

Unified School District 306
Early Childhood Education/Preschool
and Childcare Survey 2020



Prepared For
Unified School District 306 Board and Administrators

Prepared By
The Docking Institute of Public Affairs
Fort Hays State University

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Mission:

To Facilitate Effective Public Policy Decision-Making.

The staff of the Docking Institute of Public Affairs and its University Center for Survey Research are dedicated to serving the people of Kansas and surrounding states.

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Executive Summary

Unified School District 306 commissioned the Docking Institute of Public Affairs to conduct a survey of all households residing in the boundaries of the School District to determine attitudes regarding early childhood education/preschool and childcare, with a particular interest in whether residents perceive a need for the School District to offer such services. Additionally, the current preschool and childcare usage by parents with children from birth to age five and prospective future parents was measured along with such parents' interest in USD 306 providing preschool and childcare. From the survey of 360 respondents, the Docking Institute finds:

- Among all respondents, many have lived in the School District 1 to 9 (19.6%) and 20 to 29 (19.3%) years. The next largest percentage (16.5%) have lived in the school district in between those ranges -- 10 to 19 years. Only 1.7% have lived less than a year in the District.
- Among all respondents, nearly equal percentages report a child/grandchild in a USD 306 school now (43.9%) and/or have a grown child/grandchild who attended a USD 306 school (42.8%).
- Among all respondents, the single largest percentage (45%) report that their children/grandchildren currently experience or experienced three-day preschool prior to attending USD 306. Other significant percentages report church programs (32.8%), in-home childcare (30.8%), library programs (28.1%), two-day preschool (27.5%), and "Parents as Teachers" (27.5%).
- Among all respondents, 31.9% rate USD 306 providing ECE/preschool for district children as extremely important. Another 29.6% rate it as very important. About 21% rate it as not very important. Only 17.4% rate it as not at all important.
- Among all respondents, when asked to rate the importance of USD 306 providing fee-based childcare for children after preschool ends for the day, about 18% consider it extremely important, and another 29.2% consider it very important. About 31% rate it as not very important. About 22% rate it as not at all important.
- Among all respondents, when asked to "select all that apply" when it comes to good locations for any prospective USD 306 preschool and given the proviso that "at the present time, space is limited on the USD 306 campus for a preschool," 40.3% of all responses marked the USD 306 campus as good location. About 31% of all responses marked Assaria a good place, and 22.5% marked Gypsum a good location. Only 7.2% of all responses consider an "other" location to be good, and 30.3% indicate that USD 306 should not offer a preschool.
- Among parents with preschool-aged children and prospective future parents, about 43% have a preschool-aged child attending a preschool. By far, the largest number, 20, indicate their child(ren) attends preschool in Salina, another eight attend in Assaria, and one attends in Lindsborg. None attend at Gypsum nor at a location other than those listed. By far the most common arrangement is half-day preschool, with 23 indicating

this, and single largest group among those (11) report their child(ren) are in half-day preschool three days per week. Only six report that their child(ren) are in full-day preschool, and all of those are five days per week.

- Among parents with preschool-aged children and prospective future parents, about 57% do not have a preschool-aged child attending preschool. By far the most common reason that a child(ren) does not attend preschool is being too young still, with 28 offering this reason. Other reasons are almost negligible, with four mentioning transportation problems and three mentioning not being able to afford preschool.
- Among parents with preschool-aged children and prospective future parents, when asked how likely they would be to enroll their children in a USD 306-provided half-day preschool if one were available, 50.7% say it is extremely likely they would enroll their child and another almost 33% combined say it is very likely or somewhat likely. Only 16.4% say it is not at all likely that they would enroll their child in a half-day preschool provided by USD 306.
- Among parents with preschool-aged children and prospective future parents, 41.7% currently use childcare/daycare for their preschool-aged child(ren). By far, the largest number, 18, identify Salina as the location of the childcare/daycare, and another six identify Assaria. Four identify “relatives/friends at home,” three indicate Gypsum, and only one is in childcare/daycare in a place other than those in the response options offered. None mention Lindsborg.
- Among parents with preschool-aged children and prospective future parents, about 58% do not have their child(ren) in childcare/daycare. A follow-up question finds that only one of these 42 who indicated that they are in need of childcare/daycare.
- Among parents with preschool-aged children and prospective future parents, when presented with this lead-in, “IF your child(ren) were to attend a USD 306 half-day preschool program, would you need...” 23.6% indicate they would need childcare services for the remainder of the workday. Another 27.8% say maybe. The largest single percentage (31.9%) say they would not.
- Among parents with preschool-aged children and prospective future parents, when presented with this lead-in, “IF your child(ren) were to attend a USD 306 half-day preschool program, would you need...” about 27% say they would need transportation services to the USD 306 half-day preschool. Another 30.9% say maybe, and 25% indicate they would not need transportation to the preschool for their child(ren).
- Among parents with preschool-aged children and prospective future parents, when asked to choose a price range they would be willing to pay for weekly childcare service the single largest percentage (43.9%) chose the category \$50 to \$99 per week. The next largest percentage (29.8%) chose the lowest cost category offered on the survey, \$10 to \$49 per week.

Methodology

In January 2020, the Docking Institute of Public Affairs (Institute) at Fort Hays State University was commissioned by Unified School District (USD) 306 for surveying to determine School District residents' attitudes regarding early childhood education/preschool and childcare, with a particular interest in whether residents perceive a need for the School District to offer such services. Additionally, the current preschool and childcare usage by parents with children from birth to age five and prospective future parents was measured along with such parents' interest in USD 306 providing preschool and childcare.

The Institute used address based sampling to target all residential households within the geographic boundaries of USD 306. Working with its national sampling vendor, the Institute identified 1,484 households. To each household the Institute sent: an introductory letter on USD 306 letterhead and signed by its superintendent (Appendix A), a paper questionnaire designed in consultation with USD 306 (Appendix B), and a business reply pre-addressed return envelope for returning a completed questionnaire to the Institute. The letter included instructions for participating in the survey via an online questionnaire, and a password and username were supplied in the cover letter to both limit access to only eligible respondents and ensure only one response was received from a household.

The survey packets were mailed on about January 27, 2020. On February 13, 2020, the Institute received an email from USD 306's Superintendent indicating that nine households reported to him that they had not received a questionnaire. The Institute then verified that seven of those nine were included in the mailing. One of the seven had completed and returned a questionnaire. A call on February 13 to this respondent cleared up the issue. She receives her brother's mail at her residence. She completed one of the questionnaires, but was unsure if it was the "correct" one. Survey packets were mailed on February 14 to the other eight. Tracking numbers were added to each questionnaire. Thus, overall two additional households were added to the initial mailing, raising the total targeted households to 1,486. Data collection ended on February 29.

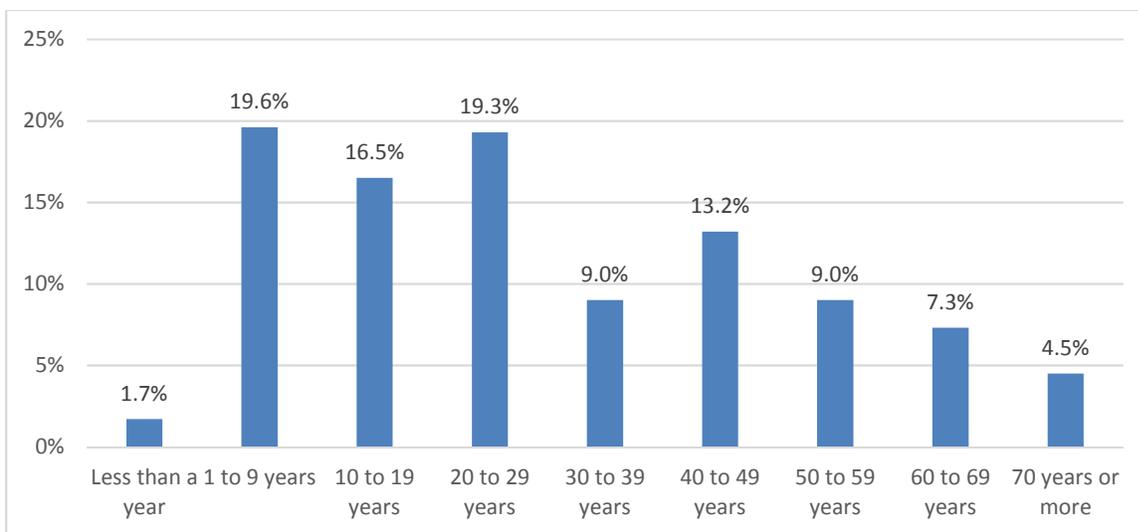
A total of 333 completed paper questionnaires were returned to the Institute, and another 27 participated via the online option. This resulted in a total of 360 responses, a 24% response rate. The survey data were entered into an SPSS data file for analysis. Because there was no random sampling and instead all members of the target population were included in the survey,

there is no sampling margin of error. However, because not all of the 1,486 households believed to be in the School District responded, there is potential for response bias.

Length of Residence in District

Figure 1 from the opening question to the survey shows the length of residence in the School District among respondents. Many have lived in the School District 1 to 9 (19.6%) and 20 to 29 (19.3%) years. The next largest percentage (16.5%) have lived in the school district in between those ranges -- 10 to 19 years. Only 1.7% have lived less than a year in the District.

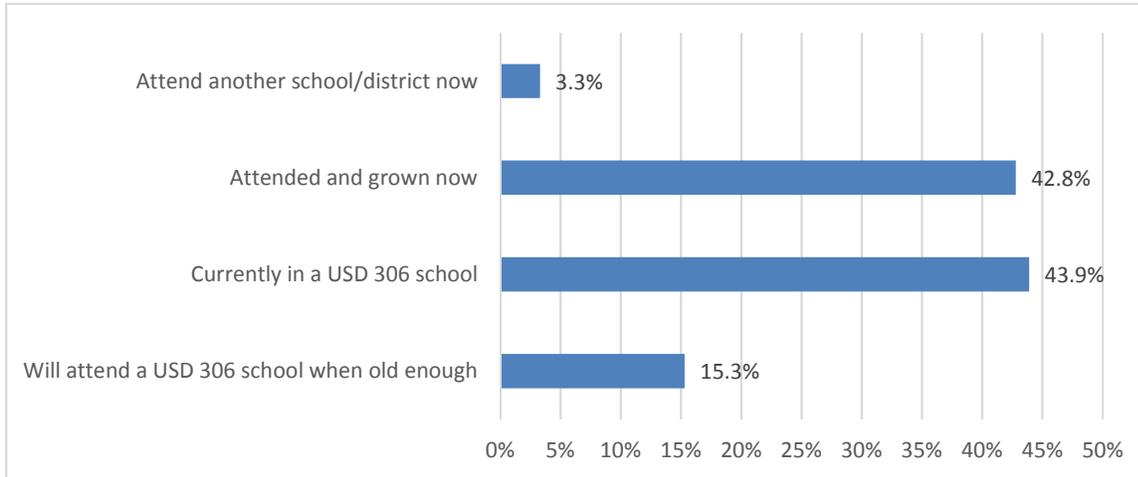
Figure 1. Years Lived in the Boundaries of the School District



Family’s Children/Grandchildren Experience Attending USD 306 and Experience Early Learning Opportunities

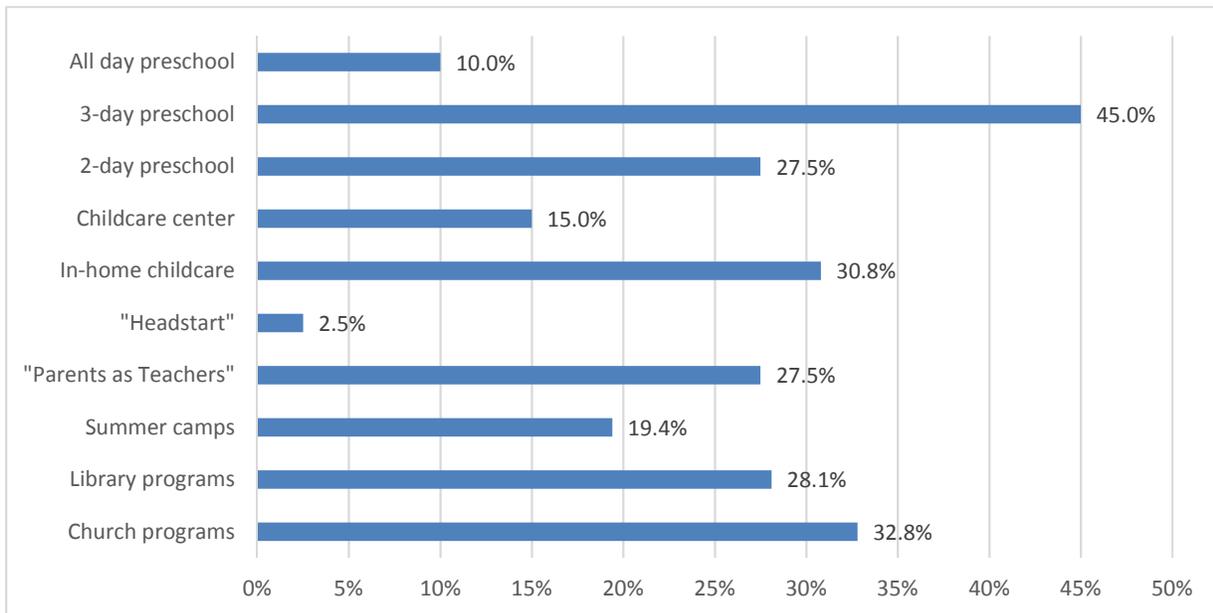
The next question asked respondents “Do you have children or grandchildren who attend, will be attending, or have ever attended a school in USD 306? (select all that apply).” Figure 2 shows nearly equal percentages report a child/grandchild in a USD 306 school now (43.9%) and/or have a grown child/grandchild who attended a USD 306 school (42.8%).

Figure 2. Children/Grandchildren Attends, Will Attend, and/or Attended USD 306



Another item for all respondents offered, “Thinking of the learning opportunities your children or grandchildren experience(d) prior to attending school in USD 306, please select all of the items below that apply.” Figure 3 shows that the single largest percentage (45%) report that their children/grandchildren currently experience or experienced three-day preschool prior to attending USD 306. Other significant percentages report church programs (32.8%), in-home childcare (30.8%), library programs (28.1%), two-day preschool (27.5%), and “Parents as Teachers” (27.5%).

Figure 3. Children/Grandchildren Learning Opportunities Experience(d) Prior to Attending USD 306



Attitudes about USD 306 Providing Early Childhood Education/Preschool and Childcare after Preschool Day

All respondents were presented with the following introduction information before two attitudinal questions about the importance of USD 306 providing ECE/preschool, as well as the importance of USD 306 providing fee-based childcare for those who need it after the preschool day would end:

“Students who are behind when entering Kindergarten often struggle throughout school and may never catch up to their peers. Early Childhood Education helps prepare children for Kindergarten. Preschool is one form of Early Childhood Education. The State of Kansas currently funds half day preschool for at-risk students. There is currently a privately run preschool in Assaria and USD 306 operates a Parents as Teachers program.”

Figure 4 shows that with this information in mind, 31.9% rate USD 306 providing ECE/preschool for district children as extremely important. Another 29.6% rate it as very important. About 21% rate it as not very important. Only 17.4% rate it as not at all important.

Figure 4. Importance of USD 306 Providing ECE/Preschool

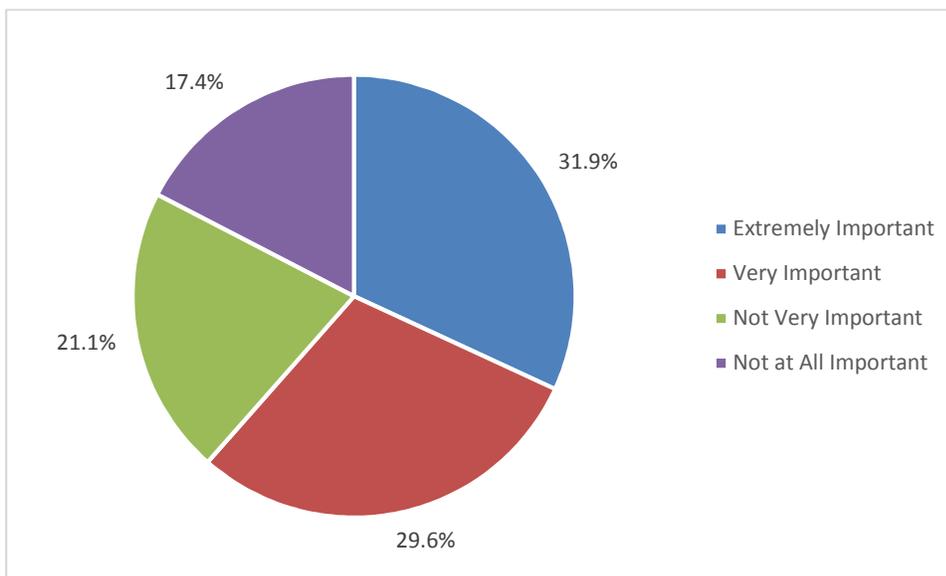
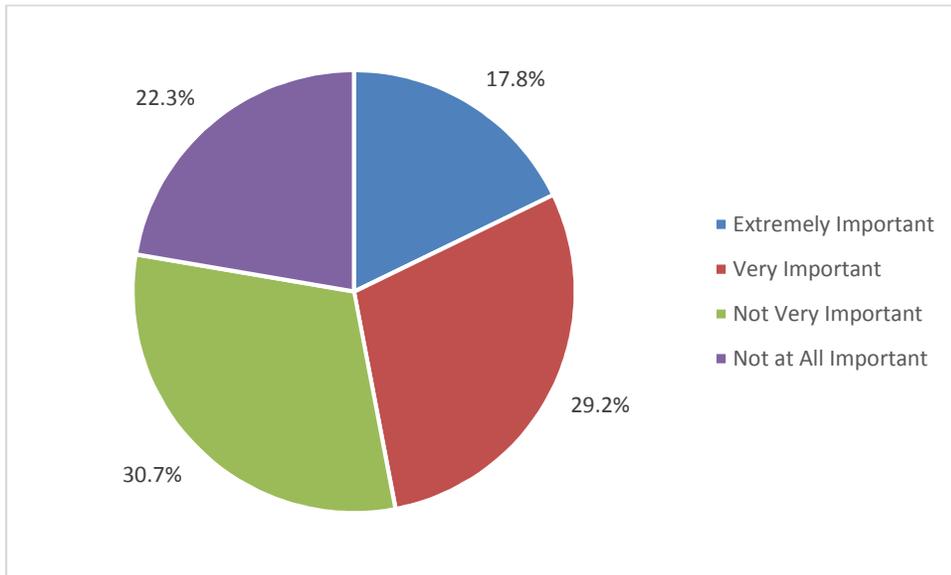


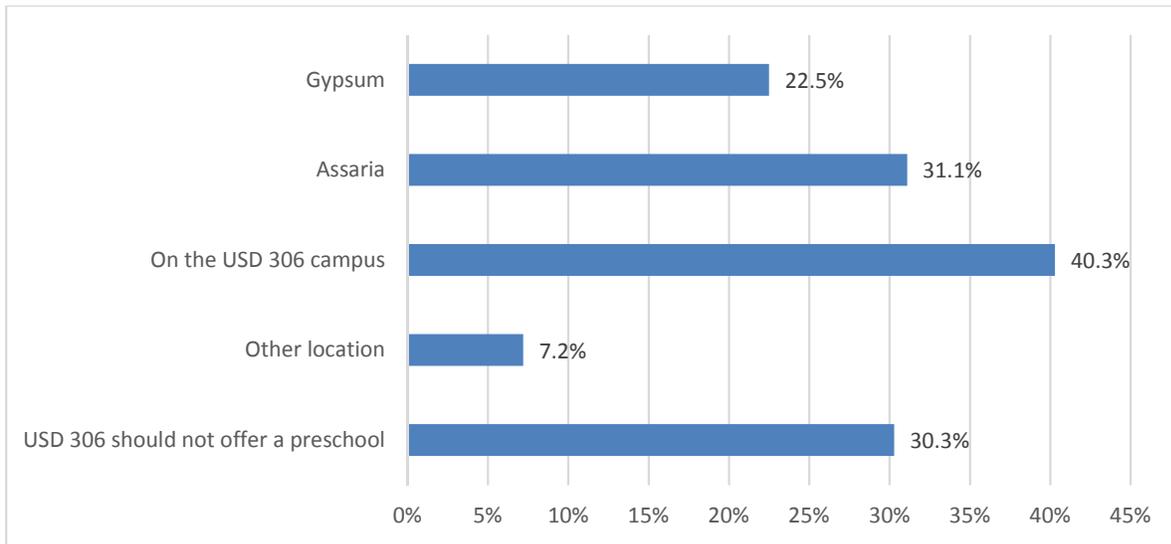
Figure 5 shows then when asked to rate the importance of USD 306 providing fee-based childcare for children after preschool ends for the day, about 18% consider it extremely important, and another 29.2% consider it very important. About 31% rate it as not very important. About 22% rate it as not at all important.

Figure 5. Importance of USD 306 Providing Fee-Based Childcare after Preschool Day Ends



All respondents were also asked to indicate the best place(s) to locate any prospective USD 306 preschool, and it was explained to respondents along with the question that “at the present time, space is limited on the USD 306 campus for a preschool.” Respondents were given the list of potential locations shown in Figure 6, and asked to select all that apply. This resulted in 473 total responses, which exceeds the total 360 respondents to the survey. *This can be thought of as voting without a restriction on the ability to vote for more than one of the listed places.* As Figure 6 shows, of the total “votes” the largest percentage (40.3%) have USD 306 campus as good location. About 31% of the “votes” have Assaria as a good place, and 22.5% have Gypsum as a good location. Only 7.2% of the total “votes” refer to areas other than those mentioned, and 30.3% of total “votes” are that USD 306 should not offer a preschool. Additional analyses (not shown) finds that of the 81 who selected Gypsum and the 112 who selected Assaria, 55 actually “voted” for both Gypsum and Assaria as good locations. Of the 81 who selected Gypsum and the 145 who selected the USD 306 campus, 32 actually “voted” for both Gypsum and the USD 306 campus as good locates. Finally, of the 112 who selected Assaria and the 145 who selected the USD 306 campus, 30 actually “voted” for both Assaria and the USD 306 campus as good locations.

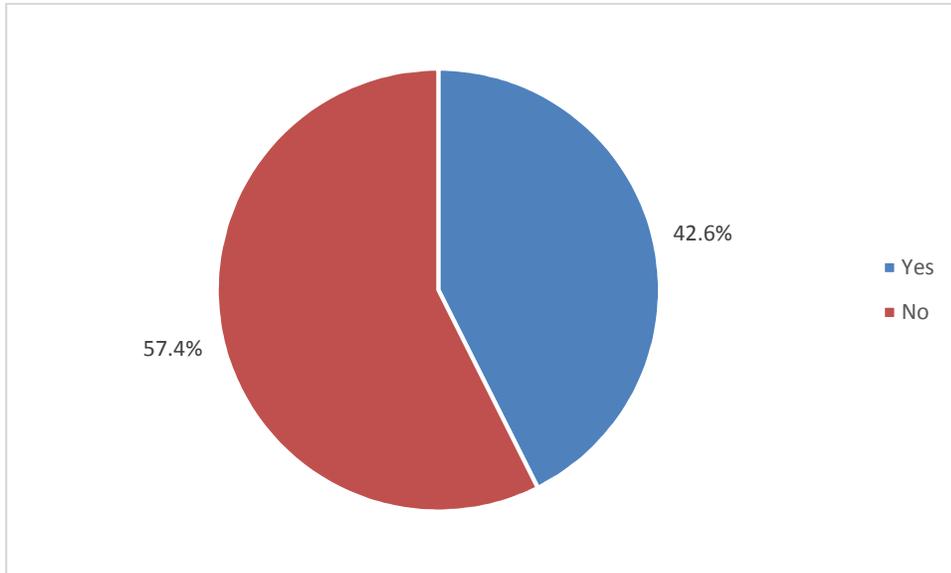
Figure 6. Best Location(s) for a Prospective USD 306 Preschool (n=473 total responses; a single respondent could answer more than one location in this “select all that apply” format)



Use of Pre-School Programming among Parents with Preschool-Aged Children and Prospective Future Parents

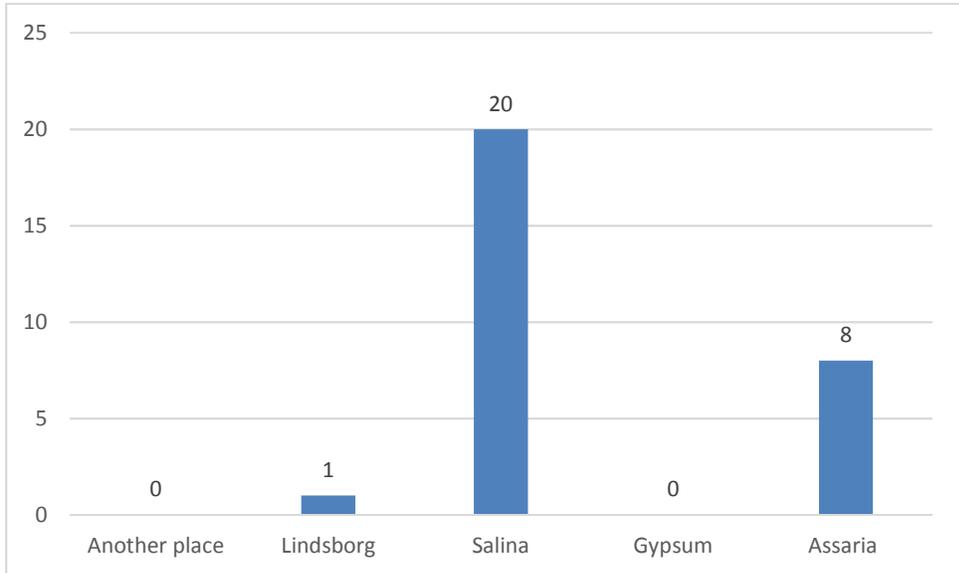
Respondents who have preschool aged children now (under five years old) and those who might have preschool at home in the future were asked a series of questions about use of preschool programming now. Seventy-eight (78) respondents self-defined as current/prospective parents of preschool aged children. The first question asked of this category of respondents was whether their preschool-aged children currently are enrolled in a preschool program. Sixty-eight (68) responded to this question, and it is assumed that the remaining 10 are only prospective parents – not currently parents of preschool aged children. Figure 7 shows that about 43% (n=29) have a preschool-aged child attending a preschool.

Figure 7. Preschool-Aged (under age 5) Child(ren) Attends Preschool (n=68)



A follow-up question of the 29 with a child(ren) enrolled in preschool offered a list of possible locations and parents were asked to select all that apply. Figure 8 shows the number of respondents who report their preschool-aged children attend at the locations offered. By far, the largest number (20) attend in Salina, another eight attend in Assaria, and one attends in Lindsborg. None attend at Gypsum nor at a location other than those listed.

Figure 8. Location of Preschool that Child(ren) Attends (n=29)



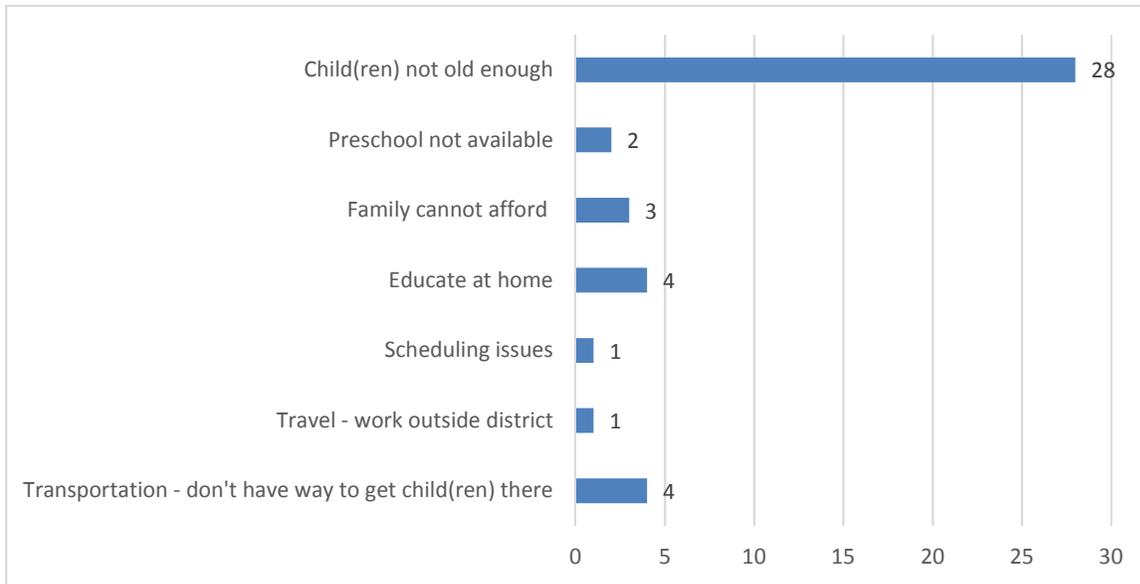
These parents with a child(ren) in preschool were presented with the options shown in Table 1 for reporting the number of days a week their child(ren) is in preschool as well as whether it is a full- or a half-day situation. By far the most common arrangement is half-day preschool, and single largest group (n=11) report their child(ren) are in half-day preschool three days per week.

Table 1. Frequency of Preschool Attendance Per Week by Full- or Half-Day (n=29)

	Full-Day	Half-Day
2 Days Per Week	0	4
3 Days Per Week	0	11
4 Days Per Week	0	3
5 Days Per Week	6	5

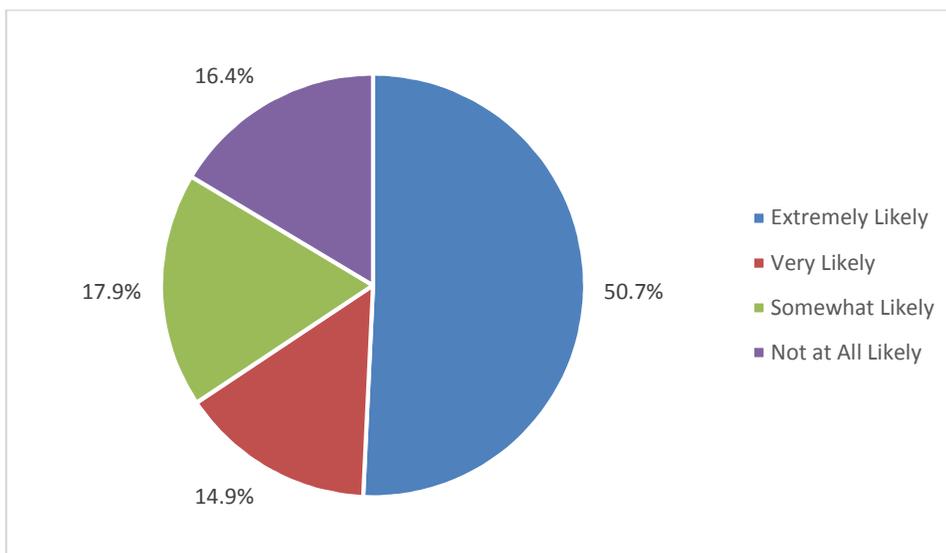
The 39 respondents who report that their preschool-aged child(ren) is not in preschool were presented a set of possible reasons and asked to select all that apply. Figure 9 shows that by far the most common reason that a child(ren) does not attend preschool is being too young still (n=28). Other reasons are almost negligible, but four mention transportation problems and three mention not being able to afford preschool.

Figure 9. Reason that Child(ren) Does Not Attend Preschool (n=39)



Sixty-seven (67) parents with preschool-aged children or prospective parents answered the question “How likely would you be to enroll your children in a USD 306-provided half-day preschool if one were available?” Figure 10 shows that half (50.7%) say it is extremely likely they would enroll their child, and another almost 33% combined say it is very likely or somewhat likely. Only 16.4% say it is not at all likely that they would enroll their child in a half-day preschool provided by USD 306.

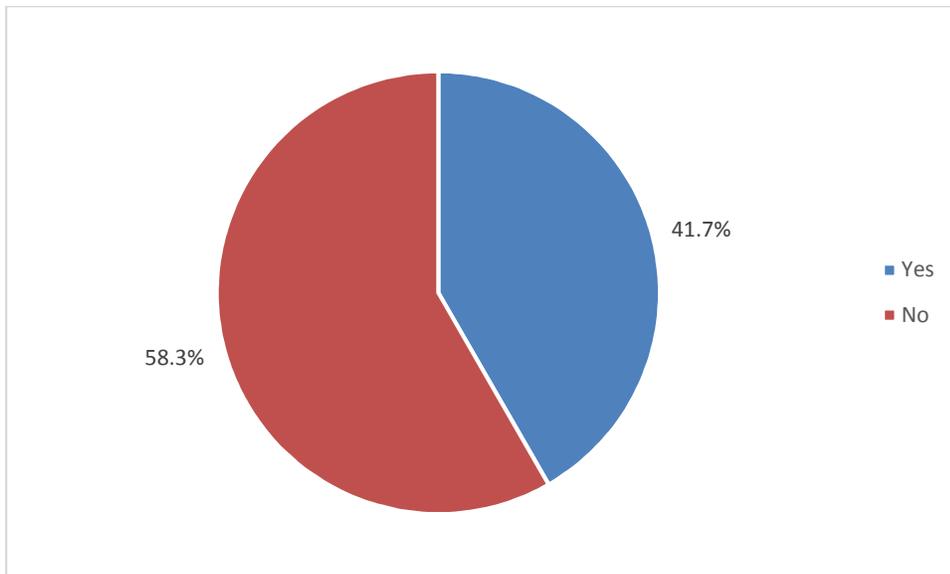
Figure 10. Likelihood of Enrolling Their Child(ren) in a USD 306 Half-Day Preschool (n=67)



Use of Childcare/Daycare Programming among Parents with Preschool-Aged Children and Prospective Future Parents

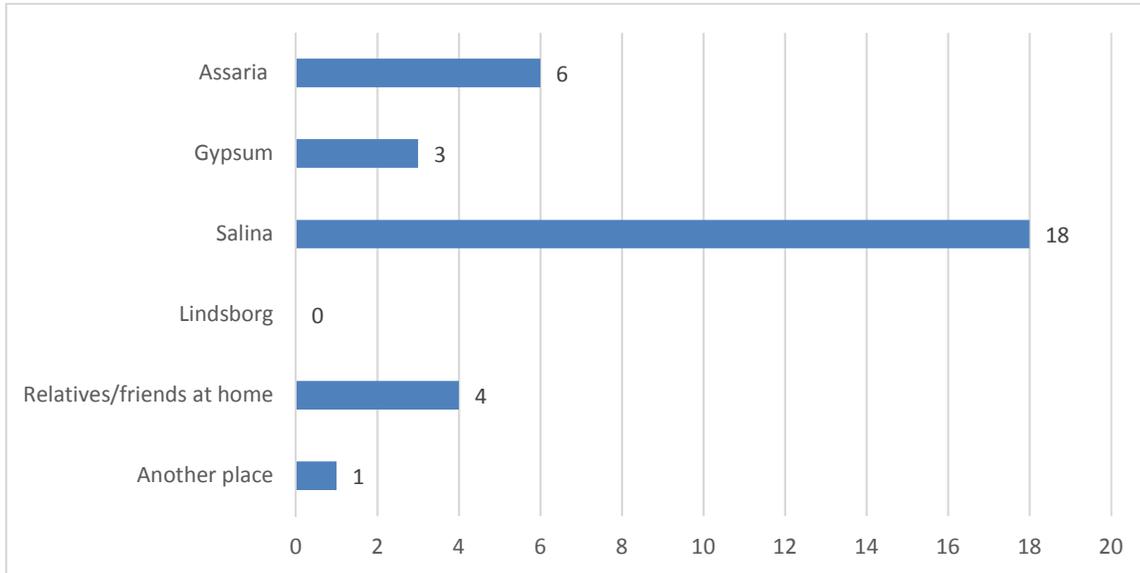
Turning to childcare/daycare, the first question asked whether their preschool-aged children currently are enrolled in a preschool program. Figure 11 shows that 41.7% (n=30) currently use childcare/daycare for their preschool-aged child(ren).

Figure 11. Preschool-Aged (under age 5) Child(ren) Attends Childcare/Daycare (n=72)



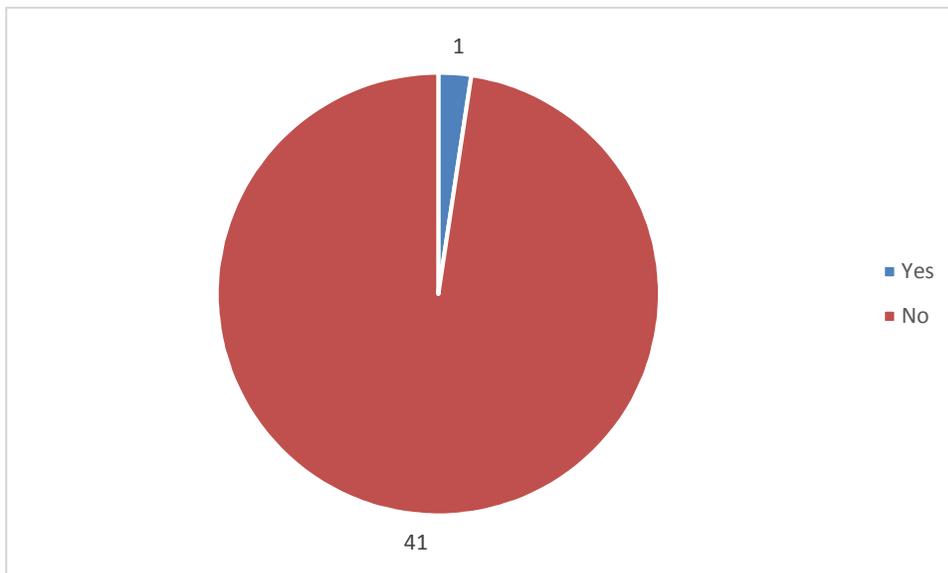
A follow-up question of the 30 who indicate they have a child(ren) in childcare/daycare asked that they indicate the location from a list of possible locations. Some indicated more than one place. Figure 12 shows the number of respondents who report their preschool-aged children are in childcare/daycare at the locations offered. By far, the largest number (18) identify Salina, another six identify Assaria, four mention relatives/friends at home, three indicate Gypsum, and only one is in childcare/daycare in a place other than those in the response options offered. None mention Lindsborg.

Figure 12. Location of Childcare/Daycare (n=30; some indicated more than one place)



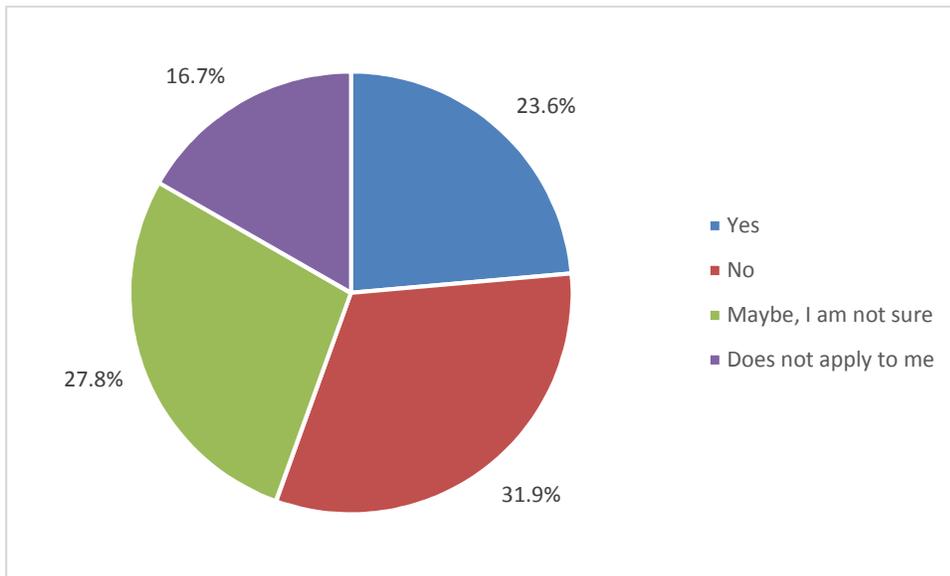
The 42 who indicated that their child(ren) are not in childcare/daycare were asked a follow-up, “If not, are you currently in need of childcare services?” Figure 13 shows that only one respondent said yes.

Figure 13. Currently in Need of Childcare/Daycare Services (n=42)



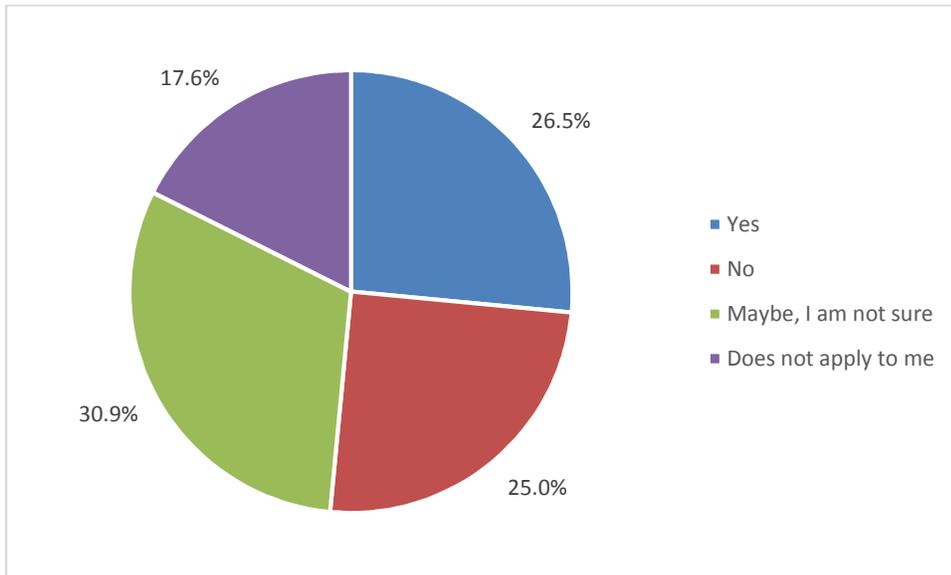
Respondents were presented with this lead-in, “IF your child(ren) were to attend a USD 306 half-day preschool program, would you need...” to questions about whether they would then need USD 306 childcare services for the remainder of the workday and secondly, would they need USD 306 transportation services. Figure 14 shows that slightly under one-fourth (23.6%) indicate they would need childcare services for the remainder of the workday. Another 27.8% say maybe. The largest single percentage (31.9%) say no.

Figure 14. If Child(ren) Were to Attend USD 306 Half-Day Preschool, Would Need Childcare Services for Remainder of Workday (n=72)



Regarding the need for transportation services, Figure 15 shows that about 27% say they would need transportation services to the USD 306 half-day preschool. Another 30.9% say maybe, and 25% indicate they would not need transportation for their child(ren).

Figure 15. If Child(ren) Were to Attend USD 306 Half-Day Preschool, Would Need Transportation Services (n=68)



Respondents were then asked a question to assess price tolerance for weekly childcare service. Figure 16 shows that the single largest percentage (43.9%) chose the category \$50 to \$99 per week. The next largest percentage (29.8%) chose the lowest cost category, \$10 to \$49 per week.

Figure 16. Range Willing to Pay for Weekly Childcare Services (n=57)

