

Murtaugh Collaborative Needs Assessment

Introduction:

The Murtaugh Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC) is participating in a federal grant awarded by the Idaho AEYC on behalf of the State of Idaho. The PDG 4.1 is a preschool development grant birth through five (PDG B-5) to support and enhance early childhood systems. The State will use information from the collaboratives to analyze and build upon current systems to maximize parental choice, share best practices, and improve program quality with the goal of enhancing early learning systems statewide to improve literacy outcomes.

We applied for this grant to allow us to analyze the level of services currently offered in our community. It provided us the opportunity to bring together local stakeholders to assess early learning systems, resources and opportunities for families with young children (birth through five).

This work will be important to our community because we lack resources for children birth through five. It will bring attention to the issue and help us move forward with new goals to improve upon services we do have and establish services that are nonexistent at this time.

Governance Structure:

We recruited a committee that would be representative of the community. The following are committee members and the roles they served;

Michele Capps – Lead Project Manager
Jo Gunnell – Early childhood educator
Anita McClure – Representative from the local school district
Lori Wrenfrow – Representative from the fiscal agency
Misha Jones – Community Partner from a local church and community member
Nancy Tellez – Community Representative
Reba Henson – Community Partner from Idaho Stars

This committee will meet at least five times throughout the process of developing a strategic plan. All members have an equal vote when decisions are to be made. Members, except Reba Henson, are being paid a stipend and must be present at all meetings. Meetings will be held in person and virtual. Minutes will be taken at each meeting and distributed to members. Members will sign an agreement to the terms of service on the ELAC.

Needs Assessment:

Objective: Identify Strengths and Needs

The committee chose to survey a portion of the community who had children birth to five or had been in the community long enough to utilize the programs we do have available and offer opinions about strengths and barriers they encountered.

Methodology:

We created a survey (attachment 1) that would ask specific questions, as well as, allow for open comments. This survey would be conducted by phone calls and available on social media. Nancy Tellez and Misha Jones were tasked with gathering this data. Our community has a large population of parents who speak only Spanish. Nancy would make those calls to insure we had a representation of the whole community. Also included is general information gathered to describe the community and the services available.

Data and Information Learned:

The results are included on the survey attached, but we had many additional “take aways” some that were obvious issues and some that were more informational, that we discussed as a group. These included;

- There has not been a licensed daycare in Murtaugh for at least thirty years. The survey showed split responses if this was a hardship for them. Most of that is dependant on the availability of family/friends.
- A few in home daycares have been identified, but none are licensed or provide academic services of any kind to children birth through 5.
- There are no academic services for children 0-3 in Murtaugh, but qualifying children can receive services at Hansen, Idaho HeadStart and Twin Falls, Idaho Migrant HeadStart. Transportation is provided to these programs.
- Transportation is provided to school for Preschool. Although transportation home from preschool presented a barrier for some, it is not an issue we can address and maintain the program. Due to the geographic nature of the district we can not run an additional route. The few who had a barrier or express an issue will be given assistance as necessary. If we try to provide transportation home we feel we will put the program in jeopardy.
- Many families expressed they do not have access to books, devices, educational materials for their children.

- Most people expressed a desire to extend the day of the current Preschool program or offer additional days.
- A few commented Preschool needs to be “free”. This is an issue of communication. Our PreK program is free. We charge \$100 for the year to assist with supplies. We will work on better communication to our families as the committee agreed this is a fair request and anyone who has a true hardship is provided access to the program without paying the \$100.
- Library time was requested by some.
- Although there are no medical services available most respondents said they do not have difficulty getting their child to the doctor.
- About half of those surveyed said they would take their child to another preschool if Murtaugh did not have access to one. It is critical that we maintain this program for the children in our community.
- More than half of those surveyed said they do not feel comfortable teaching their child the skills they would need to enter kindergarten.

Additional Information:

- There are two early childhood educators serving children ages birth through 5 in the local school district’s preschool program.
- The average education level for these educators is an Associates Degree.
- Average salary for a teacher in the program is \$12-\$15 per hour.
- The Murtaugh Preschool program has twenty-four spots per year, provides transportation, breakfast, lunch and free academic services for all four year olds in the district.
- Participants are expected to pay \$100 per year to cover supplies, but scholarships are provided for any families who cannot pay this fee.
- The program is three days per week for 3.5 hours each day. There are no additional preschool or childcare programs in the community.
- The Murtaugh Preschool program is in the process of becoming licensed with the State of Idaho, but has been following all the guidelines of the local District since its inception in 2003.
- There have been no violations or findings of any kind in the Murtaugh Preschool program.
- This is the first year the Murtaugh Preschool program has participated in Idaho Steps to Quality.
- On average, children within the Murtaugh Preschool program are 50% minority from Spanish speaking families.
- Approximately 70% of students in the Murtaugh Preschool program each year will qualify for the District’s free and reduced lunch program.
- According to the United States Census Bureau, the estimated average number of children birth through 5 in the community would be 148.

- Qualifying students, based on income and special needs, are accepted into HeadStart in Hansen, Idaho. Number of qualifying students varies from year to year.
- Hansen HeadStart provides preschool and daycare services to qualifying children birth to four years old in the Murtaugh Community. Transportation is provided.
- Migrant children, birth to five, qualify for Migrant HeadStart in Twin Falls, Idaho. Transportation is provided to families who qualify. Positions are available, but few families take advantage of this service.
- There are currently only two foster children in the community.
- Currently, no children birth through 5 have been identified as homeless.
- Approximately 20-25% of students birth through 5 qualify as limited English learners.
- Approximately 5-20% of students birth through five qualify as migrant.
- Approximately 6% of children from birth to 5 are receiving special education services.

COVID 19 closed the local Preschool program, but there are plans in place to provide digital instruction and opportunities to preschool students during any future closures. (All information above provided by the Murtaugh School District.)

NOTE: There is information available showing the median household income in the City of Murtaugh is \$49,063 and the poverty rate is 5.48%. The ELAC is hesitant to use these figures as they only focus on the City and not the surrounding impact area served. This information would be based on a city population of 73 people and is not representative to establish the needs of the entire community. Therefore, we are not relying on this data to make decisions to guide our strategic plan.

The Committee feels like we have the information necessary to establish goals that will promote growth of the early care and education system in the community of Murtaugh.

From the data gathered on this survey, and information collected from those in the Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC) who understand what the school and community currently offer, we were able to develop our SMART goals to move forward in our strategic plan.

Attachment 1:

| Question | Yes | No |
|--|---|-------------|
| Do you have easy access to daycare locally? | 24 | 24 |
| Do you attend the local preschool? | 29 | 19 |
| Do you have a transportation barrier to picking up your child from pre-school? | 14 | 34 |
| Is money an obstacle for your children in attending the pre-school? | 14 | 34 |
| If pre-school wasn't available in Murtaugh would you take your child to another pre-school? | 29 | 19 |
| Have your children received speech services? | 6 | 42 |
| Have your children received hearing services? | 0 | 48 |
| Have your children received occupational therapy services? | 0 | 48 |
| Have your children received special education services? | 1 | 1 |
| Have your children received head start in Hansen? | 2 | 46 |
| Do you have difficulty getting to a doctor? | 1 | 47 |
| Are your children up to date on immunizations? | 5 (2 not sure) | 41 |
| Do you have access to books at home? | 15 | 33 |
| Do you have access to devices at home? | 9 | 39 |
| Do you have access to internet access at home? | 14 | 34 |
| Do you have access to educational toys at home? | 16 | 32 |
| Do you feel comfortable teaching your child the skills they will need to enter kindergarten? | 18 | 30 |
| If there was a licensed daycare here in Murtaugh would you use it? | 24 (7 maybe, 1 no answer) | 16 |
| Would you be interested in running a daycare? | 46 | 2 (1 maybe) |
| How can we change our preschool program to better meet your needs? | 1. Longer hours 2. Bus kids home 3. No charge for pre-school 4. Mon-Fri 5. Good AS IS | |
| What services for children 0-5 do you want to see in our community? | 1. A daycare for children 0-5 2. Library accessibility 3. Before school program | |