

DEL funds scholarships to support early learning professionals in furthering their education and career goals. One of the main ways we do that is through Early Achievers Opportunity Grants offered through community and technical colleges. (The other scholarship program is **Washington Scholarships for Child Care Professionals**, administered through a partnership with Child Care Aware of Washington.)

Individuals working in facilities enrolled in Early Achievers, our state's quality rating and improvement system, are eligible for Early Achievers Opportunity Grants of up to \$4,000 tuition and \$1,000 books/materials to pursue:

- An associate degree in early childhood education (ECE)
- Stackable certificates, which build off one another in a sequential manner, and have the same titles, numbers, descriptions and student outcomes across Washington's community colleges

DEL partners with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to offer Early Achievers Opportunity Grants at 18 community colleges around the state. Grant recipients also get tailored academic advising and career planning from an early childhood specialist at the college. Read SBCTC's annual report on the Early Achievers Opportunity Grant at: http://www.sbctc.edu/college/education/early_achievers_fiscal_guidelines_fy15.pdf.

In school year 2013-14:

- 555 students around the state got Early Achievers Opportunity Grant funding.
- Grant recipients were awarded 612 credentials.
- Grant recipients completed more credits and continued enrolling in classes in subsequent quarters than students receiving similar financial aid.

The Early Achievers Opportunity Grant program was built using Washington's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant. DEL is seeking state funding to sustain the program in 2015-17 and beyond.

"I have always loved working with young children but over the past year I have become to realize how much more I could learn and apply if given the right opportunity. This grant not only allows me to apply the knowledge I learn everyday directly into my classroom but it also prepares me for atypical situations that I may not encounter on a daily basis...It has helped me shape my own idea of what type of teacher I want to be and in what environment I want to teach in."

—Sarah G., *Whatcom Community College Early Achievers Opportunity Grant recipient*