

ECFE Annual Report

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Rochester Public Schools

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5. How did you identify new and underserved populations? What were your key findings?

This year we created a Community Needs Assessment/Outreach Plan, not only to satisfy the ECFE Annual reporting requirement, but to improve our ECFE programming through a better understanding of our community's parenting needs. One of the first steps we took was to create a Community Needs Assessment Committee to gather information and develop a more strategic plan to focus priorities and target outreach efforts. Our committee consists of six members of our ECFE program – two administrative, two clerical, one licensed PE and one teaching assistant. For purposes of this needs assessment we decided to focus on the birth through kindergarten population.

This Community Needs Assessment Committee (CNAC) gathered demographics on our ECFE program, our community and also reviewed the Head Start 2014 Communitywide Strategic Planning and Needs Assessment. We also updated our ECFE community resource and services outreach list with over 698 professionals, child care providers and health care professionals.

One of our best sources of information came from a community survey that we sent to both parents and professionals. We developed the survey with the help of the CNAC and the ECFE and School Readiness Advisory Council. The Council's comments were extremely helpful regarding development of the survey. We received 226 survey responses - 194 from parents and 67 from community professionals. Our return rate ranged from 3% to 15 % depending on the group that we asked. We decided to disaggregate the survey by groups so that we would be able to see if there were any marked differences in the types of responses. We sent surveys to the following groups: health professionals, general community professionals, childcare providers, Family Literacy and School Readiness families, ECFE parents, and parents of kindergarteners. While we received fewer surveys than we had hoped, our return rate appears to be average for an external (customer) survey based on information from SurveyGizmo.

Key Findings:

- Based on our current demographic review of income, ethnicity and language, we are serving a representative proportion of the community.

The Rochester School District census is 8,162 children and ECFE currently serves about 35% of young children in our community in a variety of classes, activities and events. Forty-one percent of the families we serve in ECFE/SR have incomes below \$30,000. In comparison, 32% of the Rochester population has an income below \$30,000 and 35% of the Rochester School District students identified as low income. Thirty-eight percent of the ECFE/SR families are minority families. In comparison, 20% of the Rochester population identify themselves as a minority and the Rochester School District has a minority enrollment of 35%. Twenty-nine percent of the ECFE/SR families are English learners, compared to 12% in Rochester Public Schools.

- We asked the following question on our survey – "Are there populations of parents that are underserved in our community?"

57% of the parents told us that they believed there are parents who are underserved in our community. They listed the following as groups of underserved parents: low income families, working parents, single parents, immigrant or minorities, teen parents, parents of children with special needs, homeless, individuals without family support, incarcerated parents. The low income, working families were mentioned numerous times as an underserved population.

80% of the professionals told us that they believed there are parents who are underserved in our community. They identified the following: families not qualifying for county support, working poor, families without transportation, families of color, low income, immigrant or minorities, single fathers, families who don't know services are available and those too proud to accept help, parents with mental health issues. Again the working poor and/or middle class not qualifying for services were mentioned multiple times.

It appears from our data gathering that many services are available in our community for families, but many families are not eligible for scholarships and this places a financial hardship on families. It is also apparent that lack of transportation is a barrier for many parents.

6. How did you identify child and family risk factors? What were your key findings?

Throughout this school year, our Pre-K through Third Grade Alignment Team worked to identify the factors that put families at risk in our community. Members of this team represent a number of agencies and organizations working with young families in our community. The following risk factors were generated from members of this team:

- Exposure to trauma (e.g., domestic violence)
- Lack of emotional support/parent involvement
- Untreated health concerns/lack of insurance
- Mobility due to lack of stable finances
- Mental health issues
- Few conversations with adults
- Few if any enrichment opportunities
- One or both parents are absent much of the time
- Exposure to media/materials not age appropriate
- Lack of positive social situations with other children
- Mindset limitations of adults working with children

We also included the following question in our survey to parents and professionals. "In your experience, what three child risk factors need our greatest attention?"

Key Findings:

- Child Care Providers told us that lack of parent involvement, lack of knowledge of child development and age appropriate expectations, and lack of access to quality day care, preschool, or family childcare or early learning activities were the top three child risk factors.
- Community Professionals identified poverty, mental health issues, and lack of stability in food and shelter resources.
- Parents identified the following as their top three: Lack of parent involvement, lack of access to quality day care, preschool, or family childcare or early learning activities, and lack of family support.
- Both the parent and childcare groups identified lack of parent involvement and lack of access to quality daycare, preschool or family childcare or early learning activities as two of their top three risk factors needing our greatest attention.

7. How did you assess family and parenting education needs? What were your key findings?

On our survey we asked two questions that helped us identify the family and parenting needs of our community. These were the two questions that we asked parents and professionals:

Parents

- Share your top three parenting needs and challenges. (We listed 14 categories to choose from, one of which was "other".)
- What types of parenting and education supports and resources would help in your parenting role? (open-ended question)

Key Findings:

Parents

1. Share your top three parenting needs and challenges

- Availability of early childhood activities and learning experiences (52%)
- Knowledge of child development/age appropriate expectations (40%)
- Stress Management (32%)

2. What types of parenting and education supports and resources would help in your parenting role?

• Parents mentioned stress management, preschool, activities for young children and parenting classes that are offered in a variety of ways as being of value to them. They also mentioned the following as helpful ideas: online classes, checklist with contact information about when and where things need to be completed, social media parenting Q & A, electronic handouts, newsletter with activities to do with your child at home, and parenting classes for school age children. Overall, the narrative indicated that parents really value the opportunity to get parenting information and support in a variety of methods and modalities.

Professionals

- Share the top three emerging needs or challenges facing parents of young children in our community. (We listed 14 categories to choose from, one of which was "other".)
- What types of supports, resources or programming are parents with young children requesting? (open-ended question)

Key Findings:

Professional

1. Share the top three emerging needs or challenges facing parents of young children in our community.

- Resources (financial, housing, food, transportation, etc.) (47%)
- Access to quality childcare and/or preschool (32%)
- Mental Health (parent or child) (26%)

2. What types of supports, resources or programming are parents with young children requesting? (young children was defined as birth through kindergarten)

- Professionals mentioned affordable housing, transportation and resources for children (childcare, preschool, affordable activities) the most frequently.

It is interesting to note that the parents and professionals did not align with each other on any of the top three needs or challenges of parents. One professional noted, "I think that what they (parents) are requesting isn't always what is needed. They are often requesting more activities, more classes, and more things to do. But listening closely, I think they need permission to relax, love their children, spend time with them, be available, and be good examples for their children of people who deliberately enjoy life and live with a purpose to make a difference in the world around them." This statement may be a comment of the stress management that parent identify as a top need.

8. How will your programming and services be tailored to the needs of families and parents prioritized in the community needs assessment?

The focus of our Community Needs Assessment (CNA) was to help us better understand the parenting needs in our community as identified by different populations, and to focus our priorities and outreach efforts where needed. We received a wealth of valuable information from our surveys that we need to analyze more in depth as we plan for the future. The survey and information gathered by our CNAC create as many questions as they do information for program planning. One question to explore is the differences in the parent and professional survey responses.

This Community Needs Assessment Committee (CNAC) developed a template which includes the following components: ECFE History, Mission, Outreach Vision, Demographics (Past & Present ECFE, Community), SWOT of program and community, and an ECFE Outreach Goal (with implementation plan). Based on the information gathered on our CNA we plan to finalize this plan by fall. We will continue to review the survey responses over the next months and share the results with our ECFE and School Readiness and Community Education Advisory Councils, as well as some of our early childhood and parenting initiative partners in the community – Rochester Area Chamber's Journey to Growth and Rochester's PreK- Third Grade Alignment Team.

We also asked the following question on our surveys of parents and professionals, "How can PAIR/Early Childhood Family Education improve access, programming and resources for parents with young children in our community?" We received many comments on this question, some praising our programming and some offering suggestions for expansion and improvements – i.e. transportation, free programming, educating parents on importance of parent involvement, more resources, address the gaps identified in survey, etc. This information will be helpful in our future program planning and collaborations.

We also asked the professionals, "How we might partner with them to support families with young children?" Again, we received a variety of responses which will assist us in making and/or strengthening contacts with community agencies.

As a result of the survey responses and requests, we will be offering some new programming for this coming year:

- Online parenting Q & A format lead by a licensed parent educator
- Two classes on stress management – one online class and one traditional ECFE format class
- More visibility on social media
- Parenting group for kindergarten parents – many parents and professionals discussed the importance of supporting parents through the emotional and academic transition to kindergarten
- Incorporate more parenting ideas and activities that parents can do at home into our newsletter
- Improve access to affordable things for families to do with their young children
- Offer classes later in the afternoon

We see this CNA as an ongoing process and would like to plan some future steps:

- Continue to dig deeper and disaggregate our race/ethnicity and populations that were identified as underserved demographics
- Discuss the results with the ECFE/School Readiness Advisory Council and other identified groups to determine how best to collaborate to improve our programming to parents
- Complete a SWOT analysis of our community parenting resources based on survey results
- Explore ways to partner with community agencies
- Expand a future parenting survey to include K through Third Grade
- Hire a data specialist to help us look at all of our early childhood and parenting data for the benefit of the community
- Strengthen our support to parents by building our pre-K through third grade connections
- Create professional development opportunities to address the identified parenting needs
- Consider a future survey and see if we can increase the response rate
- Consider focus groups for development of information