

# Success in the Early Years

April 24, 2018

5:30 – 7:00 PM

Community  
Conversations

Doors open ..... 5:15 p.m.  
 Program Begins ..... 5:30 p.m.  
 Welcome ..... Dave Newkirk  
 Panel ..... 5:40 – 6:15 p.m.  
 Moderator ..... Mel Hartley

## Moderated Panel

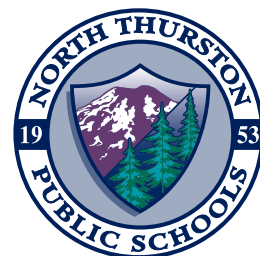
Presenter	Organization
Holly Paxson	Timberland Regional Library
Patty Belmonte	Hands on Children's Museum
Matthew Solomon	ESD 113
Gary Burris	Child Care Action Council
Kim Smith	South Sound Parent to Parent
Dr. Beth Harvey	Pediatric Associates
Durdaana Rinderknecht	North Thurston Public Schools

Turn and Talk ..... 6:15 – 6:35 p.m.  
 Facilitator ..... Gretchen Maliska

- What have you learned about Success in the Early Years?
- What questions do you have about Success in the Early Years?
- What suggestions do you have for strengthening Success in the Early Years in our Community?

Community Questions ..... 6:35 – 6:55 p.m.  
 Moderator ..... Dave Newkirk  
 Closing ..... Chuck Namit

Every student will engage in meaningful learning opportunities that foster curiosity and joy of learning while developing the academic and social skills to meet/exceed standards by the end of Grade 3.



**NORTH THURSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**Community Conversations**  
**Success in the Early Years**  
**Tuesday, April 24, 2018**  
**5:30 p.m.**  
**John W. Gott Administrative Center**

School Board Vice-President, Dave Newkirk welcomed the attendees and thanked participants for joining the conversation surrounding Strategic Goal 1, "Success in the Early Years". He shared that this would be the first of two community comment meetings scheduled for this year. Mr. Newkirk introduced Board Members Chuck Namit, Mel Hartley, and Gretchen Maliska and explained that their role for the evening would be to keep the conversation on schedule to ensure that there was time to cover all topics scheduled for the evening.

Mel Hartley introduced the evening's panelists:

- Durdaana Rinderknecht, North Thurston Public Schools' Director of Early Learning
- Holly Paxon from the Timberland Regional Library
- Patty Belmonte, Executive Director of the Hands on Children's Museum
- Matthew Solomon, ESD 113 – Assistant Superintendent of Early Learning
- Gary Burris, Executive Director of Child Care Action Council
- Dr. Beth Harvey, Pediatrician from Pediatric Associates
- Kim Smith, Executive Director of Parent to Parent

Mel Hartley thanked the members of the panel for their participation this evening and explained that there would be three questions for the panel followed by a time for Community Questions.

Question #1

**How has your organization promoted Success in the Early Years?**

Durdaana Rinderknecht shared that the district is focused on working in partnership with our community and with the early learning providers and families – these people are very important for our earliest learners. Strategic Plan Goal 1 for the district is Success in the Early Years. Two of the outcomes in that area are an increased percentage of children enrolled in high quality pre-school programs and an increased percentage of children ready for kindergarten. In that process we have been in collaboration with the others on the panel. We have a great partnership with early learning providers and the Child Care Action Council. The district recently hosted an event called "We are NTPS Early Learning", in which we provided professional development for local childcare providers. There was also a transition form that was shared that early childcare providers can complete and provide to the district to give to the child's kindergarten teacher to provide better communication. There is also an Early Learning Advisory Council that most of the members of the panel have been involved in. The district works closely with the ESD 113 Headstart / ECEAP and we utilize Washington Reading Corps members that help in our kindergarten program to provide additional support. The district also had an early learning bus tour and implemented WA KIDS, which is a three prong approach of family connections, using a whole child assessment called TS GOLD or GOLD, and collaboration with early learning partners.

Holly Paxon from Timberland Regional Library shared information about the library story times and that staff that are hosting those events have received early literacy training. The staff are not just reading a book, but are providing a variety of different activities specially designed for the developmental age that the story time is geared for. The Lacey Timberland Library also provides a dedicated children's learning and play area that has activities for children birth through age 8. The library also provides resources to not only families that come into

the library, but to the community at large. The library offers parent education classes in support of “Every Child Ready to Read”, which is an initiative similar to WA Kids that focuses on crucial developmental skills to prepare children for literacy and kindergarten. The library also provides digital resources such as *Tumble Books*, which is an app for reading picture books aloud with a caregiver or parent. There is also *ABC Mouse* that has early learning games available in the library.

Patty Belmonte shared that the vision of the Children’s Museum is to inspire all children to love to learn. The museum serves 312,000 people per year and of that more than 1/3 of the people are there on free or reduced admission. Beginning this year, anyone with an EBT card is able to access the museum for free. The museum also has a preschool program for students aged 3 – 5. The preschool teachers teach a free *Play Wise* program every week in the museum. The museum offers parenting classes and they provide camps and workshops every week of every school break. The museum has been focusing on early STEM learning. Washington State is the number one state for STEM jobs in the nation. There is a great link between early learning and science learning so they have started a young makers program to bring tools into the hands of the children.

Matthew Solomon contributed the ESD 113 Early Learning Program’s success to the community and people in his organization’s focus on the development of the whole child and working with the neediest of the needy in the community. There are a number of aspects to quality early learning education such as having quality staff, using a researched based curriculum, use of TS GOLD, and a focus on social-emotional services for the child. Many children from poverty have dealt with trauma. The ESD has also expanded the duration of their services to strive to make every child kindergarten ready.

Gary Burris from the Child Care Action Council shared that his organization works in a number of different realms. There is a big difference between babysitting and licensed child care. They provide licensed coaching to work with child care center staff to put in place improvement plans and provide professional development for early educators. They also have play and learn groups in the county to support caregivers and get together with other families to learn about child development and appropriate play activities for the age of the child that they care for. They also have a program to provide book bags to child care facilities to encourage a love of reading.

Dr. Beth Harvey from Pediatric Associates commented that she is passionate about early learning and early brain development. It is one of the most important things that we should think about in our community. Her practice focuses on supporting parents as a child’s first teacher. Their work begins prenatally to work with family partnership nurses to make sure that kids have access to care. Pediatric Associates staff receive training in promoting first relationships and model with parents how to read cues from babies and respond to their needs. They track families who are behind on well-care visits and do outreach to try to track them down and encourage that they visit. They provide anticipatory guidance and information to parents to promote learning. They provide access to early dental care and they have a new program called *Reach out and Read* that promotes early literacy and have a new program that is funded by Paul Allen Foundation to promote early Math Learning. Books are provided at every well visit from six months to age five.

Kim Smith from South Sound Parent to Parent explained that her organization is the point of entry for children in the birth to three age range who have suspected developmental delays or disabilities. They provide full evaluations in every area of development. They have family resource coordinators who help to support the needs of the family – whether it be coordinating the special needs of the child or help with utility bills. The resource coordinators help to put the families in touch with community resources. There is a Helping Parent Program that matches mentor parents with parents with a newly diagnosed children. Parent to Parent offers recreation activities and support groups to families in Thurston, Mason, and Grays Harbor Counties. There is now a social skills group for ages three to eight to emphasize social emotional wellbeing because they feel that children who have really strong social emotional skills and well supported families are set up for better learning.

## Question #2

### **What are some of the challenges or opportunities for improvement to increase Kinder Readiness?**

Matthew Solomon shared two significant areas that are challenges for Headstart and ECEAP. One is finding qualified teachers to provide the services necessary for their program. The other is the need for the highest need students to have a tiered approach and additional resources of specialists to work with them in the early years to help the child to be successful in being ready to kindergarten.

Gary Burris shared that there is also a concern around affordability and access to quality childcare by middle class families. Although the childcare workforce gets paid very little, parents for the most part are paying a lot for the childcare. Licensing requirements keep the ratio low for children to caregivers. Access, cost and compensation for the workforce are all significant issues.

Dr. Harvey indicated that in her experience families that aren't connecting to early preschool often have the biggest health disparities and socioeconomic disparities and often have trouble connecting to health care. The families move a lot and it may not be clear what school district to connect with because they are not sure where they will be living in the next year.

Kim Smith shared that there is a significant lack of providers for her program. Occupational Therapists and Physical Therapists are difficult to find. A new, larger facility for Parent to Parent will allow new opportunities to expand programs and reach more parents. Their services are always free for families of special needs children. She is excited to be able to provide social opportunities for families, and groups such as communication groups, social groups, and parent engagement groups to support families. They have recently added an outreach coordinator to spread public awareness to families.

Durdaana Rinderknecht indicated that she sees a lot of opportunity for collaboration with early learning providers and she sees that as very positive. Collaboration with community partners and service groups such as Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs will provide opportunity to provide more services for early learning. There were more ECEAP slots provided this year, but there were more students who had need so there was not a net increase. The district will continue to partner with Headstart and ECEAP to provide critical services to these students.

Holly Paxson indicated that it is a challenge to reach everyone who needs their services. Not everyone is able to come to the library or families may not be aware of the services that the library provides. The goal is to increase community outreach to reach more families, but staffing is a challenge. Collaborating with the other organizations on the panel to avoid duplication of services to see where the library can work with the organization to make the resources spread further.

Patty Belmonte indicated that research shows that children's museums are often the first learning institution that young families connect with. Military families in particular often look for children's museums when they relocate from around the country. The children's museum offers parenting classes and takes programs on-site to schools. The museum offers the opportunity for children to free-play and interact with adults and minimize screen time. These types of activities are critical to young brain development.

## Question #3

### **What are your next steps as an organization for achieving your mission?**

Kim Smith indicated that Parent to Parent is adding more staff and more special education teachers with an early intervention focus as they are able to find them. They are also contracting with many OT, PT, and SLP to expand services. They are also expanding the social opportunities beyond early intervention to reach families with older children and to strengthen the transition program between early intervention and school districts. The staff are trained in promoting first relationships and to support the parents to become the best advocate and teacher for their child.

Durdaana Rinderknecht shared that NTPS Early Learning will continue a jump start program this summer in two of our elementary buildings to allow incoming Kindergarten students to get to know their teacher, go through the lunch line and make a connection with their teacher. In 2019-20 there will be another early learning center

opening at Pleasant Glade Elementary. There will be early learning targets set to build and focus resources, energy and staff members to help students be kinder ready and successful.

Holly Paxson is looking forward to “All Aboard Kindergarten Training” – it is a part of WA Kids. The program will train library staff to help children get ready for kindergarten beyond reading.

Patty Belmonte shared that the museum has been thinking about developing a kindergarten readiness program. They also want to connect more families to resources. The Children’s Museum has started a Nature Makers Program to promote getting the kids outside. Two of five tinkering stations have opened outside and the children seem to be outside rain or shine!

Matthew Solomon shared that the ESD has a program called “Parent U” that trains parents to be entry level substitutes and also give the parents skills to work with their own children. The program was piloted this year and it will be promoted and expanded to help families. ECEAP will be expanded to serve more children in the community. There is also a plan to expand birth to three services for high needs children and begin an early headstart program.

Gary Burris indicated that he is hopeful the Governor may have an early learning initiative next session and there is a task force for compensation for early learning providers.

Dr. Harvey would like to add an adverse childhood experience screening and she would like to be able to fund a social worker or licensed mental health therapist to do early rapid treatment and help families connect to services and provide some follow-through and tracking. Pediatric Associates is also working with Best Start Washington to connect kids to nature. She also does not have any screens in the waiting area – children are provided books and she hopes to expand to having science and craft projects.

### **Turn and Talk Activity**

Board member Gretchen Maliska asked that all participants work together with their table partners to complete cards asking three questions:

1. What have you learned about Success in the Early Years?
2. What questions do you have about Success in the Early Years?
3. What suggestions do you have for strengthening Success in the Early Years in our Community?

Comment cards were collected and select questions were posed to the panel:

### **The first question was in regards to ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) scores.**

#### **Dr. Harvey was asked to talk about what the ACEs process is.**

She indicated that there isn’t a formal screen, but it is screening for traumatic things such as domestic violence, food security, and housing security. She also looks at what type of childhood experience the parent had to see if there are factors to impact the child’s development. The better we understand the challenges the families face, the better we can connect them with the right services and help them early.

#### **How are parents educated about resources that are offered?**

Patty Belmonte shared that the museum offers support groups on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday nights and during the support groups community partners are available to provide resources. While the parents obtain the resources, the children are with early learning providers to work on school readiness activities. Sunday mornings are also reserved for children of special needs. There is a parent resource board in the museum and they hope to expand the website to include more resources for families.

Matthew Solomon shared that they provide three to four home visits each year that are family service specific and three to four education specific visits with parents. They also offer family nights and resource boards at each center.

Durdaana Rinderknecht shared that the birth to three program provides home visits for families and if the child is two and a half the family attends a toddler groups with the parent to educate as play is going on. The

preschool program meets with families twice a year to update progress. Kindergarten students do family connections during the first three days of school to allow teachers to connect with the parent and the child. Holly Paxson shared that the library offers story time to model behavior with activities parents can do with kids. The library also offers direct parent education workshops throughout the year.

**How are we honoring families with backgrounds with oral traditions singing, prayer, storytelling in relationship to literacy development?**

Holly Paxson shared that the library often invite storytellers from a variety of different backgrounds to share their art with an audience. Sometimes that audience is children, sometimes all ages and sometimes adults. The library feels it is important to honor that artform. They recently had Harvest Moon provide a cultural experience that was free and open to all ages.

Dr. Harvey purchases books for the children that include songs. They also encourage families to have bedtime rituals to include prayer or stories.

**What advocacy opportunities are available for you as a community and as a panel to support workforce compensation and how do you collaborate together?**

Matthew Solomon indicated that ECEAP is state funded and Headstart if federally funded. He has recently sent correspondence to the state level to advocate for a monumental move to change the compensation piece. There is a committee at the state level working on compensation.

Gary Burris shared that they provide training to support people to become advocates. They train child care providers and parents to advocate for early learning issues. He asked if anyone was interested in making a connection with those at the legislature who are making those decisions, he would be happy to speak to those interested individually.

Matthew Solomon added there is also a program available at the state level called Parent Ambassador Program that trains parents how to advocate for the ECEAP program.

Durdaana Rinderknecht shared that she would advocate for universal preschool.

**How do we teach parents to turn off the devices, play with their children and get them outside?**

Patty Belmonte shared that there is a difference in the parents interacting with children at the museum compared to years ago. Children today are trying to get the attention of the parent while the parent is on the phone. The museum is planning to add quotes to the walls and training staff on redirecting parent to pay attention to their child.

Dr. Harvey indicated that it is a problem at the office with both parents and teens being on the phone during an appointment. She shared that parents will often even give their phone to younger children to keep them occupied. She attempts to offer suggestions of other ways to engage the child without using electronic devices.

**How do you measure success?**

All participants indicated the collection of data and use of assessment tools as a measure of success.

Board Member Chuck Namit thanked everyone for attending and indicated that there would be a second session on another topic later this year.

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 pm.