



Most notably, over the past 7 months the program has faced many challenges related to the public health crisis of the global pandemic with COVID 19. In many ways the crisis has provided an impromptu and deep community assessment that shows changes in:

- How PSD ECE provides learning (being prepared to provide remotely and in person)
- Health and safety for families who are disproportionately at risk in the health crisis, and its relation to enrolling for our services
- Access to health, nutrition, safety, and education services, including enrollment, transportation, and access to food

These needs have implications for PSD ECE’s funding and cost allocation.

Demographic Make Up of Head Start Eligible Children and Families

Below is a chart comparative demographics which shows changes from last spring to the present in green print, with EHS enrollment at 74% and PK enrollment at 74%

Geographic Area	Race	Ethnicity	Spoken Language	Homeless	Foster Care	Dual Language Learners	Disabilities
Larimer County	83% White 3% Multiracial 3% Asian 2% African American 1% Native American	12% Hispanic or Latino	9.4% speak a language other than English at home.	3% of total students enrolled in Larimer school districts	.05% of total children 18 years of age or younger	5.5% of total students enrolled in Larimer school districts	9.5% of all county residents
PSD Catchment	73% White 4% Other 3% Asian 1% African American 0.5% Native American	18% Hispanic or Latino	7.6% of total student enrollment is a Dual Language Learner	4% of total student enrollment	1% of total student enrollment in foster or kinship care	7.26% of total student enrollment	7.41% of total student enrollment
PSD ECE Program	88% White 87% 4% Multiracial 4% 4% Asian 5% 3% African American 3% 1.5% Native American or Pacific Islander 1%	37% Hispanic or Latino 41%	72% English 69% 21% Spanish 22% 4% Arabic 4% 3% Other Languages 5%	6% of total ECE enrollment 8%	2.5% of total ECE enrollment in foster or kinship care Less than 1 %	27% of total ECE enrollment 31%	35.14% of total ECE enrollment 29%



Education, Health, Nutrition, and Social Service Needs of Head Start Eligible Families

Our flexibility has been tested and we have constantly modified our services to meet the needs of our community during a global pandemic.

Education

Spring 2020

- PSD ECE followed public health orders to close our buildings and classrooms during the first three months of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- We adjusted how we provide education to children and families by providing remote education.
- During the initial building closure and throughout the summer session in June 2020 PSD provided laptops and internet access to support children's and families' remote learning.
- Our rate of remote home visit completion in EHS and HS remained at the same percentage as it has been in years of in-person services.

Summer 2020

- Home visits were successful because they engaged families as the first and most enduring educators and were conducted in the way that worked best for the family, whether by Teams meeting, phone conference, or texting.
- During the summer all families who needed to keep their technology to continue to access educational, therapeutic, or health services kept their machines. However, it became clear that iPads would be better than laptops, and that MiFi needed to replace other internet access supports.
- In the HS summer session, we provided remote learning to an expanded group of students transitioning to Kindergarten in the fall and those with identified needs. Family and child engagement was strong during the summer session.

Fall 2020

- Beginning in Fall 2020, PSD ECE supported continuing instruction by providing options:
 - A year-long PK Virtual option in half-day sessions
 - Phases of remote, hybrid, and in-person instruction based on building openings and group size guidance from the health department. Supports within the phases include porch drop off activities, in-person center and remote home visits, and, during remote only, in-person preschool half-day education services in groups of 10 or fewer children for families with highest asset scores or identified learning needs.
 - Early intervention services, which are provided in the home, became remote in March and have remained so to the present.
- PSD ECE provided iPads for over 300 families and MiFi for all families who requested them; during in-person learning families keep their devices to support them with long- or short-term remote learning phases.

Changes to the Preschool instructional design because of low enrollment

- See the social services section below for information on what prompted us to make the changes described here.
- In preparation for the return to in-person learning on October 5th, we went from 10 full day classrooms to 19 full day classrooms to use all of our state-funded preschool slots.
- Virtual Pre-K is an option for the remainder to the year for families to whom in-person is not the safest option.



Health In a review of the parity of our health and oral health procedures, we decided not to fill our Oral Hygienist position nor provide in-classroom fluoride treatments for students.

- We shifted our attention to encourage families to remain current in their vaccinations, health, and dental screenings in their medical and dental homes.
- As a district, we developed processes to ensure safety in our service provision, and we purchased personal protective equipment and signage. We implemented new protocols and training to ensure staff are prepared to use PPE, instruct in and manage socially distant settings, and meet family and community needs for engagement with safety.
- Vision and hearing screenings have been put off until it is safer to have in-person contacts from staff members who are not in the classroom daily.

Nutrition The COVID emergency led many families who counted on preschool for their child's nutrition to wonder where their next meal would come from.

Spring 2020

- At the beginning of building closures PSD ECE distributed diapers and formula to families who could not get access to supplies and food for their infants and toddlers.
- PSD Child Nutrition worked in partnership with the food bank to provide a handful of locations for families to pick up meals for children ages 0-18. Each pickup included a complete lunch and breakfast for the next day.

Summer 2020

- PSD summer feeding sites provided food for children 0-18 years old until the beginning of the new school year.

Fall 2020

- Once PSD announced remote learning for fall 2020, the district fed families at both schools and bus stops throughout the district to bring the food much closer to families' neighborhoods.
- They offered the same options for 0-18-year-olds, a lunch with a breakfast for the next day.
- As preschool students transitioned back to school buildings in October, Child Nutrition began distributing meals from schools so that children 0-18 years old would benefit from 1-2 meals daily. This will continue through December of this year.
- At the same time, Colorado is engaged in a campaign to ensure that more families enroll in food programs through WIC, SNAP, CACFP and Federal School Lunch to further reduce food insecurity across the state.

Social Services In May 2020 we re-opened Fullana Learning Center, our ECE services building, M-Th on a shortened day before the district opened other buildings. This assisted families in applying for ECE **safety, educational, food, and transportation services** for the coming school year. Many families had difficulties submitting electronic documents, and our in-person supports increased their access by answering questions and making photocopies and scans.

Families have been challenged to remain nimble as the district shifts back and forth from in-person care and education to remote services. PSD announced in-person school at the end of July, which caused our enrollment to begin to build. Our highest PK enrollment in the original 20/21



instructional model was 70%. The announcement a week later of a remote start to school caused significant loss of preschool enrollment, especially among tuition-paying families. By mid-September preschool enrollment was at 64%. While EHS enrollment has stayed between 70 and 74%, it is still down significantly from previous years. This is the first year we have reported less than full enrollment in E/HS within 30 days. Causes for low enrollment are

- Families are unsure what would be safest for their family
- Inability to plan far enough in advance for childcare based on delayed district decision/turnaround decisions.
 - Families have told us that when they give up a slot in day care they have secured to go back to district services, and then those are changed, the family has lost that initial care slot or is concerned that they will.
- Tuition-paying families were unwilling to pay for remote learning.
- Families do not feel that remote learning is developmentally appropriate due to the amount of screen time it requires.
- Lack of transportation has become a barrier since in-person services were announced. County Health is still restricting the number of children on the bus to half of the actual bus capacity.

ECE families are truly unsure what would be safest for their family, and are wrestling with this dilemma: PSD ECE enrollment represents the neediest quarter of the district's families, and nationally these families experience higher COVID infection rates, lengthier and more severe illness, and higher rates of death or post-illness difficulties. We know from home visiting that this same population is more likely to be working in person during the pandemic, which increases their need for in-person care and education. As you can see in the chart above, in addition to an increase in unemployment, our most statistically significant increase is in the rate of homelessness, which is up 2% for enrolled families. This means more families than ever qualify for our services, but that families still may hesitate to access them based on that very vulnerability.

Work, School, Training Schedules of Parents with Eligible Children

Parents and families have experienced many disruptions to their work, school, and training schedules because of COVID. Because the district has a plan to shift between remote and in-person sessions, families have communicated that this makes it more difficult to maintain regular work hours, or to support their in-person for employment. Training and school schedules are as changeable as those for PSD, where some schools and institutions are remote while others are in-person, and situations could change at any moment in response to the health crisis. An important demographic shift in our community is the unemployment rate. The unemployment rate was 2.7% in 2017 but as of July 2020 is 6.2% in Larimer County. The change is a direct result of COVID 19, making the PSD ECE free or low-cost education, health, nutrition, and social services more important than ever to our community.

Other Early Childhood Education Programs that Service Eligible Children

Other changes since the baseline community assessment include number of schools where we offer programs. We are currently in 21 schools because we added an additional PK classroom at Bennett Elementary in March 2020. We continue to have five community center-based partners with five EHS classrooms (this reflects an increase of 1, a classroom for three-year-olds) and 9 PK classrooms (an increase of 1 this fall at Teaching Tree.) Our partnership with Basecamp ended when the foundation closed its doors in June 2020, and over the summer we forged a



partnership with the new PSD partner, AlphaBest. AlphaBest assumed responsibility for the Stove Prairie and Red Feather Lakes preschool classrooms. With the strong advocacy of the Mountain Schools Principal, AlphaBest closed the Wellington PK classroom and move the services to Livermore Elementary, where community need was higher. PSD ECE will add two PK classrooms in a new school that will open in fall 2021.

Community Resources

As availability of community resources shifted, the PSD Early Childhood program has worked to provide support to bridge gaps in goods/services during the COVID lockdowns and new regulations. PSD ECE and PSD worked to provide food, formula, diapers, educational materials, and technology for families to access instruction during the pandemic. In addition, the district and food bank partnered to use district buildings to provide nutrition for the community. We continue to participate in community drive-through events for recruitment and information about the Early Childhood program.

There has also been an increase in county service providers' coming together in multi-stakeholder groups in response to COVID to link services to provide for families. These include meetings convened by PSD, such as the meetings held with our center-based partner providers to ensure continuity of services over the summer and increased supports for the centers coming into the fall and the Community Support Planning meeting which helped to provide in-person services for the most vulnerable PSD families during the remote start to the school year. Other inclusive, multi-stakeholder meetings have been convened by groups including the Early Childhood Council of Larimer County, the United Way of Larimer County, and the Larimer County Department of Human Services. The weekly Navigator meeting has helped us build our enrollment, as the regular contact with early learning, mental health, grandfamily coalition, library, faith-based, school district, and other community service providers has been a major source of referrals. Additionally, all three Larimer school districts and the Early Childhood Council are working together to apply for RISE funding from the Colorado Governor's Office by the December 12th deadline to secure collaboration and funding to support families more fully. The coalition is exploring the possibility of expanding community services through community schools located in geographically remote and Title I elementary schools.