

Kindergarten Readiness Parent Focus Group Summary

Yoncalla, Douglas County

Focus Group Snapshot



8 participants



Have lived in the community from less than 6 months to over 20 years



Have children ages birth to 7



Live in a rural community¹, population 1,882²

“Everybody is working for our children’s development. There is a oneness about kids in this community.”

What does it mean for you and your child to be ready for school?

Ready Children

Although parents discussed literacy and numeracy skills, they emphasized the importance of social, emotional, and executive functioning skills of children. Social-emotional and executive functioning skills of children were described as more important to school readiness, over learning pre-academic skills such as “the ABCs and 123s.”

Social-emotional skills such as sharing, being able to identify and verbalize their feelings, caring for others, and enjoying playing with other children.

“Knowing how to act and be able to behave around another group of kids.”

Executive functioning skills such as being able to focus attention, remember instructions, and self-regulate.

“He is ready to follow directions and can go through a typical school day without having a problem. Wash his own hands, tie his own shoes, and get dressed.”

Pre-academic skills such as knowing letters, numbers, shapes, and colors.

Ready Families

Parents needed to be able to offer concrete supports such as establishing routines and developing strategies to support children’s learning, as well as relational connections with other parents and providers.

Establish routines such as getting child up early in order to attend regularly.

Develop ways to support their child’s learning at home, such as being attuned and reflexive to support their individual child’s needs and strengths, and support academic skills.

Understand other parents in order to accept that there is a wide range of parenting values and strategies, and differences in the types of challenges families face.

Establish relationships with early learning providers and teachers in order to build trust and comfort talking with preschool and elementary teachers to seek guidance.

¹ Oregon Office of Rural Health designation file, www.ohsu.edu/xd/outreach/oregon-rural-health/data/rural-definitions/index.cfm

² U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year population estimate factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts

“Having that freedom to actually talk to all the teachers. That helps us to know how to ready [our children] for school too.”

What are trusted sources of information about school readiness?

Parents identified a range of people and resources that serve as trusted sources of information about school readiness.

People in professional roles such as teachers and doctors.

Local supports and services include Early Works events and activities at the school as well as parenting classes.

Personal connections, including family members, friends, and peers.

Additional resources included **books** such as *Loving Our Kids on Purpose*, *How to Listen and Learn from Your Kids*, and the *What to Expect When* series, **Apps** such as Vroom and Baby Connect, and specific **websites** such as babycenter.com

“[The parenting classes are] really great for the parents. We are nonjudgmental. Everybody raises their kids different...it is a really good place for parents to express how they feel and the problems they are going through and to get feedback from other parents.”

What kind of early learning supports have you participated in and how do they support school readiness?

Parents have participated in a wide range of early learning programs or services for families with children ages birth to 5.

Parent-child groups include Kaleidoscope Play ‘n’ Learn and library story times.

Parenting education series offered annually in the community through Take Root parenting hub.

Home visits through Early Head Start, and parent-teacher home visits through preschool and elementary school.

Preschool programs include Head Start and publicly funded preschool.

Nutrition supports through the Women, Infants & Children (WIC) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Other family fun and learning activities includes additional library programming, family events at the school such as Dr. Seuss Night, and community events for all ages.

How do these early learning programs help you and your child be ready for school?

Ready Children

Executive functioning and social-emotional skills development through opportunities for children to interact and play with other children in a group setting, and practice listening to an instructor.

Opportunities to gain independence through preschool experiences. Some parents were nervous to send their child to preschool, but appreciated how it helped both them and their child get used to having time apart.

“Because for you to be confident in your child going to school, they are going to be confident.”

Ready Families

Opportunities to build relationships through play groups, parent education, and home visiting programs. Families get a chance to spend time with one another, and build relationships child to child, family to family, and family to teacher.

“The in-home visits build that relationship between the child and teacher right off the bat.”

Parenting education and support from both providers and other parents was important for

families to be able to problem-solve and share strategies for addressing their child’s challenging behavior.

Support to promote child’s learning at home.

Library workshops on dialogic reading helped parents feel more confident and comfortable reading with their child, which they saw in turn, helped their child develop pre-academic skills such as recognizing letter names and sounds.

“Early Works sends books home...They teach you how to read to your kid, too. Not just read the books but at what age is appropriate to talk about the book instead of just reading it, and point out what is on the page and let [child] talk about and lead conversations that way too.”

Tangible supports help promote participation, such as having snacks and child care provided during parenting education classes or Early Works meetings and events. This allows parents to be engaged in activities who might not otherwise be able to participate.

What would help improve early learning programs to support school readiness?

Parents largely had positive experiences with early learning programs, but also had suggestions to make it easier for parents to participate, and ways to help parents integrate supports at home.

More information for parents on things they can do with their child at home to support school readiness across ages birth to 5.

More coaching for parents to practice new strategies to support their child’s learning, behavior, and development at home.

“How do we do [learning supports] on an everyday basis and incorporate it into our lives.”

Increase availability and affordability of child care especially for children ages birth to 3. Providers who are already operating in the community were described as often at capacity and, for many families, too costly.

“There are not enough [child care providers] and they are super expensive.”

Improved communication about available services and supports so parents know when activities and programs are offered in the community. One participant only learned that there was a local preschool in the community because his child rode his bike up to the school to use the restroom in the building, where they happened to meet the preschool teacher and learn about the program.

Work on ensuring the school and community is welcoming and inclusive especially for newcomers, people of color, and those who speak a language other than English. Parents appreciated the “open door” policy for parents to be at the school. At the same time, experiences of overt racism, discrimination, and cultural isolation were described as a hardship for both parents and children.

What kind of health services have you participated in and how do they support school readiness?

Parents largely described a lack of accessible health services in the community. In order to receive most services for themselves or their children, they had to drive to Roseburg to access most services, which is located approximately 30 miles from Yoncalla. There were some limited, local services provided periodically, which participants also mentioned.

Health insurance coverage limits where families can access services. All parents in this group had utilized Oregon Health Plan (OHP) during the past year.

In-office services were primarily accessed through Mercy Medical Center in Roseburg.

Home visiting was utilized by some participants, consisting of nurse home visiting and supports.

Mobile clinics are offered and accessed Yoncalla for vision, hearing, and dental exams.

Community awareness of available services is highlighted through resource booths staffed by

programs during Dr. Seuss Night at the school each spring.

How do these health services help you and your child be ready for school?

Parents felt that there were limited opportunities for health providers to support school readiness. This was mainly attributed to the lack of health services in the local community. Further, parents largely described negative experiences with health care providers. However, parents shared ways in which the health system supported their child's healthy development in specific ways.

Positive prenatal care experiences were common among this group of parents. They felt that their provider supported them throughout pregnancy with information and clarity about what to expect at each stage. Participants described this was due to feeling trusted and not judged by their prenatal care provider, as well as having providers seek out additional supports on the parent's behalf.

Tracking developmental milestones through Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ) was seen as helpful to some. Other parents felt that it was less beneficial in the medical setting because of the lack of providers' interpretation to help parents understand implications or follow-up steps, if needed.

Nurse home visiting addressed both the child's development in a comfortable setting, as well as eliminated the transportation challenges of the family.

"I know that with the home nurse it's nice because she can go in your environment and see how things are going and be helpful in different ways. [Offering] 'This is what you need to do with the now-stages and the later-on-stages.' She prepares me more and more for what I need to do as a parent."

Providers who take time to hear parents out were described as making the difference for many parents. When parents felt they had a relationship with their or their child's provider and felt heard,

known, and trusted, they were able to raise questions and concerns and get the information they were seeking about child development and ways they can support their child.

"[My child's pediatrician] didn't rush through any appointment. If I had questions, she'd explain it thoroughly. She'd explain everything, even if I had a question about another kid – behavior problems, development problems."

What would help improve health services to support school readiness?

Parents largely focused on improving access to services, and the quality of parent-provider interactions as ways to improve health services and the system overall in supporting school readiness.

Improve communication between parents and providers. For some parents, they described not being able to understand their child's provider because of the providers' use of technical terms and medical jargon. For other parents, they felt talked down to if their provider used too simple of language. Overall, parents wanted to be "met where they are at" and wished providers would be able to better individualize communication with families based on their needs and preference to best support their child.

Approach families with nonjudgmental stance and understand the diversity of needs, strengths, and values families bring, especially as related to parenting.

"I don't like going and listening to [my doctor] because he's always looking down at me."

Spend more time with families to get to understand their needs, strengths, and values, especially as related to parenting.

"I want them to listen to me...[about] the problems I'm having as a parent. Listen to me and understand what I'm going through."

Parents felt this would make the ASQ, for example, feel more relevant, and would help them understand how to best support their child's development. One parent described her experience completed the ASQ with a health provider without any interpretation or follow-up, in contrast with completing the ASQ with an early learning provider, where there was conversation about what the scores meant.

"I have the ASQs with my health provider...You filled it out and they never talk to you about it. [Preschool teacher] just did ASQ on my child too but she actually finished it and I was amazed there is actually feedback on how my child scored."

Know and use referral sources so parents can connect with additional supports, when needed, for themselves or their children. For example, one participant talked about getting a referral to Early Intervention through an early learning provider, which was described as a positive support for her child, but not something she had known about prior to that conversation, nor was it raised as an option through her child's health care provider.

"I have had a problem with my kid sleeping and did not realize until this very year when I went to the Early Intervention people that maybe he really isn't normal. I had been saying he doesn't sleep [to my child's doctor]. I feel the doctor might have been able to say, 'hey, maybe we should do something about this'."

Expand service hours to include evenings and weekends. This was seen as important for routine visits so families could stay on their preferred immunization schedules and well-child checks, while balancing the demands of needing to travel for health services.

Increase local access to health services in rural areas. This was important for several reasons such as travel time and transportation challenges, needing to take significant time from parents' work and children's school to get to services, and

difficulties traveling with multiple small children. One participant described her experience with a nurse home visitor who was able to complete well-child checks, which meant she did not have to travel "45 minutes every time" and how that experience was positive for her.

"It's a lot nicer not having to travel with your children to go to the offices all the time. You don't have to worry about getting kids in the car and then waiting in the waiting room forever."

Improve cultural responsiveness and diversity of providers. Parents of color reported experiencing racialized patterns of disrespect from providers and reported they have not yet been able to find providers who share their racial/ethnic/linguistic background or offer culturally appropriate services for their child. In response, a self-identified White participant shared her experience working with a health provider of color, who she felt was culturally responsive:

"That's why I like [my child's provider]. She would ask you questions about your background, like she understood. This way she could understand a little bit more about the kids because she understands what you are trying to teach them."

Allow families more freedom to select providers that are seen as good fit for their family. The constraints of insurance coverage, available hours, and location of services were the primary drivers for families to select providers. Parents want to see a system that instead centers families, surrounded by a system that is built to meet their needs, rather than a system in which families have squeeze into regardless of parent-provider fit.

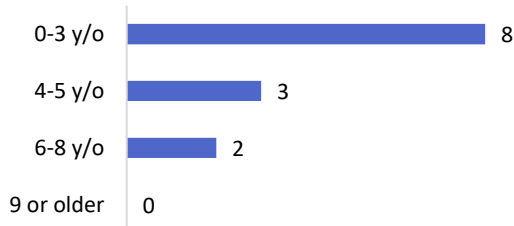
Focus Group & Community Profile

On January 23, 2018 Yoncalla Early Works hosted a Kindergarten Readiness Parent Focus Group in Yoncalla with 8 parents, including 6 moms and 2 dads. Six reported parenting with a partner. Participants were recruited by the Early Works site liaison and were known to her through families' involvement in preschool, elementary school, or other early learning programs in the community.

The **average participant age was 29** and ranged from 19 to 40.

The **average number of children per household was 2** and ranged from 1 to 4.

Ages of Children of Focus Group Participants

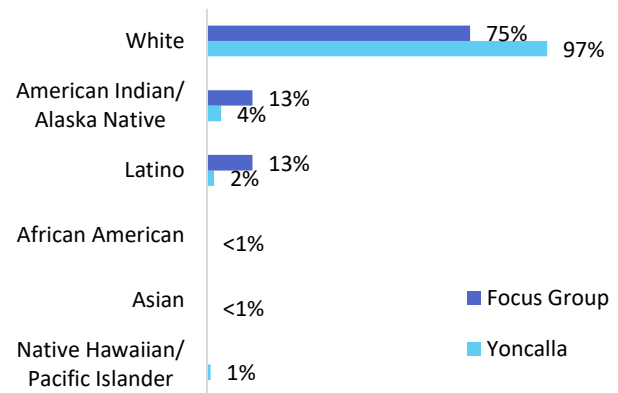


“I think it’s a nice thing that it’s such a small community. You don’t have to be scared, your kids going anywhere. Everybody knows everybody.”

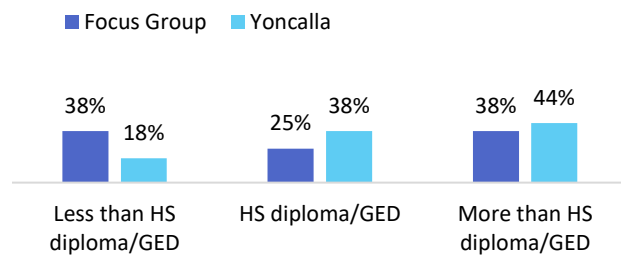
Participants reported that they like raising their children in Yoncalla because of the **community connection** among families, having a **network of people** and organizations that look out for their kids, experiencing a **sense of community safety**, and **local businesses reinvest** resources back into the community.

³ U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Race alone or in combination with one or more other races, Total may not equal 100% because individuals may endorse more than one category
factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices

Race/Ethnicity of Focus Group Participants & Yoncalla³



Educational Attainment of Focus Group Participants & Yoncalla⁴



Services Utilized by Focus Group Participants	% Yes
Public library	88%
SNAP	75%
TANF	13%
OHP	88%
WIC	75%
Early Head Start	37%
Head Start	25%
EI/ECSE	13%

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Educational Attainment among 18 to 24 year olds, factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices