

# ECFE Community Needs Assessment 2017 -2018

Response ID:153 Data

## 1. 2017-18 ECFE Community Needs Assessment

### 1. Please enter your district's information for the ECFE Annual Report.

	District Contact Information
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Official District Name:	Willow River Area School District
District Number:	0577

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

The Willow River Early Childhood Program Coordinator conducted a community needs survey in the Spring of 2018 that addressed 15 different areas. This anonymous survey was sent out by email and was made available to community members through Facebook, Willow River Area School Website, and by paper copy upon request. This survey identified past and present participants, their living arrangements, the number of people in their home, their age group, financial stability, and their experience with the Willow River Early Childhood Programs. More than 65 surveys were returned and the key findings were: the biggest struggles within respondents households are: Children's Behaviors, Parenting/ Co-Parenting, Income, Transportation, Insurance, Technology access, and Childcare.. Current participants are asked to complete feedback forms and address the positives and negatives of current programming. What we have found is that with our three year old classes, some of our families are unable to attend programming because of work schedules and/ or transportation difficulties. Three year olds attend classes once a week for 2.5 hours and the kiddos are not able to ride on the regular bus routes. The District is providing a mid day route, to or from area daycares. Parents have said that this was a tremendous help. Families continuously noted the positive changes within the four year old preschool, offering 5 day a week, all day preschool classes. They are "very happy" and "love the addition of all day programming!" They feel that this program has been very beneficial to the children in our community and it has drawn families into the district. Parents have also said that there is a noticeable difference in the children's kindergarten readiness compared to their children that did not have the same preschool opportunity. Parents also remarked positively about the addition of bussing for 4 year old preschool children. This too has been a tremendous help to families and daycare providers. Families were pleased that the School Board recognized the need for additional quality preschool programming and that they supported our children "Learning through Play, Every Day!" Attendance continues to be somewhat difficult for the families of the three year olds, as mid day transportation is only provided if they attend an approved area daycare.

Parents and families in this community are struggling with substance abuse, addiction, poverty, and the inability to transport their children to classes. Because of this, many children are not able to attend programming until transportation is provided. Through the completion of the community needs assessment, we learned that we continue to be under-serving working families and families without transportation. We also noted the need for increased recruitment efforts and outreach to families. Families and community members continue to want MORE early childhood programming –They would like to see more than 2.5 hours a week for three year olds. Families and community members would like increased Transportation available to children in order to attend preschool/ ECFE classes. Families would like to see an increase in classes, information, and support for high risk families . Topics that were recommended covered a wide variety of parenting topics, resources to address substance abuse, domestic violence, unemployment, housing, technology, medical care, and transportation.

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

During the community needs assessment each family was asked to fill out anonymously the areas that they felt their family struggled with and the areas that they felt the community struggled most with. The family struggles that were addressed were: clothing, food, transportation, housing, children's behaviors, disabilities, parenting, employment/ unemployment, adult basic education, parenting education, medical care/ insurance, substance abuse, preschool education, childcare, domestic violence, technology access, counseling, and divorce. Survey participants were asked to address the struggles within their own home and the struggles that were prevalent within our community. Families reported that within their own home the biggest struggles were: Children's Behaviors, Parenting/ Co-Parenting, Income, Transportation, Insurance, Technology access, and childcare.

Last year, the community needs assessment identified Employment/ unemployment, Medical care/ insurance, technology access, transportation, children's behaviors, and Childcare as the primary struggles. The significant difference between the years appears to be with employment/ unemployment, as this year our families do not feel that it is a significant struggle within their family.

Families reported that they feel the biggest struggles in the community are:

1. Income -Families report that even the working families are struggling to make ends meet.
2. Substance Abuse/ Addiction-There is a high prevalence of drug and alcohol abuse within our communities. This prevalence appears to correlate with the crimes and arrests within the community as well. Prenatal exposure has increased in children. Domestic violence and abuse are also noted as struggles within our community.
3. Employment/ Unemployment lack of jobs, low wages, commute and gas prices, cost of child care, and the lack of work ethic were discussed.
4. Children's Behaviors- Behaviors were noted on both the families struggles within their own homes and within the community.
5. Parenting/ Co-parenting/ Single Parenting- Many single parent homes, the inability to co-parent effectively, lack of parenting knowledge, and the high divorce rates.

Many participants felt that the district's struggles are easily and highly underestimated. Many of the parents and community members that completed the needs assessment, represent families that are somewhat stable to completely stable. These participants expressed that the nonparticipating survey families are often those in the most need and are also those with the most struggles and risk factors. Some have noted that in the past, information has depicted an unfair representation of the true population; the impoverished families, the cultural and socioeconomic diversity, and the true number of families being directly or indirectly impacted by substance abuse and addiction. The Willow River Early Childhood Program would like to increase services to underserved and to newly identified families. We also feel it is imperative to focus on Children's behaviors. Giving parents the knowledge and tools to assist their child with managing emotions and increasing their children's overall social emotional health. It is the hope that we will be able to identify more families with risk factors and work to address the family's needs and the needs of their children prior to kindergarten entrance.

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

Family and parenting education needs were assessed through the use of the community needs survey, class interest surveys, and through feedback forms of current program participants. Families repeatedly expressed the need for continued All day, every day preschool and an increase in other early childhood programming. Preschool programming is available to three year olds once a week for two and a half hours. Early Childhood Family Education Classes are available to families once a week, providing either a morning or an evening class. Families expressed the need for an increase in home/ school communication, education, and supports to parents in regards to their child's learning, behaviors, and parenting styles. Many parents are single parents or they are working to co-parent their children. Families and community members have voiced the continued need for transportation to and from classes. Most families work throughout the school day and do not have the option to leave work or to transport their children to programming, other families reported that they do not have any means to transport their children. Families and community members would like to see continued increases in programming times, classes, and options.

Families and community members expressed interest and desire to see classes and programming to meet the needs of families in areas such as: parenting styles, children's behaviors, parent support, and teaching parents and children that choices have consequences and how to make choices that will benefit our children and our community. Based upon the survey responses, it is also evident that the community would benefit from additional training and education regarding ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences.) There has been a noticeable increase in ACES

and education and prevention should become a priority for parents, staff, and the community.

As an early childhood program, we build the foundation for lifelong learning. It is imperative that we teach the families, children, and community members the importance of education. Through our increases in early childhood programming and early intervention, we have been able to identify more children that would be eligible for early intervention services. We are also able to identify children's individual strengths and needs through our hands on, High Scope based approach in preschool. By providing families and children support, we are building stronger communities and stronger home school relationships. It is our wish to provide both children and their families with the support and education that they feel will meet the strengths and the needs of their family.

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

Based on the community responses that were received, we are looking for ways to:

- Continue to provide the opportunity for 4 year old preschool students to "Learn Through Play, Every Day! To increase additional programming options, so that we are better able to meet the needs of the families in our community.
- Continue to increase classes and availability of transportation to meet the needs of the families.
- Serve as a resource to families, and to further assist them with the struggles they face in daily life including education, food, shelter, employment, and substance abuse.
- Provide the education and a strong focus on ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences), how they affect children and communities, how we can prevent them, and how do we address them.
- Increase outreach opportunities to make families aware of program availability and to work with families to identify and address their individual needs.
- Continuously monitor, assess, and address the strengths and needs of children and families in our community in order to provide a strong foundation for lifelong learning.
- Create smooth transitions from early childhood to elementary.
- Strengthen the home and school connection.

The Willow River Early Childhood Program is continuously working to address the needs of our community; we demonstrate this by asking parents and family members to complete feedback forms identifying our program strengths and our program needs. Participants were asked to describe their experience with the Willow River Early Childhood Program, overall the program received fantastic responses. This year the response to All Day, Every Day Preschool was overwhelmingly positive! The families stated "The early childhood program is wonderful!" They are doing a fantastic job!" "Fabulous!" "My child had a great experience and they are ready and excited for kindergarten!" Some of the responses in regards to how the programs could improve were in relation to transportation, fees, and before school/ after school care." The feedback forms, as well as the community needs assessment are used to learn how we can better support our children and our community.

The larger struggle comes not in simply knowing the needs of the community, but in having the funding to adequately address the programming needs and wishes of the community. We are fortunate to have administration and a school board that values early childhood education, and they continue to support and encourage our program's growth.

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**6. Do you provide parents of English learners with translated oral and written information to monitor the program's impact on their children's English language development?**

Yes

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**7. Do you provide information or support to help parents know whether their children are progressing in developing their English and native language proficiency?**

Yes

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**8. Do you support parents to actively engage with and support their children in developing their English and native**

language proficiency?

Yes

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9.

Is your program reviewed periodically to assure that instruction and materials are not racially, culturally, or sexually biased?

Yes

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10.

Does your program encourage parents to be aware of practices that may affect equitable development of children?

Yes

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11. Does your district have a PreK-3rd Grade initiative? (to be counted as "yes," the initiative should be included on your district website, and/or be included in a district plan, like WBWF, district strategic plan, building improvement plan, etc. It does not count if it is only included in an early childhood web page or plan).

Yes

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