EARLY EDUCATION IN SOUTHERN NEVADA

UNITED WAY OF SOUTHERN NEVADA COMMUNITY REPORTS
HOW DOES NEVADA RANK?

Nevada is ranked 51st in the nation for enrollment in early education. A quality early education provides children from birth to eight years old a strong foundation to enter elementary school prepared to learn and read.

While many options for child care are available, some offer early education. Early education provides structure and a curriculum, which help prepare children to enter kindergarten. Children in early education programs also receive solid foundations for math and reading, social and communication skills, emotional support and health benefits.

Early education expands opportunities for low-income families to break cycles of intergenerational poverty through work and education.

Child care also provides basic care for children while parents are working.

Expanding access to affordable child care and early education can help parents earn more and miss less work.

As earnings increase, more families are able to afford high-quality early learning options.

There are almost 76,000 children between the ages of 3 and 4 in Nevada, with 74% of them located in Clark County. Of Clark County’s preschool-aged children, only 31% are enrolled in a formal early education program.

Nevada has one of the lowest rates of preschool enrollment in the Mountain West, approximately 15% lower than the national enrollment rate of 47%. Colorado leads the region with a preschool enrollment rate of 51%, while Nevada ranks almost last in the nation with only 32% enrollment.

WHY IS EARLY EDUCATION IMPORTANT IN SOUTHERN NEVADA?

Early education programs get children on track to learn and also support working parents.

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RAINBOW

31% of Clark County children between the ages of 3 and 4 are enrolled in formal Pre-K.

Enrollment Rates
Colorado 51%
Wyoming 43%
New Mexico 41%
Utah 41%
Montana 40%
Arizona 36%
Idaho 32%
Nevada 32%

Nevada is part of an 8-state region called the Mountain West.
By the time children from low-income families enter kindergarten, they are often already 12-14 months behind national benchmarks and their peers from higher-income families.

Children’s early vocabulary skills are linked to their economic backgrounds. By age three, there is a gap of more than 30 million words between children from higher-income and lower-income families. By the time children enter kindergarten, over one in three students lack the basic language skills needed to learn how to read.

Preschool is a common setting for early education, where curriculum is delivered to improve language and literacy skills while supporting positive behaviors and social-emotional development. This is especially important in the early years of a child’s life, as a child’s brain develops to 85% of capacity by age 5.

Enrolling children in early education and reading at home helps them develop the language and listening skills necessary to read on their own, preparing them for success in elementary school. Nearly two thirds of all fourth graders read at or below basic levels, but this number can improve by ensuring children enter elementary school ready to build fundamental literacy skills.

**WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF EARLY EDUCATION?**

**Solid Educational Foundations for Math and Reading**

High-quality early learning programs provide a safe and nurturing environment while improving math and reading and promoting the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development of young children.

**Health Screenings, Immunizations and Dental Care**

In Nevada, the proportion of low-income children enrolled in federally-funded preschool programs that were up-to-date on age-appropriate preventive and primary health services increased from 43% to 74%. Access to dental services increased from 60% to 90%.

**Parent Engagement**

When children access early education, their parents are more likely to participate in parenting education courses or health education workshops, or enroll in higher education.

**Early Interventions**

Child care assistance can help families receive support before social services are needed. Parents with access to child care assistance are more likely to enter the workforce and less likely to use public programs like food stamps, housing support, and welfare.

**HOW DOES EARLY EDUCATION PREPARE CHILDREN?**

**Children’s Early Vocabulary Skills Are Linked to Their Economic Backgrounds**

- From birth, children from lower-income families hear 62,000 words each week, while those from higher-income families hear 215,000 words.
- Before the age of 4, children from lower-income families hear more than 30 million fewer words than those from higher-income families.
Child care assistance is a smart public investment that increases the chances that low-income parents will be able to access early learning options. This support increases the likelihood that parents will seek, find, and maintain employment to build economic stability.

The cost of child care is often challenging for Southern Nevada’s families. Unaffordable child care often limits the amount of money families have to spend on other essentials - like housing, transportation, nutritious food, and healthcare.

The annual cost of private center-based child care for one child in Nevada is $10,317. That number drops by 17% for home-based options, to $8,572. Married parents with one child would pay 14% of their income and those with two children would pay 26% of their annual income for child care. Single parents pay 36% of their income to place a child in care, which can rise to a staggering 67% of their income if they have two children.

Parents receiving child care assistance are not only more likely to be employed in general, but they are also likely to have more stable employment. In particular, mothers are more likely to be employed when receiving child care support, and that employment is more likely to be full time. Single mothers receiving subsidies work an average of 9.4 hours more than single mothers that don’t get help. Parents are also less likely to face child care interruptions that can lead to absences or other scheduling disruptions in the workplace, contributing to greater rates of job retention and enhanced household financial stability. Families regularly receiving subsidies for longer periods of time earned as much as $7,500 per year more than those who had occasionally received subsidies.

Finally, parents receiving child care assistance report stronger household economies, as demonstrated by improved financial well-being; the ability to afford other non-child care services; and the ability to save money, pay bills, and reduce debts. Research shows that child care assistance supports low-income families as they get out of debt, discontinue receiving public assistance, and work to manage household budgets.
The Clark County School District, faith-based organizations, charter schools, homeschool sites, child care centers and private providers, as well as friends and family, are all options for child care in Southern Nevada.

A closer look at Clark County, Nevada’s most populous county, reveals an enrollment rate of 31% in licensed early education. There is wide variation in preschool enrollment rates within the county, ranging from a low of 27% in North Las Vegas to 44% and 41% in Boulder City and Henderson, respectively. The City of Las Vegas accounts for 30% of all 3 and 4 year olds in Clark County, and has a 33% preschool enrollment rate.

In Clark County, 73% of child care providers are Family, Friends, and Neighbors. Across Southern Nevada, child care providers require a license if they are providing care to 6 or more children. Licensed centers are required to meet minimum health, safety, teacher training, and curriculum standards. Using data provided by the Las Vegas Urban League, the map below shows that child care is primarily provided by Family, Friends, and Neighbors (FFN) in North Las Vegas and areas of the valley north of US-95. Licensed child care providers are concentrated in areas like Summerlin, Green Valley, and Henderson. Improving the landscape of early learning in Southern Nevada requires an approach that expands access to licensed care and early learning opportunities in undeserved areas, and resources and support for providers caring for five or fewer children.

In Nevada, there are approximately 4,935 child care providers with annual revenues of over $235 million. An estimated 8,900 people are employed in early education services, including 4,268 at more than 300 early education centers.

Increasing employment in early education can reduce local unemployment and increase the accessibility of care so that parents can go to work or go to school while simultaneously preparing young children for healthy development and a life of learning.

More than 38,000 children are not enrolled in early education. In Clark County, almost 7 out of 10 children between the ages of 3 and 4 years are not enrolled in early education centers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Enrollment Rate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clark County</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Las Vegas</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Las Vegas</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mesquite</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henderson</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boulder City</td>
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The State of Nevada has one of the lowest rates of preschool enrollment in the country. For a 24-hour city like Las Vegas, early education and other forms of child care are critical to the support of working families. There are a variety of approaches that can help families, community members, employers, and policymakers support Southern Nevada’s youngest minds and hardest-working parents.

**WHICH PROGRAMS ARE IMPROVING EARLY LEARNING?**

- **Acelero Learning Clark County**
  - Acelero Learning focuses on positive family and child outcomes to close achievement gaps and build a better future for children, families, and communities.
  - Nationally, Acelero Learning serves 5,000 children annually. Between 2010 and 2014, the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) reported that Acelero Learning students demonstrated greater-than-average gains in both math and literacy skills.

- **Clark County School District**
  - The Clark County School District plays a leading role in providing quality early education, offering more than 460 preschool classes at 213 of its 237 schools.
  - Having children attend pre-Kindergarten in their zoned schools is a strategy to expand parent engagement in school settings from an early age.

- **Las Vegas-Clark County Library District**
  - Las Vegas-Clark County Library District (VCCLD) provided 7,500 early childhood education, offering more than 460 preschool classes at 213 of its 237 schools.
  - Having children attend pre-Kindergarten in their zoned schools is a strategy to expand parent engagement in school settings from an early age.

- **Las Vegas-Clark County Library District**
  - Las Vegas-Clark County Library District (VCCLD) provided 7,500 early childhood and family literacy programs with 65,700 participants, held at 25 library branches.
  - VCCLD provided 655 storyline and staff training visits to 29 local childcare centers reaching 18,425 children.
  - VCCLD established Las Vegas as a ROOM community with the Bezos Foundation and launched “Raising Las Vegas” Collective Action initiative with 13 local organizations, including UWSN.

- **Las Vegas Urban League**
  - The Las Vegas Urban League’s (LVUL) Early Childhood Connection provides access to center-based and home-based child care and resources for self-sufficiency.
  - It establishes programs and policies that address social and economic issues faced by low-income and minority residents of Clark County, and its outlying areas.
  - LVUL’s Family Friend and Neighbor Provider network currently supports 605 individuals providing informal child care for young children in a home-based environment.

- **United Way of Southern Nevada**
  - Every year, UWSN provides hundreds of scholarships to send children from low-income families to preschool and offers instruction and training for teachers and parents.
  - Since 2010, UWSN has awarded more than 2,000 scholarships and engaged more than 31,000 students and families.

**Neighborhood Network**

Neighborhood Network is an innovative solution to empower children and families in informal early education settings as our youngest learners prepare for kindergarten. Our goal is to support both adults and children by providing all children the opportunity to have a quality education in their neighborhood while also helping caregivers by providing professional development, workforce training, community resources, access to technology, and educational materials and supports.

UWSN works in collaboration with Las Vegas Urban League, Vegas PBS, Las Vegas-Clark County Library District, and Workforce Connections on this pilot program to support our Family, Friend, and Neighbor providers in informal early education settings.

**HOW CAN WE COLLABORATE TO BUILD OPPORTUNITIES?**

- **FAMILIES**
  - Families can work together in their neighborhoods to share information about child care options and opportunities to help build stronger networks of support for working parents and their children. By reading at home with children, parents can increase their children’s reading and language skills.

- **EMPLOYERS**
  - Employers in Southern Nevada can collaborate with each other and community leaders to develop strategies to better support their workers. Flexible working hours and on-site child care facilities make it easier for parents to navigate responsibilities.

- **COMMUNITY MEMBERS**
  - Community members can participate in public meetings and support initiatives that would expand child care assistance and other forms of support for parents and their children. Many ongoing initiatives require active public engagement including universal pre-Kindergarten and Read by Grade 3.

- **POLICYMAKERS**
  - Policymakers and funders can support programs and initiatives that increase funding to public schools for early education, preschool access and affordability. Expanding child care subsidies, Universal Pre-Kindergarten, the Child Tax Credit, and other programs like the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) are effective at incentivizing work, improving academic performance, and reducing poverty.
United Way of Southern Nevada’s Community Reports series provides an opportunity to increase our community’s awareness of local issues by presenting data in accessible and locally-relevant ways. Each report explores county-wide and city-level performance on a specific issue across the cradle-to-career pathway, offering descriptions of the data used, summaries of local trends, and recommendations for action. UWSN will use these reports to inform our own decision making and empower individuals and organizations to take action on issues facing our community.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Find data related to the population of children in Clark County, enrollment rates, and types of care at factfinder.census.gov

UWSN Early Education
Learn more about UWSN programs actively working to support young children and working families at uwsn.org/earlyeducation

UWSN Community Reports
Access community information at United Way's online hub Community Connect where research leads to positive change at uwsn.org/communityconnect

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