

Fall 2015



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CELEBRATING THE FIRST 5 YEARS:
A Midpoint Report on Washington's 10-Year Early Learning Plan

2010-2015: The Highlights



- We developed a **Racial Equity Theory of Change** that has given us strategies and a stronger determination to eliminate the opportunity gap. This gap can be seen before a child's first birthday and disproportionately impedes the healthy growth and development of children of color and children from low-income families.
- We created the **Home Visiting Services Account**, which now combines state, federal and private dollars to serve more than 2,100 families living in some of our state's most vulnerable communities. It includes a new partnership with the state Department of Social and Health Services to provide high-quality home visiting to families in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.
- We won a \$60 million federal **Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant** to establish and grow **Early Achievers**, our state's system for supporting the highest-quality licensed child care and helping families make better informed choices about child care. The state's new **Early Start Act** and historic state investment in early learning now sustain Early Achievers.
- Our **10 Early Learning Regional Coalitions** lift up local voices through their advocacy, closely partner with state leaders, and build their community's capacity to reach more children and families.
- Our tribal community sought a stronger voice in early learning and created the **First Peoples, First Steps Alliance**.
- We support **innovation and alignment** between early learning professionals and K-3 educators.
- Our **kindergarten readiness assessment process** better ensures a child's successful start in school by looking at the skills of the whole child and connecting the key adults in a child's life.
- We launched the "**Love. Talk. Play.**" campaign to support parents of infants and toddlers as their child's first and most important teachers.
- We redefined early learning to span from prenatal through third grade and then adopted **Early Learning and Development Guidelines** that support that continuum and value our state's increasingly diverse population.
- We committed to our preschoolers and kindergartners. By fall 2016, the state will fund **full-day kindergarten statewide** for more than 80,000 children; by fall 2020, about 23,000 eligible 3- and 4-year-olds will be entitled to **state-funded preschool**.

Dear Early Learning Community,

In 2010, our state unveiled something special: a 10-year Early Learning Plan. It holds the voices and commitment of hundreds of Washington residents eager to work together to make sure every one of the nearly 90,000 babies born in our state each year gets a great start in life and school.

Over the past five years, our new early learning system has taken shape. At its core are deep beliefs that parents are their child's first and most important teachers; high-quality programs are the only programs that make a real difference; and our resources must first go toward children and families furthest from opportunity.

We celebrate our collective successes. More high-quality early learning is happening everywhere: homes, child care centers, schools, libraries, tribal longhouses, doctors' and dentists' offices, businesses, and community and faith-based gathering places. We are the envy of so many other states because of our public-private partnerships and collaboration at all levels, our innovative investments, and strong bipartisan commitment.

But we are not done. Less than 40 percent of Washington's five-year-olds enter kindergarten with all of the fundamental skills they need to be successful. School readiness is even lower for our growing population of children of color, children living in poverty, and English language learners.

Over the next five years, we **MUST** accelerate our efforts and tackle some of the challenges that keep us from helping **EVERY child start kindergarten ready to succeed.**

- **Uncoordinated and inadequate levels of services for birth to age 3:** We need more investment in and coordination among the programs and interventions that are proven to improve maternal and child health, family bonds and self-sufficiency, and school readiness. We also need more affordable, high-quality child care for our babies and toddlers.
- **Workforce and facilities demand:** We need to recruit, train and adequately pay thousands more early childhood professionals to meet the workforce demand created by increased numbers of preschool and full-day kindergarten classrooms and smaller K-3 class sizes. And, we need to find the classroom space for them to offer high-quality teaching and learning.
- **Incomplete and disconnected data:** We need to know more about how our existing key programs and initiatives work and how those efforts directly contribute to more ready kindergartners. We also need a deeper understanding of the kids and families we already serve—and those we don't—to make sure we are truly creating a system to grow stronger, healthier children and families.
- **Insufficient public will and resources:** While many Washington residents understand the importance of early learning, we need to increase public demand for significant state investments in these critical first years of life.

Our five agencies commit to continuing to work together as the Early Learning Partnership and with all of you to build the best possible early learning system for Washington's children. As we have learned over the past five years, we can go faster and further when we're united.

Thank you for everything you do to improve the lives of young children and their families. Thank you for helping us make those early years as powerful as possible. Together we can and **MUST** do so much more.

warmly,

Ross Hunter
Department of
Early Learning

John Wiesman
Department of
Health

Kevin Quigley
Department of
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Randy Dorn
Office of Superintendent
of Public Instruction

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The Early Learning Plan's 36 Strategies

Ready and Successful Children	#1	Optimize Existing Nutrition in Pregnancy and Early Childhood Services and Programs
	#2	Ensure Insurance and Medical Home
	#3	Improve Early Childhood Oral Health
	#4	Build Continuum of Infants and Toddlers Services and Programs
	#5	Make Home Visiting Available to At-Risk Families
	#6	Ensure Developmental Screening
	#7	Add At-Risk Children to Early Intervention Services
	#8	Access to Mental Health Services – Develop Access to Care Standards
	#9	Access to Mental Health Services – Increase Availability of Assessment, Diagnosis and Treatment
	#10	Increase Use of Early Literacy Services and Programs
	#11	Expand Early Numeracy Programs
	#12	Expand and Enhance ECEAP
	#13	Implement Voluntary, Universal Pre-Kindergarten
Ready and Successful Parents, Families and Caregivers	#14	Create Statewide System of Access to Information and Resources
	#15	Provide More Parenting Learning Opportunities
	#16	Ensure Social-Emotional Learning – Parents, Caregivers, Early Learning Professionals
	#17	Support Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) Care
	#18	Support Strong Families Policies and Programs
	#19	Increase Mental Health Screening and Services for New Parents
	#20	Identify and Support Parent Leadership
	#21	Create Formal Pathways for Parent Participation
Ready and Successful Early Learning Professionals	#22	Enhance Child Care Licensing Policies
	#23	Implement Comprehensive Professional Development and Compensation System
	#24	Implement Quality Rating and Improvement System
	#25	Provide Health, Mental Health and Social-Emotional Consultation in Early Learning
Ready and Successful Schools	#26	Ensure Continuum of Social-Emotional Learning – Children
	#27	Align Prekindergarten and K-3 Instructional & Programmatic Practices
	#28	Implement Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (WaKIDS)
	#29	Implement Phased-in Full-Day Kindergarten
	#30	Expand Compassionate Schools – Reducing Effects of Complex Trauma
Ready and Successful Systems and Communities	#31	Revise and Promote Use of Early Learning and Development Benchmarks
	#32	Expand Registry for Early Learning Professionals
	#33	Improve Child Care Subsidies
	#34	Build Statewide Infrastructure for Partnerships and Mobilization
	#35	Strengthen Public Awareness and Commitment
	#36	Expand P-20 Longitudinal Data System



The Plan's Vision:

In Washington, we work together so that all children start life with a solid foundation for success, based on strong families and a world-class early learning system for all children, prenatal through third grade. Accessible, accountable and developmentally and culturally appropriate, our system partners with families to ensure that every child is healthy, capable and confident in school and in life.

Principles of the Plan:

- Whole child
- Prenatal through third grade
- Strategies for all, some and few children
- Equity and preparation gap
- Cultural relevance and respect
- Local connections and partnerships

Over the past five years,

the Early Learning Partnership worked together on a number of the Early Learning Plan's 36 strategies. Five strategies, though, became our focus because there was both momentum and funding to make them part of the foundation of our state's high-quality early learning system.

- Strategy #5: Make Home Visiting Available to At-Risk Families
- Strategy #12: Expand and Enhance Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)
- Strategy #24: Implement Quality Rating and Improvement System
- Strategy #28: Implement Kindergarten Readiness Assessment
- Strategy #29: Implement Phased-In Full-Day Kindergarten

Read on to learn what was accomplished with these strategies.

STRATEGY#5

Make Home Visiting Available to At-Risk Families

Home visiting is a powerful investment and proven strategy for strengthening families. This voluntary intervention pairs professionals with expecting and new families to work together regularly in the home for up to two years or more. Evidence shows that when families receive home-based support:

Children are healthier and better prepared for school
Parent-child bonds are stronger | **Abuse and neglect are less likely**

Home Visiting Services Account

In 2010, the state Legislature created the Home Visiting Services Account (HVSA) to expand the availability of home visiting services to families living in some of Washington state's most vulnerable communities. Jointly administered by the state Department of Early Learning and Thrive Washington, the account brings together state, federal and private dollars to support a portfolio of high-quality proven and promising home visiting programs—and make sure they deliver results.

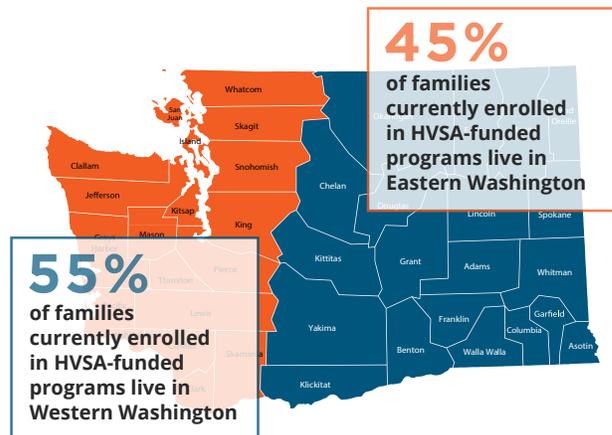
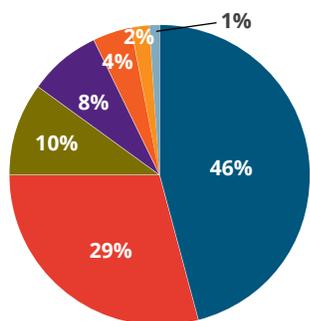
Four key functions of the HVSA:

- 1) Serve families:** The HVSA has grown from serving about 100 families to serving more than **2,100 families**. Nearly 175 families are supported through a partnership with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. About **95 percent** of children enrolled in HVSA-funded programs are under age 3. (Another 6,400 families receive home visiting outside of the HVSA.)
- 2) Ensure high quality:** The HVSA **maintains and improves program quality** by building capacity and focusing on accountability. Measuring success requires the HVSA to invest in evaluation and continuous quality improvement.
- 3) Centralize program support:** Over the past year, the HVSA provided about **750 hours** of individualized and targeted coaching and training of home visitors.
- 4) Empower communities:** By offering a portfolio of programs, the HVSA meets diverse community needs. The HVSA currently reaches **22 of the state's 39 counties** with a focus on bringing home visiting to **rural and tribal** communities.

“As a teen parent I was worried that I did not have much of a support system. I found out about a [home visiting] program called the Nurse-Family Partnership and was lucky to be able to meet with a nurse regularly during my pregnancy and until my daughter was 2 years old. It was a wonderful experience to have that support system, ask questions, and learn and grow as a person and parent. Juggling being a parent in school full time and work was not easy and having the support from my nurse really helped me so much to continue to work hard and be where I am now.”

Denica J., Parent - Everett

Children Enrolled in HVSA Programs, By Race



Innovative NEAR@HOME Toolkit Receives National Attention

Home visitors work with families with complex histories that often include traumatic childhood or adult events. To help home visitors be better equipped to address and support families with Adverse Childhood Experiences, Thrive Washington and partners in the federal Health Resources and Services Administration Region X (Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington) created the NEAR@Home toolkit. The toolkit has been downloaded by home visitors throughout the world. Learn more about the toolkit and download for free: <http://bit.ly/1iH74j1>

STRATEGY#12

Expand and Enhance Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)

Too many children arrive at school without the social, academic and physical skills important to school success. This is more common for higher percentages of children from low-income and at-risk families. When children aren't prepared for kindergarten, they are more likely to start behind their peers and stay there. This can lead to frustration, higher drop out rates, an inability to get good paying jobs, and, ultimately, increased potential for living in poverty.

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program

For three decades, Washington state has funded the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), a comprehensive pre-kindergarten program for 3- and 4-year-olds. This program addresses the needs of the whole child—a high-quality classroom with individualized learning plans, attention to the health of the child, and full engagement with the family to ensure that the child is supported and gains are sustained. ECEAP is one of the few state pre-k programs that have adopted this proven model.

Children are eligible for ECEAP if they are at least 3 years old, but not yet 5 years old, by August 31 of that school year, and meet one of the following criteria:

- Child qualifies for school district special education services
- Family income is at or below 110 percent of federal poverty level
- Child receives Child Protective Services or Family Assessment Response Services
- There are developmental or environmental risk factors that could affect a child's school success

In fall 2020, ECEAP becomes an entitlement for all eligible children



“The support that parents receive through the ECEAP staff empowers them to become stronger leaders, parents and families. My younger daughter has a serious speech delay, and despite my efforts, our pediatrician would not refer her to a specialist. When we enrolled in ECEAP, they wouldn't take no for an answer. Her speech is now progressing at such a fast rate that we've had to rewrite her IEP, and if she continues to improve at this rate we expect her to test out of services in K-12.” **Charity E., Parent – Everett**

Report Shows ECEAP a Great Investment

In December 2014, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) released a report on ECEAP, comparing the test scores of third-, fourth- and fifth-graders who had attended ECEAP to those of similar children who had not.

Major findings:

- **“Children who attended ECEAP had significantly higher math and reading scores in third, fourth and fifth grades compared to children who did not attend the program.”** These results are as good as or better than most other state pre-K programs.
- Just based on these test scores, WSIPP found a **return on investment of \$13,030 for each ECEAP participant.** This does not fully incorporate two of the major economic benefits of early learning – high school graduation and crime prevention.

ECEAP might be even better than study shows

Because the study looked primarily at third- through fifth-grade test scores, researchers could only look at ECEAP before 2009. Today, ECEAP looks even better than it did in 2008 with 33 percent more classroom hours, restrictions on caseload for family support workers, greater emphasis on research-based curriculum and assessment, and required participation in Early Achievers, the state's quality rating and improvement system.

STRATEGY#24

Implement Quality Rating and Improvement System

High-quality child care helps children get ready for success in kindergarten and beyond, yet child care quality varies considerably across Washington. A quality rating and improvement system supports child care providers in growing the quality of their care and offers families the information they need to choose the right child care for them.

Early Achievers

Early Achievers is the state's quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) for licensed child care. It offers resources and free coaching to child care providers and connects families to high-quality child care in their area with an easy-to-understand rating system.

Early Achievers was officially launched statewide in 2012 after a rigorous two-year pilot and with the financial support of a \$60 million federal Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant. The system is built on the best research available about creating the types of environments that young children need to reach their full potential and be ready for success in school. This includes valuing culturally and linguistically responsive care. Participation in Early Achievers is mandatory for all programs receiving state funds.

What's in a Rating?

Early Achievers has five levels. Child care programs earn a Level 1 and 2 through standard licensing, certification and professional development activities that get them ready for a higher rating. Levels 3-5 are earned through on-site evaluation conducted by the University of Washington. Ratings are based on four quality standard areas:

- Child Outcomes
- Curriculum, Learning Environment and Interactions
- Professional Development and Training
- Family Engagement

The Early Start Act

In June 2015, the Legislature passed the Early Start Act, an historic early learning bill that championed the importance of high-quality child care and provided ongoing funding for Early Achievers. Early Start provides:

- Thousands of Washington children and families access to high-quality early learning that leads to improved child outcomes
- Unprecedented new training resources to early learning professionals, and prioritizes resources to children in low-income families and child care providers in low-income communities
- Free coaching and supports to child care providers, with flexibility in type and amount of coaching based on individual need and cultural context

"I am a mother, a spouse of an active duty sailor, a credentialed secondary teacher, and a strong supporter of educational equity. I have two sons ages 3 and 9. My 9-year-old didn't have the benefit of attending a high-quality child care. We moved around a lot. He was so incredibly behind his peers that attending school was embarrassing and unpleasant for him. My 3-year-old is currently in a family child care facility participating in Early Achievers. When he was 2, the child care provider strongly advocated that Jacob undergo testing for speech. After therapy, he is loquacious, gregarious, and loving learning. He is now on a trajectory of being ready for success in kindergarten."

Tiffany S., Parent – Bremerton

Early Achievers by the Numbers

(August 2015)

2,528

providers enrolled
(44% of state's 5,147
licensed providers)

73,337

children receive
care from
providers in
Early Achievers

838

providers rated at Level
3, 4 or 5*
*(Only 954 have been
rated. Others are working
on pre-rating activities.)

40,000+

hours of free
training taken by
providers

100,000+

hours of coaching
and support
already given to
providers

STRATEGY#28

Implement Kindergarten Readiness Assessment

Each school year, most kindergarten teachers start with very little information about the children in their classroom. They spend the first couple of months observing, assessing, meeting families, figuring out individual children's needs – and teaching. Imagine if kindergarten teachers met all children and families before the first day of school and learned about the early years of life and learning for each child.

Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills

The Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) helps ensure the state's 80,000 kindergartners get a great start in school by valuing the whole child and connecting parents, kindergarten teachers and early learning professionals as partners in a child's education.

Before WaKIDS, Washington had no consistent, statewide process for learning about entering kindergartners. Now, WaKIDS is mandatory for all state-funded full-day kindergarten classrooms. By fall 2016, almost all schools will use the WaKIDS assessment.

WaKIDS has three parts:

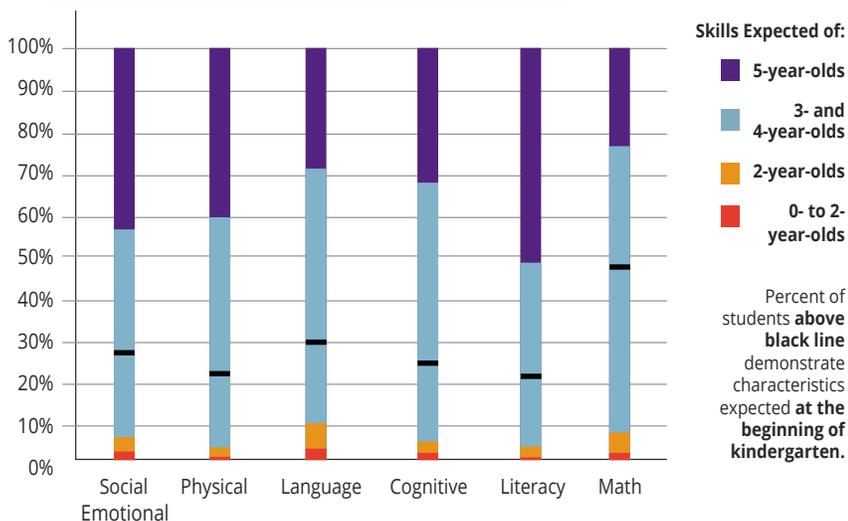
- Welcome families to school by having teachers meet with them one-on-one before or just after the school year begins
- Learn about students' strengths through an observational assessment in the first seven weeks of school
- Share information with pre-kindergarten communities to help improve the kindergarten transition for students and families

"The high-quality information that I receive from WaKIDS helps me communicate with families in a positive way that focuses on their child's strengths. Intentional data gathered through a play-based learning environment helps me answer the important questions families have: Where is my child developmentally? What will be done in the classroom? How can I support learning at home?"

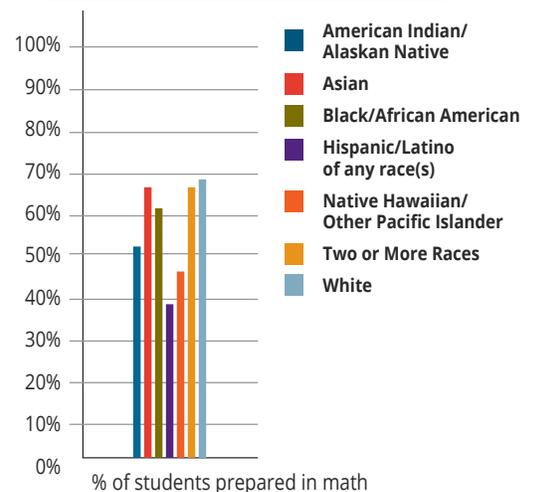
Krista I. Goudy-Sutterlict,
Kindergarten teacher, Toppenish

Less than 40% of entering kindergartners have all fundamental skills needed

Fall 2014 WaKIDS results
N = 43,298 students



Overall math problem reveals clear opportunity gap



Focusing on Early Math

Early math skills are the best predictor of future academic success, yet WaKIDS data clearly show that too many of our state's kindergartners—especially children of color—don't have key math skills. Efforts are now beginning to change this and need to include the following strategies:

- Invest in, scale and replicate successful science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) projects already happening in libraries and museums and through community organizations statewide.
- Provide professional development and STEM curriculum materials for early learning providers
- Cultivate a culture shift that gives families the confidence and enthusiasm to support early STEM learning

STRATEGY#29

Implement Phased-In Full-Day Kindergarten

Full-day kindergarten gives young children—especially those living in poverty—the time to learn the foundational academic, social and emotional skills important to future school success. Full-day kindergarten classrooms allow children more time to learn and explore activities in depth; teachers also have more time to get to know children and identify and address learning challenges earlier—saving money and resources over the long term and increasing the odds that children will be successful later in school.

Full-Day Kindergarten

In 2007, the state Legislature included full-day kindergarten in the definition of “basic education” and called for full-day kindergarten to be funded and implemented statewide by the 2016-17 school year. Schools with the highest rates of poverty were funded first.

To receive state funds for full-day kindergarten, schools must meet the following criteria:

- At least 1,000 hours of instruction in 180 school days
- Rich curriculum that helps students:
 - Develop initial reading, writing, math and communication skills
 - Experience science, social studies, arts, health and physical education, and a world language
 - Acquire social, emotional and motor skills
 - Learn through hands-on experiences
- Learning environments that are developmentally appropriate and stimulate creativity
- Connection and communication with community’s early learning providers
- Participation in the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS)

“As a kindergarten teacher who has taught both half-day and full-day programs, I consider full day kindergarten to be a gift to each child as they have the time to explore, to play, and time for deeper understanding to occur. The classroom community has time for powerful social/ emotional growth to occur through friendship building and problem solving. The teacher benefits from time to provide rich scaffolding for learning and a wealth of learning experiences, with necessary interventions and extensions.”

Karin O., Kindergarten teacher, Bellingham

\$2,380

Additional amount state pays for each student to help close the funding gap between half-day and full-day kindergarten

2015-16 Full-Day Kindergarten Participation

- 261 School Districts
- 847 Schools
- 58,833 Students (an increase of 23,000 students from last school year)



THE EARLY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

Working Together to Support Every Child and the Whole Child

In front of more than 1,000 early learning professionals and K-3 teachers at the 2015 Starting Strong Institute, the Washington Early Learning Partnership committed in pen—and paint—to continue to work together, so that every child from birth to third grade gets the best start in life possible.

Originally created in 2009 by the state Department of Early Learning, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and Thrive Washington, the Partnership has since welcomed the Department of Health and the Department of Social and Health Services, so that the needs of the whole child are being met in the critical and foundational first years of life.

This partnership between early learning, K-12, health and human services is unique to Washington state and has been key to Washington's rise as a national leader in early learning.

Handprints of leaders from the Washington Early Learning Partnership

