

**Kathy Wilson Foundation Annual Report**  
**February 3, 2015**  
**Preschool Screening Project**  
**Prepared by Samantha Sweeney, PhD**

**Introduction:**

The Kathy Wilson Foundation embarked on a new venture in July 2014. In addition to providing grants and financial support to local preschools, the Foundation is also involved in a new project near and dear to Kathy's heart: screening preschool-aged children for developmental delays. This new project is an important step in helping to identify children who could potentially benefit from universal early intervention and/or preschool. This is not currently available in Alexandria City and the Kathy Wilson Foundation is attempting to close some of this gap.

**What the Project Is:**

The Preschool Screening Project is a program that works with parents of 3- and 4-year-old children who are Alexandria City residents to fill out a questionnaire about development. This screening form is the Ages and Stages Questionnaire-Third Edition ® (ASQ-3). The ASQ-3 ® is a parent-completed form that asks about a child's development in a number of areas. These areas of development are: Communication, Gross Motor, Fine Motor, Problem-Solving, and Personal-Social. This is intended to screen for potential delays or disabilities, NOT to diagnose. Therefore, the Kathy Wilson Foundation does not provide intervention for potential issues. The Foundation does provide information about resources in Alexandria for the families to access. This is why the Foundation has partnered with several area organizations, to provide information and services.

Because parents may have questions while filling out the questionnaire, the Kathy Wilson Foundation trained and employed several facilitators to help parents during this process. The Foundation conducted three trainings with over 25 participants. Several of these facilitators speak another language, such as Spanish and Amharic, which has allowed us to use the questionnaire with a wide range of families. These facilitators have worked with every parent throughout the process of filling out the questionnaires. They translate, answer questions, and clarify concerns. Upon completion of the questionnaire, the facilitator reviews results with the parents, indicating the implications of the child's scores, and directing the parent to further resources that may be helpful. The process is an involved one, but necessary in order for parents to truly understand the findings and to seek support if necessary.

**Data:**

The Kathy Wilson Foundation conducted screenings during which over 25 children and their families participated. The following tables provide information about the preliminary data that was collected. Demographic data as well as findings data was collected and analyzed.

Demographic Data:

Age	Percentage
33 Months	33%
36 Months	33%
42 Months	17%
48 Months	8%
54 Months	8%
60 Months	0%

Gender	Percentage
Female	54%
Male	46%

Ethnicity-Self Identified	Percentage
Black/African-American	33%
Latino/Spanish/Hispanic	25%
White/Caucasian	13%
Asian/Pacific Islander	8%

Monolingual Household				Multilingual Household			
54%				46%			
Amharic	English	Pashto	Spanish	Amharic & English	Japanese & English	Spanish & English	Telugu & English
13%	13%	4%	25%	25%	4%	8%	8%

There was a relatively even gender split with slightly more than half of the children screened being female. The Kathy Wilson Foundation aimed to screen children who were “preschool-aged” meaning approximately ages 3 and 4. The ASQ-3 has a number of age ranges for each questionnaire in order to ask developmentally appropriate questions. The 33 and 36 month questionnaires were administered most frequently with both at 33%, making up two-thirds of the number of children screened. The remainder of the children ranged from approximately 3 ½ years to nearly 5 years.

The vast majority of the children screened spoke a language other than English at home. There was a nearly even split between children who lived in a monolingual household and children who lived in a multilingual household. The language that was most highly represented was Amharic with 38% of children screened growing up in a household with Amharic only or Amharic and English. The second most represented language was Spanish with 33% of children living in a household with Spanish only or Spanish and English. Altogether, there were 6 languages represented. Only 13% of children grew up in English-only homes, indicating that approximately 87% of children screened live in household where they are exposed to a language other than English.

#### Screening Results:

<b>ASQ-3 Development Areas</b>	<b>At-Risk/Monitor</b>	<b>Significant Concern</b>
Communication	8%	4%
Gross Motor	0%	0%
Fine Motor	25%	8%
Problem Solving	8%	0%
Personal Social	8%	4%

At-Risk/Monitor	50%
Significant Concern	17%
Child with 2 areas in at-risk/significant concern range	13%

Half of all of the children screened were found to be in the at-risk/monitor range. This indicates that they could potentially have a delay or require support to determine if a delay will emerge. A smaller number of children scored in the significant concern range. This indicates that these children likely require support in this area in order to overcome or cope with a

potential developmental delay. There were 13% of children who scored either in the at-risk or significant concern ranges in 2 areas. The area of greatest concern for the children screened was Fine Motor. Approximately one third of children scored in the at-risk or significant concern ranges in these areas. Communication and Personal Social both had 12% of children represented with concerns. Problem Solving had 8% with concerns. The only area where no concerns emerged was Gross Motor. All of the children in our pilot performed at age level on the ASQ-3 in this area.

### **Discussion:**

The absolute numbers in this pilot project are small, but the percentages, and therefore the implications, are large. The fact that 50% of our sample is in the at-risk area in developmental area is concerning. This does not necessarily mean that 50% of our sample has a disability, or even that they will develop a disability. But it does mean that they may be behind their peers and by the time that they enter kindergarten, they may be significantly behind. An area such as Fine Motor may not seem like a huge concern, but it has implications for the child learning to write, draw, and cut. These are all common activities in kindergarten and beyond. Without intervention, a child who is struggling in this area now may struggle significantly upon kindergarten entry. Not only would that have implications for the child's ability to write, but also his or her feelings about school. We do not want young children feeling so frustrated and behind that they end up disliking school or wanting to avoid certain tasks.

The concerns in the areas of Communication and Personal Social are also noteworthy. Communication is an important aspect of school success. Additionally, many of these children may have communication difficulties in addition to the fact that they speak another language. Speaking another language has inherent cognitive benefits such as enhanced cognitive flexibility and metalinguistic awareness. However, having communication difficulties as well as learning to speak another language may be especially difficult for a young child. Early intervention is incredibly helpful and the sooner these children are able to receive it, the better.

Personal Social is an area that has to do with self-care and a child's ability to understand and operate within the world around him or her. Deficits in this area can have implications socially, obviously, but also in other ways. Education has become more and more interactive. Children need to know how to manage their relationships with others as well as their own feelings. Without these skills a child may struggle to relate to his or her peers and teachers.

### **Conclusion**

These pilot findings have major implications for the City of Alexandria. Many of the children that we screened are already plugged into some of the wonderful resources that the city has to offer such as playgroups and home visits. Many more children in the city are not being seen by any professionals until they reach kindergarten, at which point many are already

significantly behind their peers. This pilot found that 50% of children may have a delay or a developmental area that needs to be monitored. If this is the case throughout the city then that is a shocking amount of children who could benefit from early intervention services and support. However, based on our sample, it is possible, if not likely, that the numbers are actually higher. It is our recommendation that this pilot project be expanded to include more children in Alexandria City, VA who may have a developmental delay and therefore would benefit from early intervention services.

It is a fair assumption that those children who are not already utilizing the services in Alexandria City are the ones with the most need. If we are able to access these children and screen them, we may in fact find higher numbers. If this is the case than the current system needs to allocate a greater number of its resources to early childhood intervention. More playgroups, home visitors, and preschools may be exactly what these children and these families need. The first step is to expand what we at the Kathy Wilson Foundation are already doing: make universal screening of preschool-aged children a top priority. Find out if these children require intervention or some other form of support. Collecting this data could go a long way towards preventing costly future developmental and educational issues down the line for these children.

*This report has been prepared by Samantha C. Sweeney, Ph.D., Licensed Psychologist. Dr. Samantha Sweeney is a graduate of University of Maryland's School Psychology program. She has worked at a residential treatment facility for children with significant emotional and behavioral disorders, in public school systems at the elementary and secondary levels, and at a private preschool. Dr. Sweeney is the Team Leader of the Developmental Screening Project for the Kathy Wilson Foundation. She also maintains a private practice on Capitol Hill, DC. Dr. Samantha Sweeney lives on Capitol Hill with her husband, Dr. Mark Sweeney and their two children, Tyler, 4, and Lila, 2.*

The Kathy Wilson Foundation decided to use the Ages and Stages Questionnaire-Third Edition (ASQ-3), a parent-completed questionnaire, to assess five areas of development: Communication, Gross Motor, Fine Motor, Problem-Solving, and Personal-Social. A child can score within 3 ranges-normally developing, at-risk/monitor, or significant concern. The ASQ-3 screens for potential delays and is NOT used to diagnose a disability. Trained facilitators helped parents complete the questionnaires. We had 2 Spanish-speaking facilitators and 1 Amharic-speaking facilitator. We were able to screen approximately 25 children.

Our demographic information was as follows: nearly even split between males and females; 33% Black/African-American, 25% Latino/Hispanic, 13% White/Caucasian, and 8% Asian/Pacific Islander. There was a near even split of monolingual and bi-lingual households with 25% of households speaking Spanish only and 25% speaking Amharic and English. Pashto, Japanese, and Telegu were also represented. Therefore we had a wide range of race/ethnicity and language representation.

On the ASQ-3, **50%** of participants scored in the at-risk/monitor range, **17%** scored in the significant concern range, and **13%** scored in the at-risk or significant concern range in two areas. The most significant concerns were for Fine Motor skills, which can affect a child's ability to write, use scissors, or type-all important skills, with 25% of children falling in the at-risk range and 8% in the significant concern range. On Communication, Problem-Solving and Personal-Social 8% of children scored in the at-risk range. On Communication and Personal-Social 4% of children scored in the significant concern range. Additionally, many unexpected issues came up such as parenting issues, familial issues, parent concerns about medical conditions. While our absolute numbers are small, the percentages are quite significant. We are currently in the process of collecting a larger sample in order to produce more conclusive results.

submitted by  
Mary Biegel

2  
5-16-15

May 16, 2015

To: Mayor Euille and Members of the City Council

I am here to discuss the Patrick Henry Recreation Center and its impact on my neighborhood. The proposed center is too large for our quiet neighborhood, its facilities aren't needed, and it overcrowds the lot. The neighborhood also indicated these concerns in our letter submitted on April 28<sup>th</sup>.

Our community values its quiet streets and open spaces. We moved here because of these features, not to be next to a large rec center. The proposed rec center and the multipurpose field significantly reduce the amount of open green space on the lot. The Long Range Educational Facilities Plan states "school sites shall avoid any net loss of open space on the property and seek to improve the quality of the open space." These plans would do the opposite.

At the community meetings no one expressed any interest in this type of elaborate facility, and the demand hasn't been justified to us. The neighborhood stated its concerns in its letter and Foxchase has its own facilities. A 2014 survey was mentioned at the April 22nd meeting but we found it to be lacking in both methodology and logic. The survey alone seems insufficient to justify such an expensive project. The only requests at the community meetings were for a space for after school care and senior activities. This could be done in a much smaller, attached rec center similar to the expansion proposed in 2008. Facilities, such as the gymnasium, could be shared which would result in cost and space savings. This would satisfy local demand, keep more open space, and be better for the city's budget.

Another concern is the increased traffic this center will bring onto Latham and Peacock Streets. We moved to our neighborhood because we like its suburban feel and quiet streets. An increase in traffic would be a major safety issue and destroy the feel of our neighborhood. All of the current plans place a parking lot or entrance on Latham St, which is classified by the city as a residential street. The city's goal is to minimize cut through traffic. Putting any point of ingress or egress on Latham would violate the city's own plans. It is also not necessary when Taney Avenue borders the site and currently handles the traffic. It is a full two lane road classified as a "residential collector." We have been told that these plans were made without doing a traffic study which is not acceptable. We ask that all point of egress or ingress be kept on Taney.

In summary, we ask that the size of the rec center be scaled down. A smaller, attached rec center would be more appropriate for the neighborhood, local demand, and the budget. We request that at all points of ingress or egress be located on Taney Ave. While there are no current plans for lights on the field, we also ask that the city state that this will not occur in the future. Thank you for your time.

Thank you,

Mary Biegel  
(703)212-8041  
811 N. Latham St.  
Alexandria, VA 22304