- Infant learning/early learning preschools
- Parents as Teachers. Love + logic/PAT
- Head Start, but it's limited due to income guidelines
- Partnering with private care provider for equality
- Cultural relevance
- Identification of special needs (Child Find)
- Book bags/Imagination Library with a home visitor
- Funding/if available
- All-day kindergarten (Northstar)
- Immersion pre-school (Hydaburg)
- Community-based story times
- Nice mix of school and non-school based programs (Cordova)
- Baby Raven Reads
- Cuba model. Shared responsibility (wrap around)
- Home visits
- Playgroups

### Not Working Well/Challenge:

- Income threshold for Head Start
- Accessibility, not enough slots, not affordable
- Transportation
- Inconsistent funding
- Defining high quality programs (need criteria)
- Fragmented programs, definitions
- 70% have not achieved 8 ADP
- Partnering with private care provider for equality
- Cultural relevance
- Lack of home visits
- Mentor networks peer-to-peer
- Identification of special needs (Child Find)
- Child care for parents before preschool (for infants and toddlers)
- State requirements for child care
- Limitations separating haves and have nots (IEP, tribe, income)
- Huge needs – more programs needed
- Domestic violence, child abuse, opioids, addiction
- Support and knowledge for families
- Finding volunteers for Baby Raven reads/storytelling
- Having activities during working hours
- Foster care, too much movement
- Settings that are comfortable where there are people
- Professional development for child care workers

## QUESTION #2

**What is needed for children to move from early care to preschool to school?**

*NOTE: Number of asterisks\* equals the number of additional times this response was given.*

- Parent presence in schools \*
- “Practicing” school
- Wholistic – whole child
- Medical – parent packets at birth.
- Parenting – family & me events, workplace supports
- Smooth transitions, connections\*
- Need open, universal preschool\*
- Don't label kids to get them into programs
- Funding
- Look at education as preK-12 not K-12.
- Early childhood education for parents\*\*
- Activities with parents – school and parent engagement\*
- Clear expectations, learning objectives
- Educate public about importance of early education
- Reading material print and learning tools in homes. Enrichment resources.

- Communication – bridges, alignment of skills
- Develop – philosophies of providers, programs, understanding (finding compatibility, overlap)\*\*
- Stakeholder coordination, community conversation
- Parents and organizations understand ADP
- Alignment of standards\*\*\*
- Time to play, play groups, develop skills through play\*
- Who they are – EC programs linked to culture, identity, connection
- More time for coordination – Head Start and parents, school and early childhood coordinators\*
- Creativity, soft skills, life skills
- Supplies, so we don't have to fundraise, dedicate more time to priority activities

### QUESTION #3

**What are the most serious barriers in your district to young children's care and learning from birth to age five?**

*NOTE: Number of asterisks\* equals the number of additional times this response was given.*

- Teachers\*
- Supplies
- Living wages for EC professionals, \$3.50 child care per hour\*
- Income level requirements for child care, Head Start
- Family networks – change how we reach and provide\*
- Wrap-around services – coordination
- Grant funding inconsistency
- Safety - physical, emotional, cultural safety
- Training for all providers and teachers\*\*
- Lack of consistency of policy, practice, philosophy\*
- Changes with administration – Alaska values
- Barriers for families to be here so they can participate, kids are kept away, need sense of belonging\*
- Languages – family connection
- Knowing what is available – communications, EL app
- How are we inviting stakeholders/people into conversation?
- Lack of awareness/importance for 0-5 education with stakeholders
- Substance abuse and social issues\*
- Lack of accessibility
- Costs of high-quality programs
- License requirements
- Lack of education for prospective mothers
- Lack of supports
- Over-emphasis on academics vs life skills
- Lack of appropriate facilities\*
- Child care
- Lack of connection between elders and young children
- Funding – parents need affordable child care
- Transportation
- Trust in caregivers
- Unresolved generational trauma
- Racism



### 23 PARTICIPANTS

School District	School Board Members
Anchorage	Deena Mitchell
Bristol Bay	Rebecca Hamon, Bill Hill
Cordova City	Barbara Jewell, Sheryl Glasen, Alex Russin
Denali Borough	Nikki DeMers
Dillingham City	Emily Hulett
Fairbanks North Star	Chrya Sanderson
Juneau	Brian Holst
Ketchikan Gateway	Diane Gubatayao
Klawock City	Janelle Friday, Lisa R. George
Lake & Peninsula	Shannon Johnson-Nanalook, Stacy Hill
Lower Kuskokwim	R. Thor Williams
North Slope Borough	Kathy Ahgeak
Southeast Region	Kay Andrews
Southwest Region	Marie Paul
Yukon Koyukuk	Wilma David, Shirley Kruger, Kerry Boyd, Dian Gurtler

#### Facilitators

Betsy Brenneman, AASB PDG Coordinator

Konrad Frank, AASB Community Engagement Educator

Lori Grassgreen, AASB Director of the Initiative for Community Engagement

*The project described was supported by the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Initiative (PDG B-5), Grant Number 90TP0012, from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Office of Child Care, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.*

# Alaska Early Childhood System Meeting AASB Conference Early Childhood Strategic Plan Luncheon

November 8, 2019, 12:15- 1:25 PM  
Anchorage, Alaska



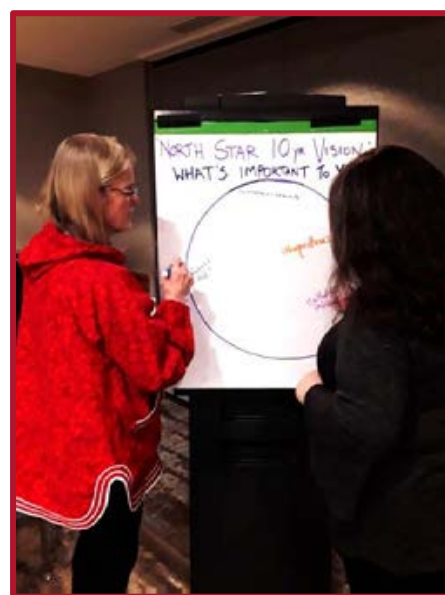
## PARTICIPANTS

Charlene Arneson (Chugach School District), Camille Booth (Hydaburg City School District), Betsy Brenneman (AASB), Tim Doran (Fairbanks North Star Borough School District), Kimberly Hankins (Lower Kuskokwim School District), Mike Hanley (Chugach School District/Aleutian Region School District), Brian Holst (Juneau Board of Education), Starr Marsett (Anchorage School Board), Deena Mitchell (Anchorage School District), Bartol A. Mwarey (Hydaburg City School District), John O'Brien (Kenai Peninsula Borough School District), Ferdinand Sharp (Board Member Southwest Region School District), Dr. Lisa Skiles Parady (Alaska Council of School Administrators), Cathy Snider (Yupit School District), Penny Vadla (Board President Kenai Peninsula Borough School District), Lorri Van Diest (State Board of Education), Mary Wegner (Sitka School District), Bridget Weiss (Juneau School District)

**Facilitation team:** Lori Grassgreen (AASB) Denali Daniels, Britta Hamre, Erin Willahan, (Denali Daniels + Associates).

## INTRODUCTIONS

Stakeholders from school boards across the state met for a working lunch during the annual AASB conference to discuss opportunities and visions for the early childhood strategic plan. Participants provided feedback on the draft one-page summary of the McDowell Group's needs assessment and a draft spreadsheet of the early childhood education programs and services in Alaska.



What stood out from the needs assessment one-pager and the key opportunities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universal PreK -&gt; reading at 3rd grade</li> <li>• Inter-relatedness</li> <li>• Where is the point of entry?</li> <li>• Quality-underestimated and undervalued</li> <li>• Great need for programs</li> <li>• Access in Rural AK</li> <li>• Child care jobs are low-paying</li> </ul>
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## NEEDS ASSESSMENT AT A GLANCE:

The needs assessment one-page summary was provided to each participant upon arriving. Participants were asked to write down and share what stood out to them first with people at their tables, and then with the wider group. Concepts shared with the wider group were documented at the front of the room. AASB then provided a more in-depth introduction to the strategic planning process, one-pager, and ECE services and programs spreadsheet.

**STRATEGIC PLAN ACTIVITY: WHAT PRIORITIES DO YOU WANT TO SEE IN A STRATEGIC PLAN?**

Participants wrote down, shared, and discussed as a group their priorities for a strategic plan for early childhood in Alaska. The group identified the following criteria:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• incentivize/pay for training/education for early educators</li><li>• language, culture, self-esteem</li><li>• quality strategic play-based strategies</li><li>• creating access for rural</li><li>• developmentally appropriate perspective</li><li>• early literacy PSA campaign (role of parents)</li><li>• kindergarten readiness</li><li>• quality: high, use of language well-connected to K-12</li><li>• locally defined programs (strengths/culture)</li><li>• entrepreneurship development</li><li>• use partnerships to meet goals (gov, school district and private, etc.)</li><li>• universal PreK statewide</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• partnerships with schools, tribes</li><li>• qualified staff</li><li>• show economic value to human capital</li><li>• professional development</li><li>• accountability to standards</li><li>• connect with moms pre-birth</li><li>• "life skills" for HS/Jr. High students-future parents!</li><li>• standards</li><li>• plan to grow our own teachers and pay value</li><li>• equal access (availability)</li><li>• stable funding</li><li>• mental/behavioral health in communities (families)</li><li>• focus on quality preschool programs - professional development</li></ul>
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**NORTH STAR 10-YEAR VISION: WHAT’S IMPORTANT TO YOU?**

Participants were asked to write down their ideas for a North Star 10-year vision for early childhood in Alaska on a chart at the front of the room. Participants contributed the following:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not simply an extension of school</li><li>• Early Ed = K-12 = Postsecondary (Equally Important) Quality</li><li>• Access for all communities and families Culturally infused</li><li>• Affordable, quality PreK child care for all</li><li>• Reduced ACES</li><li>• Every child supported in developmentally appropriate way and child care providers supported with prof. development and living wages</li><li>• Close “word” gap</li><li>• Ubiquitous</li><li>• Developing a community of stakeholders: look to community members, partners, parents, students...others to help develop plan (give insight)</li><li>• Increased private/community ECE options</li></ul>
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**NEXT STEPS**

This work will be incorporated into the strategic planning framework currently in development. Stakeholder engagement is beginning with coordination of potential meetings in Bethel, Kodiak, and Kotzebue. AASB members shared their email addresses when they registered for the luncheon and were encouraged to watch for email communications about future planning activities.

# Alaska Early Childhood System Meeting Kindergarten Ready Network

November 21, 2019, 1:30-3:30 PM  
Anchorage, Alaska



## PARTICIPANTS

Brett Banks (United Way of Anchorage), Amie Collins (Best Beginnings,) Catherine Curtis (United Way of Anchorage), Antonia Gale (HUD), Abbe Hensley (Best Beginnings,) Jeanne Holifield (Southcentral Foundation), Chris Jurenka (Providence Health & Services Alaska), Tracy Kalytiak (Mat-Su Health Foundation), Belinda Koskei (Best Beginnings), Cindy Lyell (Providence Nurse Family Partnership), Kelly Murphy (Southcentral Foundation), Craig Nolte (Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco), Stefanie O'Brien (Alaska Community Foundation), Kristin Ramstad (Rural Alaska Community Action Program), Christie Reinhardt (DHSS Women, Children, Family Health), Stephanie Schott (Best Beginnings), Letisha Secret (Southcentral Foundation), Jodi Sides (Southcentral Foundation), Richard Toymil (Anchorage Montessori School), Donna Wade (thread), Mack Wood (DHSS DPH WCFH MCH-Ep).

## Facilitation Team:

Christina Hulquist (Program Coordinator II Child Care Program Office.) Denali Daniels and Britta Hamre (Denali Daniels + Associates)

## INTRODUCTIONS

Stakeholders from the Anchorage Kindergarten Ready Network met to discuss opportunities and visions for the new early childhood strategic plan and stakeholder engagement strategies. After introductions, participants were provided an overview of the Alaska Early Childhood Joint Task Force (JTF) and strategic planning process as well as a brief discussion on challenges and opportunities to access early childhood programs in Alaska. Participants were asked "in one word how are you connected to the early childhood system?"



## STRATEGIC PLAN ACTIVITY: WHAT PRIORITIES DO YOU WANT TO SEE IN A STRATEGIC PLAN?

Participants wrote down, shared, and discussed as a group their priorities for a strategic plan for early childhood in Alaska. The group identified the following criteria:

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|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequate capacity</li> <li>• Equitable outreach and support across the state</li> <li>• Low income friendly</li> <li>• Ongoing professional training and development</li> <li>• Libraries included</li> <li>• High quality early care and learning</li> <li>• Evaluation</li> <li>• Mental health – they are enough</li> <li>• Family friendly employment opportunities</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable child care</li> <li>• Parental involvement</li> <li>• EC mental health, birth to five</li> <li>• Early literacy framework</li> <li>• Coalition of partners</li> <li>• Professional development for EC workers with livable wages</li> <li>• Early childhood behavioral health services &amp; trauma informed care</li> <li>• REALLY early intervention screening</li> <li>• Culturally relevant resources</li> <li>• Adequate funding formula</li> </ul> |
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### **NORTH STAR 10-YEAR VISION: WHERE ARE WE GOING?**

Participants were asked to write down their ideas where we want Alaska's early childhood system to be in 10 years. Across the responses, some themes that stood out to participants included support for families, inclusiveness, and a universal need for system-change to remove barriers to access. Other responses include:



- 3rd and 8th grade reading proficiency increased
- Every family with young children has access to quality, affordable early child care
- Starting to see longitudinal data indicating academic and social success in children who received early learning opportunities, note 10 years may be too soon for this
- Closing the achievement gap for lower income kids
- All families are healthy, families have choices to access affordable, high quality early care and learning.
- No more book deserts, all AK children have access to high quality age appropriate materials
- Implementation of an evidence-based EC program system that works and supports all children who enter [it]
- Improved parent-child teacher outcomes
- 90% of AK children enter kindergarten ready to learn
- Competent parenting, pre-teens, care providers
- We're #1 (on the Kids Count data)
- Equitable access to quality early education
- All families are healthy, families have choices in order to access affordable, high quality, early care and learning
- All children enter kindergarten socially, emotionally and intellectually prepared
- Every child, regardless of location or economic status has unfettered access to the highest quality care and education that supports their full potential
- Big schools are ready for children (schools are ready for whatever kiddo they get)
- Consistently funded
- Children and families thrive due to policy level changes that fully support them
- Well supported and trained staff
- All kids ready for and able to attend kindergarten with parental support to do so
- Bipartisan support for ECE ALWAYS

### **FOCUSED CONVERSATION: HOW CAN WE BEST REACH URBAN (NON-RURAL) PARENTS AND FAMILIES WHO ARE LOW-INCOME AND VULNERABLE?**

Participants engaged in a focused conversation around outreach to low-income and vulnerable parents and families. An overview of the discussion is below:

- Home visits: go to where parents and caregivers are
- Providing incentive to parents
- Books
- Food
- Gas Money
- Gift Cards
- Photo Voice; Communication materials that are linguistically and culturally appropriate
- Mat-Su Health Foundation
- Loussac Library Children's Services and family story time
- Neighborhood faith-based play groups in Mt. View and Muldoon
- Kids Corp
- Countdown to Kindergarten events
- Alaska Literacy Program and peer navigators



#### **NEXT STEPS:**

This work will be incorporated into the strategic planning framework currently in development. Using the input from this Nov. 21 meeting, strategies for outreach to low-income and vulnerable parents and families in Anchorage and the Mat-Su will be devised. Stakeholder engagement will also include a comment period on a draft strategic plan.

# Alaska Early Childhood System Meeting Kodiak Alaska Early Childhood System Luncheon

December 10, 2019, 11:30 AM-1:00 PM  
Koniag Incorporated, Kodiak, Alaska



## PARTICIPANTS:

Kelly Bell (Kodiak Baptist Mission), Rae Jean Blaschka (State of Alaska), Arwen Botz (Kodiak Area Native Association), Rheanna Davis (Kodiak Area Native Association), Kitty Deal (Kodiak College/University of Alaska), Ann Ellingson (State of Alaska), Kimberly Erpelding (State of Alaska), Kelli Foreman (Kodiak Baptist Mission), Heather Foxworthy (RuralCAP), Sean Hales (Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak), Theresa Hubbard (Kodiak Island Borough School District), Stephanie Jenkins (Kodiak Area Native Association), Kathy Johnson (RuralCAP), Angelica Lopez (Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak), Laure Madsen (City of Kodiak Public Library), Claudia Otis (Kodiak Island Borough School District), Heather Preece (Kodiak KINDNESS), Calista Pruitt (Kodiak Island Borough School District), Linda Resoff (Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak), Adrianna Sala (Kodiak Area Native Association), Amanda Sanford (Kodiak Island Borough School District), Kim Saunders (Kodiak Island Borough School District), Teri Schneider (St. Mary's School/Alutiiq Language Nest), Cherie Skonberg (Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak), Anna Sluz (Kodiak Area Native Association), Rob Stauffer (KIHA), Asia Torrejas (St. Paul Preschool), Kerry Wood (Independent Living Center).

## Facilitation Team:

Betsy Brenneman (Preschool Development Grant Coordinator, Association of Alaska School Board); Denali Daniels and Britta Hamre (Denali Daniels + Associates)

## INTRODUCTIONS

Stakeholders from Kodiak's early childhood system met to discuss opportunities and visions for the strategic plan.

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Participants reviewed a one-pager landscape of early care and education programs in Kodiak and discussed with partners what stood out to them, followed by a full group discussion.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private preschools and informal providers not included.</li> <li>• Teacher inventory is just the SEED registry?</li> <li>• The number of libraries should be expanded to include school and college libraries.</li> <li>• WIC enrollment numbers and free school lunch numbers.</li> <li>• Kindergarten Readiness doesn't reflect the readiness of students who are not English speakers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of the number of children 0-5 in Kodiak only 80 of 1,000 of them are in the district preschool.</li> <li>• Is this data going to be updated on an annual basis?</li> <li>• The need for/desired use of community level, longitudinal data.</li> <li>• The distance learning for Kodiak... What is the bigger picture here?</li> </ul>
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## STRATEGIC PLANNING:

In small groups participants were asked to reflect on the following question:

*Building on your own experience, what are three priorities that should be included in the State of Alaska Early Childhood Strategic Plan?*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Child safety and wellbeing</li><li>• Community collaboration</li><li>• Increased value of EC professionals</li><li>• ACEs</li><li>• Importance of ground level work, water the roots, stop overfunding the top</li><li>• Teachers aren't "just babysitters"</li><li>• More accessibility to healthy nutrition for all</li><li>• Social emotional support, community trauma is everywhere</li><li>• Play based learning connections</li><li>• Family supports</li><li>• Locally grown, highly qualified EC</li><li>• Affordable child care</li><li>• Infant mental health</li><li>• Trauma care</li><li>• Early childhood hub</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Basic Needs</li><li>• Parent child interaction</li><li>• Culturally relevant education</li><li>• Ideal infant feeding</li><li>• Health care</li><li>• Programs/resources for children who experience developmental disabilities</li><li>• Educate parents on the importance of early childhood education</li><li>• Teacher training</li><li>• Preschool availability for all 3-5 year old's no matter income</li><li>• Trauma prevention (increased resiliency)</li><li>• Addiction prevention</li><li>• Addiction education for students (3-5 yr)</li><li>• Highly qualified EC professional workforce</li></ul>
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## NORTH STAR VISION

In small groups, those present shared their North Star vision of early childhood in Kodiak by answering the following question:

*Think about where we want to be 10 years from now with our early childhood system in Alaska. What statements come to mind, to describe where we want to be if we are successful?*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• High school classes to teach all life skills</li><li>• Break negative cycles</li><li>• Strengthen families</li><li>• Highly functional families</li><li>• How to support addiction in communities</li><li>• Longer paid maternity leave</li><li>• Fully funded</li><li>• Functioning hub</li><li>• State mandated (i.e. making sure trauma informed resources are being used statewide).</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A mechanism for setting expectations and compliance</li><li>• Secure budget</li><li>• Kids w/ lower ACEs</li><li>• Normalized engagement with services</li><li>• Streamlined success</li><li>• Job security</li><li>• Competent kids</li><li>• Fully trauma informed</li><li>• Sustainability</li></ul> |
|--|---|

## NEXT STEPS

This work will be incorporated into the strategic planning framework currently in development. Stakeholder engagement will continue with coordination of meetings throughout the state. Those present shared their email addresses when they registered for the luncheon and will watch for email communications about future planning activities.

# Alaska Early Childhood System Meeting

## Rural Kodiak Parent Video Conference on Early Childhood

December 10, 2019, 3:30-4:30 PM

Kodiak Island Borough School District, Kodiak, Alaska



### **PARTICIPANTS:**

Peggy Azuyak (Kodiak Island Borough School District), Kim Saunders (Kodiak Island Borough School District), educators and community members from Port Lions, Old Harbor and Akhiok.

### **Facilitation Team:**

Betsy Brennenman (Preschool Development Grant Coordinator, Association of Alaska School Board); Denali Daniels and Britta Hamre (Denali Daniels + Associates).

### **NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

Content from the draft statewide needs assessment and a Kodiak-specific snapshot of the early childhood landscape were presented on by AASB and discussed by those in attendance.

### **STRATEGIC PLANNING**

Participants were asked to identify what is working for their community's early childhood system and what needs aren't being met for young children and families in their community by considering the following domains.

- **Accessibility/Availability-** pre-elementary programs, child care and health and social services are available and meet family geographic and schedule needs.
- **Affordability + Cost-** families can pay for programs and services or receive assistance needed to make services affordable without undue hardship.
- **Quality-** families can find programs and services that are safe and meet their vision for quality.

#### **What is working?**

- Literacy program, Best Beginnings
- When transportation available to preschool
- Preschool has a designated space in the Old Harbor school
- Food provided at preschool
- Elementary teachers are working with preschool aides
- Amazing teachers, always seeking and asking for help
- Pre-kindergarten interactions with the school district. i.e. attending free play or choice time
- The preschool teacher in Port Lions has been working in the community for 36 years and is very dedicated.



### What isn't working/ What needs are not being met?

- No daycare in Old Harbor
- Preschool [only] has two awesome teachers but they are currently sick, so preschool is closed
- Sometimes you're lucky that a grandparent can watch a kid during the day
- [It is hard to] shuffle around to bring kids or grandkids to work with us
- Homes where one parent [father] is employed in the fishing industry and available during the off season
- A lot of people in our community it is an aunt, uncle, grandparent raising the child
- Retirees are raising young children, there is a generational difference in exposure to reading materials in homes
- What would a tribal daycare look like? Where would the funding come from? We have wonderful young, engaged parents, training & employing parents of young children as child care providers
- Delay in potty training leads to missing the first three or six months of preschool
- Child care availability would provide peer time in early childhood
- No money for curriculum
- Corporation helps teachers via collaboration with the tribal council that assists the teachers
- Grandparents raising grandchildren
- Transportation is not available
- Bringing lower level books [within the ARC reading program] into the preschool classroom so those books are familiar to them

### NEXT STEPS

This work will be incorporated into the strategic planning framework currently in development. Stakeholder engagement will continue with coordination of meetings in communities throughout the state. Those present shared their email addresses when they registered for the event and will watch for email communications about future planning activities.

# Alaska Early Childhood Family Friendly Gathering Kodiak Family Friendly Community Gathering

December 10, 2019, 5:30–7:30 PM

Kodiak Island Borough School District, Kodiak, Alaska



## PARTICIPANTS:

Deanna Belli (Preschool Aide), Cristina Bieber (Kodiak Island Borough School District), Juliet P. Bitang (Private Child Care Provider), Deborah Bitanga (member of the public), Heather Burke (Kodiak Island Borough School District), Traci Campbell (Kodiak Island Borough School District), Katie Conway (Kodiak Island Borough School District), Sarah Daugherty (Kodiak Island Borough School District), Corrie Davis (Kodiak Island Borough School District), Judith Davis (School Psychologist, Kodiak Island Borough School District), Heather Foxworthy (Parent, Rural CAP), Angela Garofalo (Kodiak Island Borough School District), Gail Otto (Grandparent), Iris Samuels (Kodiak Daily Mirror), Rita Slowinski (Kodiak Island Borough School District), Anna Sulz (Kodiak Health Care)

## Facilitation Team:

Betsy Brennehan (Preschool Development Grant Coordinator Association of Alaska School Boards); Denali Daniels and Britta Hamre (Denali Daniels + Associates)



## INTRODUCTIONS

Parents and community members in Kodiak met to discuss opportunities and visions for the strategic plan. In introductions, attendees were asked to share their motivation for providing input for the strategic planning process.

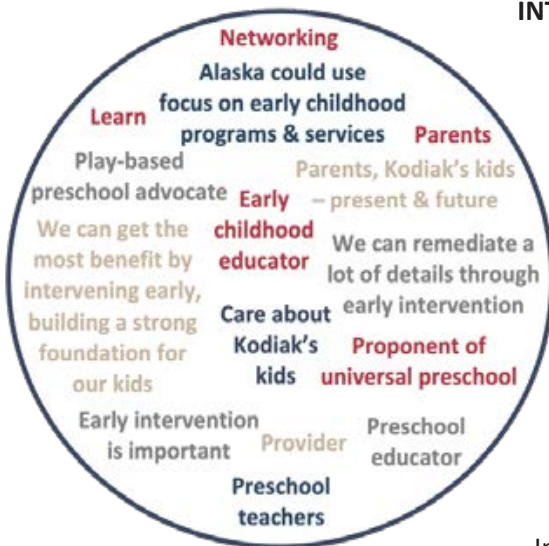
## NEEDS ASSESSMENT

**A Needs Assessment of Alaska's Mixed-Delivery System of Early Childhood Care and Education** is to be completed by the McDowell Group at the end of December 2019.

Participants reviewed Kodiak key findings from the draft needs assessment.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING

In small groups, participants were asked to address what is and isn't working in Kodiak for these three domains:





### ***Accessibility/Availability***

Pre-elementary programs, child care and health and social services are available and meet family geographic and schedule needs.

### ***Affordability + Cost***

Families can pay for programs and services or receive assistance needed to make services affordable without undue hardship.

### ***Quality***

Families can find programs and services that are safe and meet their vision for quality.

<b><i>Accessibility/Availability</i></b>	
What is working in Kodiak?	What is not working in Kodiak?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some AM, PM, and all-day programming</li> <li>• Increase in OT services</li> <li>• Sub lunch/food programs</li> <li>• Variety of preschools</li> <li>• Strong faith-based community</li> <li>• Cultural openness (sometimes)</li> <li>• Accommodating providers-interconnection</li> <li>• Big providers have some transportation</li> <li>• Good ILP and Independent learning people</li> <li>• Geographically spread out</li> <li>• Connectedness of the community in general</li> <li>• Outdoor PreK/forest kindergarten</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited options for all day</li> <li>• Limited options for shift work</li> <li>• Mission &amp; CDC are always full</li> <li>• Lack of transportation</li> <li>• Limited options for villages</li> <li>• Difficult filling open positions/turnover</li> <li>• Hard to get therapy privately</li> <li>• Language barriers/cultural barrier</li> <li>• Only non-faith-based provider is base</li> <li>• CDC Lack of care, birth – 2 years</li> <li>• Equipment outdated-tech/outdoor equipment</li> <li>• No transportation, especially to preschool</li> <li>• No child care center trained to work with or equipped to work with special needs</li> </ul>

<b><i>Affordability + Cost</i></b>	
What is working in Kodiak?	What is not working in Kodiak?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decent public assistance if you qualify</li> <li>• Transportation</li> <li>• Some providers offer scholarships</li> <li>• <b>Bartering</b></li> <li>• Lots of in-home child care</li> <li>• KIBSD meets [families' needs]</li> <li>• Meeting family needs</li> <li>• Migrant Ed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summer options</li> <li>• We need free universal preschool</li> <li>• Too expensive (for the parent and provider)</li> <li>• Accessibility of public programs</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Language</li> <li>• Nobody local to help citizenship</li> <li>• Cultural age restriction</li> <li>• Location/transportation</li> <li>• Cost with multiples [&gt;1 child in household]</li> <li>• It's too expensive, also ties to the idea that we value quality</li> <li>• People can't work because of the expense of child care</li> </ul>

<b>Quality</b>	
What is working in Kodiak?	What is not working in Kodiak?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passionate people/child care providers</li> <li>• Trainings @ local college &amp; community/statewide (thread)</li> <li>• Conscious discipline</li> <li>• Love &amp; love/love &amp; limits Infant learning home visits</li> <li>• Breastfeeding project</li> <li>• Early Childhood Program (KIBSD)</li> <li>• Parental support</li> <li>• Early childhood coalition</li> <li>• Free tuition for early childhood classes @ college</li> <li>• Grants available for in-home providers to apply to improve facility. (KANA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of licensed daycare providers/facilities</li> <li>• Availability of private providers (OT/PT/SLP)</li> <li>• Follow through after training and implementation of new learning by providers</li> <li>• Training for private provider daycare (or home daycare)</li> <li>• Networking between providers (is emerging)</li> <li>• No ABA therapy</li> <li>• Lack of in-person training for providers</li> <li>• No tech literacy</li> <li>• Trainings offered during work hours</li> <li>• Limited oversight of in-home providers</li> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• High turnover</li> <li>• No local licensing [bus drivers]</li> </ul>

## **NORTH STAR VISION**

In small groups, those present shared their north star vision of early childhood in Kodiak by answering the following question:

Think about where we want to be 10 years from now with our early childhood system in Alaska. What statements come to mind, to describe where we want to be if we are successful?

- Better self-regulated children
- Plenty of quality foster families
- People are talking to children
- Safety in centers
- Educated parents & support
- Inclusive non faith-based licensed center
- Clear paths to become a provider and to access a provider
- Busing for all children
- More men [involved in the system]
- Functional, healthy OCS
- Culturally sustaining
- Early childhood available for all.
- Fast/accessible SLP/OT/PT
- Shorten gap between theory and practice
- Fluid in plan from birth to 5
- Early childhood center and all local agencies supporting/collaborating
- After school care options
- Universal preschool
- Preschool for all children
- Lower ACE scores
- Kodiak will have incorporated preschool programs to KISBD
- Early language instruction
- Early childhood hub



## **NEXT STEPS**

This work will be incorporated into the strategic planning framework currently in development. Stakeholder engagement will continue with coordination of meetings in communities throughout the state. Those present shared their email addresses when they registered for the event and will watch for email communications about future planning activities.





EARLY CHILDHOOD ALASKA: A STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR 2020-2025

# Appendix C

## Survey Responses

1

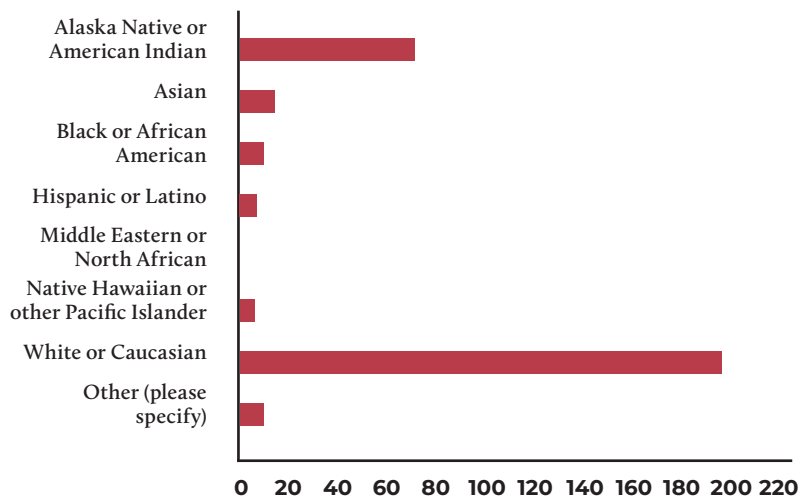
What community do you live in? Please tell us the name of the village, town, or city where you live.

### SURVEY PARTICIPANTS BY COMMUNITY

Anchor Point	2	Hooper Bay	5	Metlakatla	2	Scammon Bay	1
Anchorage*	53	Houston	1	Minto	1	Sitka	3
Bethel	6	Juneau*	27	Mountain Village	2	Skagway	6
Big Lake	1	Kasilof	1	Naukati	1	Soldotna	3
Chugiak	3	Kenai	10	Nenana	3	Sterling	2
Coffman Cove	1	Ketchikan	6	Newhalen	1	Talkeetna	2
Craig	3	Kiana	1	Nikiski	3	Tok	3
Dillingham	10	King Salmon	1	Northway	1	Utqiagvik	1
Eagle River*	2	Kipnuk	1	North Pole	12	Wasilla*	24
Fairbanks*	24	Klawock	5	Palmer*	17	Whittier	1
Ft Wainwright	1	Kodiak	14	Petersburg	6	Willow	1
Healy	1	Kotzebue	6	Russian Mission	1	Wrangell	1
Hollis	1	Manley Hot Springs	1	Salcha	2		
Homer	2	Meadow Lakes	1	Sand Point	1		

2

What is your race/ethnicity? Please select all that apply.



#	Answer	Count
1	Alaska Native or American Indian	71
2	Asian	14
3	Black or African American	8
4	Hispanic or Latino	6
5	Middle Eastern or North African	0
6	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	4
7	White or Caucasian	198
8	Other (please specify)	9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>

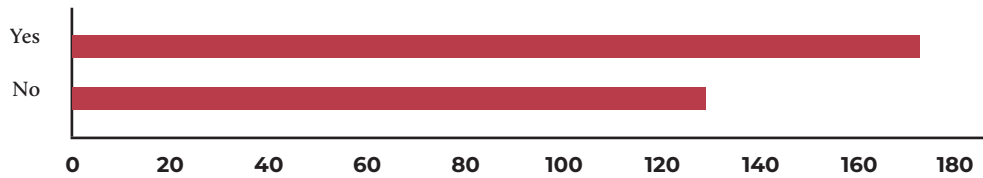
#### 2\_8\_TEXT - Other (please specify)

Irrelevant
None of your business
None of your business
Prefer not to answer

biracial
mxl
mixed
Mix of Hispanic and white with a whole lot of other

3

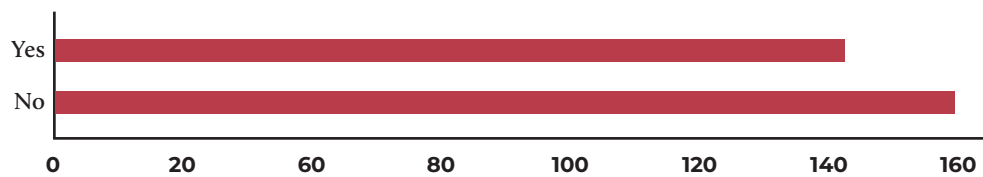
Are there any children under the age of 9 who live at least part of the time with you?



#	Answer	Count
1	Yes	175
2	No	128
	<b>Total</b>	<b>303</b>

4

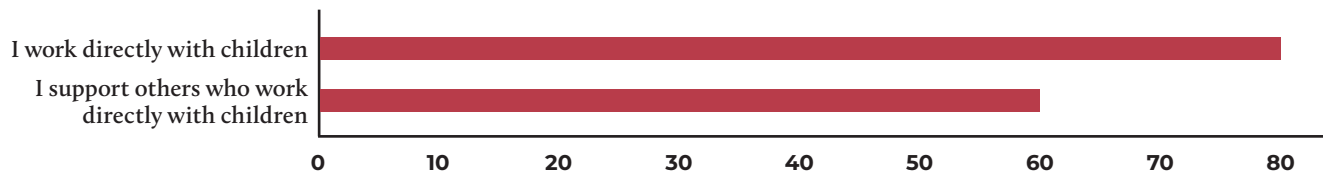
Do you work in early childhood (serving children birth through age 8)?



#	Answer	Count
1	Yes	143
2	No	159
	<b>Total</b>	<b>302</b>

5

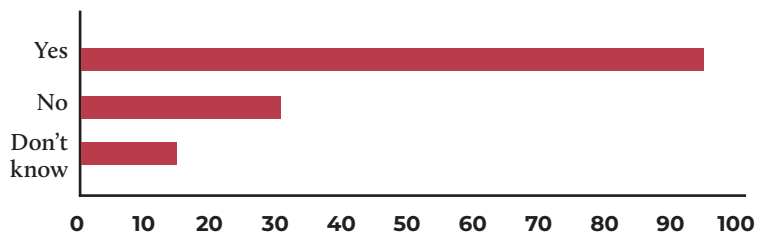
What is your main role at your workplace?



#	Answer	%	Count
1	I work directly with children	57.14%	80
2	I support others who work directly with children	42.86%	60
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>140</b>

6

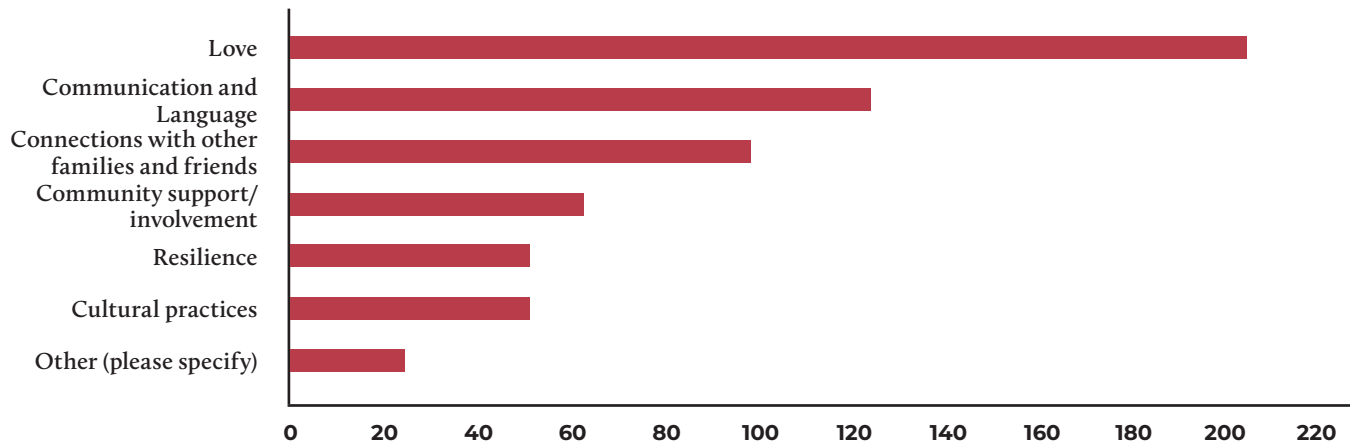
Does your workplace focus on supporting Alaska Native families and children?



#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	67.38%	95
2	No	21.99%	31
3	Don't know	10.64%	15
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>141</b>

# 7

What helps to keep the families you serve strong? Please select two that are most important to you.



#	Answer	Count
1	Love	205
2	Communication and language	122
3	Resilience	63
4	Connections with other families and friends	99
5	Community support/involvement	51
6	Cutural practices (such as music and dance or gathering, preparing, and sharing food)	51
7	Other (please specify)	23
	<b>Total</b>	<b>614</b>

## 7\_TEXT - Other (please specify)

Love to teach them what they don't know and it's always so exciting when they learn it and be so proud.

faith

Church

Time spent together, focused on eachother

Our faith

God

Time being with them and connection with extended family

faith

Faith

Jesus

Our faith

Steady income of two parents, able to support the family without a lot of stress about finances.

Making her my priority

Living alone

positive outlook

Access to resources (food, shelter, clothing...)

Community church gatherings

Properly funded resources in our communities such as education, mental health services for vulnerable youth, youth living in poverty.

Work as a team

Respect

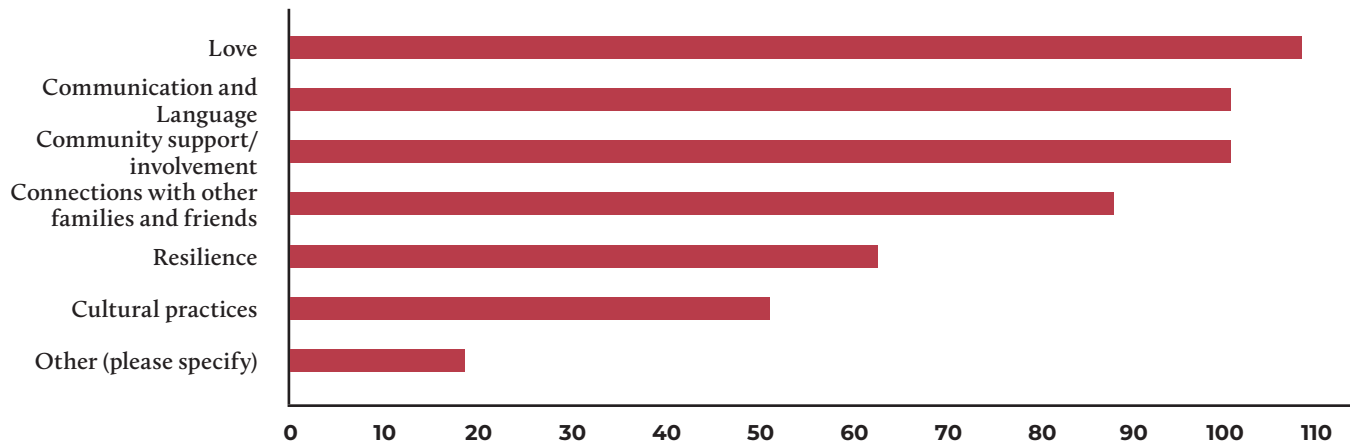
God

Alcohol, substance abuse, domestic violence training and services

Engaging with one another through games, cooking, meal-time, bedtime, anytime!

## 8

What helps to keep the families you serve strong? Please select two that are most important to you.



#	Answer	Count
1	Love	108
2	Communication and language	101
3	Community support/involvement	101
4	Connections with other families and friends	89
5	Resilience	63
6	Cultural practices (such as music and dance or gathering, preparing, and sharing food)	51
7	Other (please specify)	19
	<b>Total</b>	<b>532</b>

#### 7\_TEXT - Other (please specify)

faith

Time together

Supporting them

Their faith

God

Church

Steady income of two parents, able to support the family without a lot of stress about finances.

Sharing my experiences as a parent Now a Grandparent. I show parents calming ways to be with their kids

Making her my priority

N/A

Elder workshops to learn more about Indigenous Worldviews and Holistic Practices

Access to resources

Our faith and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ

Properly funded resources in our communities such as education, mental health services for vulnerable youth, youth living in poverty.

God

Alcohol, substance abuse, domestic violence training and services

Attachment/social-emotional competence

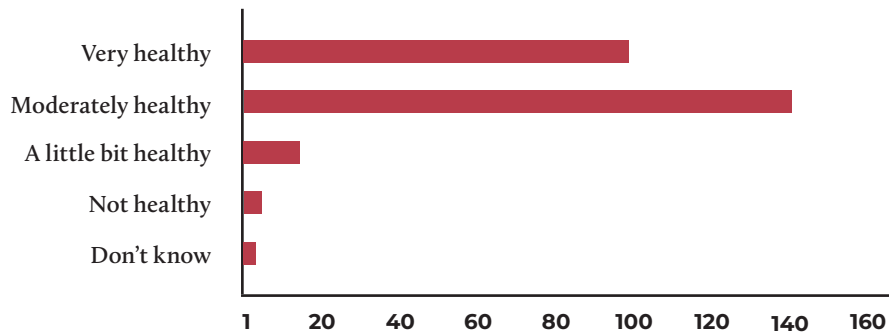
financial support through assistance programs

Having people available to teach skills not learned; through modeling and interacting



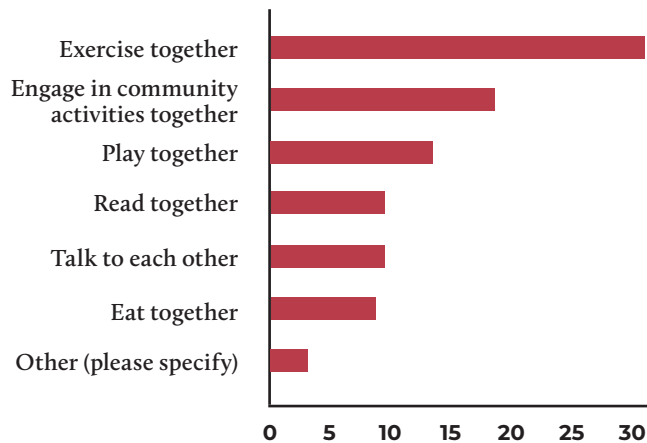
9

How healthy would you consider your family?



#	Answer	Count
1	Very healthy	98
2	Moderately healthy	140
3	A little bit healthy	14
4	Not healthy	5
5	Don't know	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>259</b>

10

What do you wish you could do more of to increase your family's health?  
Check all that apply.

#	Answer	Count
1	Play together	13
2	Eat together	8
3	Read together	9
4	Exercise together	28
5	Talk to each other	9
6	Engage in community activities together	18
	<b>Total</b>	<b>85</b>

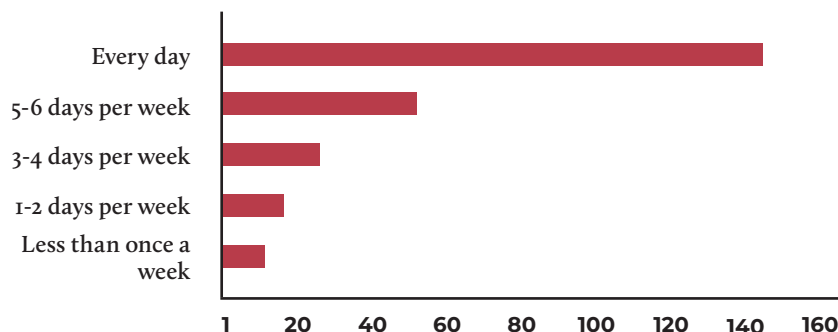
**10\_7\_TEXT - Other (please specify)**

Hunting/fishing/camping together

Nothing specific

Serve others together

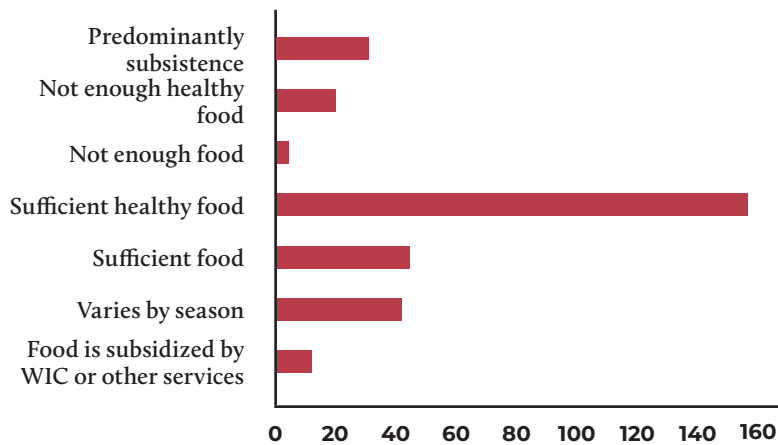
11

What do you wish you could do more of to increase your family's health?  
Check all that apply.

#	Answer	Count
1	Every day	142
2	5-6 days per week	54
3	3-4 days per week	26
4	1-2 days per week	17
5	Less than once a week	11
	<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>

## 12

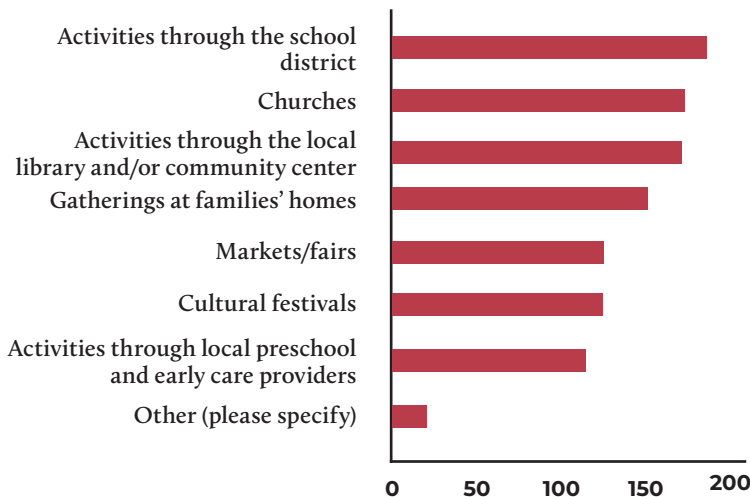
### What do healthy meals look like for your family?



#	Answer	Count
1	Predominantly subsistence	32
2	Not enough healthy food	20
3	Not enough food	2
4	Sufficient healthy food	155
5	Sufficient food	44
6	Varies by season	41
7	Food is subsidized by WIC or other services	12
	<b>Total</b>	<b>306</b>

## 13

### What opportunities are there in your community for families to connect with each other? Please select all that apply.



#	Answer	Count
1	Activities through the school district	186
2	Activities through local preschool and early care providers	115
3	Activities through the local library and/or community center	173
4	Markets/fairs	125
5	Cultural festivals	124
6	Churches	176
7	Gatherings at families' homes	151
8	Other (please specify)	21
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1071</b>

#### 13\_8\_TEXT - Other (please specify)

hunting, fishing, camping, gathering.

Parks and nature trails, mom groups, online support groups, forest schools, classes and activities like dance and swim...

Homeschool gatherings

family nights at the Fieldhouse, Parents as Teachers, Bartlett Beginnings classes

Activities through KGB sports programs

Once a week playgroups for kids under 3

There are gatherings but not for working parents' schedules so if you work you can't participate

City and local kids sports

Hiking, out-of-doors exercise, organized and informal sports, music lessons, museum visits

All of the above

Online with other parents

Cultural activities

sports

Activities through community

Open gym, open library and internet access at school, local monthly market, Basketball events, Movie night 2 times a month, boys and girls club, teen night, beading groups

4-H, Church, and school

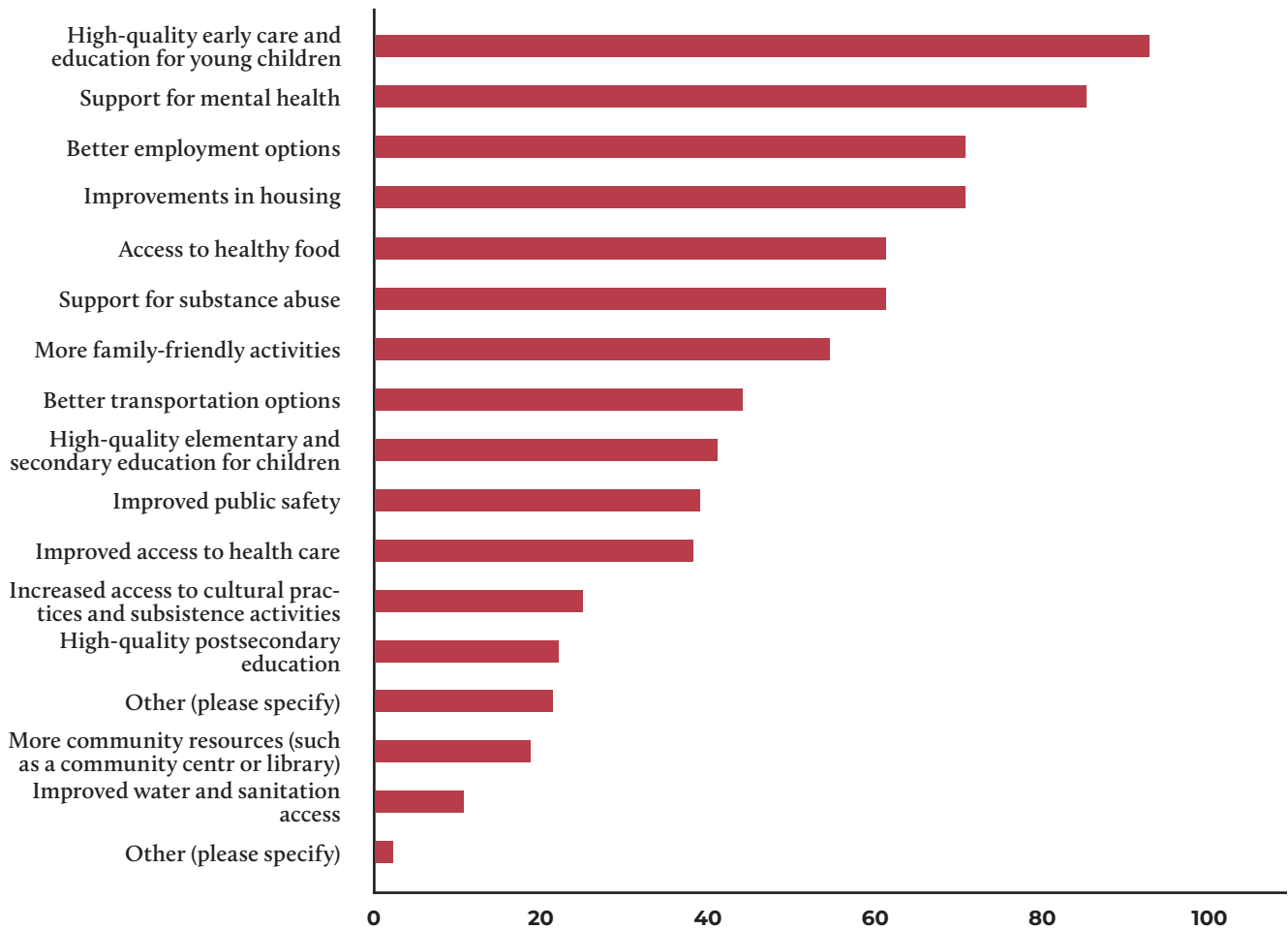
I wish there were more activities through these places, we do have some for each.

Dance groups, sports

Free activities for Tribal citizens through STA Social Services Department

memememe

## What does your community need to support safe, stable, and healthy families? Please select the 2 most urgent needs for your community.



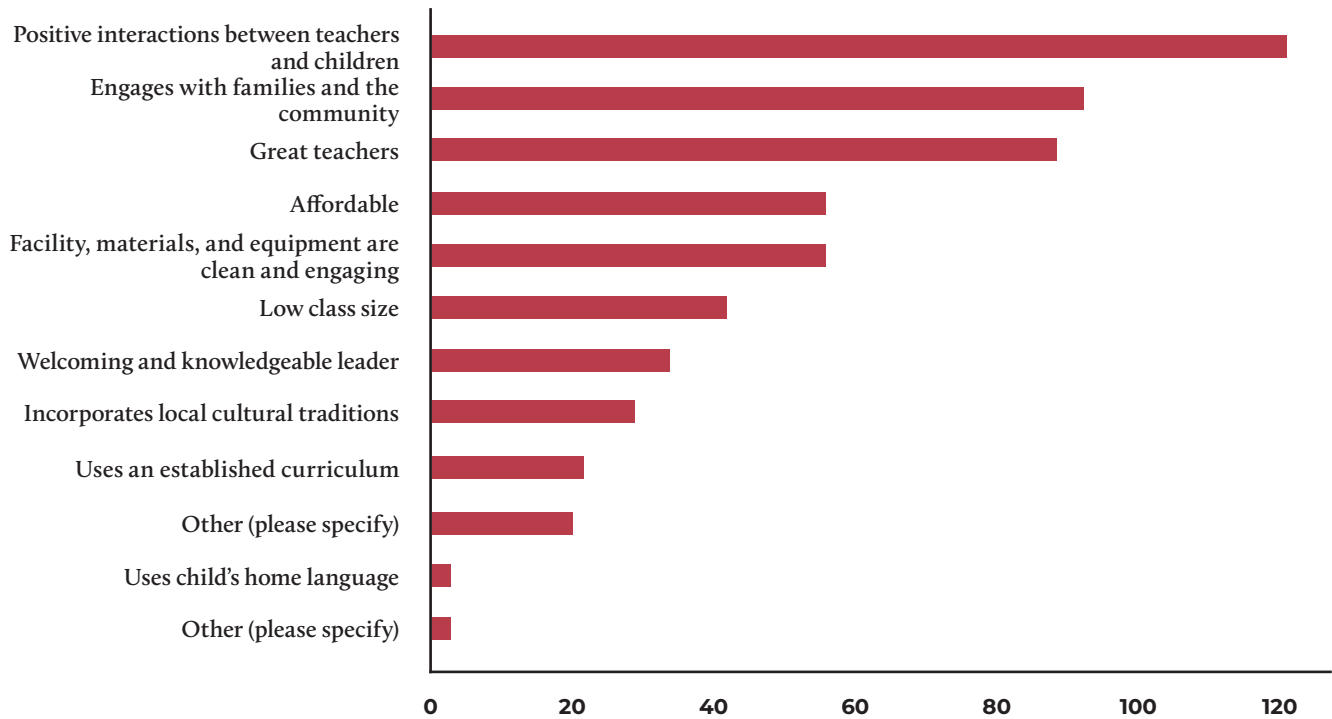
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Access to healthy food	8.28%	62
2	Better employment options	9.28%	71
3	Better transportation options	5.65%	45
4	Increased access to cultural practices and subsistence activities	3.39%	25
5	Improvements in housing	9.16%	71
6	Improved access to health care	5.14%	38
7	Improved public safety	5.14%	39
8	Improved water and sanitation access	1.25%	6
9	High-quality early care and education for young children	12.17%	93

10	High-quality elementary and secondary education for children	5.40%	41
11	High-quality postsecondary education	2.89%	22
12	More community resources (such as a community center or library)	2.51%	19
13	More family-friendly activities	7.40%	55
14	Support for mental health	11.29%	86
15	Support for substance abuse	8.16%	62
16	Other (please specify)	2.63%	21
17	Other (please specify)	.25%	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>758</b>

<b>14_16_TEXT - Other (please specify)</b>
a healthy cruise ship season
More after work activities for the kids w/parents in winter
Nothing. Plenty to choose from.
Community Center, club for kids
More restaurants
Support for families to stay home with their child for the first 6 months of their life.
The community needs are met, these suggestions would be appreciated, but not needed.
I like it just the way it is
More multi age activities or parents and children learning new skills together like woodworking
getting rid of alcohol and meth & their dealers
High quality support for childcare for children that don't qualify with a disability but mental health issue under 7 years old.
Very hard to pick just two. Steady, good income, good housing and substance abuse/mental health counseling are all critical.
More safe & fun options For teenage children.
Less taxes
A task force to take down bootleggers and drug dealers
Train-The-Trainers: High-quality Indigenous Knowledge Workshops tailored for specific age groups delivered by culturally competent facilitators.
Indoor activities for young kids everyday.
More security screenings for drugs before entering our community
Parenting classes and support groups
Better childcare options
Early Childhood hub to get all the resources of EC in one place

<b>14_17_TEXT - Other (please specify)</b>
Smaller more efficient government
Programming that flourishes Indigenous knowledge to foster awareness for healthy living tailored for specific age groups. This knowledge should be drawn from Alaska's Indigenous Ways of Knowing.

**What do you think makes an early learning program high-quality?  
Please select the two items you think are most important.**



#	Answer	Count
1	Affordable	56
2	Engages with families and the community	93
3	Uses an established curriculum	22
4	Great teachers	89
5	Facility, materials, and equipment are clean and engaging	56
6	Incorporates local cultural traditions	29
7	Low class sizes	42
8	Positive interactions between teachers and children	121
9	Uses child's home language	3
10	Welcoming and knowledgeable leader	34
11	Other (please specify)	20
12	Other (please specify)	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>568</b>

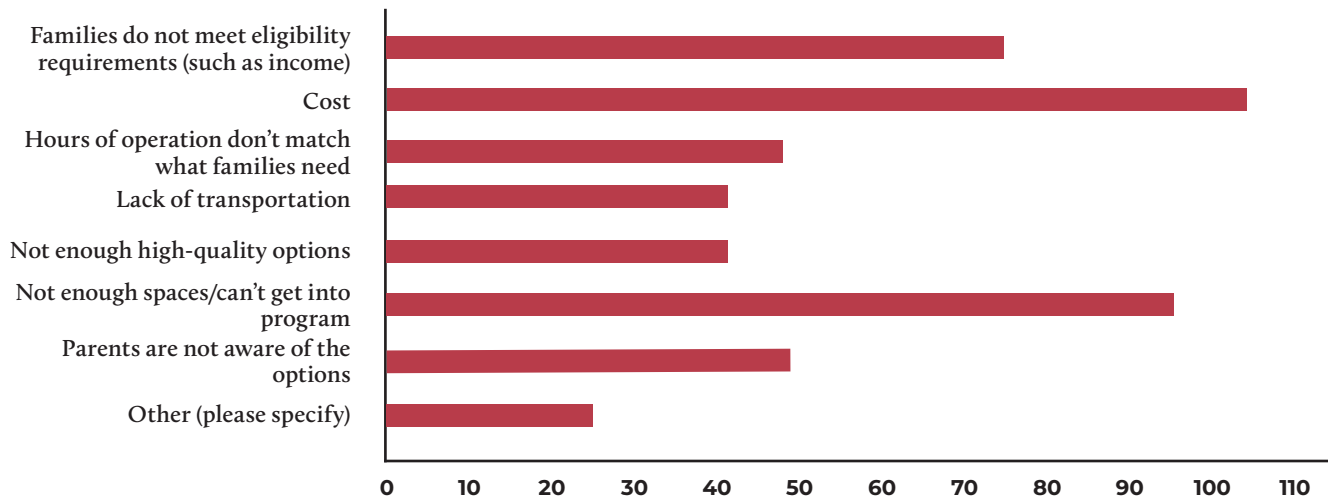


<b>r6_i1_TEXT - Other (please specify)</b>
Collaboration with the local school district
best done at home
Early learning should be at home with a parent
An understanding of play based learning
Respecting children, giving them guidance and autonomy
I think small children should be with thier parents learning from them
Play
Encourages play
Have parents there. Support parents to be able to care for their own children instead of giving them to strangers that are paid
Very young children do better in a safe home environment then school.
Love along with great teachers and supportive staff
Larger/more facilities to accommodate more children
Emotional Intelligence
Starts early -- during the mom's pregnancy and the first year of life. As presented by Dr Jack Schonkoff, of the Harvard Ctr on the Developing Child, prenatal and the first year are critical to brain development and later interventions are too late: <a href="https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/protecting-brains-stimulating-minds-theearly-life-roots-of-success-in-school/">https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/protecting-brains-stimulating-minds-theearly-life-roots-of-success-in-school/</a>
As a Grandma. I think we need to utilize homes that are in the community.Fir more individual ized one on one and much more loving attention ..I have two part time Littles for a couple years now. They love to come where they are accepted and loved and secure f
expertise, highly educated teachers in birth to three years old
Teachers with up to date training and and current strategies for creating engaging learning opportunities for children
respectful, honest, frequent communication with families
Consistent early childhood programs with quality teachers and aides. They close a lot of days which puts families in a bind
Makes children feel safe away from home and fosters their growth

<b>r6_i2_TEXT - Other (please specify)</b>
Nature
Has to be affordable to majority
Many parents do not participate with their children because the aides and teachers are “partiers” in the community

# 16

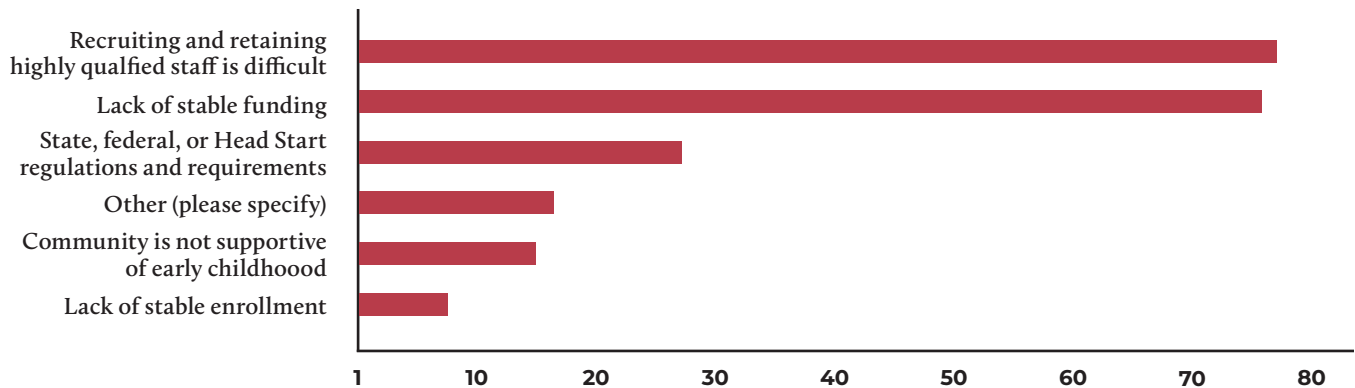
What are the most common barriers for families in your community enrolling their children in an early learning program? Please select up to 2 of the most common barriers.



#	Answer	Count
1	Families do not meet eligibility requirements (such as income)	73
2	Cost	104
3	Hours of operation don't match what families need	46
4	Lack of transportation	42
5	Not enough high-quality options	42
6	Not enough spaces/can't get into program	96
7	Parents are not aware of the options	49
8	Other (please specify)	24
	<b>Total</b>	<b>476</b>

17_8_TEXT - Other (please specify)
Currently have a grant for preschool so all interested families can participate.
None- preschool is free, offered at the school, and all kids are accepted into the program
Prefer to keep them at home
Parents can't enroll a preschool child in any of the district homeschool programs unless they have an older sibling already enrolled.
No barriers if school offers it.
I don't think there are any
No, secular options
I don't see it as a problem.
No program at all.
Government attempting to strip children away from parents
More kids need to stay home
I believe parents should care for their children. Children should be in centers and institutions from birth
Young children do better at home
parents are unwilling participants
Many homeschool
Programs that work -- early interventions, such as nurse-family partnerships -- are not available in Alaska. Only about 500 babies a year are part of two programs (at ANTHC and Providence), but about 10,500 babies are born.
<a href="https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4512284/">https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4512284/</a>
We are very limited in everything...particularly the number of kids for the need to be there
Parents are too hung over or lazy to take them
the 50% criteria for ilp is to high it should be lower
None known
School closed due to parents pulling their kids
The programs that are open close frequently and hire individuals in the community who are not making healthy choices for themselves
Parents have higher priority barriers such as food, shelter needs not being met so schooling becomes a low priority
facilities can't provide care for children with special needs

## What factors make it challenging to offer a high-quality early learning program in your community? Please select the top 2 challenges in your community.



#	Answer	Count
1	Community is not supportive of early childhood	17
2	Lack of stable funding	76
3	Lack of stable enrollment	8
4	Recruiting and retaining highly qualified staff is difficult	78
5	State, federal, or Head Start regulations and requirements	27
6	Other (please specify)	16
	<b>Total</b>	<b>222</b>

### i8\_6\_TEXT - Other (please specify)

We do offer a great program for preschoolers, Sunday mornings:)

Our community currently provides high quality early learning program.

I like the homeschool program

Highest quality learning happens at HOME with parents

I am not supportive of mandated pre school

Seasonal nature of employment

Parents are not equipped to teach before preschool starts.

Marginal leadership

Not enough early childhood programs available for the community needs

No being able to provide transportation for families.

FUNDING FUNDING FUNDING....we do not get enough funding in early childhood education field.

City assembly and administration do not know the importance of early childhood and it's economic impact if we invest in it.

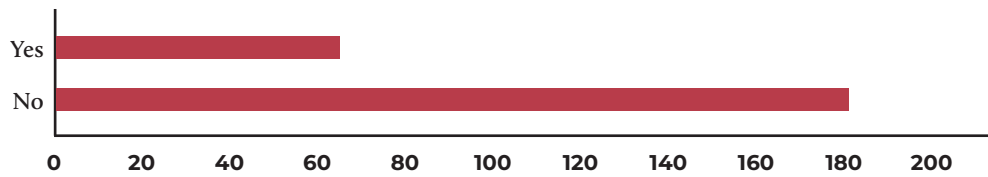
Children I trauma need more one on one attention and it is very hard with large preschool classes and not enough teachers to give them the care they need.

Providing staff education support, and professional development opportunities that are low cost.

Having the space

18

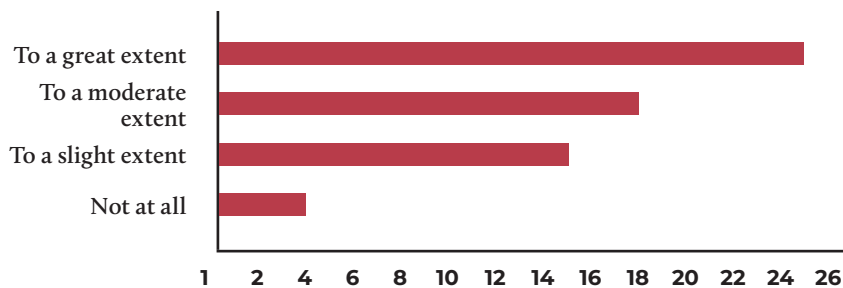
Are you currently paying for childcare or an early childhood education for a child ages 0-8



#	Answer	Count
1	Yes	64
2	No	180
	<b>Total</b>	<b>244</b>

19

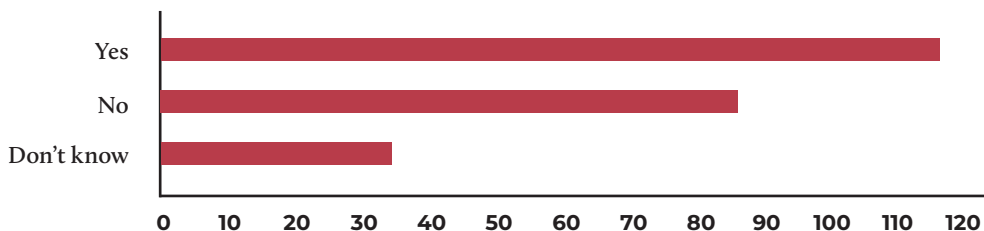
To what extent do the costs of paying for childcare or early childhood education interfere with your other family plans?



#	Answer	Count
1	To a great extent	25
2	To a moderate extent	18
3	To a slight extent	15
4	Not at all	4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>

20

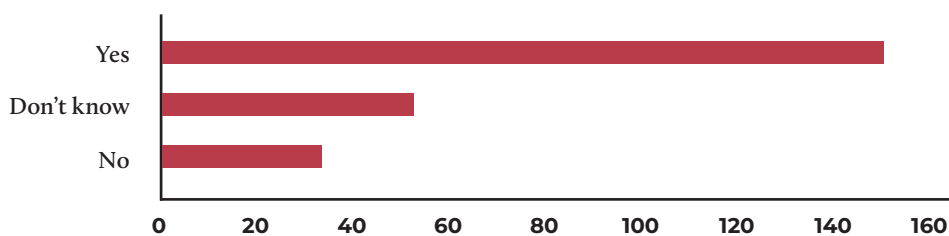
Do you think there are affordable early learning options in your community?



#	Answer	Count
1	Yes	117
2	No	86
3	Don't know	34
	<b>Total</b>	<b>297</b>

21

From your perspective, do the costs of paying for early learning programs make it so people don't use programs they need?

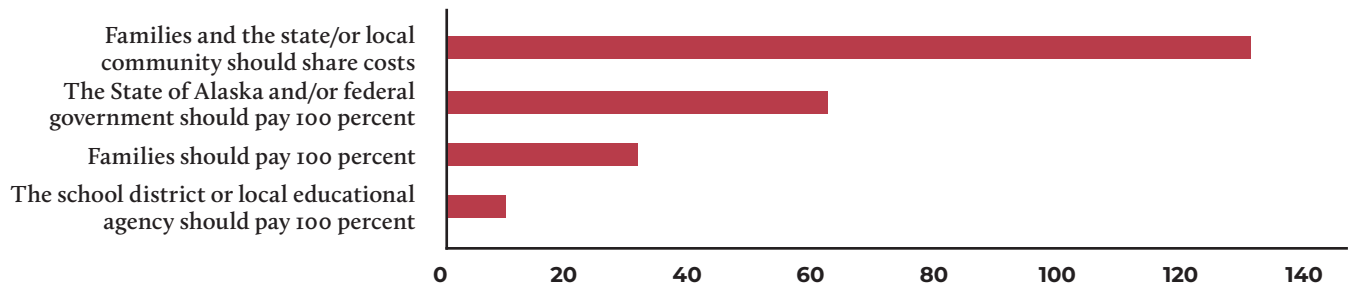


#	Answer	Count
1	Yes	150
2	No	34
3	Don't know	53
	<b>Total</b>	<b>237</b>



## 22

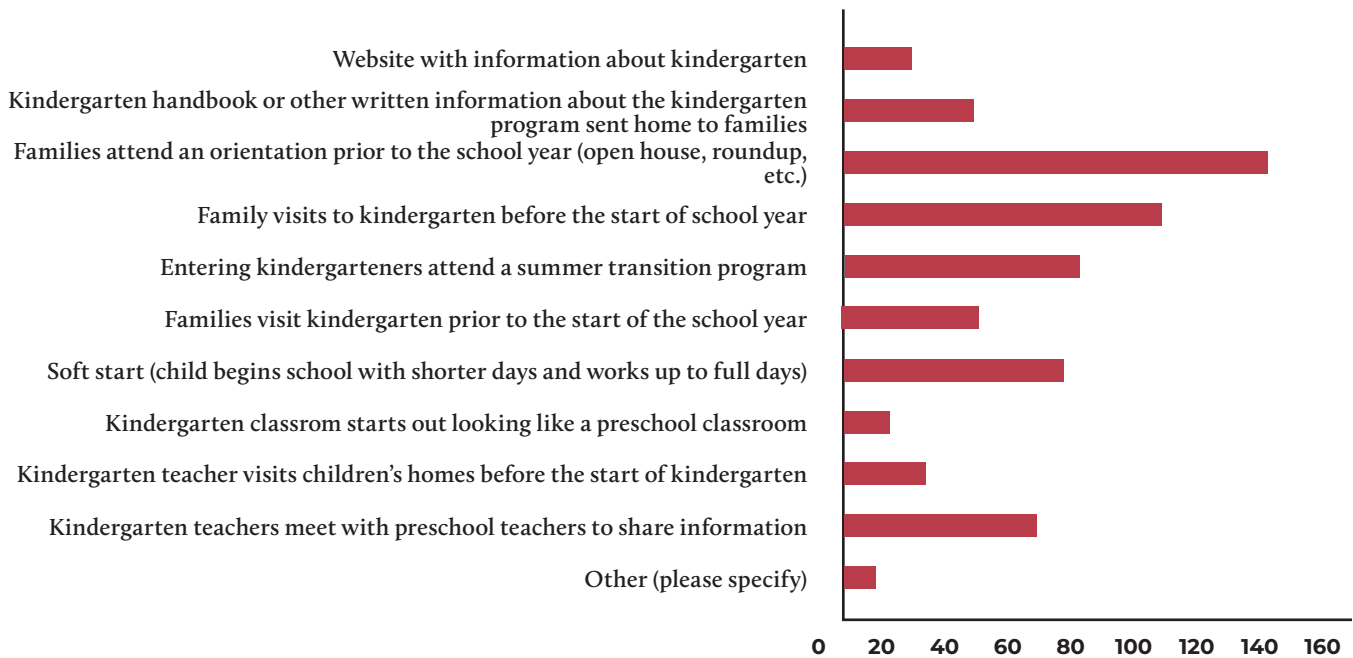
### Who do you think should pay for childcare?



#	Answer	Count
1	The State of Alaska and/or federal government should pay 100 percent	61
2	The school district or local educational agency should pay 100 percent	9
3	Families and the state/or local community should share costs	133
4	Families should pay 100 percent	32
	<b>Total</b>	<b>235</b>

# 23

For a child and their family, the transition to kindergarten can be a big step. What kinds of kindergarten transition supports would be most helpful to you or for families in your community Please select your top 3.



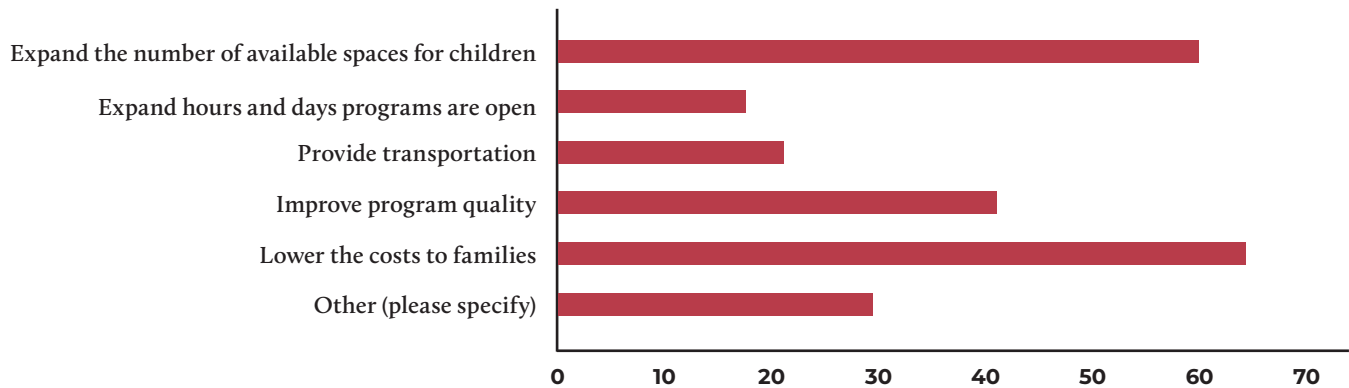
#	Answer	Count
1	Website with information about kindergarten	29
2	Kindergarten handbook or other written information about the kindergarten program sent home to families	51
3	Families attend an orientation prior to the school year (open house, roundup, etc.)	144
4	Family visits to kindergarten before the start of school year	106
5	Entering kindergarteners attend a summer transition program*	81
6	Families visit kindergarten prior to the start of the school year	49
7	Soft start (child begins school with shorter days and works up to full days)	78
8	Kindergarten classroom starts out looking like a preschool classroom	22
9	Kindergarten teacher visits children's homes before the start of kindergarten	33
10	Kindergarten teachers meet with preschool teachers to share information	68
11	Other (please specify)	19
	<b>Total</b>	<b>680</b>

\*Survey error; question repeated

24_II_TEXT - Other (please specify)
Encourage homeschooling for kindergarten; promote the homeschool programs
Our transition into Kindergarten has a great set up in Petersburg.
Organize summer play dates by class to build community and make students and families comfortable in their first days.
Half day kindergarten all year long
More focus on learning through play and self directed education, than traditional academic learning
Homeschool
Kindergarten is OPTIONAL and not required by Alaska Statutes. More should know the LAW.
Honor homeschool options which are very valid
Part time kindergarten
Better education on importance of ECE to get children ready for kindergarten curriculum expectations.
Don't have a kindergartner
preschool programs are provided through the school district with shorter days/school year to prepare children for full day Kindergarten.
kindergarten teacher familiar with local culture and planning to incorporate it
Universal free preschool
The best thing is that the child has preschool experience.
There is a huge gap as to what is taught and expected in preschool to what is taught and expected in kindergarten. I would like to see more of a kindergarten transition class or kinder prep offered though the district separate from the peer program preschool.
For high need or Trauma Impacted youth, establishing a plan of care prior to thier attending school, to be developed in preschool.
Required that the adult family members do a couple of days a month to volunteer in the classroom.
Playgroup/preschool program offered a few days a week, year round

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If there was more funding for early childhood in your community, how would you suggest it be spent? Please select only your top choice.



#	Answer	Count
1	Expand the number of available spaces for children	59
2	Expand hours and days programs are open	18
3	Provide transportation	22
4	Improve program quality	41
5	Lower the costs to families	64
6	Other (please specify)	30
	<b>Total</b>	<b>234</b>

25_6_TEXT - Other (please specify)
Support parents at home
Increase homeschooling allotments only.
More funding should not be given, that money is desperately needed elsewhere.
I feel strongly that we should reduce our budget in all areas. Please do not increase funding!
Change the focus to make it play and outdoor based
give it to first responders who need a livable wage in Fairbanks.
Head Start
Give it to families to keep them together until compulsory attendance age (which is 7)
Use the money to help parents be the primary caregivers to their children not paid strangers . Actually underpaid strangers
No need for more money to be spent
Expand to full half days so parents can at least work part time especially since transportation is not usually available between daycares and kinder ready programs
Increase salaries of early childhood teachers
Home visitation programs
Spent on the non-profit daycare we have in the community who has an early learning curriculum
Have a preschool!
Anything for early childhood would be great. There is NOTHING here.
Teachers paid more
Building to hold classes
Use the money for prenatal and the first years --BEFORE the usual age 3 and age 4 pre-k, which is too late for the most crucial brain development occurring in utero and in infancy.
There seems to be several preschool options in Palmer, but many families don't qualify for the quality programs like the Head Start Programs. There are other options, but they are expensive and not as Head Start or the school district preschools.
Training for someone and perhaps a stipend to attract people willing and WANTING to facilitate a
program...volunteering can be sketchy and doesn't allow for stability
more ILP services
Hire First People Language speakers into the programming across the board. Custodians, Cooks, Teachers, Aides and Leadership. The boards should also be given workshops on Indigenous Ways of Knowing so they can adapt to Indigenous programming.
Universal preschool
Offer more classes for the community and in addition to peer program, add general Ed classes for typically developing children as well as kinder prep classes for older preschoolers.
indoor playground and cultural learning area and a green space for families to visit
There are no preschool programs here
Healthy Parents engaged in their children
Increase Head Start slots with state dollars. Head Start offers comprehensive services to children (health, dental, nutrition, etc) and to FAMILIES (parent education, health education, adult education, etc). No other EC program does this.
More trauma informed training and support for early childhood educators



Ten years from now, what would you like to see for children and families in your community?
more family leave
More activities for all age groups
Affordable child care for everyone
School ready children who have been read to from and early age.
More band and orchestra classes
Less racist, more open communication between parents, grandparents with educators and school board. All schools should be monitored closely to be more effective for the students to get good education.
All families able to find appropriate childcare so they can work or enough supports for a parent to stay home with their young children if the family prefers.
More children having The opportunity to attend preschool programs
Jobs and affordable training
Parent involvement, more parenting classes, parents being accountable.
Better teachers that actually want to teach
Continued free preschool for ages 3-5, continued state assistance grant for childcare based on income, continued school and library family programs, continued Love and Logic parenting classes offered free from the Dahl Memorial Clinic counselor
Subsistence living. Hunting, gathering and providing.
I would like to see opportunities for families that DO work (exceed traditional income requirements) to have equal access to early childhood education.
Universal health and childcare. Kindergarten prescreening assessments done by pediatricians to help assess potential behavior or learning disabilities. Requiring students to be 5 before August start. Requiring family involvement in school settings.
Families be able to afford quality preschool programs
Parent & Teacher Relationships Parent engagement
Prioritize parents staying home with their young children. That should be the goal, making it easier.
School bus ride for low income families/special ed/speech impaired children
Lots of activities
Personal accountability,
Better parks/playgrounds that include equipment targeting older kids and doesn't have electronics. Maybe a clean indoor play-ground similar to the one on Eielson AFB to make it easier for families (especially those with kids at home all day) to be physically active all year. This would need to be self supporting though, rather than become another money pit burden on tax payers; charge a sufficient fee so it can support itself (staff, maintenance, utilities...). Being physically active makes humans of all ages feel better and happier.
More substance abuse help for families who are trying to get their act together so they can be involved and raise their own children
Non income based, low cost, 10 hour day quality childcare options
More fun family places like Chuck-e-cheese etc, indoor play/activity places like what Anchorage has.
Ability for families to spend quality time together. Support them so they can care and provide for their children.
I would like to see budgets reduced and more services provided by private industry.
Community center that is not over ran and friendly for all family members.

Programs that foster caring for others, encouragement of curiosity, more outside time, and less time spent with kids sitting all day doing worksheets. Ultimately we want kids to love learning so they are self motivated to continue learning. We need to promote strong character qualities.
All kids going to school age 4
More family actives for kids 18 and under
Quality, affordable childcare for all who want it.
Less substance abuse and domestic violence to allow for quality education
A safe building for headstart with all necessary equipment, furniture and what not!
Enough childcare facilities and enough spaces for kids, lowered cost to families, healthy foods provided to children, good educational program, with plenty of free playtime and outdoor exploration/education, kids helping with meal prep, cleaning, etc.
Kids being treated with reapect, non-authoritarian education system
Healthy informed and educated parents who know how to offer or get their kids into higher quality learning
happy and independent from government control.
Indoor playspace
learning based extra curricular programs/activities
Closer families and less government involvement in their lives.
Higher pay and benefits to attract and keep well qualified teachers. Government sharing the financial burden.
More playgrounds and outdoor activity areas for families to use.
I would love to see more families able to spend their days together instead of separated
More children engaging with their families and not in programs.
Quality licensed care available at affordable rates available with flexible schedules easily available for any parent who needs it from birth
A high rate of graduation and continuing education.
Every child that enters Kindergarten has a preschool experience prior. I feel that the teacher could provide more to all of the students rather than working more with adjustments for the students who have never been away from home in a classroom. My son attended preschool then Kindergarten. His abilities were greater than his peers who never had gone befor.
Affordable costs for parents
I would like to see AT LEAST one year of maternity/paternity leave for parents to spend time with their children before going back into the workforce. Affordable and accessible child care/preschool options for families to transition into.
Free or very affordable early education programs.
More affordable care for the children.
Children from ages three on up would be able to attend school from 8:30-2:00p.m. Mon-Thurs with family lessons on Fridays.
Healthy drug free families
Universal Preschool
Options in early childhood programs that are either free or affordable. Teachers in these programs receiving adequate compensation and opportunities to train.
Better access to early childhood education programs.
More preschool options
More opportunities for children to be safe and have a chance of a good education and families arent struggling to get trough the day
Access to childcare and affordability
Classes for parents on how to be good parents. We need more childcare options. There are long waiting lists

For families to understand the importance of being responsible for thier own growth and betterment, not waiting for some expert to do it for them.
A new facility.
Opportunities for growth
Better education
That they have access to transportation that allows them to bring their children to the various safe places for them, while they are out trying to better their own lives. Such as getting new jobs, attending work, or going to school
More opportunities for typically developing children or children that have small delays
High quality affordable child care available for all working families.
Better understanding of quality early childhood programs and that cost can definitely mean a higher quality.
More affordable housing, access to childcare, more flexible jobs, job programs for parents
The chance that Head Start and the local non-profit daycare are running smoothly and eliminate the at home daycares that are not certified.
Preschool in all elementary schools.
More uniformed approach from preschool to K. To see the value of preschool and allow parents the choice of where they would like their child/children to attend. Quality programs that are not looked at as "babysitting" would also be great.
Free child Care
I would love to see kids being able to attend preschool regardless of their skin color or annual income.
An early learning program open to all residents
All children are ready for success in schools, and have a safe and healthy family environment.
A much bigger school to hold more children and transportation. We have a wonderful school!
I would like to see an alcohol & drug free community in which children are cherished and cared for. I would like to see continuity in care and education, prenatal through gr.12. I would like to see happy children without fear of others.
I would like to see childcare options offered at minimal/no cost provided by employers and the state.
More options for care!
I would like to see a much larger percentage of students entering Kindergarten with necessary skills. I would like to see that leading to success in the upper grades. I would like to see families not have to worry about employment and food and instead be able to focus on family.
Teachers have a good salary and cost of childcare is based on income but any income is accepted
A separate early learning center that is geared to the students.
Free/affordable childcare and and preschool options
Better knowledge
SPED resources for our Federal Preschool.
Pre-K access for all people!
Early intervention and educational supports in early education
Planned, spaced births, with training of parents in healthy brain development during pregnancy and then additional adequate supports for the new family in the first year to reduce Alaska's highest-in-the-country rates of abuse and neglect, and to promote healthy brain development. There is no agency or program reaching Alaskan families at the moment, who are pregnant with a baby or in the first year of life. See discussion above about the few Alaskans who benefit from Nurse-Family Partnerships. Additionally, the Parents as Teachers effort reaches woefully few Alaskans (perhaps less than 200?). At an Alaska House Education Committee meeting on Feb 5, 2020, the testimony was that 200 kids in 157 families in Anchorage, Haines, Hoonah, Juneau, Kake, and Kodiak. It may be only 120 kids. Statewide. Per testimony of Joan Lion, AYESC and Kristen Bramsted, Ruralcap.
Yugtun materials

The tribe should use their leadership roles and it should be owned by the tribe
Affordable childcare
I hope to see that high income families get the chance to start their children when they want and not have to be put on a waiting list just because someone makes a little more money then others and not even by much doesn't mean they can afford it they have a lot of bills that's why they work so hard such as me and my husband
Joint community and learning activities as well as physical and healthy minds and body activities. Pre-K programs offered for all.
No closures.. early childhood is important!
An affordable preschool program(s) that was available to all 3-4 year old children. Staffed by professionals who are well-trained and love their jobs.
Holistic natural play for children
I would like to see high quality preschool and child care with certified Teachers, low class size, and clean and safe environments available for every child at very affordable cost for their family.
A high quality community recreation center that incorporates child care programs with adult activities that promote a healthy life style.
Because we only have 12 students enrolled in our school, the kids are all mixed together, and it seems like the ones who could work at a higher level do not have that chance. And the ones at the lower end are not challenged enough. Each should have individualized programs and be allowed to excel if the chance is there
I would like to see the families with the most severe need be able to utilize the community programs, become empowered so that in the future, they are no longer have the need to be dependent on community programs.
That they have affordable childcare for young families..
Free childcare for pre-K through middle school
Preschool for ALL 4 year olds in their home school
NA
to be a successful one
More home daycares run by Experienced Grandma's who know way more than we give them credit for.
All third graders reading at a third grade level. No more bootlegging or drug dealing. Safe, healthy families.
Universal Pre-k, though college.
Transportation provided. Lower cost (use daycare subsidies already in place) small class size programs
All children served.
Ilitqusaitnuun
More ilp services. Seems there is a shortage of ilp workers available to serve babies more often due to limited budgeting for ilp workers. I should be able to have weekly services but they are over capacity to see us weekly.
Developmental preschool in the school
A inclusive day car
Healthy options for children learning how to interact with each other.
Since Alaska currently doesn't have a college to educate new teachers the future of education in the state is very bleak. Shutting down schools to fund the PFD for people that shouldn't even be allowed to claim it is ridiculous! The students that actually need help like my daughter would slip through the cracks. The options for education are way below expectations for many families. I will not be having my children attend public school. The quality of education they would receive is far below that of the lower 48.
More programs for ages 0-5 with more community partners involved, not just the school district.
I already like what the Head Start program is doing; supporting families, including parental needs, which will better their ability to support their children.
Camaraderie

I would like to see a fully functioning full day early childhood program for all qualified students.
Evidence-based teaching practices delivered by locally-raised teachers
Speaking in conversational First People languages. Succeed in whatever they choose to pursue, Westernized Ways of Living, Indigenous Ways of Living OR both. While doing it, they should be equipped well enough to endure hardships while making informed decisions for healthy ways of living.
I'm hoping one day Kotzebue will be able to get a swimming pool and laundry mat/shower stalls for public use.
Every child in the district has the opportunity to attend a quality early learning program. In addition, I would like to see families value early learning and understand how to support the healthy development of young children.
A child has a place to go for activities at any time of the week.
Wrap-around services with focus on infant mental health, trauma-informed care, and continuity of care across agencies and professions.
Culturally involved programs with indigenous nesting programs~teaching indigenous languages to all ~ child and family
I would like to see DayCare costs become more affordable.
Test and reading scores that are competitive with those around the country. This would suggest our state is excelling in early education.
more daycare options
An early language immersion program that builds with the years. Financial support to assure all families can be involved in ECE. Enough ECE spaces so that all can be involved Quality teaching, including culturally knowledgeable teachers and materials Career and tech classes expanded at high school More real community involvement More health and PE More subsistence activities More music and arts at all levels More civics and social studies relevant to community A project oriented curriculum with ample hands-on, more field trips
Healthy foods in grocery stores and parents realizing the importance of instilling of love of learning and attending school at an early age (to increase graduation rates).
Every year towards the ten years from now more early childhood students will be more successful.
Well advanced in reading and math
pre K education and drug free community
Affordable, lots of openings available and high quality for all so parents can feel good about the care their child/ren are receiving.
Universal pre-K
Permanent Public Safety Services; Increased, regular Parent Involvement in all classrooms; Integration of local Culture into School Curriculum; Monthly Cultural Activities and/or Cultural “themes” each month; Formation of local Parent/Student/Teacher Group that meets regularly to bring Community & School Closer.
Low cost, high quality programs with outdoor opportunities and less emphasis on academics
Public full time preschool education
A preschool at each elementary school.
More preschool options for the community so kids can enter into kindergarten ready.
Fully funded early childhood programs that provide low classroom numbers and quality services.
Ten years from now I would like to see resilient families who create connections in the home and more prevention options for children who are at-risk of mental illness, drug abuse, domestic abuse, suicide, and a life of crime in Alaska. To help all children break the cycle of becoming a statistic.
Full access to early education options from pregnancy through high school along with a fully comprehensive whole family approach.
Quality child care with stable workforce. Universal preschool for every child 4yo.
A modern library that is useable and meant to work with all senses and for interaction saw one like this in Christ Church, Australia



Government subsidized high quality preK options.
Universal health care, education pre-K, and Transportation options around work schedules
More affordable quality care.
Plenty of affordable options for children and well-paid teachers and staff.
The school opened again
Safer community
Fewer addictions, more clean housing, family oriented activities year round
Play groups/preschools available 2x week, with transportation, for every child ages 0-6. Regular Parenting classes and weekly parent support groups with transportation.
All kids have a chance to get in pre school and more aligned with the local school district goals so they are ready for kindergarten.
Better curriculum in early learning
get along, help mentally challenged
Better options more available and more affordable quality care
more access for families to experiences preschool for their children
all children have the opportunity to attend a high quality Early Learning Program
Continuity of where child attends, preschool to elementary, so can visit other, previous classroom, teachers, siblings, friends, "to confirm security", moving back to proper class. Inclusive culturally and subjects, interdisciplinary subjects that support each other or have proven to help learning. Music and math, a educational basic, with practical application, math and cooking, works for fractions, measuring, etc.
I want to see more options for families and to lower the amount of childcare in the community. I have two young children and I make to much for early head start but can not afford to pay full price for daycare.....
That pre-school is available full-time to all families at an affordable rate, maybe on a sliding scale. Right now, spots are limited, some are very expensive or you have to meet low income or race requirements to be eligible.
high quality early learning is available for ALL children and free to families. government that puts children's education before all other things because research proves that money spent on early learning off sets the money needed to rehabilitate adults struggling and barely making ends meet like it's always been!
More activities for young children
Higher quality care for children to learn and play. A reasonable price for families to send their children to a higher quality class. All children should be treated equally; poor, middle class and rich.
All children of pre-k age attending a pre-k program. The program forward funded fully by the state and or federal government on a consistent basis.
affordable access to high quality early education programs, with schedules that support working parents
stable funding and expanded opportunities for childcare/early learning.
Early childcare care and education funded federally, state, and locally. Free access to parenting program for all.
Infant and early childhood mental health programs established. Prevention programs strong. Strong families and community.
Substance abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, mental health issues not being inflicted on vulnerable innocent children. Rather than have abused children removed from their families, remove the abusers.
high quality preschool & better food at schools
We need more affordable recreation for 5-10 year olds- There is nothing for them to do during our long winter months. ALL they do is play video games. We must do something for our Children growing up w/parents who are drug addicts, and neglectful. I have called OCS many Times on my own son and his wife over all the drug use and Neglect going on and they do nothing! we must Protect our Children!
Developmentally appropriate educational and social development programs that are family friendly and welcoming.

quality care for all children living wages for staff
Earlier intervention, fewer kids falling through the cracks-plans in place to support the challenged families
affordable and accessible day care/preschool options that not only support children, but families as well with parenting classes and links to community resources as needed
Stable funding from the State of Alaska DEED to support longer classroom hours and retain highly qualified staff.
access to high-quality learning environments that families have choice about - high-quality might look different to different families based on their priorities
I would like to see smaller classes with individual needs being met. Teachers and children are getting hurt by children everyday. I would like to see children respecting the people around them. I am not sure what has changed but I would have never hit a teacher or thrown furniture when I was in preschool.
All families working or seeking higher education opportunities have access to child care options at low to no cost.
High quality, affordable preschool being utilized by all those that need/want it.
Equal Access for all children to receive quality early education experiences
Every child and family has the support they need to be successful in (pre)school and in life.
New Early Learning Facility for children ages 0-5 with more workers and flexible hours
Equal access to QUALITY early childhood programs, with adequate staffing.
I would like to see more family interaction with their own culture, a stronger Native language used regularly.
I would children and families to feel safe at home and have fun engaging things to do outside the home. There should be good transitions from early learning to elementary to middle to high school to career.
cotton candy

**Do you have any additional thoughts to share about early learning and your community? Please tell us here.**

Open to all

My grandchildren struggle and are successful in their school; it seems it depend what school they are enrolled in.

Don't know

Can we can better teachers that want to teach and not just pass the student. And will not let bullying happen? And will dress professionally at all times as these are people these kids look up to?

More child care centers are needed

Fund the local school district adequately to enable them to offer a comprehensive preschool and kindergarten program.

As a Kindergarten teacher, early education prepares students for social, emotional and academic success.

Providing families with parent education on child development and how to be engaged with their child's education

Those years are best under the care of a parent, nurturing that vital relationship. Children that age should be engaged in play, not "education".

Providing transportation for kids to/FM school would be a big step/help for our kids that are in special classes n even Pre-K or Kindergarten.

It's critical to have

Parents are responsible - it government for early childhood education

Young children do best in their homes, and strong families cannot easily be built by encouraging children to spend the majority of their waking hours away from their family in school or childcare. Parents should be encouraged to teach their children at home at least until 1st or even 2nd grade. Our state already has plenty of resources to use, through the various district homes-school programs, but many parents aren't aware of that option or automatically assume they aren't capable. Parents know their child best.

For the size of our community we do pretty well, but a lower income early learning set up for kids whose parents are really trying hard would be great for the families and their children.

Early learning is mostly learned through play and interaction. Preschool should NOT be mandatory as preschoolers still need to be home with their parents as long as possible learning and becoming secure in their familial attachments.

Young children don't need formal education. They need quality family time, play time, outdoor time. time to use their imagination and lots and lots of books.

I wish more people understood the importance of play and the dangers of too much screen time.

More community events for under 5 yrs old.

Studies show that kids in countries with academic achievement far superior to our own don't start formal school till 7 years old. Please stop trying to push kids academically at a young age when it doesn't benefit them in the long run.

None

I wish we had a head start building here.

There are very few facilities and even fewer affordable ones in the Homer and Anchor Point areas. The programs we do have, have over a year waitlist! For one child, I pay over \$1200 per month. Something must change, or parents won't be able to afford to work!

no, please don't make a stupid law mandating early education it will destroy our youth.

Pushing your agenda is what has destroyed communities. Families are no more thanks to your agenda. God will judge every nation for its departure from Him.

Learning should be through play not a curriculum.

Our teachers spend so much time maintaining child/caregiver ratios, recording every aspect of each child's day (diaper changes, potty training, meals/snacks, naps beginning/ending, etc) that they have little time to spend listening to or playing with the children. It's hard to do an activity when you're recording all this information but it's the first thing inspectors look for.
School starts to soon in my opinion, no sooner than 5.
Id love for the bond between parent and child to be honored. Nursing full term not just pumping.
Let's have more optional parenting classes and more voluntary family support. Let's make healthy families, not take kids and put in early classes.
Opportunity for preschool is important. I want the best for my children and their peers.
Continue conferences for early educators and continue learning
It is difficult to find quality child care for infants and toddlers. It's expensive and is emotionally taxing on the family. A better solution would be to expand maternity/paternity leave so that families can bond and parents can be the primary teachers in the critical early years of child development. It would also allow for parents to focus on their child's needs (emotional well being, education, and health) without dueling responsibilities. Allowing for the best possible start for the child in the long term.
I would like to see a coordinated effort between all private daycares/preschools, early learning programs and school district preschools in our community. It would be awesome if a universal curriculum would be used and implemented. I would like to see state wide a clear universal screener implemented so as to gather the need for individuals requiring further evaluation of special needs. Additionally, that all pediatricians, nurse practitioners who serve early childhood kiddos be made aware of the flow chart should children need further assistance. For parents, I would like to see parent workshops - on Love and Logic Parenting, on language elicitation and stimulation techniques. For the parents who are young, I would like to see them receive mental health support should they need it. Additionally, it would be good to have access of parent navigators for the tribal clinics and the non tribal clinics i.e, to have a pool of parent navigators. I think that the public school districts preschool programs are needed: for those with special needs and a mixture of typical peers. I think that Alaska needs to re start, re fund, the Fetal Alcohol Diagnostic Clinics. If you have any questions, please contact me. Pam Christianson, M.S., CCC-SLP 9076170935 thank you
N/A
Authority is being handed over to the school dishes at an earlier and earlier age. Let's not forget about parental importance and responsibility.
Wary learning is hard in our community because the age is too mixed
I'm disappointed there is so little knowledge of the difference of quality ece programs and preschool. Many providers are under-educated in our area.
The Head Start and NP daycare go to great lengths to provide early childhood education and meet the state requirements with certifications. The home daycares are not certified and purposely undercut the daycare in costs. It would be good to see the non-profit daycare get extra benefits for being accredited to help it stay open.
I think students who attend a preschool, and I mean half day partial week program have a strong advantage when starting kindergarten.
It is really important for children to start and have a love of learning. May we encourage their imaginations and let them be free to dream.
We have headstart which does not accept all kids and there is no other preschool option. I would love for my Kindergarten student to have been able to attend preschool and I would love for my twin 2 year olds to go to preschool.
Having a counselor there to help support transitions or with special needs students would be amazing.

The headstart program is extremely beneficial for the development our children. In my area, there are only two locations where kids have access to headstart. Unfortunately the number of spaces reflect only a fraction of what the actual need for early childhood programs exist. Native children are given suppose to be given preference however, if the family income is above the limit, that is not the case. I've known several native families who've been put on the waitlist, and other non native families are given priority. There is clearly a discrepancy in this process of selection which isnt benefiting these children. The question is not who should have priority, the question should be how can we provide entrance into headstart for all of our children? Perhaps by offering discounted tuition or scholarship options? Perhaps by building a larger more comprehensive facility and staff to accommodate ALL early age children? The solution to this problem requires a much more creative option that is currently being provided as of right now. The development and socialization of these early aged children are equally important regardless of race/ethnic background and family income. Also, extreme subsidized childcare would allow for more parents to enter the workforce. As of right now, it is more beneficial to a single mother to reside in low income housing, and relying on state assistance to get by, rather than pay the astronomic costs of childcare-which is generally over half of their monthly earnings.
As a parent and an educator (currently 5th grade but previously early childhood) I feel very strongly that our State has been pressured into lowering the cut off age for Kindergarten. In doing so we have many students who are not developmentally and maturity wise ready to handle the rigor of academic learning. Then when you add the pressure to take out play learning and movement and focus on "academic learning" we have more and more students who struggle through the rest of their academic careers because they are not ready. They spend the rest of their academic careers thinking they are unintelligent or incapable and in reality it they just weren't given the time needed to properly develop and prepare. Lower class sizes, raise the age for entering kindergarten, provide programs for parents so they don't feel like they half to enter their child in kindergarten early simply for less cost care, increase the focus on play, movement and social skills, provide teaching aids for kinders through 3rd grade. It's time we support our children and give them a truly solid foundation to grow on.
Smaller communities have limited space and resources.
Early learning must expand it's focus and priority to prenatal and the first year, where the largest gains -- and the greatest losses -- occur. Thanks much.
Yugtun app
More options for childcare availability
Nothing more
We have a number of small rural communities on our island and a close relationship with the school district is imperative for pre-school programming.
More developmental appropriate practices implemented. Less academics and the encouragement of play as kearningfor young children
Early learning is extremely important to every child and our future. All children should have access to high quality early learning experience.
Early Childhood Teacher Training Programs and livable wages for child care providers.
We only have 5 'littles' and the opportunists are slim to none
I have noticed a change in my 3 year olds behavior so i feel that it is important to start them earlier...before kindergarten.
NA
So many parents are needing drug and alcohol intervention .
Our school district offers free preschool for 3 year olds and 4 year olds. My daughter attended two years of preschool free of charge. She is now in 1st grade and at the beginning stages of reading. Without her preschool years and small class sizes in our district, she would not be this far along with her reading capabilities. Thank you for taking time and asking these questions.
People are trying here, but lack of transportation and affordability are huge issues
I for example am raising my grandson, trying to keep my full time job and since my husband and I both work we have to pay daycare 100. This is not my child why do I have to pay for everything.
early learning starts at birth. this survey seems to be geared for 3 and over. please remember it starts at birth and parents with babies that need extra help need to be included in your questions!!!
Make people pay for early education. Don't allow there to be free programs. Take that money and reopen schools that have been shut down.



None.
There is a head start program and students transition to the school setting. It seems to be working well, but students do not seem fully prepared.
Early learning should never be put on the chopping block, even in tight budgetary times because it is the best investment in the future - both metaphorically and literally - that the state can make
These thoughts I've written are not meant to voice any retaliation to the colonization of Indigenous Alaska. They are meant to add value to what we have already, mainly to integrate Indigenous Ways to Early Childhood Development and continue seeking ways to improve outcomes.
I think we as a community would have less bullying for kids who would be able to wash their clothes or take daily showers, closing down the liquor store for families who suffer the consequences of death and/or missing school/work.
I would like to see increased enrollment in the pre-kindergarten programs and higher attendance and family engagement.
We need a safe place for anyone that needs a safe place to go to.
Need more oversight on how certain fed/state programs are run. Wish there were more Montessori-based learning choices.
More family involvement that involves more cultural roots
Thank you for this survey. There are too many kids that don't get into ECE and I don't know if it is space or costs, or both. Proven that this helps kids much. They deserve it, same as they deserve free available public schools. Our kindergartens are quite good, but we need more cultural relevancy from ECE thru grade 12. also trauma-trained teachers.
The funding for 0-3 and Head Start isn't consistent so it's hard to manage year to year. We have to cut slots and/or entire programs in communities.
Most or all aides should be developed professionally to become Reading Specialists for all early childhood education in every school.
State MUST fund early learning
In our community it is all about building relationships with each other, having trust so everyone is felt heard.
With Parents being the very First Teachers, we need to be more innovative to engage Parents in classrooms so parents/gaurdians will be actioiv ely involved in and out of classroom throughout students K-12 education. Also, ensuring students leave grade 3 reading at grade level 3.
Early intervention is important to this community. Mental health is a major factor for families!
Early education in addition to family connections are essential to a thriving community, will help create a brighter future for our children, and is the key to prevention.
The number of children (0-3) going to substandard child care is appalling. "Teachers" come and go. There is not a focus on the importance of the relationship between a caregiver and the kids. Caregiving is focused on budgets and not on doing what's best for kids. This comment is mainly for center based care.
Community elders and cultural should be taught through food and activities with the children and stories.
PreK teacher education on working w students with special needs, family outreach, community collaboration of agencies etc. Serving PreK families.
The closing of the school and lack of local preschool is hurting the kids and community.
We need to start visiting homes earlier like two years of age. Safety first
Providing support and intervention at the earliest ages is the best prevention for difficulties later in life.
Right now low income kids are first to get in but we need more options for parents that work but can't afford to send kids to private pre school.
Considering how fundamental and crucial and important the first three years are in every human beings existence I truly hope that it becomes more and more of a priority in our society and communities to provide all people with the opportunity to be safe, educated, and well nourished in an early learning environment. This would be the ultimate goal in my mind.
preschool is a great start for any child to be able to attend

Many kids from minority cultures are falling behind early on, by Jr high so far need alternative school. Family's are not traditional, 5-6 graders are helping little brother and sister, getting them to bed, making them get up; can be substance abuse, lack of living wage, whatever the reason parents are unavailable, or unable.
MORE FUNDING IS NEEDED- We need to get kids ready for kindergarten and early childhood education is important.
there just never seem to be enough spots available for pre-school for hard working, middle class families that aren't minorities.
there also needs to be a focus on early learning and care staff getting pay and benefits that are comparable to school district staff so that early learning professionals will be retained. turnover rate is way to high in early learning causing programs struggling to train for high quality.
improve employment and education. so we not struggling to provide for our families & improve our community.
Stronger leadership
Early childhood education is very important and neglected. People that love working with children and would enjoy being a pre-k instructor cannot earn a living wage.
We need to educate the whole community on the importance of early relationships and early childhood care and education. This might mean more advertisement on the state's end. That early childhood is just as important or more important than other stages of a child's life, since the first 5 years are the most critical for brain development.
if A Child does not have a happy and stable home Life - he is going to have difficulty in school!
Early learning is paramount for educational and social success for our children.
I do think trauma informed care is important but I also think it is important to be respected as a teacher. I can't wrap my head around children who are 4 and 5 hitting, kicking and screaming at their teachers and classmates. I am a teacher and I have a least five children who do this in my class.
The Early Childhood system is so very fragmented. Increasing services is important, but great gains in Alaska can be found by increasing governance, coordination, and collaboration in existing services.
There is a lot of burn-out among early childhood educators, causing staff turnover to be high. We need more supports in place to train them, as well as improved pay.
More summer, spring break, holiday, and weekend options. When there isn't school, sometimes its hard to find things to do.
candied apples



