



Washington State Early Learning Plan

September 2010

This document was developed in part through funding from the Washington State Department of Health Project LAUNCH grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The views, policies, and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA or HHS.

This plan is available online at www.del.wa.gov/plan

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following individuals and organizations made significant contributions of time and talent to developing this plan. In addition, more than 1,000 individuals and groups offered input and comments that helped shape this plan. Thank you for your time, ideas and assistance.

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2008 Studies on the Achievement Gap: African American, Asian American, Latino Students, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, See <http://www.k12.wa.us/AchievementGap/Studies.aspx>
Kids Matter Framework, 2005. See <http://www.earlylearning.org/resources/publications/kids-matter>
Washington Learns Final Report, 2006. See <http://www.washingtonlearns.wa.gov/ourwork.htm>

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INTRODUCTION

“Education is the single most important investment we can make for the future of our children and our state.”

Governor Christine Gregoire

A NOTE ON TERMS

There are many adults who play key roles in children’s lives. To be consistent, this plan uses terms in the following ways:

Children: For this plan, “children” refers to all children prenatal through third grade, regardless of developmental level.

Parents: Includes mothers and fathers, adoptive and foster mothers and fathers, kinship caregivers (grandparents and other family members raising children), guardians, and other adults acting as parents.

Families: Children’s immediate and extended families, however they define themselves. This term can also include family members who are caregivers (Family, Friend and Neighbor [FFN] caregivers).

Caregivers: The Family, Friends and Neighbors (FFN) who care for children on a regular or occasional basis (not parents and not licensed care providers).

Early Learning Professionals: Includes any adult who works in a paid capacity to care for and/or teach children ages birth through third grade, and their families. This includes, but is not limited to: licensed child care providers and directors in centers or family home child care; preschool teachers and directors; staff and directors of licensed school-age programs (usually serving children and youth ages 5 to 12 years old); school staff—including pre-K, kindergarten through third grade teachers and teachers’ aides, special education teachers, family support workers, literacy coaches and administrators (e.g., principals and vice principals)—plus early intervention workers, speech and language pathologists, home visitors, librarians, nutrition and health services staff, teacher coaches and mentors, trainers, and consultants.

Providers: Includes early learning and health care professionals, depending on the context.

Washington is poised to take bold action on one of the most strategic and important investments we can make in our **children**, our state, our economy and our future. **Early learning** is a smart investment. The **strategies** in this plan will provide solutions to some of the biggest problems facing our state by investing in early and equal development of human potential.

In 2007 the Washington State Legislature charged the Department of Early Learning (DEL) and its Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) with developing a statewide early learning plan that ensures school readiness for all children in Washington. In August 2009 DEL, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and Thrive by Five Washington signed the Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution, formalizing a relationship among significant cross-sector partners. For the past two years, parents, caregivers, early learning professionals, teachers, school-age program staff, advocates, state departmental staff and early learning funders have been engaged in discussions about: first, how to create a statewide plan for early learning, and second, what should be included in that plan. The result is this 10-year plan for an **early learning system** in Washington to ensure that **all children** in our state start life with a solid foundation for **success** in school and in life. The plan will guide the work of everyone who cares for, works with or is concerned about young children, so that the adults in children's lives work collaboratively and toward unified goals.

THE FRAMEWORK

This plan uses a nontraditional construct for addressing the early learning needs of our children. It encourages breaking down the barriers of traditional silos based on children's narrow age ranges, old funding patterns, different types of development (i.e., physical, mental, **social-emotional**, etc.), and the historic distinctions between a child's first five years and the school years. The plan creates a comprehensive **system** of care, education, supports and services that recognizes that a child's success in school and life is strongly influenced by the foundations that begin with a woman's pregnancy and continue from birth through third grade. These are the formative years that shape a child's growth, development and learning. Each stage of a child's development builds the platform for success in the next stage.

This plan is based on the premise that efforts to ensure an opportunity for every child to succeed in school and in life must address the needs of the whole child—i.e., physical and mental health and well being, as well as intellectual and social-emotional development skills.

The plan is built upon the important work of previous planning efforts. First, Kids Matter was developed in 2005 as a comprehensive, strategic framework for building the early childhood system of care in Washington. Kids Matter served as the starting point for developing outcomes and strategies to include in this plan. The Kids Matter Framework is included in Appendix D. Second, Washington Learns identified important **outcomes** for early learning as part of the overall system of educating children through college. The report identified five initiatives for a world-class education system and 10 reform strategies. Several of the strategies have been accomplished and others are underway.

This plan includes a **vision** for the future of early learning in Washington, guiding principles that define the values behind the plan, outcome statements that describe the desired outcomes that we seek for children, and numerous strategies suggesting near- and long-term actions to create a comprehensive early learning system. The strategies attempt to identify: those available to **all** children, parents, **families**, caregivers and early learning professionals; those available to **some** who may need extra support; and those available to **few** for whom special programs are needed.

The aim of this plan is to provide guidance and direction for priority setting, staffing and budget decisions, advocacy agendas, and partnership opportunities during the next decade.

WHY WE NEED THIS PLAN

Several important developments in the past 30 years influence the need for a comprehensive early learning plan.

Changes in family life: The percentage of mothers of children under age 18 who were in the labor force grew from 47 percent in 1975 to 71 percent today. Two-wage-earner families and single, working mothers have become the norm. This trend has spurred the need for child care and school-age programs for young children.

Growing diversity: Washington's population is becoming more diverse. People of color represented one in five Washington residents in 2000, but are projected to be one in three by 2030. The population of children will be even more diverse. Of the expected 30 percent growth in the number of children 0 to 17 years between 2000 and 2030, well more than three-quarters of that growth will be among children of color.

New science in brain development: A major report from the National Research Council, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods* (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000), reported that development of the brain is the most intense from birth through age 3 years. The brain builds itself in response to the child's experiences. Brain circuits that the child uses in daily life are strengthened. Those not used fade away. A crucial factor in building the child's brain is the nurturing the child receives, and responsive relationships with parents and caregivers.

Research on risk factors: Researchers have identified the key factors that put young children's well-being and learning at risk. These are: poverty or low income; disparities because of race, ethnicity or language; the parents' education level; having under- or unemployed parents; and living in a single-parent household. Having more than one risk factor compounds the risk. Children with these risk factors start showing poor outcomes as early as 9 months of age.

Preparation gap: Children with several risk factors are less likely to be ready for kindergarten than their peers. Children who are not ready for kindergarten often have trouble succeeding in school. This gap in preparation leads to a gap in school achievement. Compounding the challenge is that many children and families in communities of color in our state bear the brunt of the tremendous variation in the

quality of early care and preschool services available—if they can get access to early learning programs at all.

CURRENT PROFILE OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND THE EARLY LEARNING COMMUNITY

Children and families

Children aged 0 to 9 years old now number 859,727 in Washington. The state projects that by 2030 there will be 1.06 million children ages 0 to 9 years. Currently, 62 percent of children in our state under age 5 years are white, and 38 percent are children of color.

Key facts about Washington children’s well-being include the following:

One in three lives in a family that has difficulty making ends meet on a daily basis.

47 percent of all babies in Washington are born on **Medicaid**.

40 percent of public school children are in the “free and reduced price lunch” program for low-income families.

The infant mortality rate (death before reaching the first birthday) is 4.7 per 1,000 live births.

More than 6 percent of babies born each year have low birth weight, which leads to a variety of later health problems.

14 percent of children birth to 18 years have special health care needs.

Up to 75,000 children are uninsured, even though many are eligible for the state health insurance program—Apple Health for Kids.

Early Learning Settings and Schools

There are 7,449 licensed and 95 exempt (mainly school-age care) early learning facilities in Washington. These **providers** serve approximately 174,000 children. There are an estimated 35,000 child care providers and early learning teachers who work with children in these facilities. Licensed care includes centers, preschools and nursery schools, along with **family child care**, where a caregiver serves a small group of children in that caregiver’s home. Instead of or in addition to licensed care, many parents choose to put their children in the care of people they know and trust who are not licensed caregivers. This care option is called **Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN)** care.

Half of children younger than 6 years are cared for by their parent or guardian on a regular basis. Thirty (30) percent are cared for in licensed center-based care, and 15 percent by FFN caregivers.

In 2006, 80,613 children were enrolled in public and private kindergartens, and 250,000 were in first, second and third grades in public and private schools. The number of school-age children has remained fairly stable since 1999. However, the state forecasts a wave of enrollment increases from 2011 through 2030.

Needs Expressed by Parents and Providers

In statewide surveys, 80 percent of parents said they would like information on activities, events and places in the community designed for families. Approximately two-thirds would like information about ways to support children's early reading and school readiness skills, ways to help children's social-emotional development, and how to use positive discipline. More than half of the parents want information on ways to keep children healthy and to support children's overall development.

A survey that included child care providers found that parents and providers recognize the importance of early learning, but are not as clear on the importance to learning from birth to age 2 years. Many providers are uncertain about the activities they should be doing with infants and younger children to prepare them for school.

School Readiness and Achievement

There is currently no common measure or common agreement in Washington for children's kindergarten readiness. The best estimate available is from a 2004 statewide survey of kindergarten teachers. The teachers reported that less than half (44 percent) of children are ready when they enter kindergarten.

By the time children finish third grade, they need to have formed the learning skills they will need to use for the rest of their school years. Therefore, third grade achievement tests indicate not only how well their early learning has prepared them, but how likely they are to succeed in their school career. In 2008-09, 71 percent of third graders met or exceeded the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) standard for reading, and 66 percent met or exceeded the standard for math. But that means that more than a quarter of students are not reading at third grade level, and more than a third are not able to do third grade math.

Teacher Training and Professional Development

DEL oversees licensing of child care/early learning and school-age providers. The education required for licensed center staff ranges from a Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate or at least 10 college quarter credits in early childhood education/development for a child care center operator, to no educational requirement of a center assistant or a family home provider. Center directors, lead teachers and family home providers need to complete 20 hours of training approved by the State Training and Registry System (STARS) within their first six months on the job. A school-age program director and lead teacher need at least 30 college quarter credits, or combined training and college credits, in early childhood education, elementary education, social work or a related field, plus 20 hours of Basics – School Age STARS-approved training.

OSPI oversees certification of K-12 teachers. Kindergarten and primary grade teachers in public schools need a state certification in K-8 (elementary education) and a college degree or to have completed a state-approved teacher preparation program or equivalent. It is common for elementary teachers to have had only one course in child development. Special education teachers need a special education P-12 endorsement.

THE NEED TO CLOSE THE PREPARATION GAP AND ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Many children arrive at kindergarten without the knowledge, skills and good health they need to succeed in school (the preparation gap). The Washington kindergarten teachers who reported that only 44 percent of children are ready when they enter kindergarten also reported that among low-income children, only one out of four is ready on the first day of kindergarten. This serious gap for children from large segments of society continues as disparities in achievement in later school years (the “*achievement gap*”). Washington academic achievement data also reflect a pattern of inequity across racial and ethnic groups. This inequity includes lower performance on math, reading and writing standardized tests, as well as lower graduation rates and higher rates of high-school drop-out for children of color, as well as those from low-income families.

High-quality early learning experiences have the proven potential to provide all children with a solid foundation for success and to change the course of the cycle of inequity. That potential is currently unrealized. The current inequities in young children’s learning opportunities instead are likely to continue the cycle of disparities.

In a national survey of parents of school-age children, low-income parents and those from some racial and ethnic groups were especially interested in programs that offered academic supports, and were more likely than other parents to be concerned about their children falling behind in academics over the summer. A program sensitive to the needs of all parents will seek to address these issues.

THE NEED FOR A SYSTEM OF EARLY LEARNING

Early learning takes place in many places—home, child care, preschool, kindergarten through third grade, libraries, faith organizations, parks, play groups and many other community settings. Early learning also is shaped by many people—parents, guardians, grandparents, other relatives, child care providers, teachers, health care providers and a variety of caring adults—and programs—including those of government agencies, nonprofits, private businesses, faith-related organizations and community groups. Similarly, school-age programs take place in many community settings and are organized by many types of organizations including schools. This variety offers choices for families according to their own values. However, when everything takes place in separate silos, families have a hard time finding the services and information they want. Resources can be wasted because of duplication of effort. There have been a number of efforts to build bridges between existing programs, but the pieces are still disjointed. An early learning system is the various policies, programs and services for young children, and for the adults who care for and teach them. When these elements each work well and align with the other elements, children will have the best opportunity to reach their full potential.

VISION STATEMENT

The first step in creating this plan was to craft a statement that describes a long-range vision for the state early learning system, and the guiding principles, or values, to shape this plan.

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.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF WASHINGTON’S EARLY LEARNING SYSTEM:

1. Be child-focused and family-centered. Promote meaningful partnerships with parents and families, since they are children’s first teachers.
2. Promote alignment of early learning services and programs as a continuum that is comprehensive, supports whole child development, and is available to all children.
3. Be flexible, culturally responsive, accessible, relevant and respectful, and reflect the needs of local communities and individual children.
4. Be developmentally appropriate and, where applicable, evidence based (as available), and address each stage of child development from prenatal through third grade.
5. Build on strengths—of children, parents, families, providers, programs, communities and prior planning efforts, such as Kids Matter and Washington Learns.
6. Develop a tiered approach to addressing the early learning needs of all children in the state, identifying those strategies that apply to all, some and few children.
7. Provide supports, services and programs for at-risk children and families to close the preparation gap.
8. Promote high-quality early learning to increase school readiness and success in school and in life.
9. Include professional development and support for early learning and care providers.
10. Promote transparency and accountability in all policies, services and programs.
11. Provide ways to measure progress over time.
12. Identify funding sources and promote adequate financing of the system.
13. Provide for meaningful stakeholder review and comment on the Washington State Early Learning Plan as it is being developed and on the system’s performance over time.

OUTCOMES AND STRATEGIES

To describe the early learning system, this plan uses a framework that emphasizes the vision of starting life with a solid foundation:



The outcomes and strategies in this plan were developed by four work groups. Each work group focused on one subject area in the Kids Matter Framework: Child Health and Development; Early Care and Education; Family and Community Partnerships; and Social, Emotional and Mental Health. (See Appendix D for the Kids Matter Framework chart.) Each group developed a list of outcome statements to describe what the system of early learning should be trying to achieve. They also developed strategies for accomplishing those outcomes. What follows is a list of these outcomes and strategies. More detailed explanations are provided in the plan.

Ready and Successful Children:

Outcomes

- A. All children have optimal physical health, mental health, oral health and nutrition.
- B. Pregnant and postpartum women receive health, nutrition and support services to optimize the pregnancy and the health of their newborns.
- C. All children have developmentally appropriate social-emotional, language, literacy, numeracy, and cognitive skills, and demonstrate positive mental health and well being.
- D. Families have access to high-quality early learning programs and services that are culturally competent and affordable for those who choose them.
- E. All children enter kindergarten healthy and emotionally, socially and cognitively ready to succeed in school and in life.

	Strategy...	...what it means
#1	Optimize Existing Nutrition in Pregnancy and Early Childhood Services and Programs	Optimize nutrition by increasing breastfeeding, access to healthy food and food security, through information and support.
#2	Ensure Insurance and Medical Home	Increase understanding of the importance of preventive care, access to insurance, comprehensive care through a medical home.
#3	Improve Early Childhood Oral Health	Improve oral health through education, access to dental services, care coordination among medical and dental providers.
#4	Build Continuum of Infants and Toddlers Services and Programs	Build comprehensive services to promote healthy development, birth–3 years, support for families, and an infant-toddler credential.
#5	Make Home Visiting Available to At-Risk Families	Make evidence-based/promising prenatal and child home visitation services more widely available to at-risk families and caregivers.
#6	Ensure Developmental Screening	Make available universal developmental and social-emotional/mental health screening and referral for children, birth – third grade.

Strategy...	...what it means
#7 Add At Risk Children to Early Intervention Services (Part C)	Amend policy to serve children, birth–3 years, identified as <i>at risk</i> of developmental delay; include in Medicaid payments.
#8 Access to Mental Health Services – Develop Access to Care Standards	Develop developmentally appropriate access to care standards for mental health and Apple Health providers.
#9 Access to Mental Health Services – Increase Availability of Assessment, Diagnosis and Treatment	Increase availability of developmentally appropriate mental health assessment and treatment, birth–6 years.
#10 Increase Use of Early Literacy Services and Programs	Increase use of research-based early literacy programs/practices by parents, families, caregivers and early learning professionals.
#11 Expand Early Numeracy Programs	Promote early numeracy programs/practices, birth – third grade, by parents, families, caregivers and early learning professionals.
#12 Expand and Enhance ECEAP	Expand ECEAP education, health coordination and family support services to cover all low-income and at-risk 3- and 4-year-olds.
#13 Implement Voluntary, Universal Pre-kindergarten	Offer voluntary preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds, to roll out as all-day kindergarten is implemented.

Ready and Successful Parents, Families and Caregivers:

Outcomes

- F. Parents are recognized as their children’s first and most important teachers, and have the support they need to help their children “learn to learn” in their first years of life.
- G. A comprehensive, culturally and language-appropriate information and referral system about all aspects of child health, development and early learning is accessible to all parents (including expectant parents), families and caregivers.
- H. Parents, families and caregivers have the knowledge and skills needed, along with culturally appropriate services and supports, to act and respond in ways that promote optimal child health, development and early learning.
- I. Parent, family and caregiver voices help shape policies and systems.

	Strategy...	...what it means
#14	Create Statewide System of Access to Information and Resources	Expand information resources for parents, families and caregivers on a wide range of topics, and links to community services.
#15	Provide More Parenting Learning Opportunities	Provide parenting learning opportunities and peer supports in diverse and family-friendly venues.
#16	Ensure Social-Emotional Learning – Parents, Caregivers, Early Learning Professionals	Provide opportunities to deepen understanding of social and emotional development, skills.
#17	Support Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) Care	Conduct statewide outreach and support to FFN.
#18	Support Strong Families Policies and Programs	Support policies and programs that strengthen families and foster development of supportive relationships.
#19	Increase Mental Health Screening and Services for New Parents	Increase new parent screening for postpartum mood disorders and improve access to mental health services.
#20	Identify and Support Parent Leadership	Identify and nurture parent and caregiver leaders to advocate for families.
#21	Create Formal Pathways for Parent Participation	Expand pathways for parents, families and caregivers to participate in early learning program/system design and in shaping policies.

Ready and Successful Early Learning Professionals:

Outcomes

- J. All early learning professionals can demonstrate the competencies to provide children birth through third grade with developmentally and culturally appropriate early learning experiences in healthy and safe environments.
- K. All families have access to high-quality, culturally competent, affordable child care and early education programs staffed by providers and teachers who are adequately trained and compensated.
- L. A fully-developed Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is established and maintained so that early learning and school-age providers have the support and resources necessary to improve the quality of their programs and environments, and so that families have the information they need to make the best early learning choices for their children.

	Strategy...	...what it means
#22	Enhance Child Care Licensing Policies	Improve licensing through evidence-based rulemaking, training opportunities, technology and coordination with QRIS.
#23	Implement Comprehensive Professional Development and Compensation System	Build a comprehensive, integrated, statewide system of professional development, with fair compensation to attain development.
#24	Implement Quality Rating and Improvement System	Implement QRIS system to offer support and resources to providers for improving quality, and consumer education for families.
#25	Provide Health, Mental Health and Social-Emotional Consultation in Early Learning Settings	Provide coordinated local-state consultation to early learning professionals.

Ready and Successful Schools:

Outcomes

- M.** All children and families make smooth transitions among home, early learning settings and school.
- N.** All schools are ready to welcome all children who attend, including preparing for their individual gifts and needs, level of knowledge, skills, social-emotional and physical development, and their cultural background and language.
- O.** All students transition from third grade-level activities prepared with the foundations to achieve the more advanced challenges of upper elementary and intermediate grade-level activities.

	Strategy...	...what it means
#26	Ensure Continuum of Social-Emotional Learning – Children	Make available a continuum of skills development and support to every child in preK-12 public school classes.
#27	Align Prekindergarten and K-3 Instructional & Programmatic Practices	Ensure that children’s preK–third grade experiences are aligned and coordinated.
#28	Implement Kindergarten Readiness Assessment	Create an assessment of learning and development domains, with information from parents, caregivers, early learning professionals.
#29	Implement Phased-In Full-Day Kindergarten	Continue phasing in full-day kindergarten as part of basic education.
#30	Expand Compassionate Schools – Reducing Effects of Complex Trauma	Train families, caregivers, early learning professionals in ways to reduce the effects of adverse childhood experiences.

Ready and Successful Systems and Communities:

Outcomes

- P. The early learning system in Washington uses **evidence-based** and/or demonstrated **best practices** (as available) to support families in fostering children’s healthy development and learning, and to build high-quality, culturally competent early learning programs for children birth through third grade.
- Q. The early learning system in Washington works to close the preparation gap.
- R. The early learning system supports children with developmental disabilities and other special needs, and their families, to optimize each child’s health, development and educational outcomes.
- S. Governance and accountability systems ensure progress toward achieving the vision for a high-quality, accessible, early learning system for all children in Washington.
- T. Communities support families and promote children’s learning and healthy development.
- U. The public understands the critical economic and social value of high-quality, culturally competent early learning for every child from birth through third grade, and actively supports related policies and investments.

	Strategy...	...what it means
#31	Revise and Promote Use of Early Learning and Development Benchmarks	Refine the <i>Benchmarks</i> based on constituent input, then promote use in early learning settings, and align with preK–third grade.
#32	Expand Registry for Early Learning Professionals	Create a comprehensive registry system for individuals’ professional development, and for planning, evaluation and quality assurance.
#33	Improve Child Care Subsidies	Improve subsidy programs to support high-quality care, increase parental choice, and improve access to care.
#34	Build Statewide Infrastructure for Partnerships and Mobilization	Build statewide infrastructure to strengthen partnerships, build capacity, broaden reach and focus local mobilization efforts.
#35	Strengthen Public Awareness and Commitment	Expand public awareness campaigns to deepen the understanding, action, support of local leaders and public to make children a priority.
#36	Expand P-20 Longitudinal Data System	Continue developing a seamless P-20 data system that includes early learning services and programs outside the K-12 system.

System Infrastructure

Governance. There is no single authority or expert that can deliver the early learning “solution.” Governance for early learning in Washington will have to be a collaborative that engages the many entities that work on behalf of children and families in cooperating to achieve the common goals in this Early Learning Plan (ELP). This collaborative governance mechanism will need to find a balance between quality and quantity in funding early learning programs, to engage and inform families and the public, and to build connections and partnerships that strengthen local and statewide efforts.

Building this collaborative governance will take place in three phases:

Phase 1. Coordinated interim governance structure. This structure will include the Early Learning Advisory Council, which meets quarterly, and the three agencies in the Joint Resolution Partnership—DEL, OSPI and Thrive by Five Washington. The partnership will report on a regular basis on the progress of their Three-Year Action Plan, which lays out the actions they will take to begin implementing parts of the ELP.

Phase 2. Planning and transition. Beginning in 2010, the Early Learning Partnership will lead an intensive planning process to design a collaborative governance model for the ELP. This process will have support from DEL’s federal State Advisory Council grant, and from a National Governors Association technical assistance grant. The partners will engage local and regional early learning coalitions and other key partners in this planning process.

Phase 3. Implementation of collaborative governance. This phase will put the governance mechanisms in place at the state level and at the local/regional level, and establish a stable funding stream to support the staffing and other infrastructure needs of the governance system.

Quality Assurance. Citizens and policymakers want to be certain that their investments are paying off in terms of children’s outcomes, overall readiness for school and success in kindergarten through third grade. Accountability is built into this plan through three strategies:

Benchmarks: Review, revise per constituent feedback, and implement the Washington State Early Learning and Development **Benchmarks**, a common set of early learning standards across the state.

Kindergarten readiness assessment: Develop and implement WaKIDS as a common metric for measurement and reporting on kindergarten readiness.

Longitudinal data system: Fund the continued development of a seamless **P-20 longitudinal data system** as a common repository and process for collecting data covering preschool through age 20.

Financing. Current funding sources for early learning (prenatal through third grade) are administered in at least five different state agencies, and numerous federal agencies. Systems and accountability for each funding source have created silos, resulting in fragmented services. This fragmentation makes coordination and collaboration across agencies difficult and complicates statewide planning. It also misses the opportunity to ensure that money being

spent on young children and their families is set in a strategic direction toward school readiness and early success in school, and children's overall health and well being.

The following actions will set the stage for financing the early learning system:

- Create a governance mechanism focused on financing that sets the strategic direction for funding, assesses results, and holds agencies and programs accountable.

- Set financing standards.

- Develop a funding planning tool—for both public and private sector use—that can guide Washington in planning and acting toward a more effective use of funds.

- Organize a technical assistance network for agencies, communities and programs on how to braid, blend and orchestrate an optimized funding approach.

- Attend to early learning financing systems work—developing the infrastructure, resources and leadership necessary to create a coordinated system of services and supports.

- Create an outcomes-based orientation to financing—a focus on results that drives both funders and programs to think more realistically about the connections between investments and outcomes.

Statewide Indicators. Finally, the plan includes the Washington Early Learning *Indicators*. This initial set of indicators will provide a high-level overview of the well-being and development of young children, and serve as a tool for monitoring progress toward improving the broad child and system outcomes in this Early Learning Plan. A Technical Advisory Group will help to shape this effort. The Early Learning Partnership will publish a biennial data summary, beginning in October 2011.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Early Learning Partnership has developed a Three-Year Action Plan, identifying the ELP strategies they will each undertake in 2010-13. The partnership will report quarterly on the progress of their action plan. Many state agencies and statewide and local groups already play important roles in the early learning system. They can use the ELP to help guide their efforts. Once an ELP governance structure is developed, it will compile a biennial report on statewide and local progress on the strategies in this plan. The Early Learning Partnership will set a schedule for periodic updates to this ELP.



SECTION I

THE NEED FOR AN EARLY LEARNING PLAN

“We have the research now, and we will have more in the next decade, that documents the enormous learning capacity of young children. Our responsibility is to design educational experiences that take this capacity as a starting point and support children to achieve their full potential every day of their lives.”

Ruby Takanishi, Foundation for Child Development

PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan for an **early learning system** in Washington is to ensure that each and every **child**¹ in our state starts life with a solid foundation for success in school and in life. The plan aims to give everyone who is involved with children and **families** from prenatal through third grade a common road map and unified goals.

This plan responds to a growing interest by everyone concerned with young children that the entire community makes **early learning** and school success a priority. There is growing understanding that for children to have the best opportunity for success, they must have a foundation of seamless learning during their earliest years, birth through third grade. “Yet currently, most children experience a wide range of disparate experiences that jumble together and end up requiring our youngest learners to figure them out on their own” (Foundation for Child Development, 2008). It is this jumble of experiences and the different “silos” that this plan aims to address.

EVENTS LEADING TO THIS PLAN

Prior planning efforts in Washington have called for increased attention to early learning and improved coordination among all involved. In recent years, elected officials and statewide panels have called for a cross-**system** approach to early learning. Starting with four landmark events in 2005 and 2006, a number of actions have paved the way for this plan.

Kids Matter: This landmark effort in 2005 provided a comprehensive framework for building the early childhood system in Washington. With extensive participation of community, local and state stakeholders, it provided a unified goal (“Children are healthy and ready for school”). *Outcomes* and *strategies* are in four categories: (1) access to health insurance and *medical homes*; (2) social, emotional and mental health; (3) early care and education/child care; and (4) parenting information and support. Many organizations at all levels began aligning their work with the Kids Matter framework.

Washington Learns: The final report of this panel in 2006 proposed an education system that flows seamlessly from birth to adulthood.

Department of Early Learning (DEL): Governor Christine Gregoire formed DEL in 2006 as a cabinet-level agency. Early learning programs and *provider* professional development opportunities, which had been under several different state agencies, were now unified in DEL. DEL also provides information and tools for *parents*.

Thrive by Five Washington: This public-private partnership was created in 2006 to mobilize public and private resources to advance the development and learning of children birth through age five. Led by education, government and business leaders, Thrive communicates and champions the importance of early learning, identifies and supports

¹ See Glossary at the end of this plan for a definition. Terms in the Glossary are marked in **bold italic** the first time they appear in the text.

promising programs and practices around the state, and assists with building an effective early learning system.

Charge to create an early learning plan: The legislature in 2007 charged DEL and its Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) with developing a statewide early learning plan that ensures school readiness for all children in Washington (RCW 43.215.090).

All-day kindergarten: Also in 2007, the legislature expanded funding for kindergarten in order to support voluntary all-day kindergarten, phased in through 2018, beginning with the schools with the highest poverty levels (RCW 28A.150.315). In 2009 the legislature required all school districts to increase kindergarten hours to a full-day program, to be phased in by 2018.

Basic education: The legislature created a Quality Education Council in 2009 to make recommendations on the evolving definition of the “basic education” that the state has committed to provide.

Early learning and “basic education”: As part of the 2009 Basic Education bill, the legislature would have established a program of early learning for at-risk children included in the definition of basic education (ESHB 2261). In May 2009 Governor Gregoire vetoed the early learning provision of the bill, but noted that she is committed to providing quality early learning programs for all children in the state.

Governor’s request for a bolder, broader early learning proposal: The Governor asked the Director of DEL and the Superintendent of Public Instruction for a bolder, broader proposal to ensure that all Washington children have the benefit of early childhood education, and asked for recommendations by December 1, 2009. See Appendices A and J.

Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution: In August 2009 DEL, OSPI and Thrive by Five Washington signed the Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution to work together toward a common vision to create an aligned, seamless, learner-focused, world-class early learning system in Washington. See Appendices B and C.

Federal legislation: The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act signed into law by President Obama in March 2010 includes an Early Childhood Home Visiting Program to be carried out through grants to states, Indian tribes and urban Indian organizations (Children’s Defense Fund, 2010). An Early Learning Challenge Fund grant program was proposed in Congress in late 2009 in connection with the health care reform and budget reconciliation package, but was not enacted. However, the backers may look for another way to move this legislation forward. One of the purposes of the proposed legislation is to encourage states to integrate appropriate early learning and development standards across early learning settings.

CONTEXT: THREE IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

Three developments frame the need for an early learning plan: demographic changes over the past 40 years, advances in scientific understanding about children’s early development and learning, and reports on the continuing gaps in student achievement along racial, ethnic and income lines.

Social Changes

Women in the work force. The 1970s saw the start of a trend of women entering the work force and continuing their careers even after they became mothers. In 1975, when the U.S. census started tracking the number of working mothers, 47 percent of mothers with children under the age of 18 were in the labor force. Today, their labor force participation has risen to 71 percent (Galinsky, Aumann & Bond, 2009, pp. 4-5). Two-wage-earner families and single, working mothers have become the norm. Sixty percent of children under age 6 years in Washington live in either two-parent families with both parents employed or in single-parent families with the parent employed (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).

This trend has led to an increased need for child care and school-age programs. Today, approximately 705,800 Washington children under age 13 live in a single-parent or two-parent home where the parent or parents are in the labor force (Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network, 2008). Finding child care that is affordable, convenient, matches the parents' work hours and is of good quality can be difficult. In a recent statewide survey, nearly half of parents using child care said it was very or fairly difficult to find an affordable program, and to find programs with space available (Thrive by Five Washington, 2008).

Many parents end up patching together child care arrangements. Nationwide, more than 20 percent of children ages birth to 5 years are in more than one nonparental care arrangement each week (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). A national study found that 29 percent of employed parents had experienced some kind of child care breakdown in the prior three months (Shellenback, 2004). This adds to the stress parents feel, and, along with the overload of working and caring for the children and household, interferes with good parenting (Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children, 1994). An estimated 112,700 children between the ages of 5 and 14 are caring for themselves before/after school and during school vacations, based on national self-care estimates (Overturf Johnson, 2005) and census data for Washington state.

As a result, many children now spend time in a wider variety of settings in their earliest years than was common in years past. This can pose a challenge for **early learning professionals** (including the **school-age workforce**), and schools to meet each child where he or she is and provide continuity of learning.

Growing diversity. Washington's population also is becoming more diverse. In 2000, all people of color viewed together represented one in five people in Washington. By 2030, one in three Washington residents will be a person of color. The largest growing groups are the Asian and Pacific Islander, and the Hispanic populations. But the most rapidly growing racial group is the category called "two or more races," which is projected to increase by 160 percent. The non-Hispanic white population tends to be quite a bit older than other racial and ethnic groups. This is because births and immigration of young adults play a large part in the growth of many racial and ethnic communities. The number of children (0 to 17 years) in Washington is expected to

increase by 29 percent between 2000 and 2030. Approximately 81 percent of that increase will be among children of color (Washington State Office of Financial Management, 2006a, 2006b). The majority of immigrants to our state are young adults in their child-bearing years. More than 90 percent of recent immigrants come from non-English-speaking countries. As a result, school districts have added or expanded their programs for English language learners (Washington State OSPI, 2008b).

New Understandings from Research

Early development. A major report from the National Research Council, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods*, summarized current scientific understanding of early childhood development (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Among the key findings are:

Development of the brain is the most intense from birth to age 3 years.

The brain builds itself in response to the child’s experiences. Brain circuits that the child uses in daily life are strengthened. Those that the child doesn’t use fade away.

The nurturing a child receives and responsive relationships with parents and *caregivers* are especially important to building the child’s brain structure. Good parent-child relationships are a crucial foundation for the child’s learning, behavior and health.

A child that experiences extreme poverty, abuse, chronic neglect, severe maternal depression, substance abuse or family violence will be in a state of toxic stress that disrupts brain growth.

Brain circuits stabilize with age. It is possible to build connections and to adapt later, but it is more difficult and expensive.

(Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; 2005; Shonkoff, 2006; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000)

Risk factors. Researchers have also identified the factors that put young children’s well-being and learning at risk. The key risk factors are:

Poverty or low income

Disparities because of race, ethnicity or language

The education level of their parents, particularly their mother

Having under- or unemployed parents

Living in a single-parent household (Human Services Policy Center, 2003a).

The risk factors that researchers see the most consistently in children who have poor learning and health are low income and low maternal education (Halle et al., 2009).

Children with these risk factors start showing poor outcomes as early as 9 months of age. By 24 months, the gap is widening between children who have these risk factors and children who don’t. These disparities show up across the board in children’s development—in cognition, social skills, behavior and health. What’s worse, the more risk factors a child has, the bigger the roadblock to his or her development (Halle, Forry, Hair, Perper, et al., 2009).

Children in families with two or more risk factors are more likely to experience the following problems:

A challenging family environment, including:

- Stressful environment, abuse /and/or neglect;
- Poor or no parent-child bonding, which researchers have found to be a fundamental need for children’s learning;
- Parents and caregivers who lack knowledge about children’s cognitive, social and emotional development and how to support that development;
- Poor mental health of parent or caregiver; and
- Socially isolated parents/caregivers.

Developmental challenges, including:

- Delayed language development;
- Disabilities and/or poor health; and
- Poor nutrition.

Challenging social conditions, including:

- Poverty and under- or unemployed parents;
- Low-quality child care;
- Stressful neighborhood living conditions; and
- Under-resourced schools;

(Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2005)

Effect on school readiness and life success. Researchers have found that having two or more risk factors doesn’t just block a child’s path to success, but turns into a downward spiral. Children with several risk factors are less likely to be ready for kindergarten than their peers. Children who are not ready for kindergarten often have trouble succeeding in school. Those who do poorly in school are more likely to need to repeat classes, need special education, drop out of school, become teen parents, and get into trouble with the law. As adults, drop-outs have trouble making a living wage, and are at risk of poverty and homelessness (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2005; Isaacs, 2008).

High-quality early learning and care. As noted above, brain researchers have found that the quality of children’s early experiences and of their relationships with their parents and caregivers has a profound effect on their learning. Nurturing and stable relationships with caring adults are essential to healthy human development. (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004).

Studies have also shown that **high-quality** early learning programs can promote children’s learning and development and lessen the risk factors that some children face. Long-term studies of at-risk children in three high-quality, intensive early learning programs—HighScope Perry Preschool Program, Chicago Child-Parent Centers, and the Abecedarian Project—have documented benefits in the children’s lives into their 20s (Campbell, Ramey, Pungello, Sparling, & Miller-Johnson, 2002; Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, & Mann, 2001; Schweinhart, 2005). Elements of quality in these programs included small class sizes, a high teacher-to-child ratio,

well-educated and well-compensated teachers (with resulting low turnover), parent involvement, and a focus on the whole child (Galinsky, 2006).

A recent national, rigorous study of the Head Start program found that while children in the program showed advances in several aspects of school readiness, most of the advantages faded out by the end of first grade (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010).

Organizations such as the Promising Practices Network (n.d.) and the National Institute for Early Education Research (Barnett, 2010) have written about why Head Start's effects are difficult to evaluate or have drawn different conclusions from the evidence.

However, a study analyzing 123 comparative studies of preschool programs found that the programs provided not only benefits for children's cognitive and social skills, but also for school outcomes to age 10 (Camilli, Vargas, Ryan & Barnett, 2010; National Institute for Early Education Research, 2010). And a study based on national longitudinal data² found that the quality of child care predicts children's cognitive/academic achievement at age 15, and that long-lasting effects appear for middle class and affluent children as well as for lower income children (Vandell, Belsky, Burchinal, Steinberg, Vandergrift & NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2010).

Families, early learning professionals, communities and schools. Social science researchers have found that for young children to succeed in school, their parents, families and early learning professionals, plus schools and communities all need to join together to support both children's early learning and the schools' readiness for children. Families are better able to raise their children when they have a supportive social network outside the immediate family, and live in a neighborhood where they feel safe. Other important supports that communities provide include health care, a system to assess children's healthy development and **early interventions** for developmental challenges. Early learning providers can help let parents know about these community resources (Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children, 1994).

Ready schools are prepared to support the learning and development of every child in their communities. The National Education Goals Panel (1998) described ways that schools prepare for children. Among these are working with parents and early learning programs to smooth the child's transition into school, and respecting the child's and family's culture and language. Ready schools also are prepared to help children with disabilities to participate fully in the life of the classroom and the school.

Continuity of learning from birth through third grade. Most children have one thing in common when starting school. With few exceptions, there has been little or no connection between their early care and education setting and the school they enter. Yet young children

² Analysis of data from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development, which is the longest running and most comprehensive study of child care in the United States conducted to date to determine how variations in child care are related to children's development.

learn best when what they are learning has meaning to who they are and builds on their prior learning and experience. The disconnect between early care settings and the early elementary years makes transitions challenging for both children and teachers. Children must adjust to a new setting, and teachers assess how each student approaches learning, and what each knows and can do.

Child development and education researchers have found that it is crucial to maintain the gains from high-quality early learning through third grade and to form stronger relationships across all early learning settings. Kindergarten through third grade are the critical years for building the fundamental learning skills that children need in order to be successful in the rest of their school career. Researchers cite the importance of building strong connections between early learning providers and schools, in order to help children make a seamless transition into kindergarten. They also note the importance of a smooth transition between kindergarten and first grade, and for **alignment** of learning in first through third grades (Education Commission of the States, 2008). Third grade is a crucial turning point for a child's education. Children who cannot read nor do math at grade level by third grade are unlikely to become proficient later (Shore, 2009).

In addition, in the past 10 years, school-age programs have become more closely aligned with the learning that occurs during the school day. This alignment is having positive impacts. A two-year study examining the effects of participation in quality afterschool programs found that elementary and middle school students improved in their standardized math scores, their work habits and task persistence (Vandell, Reisner, & Pierce, 2007).

Connecting learning from birth through third grade does not mean that academic curriculum and teaching practices from elementary school are pushed down into preschool. Nor will 3- and 4-year-olds be moved out of care and learning at home and in the community, and placed in the school system. Instead, aligning learning through these crucial early years will combine the best of both educational approaches and assure that each learning opportunity builds on what came before and prepares children to move ahead through school.

The Preparation and Achievement Gaps

Many children are struggling to do well in school. As noted, children who face multiple risk factors are likely to be unprepared for school. This sets up a gap between children who have had the experiences and gained the skills they need to be prepared for school and those who have not. Studies comparing children with and without high-quality early learning experiences have found that this **preparation gap** tends to continue through school as a gap in achievement between different groups of children (Isaacs, 2008; Schweinhart, 2005).

Review of standardized tests nationwide has, for some years, found gaps between the scores of African American, Latino and Native American students and those of their white and Asian counterparts. There are similar gaps between students from low-income families and those from middle and higher income families (Center on Education Policy, 2009). In Washington,

scores on the Washington **Assessment** of Student Learning (WASL) test have shown differences by racial and ethnic categories, with children of color tending to score lower than their white counterparts. See the Washington State Report Card on OSPI's Web site, <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/summary.aspx?year=2008-09>.

Advisory committees in Washington have recently presented reports to the legislature on the achievement gaps for African American students (Washington State OSPI, 2008c), Asian American students (Hune & Takeuchi, 2008), Latino students (Contreras & Stritikus, 2008), Native American students (The People, 2008), and Pacific Islander students (Takeuchi & Hune, 2008).

Several of these reports note that not only do the children and their families of these communities lack access to early learning programs in our state, but they also bear the brunt of the tremendous variation in the quality of preschool services available, especially for bilingual and bicultural children (for example, see Contreras & Stritikus, 2008, p. 22). This uneven footing at the preschool level then leads to problems in achievement in elementary school. These reports either include a recommendation that all their families be offered high-quality early learning programs and/or a recommendation for a seamless preschool through college education system.

In addition, the report for Native American students cautions that the achievement gap paradigm itself has a bias: "Using European Americans and European American standards as the 'norm' means that other racial minority groups are left in the category as 'deficient' unless they comply and are proficient with European American cultural competencies Even how one defines success and achievement is based on a culture's value system" (The People, 2008, p. 12).

BRIEF TIMELINE OF EARLY LEARNING IN WASHINGTON

Interest in and a commitment to early learning are not new in our state. The following timeline highlights some of the important events.

1893: The state normal schools (teachers' colleges) began early childhood education classes, only four years after Washington became a state.

1965: The first Head Start programs opened in Washington, when this locally administered federal program began.

1970s: The Washington State Legislature defined "basic education" as including part-day kindergarten. The legislature also created the Educational Service Districts to provide to school districts and state-approved private schools support and educational services, which include early childhood and family support programs. Also in the 1970s, the Washington Association for the Education of Young Children was formed.

1982: Washington Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (WCPCAN, now the Council for Children and Families Washington) was formed.

- 1985: The Washington State Legislature approved a planning grant of \$30,000 to start the Early Care and Education Assistance Program (ECEAP), which is Washington’s state-funded preschool, with support of the Washington Business Roundtable.
- 1987: ECEAP served 1,000 children with a \$3 million budget. City of Seattle started School’s Out with a grant from Washington State Department of Social and Health Services.
- 1989: The statewide Child Care Resource and Referral Network was formed.
- 1980s: Service Employees International Union (SEIU) became the first child care guild in Washington.
- 1994: The federal Early Head Start program began.
- 1996: Washington created a state registry to track the training hours of licensed child care providers and approve classes (State Training and Registry System [STARS], and now tracked in Managed Education and Registry Information Tool [MERIT]).
- 1998: Governor Gary Locke created the Governor’s Commission on Early Learning to focus public attention on the learning of Washington’s youngest children. It created a statewide, public engagement campaign about the importance of early brain development, and established a nonprofit foundation, the Foundation for Early Learning.
- 1999: Washington Regional Afterschool Project (WRAP) formed to increase training and support in each region of the state.
- 2003: Washington Afterschool Network formed as the action arm of School’s Out.
- 2005: The Kids Matter Framework, an outcome-based early childhood systems building framework was created and began to be implemented in communities across the state.
- 2006: The state Department of Early Learning was created; Thrive by Five Washington was created; and the Washington Learns final report was published.
- 2000s: There has been an explosion of efforts by nonprofit and community organizations and local governments to provide information, services and supports for families and to improve early learning.

CURRENT PICTURE

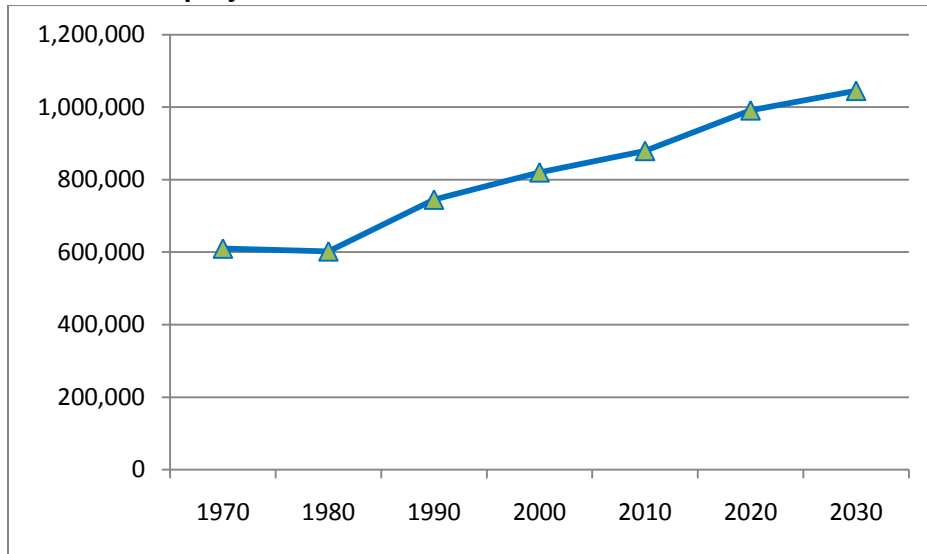
To address the early learning needs of Washington’s children and families requires a thorough understanding of current demographics, the existing system of early care and education, and information about what parents and caregivers say they need. There are a great deal of data that help provide that picture. The following provides a summary.

Children and Families

Child population. Close to 90,000 children were born in Washington in 2009. Children aged 0 to 9 years old now number 869,797. About equal numbers are in the 0 to 4 years and the 5 to 9

years age groups. The state projects that by 2030 there will be 1.05 million children ages 0 to 9 years (Washington State Office of Management and Budget, 2009). See the figure below.

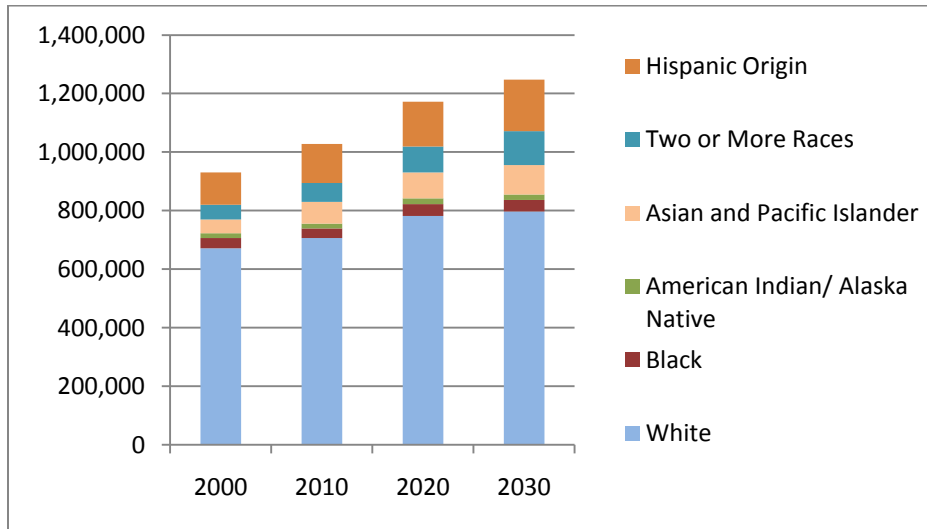
Figure 1. Washington Children, Ages 0 – 9 Years, 1970 to 2030 projected



Source: Washington State Office of Financial Management, 2009

Race and ethnicity. The race/ethnicity for Washington children, birth through age 9 years, is shown in proportion in the chart below for 2000 and projected to 2030. The number of children of Hispanic Origin, Asian/Pacific Islander and Two or More Races show the highest rates of growth from 2000 to 2030.³

Figure 2. Washington Child Population, Ages 0 – 9 Years by Race/Ethnicity, 2000 to 2030 projected



Source: Washington State Office of Financial Management, 2008a

Language. Eight percent of public school K-12 students in 2008-09 were English language learners and were in transitional bilingual programs (Washington State OSPI, 2009). The percentage of English language learner students has more than doubled since 1990, but has hovered between 8 percent and 9 percent since 2004. More than half of these students are in kindergarten through third grade. In 22 of the state’s 295 school districts, English language learners are a quarter or more of the student population.

The English language learner students speak a total of 204 different languages. Spanish is the primary language of two-thirds of English language learners. The other top languages are Russian, Vietnamese, Ukrainian, Somali, Korean and Tagalog.

English language learners are not distributed evenly across the state. The largest concentrations are in the Puget Sound area (37 percent of the English language learners), the Yakima Valley (15 percent), the northwestern part of the state (14 percent), and the Tri-Cities (13 percent). In the western part of the state, more language groups are represented, with school districts serving speakers of 20 or more languages. In the central and eastern regions, the majority of the English language learners speak Spanish (Washington State OSPI, 2008b).

³ The Washington State Office of Financial Management’s projections (2008a) show growth rates from 2000 to 2030 for the population of children 0 to 9 years of: 5.6% American Indian/Alaska Native, 15% Black, 18.7% White, 59% Hispanic Origin, 114.3% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 131.8% Two or More Races.

Families and poverty. One in three children in Washington lives in a family that has difficulty making ends meet on a daily basis⁴ (Human Services Policy Center, 2009). Moreover, 47 percent of all babies in Washington are born on **Medicaid**; and 40 percent of public school children are in the “free and reduced price lunch” program for low-income families (Washington State Department of Social and Health Services [DSHS], 2007; Washington State OSPI, 2009). An average of 37 percent of children ages birth to 4 years in Washington are eligible for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). However, in the central part of the state, 57 percent are eligible (Urban Institute, 2010). These programs all serve women and children with family incomes of up to 185 percent of the federal poverty level.⁵

An average of 64,287 children receive state-subsidized child care every month through the Working Connections Child Care program for low-income working families (Washington State Office of Financial Management, 2008b). Nearly 40 percent are school-age children. This program provides child care subsidies for families who are working and have incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.⁶

More than 20 percent of Washington children birth through third grade live in single-parent families (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Just over a third (34%) of children birth to 18 years live in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment (KIDS COUNT, 2009). Unmarried mothers in our state now account for 33 percent of all births. By comparison, this share of births was 3 percent in 1960 and 24 percent in 1990 (Washington State Office of Financial Management, 2008b).

Living in a low-income or single parent household, or with under- or unemployed parents are circumstances that put children’s early learning at risk.

Health. The rate of infant mortality (children who died before reaching their first birthday) in Washington is 4.7 per 1,000 live births. More than 6 percent of babies born each year have low birth weight (less than 5.5 pounds). Low birth weight is associated with a variety of later health

⁴ This includes families whose incomes are up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level guidelines. These guidelines are set by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and are used to determine who is eligible to receive assistance from federal social programs. The federal poverty level is slightly different from the U.S. Census definition of poverty. In 2009, the Census poverty threshold for a family of four with two adults and two children was \$21,756, while the HHS federal poverty level for a family of four was income up to \$22,050. The U.S. Census poverty rate for Washington children birth through third grade is roughly 17 percent.

⁵ Because the federal poverty level is based on assumptions about family expenses that date back to the 1960s, many programs set eligibility at a certain percentage above poverty. In Washington state, pregnant women with an income up to 185 percent of the federal poverty level can get Medicaid coverage for the pregnancy and birth. In 2009 a pregnant mother in a family of four was eligible for Medicaid if her family income was less than \$40,793. A single, pregnant woman with no other children was eligible for Medicaid with an annual income up to \$26,955. The free-and-reduced-price school lunch program provides a free meal for children with family incomes up to 130 percent of poverty, and a reduced price meal at incomes up to 185 percent of poverty. In 2009 for a family of four, 130 percent of poverty was \$28,665 and 185 percent was \$40,793.

⁶ In 2009, 200 percent of poverty for a family of four was \$44,100.

problems. For every thousand teenaged young women, 33 become pregnant each year (KIDS COUNT, 2009).

Nearly 18 percent of children birth to 18 years have special health care needs. The three leading diagnostic categories are: **developmental delay** and mental retardation, congenital anomalies, and perinatal conditions. The three largest categories for children in special education services are: specific learning disabilities, health impairments and communication disorders (Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative, 2007; Washington State Dept. of Health, 2005). In the public K-12 schools, 13 percent of students were in special education programs in 2008-09 (Washington State OSPI, 2009).

Forty-four percent of children under 18 years are in the medical assistance program of DSHS, 2 percent in the mental health program, and 1 percent in developmental disabilities program (Washington State Dept. of Health, 2005). The state's Apple Health for Kids program for low-income families⁷ covers preventive care, such as well-care visits, and dental care for children, as well as major medical. DSHS estimates that up to 75,000 Washington children still are uninsured, even though many of them are eligible for Apple Health for Kids (Washington State DSHS, 2009).

The data on the health status of children and children in poverty suggest that there are a great many children in Washington who carry the burden of one or more risk factors that make it very difficult to be prepared for, and to succeed in school.

Risk profile. Children who experience multiple risks are less likely to be ready for kindergarten or successful in school. In a study of 2000 Census data, Washington KIDS COUNT found that one in 10 Washington children experiences multiple risks. For Hispanic, African American and American Indian children, the stakes are even higher, with one in five children experiencing three or more risks (Human Services Policy Center, 2003a).

Analyzing individual risks, the researchers found that:

One-third of children 0 to 17 years live in low-income households.

One in five has no parent with full-time, year-round employment.

One in 16 has parents with a disability affecting employment.

Twenty-nine percent live in homes where neither parent or only one parent resided.

One in nine has a mother with no high school degree.

Two percent of children ages 5 to 17 years are not fluent in English.

(Human Services Policy Center, 2003a).

⁷ A family of four qualifies for free health insurance through Apple Health for Kids at incomes of up to \$44,100. Between \$44,101 and \$55,125 in income, the family pays a \$20 monthly premium. Between \$55,126 and \$66,150 in income, the family pays a \$30 monthly premium.

Given today's unemployment rate of more than 9 percent (Washington State Employment Security Department, 2010) the rate of children with unemployed parents is undoubtedly much higher. (The state unemployment rate was just under 5 percent at the time of the 2000 census, which was the basis of the above calculations.) Since parents with stable employment are better able to provide for their children's needs, periods of high unemployment create additional risk for children's well-being and future success.

In sum, many children experience two or more of these risks and have been in multiple learning and care settings by the time they enter kindergarten. These factors underscore the need for continuity across all stages of early learning, birth through third grade. Facing the jumble of experiences that children often have now, it is no wonder that too many children have a hard time achieving success in school.

Needs Expressed by Parents and Providers

Parents are children's first and most important teachers. Recent statewide surveys by the DEL and Thrive by Five Washington explored what kinds of information and services parents (and early learning providers, in Thrive's poll) would like.

DEL's 2008 parent needs assessment included a statewide telephone survey in English and Spanish of a sample of randomly selected parents, along with a series of focus groups held across the state. The focus groups included parents who were the most likely to use programs that DEL oversees, such as ECEAP, and parent groups that may have been underrepresented in the phone survey, such as those who spoke a language other than English or Spanish, or who did not have a home telephone. The survey found that nearly two-thirds of families had participated in play groups, and half in reading programs. More than half who had a child ages 3 to 5 years had participated in preschool.

More than half of parents surveyed wanted information on:

- Ways to support children's early reading skills and school readiness skills;
- Ways to help children's *social-emotional* development, and to use positive discipline; and
- Ways to keep children healthy and to support their overall development (Washington State DEL, 2008b).

Thrive by Five Washington sponsored research in 2007 to gauge the perceptions of parents and child care providers across the state on early learning and school readiness. Thrive's research included a telephone survey sample of 600 parents in English and in Spanish, and 18 focus groups with lower- and middle-income parents of children ages birth to 5 years, and with both home-based and center-based licensed providers in Western and Eastern Washington. Key findings included the following:

- Parents and providers recognize the importance of early learning, but are not as clear on the importance to learning of the birth to age 2 years period.

The parents would like more information on intellectual development, brain development, managing emotions and preparing children for school.

The parents, though generally satisfied with their child care arrangements, cited affordability, and in rural areas, availability, as the main barrier to getting higher-quality care.

Most providers surveyed would like to offer high-quality care but said they face such obstacles as time, funding and staffing.

(Thrive by Five Washington, 2008).

Early Learning Settings and School

Early learning and school-age providers. There are 7,449 licensed and 95 exempt (mainly school age care) early learning facilities in Washington. These providers serve approximately 174,000 children. There are an estimated 35,000 child care and school-age providers and early learning teachers who work with children in these facilities. Licensed care includes child care centers, preschools, nursery schools, and school-age programs, along with **family child care**. In family child care, a caregiver is licensed to serve a small group of children in the caregiver's home. Between 2002 and 2007, the overall number of licensed facilities has declined by 13 percent. This is mainly due to a decline in the number of family child care businesses. As of 2007 there were a total of 119,553 "slots" for children in centers, preschools and nursery schools in Washington, and 47,357 slots in family child care (WSCCR&RN, 2008).

Many parents choose to put their children in the care of people they know and trust who are not licensed caregivers. This care option is called **family, friend and neighbor (FFN) care** (WSCCR&RN, 2008).

Children in early learning settings. DEL's parent survey (2008b) found that for children younger than 6 years, half are cared for only by a parent or guardian on a regular basis. The second largest group is in center-based care. In a survey DEL conducted of licensed child care providers, approximately 166,500 (15 percent) of children ages birth through 12 years are in licensed care on any given day. Preschoolers make up the largest percentage of the children in licensed care (Washington State DEL, 2008c). However, the data on licensed care do not include preschool programs in school buildings that are certified but not licensed.

Some early learning programs for children under age 5 years are located within schools. In addition, some special education preschool programs are located in schools. Some of these open additional slots to preschool children who do not need special education services. In both cases the location in the school can help to build the relationships among early learning professionals for the full age range of birth through third grade. Building these relationships helps to build continuity of learning for the children.

In addition, nearly half a million children in Washington ages birth through 12 years spend some time each week in FFN care. The form of outside care that parents choose differs by the child's age. Generally, of children cared for by someone other than their parents on a regular basis,

infants and toddlers spend the greatest proportion of non-parental care hours per week with FFN caregivers (Human Services Policy Center, 2003b).

Child care cost and programs for low-income families. Public school offered to all children in Washington begins at age 5 years with kindergarten. Parents who need or want an early learning and care program for a younger child must pay for it themselves. Child care is a substantial expense for most families. Infant care has the highest cost. The median cost of full-time care for an infant in Washington in 2007 was \$9,620 at a child care center and \$7,280 in family child care. These costs were between 12 percent and 16 percent of income for a median-income household. (Median income in 2007 was \$58,462.) A median-income household that had both an infant and a preschooler paid between 23 percent and 28 percent of their annual income for child care. At the other end of the cost scale, the median annual cost for school-age care was \$4,160 in a center and \$3,120 in family child care, or between 7 percent and 5 percent of median household income (WSCCR&RN, 2008).

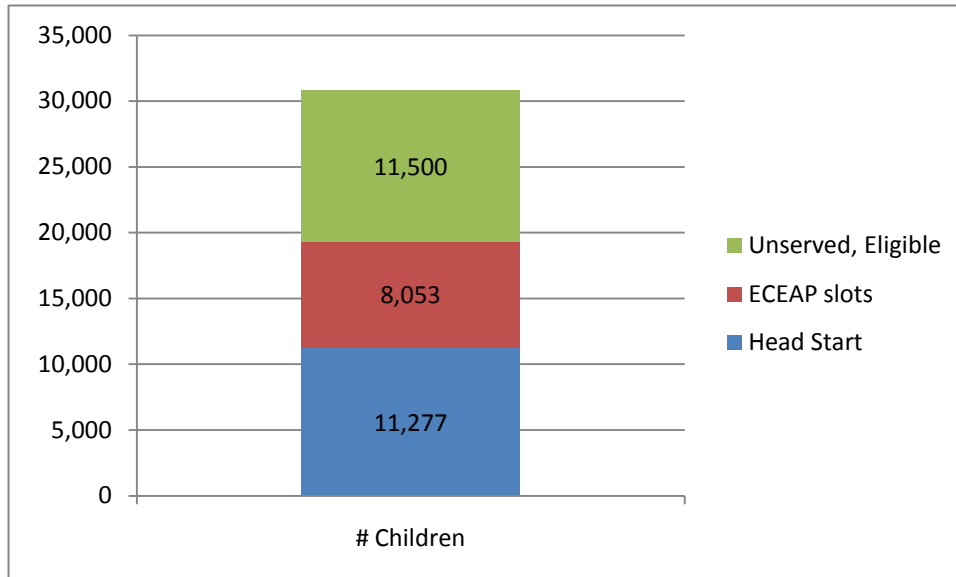
Low-income parents can get help from several federal and state programs, however. Early Head Start and Head Start are operated by local organizations using federal grant funds. Head Start, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, and Tribal Head Start serve 3- and 4-year-olds. Early Head Start provides services to pregnant women, and children birth to 3 years old. These programs provide comprehensive services to meet the emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs of children and pregnant women. The programs also include strong parent and family involvement. Families qualify mainly because they receive public assistance or have an income below the federal poverty guidelines⁸. There is no cost to the family for these programs. In 2010, 11,277 children in Washington were enrolled. Head Start in Washington is funded at an average of \$8,923 per child (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, 2010).

The state's Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) also offers preschool, and health and nutrition services for 3- and 4-year-olds, with 8,053 slots funded in 2010. This program is mainly for families whose incomes are at or just above the federal poverty guidelines (up to 110 percent of poverty). There is no cost to the family for this program. ECEAP is funded at an average of \$6,662 per child. This funding level is lower than Head Start's, with the result that ECEAP offers fewer classroom hours and a less intensive program.

Both these programs serve eligible low-income and at-risk 3- and 4-year-olds, but there are not enough "slots" (spaces in the programs) to serve approximately 11,500 (37 percent) of currently eligible children. See the figure below. However, this unserved estimate does not take into account children being served in private preschool or children whose parents do not choose to enroll their income-eligible children in a preschool program.

⁸ The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services sets the federal poverty guidelines each year. The guidelines vary by the number of people in a family. For example, the 2009 poverty guideline for a family of two is \$14,570 in annual income, for a family of four is \$22,050, and for a family of eight is \$37,010. Some federal and state programs use the poverty guidelines (or a multiple of them, such as 125 percent of poverty) to decide who qualifies for assistance.

Figure 3. Head Start and ECEAP Slots Available, and Children Unserved



Sources: U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, 2010; Washington State DEL, 2008a_

Another option for low-income parents in Washington is the state’s Working Connections Child Care subsidy program. On average, 64,287 children per month are in child care using subsidy support (Washington State Office of Financial Management, 2008b). This program provides money to child care businesses and relatives who care for children while parents work. Families are eligible if their incomes are at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines, or if they are eligible for WorkFirst through TANF, or if the parents are under age 22 and enrolled in high school or a General Education Diploma (GED) program. The family pays a co-payment to the child care provider on a sliding scale. The state pays the provider directly, according to a schedule of maximum child care rates (by type of care program, age of child and region of the state). The provider is not allowed to charge the family the difference, if any, between the maximum child care subsidy rate and the provider’s usual rate for private child care (Washington State DEL, 2007).

Children in school. Kindergarten as part of “basic education” funded by the state in Washington is defined as part-day (450 hours over the school year) (RCW28A.150.220(1)(a)). In 2007, the state legislature passed a bill that begins the phase-in of voluntary, all-day kindergarten, funded by the state, beginning with the schools with the highest poverty levels. The phase-in is to be complete by the 2018-19 school year. Among the requirements are that the schools have a transition program, to work with early learning providers in the community and to participate in

kindergarten readiness activities with providers and parents. In addition to providing children with more learning opportunities, full-day kindergarten also provides greater continuity for those children who have been accustomed to all-day preschool or other care settings.

In 2006, there were 80,613 children enrolled in public and private kindergartens. There are 1,307 elementary schools with kindergarten classes. A total of 249,209 children were in first, second and third grades in public and private schools (Washington State OSPI, 2007). The number of school-age children has remained fairly stable since 1999. However, the state forecasts a wave of enrollment increases from 2011 through 2030, as the grandchildren of baby boomers reach school age (Washington State Caseload Forecast Council, 2009; Washington State Office of Financial Management, 2005; SRI International, 2008).

Aligned learning. The educational system in the United States developed at different times and in different ways. Recently there has been an interest in connecting learning into a seamless and coherent continuum, from birth through adulthood. A recent KIDS COUNT report makes as its first recommendation: “Develop a coherent system of early care and education that aligns, integrates, and coordinates what happens from birth through third grade so children are ready to take on the learning tasks associated with fourth grade and beyond” (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010, p. 4).

In Washington, the *Washington Learns* report championed an aligned approach and created a **P-20** council to monitor progress (2006). Some school districts, such as Bremerton, have implemented an aligned preschool through third grade (**preK-3** or **P-3**) system. In August 2009, the Starting Strong P-3 Conference brought together Washington state school district officials, teachers, early learning professionals, parents, funders and policymakers to create a shared understanding about aligning early learning from birth through third grade. The conference emphasized four key actions to build P-3 learning: (1) align curriculum and instruction; (2) engage families more in their children’s learning; (3) build coalitions and partnerships in the community; and (4) foster strong leadership at the school or district level (Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2010).

School Readiness and Achievement

School readiness. Discussion of school readiness often focuses on children and how to get them ready for school. But DEL, OSPI and Thrive by Five Washington agree, as do national experts, that school readiness is a shared responsibility (National Education Goals Panel, 1998). In an August 2009 Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution DEL, OSPI and Thrive by Five Washington describe school readiness as including four concepts:

Ready children are healthy and socially, emotionally, and cognitively prepared for success in school and life;

Ready schools are prepared to meet the individual needs of the diverse children who enter kindergarten;

Ready parents and families have the information and resources needed to be their children's first and most important teachers; and

Ready early learning professionals and communities have the information and resources needed to support parents, children and schools.

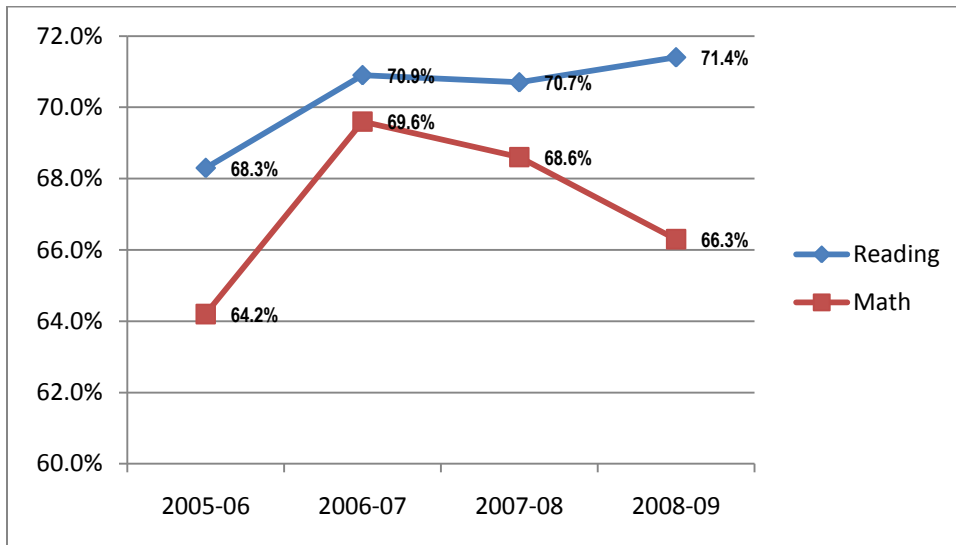
(DEL, OSPI, Thrive by Five Washington, 2009, see Appendix B)

Children's readiness for kindergarten. In Washington there is currently no common measure nor a common definition for children's kindergarten readiness. The best estimate available is from a 2004 statewide survey of kindergarten teachers. The teachers reported that less than half (44 percent) of children are ready when they enter kindergarten (Washington State OSPI, 2005). (See more under Need to Close the Preparation Gap, below.)

A little over one-third of public elementary schools with kindergartens conduct their own assessments of entering kindergarteners (SRI International, 2008). Two of the tools they use are the Dynamic *Indicators* of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and the Early Development Instrument (EDI). Many use their own measures, as well.

DEL, Thrive and OSPI are partnering to develop and pilot a kindergarten readiness assessment process. The 2009 legislature appropriated funds to be matched for this effort. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Thrive by Five Washington have stepped up to provide the matching funds. The pilot is to begin in Fall 2010. A statewide kindergarten readiness assessment process could offer a way to better understand children's abilities and needs as they enter school. This information could help families, early learning providers and communities improve the ways they help children prepare for school, and schools to help all children succeed once they enter. There are a number of challenges still to be met to develop the readiness assessment. These include setting guidelines for how the results are used, how information is shared with families, and how to make the process inclusive of language, culture, disabilities and special needs (SRI International, 2008).

Third grade WASL scores. By the end of third grade, students need to have mastered a strong foundation of learning skills—to have learned how to learn. In later grades, they need to apply these skills to subject content and analytical thinking. Therefore, their scores on the statewide WASL test indicate not only how well their early learning has prepared them, but their likelihood of succeeding in their school career. In 2008-09, 71 percent of third graders met or exceeded the standard for reading, and 66 percent met or exceeded the standard for math. But that means that more than a quarter are not reading at third grade level, and more than a third are not able to do third grade math. The scores in the last four years have gone up slightly in reading, but have gone up and then down in math (Washington State OSPI, 2009). OSPI discontinued the WASL in 2009, and replaced it in 2009-10 with the Measurement of Student Progress (for grades 3 – 8) and a High School Proficiency Exam.

Figure 4. Third Grade WASL: Percent Who Met or Exceeded the Standard, 2006 - 2009

Source: Washington State OSPI Web site, 2009

A KIDS COUNT report shows that 67 percent of Washington fourth graders scored below proficient in reading level, as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading test in 2009. This puts Washington in a tie for 25th place with South Dakota, Wisconsin and Wyoming. The report also showed that 82 percent of low-income⁹ fourth graders in Washington scored below proficient¹⁰ (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010).

Teacher Training and Professional Development

The quality of early learning through the whole span of birth through third grade depends in large part on the education, training and experience of the teachers. For example, a recent study of early reading in twins found that “poor teaching impedes the ability of children to reach their potential” (Taylor, Roehrig, Hensler, Connor, & Schatschneider, 2010). The educational requirements are vastly different, however, for those planning to teach children birth through age 5 years, those planning to teach kindergarten through third grade, and those who work in school-age programs. But their needs for professional development are similar—and crucial. There is work still to be done to create common understanding and instructional practices that will provide the quality and continuity of learning that children need.

Early learning outside of school. DEL oversees licensing of child care/early learning and school-age providers. The educational requirements differ depending on the setting and the level of the provider’s position. A child care center director needs to: (a) have knowledge of child development as evidenced by professional reference, education, experience, of on-the-job performance; and (b) have either a CDA certificate, or 10 to 45 college quarter credits in early

⁹ Eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program

¹⁰ NAEP defines proficient as —Solid academic performance.” Specifically: —Fourth-grade students performing at the *Proficient* level should be able to integrate and interpret texts and apply their understanding of the text to draw conclusions and make evaluations” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010).

childhood education or child development, or the equivalent in DEL-approved training hours (number of credits/hours dependent on the number of children the center is licensed to serve). If the director does not meet these educational requirements, the center must have a program supervisor who does. In that case, the center director needs to have at least one three-credit college class in early childhood education or development. A center lead teacher needs to: (a) have a high school diploma or the equivalent, and (b) have documented child development education or work experience. Currently there are no educational requirements for a family home provider; they must have an understanding of how children develop socially, emotionally, physically, and intellectually. Educational requirements also do not apply to child care assistants and aides.

Within the first six months of working as a director/teacher/provider, all center directors, lead teachers and family home child care providers need to complete 20 hours of STARS-approved training listed in the MERIT database. There is no training required for assistants/aides in centers or family home child care.

Every year, all center directors, program supervisors and lead teachers need to complete 10 hours of STARS-approved continuing education. The MERIT database tracks licensed providers' individual compliance with this requirement. The registry and licensing together ensure that all training hours have been met.

For school-age care, the program director, site coordinator and lead teachers must have 30 or more college quarter credits, or a combination of training (clock hours) and college credits in early childhood education, elementary education, social work or another child-related field. The lead school-care staff person must have a high school education and have school-age child development knowledge and experience. The program director and site coordinator must also take 20 hours of Basics – School Age STARS-approved training. There is no training requirement for a school age care assistant. Every year, all school-age program directors and site coordinators must complete 10 hours of STARS-approved continuing education. For school-age programs that serve more than one group of children, at least one staff person for every group of children must also complete 10- hours of STARS-approved continuing education.

Clearly there is work to do to gain a common understanding of the education and instructional practice that make a difference in results for children.

Many community colleges and four-year colleges provide degree programs (AA and BA) in early childhood education and related fields. Some community colleges offer a two-year technical degree that prepares students for employment (ATA/AAS and AAS-T). Many community colleges also offer courses leading to a CDA credential, conferred by the national Council for Professional Recognition. Earning a CDA involves course work and planned experience working with children, plus supervised training. Another option at community colleges is an Early Childhood Education (ECE) certificate, which is a 45- to 64-credit program designed to meet Washington's requirements to become a licensed program coordinator in a center or a teacher in an early childhood classroom. Coursework that leads to undergraduate degrees in school-age

care are nonexistent in Washington, although some community and four-year colleges offer specific courses that directly relate to the school-age field.

In addition, several national organizations have voluntary accreditation programs, which assess providers against national quality standards. The following table shows the number of accredited early learning facilities in Washington.

Table 1. Washington Early Learning Facilities with National Accreditation, 2007

Accreditation Program	Sponsoring Organization	Number of Accredited Facilities in Washington	% of Total in Washington
Center-Based Accredited Programs	National Association for the Education of Young Children	114	5.5% of 2,055 licensed centers
School-Age Accredited Programs	National AfterSchool Association	9	1.7% of 525 school-age programs
Accredited Family Child Care Homes	National Association for Family Child Care	21	0.4% of 5,299 licensed family child care homes
Early Care and Education Programs	National Association of Child Care Professionals	29	1.4% of 2,055 licensed centers
Accredited Montessori Programs	American Montessori Society	8	40% of 20 American Montessori Society member schools

Sources: Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network, 2008; Washington State Department of Early Learning, 2010; National AfterSchool Association, 2010; National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs, 2010; American Montessori Society, 2010

Early learning in school. OSPI oversees certification of K-12 teachers. Kindergarten and primary grade teachers in public schools need a state certification in K-8 (elementary education). The teacher must have earned a bachelor's or higher degree at an accredited college or university, or completed a state-approved teacher preparation program at an accredited college or university, or completed a state-approved alternative pathway teacher preparation program, or hold a teaching certificate in another state and pass skills and knowledge tests. Every five years teachers with current certification must complete 150 clock hours of approved continuing education study and/or equivalent academic credit. However, it is common for elementary school teachers who teach kindergarten through third grade to have had only one course on either child development or child psychology. Special education teachers must have additional special education course work and receive a special education P-12 endorsement from OSPI within five years of service as a special education teacher.

NEED TO CLOSE THE PREPARATION GAP AND PREVENT THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Many children arrive at kindergarten without the knowledge, skills and good health they need to succeed in school. Closing this gap in preparation for kindergarten will help to close the **achievement gap** that appears as children progress through school. As mentioned above, in a one-time survey conducted in 2004, kindergarten teachers in Washington reported that less than half (44 percent) of children are ready when they enter kindergarten. More startling, they reported that among low-income children, only one out of four is ready on the first day of kindergarten (Washington State OSPI, 2005).

This serious gap for children from large segments of society is also seen in the disparities in achievement in later school years. Beginning school behind their peers sets children up for a lifetime of inequity by reinforcing the disparities that contributed to their lack of school readiness in the first place and contributes to a cycle of inequity (Bridges, Fuller, Rumberger & Tran, 2004, as cited in Kagan, 2009a).

A companion gap is the gap in the resources available for early learning programs and schools to address the needs of children effectively. A key part of these resources is the capacity to build relationships, such as between early care providers and schools, and between early learning programs at all levels and parents in the communities they serve.

Three questions can help frame the discussion about how to close these gaps: Who are the children that are missing the kinds of support and early learning opportunities before kindergarten that would better prepare them for early school success? What are the gaps in the array of systems, services, supports that, if filled, could better support children? Once children arrive at school, how well is their learning both in and out of school connected to their prior learning?

(1) Who are the children that are missing the support and early learning opportunities before kindergarten to prepare them for early school success?

Some children start kindergarten already behind their peers in learning, behavior, health and/or family support. These children are likely to live in families with low incomes and low parent education levels, and are likely to live in vulnerable communities.¹¹ However, not all children with these family characteristics arrive at school unprepared.

Multiple risk factors. As noted in the discussion of risk factors above, children with multiple risk factors (such as low maternal education, low family income, and non-English home language) are the most likely to fall behind at a very young age and arrive at kindergarten without the knowledge, skills and good health they need to succeed (Halle et al, 2009). There are neighborhoods and communities with high concentrations of families experiencing multiple risk

¹¹ Bruner and Tirmizi (2007) analyzed census data to identify vulnerable child-raising communities (based on census tracts). Their findings confirm connections between race, place and child raising vulnerabilities (related to wealth, income and educations).

factors. These include both metropolitan and rural communities (Human Services Policy Center, 2005).

It is also important to note that disparities show up as early as nine months of age, and grow wider quickly (Halle et al, 2009). This means that waiting until preschool or kindergarten to begin interventions may be starting too late.

Socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity. In the United States, socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity are intertwined with other predictors associated with a lack of school readiness, including parents' education level, enrollment in high-quality early childhood programs, parents' likelihood to have read to their children, and health outcomes (Rouse, Brooks-Gunn & McLanahan, 2005). A Washington KIDS COUNT analysis of census data found that one in 10 children in Washington experienced three or more risks that are linked to lack of school readiness. Six percent of white children—more than 55,000 children—faced multiple risk factors. The balance of children facing multiple risk factors, approximately 90,000, were children of color. Relative to their overall population in the state, the proportions of children of color facing multiple risks were much higher than the proportion of white children facing such risks: African American – 21 percent, American Indian – 19 percent, Hispanic – 23 percent and Asian – 9 percent (Human Services Policy Center, 2003a).

Data such as these also underscore the need for data that are *disaggregated* by race and ethnicity in consistent ways. For example, the category “Asian” sometimes includes Pacific Islanders, and sometimes does not. “Mixed race” and “Other race” have only recently been included on census forms. Without consistent data collection, it is difficult to draw conclusions or see trends over time.

Socioeconomic status is one of the most critical predictors of school readiness. Although most children living in poverty in Washington are white, the rates of poverty (as with other risk factors) are disproportionately high for children of color. Rates of poverty are also higher for immigrant families, single parent families, and families in rural areas (Human Services Policy Center, 2003a).

Cultural strengths. When considering risk factors, it is important also to recognize that children gain differing strengths from their family and cultural background. These strengths may include “socialization practices, forms of cognition and motivated learning within everyday activities” (Fuller & Garcia Coll, 2010). However, teachers in mainstream settings might not recognize these strengths. For example, a study of Latino kindergarteners found that most had strong social skills on entering kindergarten, and that these skills predicted stronger mathematics learning. The researchers did find some differences in skill levels by family income level and by region of family origin. However, they cautioned that “gaps in preliteracy and numeracy skills that many Latino children from poor families bring to school cannot be broadly interpreted as demonstrating that these youngsters are holistically ‘at risk’ or that they lack the social skills demanded by kindergarten teachers” (Galindo & Fuller, 2010, p. 591).

Academic achievement inequities. Washington academic achievement data reflect a pattern of inequity across racial and ethnic groups. This inequity includes lower performance on math, reading and writing standardized tests, as well as lower graduation rates and higher rates of high-school drop-out for racial and ethnic minorities. There is a gap between whites and other racial/ethnic groups (except Asians) in most subjects and grades, and considerably lower graduation rates for some groups. For example, in 2005, 82 percent of white students graduated on time, while only 68 percent of black, 67 percent of Hispanic, and 61 percent of American Indian students graduated on time (Washington State OSPI, Washington Board of Education, Washington State Department of Health, n.d.). A 2009 report noted that the Washington drop-out rate had increased for all students, but had increased at a disproportionately high rate for African American and Asian Pacific Islander students (*Legislative Report Card on Social Equity*, 2009). Also note the challenge in the data reporting when one source says there is no gap between Asians and whites in most grades, and another says that Asian Pacific Islander students have a disproportionately high drop-out rate.

Inequities in academic achievement were recently documented and discussed in a series of reports requested by and presented to the Washington legislature. The reports focused on African American, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native American students (Contreras & Stritikus, 2008; Hune & Takeuchi, 2008; Takeuchi & Hune, 2008; The People, 2008; Washington State OSPI, 2008c). These reports not only presented test score data, but also discussed contextual issues such as demographic trends (e.g., the growing Latino population) and gaps in data reporting (e.g., need for disaggregation for some Asian subgroups) that further emphasize the significance of academic achievement disparities. For example, one report noted that the Latino student population in our state grew 372 percent between 1986 and 2007 compared to just 6 percent among white students, underscoring the importance of addressing disparities in outcomes in this growing group. See Appendix E for a summary of the recommendations from these reports.

The reports focused primarily on K-12 schools, but nearly all referenced the importance of access to high-quality early childhood programs in preparing children of color for school and helping to impact these disparities. They also noted the importance of ensuring that educational materials and approaches, in early learning and K-12, are culturally relevant and that educators reflect the diversity among the children and youth.

High-quality early learning experiences have the proven potential to provide all children with a solid foundation for success and to change the course of the cycle of inequity (Hanover Research Council, 2009a, 2009b). That potential is currently unrealized. The current inequities in young children's learning opportunities instead are likely to continue the cycle of disparities (Kagan, 2009a). For this reason, the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities (2010, p. 11) urges the state to prioritize early learning services under the ELP to target school districts where should have the largest academic achievement gaps.

In a national survey of parents of school-age children, low-income parents and those from some racial and ethnic groups were more interested than other parents in programs that offered

academic supports, and were more likely to be concerned about their children falling behind in academics over the summer. These parents see education as the key to a better life for their children. A program sensitive to the needs of all parents will seek to address these issues (Duffet, 2004).

(2) What are the gaps in preparation (early childhood services, systems and supports) that if filled, could better support these children?

Existing service and systems gaps, if meaningfully addressed, could offer promise to help close the overall preparation gap, according to the Build Initiative (2008), a multistate effort that helps states build a coordinated early learning system that responds to the needs of young children and their families.

Teacher preparation and diversity. As noted above, early learning professionals who work with children before school-age and outside of school do not need to have a college degree or much education in early learning. And an individual does not need any education or training to be an FFN or other unlicensed caregiver. For kindergarten through third grade teachers, the P-3 endorsement is voluntary. Many have had only one class in child development. The lack of background knowledge for many early learning professionals about child development, and their lack of knowledge and experience in working with diverse learners and families sets the stage for both the preparation gap and the achievement gap. In addition, it is an unfortunate fact that the lower the income of the student, the more likely the child is to be in a substandard school with teachers who do not have qualifications in early childhood development.

Research has found that the quality of early learning settings and of the early learning professionals' preparation has an impact on children's school readiness. While there are highly effective programs and services, the quality is uneven. In addition, "[w]hen enrollment and participation data are disaggregated by income, race/ethnicity, and language, there often are substantial gaps in participation and barriers to access to basic services" (Build Initiative, 2008). For example, DEL's parent needs assessment found that fewer Spanish speaking than English-speaking families reported participating in early learning services such as play groups, parent groups, and services for children with disabilities or special needs. The English-speaking parents who did not participate said that the services were not needed, their child was too young, or that they simply were not interested. The Spanish-speaking parents, on the other hand, were more likely to say they were not aware of the services or had conflicts based on the services' hours of availability (SRI International, 2008).

The level of cultural awareness and recognition of the array of early learning services and systems has not been formally studied. Data available related to the K-12 system hint at the likely gaps and questions for early childhood. Stakeholders interviewed for the five 2008 achievement gap reports mentioned above called for better preparation of educators to work with children from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. The Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities (2010, p. 10) also emphasizes the need for high-performing and culturally responsive teachers and staff for schools with large academic achievement gaps. Another common recommendation was to provide more language support for students of color.

Findings supporting these recommendations included some negative perceptions among educators of students from some ethnic groups, lower expectations of children of color, and an emphasis on monolingualism.

The educational achievement gap studies included recognition of a shortage of bilingual, bicultural teachers in the state. Scholars at the University of Washington report that having insufficient teachers of color impacts educational outcomes because children lack role models and parents lack comfort in interacting with teachers and administrators because of racism/discrimination or limited English speaking ability (Human Services Policy Center, 2005). The first of the common recommendations from the OSPI achievement gaps studies is to recruit, hire and retain people of color.

Health. Children are more likely to be prepared for and do well in school when they are healthy. Certain health risks contribute to academic risk. Primary health care providers play an important role helping to identify early childhood developmental concerns. Yet many children lack health insurance (75,000 estimated by DSHS) or access to primary health care.

Social determinants of health, such as race and income, are real and reflected in children's experiences, just as with academic achievement. In Washington, more than a quarter of all Hispanic, African American, and Native American/American Indian mothers do not receive prenatal care in the first trimester when the fetus is most vulnerable (Human Services Policy Center, 2005). Poor children are most likely to experience health problems but the least likely to receive care or have health insurance (Human Services Policy Center, 2009). In examining how racial and income disparities in health contribute to gaps in school readiness, Currie (2005) found that racial differences in child health, as well as maternal health and behaviors, may together account for as much as 25 percent of the racial gap in school readiness.

Social-emotional development. Social-emotional skills, such as the children's ability to recognize and manage their emotions, and the ability to form and sustain relationships, directly impact their ability to learn and their cognitive development (Cohen , Onunaku, Clotheir, & Popper, 2005). A 2003 DSHS report, which estimated that 7 percent of children between birth and 18 years, and 9 percent of children living in families below 250 percent of the federal poverty level in Washington have serious emotional disturbances. This report also noted a "primary concern was the paucity of estimates of serious emotional disturbance in young children" (Washington State DSHS, 2003).

Choices available to parents. Differences in child care arrangements and the choices available to parents impact early childhood experiences and outcomes. Institutional arrangements, policies and practices put barriers on the choices available to parents, and these barriers can disproportionately affect low-income families, and children and families of color. Affordability also influences those choices. Child care subsidies are disproportionately used by families of color, but the cost of care has risen to double the amount of subsidies (*Legislative Report Card*, 2009).

A lack of licensed care during the hours parents work also shapes the choices families make. There are few child care facilities in the state that offer care past 6:30 p.m. (19 percent), over the weekend (17 percent) or overnight (9 percent) (WSCCR&RN, 2008). Many parents turn to FFN care to meet the need for care in nonstandard hours. As noted above, FFN care has some clear strengths. However, most FFN providers are not trained in child development, and many would like additional supports and resources. Almost 20 percent of FFN caregivers care for a child with special physical, emotional, behavioral or developmental needs (Human Services Policy Center, 2002).

Another gap related to parents is their participation in decisions for early learning programs and the early learning system. A 2008 study by Social Venture Partners Seattle sheds some light on this. The study examined the connections and collaborations among early learning stakeholders and decision makers in Washington. Findings of this initial study showed that racial and ethnic diversity among the early learning stakeholders connected to a statewide network of their peers is lower than racial and ethnic diversity in the state overall (Social Venture Partners, 2009).

Gaps in data. We do not have the data we need to evaluate effectively how well we are doing for children in Washington. There is very limited information across the prenatal through third grade continuum. Beyond birth record information, there are very few points at which data are collected on a scale that would allow policymakers to draw conclusions about children’s well-being and early learning experiences, or about the best ways to address early learning gaps. National and Washington state scholars have made a number of recommendations to make more data and more useful data available to inform early learning services, systems and supports (Brandon, Loeb, & Magarati, 2009; Brown & Moore, 2009; Bruner & Wright, 2009; Kagan, 2009a; Stagner, George, & Ballard, 2009). Broadly, their recommendations include the following:

- Collect common information related to early learning, school-age programs and overall child well-being for children birth through third grade.

- Monitor levels of student and parent engagement.

- Collect annual data that describes all of the different settings (including FFN care). In Washington, establish a statewide Quality Rating and Improvement System to measure both educator and program quality.

- Collect longitudinal data linking early childhood data systems with K-12 data systems.

- Ensure that all data collection efforts track basic information about children’s economic and social background as well as their racial, ethnic and language background, and enable drawing conclusions about the experiences of children with different characteristics.

- Ensure that data are disaggregated by race and ethnicity and that this is done in consistent ways over time.

- Involve parent, family and diverse voices in developing data collection and reporting systems.

(3) Once children arrive at school, how well is their learning both in and out of school connected to their prior learning?

Children’s success in school and in life must be built on a foundation of seamless learning during their earliest years. Early learning teachers and administrators must work together across settings and grade levels to link children’s learning experiences across these critical years. Children are more likely to grow into independent, able learners, and to succeed in school and beyond, if they have a strong, solid early learning base. Planning, curricula, professional development, and assessment need to be integrated across the six years of prekindergarten through third grade (Foundation for Child Development, 2008; Shore, 2009). In addition, as noted above, schools need to be ready to meet the individual needs of their students, and to help them make the transition from home and early care settings into school, and into any programs that the children attend before and/or after school.

BENEFITS OF HIGH-QUALITY EARLY LEARNING

Given the size of the needs and challenges above, some may wonder if we in Washington can afford to address them. But the better question to ask is: Can we afford not to? Several leading economists have concluded that there is a significant cost to society from failing to ensure that all children are adequately prepared for kindergarten. Based on long-term studies of three programs that provided high-quality early learning through third grade with strong alignment, researchers have concluded that every dollar invested in the early learning programs returned between \$3 and \$17 in benefits. These benefits include:

- Lower costs for special education;
- Reduced need to repeat grades in school, lowering school costs;
- Lower costs for child welfare;
- Lower costs for public health and social welfare from teen pregnancy;
- Reduced juvenile and, later, adult crime, lowering criminal justice costs; and
- Increased tax revenue from successful students’ increased earnings as adults (RAND Corporation, 2008).

It is important to note that these early learning programs were high in quality (such as having well-educated, well-trained and well-compensated teachers, and a high teacher-child ratio) and provided bridge programs into second or third grade (Galinsky, 2006).

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy estimated the benefits of a high-quality early childhood education for low-income 3- and 4-year-olds through high school graduation.

Table 2. Cost Savings from High-Quality Preschool for Low-Income Children

Savings per Youth

Savings per Youth

Increased high school graduation	\$9,966
Reduced K-12 grade repetition	\$206
Reduced K-12 special education	\$135
Reduced crime	\$5,068
Reduced child abuse and neglect	\$1,919
Reduced alcohol and drug abuse	\$278
Offset child care costs	\$1,897
Total benefits/youth	\$19,469
Less cost/youth	\$7,709
Net savings/youth	\$11,760

Source: Aos, 2006, p. 6

In addition, researchers have identified that investing in early education has a greater payback over time than investments for remedial programs for school-age children or job training for disadvantaged adults. They conclude that the most productive way to strengthen the future workforce and improve quality of life is to invest in the early childhood years, especially for at-risk children (Knudsen, Heckman, Cameron & Shonkoff, 2006). Federal Reserve bank economists Arthur J. Rolnick and Rob Grunewald have concluded that “investing in early childhood development yields a much higher return than most government-funded economic development initiatives” (Rolnick & Grunewald, 2007).

NEED FOR A SYSTEM OF EARLY LEARNING

Early learning happens in many settings—home, FFN care, child care, preschool, kindergarten through third grade, libraries, faith organizations, parks, play groups, and many other community settings. Early learning also is shaped by many people—parents, guardians, grandparents, other relatives, child care providers, teachers, health care providers and a variety of caring adults—and programs—including those of government agencies, nonprofits, private businesses, faith-related organizations and community groups. Many are doing an excellent job of preparing children for success in life. Many good programs, services and supports have been successfully serving children and families for years.

Similarly, school-age programs take place in many community settings and are organized by many types of organizations including schools. They offer academic support, educational enrichment, cultural and social development activities, recreation, visual and performing arts, tutoring, homework services and more. The programs generally operate before school, after school and/or during summer and other school breaks.

This variety offers choices for families according to their own values, culture and interests, and for organizations to offer programs they believe are important. However, when everything

takes place in separate silos, each program and service has its own objectives, approaches and guidelines for who is eligible, and understanding of what children should know and be able to do. Families have a harder time finding the services and information they want. Resources can be wasted because of duplication of effort. Different efforts may even work at cross-purposes.

There have been a number of efforts to build bridges between existing programs. But the pieces are still disjointed. What is needed, as one stakeholder said in 2009 opinion research, “We need an overarching vision of the system and a shared understanding [of what we’re trying to bring about]” (Organizational Research Services, 2009).

What an early learning system is. In a system each piece is independent. But each piece also interacts with the other pieces to form a stronger, unified whole. The whole becomes more than the sum of the parts. An early learning system brings together the independent systems for:

- Prenatal care;
- Child care and preschool;
- Kindergarten through third grade;
- Health and nutrition;
- Social-emotional development and mental health;
- Parent and community partnerships;
- Parenting education and resources;
- Higher education in child development and early childhood education; and
- Professional development for early learning professionals.

An early learning system is a way for people to work together in a coordinated way toward a common goal for children. The system is the various policies, programs and services for young children, and for the adults who care for and teach them. When these elements each work well *and* align with the other elements, children will have the best opportunity to reach their full potential.

An early learning system is made up of the people and organizations involved with early learning and the programs, services and supports they provide. In addition, an early learning system needs an infrastructure to bring people and activities together in a coordinated way. This infrastructure includes an agreed-on governance structure, financing methods and sources, methods of accountability (including indicators that provide a basis for evaluation of the system), standards or principles, and methods of communication.

Current efforts. There are a number of things happening in our state that are moving toward creating an early learning system. These include:

- The Washington State Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution (August 11, 2009), in which the Department of Early Learning, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Thrive by Five Washington made a commitment to collaborate to support school readiness for all children (see Appendix B). The attached Accountability

Framework (Appendix C) includes goals and specific responsibilities for each partner to carry out. The partners provide quarterly progress reports, which are posted on DEL's Web site.

- Since 2007, the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) has been meeting to advise the Department of Early Learning. ELAC consists of representatives from around the state. It meets regularly to provide advice and recommendations to the Department so that strategies and actions are well-informed and broadly supported by parents, child care providers, health/safety experts and interested members of the public.
- A variety of local and regional coalitions are working to coordinate efforts and expand early learning opportunities in their area. An example is Support for Early Learning and Families (SELF) in Clark County, a partnership of local organizations that is pursuing strategies to build a community that nurtures the full potential of their youngest children.
- Since 2005, the Kids Matter framework has helped to give a common frame of reference to planning efforts in local communities and statewide (see Appendix D). These efforts have brought together people working in the areas of early education, health, K-12 schools, social services, family support, parenting education, and more.
- The Professional Development Consortium has been meeting since 2008 to develop recommendations for “improving the coordination of existing resources and strategies; define core competencies ... for early learning professionals; and develop recommendations for a plan to implement a statewide, comprehensive, and integrated pathway of preparation and continuing professional development and support for the early learning and school-age program workforce.” (HB 1943) See Appendix I. for the Consortium's draft model of the professional development system. The Consortium is to provide recommendations by December 31, 2010.
- Washington is one of 38 states that has an active and vibrant afterschool network that is working toward creating strong community and school partnerships. In addition, the Washington Regional Afterschool Project has been delivering professional development opportunities to providers across the state since 2000.
- Culture of Literacy, an initiative led by Thrive by Five Washington and including more than 22 stakeholders, is working to develop a system of evidence based early literacy programs both on the statewide and community levels. Thrive is utilizing some of the early learning coalitions to seed and expand these programs with private funding.
- Kindergarten transition projects are underway in some school districts. These bring together families, *school staff*, child care providers, Head Start, and preschools to help children make a smooth transition into kindergarten and help schools prepare for the children who will soon enter their doors. For example, the Yakima School District and Ready by Five hold a summer program for incoming kindergarteners where the children meet their teachers, get acquainted with the school, and get an introduction to common classroom practices, and where the teachers visit the students' families at home.



SECTION II

RESOURCES AND INFORMATION SOURCES

“What we see in the crib is the greatest mind that has ever existed, the most powerful learning machine in the universe.”

The Scientist in the Crib, 2000

This plan draws on the wisdom of prior planning efforts and sources in Washington, and from federal sources and other states' efforts.

Kids Matter. Kids Matter is the cornerstone on which this plan has been built. It served as a way to organize the development of the plan. Kids Matter also was the starting point for identifying the outcomes and strategies in this plan.

Developed in 2005, Kids Matter is a comprehensive, strategic framework for building the early childhood system in Washington in order to improve outcomes for children. See Appendix D for the Kids Matter framework. It was developed through a partnership of the Department of Health, the Head Start–State Collaboration Office (now part of the Department of Early Learning), and the Washington Build Initiative (an early childhood effort co-led in Washington by the Head Start–State Collaboration Office and the Foundation for Early Learning). Kids Matter has served as a common organizing framework for local communities and for organizations working in the areas of child health and development, early care and education, and parent and family support (Washington Dept. of Health, 2007).

Kids Matter identifies specific, achievable outcomes within four goal areas:

- Access to health insurance and medical homes;
- Mental health and social-emotional development;
- Early care and education/child care; and
- Parenting information and support.

Woven through these areas is a family support approach to achieving outcomes within the four goal areas. All the outcomes move toward achieving Kids Matter's overarching goal: *Children are healthy and ready for school* (Kids Matter, 2005).

Washington Learns. Washington Learns illustrated the need for developing an early learning plan and garnered the momentum necessary to support its development by identifying important outcomes for early learning as part of the overall system of educating children and young people in Washington from early care through college and graduate programs. It also promoted the idea of partnering with the K-12 system to support math skills and create a more personalized approach to learning, in order to help every student be successful in school and life

Washington Learns was formed by Governor Gregoire in 2005. It involved a public-private steering committee and advisory committees on early learning, K-12 education and higher education. These panels conducted an 18-month review of Washington's education system, its structure and its funding. The goal was to create a roadmap for building a world-class, seamless education system that prepares all Washington students to succeed in today's global economy.

Washington Learns identified five principles to guide development of this education system, which apply equally well to the early learning system:

Share accountability for continuous improvement.

Tailor education to fit the needs of individuals.

Bring creativity into the classroom.

Engage parents, communities, and private partners.

Commit the necessary human and fiscal resources.

The final report, *Washington Learns: World-Class. Learner-Focused, Seamless Education* (2006), calls out early learning as “a smart investment” and includes it as one of five key initiatives. The report identified 10 strategies for reform of early learning and their expected results. Several of these strategies have been accomplished, and others are underway.

Achievement Gap reports. Closing the preparation gap is one of the priorities of this early learning plan. As noted above (Section I.C.3.), advisory committees in Washington have recently presented reports to the legislature on the achievement gaps for African American students (Washington State OSPI, 2008c), Asian American students (Hune & Takeuchi, 2008), Latino students (Contreras & Stritikus, 2008), Native American students (The People, 2008), and Pacific Islander students (Takeuchi & Hune, 2008).

Early Learning Joint Resolution Partnership resolution. As noted above, DEL, OSPI and Thrive by Five Washington have signed an Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution to collaborate in supporting school readiness for all children (see Appendix B). The resolution’s attached Accountability Framework (Appendix C) identifies 10 areas that the organizations will pursue, with responsibilities listed for each. These areas are:

- Safety and well-being of children in child care and education programs
- Parenting information and support
- Voluntary quality rating and improvement system (QRIS)
- Kindergarten readiness assessment process
- Enhanced early learning options for all students
- Public-private partnerships
- Funding opportunities
- Early literacy
- Revised Benchmarks
- Statewide early learning plan and response to the Governor’s letter

The partners are providing quarterly progress updates.

Funding requirements. Federal and state programs usually have some requirements set by the funder. Examples are the income guidelines for families to participate in Early Head Start and Head Start. In addition, a federal grant program, Race to the Top, and the proposed Early

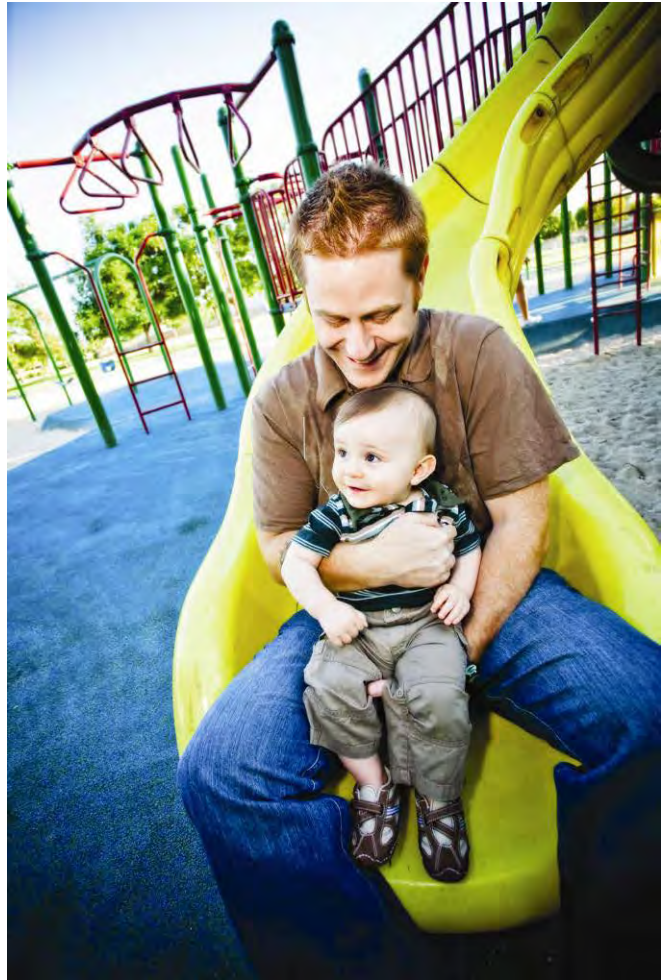
Learning Challenge Fund would offer funding for early learning activities. (See Appendix G.) This plan takes these federal and state requirements into account both in terms of the populations to be served and the activities allowed by the funder.

Stakeholder comments. During the process of developing this plan, stakeholders provided comments about what they would like to see in the plan, and how well the elements of the plan appear to serve the needs of children, families, caregivers, early learning providers and teachers in their community. The organizations leading development of this plan have reviewed the comments and made changes in and additions to the plan in response (see Appendices K and L).

BUILD Initiative technical assistance. The BUILD Initiative provided technical assistance and resource information throughout the development of this plan. BUILD is a multistate, multifoundation effort focused on young children and their development. Washington is one of seven states with whom BUILD is currently working to help construct a coordinated system of programs, policies and services that responds to the needs of young children and their families in that state, and uses resources effectively to prepare young children for a successful future.

“As a mom and former preschool teacher, I’ve seen firsthand the positive impact that high-quality early childhood education has on our students. We know that children who access high-quality early childhood education have a much better shot at career success than those who did not. Washington state is a leader in this effort, and the Early Learning Plan is an important step forward.”

US Senator Patty Murray, D-Washington



SECTION III

PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING THE PLAN

“I would like to extend the gratitude of the S’Klallam Tribe toward Washington State and its new early-learning plan. As Native Americans we are ready and willing to collaborate with our neighbors to help further the educational programs and improved learning environments for our youngest children. We stand ready to help achieve the best educational plan possible, and look forward to further work with the state in this regard.”

Jeromy Sullivan, Port Gamble S’Klallam
Tribal Council Chairman

Sponsors. The Department of Early Learning, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Thrive by Five Washington are co-sponsoring this early learning plan. Other state agencies important to this work and who have participated in the plan’s development are the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). Funding for the planning process has come from Thrive by Five Washington (with support from The Boeing Company, Save the Children and King County United Way), DEL and OSPI.

Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC). ELAC is an advisory body to DEL, and charged with working with DEL to develop a statewide early learning plan to ensure school readiness for all children (RCW 43.215.090). ELAC members were briefed on the progress of work to create this plan on a quarterly basis, and reviewed the draft and final plan.

Early Learning Plan (ELP) Steering Committee. ELAC created an Early Learning Plan Steering Committee to oversee development of the plan. The Steering Committee met monthly through December 2009, then roughly bimonthly to review progress and provide guidance.

Work groups. The Steering Committee formed four work groups to develop the pieces of the plan in each of the four Kids Matter areas (*domains*, see Kids Matter framework in Appendix D). The Steering Committee asked the work groups to review Kids Matter for their domain, and decide if it needed to be updated, changed or expanded. This process led to changes in the scope of two work groups:

- The child health work group broadened its focus from the “Access to health insurance and medical homes” domain of Kids Matter to “Child Health and Development.”
- The parent work group broadened its focus from the “Parenting information and support” domain of Kids Matter to “Parent and Community Partnerships.”
- The Early Care and Education Work Group and the Social, Emotional and Mental Health Work Groups kept their focus as in Kids Matter. In addition to the four domain work groups, the three sponsoring organizations and ELAC created two other work groups:
 - A *Vision* Work Group, which developed the draft vision statement for the plan; and
 - A Community Engagement Work Group, which helped to plan outreach targeted to communities that often are under-represented in planning process, and to get their feedback on the draft plan.

Development of Recommendations to the Governor. While the work to develop this early learning plan was getting organized, Governor Gregoire sent a letter to the heads of DEL and OSPI, requesting recommendations on what early childhood education should be available to all children (Appendix A). DEL and OSPI set up a December 1st Drafting Team to develop a response

to the governor. This drafting team included the chairs of each of the four ELP domain work groups.

Since there was so much overlap between the work of the December 1st Drafting Team and the work groups developing the ELP, the three sponsoring organizations decided to merge the two processes. The work groups continued developing outcomes and strategies for their area of the ELP. The December 1st Drafting Team formed subgroups to look at the overarching issues of financing and indicators. The Drafting Team as a whole considered what the infrastructure needs would be. See Appendix J for the Recommendations to the Governor.

Management Team. To coordinate the work of both the Recommendations to the Governor and of the ELP, the three sponsoring organizations formed a Management Team. This group included members from each of the three sponsor organizations, plus the co-chairs of ELAC. A consulting team was hired in July 2009 to assist in coordinating the process and to draft the ELP.

The merged structure is shown in the chart in Figure 5.

Criteria for choosing outcomes and strategies. The Management Team identified a set of criteria for the work groups to use in choosing outcomes and strategies to be included in the ELP. See Appendix F.

Outreach methods leading to Dec. 1, 2009, Draft ELP. The three sponsoring organizations developed a communications and outreach plan for the development of the draft ELP in Fall 2009. Because of the short timeline to develop the Recommendations to the Governor and Draft ELP by December 1, 2009, most of this outreach occurred in the two-and-a-half week period between October 26 and November 11, 2009.

The outreach methods included the following:

- A Web page with ongoing postings of documents and online surveys.
- Regular e-mail updates and opportunities to comment sent to 400 “key communicators” who represented a variety of organizations and who requested updates by filling out a Web form.
- A PowerPoint for use in presentations.
- An input form in hard copy and online for collecting comments.
- Briefings by DEL’s director with legislators on committees of jurisdiction and legislative staff.
- Community meetings sponsored by the League of Education Voters and held in Bellingham, Jamestown S’Klallam Tribal Community Center, Kirkland, Sequim, Seattle, Silverdale, Spokane, Tacoma, and other locations statewide.

Section III Process for Developing the Plan

- A statewide K-20 Network meeting, sponsored by Educational Service Districts and 10 Child Care Resource and Referral agencies.
- Meetings with the Achievement Gap Committees to review early drafts for the plan.

The sponsor organizations gathered input on the recommendations and plan, and compiled a summary by theme. The input was provided to the teams that drafted the two documents, who determined what changes to make in response. These responses are also captured in the comment summary (see Appendix L).

In addition, leaders of DEL and Thrive by Five participated in a live television interview on November 20, 2009, about the plan. DEL, Thrive and OSPI held a Webinar for statewide media on December 1, 2009, to announce the release of the Draft ELP and the opportunities for public input.

Outreach methods for Sept. 2010 ELP. DEL, OSPI and Thrive led outreach on the Draft ELP between December 1, 2009, and June 18, 2010. The goal was to ensure broad awareness of both the purpose of the draft plan and the opportunity to weigh in on the draft. DEL posted the Draft Plan on its website at www.del.wa.gov/plan, along with an online survey for comments. Three new draft strategies also were posted online for comment as they were completed. The partner agencies met with and presented to interested policymakers and stakeholders, including:

- Policymakers: Meetings with the governor, and with individual legislators, legislative committees, and staff.
- Early learning and care providers: Eastern Washington Association for the Education of Young Children Conference; Eastern Washington Family Child Care Association Conference; Infant and Early Childhood Conference; Policy Council of ECEAP & Head Start; Washington Association for the Education of Young Children Growing Connections Webinar; Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP winter meeting
- Early learning and children's organizations: Foundation for Early Learning 10th Anniversary Luncheon; KCTS Early Attachment Summit; Snohomish County Children's Commission; Thrive by Five Washington Board of Directors
- School-age providers: School's Out Washington
- K-12 educators and superintendents: Association of Washington School Principals; school superintendents in King and Pierce counties; Sumner School District ELP meeting; Washington Association of School Administrators
- Education organizations: Association of Educational Service Districts Annual Conference; League of Women Voters event; State Board of Education; Washington Association for Better Schools; Washington State PTA Annual Convention; Washington State University President's Summit on Early Learning

- Organizations of people of color and Tribes: African- American advocates (convened by Washington State Commission on African American Affairs); Suquamish Tribe; Washington State Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs Education Committee
- Disability and special needs organizations: Hearing, Speech & Deafness Center; Kindering Center; Kitsap Interagency Coordinating Council
- Early learning coalitions: Inland Northwest Alliance; Olympic-Kitsap Early Learning Coalition breakfast; Snohomish County Early Learning Coalition; Statewide coalition meeting; Thrive Demonstration Communities; Whatcom County Early Learning Coalition
- Business leaders: Bellingham business breakfast; Early Learning Leadership Breakfast (Spokane); East King County Chambers of Commerce Legislative Coalition; Leadership Institute of South Puget Sound; Rotary Club of Silverdale; United Ways of Washington business leaders breakfast, Bainbridge Island
- Librarians: Early Learning Public Library Partnership
- News media: KAOS Radio; KTBW
- E-newsletters: Early learning organizations included information in e-news alerts encouraging recipients to fill out the online survey.

See Appendix K for a summary of the feedback from this public outreach, and responses indicating how the feedback shaped the 2010 ELP.

Outreach tool kit. DEL and Thrive developed a tool kit for local groups to use to hold meetings about the Draft Plan and give the opportunity to comment. The tool kit included templates in English and Spanish for invitations and agendas, a PowerPoint and handout, and background information and a questions-and-answers sheet for presenters. DEL and Thrive distributed a total of 40 tool kits in English and one in Spanish, which in turn were forwarded to others.

Targeted outreach. The outreach team conducted targeted outreach from mid-April through late May 2010 to 125 local leaders, to help ensure we reached out to various constituencies around the state: the business community, cultural/ethnic communities, disability/special education, higher education, law enforcement, K-12, faith organizations, parents and professionals.

Cultural competency review. Betty Emarita, a nationally recognized cultural competency expert from Minnesota, conducted an extensive review of the draft Early Learning Plan and provided recommendations regarding strengths and challenges associated with addressing issues of cultural relevance and equity in developing an early learning system for Washington. Her review and recommendations focused on two key areas: (1) identifying key concepts that are missing in the ELP and flagging language or other frames that will make the document inaccessible, unusable or unpalatable to Washington's culturally and ethnically diverse residents; and (2) a review of the summary of themes and comments gathered from ELP

outreach processes (December 2009-June 2010) and suggestions for ways that the concepts in the plan can be more specific to ensure the inclusion of diverse and underrepresented communities.

Emarita's approach to the review was driven by questions synthesized from research and comments from the ELP outreach survey and other materials. Her review was based on the following questions posed from the perspectives of minority cultural communities:

Do I see my community/my family/myself in this framework?

Can I address the things that are important to my community/my family/me through this process?

Are there mechanisms through which my community/I can make meaningful adaptations to ELP strategies and implementation over time?

Where are the opportunities in ELP strategies and implementation for my community, my family, myself?

Following the review, Emarita provided three recommendations regarding immediate additions to the ELP that were accepted by the three partner agencies (DEL, OSPI and Thrive by Five Washington) and incorporated into the ELP. These recommendations focused on the importance of creating a governance structure and data systems that represent the diversity in Washington state, and to ensure that feedback loops are created as a key element in the ongoing development and implementation of the ELP. Specifically, Emarita recommended that: *"the governance mechanism will include feedback loops to generate mutually beneficial two-way learning opportunities. At the least, the feedback loops will extend across tiers from formal and informal community-based organizations, institutions and agencies, to county and regional planning entities, to the state level . . ."* These ideas are incorporated in the governance description, Section VI.A.1., below.

“Science is literally showing us how babies and young children learn and grow. This early learning plan will help educate and support parents and caregivers – so that all children get the best possible start in life.”

Washington State Representative Ruth Kagi



SECTION IV

VISION, PRINCIPLES AND SCOPE

“We should raise the bar when it comes to early learning programs...Today, some early learning programs are excellent. Some are mediocre. And some are wasting what studies show are—by far—a child’s most formative years.”

President Barack Obama, 2009

VISION AND PRINCIPLES

The ELP Steering Committee, work groups, ELAC and three sponsoring organizations developed the following vision statement and guiding principles for this plan.

VISION STATEMENT

The first step in creating this plan was to craft a statement that describes a long-range vision for the state early learning system, and the guiding principles, or values, to shape this plan.

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.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF WASHINGTON'S EARLY LEARNING SYSTEM:

1. Be child-focused and family-centered. Promote meaningful partnerships with parents and families, since they are children's first teachers.
2. Promote alignment of early learning services and programs as a continuum that is comprehensive, supports whole child development, and is available to all children.
3. Be flexible, culturally responsive, accessible, relevant and respectful, and reflect the needs of local communities and individual children.
4. Be developmentally appropriate and, where applicable, evidence based (as available), and address each stage of child development from prenatal through third grade.
5. Build on strengths—of children, parents, families, providers, programs, communities and prior planning efforts, such as Kids Matter and Washington Learns.
6. Develop a tiered approach to addressing the early learning needs of all children in the state, identifying those strategies that apply to all, some and few children.
7. Provide supports, services and programs for at-risk children and families to close the preparation gap.
8. Promote high-quality early learning to increase school readiness and success in school and in life.
9. Include professional development and support for early learning and care providers.
10. Promote transparency and accountability in all policies, services and programs.
11. Provide ways to measure progress over time.
12. Identify funding sources and promote adequate financing of the system.
13. Provide for meaningful stakeholder review and comment on the Washington State Early Learning Plan as it is being developed and on the system's performance over time.

SCOPE OF THIS PLAN

This plan provides a way to build over the next 10 years a comprehensive early learning system in Washington with continuity from prenatal through third grade, and to guide policy, funding and ongoing work by organizations and agencies. It identifies the outcomes we hope to reach for children and families, and offers strategies for actions that will move toward achieving these outcomes.

Parameters. Those involved in developing this plan (see Section III and the Acknowledgements) agreed on a number of parameters for the plan. Many of these are included in the Guiding Principles. They include:

Whole child. The plan attempts to take into account all areas of a child’s growth, development and learning.

Age range. The plan addresses children’s needs and well-being from prenatal through third grade. It includes recommendations for the parents, families, caregivers, early learning and school-age providers, and teachers who care for or work with children in this age range.

All, some and few. This plan offers strategies that will be available to **all** children who are in the relevant age group or to all families. The plan also includes strategies that are more targeted. These are strategies for **some** children, parents, families, caregivers and/or early learning professionals who may need extra support. Finally, there are also strategies for the **few** for whom special programs are needed. See the table below.

Equity and preparation gap. The strategies aim to address the lack of equity of opportunity that many children and families face because of race, ethnicity or family income, and the preparation gap that stems from a variety of risk factors.

Cultural relevance and respect. The programs, services and supports for children and families must be relevant to and respectful of their culture and language.

Local connections and partnerships. This plan can work only if everyone involved in early childhood work plays a part. While some of the strategies are programs and services that the state offers, many will need the leadership and support of local community efforts, nonprofits, public-private partnerships, and other organizations and businesses.

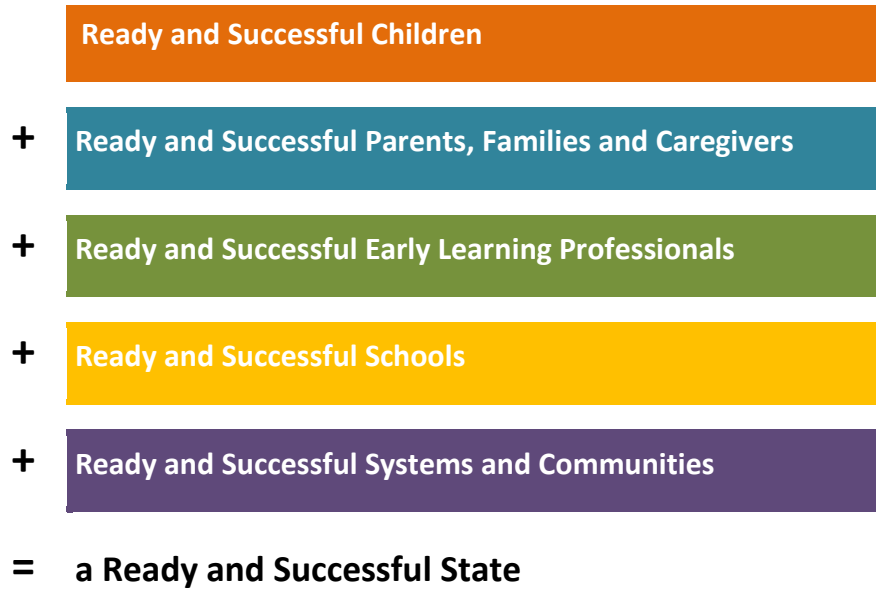
Table 3. All, Some, Few Approach

All (also called Universal, Primary, or Promotion)	The general public or a whole population group, such as preschool that is available to all 3- and 4-year-old children.
Some (also called Selected, Secondary, or Prevention)	Individuals or a subgroup of the population who is at-risk, such as home visiting for teen mothers. This category can also apply to benefits for those who are doing exceptionally well, such as to reward high-quality early learning programs.
Few (also called Indicated, Tertiary, or Early Intervention)	High-risk individuals/families, such as early intervention services for children at risk of developmental delay.

Limitations. The plan is being created during a recession, when the state and many local government budgets are being cut. For this reason, the implementation of some strategies may take longer than would be possible in more robust economic times. However, the phased implementation that is being used to roll out full-day kindergarten might be used effectively with other strategies in this plan.

“READY AND SUCCESSFUL” FRAMEWORK

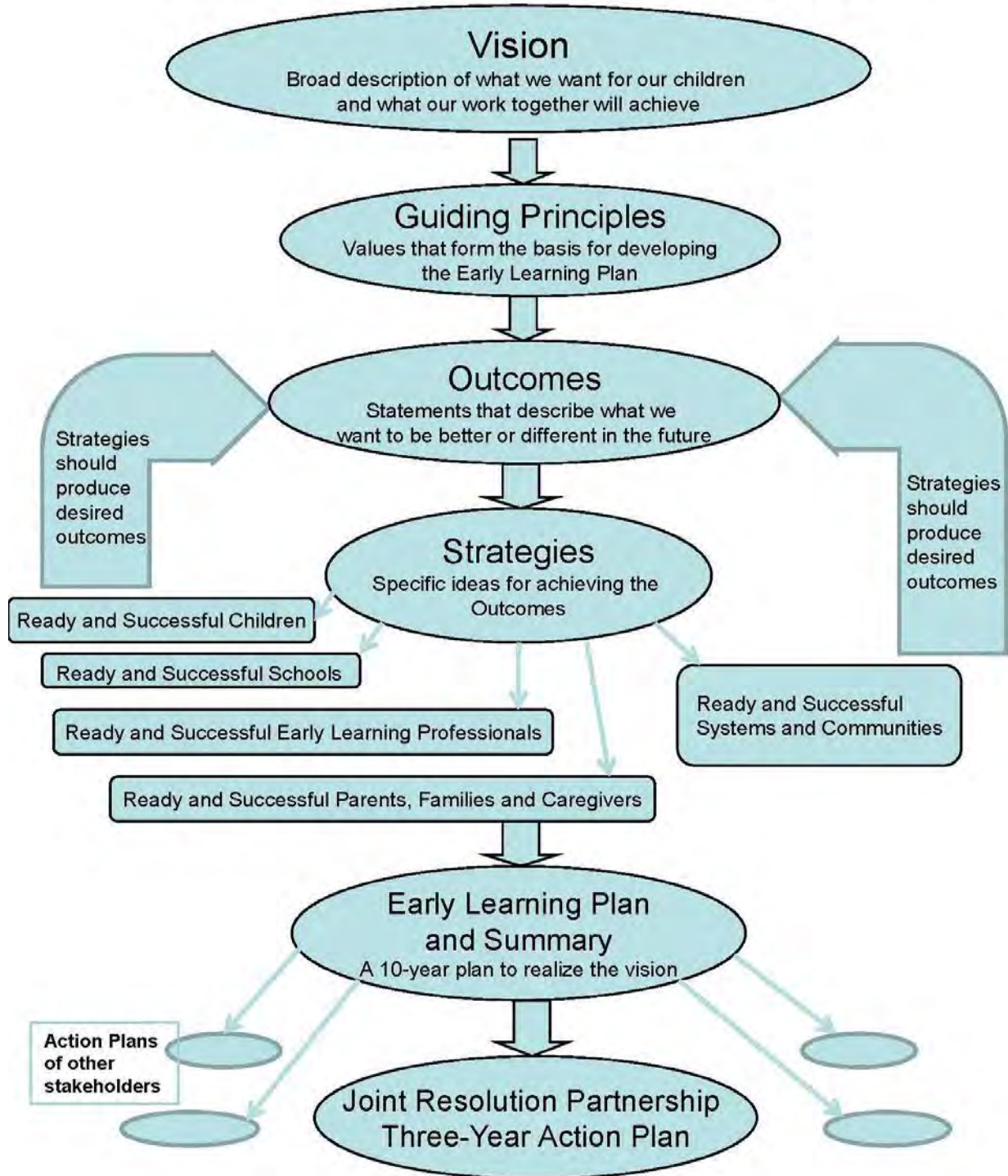
To describe the early learning system, this plan uses a framework that emphasizes the vision that all children should be ready for school and for success in school and life. This framework comes from the Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution of DEL, Thrive by Five Washington and OSPI, and is based on the National Education Goals Panel’s definition of school readiness (National Education Goals Panel, 1998). The framework is:



This framework emphasizes the “whole child” and the child’s family, as well as professionals, schools, communities and systems. To create a comprehensive early learning system, this plan also includes the efforts of other education, health and human services systems, which have the common goal of achieving better outcomes for children and their families.

Figure 5. Washington Early Learning Plan Overview

Washington State Early Learning Plan Structure



“Early learning begins at birth with parents as a child’s most important teachers. We know that children who are enrolled in early education programs are less likely to fail grades, need special education services or become involved in the criminal justice system. The message is clear: We must continue our long-term commitment to support our littlest learners from birth to third grade.”

Washington State Senator Rosemary McAuliffe



SECTION V
OUTCOMES AND STRATEGIES
FOR READINESS AND
EARLY SCHOOL SUCCESS

“Simply put, alignment means families, teachers and providers work together to ensure each learning opportunity builds on children’s prior learning and experiences, and that new skills and concepts learned prepare them for what they will learn next.”

Starting Strong in Washington State: Early learning lessons and success stories

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2010

Three important terms for understanding this section:

Early learning – Throughout this plan, “early learning” includes all learning and development for a child from prenatal through third grade. Early learning includes all areas (called “domains”) of development. These are described in the *Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks* (State of Washington, 2005) as: (1) physical well-being, health and motor development; (2) social and emotional development; (3) approaches toward learning; (4) cognition and general knowledge; and (5) language, communication and literacy.

- **Outcomes** – Statements describing what we want to be different or better in the future.
- **Strategies** – Specific ideas for achieving the outcomes.

What’s included here. The outcomes and strategies in this section were developed by four work groups for this project (see Section III. Process for Developing this Plan). Each work group focused on one subject area in the Kids Matter framework: Child Health and Development; Early Care and Education; Family and Community Partnerships; and Social, Emotional and Mental Health. The three sponsoring organizations asked each work group to build off the Kids Matter framework to identify what is needed in its subject area in order to develop the early learning system in our state. What resulted is uneven, but not unusual, since different aspects of the system reflect different levels of need in terms of policies, outcomes and strategies to move the system forward. This unevenness reflects the complexity of this work and the need to approach the Early Learning Plan from a variety of levels.

The outcomes and strategies in this plan represent and support the Guiding Principles (see Section IV) and the agreed-on parameters of serving prenatal to third grade, and all children, families and providers, with an initial focus of closing the preparation gap (see Scope of this Plan in Section IV).

READY AND SUCCESSFUL CHILDREN

Outcomes

- A. All children have optimal physical health, mental health, oral health and nutrition.
- B. Pregnant and postpartum women receive health, nutrition and support services to optimize the pregnancy and the health of their newborns.
- C. All children have developmentally appropriate social-emotional, language, literacy, numeracy and cognitive skills, and demonstrate positive mental health and well being.
- D. Families have access to high-quality early learning programs and services that are culturally competent and affordable for those who choose them.
- E. All children enter kindergarten healthy and emotionally, socially and cognitively ready to succeed in school and in life.

Strategies

#1

Strategy #1. Nutrition in Pregnancy and Early Childhood

What it is. Optimize nutrition during pregnancy and early childhood by increasing breastfeeding, access to healthy food (e.g., in full-day kindergarten), and food security, through coordinated nutrition information and support for expectant parents, parents of children birth through third grade, families, caregivers and young children.

Children need good nutrition to be healthy and ready for success in school and life. Our state has a number of **evidence-based**, effective, public and private programs that help support optimal nutrition for expectant parents, young children and their families. What is needed is to leverage existing partnerships, encourage cross-program connections, and work together on policy and programmatic strategies, and public education. The existing programs that focus on nutrition or have a strong nutrition component include the following:

WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children) addresses the nutritional needs of low-income clients, but is not fully utilized.

Breastfeeding Coalition of Washington is a statewide coalition of 22 local coalitions, coordinated by WithinReach.

Maternity Support Services (MSS) addresses the nutritional needs of low-income pregnant women on Medicaid.

Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN) program's nutrition services address the entire population of children under 18, however access is limited.

Basic Food Program (aka SNAP or food stamps) addresses the nutrition needs of low-income clients and is not fully utilized.

Food banks may be accessed by the entire population, however their resources are limited.

School nutrition programs are available to all students both during the school year and in summer months.

WithinReach's Family Food Hotline and Parent Help 123 (www.parenthelp123.org) are open to all who want to learn about health and food resources in their community, including eligibility screening and application assistance for WIC and Basic Food.

Why it will work. Research shows that healthy, well-nourished children are prepared to learn and able to take advantage of educational opportunities. Studies demonstrate that undernourishment, even for short periods of time, negatively impacts the behavior of children, their school performance, their attendance, and their ability to concentrate and perform complex tasks. Inadequate nutrition during childhood can have lasting effects and compromise cognitive development and school performance.

Breastfed babies have fewer and usually milder illnesses. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding for at least one year and exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months. DSHS at the state level and the federal CDC support breastfeeding coalitions as an integral process to promote and support breastfeeding. Nutrition services that Maternity Support Services (MSS) offers to pregnant women have reduced low birth weight and premature birth. Breastfeeding education and support increase the likelihood of breastfeeding practice, which improves health outcomes.

Research has shown WIC increases the overall health of low-income pregnant women and young children. Pregnant women on WIC: consume more of the nutrients essential for optimal growth and development; get into prenatal care earlier in pregnancy; have fewer premature babies; have fewer low and very low birth-weight babies; and experience fewer fetal and infant deaths. WIC reduces the rate of very low birth-weight babies by 44 percent. Children on WIC: consume more of the nutrients essential for optimal growth and development; are more likely to have normal childhood growth; have less childhood anemia; have better immunization rates; have better access to pediatric health care; and have increased vocabulary and memory scores (Children's HealthWatch, 2010).

Nutrition assessment data collected from 1996 to 2003 at early intervention centers in Spokane for the Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN) program indicate that early

identification and nutrition intervention by registered dietitians improves the nutrition status of children with special health care needs.

When it could be put in place. All the programs listed above are existing. Some are not fully utilized by those who would qualify; and others do not have the capacity to serve more. Any could reach more children and families if resources were available. The timeline would vary depending on the goals.

#2

Strategy #2. Insurance and Medical Home

What it is. Help parents, families and caregivers understand the importance of preventive care, access insurance, and receive comprehensive physical, oral and mental health care, coordinated through a medical home.

In Washington we have a policy to “cover all kids.” All children whose family incomes are up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level¹² are covered by Medicaid, yet accessing care remains a challenge. Families whose income is too high to be eligible for Medicaid but who are still struggling to make ends meet can apply for the state’s Apple Health for Kids program. But many don’t apply. Many challenges remain to assure that children have insurance continuously, can access care using that insurance, and can get high-quality, comprehensive care in a medical home. A “medical home” is a regular place and provider where children receive both preventive care (such as immunizations) and care for acute and chronic illnesses; care or referrals for oral and behavioral/mental health needs; and where physicians help families connect with needed community based services, including early learning programs.

The following four actions are needed:

Medicaid reimbursement. Ensure access to a medical home by providing an adequate Medicaid reimbursement rate. Making this change will likely expand the number of Medicaid children seen by providers to around 40 percent.

Visit tracking. Develop and use a streamlined/easy process to determine if a child, once enrolled in Apple Health, has seen a doctor/dentist.

Provider list. Develop and use a streamlined process for determining which providers are accepting Apple Health coverage.

¹² The official name is the federal poverty guidelines, which the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services sets each year, geared to the number of people in a family. Some federal and state programs use the poverty guidelines or a multiple of them to decide who qualifies for assistance. For example, the 2009 poverty guideline for a family of four is \$22,050. In this case, 300 percent of federal poverty is \$66,150 in annual income.

Covering pregnant women. Clarify with health professions the process that covers Medicaid-eligible pregnant woman from the time of eligibility until assigned a managed care plan, in order to eliminate gaps in service.

Why it will work. The medical home is a natural place to support young children’s early learning and development. Families embrace this concept. Seventy-one percent of Washington parents say that they trust and want to receive early learning information through their child’s health provider. The 2007 report *A Science-Based Framework for Early Childhood Policy* concluded that: “Access to basic medical care for pregnant women and children can help prevent threats to healthy development, as well as provide early detection and intervention for problems that emerge” (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2007).

Researchers have found that a medical home is associated with better health, on both the individual and population levels, with lower overall costs of care and with reduction in disparities in health (Starfield & Shui, 2004). DEL’s Parent Needs Assessment (2008b) found that 71 percent of parents most often trust and want early learning information from health care providers. Almost one-third of families with children younger than 6 years have participated in the Medical Assistance or the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) in the past 12 months, and about three-quarters of Spanish-speaking families have done so.

The political momentum around children’s health care in our state and nation, combined with the science of early childhood development, provide a strategic opportunity to improve child outcomes by leveraging children’s health and early learning policies and programs together.

When it could be put in place. Medicaid and Apple Health for Kids are existing programs. The four recommended steps could be accomplished within five years.

#3

Strategy #3. Early Childhood Oral Health

What it is. Improve early childhood oral health through: education of children, parents, families, caregivers, and early learning professionals; access to dental services; and care coordination among medical and dental providers.

Oral health problems impact early learning and children’s ability to succeed in school. For example, children who are suffering from tooth decay are often in pain and have difficulty in eating, communicating, self-esteem, concentration and learning at school. Dental caries are one of the most prevalent health problems among young children. In recent years there has been increasing attention to this issue, with concerted efforts to raise awareness, institute

preventive measures, and help assure that all young children are free from oral disease and receive dental care when needed as part of their comprehensive health services. Partnerships have developed that incorporate oral health education, oral disease prevention and access to services in both early childhood and medical settings. This has been especially important given limited access to preventive measures and care for young children in many areas, particularly for those most at risk. Washington has effective programs to address these important oral health issues, many in cross-system collaborations and public-private partnerships. Further progress to assure that all children have optimal oral health is possible by leveraging these efforts systematically together. Doing so will help reduce the preparation gap by enabling more children to be healthy and ready for success in school.

The following five actions are needed:

Needs Assessment. Increase availability of oral health data for early childhood by continuing to participate in and support the Washington State Smile Survey (done every five years) and other oral health needs assessment opportunities.

Oral Health Education. Raise the oral health literacy of parents, families, caregivers, young children and early learning professionals with the goal of establishing awareness and behaviors that support a lifetime of good oral and consequently general health.

Dental Services. Connect children in early learning environments to oral health care providers through the Access to Baby and Child Dentistry (ABCD) program for Medicaid-eligible children from birth to 6 years, and to other resources.

Medical Home Oral Health Integration. Deliver dental disease prevention services in medical settings during well-child checks.

Care Coordination. Promote coordination of care among medical and dental providers in order to improve referrals and health outcomes for young children.

Why it will work. Disease surveillance systems (including oral disease) are recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as a way to track and monitor disease in the population and develop strategies to overcome it. Oral diseases are the most common chronic disease of childhood (five times more common than asthma). The prevalence of oral diseases has been increasing steadily since 1994 in our state, especially among young children. Research has demonstrated that early preventive and intervention services can produce positive health benefits for young children and lead to decreased health-related costs in the future.

ABCD, which began in Spokane County in 1995, now operates in 31 of Washington's 39 counties. It was named a **best practice** in 2000 by the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry and has become a model replicated in other states. Statewide Medicaid utilization data show significant increases in access for very young children in the years since ABCD began. Appropriate coordination of health services has shown great benefits to patients' health outcomes. Primary care medical providers usually see a child for well-child check-ups eight to 11 times before the child is 3 years old. They are well-positioned to deliver preventive oral health services and can learn to identify children at risk for dental disease who need to be referred to a dental office for care. Research has shown that physicians are more likely to make a dental referral when they have a relationship with local dentists.

When it could be put in place. The Washington State Smile Survey and ABCD are existing programs that can be further taken to scale within five years or increasingly integrated as part of a comprehensive early childhood oral health strategy. The other steps could take more time.

#4

Strategy #4. Infants and Toddlers

What it is. Align, integrate and build a continuum of quality services and programs for birth through third grade specifically to address the preparation gap by implementing comprehensive, voluntary services to promote the healthy development of infants and toddlers from birth through age 3 years, beginning with the most vulnerable, along with support for their families and caregivers, and an infant-toddler credential for early learning professionals.

If Washington is serious about improving school readiness and high school graduation rates, it is crucial to provide quality programs and services for children birth through 3 years, especially for at-risk children. Many children whose families are near or below poverty suffer from chaotic, stressful environments without the attention and stimulation they need to develop. We need to bridge the preparation gap through high-quality, culturally competent home-based and center-based services well before a child enters pre-K. These should include: home visiting or other in-home services; Play and Learn groups and informal supports for FFN caregivers; early literacy programs; programs similar to or expansions of Early Head Start and ECEAP; and development of an infant-toddler credential and corresponding program of study and experience. Any infant/toddler outreach and service strategy must be based on parent choice, and must include the child's parents, caregivers and early learning professionals to ensure continuity and consistency of care.

Specific steps to consider are:

Increasing the capacity of existing Early Head Start programs and home visiting programs to serve additional children and expectant families.

Supporting partnerships between Early Head Start programs and community partners, such as child care providers and home visiting programs.

Strengthening the quality of infant/toddler care within the licensed care system through a variety of strategies, including funding or supporting the addition of infant/toddler specialists in community-based programs statewide.

Working with higher education systems to develop an infant/toddler credential program.

Strengthening supports for children in FFN care through expansion of Play and Learn groups.

Why it will work. Research tells us that the preparation gap is measurable and apparent by the time a child is 9 months old (Halle, et al., 2009). We know that verbal skills are essential to success in school, but at age 4, children in poverty know a fraction of the words that middle-class children do. The differences between these groups are unchanged at age 5, age 12, and beyond. For at-risk children, the earlier interventions begin and the more intensive they are, the bigger the positive impact on the child over time. Research shows that the Early Head Start model has positive impacts on child and family outcomes. Early Head Start programs produce positive impacts on standardized measures of children’s cognitive and language development, and on a wide range of parenting outcomes (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Head Start Bureau, 2002).

When it could be put in place. HB 2867, signed by the governor in March 2010, requires DEL to develop a comprehensive birth-to-three plan for the legislature and governor by December 1, 2010. See <http://www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/infant/Default.aspx>. This effort could be phased in as Washington phases in universal pre-K for 3- and 4-year-olds.

#5

Strategy #5. Home Visiting

What it is. Make evidence-based and promising prenatal and child (birth to 5 years) home visitation services more widely available to at-risk families and caregivers.

Evidence-based home visiting is a voluntary early childhood strategy that can enhance parenting, *and* promote the optimal growth and development of young children. Evidence-based home visiting programs are focused, individualized and culturally competent services intended to reach expectant parents, young children, parents and caregivers (including FFN and **kinship caregivers**) in their homes. Such programs achieve a multitude of interconnected

outcomes that can buffer the effects of multiple risk factors and sources of stress in the family. They help families strengthen attachment and provide optimal development for their children, promote health and safety, and reduce the potential for child maltreatment at the same time. Four evidence-based home visiting programs are in use in Washington: Nurse-Family Partnership, Parents as Teachers, Parent-Child Home Program, and Early Head Start. The total capacity of the four programs is enough to serve only 2 percent of the estimated eligible families who would choose to participate. Some additional evidence-based home visiting has been funded by the Council for Children and Families. In addition, Thrive by Five Washington has been providing a range of home visiting programs, including evidence-based home visiting in its two demonstration communities. They have developed promising practices and a universal risk assessment tool that helps steer families to the home visiting program most appropriate for them.

In 2010, the legislature established a Home Visiting Matching Fund to be administered in partnership between DEL and Thrive by Five Washington. The Home Visiting Fund is a way to leverage increased state dollars for home visiting by providing private dollars as match, and also to coordinate evaluation, increase technical assistance and training, and integrate home visiting with other critical early learning issues identified in this plan.

Fifteen organizations in Washington have received a federal grant under the stimulus package funding to expand or create a new Early Head Start program, starting in July 2010. Still, these programs will be able to serve only a small percentage of eligible families in Washington. Washington is also applying for up to \$1.3 million in federal grant funding for early childhood home visiting programs. This funding is part of federal health care reform. The first wave of funds is to go to states in the summer of 2010.

Washington needs to create a well integrated and effective system for evidence-based home visiting (EBHV) that includes: a strong evaluation; expansion of EBHV services that maintain quality; and the addition of new promising programs to the evidence base through evaluation.

State agencies funding these types of services need to better coordinate so that programs serving children and families have: shared outcome reporting requirements; cross-program training or curriculum for home visitors; and incentives for communities to better communicate and coordinate.

Washington will develop agreement among state agencies in coordinating a system of home visiting, using relevant objectives from *Senate Bill 5830: Home Visiting Collaboration and*

Consolidation – Report to the Washington State Legislature (Council for Children & Families, 2008) as a starting point. Additional specific elements needed for coordination include:

Adding dedicated staff positions at the state level, including a State Nurse Consultant to provide tailored and state specific clinical assistance for the Nurse Family Partnership, and improve coordination.

Creating state standards for program delivery and improvement of quality in Washington.

Supporting a learning community regarding home visiting and early intervention that can progressively improve quality.

Testing the practicality and relative benefit of this multi-method approach, including assessing consistency of quality, ability to serve local differences, capacity, service delivery, and level of support that local programs need.

Providing model-specific technical assistance, including assistance in continuous quality improvement.

Developing a practice community to provide opportunities for information and skills building, and peer support.

Why it will work. Each of the major evidence-based home visiting models has been extensively studied. The program evaluation data are growing continually, both in number and in methodological rigor. The studies that form this database clearly affirm the importance of a child's early years and the effectiveness of early-intervention services in avoiding child maltreatment, influencing a child's developmental trajectory, and positively influencing the parent-child relationship. Over time, these benefits can translate into substantial societal savings on health care, education and welfare expenditures. The effectiveness of evidence-based home visiting programs is supported by a number of national experts, including Chapin Hall, the Center for the Study of Social Policy, Zero to Three (2009), Children's Defense Fund, and many others. Researchers have found positive effects through age 12 years (Kitzman et al., 2010). Experts in home visiting have also identified the need to evaluate new promising home visiting programs in order to add to the evidence base, as well as to continually evaluate existing evidence-based programs over time.

When it could be put in place. Based on the estimated number of eligible families with children ages birth to 5 years who would choose to participate, it may take 10 years to build sufficient capacity in an evidence-based home visiting program to ensure that high-quality programs can reach the target populations. However, the federal Early Childhood Home Visiting grant

program, included with federal health care reform legislation, could provide a substantial investment to jump-start the capacity building.

#6

Strategy #6. Developmental Screening

What it is. Make available universal developmental and social-emotional/mental health screening that refers children birth through third grade to early intervention and/or special education services when indicated.

Screenings and assessments give parents, families, caregivers and early learning professionals, (including teachers and the school-age workforce) a better understanding of a child's strengths and needs, and how to support the child's development. Washington statistics suggest that we are significantly under-identifying children who would benefit from early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities. Developmental screening is a necessary part of addressing this issue. Screenings and assessments can also help determine what additional services might be helpful, including those within formal, federally mandated programs that are part of the Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) or the Preschool Special Education program (Parts C and B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], respectively). Some early childhood programs such as ECEAP/Head Start, foster care and home visiting programs use developmental screening tools. Unlike in many other states, Washington's Medicaid program does not currently pay for developmental screenings in the primary care setting. This is considered a major barrier to broader implementation.

There have been successful partnerships to implement improved developmental screening and referral processes in various communities and settings in Washington. What is needed is a strategic statewide effort to facilitate collaboration across sectors to move toward a universal system. The system will also need a means to track screenings, and the referrals that result. Engaging physicians and the medical home with early learning professionals around developmental screening is a key strategy to help decrease the preparation gap, and assure optimal child health and development outcomes.

Why it will work. Research has clearly demonstrated that standardized developmental screening tools are needed to identify children with potential delays, and start the process for further assessment when indicated. Research is also clear that early intervention can support optimal early childhood development, and in many cases help prevent or reduce the need for later special education services. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has issued formal policy statements recommending developmental screening within the medical home (AAP,

2006). The Washington Chapter of the AAP and other public and private health partners are interested in working toward policies and programs that help assure that children receive appropriate screening, assessment and services.

When it could be put in place. Components of this system exist. Implementation of a universal approach to developmental screening will be dependent on payment and other policy issues at the state level. If the support were provided at a state level, implementing this system would likely take between one and five years.

#7

Strategy #7. Adding At-Risk Children to Early Intervention Services (Part C)

What it is. Amend DSHS policy for the Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) program to include serving children, birth to 3 years, identified as at risk of developmental delay, based upon established risk categories (i.e., serving foster care, level of prematurity, etc.). Amend the Medicaid State Plan to include payment for developmental screening and therapy to support IDEA, Part C service provision for existing and new populations.

ESIT, which DSHS administers, provides early intervention services for infants and toddlers, birth to three, who have disabilities and/or developmental delays. Eligible infants and toddlers and their families in Washington are entitled to individualized, quality early intervention services in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C. Currently the ESIT statewide community-based service system serves 8,400+ children per year. Every school district is serving eligible children birth to age 3 years either directly or by contract, as of September 1, 2009.

What is needed is funding to cover infants and toddlers not eligible for Medicaid and early intervention services not covered by Medicaid (e.g., services provided by certificated teachers), and to increase training both for early intervention service providers and for early learning professionals in how to support the social-emotional development of children who are considered to be at risk for developmental delay.

Why it will work. Research on the importance of providing early intervention services to children at risk of or experiencing a developmental delay/disability includes the following:

The Abecedarian Project, <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~abc/#home>.

Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. (2007). *A science based framework for early childhood policy*. www.developingchild.harvard.edu.

National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC),
<http://www.nectac.org/topics/evbased/evbased.asp>.

When it could be put in place. The statewide ESIT program is implemented through a state interagency agreement among five agencies: Department of Social and Health Services, Department of Early Learning, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Health, and Department of Services for the Blind. The change in policy would require new funding to implement.

#8

Strategy #8. Access to Mental Health Services – Access to Care Standards

What it is. Develop access to care standards for public mental health providers and Apple Health providers that are developmentally appropriate for young children.

Access to Care standards determine what “diagnoses” are needed (if any) in order for individuals or families to qualify for mental health services. They also impact the amount or type of treatment that will be funded. A review of access to care standards is in process as required by 2SHB1088 (the “Children’s Mental Health Bill”) as passed in 2007. Adoption of proposed legislation would be a substantive step in addressing this strategy. The initial versions of HB1373 during the 2009 legislative session contained the following proposed language to modify the access to care standards:

“(i) Accommodate the features of the assessment tool adopted under subsection (1)(b) of this section that are specific to infants, toddlers, and young children, recognizing that behaviors that are assessed and demonstrated in such young children may differ significantly from those assessed and demonstrated in school-age children; and

(ii) Acknowledge the critical importance of the parent-child dyad, both with respect to the impact of a parent’s emotional difficulties, such as postpartum or maternal depression or substance abuse, upon a young child and the need to jointly treat both the parent and the young child in order to effectively treat the child” (HB1373, Concerning children’s mental health services, 2009)

This language was not included in the final bill as passed by the legislature in 2009, however.

Currently many Regional Support Network (public mental health) providers and Apple Health providers do not believe that treatment services for young children (particularly under 3 years) are accessible (i.e., they would meet access to care standards and that treatment would be reimbursed). Additional training for providers could help some young children become eligible for public mental health treatment services using current Access to Care (eligibility) Standards.

Revising the Access to Care Standards to be developmentally appropriate for young children, including infants, would increase the number of children experiencing serious mental health problems who can access treatment.

Following change to the basic access to care standards, the logical next step is to work with public and private insurers to provide access to treatment as needed with or without a presenting diagnosis for children who fall in the highest risk groups: maltreated children; children exposed to trauma/violence; children of military families; children in families with substance abuse or with adults/parents with mental health disorders; and infants/toddlers with a failure to thrive diagnosis. After changes to standards for publically funded mental health services are complete, changes to standards and expectations for privately funded providers should be explored.

Why it will work. Research has shown that mental health problems in early childhood can impair learning and behavior for life (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2008). The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study is an ongoing national scientific study of the relationship between various types of childhood trauma and negative consequences later in life: <http://www.cestudy.org/>

When it could be put in place. Because Medicaid (the funding source for public mental health) is an entitlement program, additional funding would need to be available in order for the Access to Care Standards to be changed. New Standards could probably be developed in a year or so, but it will most likely take considerably longer than that to provide the necessary funding for treatment and training providers to use the standards and provide the treatment.

#9 Strategy #9. Access to Mental Health Services – Assessment, Diagnosis and Treatment

What it is. Increase the availability of developmentally appropriate, relationship-based mental health assessments and treatment services for children under age 6 years, by developing this capacity statewide. Offer parent and child therapy.

Currently, relatively few public or private mental health providers in Washington have the capacity to conduct a developmentally appropriate, relationship-based assessment of young children. Current payment structures frequently do not allow for this assessment. Additionally, developmentally appropriate treatment services are not widely available.

Overall there are three components needed in this area:

Training: Statewide education and training for mental health providers on:

- A nationally recognized diagnostic approach for infancy and early childhood (i.e., Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Development Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood – Revised: DC:0-3R). Training would need to include a focus on tools and methods for observing relationships and assessing relationship functioning.
- Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health treatment.

Resources:

- Appropriate reimbursement to allow for assessments to: be conducted over multiple sessions, incorporate input from multiple providers, include interviews and other contacts with family members and other caregivers; and include observations of caregiver-child relationships in natural settings.
- Appropriate evidence based treatments (such as Child Parent Psychotherapy), as available, should be fully resourced, including provision of services in the community (homes, early learning settings, etc.) in addition to office based services.

Consultation:

- Consultation and reflective supervision in assessment should be provided by advanced Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Specialists, particularly for providers new to this work.
- Collaboration and consultation between mental health entities/providers and other child serving entities/providers is critical both to inform the mental health work and to inform others about what infant and early childhood mental health treatments are available.

Why it will work. Research has shown that mental health problems in early childhood can impair learning and behavior for life (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2008). Also see the Zero to Three Policy Statement on infant mental health services (Onunaku, 2005). There are several therapeutic models that have a substantial evidence base, such as Child Parent Psychotherapy. For a short summary please see the National Child Traumatic Stress Network at http://www.nctsnet.org/nccts/nav.do?pid=ctr_top_trmnt_prom. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study is an ongoing national scientific study of the relationship between various types of childhood trauma and negative consequences later in life: <http://www.acestudy.org/>

The Navos Mindful Beginnings Program in King County is a good example of providing infant and early childhood mental health treatment in a community mental health setting (<http://www.navos.org/services/pioneered-at-navos>).

When it could be put in place. Reform efforts are underway in some areas. Other components require extensive capacity building, so will require work over the next 10 years.

#10

Strategy #10. Early Literacy

What it is. Increase the use of research-based, developmentally and culturally competent early literacy programs and practices for children birth through third grade by parents, families, caregivers, early learning professionals and health care providers. Promote these strategies with families so that all children are reading at grade level by the end of third grade. Ensure that parents, families and caregivers understand that early literacy activities should begin at birth.

An overall framework for this effort is the Culture of Literacy Initiative, developed by a 22-person task force of professionals from across the state, which Thrive by Five Washington convened. The statewide culture of literacy will be created using a two-pronged approach: one that reaches a large number of children across the state (the statewide approach), and another to work closely with a select number of communities to develop comprehensive, community-specific plans that fully imbed early-literacy in all aspects of community life (the community approach).

One element of this strategy is to incorporate early literacy promotion within the medical home. When Washington parents were asked where they most trust and want to obtain early learning information, 71 percent chose health care providers; and more than two-thirds said they want more information about early reading skills (Washington State DEL, 2008b). Because most children have health insurance and receive medical care, the medical home is one of the most reliable places to reach young children and their parents. The Reach Out and Read (ROR) program is a unique approach that reaches parents via health care providers. ROR incorporates early literacy into well-child checkups within the medical home, helping parents have the knowledge, skills and resources to support optimal child development. Reach Out and Read is currently serving more than 50,000 Washington children per year, with 101 programs in 23 counties.

Other steps to be taken to achieve this strategy include:

Revitalize and expand the Culture of Literacy network of stakeholders.

Create a consistent and sustainable funding stream to support ongoing early literacy practices.

Create greater coordination between the birth-to-age-5 and kindergarten-to-12th grade systems.

Take evidenced-based programs, such as Reach Out and Read and Dialogic Reading, to scale statewide.

Partner with local libraries, the Early Learning Public Library Partnership, and the Washington State Library to integrate library services into state and community early literacy strategies.

Promote activities to support English language learner (ELL) children and English as a Second Language (ESL) learning.

Initiate the development and use of an evaluation plan for early literacy programs and services.

Why it will work. Research clearly shows that early language development and literacy skills are critical to future success in school. The 2007 report, *A Science-Based Framework for Early Childhood Policy*, reviewed the science of early brain development, emphasizing the importance of early experiences to promote language and literacy skills. The report concluded:

“Language-rich, nurturing, and responsive caregiving fosters healthy development during this period (birth to 3), but not all children have such experiences Between three and five years of age, there is an emergence of increasingly complex social behaviors, emotional capacities, problem-solving abilities, and pre-literacy skills that build on earlier developmental achievements and are essential building blocks for a successful life” (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2007).

This supports the need to reach all parents so they understand and are able to support their children’s early language and literacy development. Just having books at home means that children achieve three more years of schooling than do children from bookless homes, no matter their parents’ educational or income levels (Evans, Kelley, Sikora, & Treiman, 2010).

In developing the Culture of Literacy Initiative, Thrive by Five Washington completed a thorough literature review on the subject of early literacy and found many examples of practices that parents, families, caregivers, early learning professionals and health care providers use to support language and literacy development (Kassow, Joachim & Blasingame, 2009).

There is a 20-year national history, with 11 published, peer reviewed studies, that demonstrate that Reach Out and Read works. For those participating in ROR (as compared to those families that do not) it has been found that: (1) parents have more positive attitudes toward books and reading to their children; (2) parents read to their children more often; and (3) children show significant improvement in language skills.

When it could be put in place. Based on current early literacy programming and funding resources, it is estimated that it will take five to eight years to build a system of high-quality early literacy programs and activities available to all children, parents, families, caregivers, early learning professionals and health care providers throughout the state. Over the past two years Reach Out and Read visit capacity has grown from 65,000 one-on-one visits with children and families to 119,000 per year. The program continues to grow despite the current economic recession, and could be taken to scale across the state in the next five years. Thrive by Five Washington is currently funding the community based strategy of the Culture of Literacy Initiative in a small number of early learning coalitions utilizing private funding.

#11

Strategy #11. Early Numeracy

What it is. Implement developmentally and culturally competent early numeracy programs and practices for children birth through third grade by parents, families, caregivers, early learning professionals, and health care providers. Promote these strategies so that all children enter kindergarten with the mathematics and numeracy skills that will support continuous grade-level mathematical development. Ensure that parents, families, caregivers and early learning professionals understand that early numeracy activities should begin in infancy.

A statewide awareness and value of early numeracy skills will be created. OSPI, DEL and Thrive by Five Washington will take the lead in initiating programs that promote community-wide awareness of the importance of early mathematics and numeracy skills to later school achievement.

Steps to achieve this strategy will be based on the recent National Research Council report *Mathematics Learning in Early Childhood: Paths Toward Excellence and Equity* (2009). These steps will include:

Increase Parents' and Providers' Knowledge and Skills:

Work with higher education to improve mathematical training of early learning teachers and providers including content, pedagogy, and current research findings of early childhood mathematics.

Provide information to health care professionals who can provide parents with knowledge, skills and resources about the development of early numeracy, along with early literacy, to support parents as “first teachers” of their children.

Provide a guide to assist early learning professionals in the understanding and observation of the mathematical learning progressions of young children.

Offer media programs on numeracy for parents and providers (e.g., Thrive by Five Washington Learning for Life numeracy segments).

Develop parent and caregiver workshops, including activities and materials that they can use with their children.

Increase School Readiness:

Include mathematics and numeracy in pre-screening of kindergarten students.

Examine early numeracy programs based on the National Research Council report, and disseminate this information to the early learning community.

Build Community and Support:

Develop a culture of numeracy network of stakeholders.

Create a consistent and sustainable funding stream to support ongoing early numeracy practices.

Why it will work. A growing body of research is linking the critical importance of early numeracy readiness to later school achievement. The National Research Council’s *Mathematics Learning in Early Childhood: Paths Toward Excellence and Equity* (2009) states that:

[A]lthough virtually all young children have the capability to learn and become competent in mathematics, for most the potential to learn mathematics in the early years of school is not currently realized. This stems from a lack of opportunities to learn mathematics either in early childhood settings or through everyday experiences in homes and in communities. This is particularly the case for economically disadvantaged children, who start out behind in mathematics and will remain so without extensive, high-quality early mathematics instruction (pp. 1-2).

This supports the need to reach all parents and early learning providers so that they understand and are able to support children’s early mathematics and numeracy development.

Early childhood teachers and providers are often uncomfortable teaching mathematics. The National Research Council also found that:

Examination of current standards, curricula, and instruction in early childhood education revealed that many early childhood settings do not provide adequate learning experiences in mathematics (p. 2).

This supports the need to improve preparation programs for early childhood providers.

When it could be put in place. Some of the components of this strategy can be initiated immediately, particularly those around awareness and information dissemination. Realizing the full potential of these strategies will take a number of years. A reliable, consistent funding stream will be necessary. Bringing higher education on board, creating meaningful early numeracy education programs, and scaling efforts statewide could take up to 10 years.

#12

Strategy #12. Enhanced Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)

What it is. Reduce the preparation gap by expanding high-quality, culturally competent comprehensive ECEAP education, health coordination and family support services to cover all low-income and at-risk 3- and 4-year-olds not served by Head Start.

Expanding ECEAP will take place in three phases, with one parallel process.

Phase One (by the 2014-15 school year):

- Phase in expansion of ECEAP slots, from 8,024 in the 2010-11 school year, to serve 75 percent of all children from families at or below 110 percent of the federal poverty level, or meeting 2010 ECEAP eligibility based on disability or risk factors, who are not served by Head Start. The Ready for School Act of 2010 begins expanding the number of slots in 2013-14, with full implementation by 2018-19.
- Increase the intensity of ECEAP to a minimum of 450 preschool classroom hours per school year.
- Increase teacher qualifications to require that 100 percent of ECEAP teachers have an associate or higher degree with the equivalent of 30 college quarter credits in early childhood education. These 30 credits may be included in the degree or in addition to the degree (up from the current 71 percent).
- Encourage/provide incentives for preK through third grade alignment.
- Implement a statewide child outcomes assessment process.
- Replace the ECEAP data management system to include capacity to collect outcomes data on individual children.
- Increase rate per ECEAP slot to address program intensity and quality improvements above.

Phase Two (by the 2018-19 school year):

- Phase in expansion of ECEAP slots to serve 75 percent of all children from families at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level, or meeting 2010 ECEAP eligibility based on disability or risk factors, who are not served by Head Start. The 130 percent level is consistent with Head Start and the school Free Lunch program by the 2020-21 school year
- Increase the intensity of ECEAP to a minimum of 600 preschool classroom hours per school year, consistent with emerging research showing that full-day, full-school-year programs achieve the best results for low-income and high-risk children.
- Increase teacher qualifications to require that 70 percent of ECEAP teachers have a bachelor's or higher degree with the equivalent of 30 college quarter credits in early childhood education. These 30 credits may be included in the degree or in addition to the degree (up from the current 51 percent).
- Integrate ECEAP child data into the K-12 database.
- Increase rate per ECEAP slot to address program intensity and quality improvements above.

Phase Three (by the 2020-21 school year):

- Expand ECEAP eligibility to children from families at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level, or meeting 2010 ECEAP eligibility based on disability or risk factors to children, consistent with the Reduced-Price Lunch program in the schools.
- Increase teacher qualifications to require that 100 percent of ECEAP teachers have a bachelor's or higher degree with the equivalent of 30 college quarter credits in early childhood education. These 30 credits may be included in the degree or in addition to the degree.

Parallel Process (by the 2018-19 school year):

- Phase in regulation of currently license-exempt preschool programs, starting with registration and ending with licensing. This will provide the full picture of the supply of preschool programs available to parents, support safety including background checks, and assess quality across programs as they join QRIS.

Why it will work. Many children arrive at school less than well prepared with respect to both social and academic skills that are important for school success, with higher percentages of low-income and at-risk children starting behind. In recent years, evidence has mounted that problems of school readiness and educational failure impact both low- and middle-income children. Emerging research indicates that full-day developmentally appropriate preschool

programs can result in greater gains for children who are far behind at preschool age. Examples of the research include:

Lynch, R. G. (2007). *Enriching children, enriching the nation: Public investment in high-quality pre-kindergarten*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.

Robin, K. S., Frede, E. C., & Barnett, W. S. (2006). *Is more better? The effects of full-day vs. half-day preschool on early school achievement (NIEER Working Paper)*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, National Institute for Early Education Research.

Sammons, P., Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Siraj-Blatchford, I., Taggart, B., & Elliot, K. (2002). *Measuring the impact of pre-school on children: Cognitive progress over the preschool period (Technical Paper 8a)*. London, England: University of London, Institute of Education.

In a 12-year longitudinal study of ECEAP (1988-2000), researchers found that ECEAP children made significantly greater academic gains, displayed more positive behaviors, enjoyed school more, and had fewer health problems than non-ECEAP children (Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP, n.d.).

When it could be put in place. The expansion is to begin with the 2013-14 school year, and will proceed in phases as outlined above, beyond the 10-year period of this plan.

#13

Strategy #13. Voluntary, Universal Prekindergarten

What it is. Implement voluntary preschool offered to all 3- and 4-year-olds (“universal preschool”), to be rolled out as all-day kindergarten is implemented. The program will coordinate and build off of an enhanced ECEAP program to serve all children.

Currently ECEAP and Head Start serve approximately 20,000 3- and 4-year-olds in Washington. Private preschool is available to children whose parents can pay for it. Lower income 3- and 4-year-olds not in ECEAP and Head Start who are on the state’s child care subsidy program (Working Connections Child Care) may be participating in preschool activities in their licensed child care program, yet there are no data to verify the core content or the quality outcomes of such programs. A significant number of children are left out of the preschool loop entirely. Expansion of high-quality and culturally competent preschool should start with the children most at risk, in order to level the playing field they share with their better off peers. Then, preschool should be offered to all the families in our state who want this advantage for their youngest children.

Why it will work. Studies such as High/Scope Perry Preschool (Schweinhart, 2005), have documented the benefits of high-quality preschool. In addition, studies have found that students who start school behind tend to stay behind. Quality preschool helps close the preparation gap before it becomes the achievement gap. But the children who would benefit the most from preschool—Latinos, African Americans, English language learners and children from low-income families— are the least likely to get the chance. In addition, research shows middle-income children benefit from universal preschool. These families often do not qualify for need-based programs but do not earn enough to pay for private, quality programs.

When it could be put in place. The 2010 legislature created a technical working group, coordinated by OSPI with assistance from DEL, to develop a comprehensive plan for a voluntary program of early learning for 3- and 4-year-olds. The plan is to examine at least two options: to make the voluntary early learning program part of basic education, or to make it an entitlement protected by statute or the constitution. The working group’s final report is due to ELAC and the Quality Education Council by November 1, 2011. This strategy could be phased in over 10 years, as full-day kindergarten is phased in. The first phase would be for at-risk 4-year-olds, followed by at-risk 3-year-olds, then all 4-year-olds, and finally, all 3-year-olds.

READY AND SUCCESSFUL PARENTS, FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS

Outcomes

- F. Parents are recognized as their children’s first and most important teachers, and have the support they need to help their children “learn to learn” in their first years of life.
- G. A comprehensive, culturally competent and language-appropriate information and referral system about all aspects of child health, development and early learning is accessible to all parents (including expectant parents), families and caregivers.
- H. Parents, families and caregivers have the knowledge and skills needed, along with culturally competent services and supports, to act and respond in ways that promote optimal child health, development and early learning.
- I. Parent, family and caregiver voices help shape policies and systems.

Strategies

#14

Strategy #14. Access to Information and Resources

What it is. Build on existing infrastructure to implement a statewide system for offering to parents, families, and caregivers easy-to-access, culturally competent, language-available, relevant and affordable information on a wide range of topics related to early learning, child health and development, nutrition, parenting and family strengthening. Connect them with community-level resources to meet their needs, so as to optimize child and family outcomes.

Many states have some of the necessary components for a comprehensive, coordinated system that offers child health and development information, early identification and linkage with community resources. However, few have been able to create a system that is integrated, comprehensive and effectively connects families to services. The Connecticut model, *Help Me Grow*, has successfully implemented systemwide changes at the state level in order to support children and families at the local level. It has been replicated in Polk County, Iowa, and Orange County, California. Through a grant from The Commonwealth Fund, the Connecticut Children’s Medical Center will be providing support to five states over the next two years.

By working collaboratively with a wide range of programs that serve children and families, Washington has the components reflected in the *Help Me Grow* model and could move to create a cost-effective, efficient and user-friendly buttress for all children.

Three current programs that provide individualized information are CHILD Profile, WithinReach, and Parent Trust for Washington Children’s Family Help Line CHILD Profile is an award-winning parenting information system that reaches 86 percent of parents of children birth through 6

years old through periodic mailings to the families. WithinReach (and Parent Help 123) serves all ages and offers resource information by telephone and on the Web. WithinReach provides individualized information, referrals and application assistance to connect parents, families and caregivers to health, nutrition and developmental services. The Family Help Line is a statewide toll-free telephone line staffed by parenting coaches and an online searchable database of resources. These and other sources provide information on child health, social-emotional development, early care and education, parenting, peer support and family strengthening.

A fourth program, Coordinated School Health, offers resource information for students, school staff, and families. Topics include physical education, health, counseling and support services, and healthy school environment.

What is needed is wider promotion and outreach to make parents, families and caregivers aware of these services and what they offer, and expansion of the resources available. Also, the forms these services take need to be expanded to be language inclusive and culturally relevant. This might include partnering with community organizations to reach trusted advocates/liaisons who can help connect families with existing resources. Creating a “no wrong door” approach will help to connect children at risk for developmental or behavioral problems with appropriate resources. Parent and community input will be key to this effort. We can build on the lessons learned from the nationally recognized *Help Me Grow* approach, which is now being replicated across the country.

Why it will work. CHILD Profile materials are developed according to health education theory, incorporate input from parents and child health and early learning professionals, and are revised regularly to be up-to-date. Evaluation consistently shows high satisfaction and use of the materials. The materials are nationally recognized and endorsed by the Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Washington Academy of Family Physicians, and the University of Washington School of Public Health Maternal Child Health Program. WithinReach’s call center has periodic customer service evaluation and is building survey capacity for callers. Each of the services to which WithinReach, Child Profile and www.parenthelp123.org refer families has its own research base. The *Help Me Grow* model has been highlighted and supported by the Commonwealth Fund. The February 2006 *Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics* (27(Supplement 11), S1-S21) outlined this program’s successes and potential for replication. The Commonwealth Fund is currently working with a number of states to replicate this model. Coordinated School Health conducts regular impact assessments of its programs.

When it could be put in place. Enhancements to existing programs could be achieved in the near term. Since many of the components of the *Help Me Grow* model currently exist, it would take approximately one year to implement. Mapping resources and coordinating efforts could be done within five years.

#15

Strategy #15. Parenting Learning Opportunities

What it is. Provide culturally competent learning opportunities and peer supports that provide child development and parenting guidance in diverse and parent-friendly venues.

To appeal to the wide range of the population who are parents and caregivers, they need a wide variety of opportunities, including in their own language, to pursue learning about child development and parenting. The Community Café Collaborative, a Washington based parent grassroots group, is dedicated to establishing meaningful conversation and action among parents, caregivers and others invested in the well-being of children and families. The Community Café model is in use in communities across the state. Community colleges around the state offer parenting education programs and host parent cooperative preschools, where parents actively participate in their child's learning. Other programs and services currently offered include: Bringing Baby Home, Child Profile mailings, children's museums, Circle of Security, community college parenting classes, Conscious Fathering, FFN initiatives, the Foundation for Early Learning's online Early Learning Community, Home Team, Library Initiative, Loving Couples-Loving Children, Parent Help 123, Parent Information Resource Centers, Parent Trust for Washington Children's Family Help Line, Program for Early Parent Support, Promoting First Relationships, Reach Out & Read Washington, Ready for K, Strengthening Families, and Talaris' Parenting Counts. Opportunities that are needed include venues to host Community Café conversations and distribute materials (such as doctors' offices, health clinics, community centers, faith organizations, libraries and retail outlets), more parenting education classes, Web sites, e-newsletters and toll-free information lines.

Why it will work. A number of sources document the effectiveness of learning opportunities and peer supports for parents, families and caregivers. These include:

Barlow, J., Parsons, J., & Stewart-Brown, S. (2005). Preventing emotional and behavioural problems: the effectiveness of parenting programmes with children less than 3 years of age. *Child Care, Health and Development*, 31(1), 33-42.

Lundahl, B., Risser, H. J., & Lovejoy, M. C. (2006). A meta-analysis of parent training: Moderators and follow-up effects. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 26(1), 86-104.

Olds, D. L., Sadler, L., & Kitzman, H. (2007). Programs for parents of infants and toddlers: Recent evidence from randomized trials. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 48(3-4), 355-391.

Waterston, T., & Welsh, B. (2007). What are the benefits of a parenting newsletter? *Community Practitioner*, 80(8).

Reports of the Washington state based, Community Café Collaborative: Community Café—<http://www.earlylearningcommunity.org/group/thecomunitycafes> and https://www.msu.edu/user/nactpf/initiative_parents-2.htm

Wheatley, M. (2009). *Turning to one another: Meaningful conversations to restore hope to the future*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

When it could be put in place. As noted above, a number of programs now exist. Expanding and making these more widely available would be phased in over 10 years.

#16 Strategy #16. Social-Emotional Learning – Parents, Caregivers, Early Learning Professionals

What it is. Ensure that parents, families, caregivers, and early learning professionals, have access to opportunities for deepening personal knowledge and understanding of social and emotional development, social and emotional learning skills, nurturing early relationships, and mental health.

A number of programs are available to help families and those who work with children to gain a better understanding of and learn how to support children’s social-emotional development. Examples are the programs of the Committee for Children, Talaris Research Institute, and the Reflective Parenting program. What is needed is to make these learning opportunities more widely available in partnership with a variety of agencies.

Thrive by Five Washington is currently establishing Communities of Practice utilizing two coalitions in the Puget Sound area, with a focus on supporting parent educators, home visitors and parent support staff in a learning circle approach. The learning circles will help these professionals to better coordinate their efforts, bring them new research and information, and support the concept of continuous quality improvement for parenting programs. This approach could be further expanded to help create more of a system of parenting programs and supports.

Two suggested steps are to:

Ensure that physicians and other primary health care providers promote parenting strategies for social-emotional skill development as part of routine health care.

Provide social-emotional learning workshops, communities of practice, and ongoing training for parents, families, caregivers, and early learning professionals, at schools, community centers, spiritual centers, conferences and other venues.

Why it will work. Key research includes:

Parlakian, R. (2003). *Before the ABC's: Promoting school readiness in infants and toddlers*. Washington, DC: Zero to Three.

Raver, C. (2002). Emotions matter: Making the case for the role of young children's emotional development for early school readiness. *Social Policy Report of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 16(1), 3-23.

Siegel, D. (1999). *The developing mind: How relationships and the brain interact to shape who we are*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Shonkoff, J. P. & Phillips, D. A. (Eds.). (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development*. Washington, DC: National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, National Academy Press.

When it could be put in place. The existing programs could be expanded and additional efforts phased in over the next five years through pilot projects, demonstration sites, and development of guidelines.

#17

Strategy #17. Family, Friends and Neighbors (FFN) Care

What it is. Design and implement statewide outreach and support for FFN caregivers.

FFN caregivers care for children not their own and have the trust of the children's parents, but are not licensed by the state to provide child care. FFN caregivers in Washington provide a large proportion of the non-parental care for children birth to 3 years old. (See "Children in early learning settings" in Section I.E.3., above.) Parents choose FFN caregivers because they know and trust the individual. Often the caregiver shares the culture and language of the parents. Flexible availability and lower cost also can be factors in this choice. Most FFN caregivers do not have formal education or training in early childhood development, but have valuable knowledge of the family and community culture. Outreach and support programs for FFN caregivers offer information, resource materials and peer support, often in community settings. DEL currently contracts with the Washington State Child Care Resource and Referral Network to

provide FFN outreach and support programs. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) also provides training for those FFN caregivers who accept Working Connections Child Care subsidies from the state, (See “Child care cost and programs for low-income families” in Section I.E.3., above.)

What are needed are high-quality, culturally competent information and support opportunities for FFN caregivers in more locations across the state, and in more languages. The Washington State CCR&R Network is currently partnering with a diverse group of local organizations who have access to FFN caregivers and resources to share. Organizations include: community colleges who offer parent education classes, public libraries, tribes, local governments, public health departments, schools, park districts, children’s museums, faith-based organizations, and other community service organizations. The CCR&R Network is introducing new and building on existing local opportunities to engage FFN caregivers in learning, such as Play & Learn groups, Community Café Conversations, Public Library “Story Time,” and other innovative, culturally relevant outreach efforts.

The next steps include:

- Developing more curricula

- Developing creative outreach models

- Continue the current effort to develop viable indicators and evaluation strategies

- Build up the infrastructure to support FFN outreach and support

Why it will work. The quality of FFN caregiving for young children has been receiving increasing interest in policy and research circles. Other states are piloting FFN training and support programs, but there has been no rigorous evaluation of the impact of these efforts. A study of FFN caregivers in Washington found the education level of FFN providers to be somewhat lower than for the general adult population, with only 15 percent having bachelor’s degrees (Brandon, Maher, Joesch & Doyle, 2002). However, a 2005 survey found that nearly two-thirds said they would like to participate in a training or support activity (Brandon, 2005). The acceptance of and interest in the programs offered through the Washington State CCR&R Network has been overwhelmingly positive, especially in rural communities.

When it could be put in place. With additional funding, the effort to provide information and support for FFN caregivers that is now coordinated by Washington State CCR&R Network could be expanded within five years.

#18

Strategy #18. Strong Families

What it is. Fund and support programs, strategies and policies that strengthen families, and foster development of supportive relationships among parents, families, caregivers, early learning professionals and schools.

Several strategies and policies exist that support strong, supported families. The Strengthening Families approach increases the availability of and access to family support and other services for families, and bolsters five key protective factors that promote healthy families. These protective factors are: parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete supports in times of need, and children’s healthy social and emotional development. The Strengthening Families approach also helps early learning professionals to facilitate mutual support among parents, strengthen parenting skills, respond to family crises, link families to services they need, facilitate children’s social and emotional development, and respond to early warning signs of abuse or neglect. This approach is in use through Strengthening Families Washington, a collaborative initiative, but needs to be expanded. Over time, the strengths-based approach that Strengthening Families uses should be embedded into more programs and services for families.

A related approach is the development of social networks that provide parents, families and caregivers with peer support and venues for sharing information. Examples include parenting support groups, Community Café groups, Play & Learn groups, school-related parent groups, and cooperative preschools.

A policy that strengthens families is paid family leave. Paid family leave helps strengthen families by giving new parents a period of time to devote solely to their children’s needs without paying a financial penalty. Paid family leave was adopted by the legislature to begin in 2012 (RCW 49.86 Family Leave Insurance), but has not yet been funded.

Why it will work. The Strengthening Families approach and five protective factors come out of research by the Center for Study of Social Policy (2003). Though originally studied in relation to child abuse prevention, the protective factors have been found in practice also to promote children’s social-emotional development and early learning.

Researchers have documented ways in which social networks can improve the health and school readiness of children. Social isolation is linked to many adverse outcomes for children and families. Informal, generalized and institutional networks can all play a role in the indicators of “increased parent involvement in schools” and “more children enter school ready to learn”

(Jordan, 2006). See the series of reports on Social Networks from the Annie E. Casey Foundation (<http://www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/PublicationsSeries/SocialNetworks.aspx>). The National League of Cities cites as a promising practice developing community partnerships to support parents of young children. Members of the partnership learn new ideas from each other, share expertise, and remain close to the issues and needs of parents (Institute for Youth, Education and Families, 2007).

The federal Family and Medical Leave Act and related state Family Leave Law promote family stability and a balance of family and workplace needs by enabling workers to take time off work for the birth of a child or to accept a newly adopted child. But many individuals do not have access to family leave or are not in a financial position to take family leave that is unpaid. These are the challenges that the Family Leave Insurance law addresses.

When it could be put in place. Strengthening Families is an existing collaborative initiative. Many other programs and services also help to create social networks and partnerships with families. The significance of this effort is in shifting the way Washington agencies think about families and children to a strengths-based approach. It may take five to 10 years to reach the most isolated families, and to create system change to ensure that all new parents are automatically steered toward the supports and resources they need. With respect to paid family leave, the benefits are to begin in 2012, but the legislature will need to define a funding source.

#19

Strategy #19. Mental Health Screening and Services for New Parents

What it is. Increase the number of new parents who are screened for postpartum mood disorders, and improve access and increase referral pathways between primary care and allied mental health services for mothers, fathers and their families experiencing postpartum mood disorders.

Two programs in Washington, First Steps Maternity Support Services and Infant Case Management (for women on Medicaid), and the “Speak Up When You’re Down” postpartum depression awareness campaign have laid the groundwork and some foundational activities for this strategy. What is needed is to expand these efforts to reach expectant and new mothers and fathers statewide, using culturally competent practices to coordinate across systems, and to track and evaluate the results. First Steps screens clients for maternal mood disorders and provides education and interventions to women and their families suffering from a mood disorder. Determining the number of Medicaid eligible pregnant women suffering from mood

disorders and the level of services they have access to will require modification in how data are collected. “Speak Up When You’re Down” is led by the state’s Council for Children & Families (CCF). This campaign seeks to reduce social stigma and barriers that prevent mothers and fathers from seeking treatment, and to educate about available resources. Assets include: a Web site, toll-free referral line, and distribution of materials in English and Spanish through such organizations as WithinReach and CHILD Profile. The campaign reaches more than 80,000 Washington families each year. It is important to note that the campaign must operate on a *cumulative* basis to continuously and consistently reach new families each year.

Why it will work. Research is well-documented on the negative consequences on the child of a parent’s untreated mood disorders both during pregnancy and postpartum. Studies of long-term consequences found that postpartum mood disorders were associated with behavioral and emotional problems in the child at ages 4 to 6 years, attention deficit–hyperactivity disorder and anxiety in the child at ages 8 and 9 years, and impulsivity and poorer scores on intelligence subtests in the child at ages 14 and 15 years. An example of this research is Weissman, Wickramaratne, et al. (2006). A series of studies has suggested that new fathers also may become depressed after childbirth (Paulson & Brazemore, 2010). The methods to improve access and referral pathways are adapted from federal agency identified emerging/promising practices (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009).

When it could be put in place. First Steps is a DSHS program managed with the assistance of the Department of Health. “Speak Up When You’re Down” is led by the Council for Children & Families. Both programs have sustained recent budget cuts. This strategy will need to be coordinated across systems and integrated in phases to ramp up over the next five years.

#20

Strategy #20. Parent Leadership

What it is. Use proven and promising models to identify and nurture parent and caregiver leaders to advocate for families.

This strategy aims to gain the meaningful engagement of parents, families and caregivers with all child- and family-serving organizations in the state to ensure that the organizations’ activities promote child and family well-being. Culturally competent expertise and standards need to be developed in ways to identify and nurture parent leaders, and to engage them in shaping policies and implementing programs. Flexible funding is needed to support parents’ participation through reimbursements for child care, mileage and similar expenses. A data collection and evaluation system also is needed. This effort can draw on a number of existing

programs and models. These include: the Community Café Collaborative, the Strengthening Families Washington Initiative, DEL’s Parent Advisory Group, the Head Start and ECEAP Parent Ambassador program, parent co-op preschools at community colleges, Washington State CCR&R Network’s Grassroots Mobilization Initiative, the Children’s Alliance Advocacy Camp, the Council for Children and Families Parent Leadership Group, ESIT Family Resource Coordinators, PAVE (Parents Are Vital in Education), and Play & Learn groups offered in communities statewide.

Why it will work. The Early Childhood Initiative of the National Alliance of Children’s Trust & Prevention Funds has identified promising practices in the states of Alaska, Minnesota and Pennsylvania. Research conducted by the Center for the Study of Social Policy on Strengthening Families Through Early Care and Education (<http://www.strengtheningfamilies.net/>) provides approaches. The Community Café Collaborative has produced emerging outcome assessment data, and a Play & Learn evaluation study is underway. National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRRRA)’s experience in developing its Parent Network provides lessons learned. The National Academy for State Health Policy recommends encouraging parent leadership as part of a three-part approach to involving families: engage them in (1) supporting their child’s healthy development, (2) shaping the services and programs they receive, and (3) shaping the larger systems and policies that promote children’s learning and healthy development (Ahsan & Rosenthal, 2010).

When it could be put in place. This strategy would be phased in over 10 years.

#21

Strategy #21. Parent Participation

What it is. Create formalized pathways for diverse parents, family members and caregivers to participate in early learning program and system design, and in shaping early learning policy.

Engaging parents, families and caregivers in early learning programs and policy development creates a partnership among the adults who care for and about young children. This creates a win-win environment, where parents, families and caregivers are more involved with their children’s early learning, and where programs can better serve their needs. A number of organizations and groups currently include parent advisory groups and advocacy approaches.

What is needed are for child and family-serving agencies and organizations to:

Develop formal pathways for parent, family and caregiver engagement;

Create sample protocols for ensuring engagement and diverse representation from parents and caregivers in policy development and implementation;

Increase leadership development resources;

Track the experiences of parents, families, caregivers and agencies with the models; and

Evaluate what works.

The Strengthening Families Initiative partner organizations will be key players in these efforts.

Why it will work. The Early Childhood Initiative of the National Alliance of Children’s Trust & Prevention Funds has identified promising practices for parent participation in the states of Alaska, Minnesota and Pennsylvania. Research conducted by the Center for the Study of Social Policy on Strengthening Families Through Early Care and Education provides approaches (<http://www.strengtheningfamilies.net/>). The Community Café Collaborative has produced emerging outcome assessment data. NACCRRRA’s experience in developing its Parent Network provides lessons learned. Early Head Start also has demonstrated a successful approach in engaging parents to help shape the policies of their local programs.

When it could be put in place. Existing programs can be used as models and taken to scale within five years.

READY AND SUCCESSFUL EARLY LEARNING PROFESSIONALS

Outcomes

- J. All early learning professionals can demonstrate the competencies to provide children birth through third grade with developmentally and culturally appropriate early learning experiences in healthy and safe environments.
- K. All families have access to high-quality, culturally competent, affordable child care and early education programs staffed by providers and teachers who are adequately trained and compensated.
- L. A fully-developed Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is established and maintained so that early learning and school-age providers have the support and resources necessary to improve the quality of their programs and environments, and so that families have the information they need to make the best early learning choices for their children.

Strategies

#22

Strategy #22. Child Care Licensing

What it is. Improve child care licensing in Washington state by: using an evidence-based rule-making process and tools to assess risks/strengths in decision-making; expanding training opportunities for all early learning professionals; making better use of technology; and coordinating efforts with the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).

The Department of Early Learning (DEL) licenses more than 7,800 child care centers and family home child care providers within Washington. Licensed child care providers follow the licensing standards set by the state to ensure children in licensed care are in safe, healthy, and nurturing learning environments. DEL licensors provide orientation workshops, ensure provider application packets are complete, process background checks, inspect and monitor facilities, and take corrective action as necessary. Working with licensed providers, licensors identify strengths in the child care setting, and offer information and resources when something needs to be changed.

Evidence-based rule-making and risk/strength-based decision-making:

- **Revising regulations:** Use an inclusive and evidence-based rule making process for the scheduled full revisions of child care regulations, using lessons learned from past and current review processes.
- **Weighted licensing standards:** For each licensing standard in the Washington Administrative Code (WAC), determine a weighted value that is associated with a level of potential risk, based on data and evidence. The weighted standards will provide a consistent way to identify the level of risk in a child care setting to inform licensing decisions. This approach will require an effective data system and analysis of licensing standards to develop a risk model for child care programs.

- **Risk-/strength-based assessment and decision making models:** Make regulatory decisions based on a strength and risk analysis that stems from the weighted licensing standards. Integrate this assessment into child care checklists and other DEL tools. The tools will include a self assessment to help licensed providers identify and develop ideas to build on their own strengths and skills.
- **Differential monitoring:** Assign a risk/strength factor to each licensee, based on compliance, weighted licensing standards and licensing history, in order to determine the monitoring level needed for each facility in a given time period, beyond the minimal level of monitoring. Implementing differential monitoring system will be possible once the proposed data system, strengths and risk model, and weighted licensing standards are in place.

Expanded training opportunities:

- **Pre-service training:** Develop a comprehensive pre-service curriculum to better prepare early learning professionals to operate licensed programs providing a safe, healthy environment that promotes healthy child development and learning. Implementing this training will depend on adequate resources and statewide infrastructure to establish a network for delivery and consistency.
- **DEL licensing professionals:** Strengthen the training curriculum for licensing professionals that enhances their early childhood education knowledge and regulatory role as licensors to promote safe, healthy environments for children.

Technology:

- **Background checks:** Use electronic fingerprint scanning for nationwide background checks, informed by guidance from national sources, in order to improve the process and response time. Align the system with the national model set up by NACCRRRA. Explore creating a transferable and portable background check certificate that multiple programs can use to support substitute programs and consistent checks.
- **Data collection:** Increase the data and information available to inform decision-making, and to better inform parents, families and other stakeholders. Coordinate this work with the *P-20 longitudinal data system* (see Strategy #36 below).

Coordination with the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS): Build strong communication and coordination between DEL licensors and QRIS coaches/mentors. In most quality rating systems across the country, licensing is understood to be the standard for health and safety requirements, and the foundation of quality.

Why it will work. The Department of Early Learning (DEL) licenses more than 7,800 child care centers and family home child care providers within Washington. The licensing standards ensure that children in licensed care are in safe, healthy and nurturing learning environments. As noted on Section I.C.2., above, the latest brain research has shown how crucial the early years are for a child's learning and growth. A strong child care licensing system promotes higher

quality child care, which helps ensure the safe, healthy, nurturing and developmentally rich environments that children need to promote their learning.

The improvements in this strategy will move the child care licensing system toward greater standardization, transparency and consistency, and will strengthen the dialogue among DEL, early learning professionals and families. In addition, as Richard Fiene explains, “Quality child care is achieved by both regulatory and non-regulatory approaches...licensing provides the threshold for quality below which no program should be permitted to operate” (2005). Child care licensing and the QRIS model are the perfect example of how regulatory and non-regulatory systems working collaboratively can help raise the level of quality in licensed child care.

Research supporting these changes includes:

Azer, S., Morgan, G., Crawford, G. M., LeMoine, S., Clifford, R. M. (2002). *Regulation of child care* (Early Childhood Research and Policy Briefs, 2(1)). Chapel Hill, NC: National Center for Early Development and Learning.

Colbert, J. A. (2005). *Minimizing risks to children in licensed child care settings: A literature review and state survey*. Olympia: Washington State Division of Child Care and Early Learning.

Fiene, R. (2005). *Licensing measurement*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University.

Fiene, R. (2002). *13 Indicators of quality child care: Research update*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

National Child Care Information Center & National Association for Regulatory Administration. (2009). *The 2007 child care licensing study*. Lexington, KY: National Association for Regulatory Administration.

United States Government Accountability Office. (2004). *Child care: State efforts to enforce safety and health requirements* (GAO-04-786). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Accountability Office.

When it could be put in place. The licensing improvements build on the strengths in the current system. DEL has already begun to implement inclusive and evidence based rule making, and is taking steps toward instituting electronically scanned fingerprints, and to improve technology and data collection. Based on the current staffing and resources, realizing all the proposed improvements could take 10 years to achieve.

#23

Strategy #23. Professional Development and Compensation

What it is. Implement a comprehensive, statewide, integrated system of preparation and professional development for early learning professionals, who work with families and children birth through third grade. This system will include: professional standards, core competencies,

career pathways to degrees and P-3 endorsements, establishing an infant-toddler credential, college credit articulation, experience equivalency, integrated professional registry, and financial support and incentives so that professionals can obtain education and ongoing development, with fair compensation for attaining additional education and development. Integrate parenting education and engagement best practices into professional development for early learning partners working with expectant parents, and children birth through third grade and their families.

The quality of early learning and care depends heavily on the education, training, compensation and stability of the workforce. Currently Washington has some components of a professional development system, yet most policies and initiatives are under-resourced and not coordinated to address systematically the professional knowledge, stability and diversity of the workforce.

There is a lack of quality data about the early learning workforce to guide policy decisions; this includes information on individuals currently providing care and efforts to increase professional development.

Some of the steps necessary to create an effective system of professional development include the following:

- Increase understanding of the composition of the early learning workforce.

- Add “slots” and resources (e.g., advisors, materials, scholarships, release time from work responsibilities, etc.) in the community colleges, technical colleges, and universities, and funding in the Washington Scholarships for Child Care Professionals to support degree attainment.

- Work with higher education institutions to encourage expanding programs of study in early childhood education and development.

- Begin regulating currently license-exempt preschools to better understand the supply and quality of programs, and to engage staff in professional development opportunities.

- Secure additional resources to support increased competency of professionals who are credentialed and/or hold a professional degree, and to increase wages and compensation.

- Develop policies and strategies that attract bilingual and bicultural individuals to the early learning field.

- Promote training in working with English language learner (ELL) children and English as a Second Language (ESL).

- Integrate professional development opportunities among early learning professionals working with children at all age levels, birth through third grade.

Why it will work. Much of the research on early childhood education documents the importance of nurturing early relationships to promote healthy child development and

ultimately success in school. Professional development is key to fostering and supporting nurturing relationships between parents/caregivers and their young children.

According to research by Herzenberg, Price, and Bradley (2005), a well-compensated workforce directly affects the quality of instruction and care at the most fundamental level due to a strong correlation between teacher compensation, retention and educational level.

Researchers Weber and Trauten (2008) state that “Three primary factors are positively associated with teacher quality: compensation, participation in professional development, and stability. Compensation appears to be the strongest predictor of classroom quality in child care centers. . . . Program quality, teacher/caregiver outcomes, and child outcomes are inextricably linked” (pp. 1-2).

When it could be put in place. In 2009, the Washington State Legislature provided direction through House Bill 1943 to the Professional Development Consortium, a group of early learning and school-age experts and stakeholders convened by DEL to create a comprehensive early learning and school-age professional development system in our state that promotes a qualified and well-compensated early learning work force and integrates with the Quality Rating and Improvement System. The Consortium’s recommendations are scheduled to be complete by December 2010. The recommendations from that effort should be incorporated into this Early Learning Plan.

In the near term (the next five years), existing programs and services can be strengthened. In the long term (10 years), the system of professional development needs to be expanded.

#24

Strategy #24. Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

What it is. Fully fund and implement a voluntary Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) so that early learning and school-age providers have the support and resources necessary to improve the quality of their programs and environments. The QRIS will help create a career ladder that provides access to professional opportunities, wages and benefits, and other compensation commensurate with the provider’s career progression along a path to education, experience and competence. The QRIS will also provide consumer education opportunities so that families can identify and choose high-quality programs for their children.

The QRIS should include a variety of strategies and initiatives, including increased funding, oversight of the system, data systems that will support evaluation, links to professional development systems, consumer education and awareness, and supports for providers (both money and technical assistance).

Creation of the QRIS will enable policy makers and professionals in the field to develop and then monitor key indicators to track progress toward improvement of early learning programs and environments. The indicators could help monitor the level of engagement of at-risk populations, including young children (birth to 5 years) with disabilities. This would help ensure

that young children with disabilities will be included in all early learning programs for young children.

Steps include:

Evaluate the results from the modified field tests in the five counties. Based on the evaluation results, expand QRIS, including a system of health and safety coaches, to all communities throughout the state.

Attempt to access federal grant funds to support the development of QRIS.

Create a baseline measure of quality in all communities.

Include license-exempt preschools and Head Start and ECEAP programs in QRIS so that parents can evaluate the quality of services and preschool options.

Why it will work. Much has been learned from the early implementers of QRIS across the country. Evidence suggests that there is a relationship between QRIS participation and an increase in early learning program quality. There is also evidence that there is a relationship between QRIS participation and a decrease in staff turnover rates.

Some of the studies from other states that have implemented QRIS include the following:

1. Pennsylvania –University of Pittsburgh. (2006, December). *Evaluation of Pennsylvania's Keystone STARS Quality Rating System in Child Care Settings*.
2. Tennessee – *What is Working? What is Not Working? Report on the Qualitative Study of the Tennessee Report Card and Star-Quality Program and Support System*. (2006, Nov.).
3. North Carolina – Bryant, Bernier, Maxwell & Peisner-Feinberg. (2001). *Validating North Carolina's 5-Star Child Care Licensing System*; and Cassidy, Hestenes, Hestenes, & Mims. (2003). *Measurement of Quality in Preschool Child Care Classrooms*.

For these reports and more information, see the National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center's Web page on QRIS and impact on quality at <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/poptopics/grs-impactqualitycc.html>.

When it could be put in place. The State Department of Early Learning has established pilot projects in five different counties to test elements of the Seeds to Success (QRIS) model. The evaluation of those pilots will be helpful in creating QRIS statewide. It will likely take 10 years to build the necessary infrastructure to support a comprehensive statewide QRIS.

#25

Strategy #25. Health, Mental Health and Social Emotional Consultation in Early Learning Settings

What it is. Provide coordinated local-state health, mental health and social emotional consultation, screening and referral, and support, in partnership with coordinated school health services, to early learning professionals, in order to optimize child health and development. Consultation services impact a child's health, safety, development, and mental health. The

consultation should be available in licensed early learning settings, Head Start programs, home visiting programs, elementary schools, and school-age care.

Early learning health consultation should be provided in all areas of the state utilizing local health jurisdictions, public health staff, child care resource and referral entities, and other community agencies to build on existing efforts and expertise. Culturally competent consultation should be available to all early learning providers and home visiting programs, and can be customized to their specific needs, such as health and safety, mental/behavioral health, or specialized infant consultation. This strategy aims to improve the physical and social/emotional health, safety and optimum development of young children.

Portions of a system of consultation already exist. The need is to build a continuum of health consultation services to best meet the needs of a variety of early learning settings, including FFN. Our state has a pool of highly trained early learning health consultants and some mental health consultants. State law requires centers that provide care for infants to contract with a nurse for health consultation. All of the child care resource and referral agencies and most early learning health consultants with local health departments offer some form of social-emotional consultation, although programs differ in how they are provided. There are no current specific requirements for social-emotional consultation, and no standardized system for measuring outcomes. Funding support for this array of services has been significantly reduced in recent years. Whatever consultation network existed in the past is disappearing. There is currently no coordinated system of consultation designed to meet the health, mental health, and social/emotional development needs of our children.

Several steps would be required to successfully implement this strategy. These include:

- Create state-level coordination that could bring together the remaining consultants, improve the delivery of services, create a statewide continuum for health and social-emotional consultation, and work to increase the number of early learning consultation work force.

- Create state-/regional-level coordinator(s) utilizing health professionals with expertise in health, safety and child development in early learning settings, who would be available to provide specific expertise related to children with disabilities or special needs.

- Funding to support training, dissemination of information, and consultation through statewide and regional meetings, Webinars and creation of Web site resources.

- Establish standards and qualifications, and negotiate payment rates for social emotional consultants.

Why it will work. There is national recognition that health consultation improves quality in early childhood settings. The federal Maternal Child Health Bureau requires health consultation as a component of a comprehensive early childhood system. Health and mental health consultation are proven ways to improve the quality of care and learning.

In the past year DEL conducted a pilot project with three different models for providing social-emotional consultation. The interim report showed positive outcomes.

There is a considerable amount of research available that suggests the importance of health and mental health consultation in a child's healthy development. Some of those sources include:

1. Fiene R. *13 Indicators of Quality Child Care: Research Update*, <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/ccquality-ind02>.
2. Alkon, A., Bernzweig, J., To, K., Mackie, J. F., Wolff, M. & Elman, J. (2008, March/April). Child care health consultation programs in California: Models, services and facilitators. *Public Health Nursing*, 25:2, 126-139, <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/119404874/abstract>
3. Snohomish Health District. (2009, March). *Child care health consultation: Evidence based effectiveness*. www.shohd.org.

Similarly, the research on the need for social-emotional consultation is current, compelling and plentiful. The following Web sites provide extensive current research: Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/>), Zero the Three (<http://www.zerotothree.org/site/PageServer>), Georgetown University (<http://www.brightfutures.org/mentalhealth/>), the National Center for Children in Poverty (<http://www.nccp.org/>), and National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health at Georgetown University (<http://gucchd.georgetown.edu/67211.html>). In addition, the University of Washington has established Promoting First Relationships as a promising practice and has gathered substantial research to demonstrate the efficacy of the program (<http://www.pfrprogram.org/>).

When it could be put in place. Many of the services needed to put a comprehensive system of consultation in place already exist. It could take up to five years to expand and coordinate the existing services. Early learning health consultation on many topics is now offered through the State Department of Health (DOH) Healthy Child Care Washington program, and social-emotional consultation is provided through child care resource and referral agencies, and a number of independent consultants. Child health consultants exist in every county in the state, although their levels of expertise and experience vary significantly. The system needs to link the varieties of health and social/emotional consultation to create a continuum of services that meet the differing needs of early learning providers caring for children in all types of early learning settings.

READY AND SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

Outcomes

- M.** All children and families make smooth transitions among home, early learning settings and school.
- N.** All schools are ready to welcome all children who attend, including preparing for their individual gifts and needs, level of knowledge, skills, social-emotional and physical development, and their cultural background and language.
- O.** All students transition from third grade-level activities prepared with the foundations to achieve the more advanced challenges of upper elementary and intermediate grade-level activities.

Strategies

#26

Strategy #26. Social-Emotional Learning – Children

What it is. Ensure that a continuum of skills development and support are available to every child within all preK-12 public school settings.

Traditionally, early learning settings for children from birth to 4 years and school-age programs have incorporated learning for the whole child, including social-emotional learning, while K-12 schools have focused more on academic learning. Social-emotional learning refers to knowledge and skills in the awareness and management of emotions, setting and achieving personal and academic goals, interpersonal skills, establishing and maintaining positive relationships, and demonstrating decision-making and responsible behavior. In Washington there are references to some of these skills in the school grade-level expectations for health and fitness, such as “solves conflicts while maintaining safe and respectful relationships.” Some states, including Wisconsin, Ohio, Tennessee and Illinois, have adopted separate standards for social-emotional learning. In Illinois all school districts are required to adopt a policy for incorporating social-emotional learning into their educational program. What is needed in Washington is to develop and fully fund policies that establish social and emotional learning performance guidelines, standards, and professional accountability systems for school-aged children that are aligned with the *Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks*.

Why it will work. There is research that connects social-emotional learning with school readiness, and traces the impact into later school years. Examples are:

- Raver, C. (2002). Emotions matter: Making the case for the role of young children’s emotional development for early school readiness. *Social Policy Report of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 16(1), 3-23.
- Shonkoff, J. P. & Phillips, D. A. (Eds.). (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development*. Washington, DC: National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, National Academy Press.

Payton, J., Weissberg, R. P., Durlak, J. A., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., Schellinger, K. B., & Pachan, M. (2008). *The positive impact of social and emotional learning for kindergarten to eighth-grade students: Findings from three scientific reviews*. Chicago, IL: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning.

When it could be put in place. Policies could be developed within five years.

#27

Strategy #27. Aligned Prekindergarten and K-3 Instructional and Programmatic Practices

What it is. Children’s prekindergarten through third grade experiences are aligned and consistent with research-based developmentally- and culturally competent instructional and programmatic practices. Each learning opportunity builds on the child’s prior learning and experiences, and prepares the child for the learning to come next. Gains achieved in high-quality prekindergarten programs are sustained by connecting them with complementary and coordinated education in kindergarten, first, second and third grades. Aligned prekindergarten and kindergarten through third grade practices also promote a team approach and smooth transitions for children and families, and help set the stage for meaningful partnerships among schools, parents and early learning providers in supporting individual children’s learning needs and parent involvement in children’s learning.

Steps to accomplish this strategy include the following:

Increase early childhood/early elementary program collaboration and teacher effectiveness at a district level through a focus on the development of critical early learning skills, using aligned standards, curricula and assessment pre-K through third grade.

Increase regional leadership among principals, superintendents, school boards and early learning partners (such as Head Start, ECEAP and child care directors) to further effective P-3 (preschool through third grade) practice in early learning and early elementary classrooms through the use of data and sound understanding of early childhood development and effective early learning instruction.

Increase capacity to provide regional leadership across early learning and K-12 partners to support P-3 implementation.

Create mechanisms to support district, regional and/or state-level evaluation of P-3 practices and their impact on children’s educational achievement pre-K through third grade.

Complete P-3 teacher endorsement and incentivize early learning and kindergarten through third grade teachers to receive the endorsement.

Incorporate P-3 endorsement requirements into the professional development standards for early learning providers.

Increase funding to achieve smaller class sizes.

Replicate existing successful models in the state for aligning research-based culturally- and developmentally-appropriate prekindergarten through third grade practices, including support for English language learners.

Encourage communication and collaboration among professionals working with children of different ages, and efforts to combine the whole-child approach birth through age 5 years care with the K-12 emphasis on academic knowledge and practices.

Why it will work. The need for aligned, research-based developmentally- and culturally-appropriate instructional and programmatic practices is compelling. As the Foundation for Child Development states in *America's Vanishing Potential: The Case for PreK-3rd Education*:

Children's success in school and in life must be built on a foundation of seamless learning during their earliest PreK-3rd school years. PreK-3rd teachers and administrators work together across these grade levels, building strong connections and linking learning experiences across these critical years. Yet currently, most children experience a wide range of disparate experiences that jumble together and end up requiring our youngest learners to figure them out on their own (Foundation for Child Development, 2008, p. 5).

Consistent with best-practice research, a P-3 network is emerging in Washington. In addition to the kindergarten through third grade demonstration projects funded by the legislature, the network includes schools who have developed P-3 programs on their own, as well as schools funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation through their Early Learning Leadership Grants. Interest in building local P-3 systems is evident by the attendance at the August 2009 Starting Strong P-3 Conference: Connecting Schools and Early Learning (Washington State OSPI, 2010). All 39 counties of the state were represented by participants who learned and worked together, focusing on the topics of aligning instruction, increasing family engagement, and building partnerships and leadership.

When it could be put in place. The nucleus of a P-3 network is in place. Expanded participation, and support for aligned, research-based, developmentally- and culturally-appropriate instructional and programmatic practices could be achieved in the near term. The results of the kindergarten through third grade demonstration project evaluation, as well as lessons learned from the state's existing P-3 programs can be used to continuously improve the quality of all programs.

#28

Strategy #28. Kindergarten Readiness Assessment

What it is. Create and implement a Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Process that includes information from parents, caregivers and early learning professionals, the history of early learning, and addresses multiple domains of early learning and development.

Washington does not have a statewide assessment process for children entering kindergarten. Some schools and school districts have been assessing kindergarten readiness using either tools that are used elsewhere in the nation or developing their own process. (See "Children's readiness for kindergarten" in Section I.E.4., above.) The Bremerton School District has developed a strong readiness assessment process that is showing results. A statewide culturally competent kindergarten readiness process could offer a way to better understand children's abilities and needs as they enter school. This information would help parents, families,

caregivers, early learning professionals, and communities to ensure that children are ready for kindergarten, and schools to prepare for their students.

The goals are to gather data on what children know and are able to do when they enter kindergarten in order to support the transition and alignment between early learning and K-12 education systems, ensure that schools offer appropriate classroom instruction, and inform statewide planning for early learning investments. This is a diagnostic assessment, *not* a high-stakes test. The intent is not to track children but to improve early learning opportunities.

As noted in Section I.E.4., above, DEL and OSPI, in collaboration with Thrive, are working together to develop pilot a kindergarten readiness process, known as the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills, or WaKIDS. WaKIDS was developed in collaboration with teachers and principals, early care and education providers, parents, and representatives from Washington's tribal communities. The process is based on the latest early learning research and best practices from other states about what young children need to be ready to learn. The WaKIDS pilot will include three parts:

Family Connection: Before school starts, kindergarten teachers will meet with families to talk about each student's strengths and needs, fill out a comprehensive survey, and make sure they feel welcome at the elementary school.

Kindergarten Inventory: In the fall, kindergarten teachers will complete a more formal inventory focusing on the development of the whole child, including social and emotional, physical, cognitive and linguistic skills. Teachers will receive special training and extra compensation for their time.

Early Learning Collaboration: Early learning providers and kindergarten teachers will continue meeting throughout the school year to develop new ways to collaborate and share information.

A total of 54 school districts across the state are participating, each conducting the pilot in between one and seven classrooms. For more information see <http://www.del.wa.gov/development/kindergarten/pilot.aspx>

Once the pilot is tested and verified, the assessment can be replicated statewide. Training will be needed for school districts and staff in how to use the assessment and what information it can provide. Reports of the results and evaluation of the process will also be crucial to make it the most useful.

Why it will work. The *Kindergarten Assessment Process Planning Report* that DEL commissioned surveyed the assessment work being done in various school districts, conducted a survey of stakeholders, reviewed national models, and made recommendations for developing the assessment process (SRI International, 2008). OSPI's *Early Learning in Washington Public Schools Report* (2008a) also reviews the assessments taking place now. These reports suggest questions to consider for developing the assessment, and the steps for implementation.

When it could be put in place. Planning is underway. The WaKIDS pilot will begin in Fall 2010. Once the pilot is complete, DEL and OSPI will submit a report to the legislature in January 2011 with findings and recommendations for next steps. Depending on the pilot’s results, a kindergarten readiness assessment process could be fully implemented statewide within five years.

#29 Strategy #29. Full-Day Kindergarten

What it is. Continue the phase-in of full-day kindergarten as part of basic education, and coordinate the phase-in with the implementation of universal preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds.

Kindergarten as part of Washington public schools is defined as 450 hours of instruction per year, the equivalent of half-day. In 2007 the state legislature responded to the recommendations of Washington Learns by passing Senate Bill 5841, which funded voluntary full-day kindergarten (at least 1,000 hours per year) starting with the 2007-08 school year (RCW 28A.150.315). Funds appropriated were sufficient to phase in full-day kindergarten to 10 percent of schools each year, with the goal that all schools would receive funding in 10 years. Once funded, schools may apply to renew funding year to year. Starting in the 2008-09 school year, funding was provided to schools in which the student poverty rate was 67 percent or higher. Schools receiving all-day kindergarten program support agree to conditions that include:

- Providing a curriculum that offers a varied set of experiences to develop skills in reading, mathematics, writing, communication; experiences in science, social studies, arts, health and physical education and a world language other than English; acquiring motor skills and social-emotional skills; and learning through hands-on experiences;

- Establishing learning environments that are developmentally appropriate and promote creativity;

- Demonstrating strong connections and communication with early learning community providers; and

- Participating in kindergarten program readiness activities with early learning providers and parents (RCW 28A.150.315(1)(b)-(e)).

Currently more than 200 Washington public schools are funded to offer full-day kindergarten. The Bremerton School District has been funded as a “lighthouse” district to offer technical assistance and best practices to other districts in the initial stages of implementing all-day kindergarten.

Why it will work. Full-day kindergarten gives young children, especially those living in poverty, the time to learn the foundational skills and knowledge that are important to future school success (Washington State OSPI, 2008a).

When it could be put in place. The phase-in of full-day kindergarten began with the 2007-08 school year and is to be complete by 2018-19.

#30 Strategy #30. Compassionate Schools – Reducing Effects of Complex Trauma

What it is. Work to ensure that parents, families, caregivers and early learning professionals, implement strategies to reduce the effects of complex trauma and adverse childhood experiences for children birth through third grade.

A pilot training program has been implemented in Pierce County and Spokane County early learning and pilot elementary schools. OSPI has provided support to pilot the compassionate schools model. OSPI has also published a book on complex trauma and compassionate schools (Johnson & Hertel, 2009). What is needed is additional staff training, recruitment of early learning professionals and elementary schools, and development of a long-term plan for implementation.

Why it will work. Research has documented the effects of childhood stress on early learning and health, and ways to help traumatized children. Sources include:

Cole, S. F., et al. (2005). *Helping traumatized children learn: A report and policy agenda*. Massachusetts Advocates for Children.

Johnson, M., & Hertel, R. (2009). *The heart of learning and teaching: Compassion, resiliency, and academic success*. Olympia, WA: Washington State OSPI.

Middlebrooks, J. S., & Audage, N. C. (2008). *The effects of childhood stress on health across the lifespan*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study: <http://www.cestudy.org/>

When it could be put in place. The training could be expanded to more pilot sites in phases over the next five years.

READY AND SUCCESSFUL SYSTEMS AND COMMUNITIES

Outcomes

- P. The early learning system in Washington uses evidence-based and/or demonstrated best practices (as available) to support families in fostering children’s healthy development and learning, and to build high-quality, culturally competent early learning programs for children birth through third grade.
- Q. The early learning system in Washington works to close the preparation gap.
- R. The early learning system supports children with developmental disabilities and other special needs, and their families, to optimize each child’s health, development and educational outcomes.
- S. Governance and accountability systems ensure progress toward achieving the vision for a high-quality, accessible, early learning system for all children in Washington.
- T. Communities support families and promote children’s learning and healthy development.
- U. The public understands the critical economic and social value of high-quality, culturally competent early learning for every child from birth through third grade, and actively supports related policies and investments.

Strategies

#31

Strategy #31. Early Learning and Development Benchmarks

What it is. Refine the *Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks* (State of Washington, 2005) based on constituent input. Then promote and use the Benchmarks in early learning settings, and align them with kindergarten through third grade education to inform professional standards and the curriculum used for professional development of all early learning professionals, including K-3 teachers and the school-age workforce.

DEL, OSPI and Thrive by Five Washington are developing a process to work with stakeholders to review and refine the Benchmarks, which were produced in 2005. The stakeholders’ group will help identify ways to implement the Benchmarks that are appropriate for all children and communities across the state. The Benchmarks have been used by educational organizations and early learning professionals. In addition to revisions based on constituent input and field use, what is needed are related tools, materials and training for early learning professionals, and for use in community college and college programs in early childhood development, and in kindergarten through third grade teacher preparation. The Benchmarks also should be used to align early learning standards from birth through grade three.

Why it will work. Washington developed the Benchmarks in 2005 to fulfill a requirement for federal Child Care Development Fund funding. Based on research and best practices, the *Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks* are a way of assisting parents, families, caregivers and early learning professionals to know what children at specific ages should know and be able to do, and how they as “teachers” can stimulate each child’s

development across all the domains. Washington hired a team of nationally recognized experts to work with state and local stakeholders to develop the Benchmarks. Washington's Benchmarks have become a national model for other states.

When it could be put in place. The new version of the Benchmarks is expected to be issued in 2011. Development of materials, tools and training could be done within five years.

#32

Strategy #32. Registry

What it is. Create a comprehensive, integrated registry system that captures professional development data of early learning professionals (including the school-age workforce) to inform planning, evaluation, quality assurance and accountability.

Currently under the STARS registry, the MERIT database tracks child care and school-age provider training completion in a limited manner (there is no reporting capacity). DEL is planning to replace the registry, and is considering the most viable options for registry re-design. One positive opportunity is that the Washington State CCR&R Network through the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) is in the process of beta testing a database to track all training, technical assistance, coaching and onsite consultation offered through local CCR&R programs. This software will be the foundation for the CCR&R Network's Early Childhood Academy, which will increase the quality, effectiveness and accessibility of comparable training available through the CCR&R system statewide. Developed with private funding, the Academy framework includes both breadth and depth of offerings for providers, as well as trainer supports. All trainings will be linked to the state's core competencies and skill standards. This system could potentially be expanded to capture individual education and training of child care providers.

Washington is one of the few beta test sites for NACCRRA's database of training opportunities. An integrated registry system will provide better:

- Understanding of the current status, expertise and gaps of the workforce;
- Understanding of the types of trainings available and where there are significant gaps;
- Guidance in the allocation of resources; and
- Accountability for individuals and programs to track their own professional development.

It is DEL's intention to design a registry that would link to the P-20 longitudinal data system currently under development. In the meantime, the registry would contain the CCR&R Network data, relevant data from the OSPI/Educational Service District training tracking system for K-12 teachers, as well as simplifying the data collection from two- and four-year higher education institutions.

Why it will work. There is a legislative mandate from HB 1943 in 2009 ("Requiring recommendations for preparation and professional development for the early learning and school-age program workforce") to create a comprehensive and integrated registry. The

Professional Development Consortium, in collaboration with DEL, is developing recommendations for a comprehensive statewide system of preparation and professional development for early learning professionals and the school-age workforce. The Consortium is to provide final recommendations to the legislature and the governor by December 31, 2010.

Most other states have developed functional registries, which have shown that the benefits are significant for data collection, evaluation of quality trainings, and knowledge that licensors need to do their jobs efficiently and effectively, but in Washington currently do not have.

When it could be put in place. The system will be developed based on the recommendations due at the end of 2010.

#33

Strategy #33. Child Care Subsidies

What it is. Improve child care subsidy programs to support high-quality care, increase parental choice, improve access for children and families, and improve the technology to better serve families and early learning professionals.

Child care subsidies help lower income families pay for child care while they work or are involved in a WorkFirst activity. The Department of Early Learning (DEL) administers three child care subsidy programs: Working Connections Child Care (WCCC), Seasonal Child Care Subsidies (SCC), and Homeless Child Care. For WCCC, DEL has administrative and policy making responsibility for the 60,000 children each month whose families receive a subsidy. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) implements WCCC by determining eligibility, authorizing care and making payment on behalf of families to the early learning provider. The program has an annual budget of around \$300 million. Seasonal Child Care supports agricultural workers with help to pay their child care. The program serves about 650 children per month. DEL contracts with local agencies to determine eligibility and authorize care; DSHS makes the subsidy payment to providers. The annual budget is \$8.8 million. Homeless Child Care is a small program that contracts with community providers to provide child care subsidy to homeless families while they find work and housing, and make legal and medical appointments. Its annual budget is \$670,000.

The policies for subsidies need to support high-quality care, parental choice and access for children and families in the following ways:

Ensure there is adequate access to high quality, culturally competent providers that accept subsidies.

Support parents' choice in the type of care setting they choose for their child.

Ensure the continuity of care for children and families so that children can build and maintain a relationship with their provider.

Link to other programs and supports for the family to access for their child.

Ensure that providers are available who can provide high-quality care for children with disabilities or special needs.

Ensure that subsidy rates, including the rate for children with disabilities or special needs, are adequate to support high-quality care.

Make the subsidy system easy for families and early learning professionals to access and use.

Steps to be taken to provide support to early learning professions in providing quality care are:

Connect to the QRIS through subsidy incentives for higher quality care.

Ensure that subsidy rates, including the rate for children with disabilities or special needs, are adequate to support high-quality care.

Make specialized training available for license exempt providers receiving subsidies.

Provide timely and accurate authorization and payment of providers, and notification of changes.

Investments in technology are needed to:

Increase the accuracy of authorization, payment and notifications.

Increase the data and information available to inform decision-making and to realize efficiencies.

Better serve families.

Align with the P-20 longitudinal data collection system.

Not only do policies need to support the above actions, but the funding needs to align with the policies.

Why it will work. Several studies are available online that support the principles and steps for improving subsidies. These include:

Adams, G., & Snyder, K. (2003). *Essential but often ignored: Child care providers in the subsidy system* (Assessing the New Federalism Occasional Paper No. 63). Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.urban.org/publications/310613.html>

Adams, G., Snyder, K., & Banghart, P. (2008). *Designing subsidy systems to meet the needs of families: An overview of policy research findings*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.urban.org/publications/411611.html>

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP). (2007). *Selected state and local policies to support immigrant and limited English proficient early care and education providers*. Retrieved from <http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/0383.pdf>

Matthews, H. & Schumacher, R. (2008). *Ensuring quality care for low-income babies: Contracting directly with providers to expand and improve infant and toddler care*

(CLASP Policy Paper No. 3, Child Care and Early Education Series). Retrieved from <http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/0422.pdf>

Weber, R. B., Grobe, D., Davis, E. E., Kreader, J. L., & Pratt, C. C. (2007). *Practices and policies: Market rate surveys in state, territories, and tribes*. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Family Policy Program, Oregon Child Care Research Partnership. Retrieved from http://www.hhs.oregonstate.edu/familypolicy/occrp/publications/Survey-of-States-Report-FINAL-05_30.pdf

When it could be put into place: Based on current resources and existing work on professional development, QRIS, and improvements in technology, an incremental approach is recommended. It could take five to eight years to realize the full strategy, including the necessary improvements and full integration of child care subsidies into the early learning system.

#34

Strategy #34. Partnerships and Mobilization

What it is. Build state-level infrastructure to strengthen partnerships, build capacity, broaden reach, and focus local early learning mobilization efforts.

In many communities across the state, people and organizations involved with early learning have joined together in various ways to share information and resources. Many communities have strong and active early learning coalitions. The community-based mobilization efforts for early learning are governed at the local level and, for the most part, are dependent on the structure and supports available locally. Some monitoring occurs to meet grant requirements, but this happens on an individual basis. The Foundation for Early Learning and Thrive by Five Washington provide technical assistance, funding and resources to a number of community-based groups, and the Foundation is starting to build a “coalition consortium.”

What is needed is a coordinated effort at the state level to support the needs of diverse communities, and create a consistent way for communities to stay linked to one another and to state-level efforts. The evaluation of local efforts in utilizing the Kids Matter framework, which has been done for some communities, should continue and expand statewide. Monitoring needs to be flexible so as to allow local communities to organize in ways that best meet their needs. Local coalitions should be encouraged to collect at least three common data elements to inform evaluation and improvement efforts. A system of peer-to-peer evaluation also should be set up.

Why it will work. Research on system building includes the following:

Bruner, C., Wright, M. S., and Tirmizi, S. N. (2007). *Village building and school readiness: Closing opportunity gaps in a diverse society* (Resource brief). State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistance Network. Retrieved from <http://www.finebynine.org/uploaded/file/VBSR.pdf>

Coffman, J. (2007). A framework for evaluating systems initiatives. The BUILD Initiative.

Logan, A. (2009). *Integrated children's services* [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from <http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0909BUILDINGFUTURESLOGAN.PDF>

Organizational Research Services. (2006). Evaluation of awareness and utilization of Kids Matter Framework: Stakeholder survey report. Seattle, WA: Author.

When it could be put in place. This strategy is feasible to develop within five years.

#35

Strategy #35. Public Awareness and Commitment

What it is. Strengthen and expand the current public awareness campaigns to deepen the understanding, action and support of local leaders and the public to make children a priority and support investments in child development and learning, especially in high-quality environments from birth through third grade.

It is important to continue raising awareness and educating the public and local leaders about the significance of early learning and school-age programs, not just for individual children but for society at large. This understanding can then lead to support and action. There have been and continue to be public awareness and engagement campaigns by various statewide and local early learning organizations. These include United Way's Born Learning campaign, DEL outreach and publications, Thrive by Five Washington's "Learning for Life" partnership with KING 5-TV/BELO Corporation, Foundation for Early Learning publications, the Washington State CCR&R Network's *Child Care 2000 Campaign*, and public library efforts. The Early Learning Communications Roundtable has brought together communications experts from various early learning entities around the state to share ideas and seek partnerships. The Children's Alliance and Early Learning Action Alliance currently work to educate legislators and other elected leaders. Fight Crime – Invest in Kids and many United Ways have conducted efforts to reach business and other local leaders.

However, our state has not yet spearheaded any *collective* effort to launch one, coherent campaign. What is needed is to develop a statewide community engagement campaign, gain agreement on purpose and messaging, engage the media, create approaches and tools that local communities can modify to suit their needs, and develop an evaluation methodology. Clear campaign goals must be established. Messaging and materials must be culturally competent and designed to reach a variety of audiences—available in multiple languages and distributed in a variety of formats. The campaign should include a range of methods, including peer-to-peer information sharing, and outreach to elected officials, and business and community leaders.

Why it will work. The research in social marketing has developed over the past decade with review of successful public awareness campaigns, such as the Washington Tobacco Prevention Program, Click it or Ticket, and the National Postpartum Depression Campaign (for which Council for Children and Families manages the state effort). See Kotler & Lee (2007). The National League of Cities has documented the importance of involving leaders (National League of Cities Strengthening Families Platform: http://www.nlc.org/IYEF/A_CITY_PLATFORM/index.aspx). Thrive by Five Washington’s baseline public awareness poll (2008) provides a starting point for the recommended work.

When it could be put in place. The partnerships to begin this work are in place. A statewide campaign could be launched within five years.

#36

Strategy #36. P-20 Longitudinal Data System

What it is. Continue the development of a seamless P-20 longitudinal data system that includes information regarding the formal early learning education services and programs that children receive before they enter the K-12 education system. Combine this information with the available data on the children in the K-12 education system to prepare reports and information that will improve instruction and child outcomes in both early learning programs and K-3 classrooms.

Washington Learns promoted meaningful accountability. Recording and compiling data on the results of early learning services and programs before children enter kindergarten will enable monitoring of results. The reports from this system will be helpful in identifying ways to improve instruction. Most importantly, accurate and complete data collection on individual children will enable sophisticated analysis in order to assess how specific early learning programs and approaches are doing in addressing the preparation gap and preparing their children for success in kindergarten. In addition, the data collection will enable assessment of how the K-12 system is doing in retaining the benefits of high-quality early learning, by tracking how children fare once they enter the K-12 education system. Ultimately, the data will provide a clear sense of how best to reduce the preparation and achievement gaps for specific children and groups of high-risk populations.

Why it will work. Our current base of data leaves gaping holes in our knowledge and understanding of how children’s early learning experiences influence their ultimate success in school and in life. The same is true regarding children’s K-12 experiences. Successful education reform must be grounded in appropriately trained and prepared teachers who demonstrate positive outcomes for children in their classrooms. A sophisticated P-20 longitudinal data system will enable this critical level of assessment of the children *and* their teachers over time.

When it could be put in place. The Education Research and Data Center at the state Office of Financial Management is currently developing the P-20 longitudinal data system, in collaboration with OSPI and other agencies. A three-year, \$17.3 million federal grant, awarded in May 2010, will advance this work.

Table 4. ELP Outcomes with Supporting Strategies

Ready and Successful CHILDREN	
A. All children have optimal physical health, mental health, oral health and nutrition.	
#1. Nutrition in Pregnancy and Early Childhood #2. Insurance and Medical Home #3. Early Childhood Oral Health #4. Infants and Toddlers #5. Home Visiting #6. Developmental Screening #7. Add At Risk Children to Early Intervention Services (Part C)	#8. Access to Mental Health Services – Develop Access to Care Standards #9. Access to Mental Health Services – Increase Availability of Assessment, Diagnosis and Treatment #25. Health, Mental Health and Social-Emotional Consultation in Early Learning Settings #30. Compassionate Schools – Reduce Effects of Complex Trauma #33. Child Care Subsidies
B. Pregnant and postpartum women receive health, nutrition and support services to optimize the pregnancy and the health of their newborns.	
#1. Nutrition in Pregnancy and Early Childhood #2. Insurance and Medical Home	#3. Early Childhood Oral Health #5. Home Visiting
C. All children have developmentally appropriate social-emotional, language, literacy, numeracy, and cognitive skills, and demonstrate positive mental health and well being.	
#4. Infants and Toddlers #5. Home Visiting #6. Developmental Screening #10. Early Literacy #11. Early Numeracy #12. Enhanced ECEAP	#13. Voluntary, Universal Pre-kindergarten #26. Social-Emotional Learning – Children #29. Full-Day Kindergarten #30. Compassionate Schools – Reduce Effects of Complex Trauma #31. Early Learning and Development Benchmarks #33. Child Care Subsidies
D. Families have access to high-quality early learning programs and services that are culturally competent and affordable for those who choose them.	
#4. Infants and Toddlers #5. Home Visiting #6. Developmental Screening #7. Add At Risk Children to Early Intervention Services (Part C) #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. Early Literacy #11. Early Numeracy #12. Enhanced ECEAP #13. Voluntary, Universal Pre-kindergarten #24. Quality Rating and Improvement System #33. Improve Child Care Subsidies
E. All children enter kindergarten healthy and emotionally, socially and cognitively ready to succeed in school and in life.	
#1. Nutrition in Pregnancy and Early Childhood #2. Insurance and Medical Home #3. Early Childhood Oral Health #4. Infants and Toddlers	#9. Access to Mental Health Services – Increase Availability of Assessment, Diagnosis and Treatment #10. Early Literacy

<p>#5. Home Visiting #6. Developmental Screening #7. Add At Risk Children to Early Intervention Services (Part C) #8. Access to Mental Health Services – Develop Access to Care Standards</p>	<p>#11. Early Numeracy #12. Enhanced ECEAP #13. Voluntary, Universal Pre-kindergarten #28. Kindergarten Readiness Assessment #33. Child Care Subsidies</p>
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Ready and Successful PARENTS, FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS

F. Parents are recognized as their children’s first and most important teachers, and have the support they need to help their children “learn to learn” in their first years of life.

<p>#10. Early Literacy #11. Early Numeracy #14. Access to Information and Resources #15. Parenting Learning Opportunities #16. Social-Emotional Learning – Parents, Caregivers, Early Learning Professionals</p>	<p>#18. Strong Families #19. Mental Health Screening and Services for New Parents #20. Parent Leadership #21. Parent Participation</p>
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G. A comprehensive, culturally and language-appropriate information and referral system about all aspects of child health, development and early learning is accessible to all parents (including expectant parents), families and caregivers

#14. Access to Information and Resources	#17. Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) Care
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H. Parents, families and caregivers have the knowledge and skills needed, along with culturally appropriate services and supports, to act and respond in ways that promote optimal child health, development and early learning

<p>#6. Developmental Screening #14. Access to Information and Resources #15. Parenting Learning Opportunities #16. Social-Emotional Learning – Parents, Caregivers, Early Learning Professionals</p>	<p>#17. Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) Care #18. Strong Families #19. Mental Health Screening and Services for New Parents #31. Early Learning and Development Benchmarks</p>
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I. Parent, family and caregiver voice helps shape policies and systems.

<p>#20. Parent Leadership #21. Parent Participation</p>	#34. Partnerships and Mobilization
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Ready and Successful EARLY LEARNING PROFESSIONALS

J. All early learning professionals, can demonstrate the competencies to provide children birth through third grade with developmentally and culturally appropriate early learning experiences in healthy and safe environments.

<p>#10. Early Literacy #11. Early Numeracy #16. Social-Emotional Learning – Parents, Caregivers, Early Learning Professionals #22. Child Care Licensing #23. Professional Development and Compensation</p>	<p>#24. Quality Rating and Improvement System #25. Health, Mental Health and Social-Emotional Consultation in Early Learning Settings #31. Early Learning and Development Benchmarks #32. Registry</p>
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K. All families have access to high-quality, affordable child care and early education programs staffed by providers and teachers who are adequately trained and compensated.	
#22. Child Care Licensing #23. Professional Development and Compensation #24. Quality Rating and Improvement System	#25. Health, Mental Health and Social-Emotional Consultation in Early Learning Settings #31. Early Learning and Development Benchmarks #32. Registry
L. A fully-developed Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is established and maintained so that early learning and school-age providers have the support and resources necessary to improve the quality of their programs and environments, and so that families have the information they need to make the best early learning choices for their children	
#22. Child Care Licensing #23. Professional Development and Compensation	#24. Quality Rating and Improvement System

Ready and Successful SCHOOLS	
M. All children and families make smooth transitions among home, early learning settings and school.	
#27. Align Prekindergarten and K-3 Instructional & Programmatic Practices #28. Kindergarten Readiness Assessment	#29. Full-Day Kindergarten #30. Compassionate Schools – Reduce Effects of Complex Trauma #31. Early Learning and Development Benchmarks
N. All schools are ready to welcome all children who attend, including preparing for their individual gifts and needs, level of knowledge, skills, social-emotional and physical development, and their cultural background and language.	
#23. Professional Development and Compensation #26. Social-Emotional Learning – Children #27. Align Prekindergarten and K-3 Instructional & Programmatic Practices	#28. Kindergarten Readiness Assessment #29. Full-Day Kindergarten #30. Compassionate Schools – Reduce Effects of Complex Trauma
O. All students transition from third grade-level activities prepared with the foundations to achieve the more advanced challenges of upper elementary and intermediate grade-level activities.	
#10. Early Literacy #11. Early Numeracy	#27. Align Prekindergarten and K-3 Instructional & Programmatic Practices #29. Full-Day Kindergarten

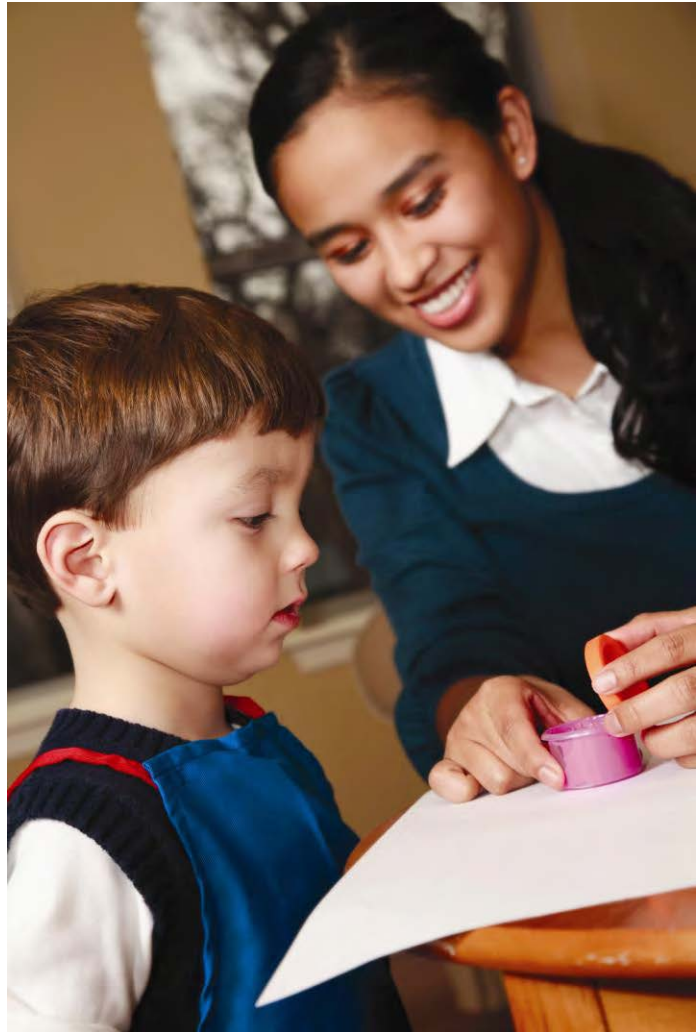
Ready and Successful SYSTEMS AND COMMUNITIES	
P. The early learning system in Washington uses evidence-based and/or demonstrated best practices (as available) to support families in fostering children’s healthy development and learning, and to build high-quality early learning programs for children birth through third grade.	
#31. Early Learning and Development Benchmarks	
Q. The early learning system in Washington works to close the preparation gap	
#1. Nutrition in Pregnancy and Early Childhood	#10. Early Literacy

Section V Outcomes and Strategies for Readiness and Early School Success

<p>#2. Insurance and Medical Home #3. Early Childhood Oral Health #4. Infants and Toddlers #5. Home Visiting #6. Developmental Screening #7. Add At Risk Children to Early Intervention Services (Part C)</p>	<p>#11. Early Numeracy #12. Enhanced ECEAP #13. Voluntary, Universal Pre-kindergarten #17. Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) Care #29. Full-Day Kindergarten #36. P-20 Longitudinal Data System</p>
<p>R. The early learning system supports children with developmental disabilities and other special needs, and their families, to optimize each child’s health, development and educational outcomes.</p>	
<p>#6. Developmental Screening #7. Add At Risk Children to Early Intervention Services (Part C) #9. Access to Mental Health Services – Increase Availability of Assessment, Diagnosis and Treatment</p>	<p>#17. Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) Care #23. Professional Development and Compensation #25. Health, Mental Health and Social-Emotional Consultation in Early Learning Settings</p>
<p>S. Governance and accountability systems ensure progress toward achieving the vision for a high-quality, accessible, early learning system for all children in Washington.</p>	
<p>#32. Registry #34. Partnerships and Mobilization</p>	<p>#36. P-20 Longitudinal Data System</p>
<p>T. Communities support families and promote children’s learning and healthy development.</p>	
<p>#18. Strong Families #34. Partnerships and Mobilization</p>	<p>#35. Public Awareness and Commitment</p>
<p>U. The public understands the critical economic and social value of high-quality early learning for every child from birth through third grade, and actively supports related policies and investments.</p>	
<p>#34. Partnerships and Mobilization</p>	<p>#35. Public Awareness and Commitment</p>

“Many of us who have worked for years in the early childhood field have been waiting our whole careers for a comprehensive plan like this. We now have a road map for moving the early learning system forward and making high quality services accessible for ALL children, starting by reducing disparities for marginalized children and families. Although we have funding challenges in front of us, this is still an exciting time for Washington!”

Thrive by Five Washington CEO Nina Auerbach



SECTION VI
WASHINGTON'S
EARLY LEARNING SYSTEM

“The time is long overdue for state and local decision makers to take bold actions to design and implement coordinated, functionally effective infrastructures to reduce the long-standing fragmentation of early childhood policies and programs.”

From Neurons to Neighborhoods, 2000

The early learning system is made up of the “readiness and school success” elements above, plus the infrastructure to organize the work, indicators to assess progress, and connections and partnerships to carry it out.

SYSTEM INFRASTRUCTURE – A READY STATE

Federal, state and local investment in early learning has been episodic and inconsistent. Few have paid attention to—or provided funding for—the infrastructure underlying the programs, supports and services. National, state and local leadership have been far more willing to support direct services for children—something that is highly visible to constituents and the public—than to support an amorphous infrastructure or systems improvement work. Not glamorous, catchy or well-understood, “infrastructure” and “system” are often neglected in discussions of early childhood policy. For many who work with children and families, these terms are vague and remote from the daily realities. Little could be further from the truth. Infrastructure is the essential ingredient that enables expansion and excellence, according to Sharon Lynn Kagan of Teachers College, Columbia University, an expert on these issues. She states that: “[S]ystems and infrastructure are what make the pieces function, what enables investments to yield returns, and what glues together varied, cross-purposed efforts on behalf of young children and their families” (Kagan, 2009b). Attending to early learning systems work means developing the infrastructure, resources and leadership necessary to create a coordinated system of services and supports that addresses the many needs of young children and their families. This systems work is paramount to expanding and enhancing the quality of services (Kagan, 2001).

Early learning programs, supports and services are bereft of a unified system. Funding is in program silos (e.g., child care, early intervention, Early Head Start, home visiting, preschool). There is no unity of regulation, governance and accountability. Unlike K-12 education, early learning lacks state and local boards to govern programs and services. It lacks a consistent set of facility and provider/teacher certification requirements. It lacks a unified accountability system. It lacks even a quasi-coherent mechanism for durable and consistent funding to meet critical needs. The lack of these infrastructure elements jeopardizes the quality and equality of early learning in Washington (Kagan, 2009b).

Direct services need funding, certainly. But their quality suffers without devoting new and existing investments to supporting the infrastructure and building a durable, coordinated system of early learning (Froelicher, 2008).

Despite the lack of a unified system of early learning in Washington, we do have a foundation for it. Progress is being made. The Governor, the legislature, DEL, Thrive by Five Washington, and ELAC have all called for a seamless system of early learning, and have collaborated in creating the framework for that system with this comprehensive plan.

A comprehensive early learning plan is a roadmap and agreement about what Washington hopes to achieve for young children and their families. The plan can help align and develop shared purposes, goals, outcomes and accountability across systems, sectors, organizations,

funding streams and programs. The following are essential functions for a strong early learning system infrastructure:

1. Collaborative governance, planning, cross-system and sector linkages, and communication;
2. Quality assurance: Standards, assessment and accountability; and
3. Financing (Kagan, 2001).

1. Collaborative Governance, Planning, Cross-System and Sector Linkages and Communication

Through countless experiences and challenges, partners in Washington have persevered in building strong early learning programs and services across the state. However, it is evident that there is no single authority that can do it all. No one state agency, no one public/private partner, no one single council or coalition can be effective and accountable in implementing an early learning system that achieves results for all children and families in our state. As we undertake to create an early learning system, there must be a structured mechanism in place to ensure an organized, clarified and coordinated set of roles and responsibilities of both state and local partners.

Governance for early learning in Washington will have to be an organized structure that is charged with achieving goals and requiring collaboration or integration of activities across existing organizational entities that normally have separate lines of decision-making authority. A new term for this type of governance is *Collaborative Governance*, an emerging set of concepts and practices that offer prescriptions for inclusive, deliberative and often consensus-oriented approaches to planning, problem solving and policymaking. "The essence of Collaborative Governance is a new level of social/political engagement between and among the several sectors of society and that constitutes a more effective way to address many of modern societies' needs beyond anything that the several sectors have heretofore been able to achieve on their own" (Henton & Melville, n.d.). Collaborative governance combines two basic concepts:

Collaborative: To co-labor, to cooperate to achieve common goals working across boundaries in multi-sector relationships. Cooperation is based on the value of reciprocity.

Governance: To steer the process that influences decisions and actions within the private, public and civic sectors (Henton & Melville, n.d.).

The "right" structure varies from state to state. However, most experts agree that planning and governance structures for an early learning system should be developed at both the state and community levels.

The ABC's of Planning and Governance states that: "In the long term, an early learning collaborative governance structure should be representative, legitimate, enduring, effective,

‘planful,’ and authoritative. Governance structures have to earn the legitimacy they need to endure and be effective through their actions, not the statutes or rules that create them. This is achieved through the vision and leadership of members of the governance structure” (Bruner, Wright, Gebhard & Hibbard, 2004).

Balance quality and quantity. Finding a balance between quality and quantity in funding early learning programs is a central struggle for Washington. Many advocates who specialize in early childhood will seek to improve the quality of programming for at-risk children, even if the added costs limit the number of children who can enroll at existing funding levels. But others want to add as many children as possible, which could sacrifice quality. A new governance mechanism will need to be a good forum in which to negotiate the right balance between quality and quantity (Regenstein, 2009).

Engage and inform families and the public. Public will and awareness are critical to providing access to quality early learning. Local coalitions discovered through the *Born Learning Campaign* that when communities value early learning, more families become aware of available services, and decision makers recognize high-quality early learning as a priority for public investment. Additionally, ensuring a formal, shared responsibility and community engagement process and structure is in place and utilized—for all initiatives focusing on birth through third grade—will help to establish mechanisms for more formal and regular two-way communication between the state and local/regional level. Local/regional strengths, needs, values and perspectives are important ingredients to creating a coherent early learning system that functions well. Ensuring that people are engaged at all levels in conversation, coordinating systems, capacity building and decision-making will help to build upon and increase the leadership for early learning issues across Washington.

Linkages, connections and partnership. Collaborative governance can strengthen existing efforts happening in multiple agencies, early learning coalitions and on important, related legislative work. It will build connections and partnerships across sectors, subsystems and disciplines. Strong and effective linkages can improve results for children, families and providers.

Tribal consultation. The sponsoring state agencies (DEL and OSPI), together with partner Thrive by Five Washington, will consult with tribal governments regarding the tribes’ interest in participating in the collaborative governance mechanism for the Early Learning Plan, and/or in any of the strategies outlined in the plan. The agencies agree to follow the Interim Communication and Consultation Protocols, and the Protocol for Co-Governance in Language, Culture and Oral Tribal Traditions Education, as appropriate.

Learning community. The state level collaborative governance mechanism will function as a learning community across sectors, levels and tiers. It will promote the vision of the ELP statewide in collaboration with local and regional early learning coalitions. It will identify and champion best practices in collaborative governance, drawing from national and international examples. It will ensure that feedback loops from families to local and regional institutions and agencies, and to the state are functioning well, and that information is captured and utilized.

Next Steps

There is no question that Washington is poised to achieve success in the development of a comprehensive statewide early learning system. One of the critical components to an early learning system is a responsive and iterative governance structure that will enable the system to grow, adapt and reflect the ever-changing needs of children and families in the state. Over the next few years, Washington will work diligently to build on existing mechanisms to create a collaborative governance model, while simultaneously employing an interim effort for coordinating and communicating the implementation and progress of the state's early learning plan.

Phase 1: Formalize existing activities into a more functional and coordinated interim governance structure. Currently, there are a number of activities and opportunities underway that begin to build the foundations of a sound governance structure. Washington needs to strengthen and expand on this work with a common goal of implementing the strategies and outcomes of the early learning plan.

Early Learning Advisory Council: In 2007, the Washington State Legislature created the Early Learning Advisory Council to serve in an advisory capacity to the Department of Early Learning (DEL). Since its inception, ELAC has provided feedback and counsel to DEL on a variety of issues from the development of the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) plan to implementation of the statewide Professional Development Consortium. Most recently, the Council has become intensely involved in the development of the statewide Early Learning Plan, perhaps their most important charge set forth in legislation that presents an opportunity to lay the foundation for a well-integrated, comprehensive early learning system in Washington. As the development of the first phase of the early learning plan is completed in 2010 and implementation begins to take shape, the existing ELAC will serve as the central mechanism at the state level for providing oversight and direction to the field regarding execution and progress of the plan. At quarterly ELAC meetings, DEL and its partner agencies, OSPI and Thrive by Five Washington, will provide regular updates on the progress of the plan, in addition to subsequent steps for moving forward.

Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution: As we undertake to create an early learning system, there must be a structured mechanism in place to ensure an organized, clarified and coordinated set of roles and responsibilities of both state and local partners. The last year has been one of significant transition within the key statewide early learning agencies (DEL, OSPI and Thrive). Specifically, there have been new leadership and new staff in each. The Joint Resolution Partnership agreement brought these new players together and solidified the commitment of each entity to collaborate and work together in accomplishing key early learning priorities. Although rudimentary, the partnership Agreement, specifically the Accountability Framework (see Appendix C), has become the foundational governance structure for many of the early learning initiatives underway in Washington (ELP, kindergarten readiness assessment, early literacy, etc.).

The progress that has been made with the Joint Resolution Partnership agreement will serve as the springboard toward an interim governance mechanism that ensures that we are advancing the priorities and strategies articulated in the ELP. In addition, the partners have also created an “action plan” as a companion document to the ELP. It will communicate to a wide audience the specific actions and shorter-term outcomes and accountability that will comprise the coordinated investments of the three partners (DEL, Thrive and OSPI). This action plan will serve as the new framework to prioritize and coordinate the work of the three agencies, provide the structure necessary to measure progress and the accountability to ensure that the vision of the ELP is being implemented.

Phase 2: Planning and transition. Beginning in 2010, Washington partners will engage in an intensive planning process to design a collaborative governance model for the state, so that we can begin to transition from the existing rudimentary governance effort to a more realized governance model. As a result, the state will be on its way to creating a governance structure that maximizes the potential of state and local partnerships in a way that ensures a shared approach to accountability and decision-making and that achieves maximum outcomes for the children, families and communities in our state.

State Advisory Council (SAC) application: In 2009-10 Washington developed a federal State Advisory Council application to secure a three-year funding opportunity to support implementation of the statewide early learning plan, including the establishment of a collaborative governance model. In December 2009, DEL and ELAC convened a State Advisory Council Task Force represented by state and local partners to guide the development of Washington’s SAC application. The one-time funding, expected in Summer or Fall 2010, will enhance the existing ELAC, and provide staffing and other resources to support interim governance activities as well as the development of the state’s collaborative governance model.

NGA technical assistance: In January 2010, Washington was notified that it was one of six states to receive a National Governors Association (NGA) technical assistance grant to support the development of a collaborative governance model. In coordination with state and local partners, Washington will utilize support from NGA and other national experts in assessing the best ways to build on the strengths of existing governance mechanisms in the state, as well as exploring elements of effective governance models in other states.

Engaging early learning coalitions in the planning process: In Washington, the state’s local communities are no stranger to early learning systems building. Most recently, they have continued to lead the charge in our state in building early learning systems within their communities through the formation of coalitions. Early learning coalitions have leveraged public and private funding to: create strategic plans for early learning, hold early learning forums, and devise plans to engage non-traditional partners in the early learning community, among other innovative efforts. In many ways, it has been the novel work and success of early learning coalitions that have proved influential to the current efforts to produce a statewide Early Learning Plan. However, structures for

communicating, planning and shared accountability do not **exist between these local** entities and state-level efforts. In 2010-11, DEL and its partners will engage early learning coalitions and other community-based early learning partners in the design of Washington's collaborative governance mechanism. Through the support of State Advisory Council grant funding, DEL and partners will also provide resources and support to coalitions in their efforts to implement outcomes and strategies within the early learning plan in local communities.

Engaging tribes in the planning process: The Early Learning Partnership (DEL, OSPI and Thrive by Five) will invite tribal governments to participate in the process of planning the collaborative governance mechanism. The agencies agree to follow the Interim Communication and Consultation Protocols, and the Protocol for Co-Governance in Language, Culture and Oral Tribal Traditions Education, as appropriate. The partnership will also consult with the tribes, under the Centennial Accord, regarding the governance and implementation of the Early Learning Plan, and opportunities to participate.

Phase 3: Full implementation of the collaborative governance model.

Implement collaborative governance mechanisms at the state level: Through an intensive planning process beginning in 2010, Washington intends to create a governance mechanism that enables multiple parties involved in implementing the early learning plan to work together. This collaborative effort will help insure that the responsibilities for plan implementation are clearly defined. The governance mechanism will include feedback loops to generate mutually beneficial two-way learning opportunities. At the least, the feedback loops will extend across tiers from formal and informal community-based organizations, institutions and agencies, to county and regional planning entities, and to the state level.

Implement collaborative governance mechanisms at the local/regional level: Create/ utilize mechanisms at the local/regional level that formally connect with the governance mechanism at the state level, and that will coordinate the delivery of services, assure the effective use of funds, provide for the infrastructure and coordinate efforts (Kagan, 2001).

Establish a stable funding stream to support the infrastructure needs of governance: Building an effective, comprehensive and coordinated system will require a dedicated, stable funding source committed to the support of the infrastructure needs to effectively govern the statewide early learning system. These infrastructure needs include, for example, staff with time dedicated to facilitating the planning process, the operation of ELAC, coordination with local coalitions, oversight of the work on indicators, etc.

2. Quality Assurance: Standards, Assessment and Accountability

With so much early childhood funding emanating from the states, policymakers want to be certain that their investments are paying off in terms of children's outcomes and overall

readiness for school and early success in kindergarten through third grade. As a result, accountability, though only mandated nationally in elementary and secondary school, has become a new force in early learning. States are responding to accountability in diverse ways. Early learning standards (or guidelines) for children have been launched in most states, providing the foundation of an accountability system.

Based upon the vision and principles of the ELP, the collaborative governance mechanism will advise implementing agencies on the creation of accountability standards that can document progress toward ELP outcomes. Quality assurance has been built into this plan in the following three strategies:

Benchmarks: The *Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks* (2005) provide common early learning standards. They will be reviewed and likely revised per constituent feedback as part of this plan. (See Strategy #31.)

Kindergarten readiness assessment: The WaKIDS kindergarten readiness assessment process will provide a common metric for measurement and reporting. (See Strategy #28).

Longitudinal data system: The P-20 (pres-school through age 20) longitudinal data system will be developed as a common repository and process for data collection. (See Strategy #36.)

3. Financing

To enhance and expand benefits for children prenatal through third grade requires alignment of funding, service delivery and new funding resources. Public agencies, working in partnership and using a unifying policy and funding framework, could be a significant part of the school readiness/early success in school “coordination” solution. This Early Learning Plan adds the needed overarching school readiness and success framework to guide early learning efforts at the state agency level, and provide a unified approach to funding.

The need for new money. Many young children in Washington are living in families that are low income or living in poverty, as described earlier in this plan (KIDS COUNT, 2009). Some of the most at-risk children and families are not being served. There is a high demand (as evidenced by waiting lists) for: Licensed Child Care for Infants; ECEAP (the state’s prekindergarten); Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT); Full-Day Kindergarten; Washington Scholarships; Career and Wage Ladder; Head Start; and Early Head Start. This lack of capacity to serve at-risk children and families creates a missed opportunity for Washington to build on known-to-be-effective programs that focus on child and family outcomes, and school readiness (Froelicher, 2008).

Until the funding for services is commensurate with the demonstrated need, our progress will continue to lag, hindering Washington’s ability to reach its early learning goals. Several federal fund sources may be available to support elements of this plan. A list of potential federal and state revenue sources is provided in Appendix G.

Spending smarter. We need to spend our existing resources smarter so that Washington can be more intentional about improving the health and well-being of young children, and their social, emotional and learning outcomes. Current funding sources for early learning (prenatal through third grade) are administered in at least five different state agencies, and numerous federal agencies. Systems and accountability for each funding source have created silos, which have resulted in fragmented early childhood/early learning and school-age services. This fragmentation makes coordination and collaboration across agencies difficult and complicates statewide planning. It also misses the opportunity to ensure that money being spent on young children and their families is set in a strategic direction toward school readiness and early success in school, and children's overall health and well-being.

Outcomes orientation to financing. An outcomes orientation, which provides a focus on results, drives both funders and program people to think more realistically about the connections between investments and outcomes. This focus also clarifies how often the best results come from the effective implementation of a combination of several promising interventions that, in isolation, would have little effect. So if the outcomes we're working toward require contributions (such as staffing and funding) from many agencies, organizations and stakeholders, we have to be willing to measure multiple contributions toward shared outcomes. Individual agencies won't be able legitimately to claim responsibility for changing life trajectories or community conditions (Schorr, 2006).

Tiered approach. To spend smarter and with a focus on results suggests taking a tiered approach in considering who the target population is for each strategy. As noted above in Section IV.B. Scope of this Plan, this plan takes an All-Some-Few approach. Some strategies are needed by and appropriate to *all* children, families, caregivers, early learning professionals, and/or schools. Other strategies are best targeted to *some*, while a third group of strategies are appropriate for the *few* who need them.

Minding the gap—equity and diversity. As noted above in Section I.F. Need to Close the Preparation Gap and Prevent the Achievement Gap, the United States is becoming more diverse, and young children are leading the way. Although the ultimate goal of public policy should be to improve the readiness and early success in school for *all* children, attempting to raise the bar for the most needy students is a key to reaching "all." By focusing on the socio-economic, racial and ethnic gaps in readiness and early success in school, we can simultaneously highlight policies that will most likely raise the bar for all students (Build Initiative, 2008).

Gaps needing attention that exist in greater percentages for children by culture and language are as follows:

- Readiness and early success in school gap;

- Participation gap in formal services and school, particularly health services, preschool and other formal care arrangements, and absenteeism in school;

Cultural awareness and recognition gap, particularly for teachers and providers serving children with different cultural and language backgrounds than their own;

A workforce diversity gap, particularly among credentialed teachers and providers, and within professional institutions training and accrediting the workforce; and

A stakeholder planning and decision-making gap, particularly in developing public policies and recognizing the expertise of those from other backgrounds and experiences.

Financing for programs, services and supports needs to take these gaps into account. As mentioned above, new revenue sources will be required to address these needs.

Unified financing system. Also needed is attention to the overall financing system for early learning. Creating a unified system involves developing the infrastructure, resources and leadership to build a coordinated system of services and supports to address the many needs of young children and their families. This coordinated system is paramount to financing the expansion and enhancement of high-quality services.

Next Steps

Washington should develop the following:

A governance mechanism focused on financing that sets the strategic direction for funding, assesses results, and holds agencies and programs accountable.

Financing standards.

A funding planning tool—for both public and private sector use—that can guide Washington in planning and acting toward a more effective use of funds for a common mission (e.g., Kids Matter layer cake model).

A technical assistance network for agencies, communities and programs on how to braid, blend and orchestrate an optimized funding approach, such as:

- Braiding categorical funding sources, primarily at the program or community level, to tap multiple public and private sector funding sources;
- Pooling or blending monies from multiple agencies or programs to support comprehensive initiatives;
- Public-private matching funds that can leverage dollars from both sectors;
- Interagency agreements to jointly administer (align eligibility requirements, program regulations, and administrative requirements and procedures) or transfer responsibility of programs to promote coordination and efficiency; and
- Grant programs that require or encourage collaboration at the state and/or local level.

An outcomes orientation tied to financing.

An early learning financing system—infrastructure, resources and leadership— to create a coordinated system of services and supports addressing the needs of young children and their families. This system should include:

- Sufficient financial data to support analysis of investments in activities designed to promote service system improvements (e.g., improving quality and access);
- Less categorical and more flexible funding (e.g., Illinois state-funded early childhood block grant);
- Better use of existing resources across programs and funding streams aimed in a set, strategic direction; and
- Providing new funding, and leveraging existing resources for improving coordination of eligibility and outreach processes, including:
 - ♦ Better mechanisms to integrate service systems; and
 - ♦ Cross-system approaches to serving and supporting families.

STATEWIDE INDICATORS AND CONTEXT

Vital Signs – The Purpose of Washington Early Learning Indicators

Washington will establish a set of Early Learning Indicators and regularly publish a summary of indicator data, with guidance from a technical advisory group. An early learning indicator is a number or set of numbers that helps to describe the well-being and development of young children and/or the presence of services, systems and supports that promote young children's optimal learning and development. The indicators will be like a heart rate or temperature, serving as vital signs of the well-being of young children. Collectively, the indicators can help describe conditions for children, families, communities and early learning systems in Washington. A list of proposed Washington Early Learning Indicators is below.

Careful monitoring and regular summary reports on the Early Learning Indicator data will show trends over time, measure progress toward improving outcomes, inform planning and program improvement efforts, and highlight opportunities to explore aspects of the early learning system in the state. Carefully collected and analyzed, the Early Learning Indicators have the potential to highlight issues related to the opportunity gaps described earlier in this plan, and to guide decisions about additional research and data collection.

The Washington Early Learning Indicators will be:

Relevant over a long period of time, over the course of different strategies.

Regularly reported from a trusted source and easily understood by a broad audience.

Disaggregated by race/ethnicity, income, geography and/or first language and immigrant status (where applicable).

Indicative of conditions across the breadth of strategies and outcomes as well as the range of groups affected, including parents and families, caregivers, early learning professionals and other service providers, educators, and children from birth through third grade.

Useful to help provide context for stakeholders' efforts across multiple agencies, organizations, communities and families.

The indicators will provide two main benefits. First, they will provide early learning stakeholders with contextual information to guide their efforts. Second, the indicators will provide perspective on the results of stakeholders' collective early childhood system-building efforts. Stakeholders also need to be aware of the limitations of the indicators. The indicators are not evaluations of particular strategies, organizations or services. The indicators also will not stand alone. There will need to be additional ways to assess the impact of the system that incorporate the voices of the diversity of families, communities and organizations involved. The Early Learning Indicators Technical Advisory Group will recommend special evaluations or analyses to better describe particularly complex issues and/or provide important context for the indicator data presented.

Biennial data summary. As a cornerstone of monitoring and evaluating efforts to implement the ELP, the three Early Learning Partners will publish a biennial Early Learning Indicators Data Summary, summarizing data on key early learning indicators. DEL will be responsible for producing this data summary. Like the overall Early Learning Plan, the Indicators Data Summary will be implemented in phases. The first Early Learning Indicators Data Summary will be published by October 1, 2011. The first Data Summary will present a summary of available data on all of the "current indicators" identified in Table 5 below. Following that publication, the data summary will be published biennially, timed to be useful for the legislature.

Technical Advisory Group. The Joint Resolution Partnership also will form an Early Learning Indicators Technical Advisory Group, with representatives of each partner agency, by October 2010. The Department of Early Learning will convene and facilitate this advisory group. The Technical Advisory Group will: (1) advise on changing indicators to best answer current questions and/or reflect the best available data related to a particular area of readiness; (2) work to add data on the "indicators in development" listed after Table 8; and (3) guide the creation of a written product that is useful and accessible to a broad audience.

Realizing the Potential of the Washington Indicators

High-level "vital signs" for each area of readiness. The indicators will describe the "state of early learning" across the five areas of readiness, as described below. The actual measures, the indicator data, will be proxy measures using the best available data to help describe the areas of readiness. For example, they will help answer such questions as: How "ready" are the state's early learning professionals and how is that changing over time? Where possible, the data will describe conditions at a statewide or communitywide level. However, where data at this level are not available, measures from a specific program or intervention may offer a proxy.

An early task for the technical advisory group will be to articulate the link between the measures (data) and a conceptual description for each of the areas of readiness. For example, a conceptual description of “ready children” is: “Ready children are healthy and socially, emotionally, and cognitively prepared for success in school and life.” The proposed indicators are a handful of measures that will help describe how well reality matches that conceptual description (in different communities, for different groups of children), and how that reality is changing over time. Some of the proposed measures will report data only on children participating in a specific program (e.g., ECEAP). However, those data may be the best proxy measure to describe the “state of the state” for a particular area.

Data resources. Where possible the Washington State Early Learning Indicators will draw upon data currently available. The indicators also will include placeholders for data that are likely important parts of both the Early Learning Indicators and the overall early learning infrastructure, but do not yet exist. These placeholders will help to highlight the commitment of the state to invest in data systems as part of the early learning infrastructure.

Key trusted sources for existing and developing data include (but are not limited to) the following:

National:

- Administration for Children and Families
- Center for Law and Social Policy
- National Child Care Information Center
- National Institute for Early Education Research
- National Survey of Children’s Health
- Zero to Three

Washington State:

- Department of Early Learning
- Education Research and Data Center
- Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Human Services Policy Center, University of Washington
- Social and Economic Research Center, Washington State University
- Washington Child Care Resource and Referral Network

Initial List of Indicators

The proposed indicators rely on existing or relatively easily developed data sources. The technical work group, led by DEL, will finalize these indicators prior to developing the Early Learning Biennial Data Summary. Some of these indicators will require new data collection, but only to add new information to in-state existing data collection efforts.

Table 5. Initial Indicators

Ready and Successful . . .	Current Indicators	Source
...CHILDREN	Percent of students meeting or exceeding third grade reading and math standard, disaggregated by race, ethnicity and income	OSPI
	Percent of eligible children ages 3-5 enrolled in state-funded full-day pre-K, including ECEAP and Head Start	DEL
	Percent of entering kindergartners demonstrating readiness (social-emotional, cognitive, physical, etc.), disaggregated by race and ethnicity	DEL (2010 WaKIDS Pilot)
	Percent of young children without health insurance (or percent receiving a well-child check-up in the past year) ¹³	National Survey of Children’s Health
	Percent of young children receiving state early intervention services who reach or maintain functioning comparable to their same-aged peers	ESIT
	Percent of children with untreated dental decay	NHANES, DOH (WA Oral Health Surveillance System)
	Percent of social-emotional growth experienced by ECEAP students in one school year	DEL
	Percent of ECEAP children exhibiting social-emotional readiness at the end of the school year	DEL
	Percent of children in Working Connections Child Care who receive 12 months of care without interruption	DEL
...PARENTS, FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS	Percent of mothers who receive prenatal care in their first trimester	DOH (birth records)
	Percent of new mothers who breastfeed their children	DOH (PRAMS)
	Percent of families who read or tell stories to their children every day	National Survey of Children’s Health
...EARLY LEARNING PROFESSIONALS	Percent of licensed early learning settings reporting use of Early Learning and Development Benchmarks	DEL
	Number and/or percent of licensed child care slots available in levels one, two, three, and four “Seed”	DEL (Seeds to Success field test)

¹³ The data source for this proposed indicator is the National Survey of Children’s Health. Data are collected every two to four years and may have limited capacity to disaggregate for race/ethnicity, income or geography. Other possible health care indicators include: percent of children in Washington without health insurance (from the Washington State Population Survey); and percent of children enrolled in Washington Medical Assistance receiving at least one early or periodic screen (EPSDT).

Ready and Successful . . .	Current Indicators	Source
...EARLY LEARNING PROFESSIONALS	centers and homes Number and/or percent of child care slots in centers receiving three seeds on family and community partnerships	
	Number and percent of early learning providers enrolled in Washington Scholarship program who receive a degree or credential	DEL, CCR&R
	Reimbursement rate for subsidized children	DEL
...SCHOOLS	Percent and number of students enrolled in state-funded full-day kindergarten	OSPI
	Percent of schools with K-3 student-teacher ratio of 17 to 1 (or fewer).	OSPI
..SYSTEMS AND COMMUNITIES	Percent of licensed child care that accept subsidized children	DEL
	How easy or hard is it for parents to find child care in their community that: is affordable is clean and safe respects each family’s culture helps children be ready for school	CCR&R (Parent Satisfaction Survey)
	Child care capacity as demonstrated by licensed child care slots as a percent of total number of children	DEL
	Cost of child care as a percent of median income	CCR&R

Indicators in development. Many indicators cannot be reported on in a reliable manner right now. The technical advisory group will define which areas need focus, and responsible parties will identify how the indicator can be reported on in the near future. Initial topics include:

- Statewide kindergarten readiness data for every child in a public school

- K-3 social-emotional growth

- Health care quality and access (physical, oral and mental health) for every child from birth through age eight

- Statewide quality rating data for every child care facility

- Parent support and access to information

- Professional development and educational attainment data for child care professionals and educators

Access and affordability to quality child care, disaggregated by income, race, and ethnicity
Cultural awareness and support in early learning and K-3 environment

Risk Factor Data as Contextual Indicators

Many young children lack opportunities to achieve their full development potential. A handful of widely recognized risk factors help to show how many children and which communities are less likely to have the environments and supports that provide young children and their families with a full range of opportunities to build young children’s potential. The Washington Early Learning Indicator Data Summary will report on a small number of these risk factors in order to provide important context for the work envisioned in the Early Learning Plan. Examples are:

Number or percent of children in poor and/or low-income families

Number or percent of children born to teen mothers

Number or percent of children who live with single parents

Number or percent of children whose mother has a low education level (less than a high school diploma).

These contextual risk factor indicators are widely acknowledged to be associated with poorer outcomes of child wellbeing and school readiness and success (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2008; National School Readiness Indicators Initiative, 2004; Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning, 2009; State of Maryland Children’s Cabinet and Governor’s Office for Children, 2008). Research tells us this is particularly true for children who experience multiple risk factors (HSPC, 2003a). Whereas the indicators in the previous table would be expected to change over time as a result of the state’s early learning efforts outlined in this plan, that is not necessarily the case for the contextual or risk factor indicators. The ELP does not aim to directly reduce poverty, for example. The contextual risk factor indicators are important to help to frame progress over time by acknowledging what the risk profile looks like in our state (including how and if it is changing). Providing the risk profile will help raise awareness about families that are most vulnerable, and call attention to what we know about the equality of opportunity for all young children in the state to succeed in school.

CONNECTIONS AND PARTNERSHIP REQUIRED

Today's watchwords in public policy are networks and partnerships. In the 20th century, the hierarchical bureaucracy was the main model for delivering public services and fulfilling public-policy goals. Today's increasingly complex world calls for new models. One-size-fits-all solutions have given way to customized approaches that involve those who benefit in shaping the solution. Government and nonprofit executives' jobs no longer center on managing people and programs but on organizing resources—often belonging to others—to produce public value. This trend is referred to as “governing by network” (Goldsmith & Eggers, 2004).

At the state level in Washington, the 2009 Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution among the Department of Early Learning, Thrive by Five Washington and OSPI (Appendix B) is the beginning of a formal governance structure to manage at least part of an early learning agenda. It also recognizes that no one of these entities can do the job alone.

At the same time, regions and communities have begun to play a valuable role in building and managing the early learning system. In Washington, we have established two “high impact” demonstration projects or initiatives in White Center and East Yakima. In addition, regions and communities across the state have established local planning coalitions to focus attention on and build early learning systems in their communities. These coalitions have successfully built local support, raised public awareness and forged strong collaborations. See Appendix H.

Regional/local coalitions also can often address issues of diversity and cultural competence more effectively than can be done at the state level. Communities in the state differ in their racial, cultural and language make-up, with young children leading the way in diversity. Developing culturally competent early learning systems is essential for success in a multicultural society, but must fit the cultural mix in the community. Community planning and governance helps to ensure that such issues are addressed in ways that fit local children and families. While state actions need to be culturally competent and respectful, effective early learning systems need to be contoured for local needs.

The roles and relationships between state and community planning and governance structures need to be more clearly articulated, however. This begins with a common purpose for sharing responsibility for child and family outcomes across sectors (Schorr, 2007). Several guidelines will help:

Be clear about the purposes of our work—The outcomes we are trying to achieve for children and families. This Early Learning Plan is an effort to present and agree on common outcomes.

Create and sustain the partnerships to achieve these purposes. The DEL-Thrive-OSPI Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution and the organizations that participated in developing this Early Learning Plan form the basis for building a statewide partnership.

Be accountable for achieving those purposes. Outcomes on paper are not enough. We have to be willing to hold each other and ourselves accountable for achieving those

outcomes. We have to be able to document and ready to report results—results the public cares about. This is why it is important to agree on a set of indicators for the early learning system.

Embrace systems change. We have to embrace the need for systems change, and get really good at bringing it about in order to improve outcomes for children and families.

Next Steps

The following steps will build on and expand the connections and partnerships that have begun to form:

Strengthen statewide coordination to address the purposes, functions and benefits of state-community relationships; the appropriate roles and relationships of state and community planning and governance structures; and the best ways to link state and local governance and planning efforts.

Promote new, and recognize existing, community public-private collaborations/coalitions and identify the ways they can lead meaningful engagement.

Connect to an existing or new communication network.

Foster two-way learning between systemic community and state early childhood efforts.

Support the expansion of existing and create new Communities of Practice. This approach gives communities a way to learn from each other, and to jointly discuss challenges and strategies so that community leaders are poised to participate significantly in future early childhood systems planning and decision-making.

“Early learning is the single best investment we can make in public education. I think it’s the single best economic investment we can make in our country.”

DEL Director Dr. Bette Hyde



SECTION VII

IMPLEMENTATION

“I am excited to be part of this momentous development in early-learning. As a director of the early-childhood education program with the S’Klallam Tribe, I have been working my entire career to see a plan like this happen. I celebrate the joining together of state and tribal entities to find the best road ahead for the children of all nations.”

Jaclyn Haight, Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe
Early Childhood Education Program Director

This Early Learning Plan is a road map for building an early learning system in Washington in the coming years. The Early Learning Joint Resolution Partnership—DEL, Thrive by Five and OSPI—will lead implementation. But in the same way that many organizations participated in the plan’s development, many groups and individuals across the state will be part of making it happen. All groups, communities and programs that work with children, families, and early learning professionals are invited to review the plan and decide what parts they can help to move forward.

GROUPS INVOLVED

Early Learning Joint Resolution Partnership Three-Year Action Plan. DEL, OSPI and Thrive by Five Washington have developed a Three-Year Action Plan for working together. This action plan identifies the ELP strategies they will undertake in 2010 through 2013 to advance the building of Washington’s early learning system.

Other organizations involved. Many state agencies and statewide and local groups already play important roles in the early learning system. They can use the ELP to help further guide their efforts. For example, the Washington State Department of Health is leading the process of addressing Strategy #6 Ensure Developmental Screening by establishing a plan to ensure that all young children in our state have access to developmental screenings. Similarly, a key organization addressing Strategy #10 Increase Use of Early Literacy Services and Programs is Reach Out and Read Washington, which supports early literacy development through the medical home.

Ideas for local use. A user-friendly summary version of the ELP will be available for local communities to use in their own planning. Some early ideas are suggested by respondents to the question in the online ELP outreach survey, “Are there ways you can see using this plan in your community or work?” Here are some of these ideas:

- Direction and alignment: Use the ELP to align local efforts and provide a unified direction.
Work with educational systems and communities to help them understand the need to support families and caregivers. Expand involvement in kindergarten transition.
- Resource for information and planning services: Share information about the resources available to parents and providers. Identify gaps in the community and set priorities.
Use the ELP to inform training programs for child care providers.
- Workshops, seminars, conferences: Organize two-way learning opportunities among all types of caregivers and early learning professionals, with content from both formal and natural learning settings.
- Cross-cultural learning: Create opportunities to learn effective methods and techniques for parenting, caregiving, teaching and mentoring that come from a variety of cultures in the United States, including ways different cultural communities effectively address specific types of challenges.
- Evaluation: Use ELP indicators to compare progress.

Advocacy and funding: Use the ELP to build annual policy agendas. Promote increased funding support to co-op preschools.

As part of the Phase 2 infrastructure planning (see Section VI.A.1, above), the Early Learning Partners expect to provide resources and support to local early learning coalitions to help them implement outcomes and strategies within this early learning plan in their own communities.

Timing. Implementation of this Early Learning Plan will be phased in over the next decade. Some strategies may be accomplished in the near term, while others will require more time. The strategy descriptions above discuss when each strategy could be put into place. Generally, strategies that close the preparation gap are given priority to be completed earlier. For strategies that will be available to all children, most propose that phasing should begin with a focus on at-risk children.

Oversight. As noted under Governance above (IV.D.1.), initially, ELAC will continue to serve as a central mechanism at the state level for providing oversight and direction to the field regarding implementation of this plan. The full governance model, once in place, will provide for oversight and coordination at the state level.

REPORTING

DEL, Thrive by Five and OSPI will report quarterly on progress of their Three-Year Action Plan using the Accountability Framework of Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution. These reports will be posted on DEL's Web site. Under the interim governance structure for the ELP (see IV.D.1. System Infrastructure – Governance, above), the three agencies will provide progress updates at quarterly ELAC meetings.

As noted above in IV.E. Statewide Indicators and Context, the three agencies also will publish an Early Learning Indicators Data Summary on a biennial basis to report on key early learning indicators.

In addition, starting in Phase 3 of governance for the Washington Early Learning System, the three agencies, in collaboration with early learning coalitions across the state, plan to compile and make public an annual or biennial report on progress in implementing the ELP.

PERIODIC REVIEW AND REVISION

This plan is a living document. The Early Learning Joint Resolution Partnership—DEL, Thrive by Five Washington, and OSPI—will create a schedule for periodic review and updating the ELP over the next decade.



SECTION VIII

CONCLUSION, GLOSSARY AND REFERENCES

“When social skills are combined at an early age with cognitive skills, they help create more capable and productive citizens.”

Nobel Laureate Economics Professor James Heckman

This Early Learning Plan has been created by the active participation of hundreds of early learning advocates, parents and caregivers, and early learning professionals from across the state. Similarly, successful implementation will require the vigorous engagement of individuals, organizations and coalitions working in collaboration with state, local and federal government officials. The plan provides a roadmap for weaving together the current early learning programs, services and initiatives. It attempts to provide direction for future decisions regarding resource allocations, staff deployment, and priority setting.

Building on the work of leaders in the field, Washington state is now poised to establish a coherent and comprehensive system of early learning. The Early Learning Joint Resolution Partnership, established by the Department of Early Learning, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Thrive by Five Washington, signals the beginning of a new era for early learning policies and initiatives— one in which the developmental and educational needs of children outweigh the programmatic and funding silos that have been built over time. With this spirit of cooperation, and an Early Learning Plan to guide decisions, we can establish a sharp focus on the outcomes we want for children in our state.

GLOSSARY

Achievement gap: As used in the education field, this generally refers to the differences in grades and/or test scores between white students and students of color, students from high-income and from low-income families, and students in good health and students with disabilities. See also, Preparation gap.

Alignment: Alignment of early learning means that families, providers and teachers work together to ensure that each learning opportunity builds on children’s prior learning and experiences, and that new skills and concepts children learn will prepare them for what they will learn next.

All children: As used in this plan, “all children” means each and every child, no matter the child’s family income or circumstances, race, ethnicity, culture, creed, disability or other circumstances, and regardless of developmental level.

All, some, few: These terms show who benefits from a program, service or activity. In this plan, *all* means the general public or a whole population group, such as 4-year-old children. *Some* means individuals or a group of the population who needs some extra help or who is doing exceptionally well. Examples are low-income, first-time mothers and fathers (need extra services) and early learning professionals who have gained extra education (doing exceptionally well). *Few* means children or families who are at high risk for poor outcomes. Examples are children and families who face barriers because of their ethnicity, race or income level, and children with disabilities.

Assessment: A systematic procedure for getting information about a child or a program, and using it to make judgments about characteristics of that child/program. The information can be obtained from observation, interviews, portfolios, projects, tests and/or other sources. For example, a kindergarten readiness assessment could use the observations of early learning professionals, school staff and parents about a child, together with a tool to measure what the child knows or can do, to determine how well prepared the child is for kindergarten learning.

Benchmarks: Clear, specific descriptions of knowledge or skills that a child should have by a particular stage of development, age or grade level. The knowledge or skills can be determined through observations or documentation of the child’s behavior or by samples of the child’s work. Benchmarks often are used in connection with a broadly stated content standard, that is, what a child should know and/or be able to do in the content area at a particular level.

Best practice: The most efficient (requires the least amount of effort) and most effective (gives the best results) way of accomplishing a task, based on repeatable procedures that have proven themselves over time for large numbers of people. Generally, best practices are what experts or a large number of professionals in a field agree works best, even if the results are not yet proven by scientific research.

Caregivers: As used in this plan, the family members, friends and neighbors (FFN) who care for children on a regular or occasional basis (not parents and not licensed care providers).

Child/Children: For this plan, “children” refers to all children prenatal through third grade, regardless of developmental level, unless a different age range is given.

Developmental delay: The status of a child who: (1) shows significantly later than normal development, as identified by a multidisciplinary team, in one or more of the following areas: cognitive development, physical development, language/communication, social-emotional development, or adaptive behavior/skills development; or (2) has been diagnosed with a physical or medical condition that has a high probability of resulting in a substantial delay in function in one or more of these areas.

Disaggregated: Split apart. Data about children and students are often combined into a single score or percentage. This is helpful for understanding the big picture but does not show if there are differences for particular groups of children, such as children of color, low-income children, children with disabilities, etc.

Domain: A broad category or dimension of children’s learning and development. These domains are often listed as: physical health, social/emotional, approaches to learning, cognitive (general knowledge), and language/communication/literacy.

Early intervention: Programs or services designed to meet the developmental needs of infants or toddlers (birth to age 3 years) and their families. See also the definition for Part C IDEA.

Early learning: Throughout this plan, “early learning” includes all learning and development for a child from prenatal through third grade. Early learning includes all areas (called “domains”) of development. These are described in the *Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks* (State of Washington, 2005) as: (1) physical well-being, health and motor development; (2) social and emotional development; (3) approaches toward learning; (4) cognition and general knowledge; and (5) language, communication and literacy.

Early learning professionals: Any adult who works in a paid capacity to care for and/or teach children ages birth through third grade, and their families. This includes, but is not limited to: licensed child care providers and directors in centers or family home child care; preschool teachers and directors; staff and directors of licensed school-age programs (usually for children and youth ages 5 to 12 years old); school staff—including pre-K, kindergarten through third grade teachers and teachers’ aides, special education teachers, family support workers, literacy coaches and administrators (e.g., principals and vice principals)—plus early intervention workers, speech and language pathologists, home visitors, librarians, nutrition and health services staff, teacher coaches and mentors, trainers, and consultants.

Early learning system: The various policies, programs and services for young children and for the adults who care for and teach them. When these elements are each working well *and* align with the other elements, children will have the best opportunity for optimal development.

Evidence-based: Practices or programs that have been tested and shown to be effective using scientific research. The classic scientific method tests a hypothesis by selecting the subjects for like characteristics, then dividing them in two groups: one that receives the treatment or program being tested and one that does not (the “control” group), then comparing the results for each of the groups. For example, the High/Scope Perry Preschool study identified a sample of 123 low-income children who were at high risk of school failure, then randomly assigned half to receive the high-quality preschool and half that did not participate in preschool. This research is expensive, however, and difficult to accomplish for many kinds of programs involving people. As an alternative, rigorous evaluations can be used to compare the results of different programs to identify what is effective.

Families: As used in this plan, children’s immediate and extended families, however they define themselves. This term can also include family members who are caregivers (family, friend and neighbor [FFN] caregivers or kinship caregivers).

Family child care (or family home child care): A caregiver who is licensed to serve a small group of children in the caregiver’s home.

Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) caregivers: Family members, friends and neighbors who care for children on a regular or occasional basis, but are not the child’s parent or guardian. They are not licensed, but might or might not receive compensation from the parents. In this plan, FFN providers are included in the term “caregivers.”

High quality: For early learning before children enter school, high quality has been defined by the accreditation standards of such organizations as the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Association of Family Child Care. For kindergarten through third grade, quality standards are set by OSPI. Some examples of high-quality characteristics that all these learning settings have in common include: well-educated and well-trained teachers, a high teacher-to-student ratio (i.e., small class sizes), developmentally appropriate curriculum and materials, culturally competent and respectful approaches, responsive interactions between teachers and children, and active involvement of families in their children’s learning.

Home visiting: Home visiting is a way of delivering an array of services in the home. The type of home visiting referred to in this plan involves serving children, families and caregivers during the window of time from pregnancy through age five, with a series of visits made on a regular basis, such as weekly. These home visits are geared toward improving maternal and child outcomes, which, in turn, contribute to multiple benefits to the child during his or her lifetime.

Indicator: For early learning, a number or set of numbers that help to describe the well-being and development of young children and/or the presence of services, systems and supports that promote young children’s optimal learning and development. The Washington Early Learning Indicators will serve as “vital signs” of the well-being of children. Collectively, the indicators can help describe conditions for children, families, communities and early learning systems in Washington.

Joint Resolution Partnership (the partners): A collaboration among three agencies: the Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL), the public-private partnership Thrive by Five Washington, and the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). These agencies established the partnership through a joint resolution in August 2009. (See Appendices B and C.) The partners agreed to work together to develop an aligned statewide early learning system, to use an accountability framework identifying priority areas and the organizational lead, and to report quarterly on their progress. The partnership also has developed a Three-Year Action Plan covering their work to implement the ELP.

Kinship caregivers: Grandparents and other family members who are raising children in lieu of the parents. In this plan, kinship caregivers are included in the term “parents.”

Medicaid: A federal health insurance program that provides payment for medical expenses for those who meet income limits.

Medical home: An approach to providing health care in a high-quality and cost-effective manner through a partnership between families and health care providers. Children receive the care they need from a pediatrician and other health care professionals. Children are able to access all the medical and non-medical services needed to help them achieve their maximum potential. At a medical home, children receive both preventive care (such as immunizations) and care for acute and chronic illnesses; care or referrals for oral and behavioral/mental health needs; and physicians help families connect with needed community based services, including early learning programs.

Outcomes: In this plan, the plan outcomes describe what we want to be different or better in the future.

P-3 or preK-3: Refers to preschool (or prekindergarten) through third grade. P-3 programs are an effort to align learning from birth or early childhood through third grade to provide a seamless fabric of learning for the child and to connect the early learning providers, teachers and parents in supporting that learning.

P-10: Preschool through age 20.

P-20 longitudinal data system: A longitudinal data system collects information on the same students and teachers over time. The P-20 data system will link student, educator and financial information to track desired student outcomes and the costs of the programs. The system will be housed at the state Office of Financial Management. Development of a longitudinal student data system was recommended by Washington Learns as a way of tracking progress toward long-term educational goals and providing accountability.

Parents: As used in this plan, includes birth mothers and fathers, adoptive and foster mothers and fathers, kinship caregivers (grandparents and other family members raising children), guardians, and other adults acting as parents.

Part C IDEA: The part of the federal Individual with Disabilities Education Act that authorizes grants to the states for early intervention services for infants and toddlers, ages birth to 3 years, within each state's criteria for eligibility. In Washington state, this is the Early Support to Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) program.

Preparation gap: When children enter kindergarten, the differences that are seen between the children that have had supportive and high-quality early learning experiences and those who have not. These differences can be in social-emotional development as well as in knowledge and skills. Because children who start school behind their peers tend to have a hard time catching up, the preparation gap often continues throughout school and shows up in poor grades and test scores. This continued gap is often referred to as the achievement gap.

Providers: As used in this plan, includes early learning professionals and health care professionals, depending on the context.

Ready and successful: This is the framework of this plan, which emphasizes that all children should be ready for school and for success in school and life. This framework comes from the Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution of DEL, Thrive by Five Washington and OSPI, and is based National Education Goals Panel's definition of school readiness (National Education Goals Panel, 1998).

School-age workforce: As used in this plan, includes all staff working in licensed school-age programs serving children and youth ages 5 to 12 years old.

School staff: As used in this plan, includes all school personnel serving children in preK, kindergarten, and first through third grades, such as teachers, teachers' aides, family support workers, literacy coaches, librarians, nutrition and health services staff, and school administrators.

Social-emotional learning: Knowledge and skills in the awareness and management of emotions, setting and achieving personal and academic goals, interpersonal skills, establishing and maintaining positive relationships, and demonstrating decision-making and responsible behavior.

Strategies: The plan strategies describe specific ideas for achieving the plan's outcomes.

Success: What is considered success differs in different cultures and from person to person. As used in this plan, success refers to achieving learning goals, getting passing grades in school, meeting the desired outcomes of programs, and living up to one's potential.

System: A group of independent elements that interact and that together form a unified whole. See "Child care system."

Vision: The vision for this plan shows what we want for children and what our work together will look like.

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EARLY LEARNING PLAN APPENDIX

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APPENDIX A LETTER FROM GOVERNOR GREGOIRE (6/8/2009)

CHRISTINE O. GREGOIRE
Governor



STATE OF WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

P.O. Box 40002 • Olympia, Washington 98504-0002 • (360) 753-6780 • www.governor.wa.gov

RECEIVED

Department of
Early Learning

RECEIVED

June 8, 2009

Department of
Early Learning

The Honorable Randy Dorn
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Post Office Box 47200
Olympia, WA 98504-7200

Ms. Betty Hyde, Director
Washington Department of Early Learning
Post Office Box 40970
Olympia, WA 98504-0970

Dear Superintendent Dorn and Director Hyde:

On May 19, 2009, I asked you both to start the very important work of developing a proposal for the 2010 legislative session to ensure that all Washington children and their families have the benefit of early childhood education. I would like to share some of my thoughts with you as you undertake the task of developing this proposal for all of our early learners defined as birth through five years old.

The goals for early learning developed through the 18-month Washington Learns process are crucial. These goals include supporting parents as their children's first and most important teachers, as parents help their children learn. Striving for all children to enter kindergarten healthy, and emotionally and cognitively ready to succeed in school and life is equally important.

I am asking you to work on a proposal about the state's role in providing early learning opportunities for all children birth to five, their families, early learning caregivers and educators. I believe children should have early learning opportunities from birth. These opportunities must include both recognizing the role of the parent as the child's first and most important teacher, and that the opportunities should be available to all children and families.

I would also like you to consider the resources that could be available to support your recommendations and provide recommendations identifying where to start programs and how to develop them to scale. For example, with all-day kindergarten, we started with providing all-day kindergarten for all children in the schools with the highest levels of poverty and are working towards all-day kindergarten available for all kindergarten students. When funded, all-day kindergarten will be part of basic education.

As you conduct your work, I expect you will involve Thrive by Five and the early learning stakeholders. I would like to see a work plan, including a timeline and a date for a preliminary report, leading to a final report by December 1, 2009. I am also asking you to look beyond current programs and service delivery systems and address the questions: "What early learning opportunities should all children and their families have in Washington from birth until they enter kindergarten?" and "What are the roles of communities, non-profits and government?"



Superintendent Dorn and Director Hyde
June 8, 2009
Page 2

I also ask for your recommendations about how your proposal should intersect with basic education and what other mechanisms might provide a stable revenue source for your proposal. There may be current education programs besides all-day kindergarten and special education preschool that should begin at early years. Again, I am firmly committed to the principle that a basic education program should be open to any child needing the program regardless of income.

Your work will be conducted along with other efforts to improve early learning. Children and families have different needs and more intensive programs are crucial. The state-funded Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program and the federally funded Head Start program serve at-risk three and four year olds. How should these programs function to ensure efficiency, cost effectiveness and accountability? In these tough economic times, I and the Legislature have protected the services to at-risk three and four year olds in Washington through both state funds and increased federal funding.

Early learning home visiting programs are available to some of our youngest, most at-risk children. We are piloting a quality rating and improvement system to provide better information to parents and to improve the quality of child care programs. As the Early Learning Advisory Council continues to work on the state early learning plan, I anticipate recommendations on how these programs should grow and expand over time. I encourage the Early Learning Advisory Council to work with the newly created Quality Education Council as it develops its recommendations for a program of early learning for at-risk children.

I believe that we can create early learning environments in public places such as public schools and libraries where families and children from different backgrounds can gather together and learn from each other. By creating such a program, we may reduce the number of children and families needing more intensive services.

I am excited about your work to develop a broad proposal about what early learning opportunities should be available to every child and their families from cradle to kindergarten in Washington.

Sincerely,



Christine O. Gregoire
Governor

APPENDIX B EARLY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP JOINT RESOLUTION—DEL, THRIVE BY FIVE WASHINGTON AND OSPI (8/11/2009)



**The Washington State Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution
Between
The Washington State Department of Early Learning
And
The Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
And
Thrive By Five Washington, the Early Learning Fund**

Whereas, The Washington State Department of Early Learning, the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Thrive by Five Washington (the Early Learning Fund) are committed to collaborate on behalf of all young children and families in Washington State in developing a strong, comprehensive early learning system for all children birth to age eight; and

Whereas, we believe that this will only be achieved through a commitment to share responsibility and accountability towards this vision; and

Whereas, we commit to jointly support the development of a high-quality, aligned early learning system that respects and reflects the rich diversity of children and families throughout our state; and

Whereas, at the heart of our shared efforts is our understanding that “school readiness” encompasses four concepts:

Ready Children + Ready Schools + Ready Parents and Families
+ Ready Communities

Ready children are healthy and socially, emotionally, and cognitively prepared for success in school and life;

Ready schools are prepared to meet the individual needs of the diverse children who enter kindergarten;

Ready parents and families have the information and resources needed to be their children’s first and most important teachers; and

Ready early learning professionals and communities have the information and resources needed to support parents, children and schools; and

Whereas, The Department of Early Learning, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Thrive by Five Washington are committed to working together to create an environment of cooperation and an early learning system in Washington State that is capable of supporting readiness of children and schools and of engaging parents and families, and communities; and

Whereas, we agree that by working collaboratively and in partnership, all children in Washington may reach their full potential and will have the best opportunity to succeed in school and life;

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the leaders of the Washington State Early Learning Partnership acknowledge and honor the prior work and involvement of families and children, local community groups, organizations, schools, and individuals throughout the state that have passionately and diligently moved early learning programs forward; and

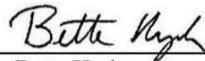
Be It Further Resolved, that development of an aligned statewide early learning system requires us to continue to engage stakeholders and leaders to work together toward a common vision; and

Be It Further Resolved, that in order to assure accountability and better communicate a common vision, the leaders of the Washington State Early Learning Partnership will develop an accountability framework identifying the organizational lead for each priority area and key actions of partners, and furthermore the Partnership leaders agree to meet quarterly to assess the progress in each of the priority areas; and

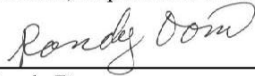
Be It Further Resolved, that the Washington State Early Learning Partnership defines “lead responsibility” to mean convening interested parties, including but not limited to parents, early learning and K-12 professionals, and the primary responsibility for document production; and

Be It Finally Resolved, that key roles of partners will include participation of staff from each agency to support development and assure alignment of each priority area with programs and resources to ensure the advancement of a seamless, learner-focused, world-class early learning system in Washington State.

Signed now this day, August 11, 2009



Dr. Bette Hyde
Director, Department of Early Learning



Randy Dorn
State Superintendent of Public Instruction



Nina Auerbach
President and CEO, Thrive by Five Washington

APPENDIX C JOINT RESOLUTION PARTNERSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK (08/2009)



Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution Accountability Framework August 2009

Priority/Goal	Lead/Co-Lead	Key Actions
Improve the safety and well-being of children in child care and education programs	DEL	<p>DEL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase frequency of monitoring visits • Increase the number of licensed sites in compliance • Pilot non-expiring child care licensing format • Provide additional services and supports for children with complex behavior/health issues <p>OSPI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a technical assistance brief for districts explaining child care licensing and promote licensing of pre-K programs within schools <p>TB5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share best practices and information through web site, newsletters and other publications
Make parenting information and support readily available and ensure materials reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of families throughout Washington.	DEL/TB5	<p>DEL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand and focus Web outreach • Conduct Parent perception survey • Provide coordinated, accessible, accurate and responsive information on early learning and child care for parents <p>OSPI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and promote key messages to all parents • Disseminate parent resources developed via web, at conferences, and at other distribution opportunities • Translate key materials in languages other than English



**Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution Accountability Framework
August 2009**

		<p>TB5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate information and improve public awareness through a variety of methods including Web, TV partnership with BELO and other media outlets, and partnerships with parenting and child development experts
<p>Develop and implement a voluntary quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), that is culturally sensitive, linguistically responsive and gives parents better information about child care quality, and provides incentives to expand the availability of high-quality early learning opportunities</p>	<p>DEL/TB5</p>	<p>DEL/TB5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the refinement of the QRIS process Use the Seeds to Success statewide model as the foundation for development Pilot Seeds to Success model in several communities that reflect the cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity of our state and report findings Create opportunities for additional communities to voluntarily participate in the pilot Ensure parents, providers and other stakeholders that represent cultural, ethnic and linguistically diverse communities are engaged in finalizing the state QRIS model Report findings and recommendations for phase-in to the Legislature
<p>Develop and implement a kindergarten readiness assessment process that is culturally sensitive and linguistically responsive</p>	<p>DEL/OSPI/TB5</p>	<p>DEL/OSPI/TB5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify sources for required matching funds Establish stakeholder engagement process that includes parents, early learning providers, and staff in school districts and reflects the cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity of children and families statewide Use research and best practices for establishing a foundation for the design of the assessment process Ensure the recommended process is reviewed for bias and cultural relevance and aligns with Washington’s Early Learning and Development Benchmarks and K-3



**Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution Accountability Framework
August 2009**

		<p>learning standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify pilot sites • Implement a pilot program • Report findings of the pilot programs to the Legislature
Phase-in enhanced early learning options (e.g., infant/toddler services pre-K,, full-day kindergarten (FDK), for all students	DEL/OSPI/TB5	<p>DEL/OSPI/TB5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote expansion of early learning opportunities (e.g., infant/toddler services, pre-K) as integral components of a comprehensive early learning system • Promote and assist districts and early care and education providers to build relationships that enhance alignment and improve transitions for children as they move from pre-K into school • Conduct research on the impacts of various early learning options to determine child outcomes • Promote replication of promising practices such as Summer Kindergarten Transition program in Thrive’s East Yakima demonstration community
Continue to build public-private partnerships and support the strategic use of resources focused on engaging the public and improving the quality of early learning	DEL/OSPI/TB5	<p>DEL/OSPI/TB5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen and support TB5 as the statewide early learning public-private partnership • Expand the number of local early learning public-private partnerships • Ensure continued participation with early learning partners • Inform and promote use of State and Federal funds for early learning (e.g., Title I funds) with school districts and early learning programs • Build statewide capacity to assist districts and early learning program to work on alignment through support of the Educational Service Districts/Washington State



**Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution Accountability Framework
August 2009**

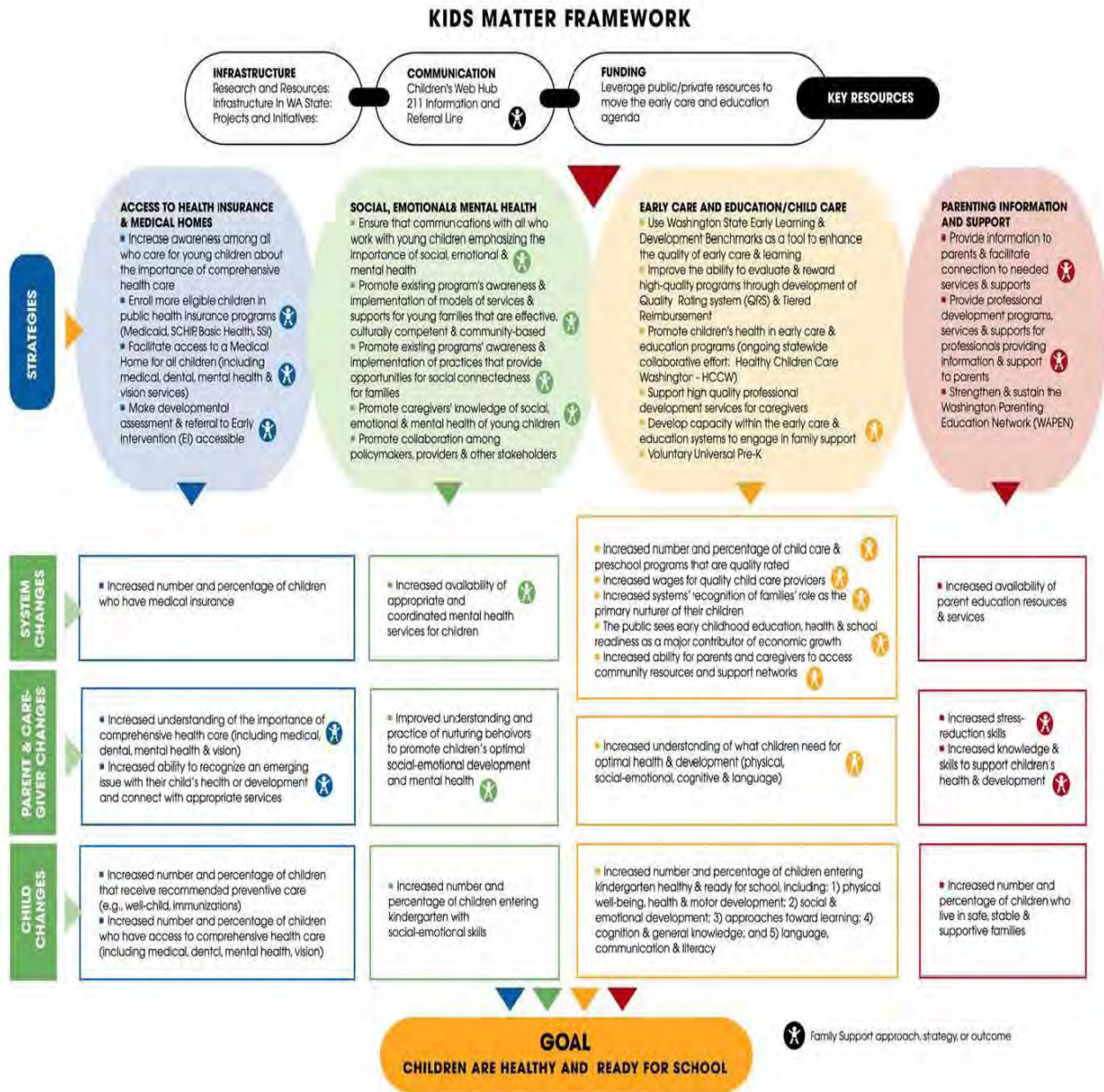
Child Care Resource and Referral Partnership for Early Learning		
Explore funding opportunities to promote creativity to advance the early learning priorities/goals	DEL/OSPI/TB5	DEL/OSPI/TB5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and pursue private/state/federal funding opportunities to fund the early learning system Explore feasibility and identify resources necessary to launch an Innovation Grant program that could fund community based partnerships and initiatives Develop a plan for communicating findings with early learning providers and schools to promote expansion and replication of promising models
Promote early literacy programs and strategies so that every child reads at grade level by third grade	DEL/OSPI/TB5	DEL/OSPI/TB5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and expand effective research based early literacy programs for parents and early learning programs PK-3 Develop an effective communications strategy and tools to inform parents on how they can encourage the early language and literacy development of their children TB5 to fund exemplary early literacy programs in some early learning coalitions
Review, revise and support statewide implementation of the Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks	DEL	DEL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update the early learning benchmarks that were published in 2005 Identify and create an advisory board for the review and updating that reflects all interested constituencies Ensure cultural sensitivity, linguistic diversity, children special needs, and infants/toddlers are adequately represented in the updated document Adopt and promote the use of the updated statewide Benchmarks OSPI <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for all K-12 educators working with young children to



**Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution Accountability Framework
August 2009**

		<p>participate in training on the benchmarks by using existing systems partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote use of the Benchmarks <p>TB5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore resources to write a companion to the Benchmarks which relates the importance of cultural sensitivity and provides guidance to enhance the culturally appropriate use of the Benchmarks Promote use of the Benchmarks
Develop a comprehensive statewide Early Learning Plan and response to the Governor's letter	DEL/OSPI/TB5	<p>DEL/OSPI/TB5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate and align response to the Governor's letter with the ongoing statewide early learning plan being developed for the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) Draft a vision and identify outcomes for a comprehensive and effective statewide early learning system Produce a draft of a plan for ELAC which ensures equitable access to high quality effective early learning opportunities for ALL children birth through age eight Align and coordinate recommendations of the Professional Development Consortium within the design of the statewide early learning plan Conduct a comprehensive process for vetting the plan and gathering feedback from stakeholders representing the cultural and linguistic diversity, and that is inclusive of children with special needs and behavioral issues Incorporate all the actions of this Accountability Framework into the statewide early learning plan

APPENDIX D KIDS MATTER FRAMEWORK



APPENDIX E ACHIEVEMENT GAP REPORTS – SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS (9/10/2009)

Asian Americans

Recommendations/Goals	
1.	<p>Adopt a Data Collection, Research, and Evaluation Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement systematic data collection that can provide accurate, precise, and quality information on students’ demographic backgrounds and academic outcomes. • Collect disaggregated data by Asian American ethnic subgroups and within student subgroups for any meaningful analysis of their academic participation and performance. Alone aggregate data is incomplete. • Develop standard forms for students’ demographic information, including ethnicity and language, from enrollment to graduation records, from schools through districts to OSPI to ensure consistency across different data sets. • Establish data linkages between the CSRS and other data sets, including WASL, to enable the examination of various student factors that contribute to their educational outcomes and academic achievement, both comparatively and longitudinally. • Engage a community-based advisory group to advise on data development and research questions about academic achievement that are meaningful for schools and Asian American communities. • Conduct follow-up of students who drop out of and who graduate from Washington State high schools. Such studies are critical to understanding the short-term and long-term consequences of schooling in the State.
2.	<p>Create a Seamless Pipeline Pre-K Through 16.</p> <p>Include Asian Americans, with particular attention to at-risk groups, in all academic and co-curricular programs, from early education (such as Thrive by Five) through K-12 and on to college access, information, and recruitment opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with community-based organizations to increase resources, including linguistic and cultural experts, and to identify families and ethnic groups who can most benefit. • Consult with Asian American teachers, counselors, administrators, other school personnel, and specialists on Asian American education. • Develop partnerships with higher education, including 2-year and 4-year institutions. • Collect and analyze aggregate and disaggregated data on Asian American student participation, performance and outcomes at all levels, pre-k-16. •

<p>3.</p>	<p>Broaden and enhance Measurements and Accountability. Given that single (high-stakes) measurements tend to demoralize students and limit teacher effectiveness, the following are recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Balance cognitive-based measurements with assessments using other forms of knowledge acquisition and skill building, such as social emotional learning. ● Adopt qualitative ethnographic studies along with quantitative data about student progress and performance. ● Inform students and families about measurements, standards, performance, and related matters in culturally responsive ways. ● Review assessment methods and materials to ensure they are free of cultural biases. ● Engage with all stakeholders—students, families, communities, educators, specialists, and others at local, regional and national levels to ensure measurements are appropriate, meaningful, and positive, not punitive.
<p>4.</p>	<p>Foster Culturally Responsive Approaches Develop and implement a strategic plan that encourages the cultural responsiveness of the school system to Asian Americans and all racial and ethnic minority groups so the system is positive, individualized, free of stereotypes, and views them as assets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Address institutional barriers such as discrimination, bullying, stereotyping, and inappropriate testing that create a hostile school climate and disengage students from learning in the classroom or participating in school activities. ● Incorporate culturally responsive teaching and curricula that include appropriate material on Asian American groups and capitalize on students’ cultural backgrounds. ● Recruit, retain, and advance effective teachers and administrators from Asian American communities. ● Train all teachers and administrators to work more effectively with diverse groups of Asian American students and their families.
<p>5.</p>	<p>Adopt Effective ELL Programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adopt effective ELL programs, and, support the programs for the necessary time that students need in order to achieve academic English proficiency. ● Enhance equal access for ELL students to information, programs, and opportunity for higher education. ● Ensure that all Asian American students who are ELL students or who could benefit from such programs are well served in them. ● Employ highly effective and well-trained bilingual/ESL teachers and counselors.

<p>6.</p>	<p>Address Teacher Quality and Effectiveness</p> <p>Teachers should expect success for all children regardless of their ethnicity, primary spoken language, socioeconomic status, family configuration, age, religion, ability, gender, and physical characteristics. Schools need to support and reward teachers who demonstrate effectiveness in closing Asian American achievement gaps. We encourage teachers engaged with Asian American students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate positive, interactive relationships with families and communities as they participate in their children’s education. • Know students by gaining greater knowledge of Asian American ethnic groups, their histories and cultures here in the United States and in their ancestral countries. Incorporate such information in the classroom and related school activities. • Use multiple teaching styles to support students’ different learning styles. • Provide all students with access to challenging and engaging curricula.
<p>7.</p>	<p>Engage Asian American Families in Schools.</p> <p>Greater effort needs to be made to engage parents in ways that are meaningful to them; school-defined involvement is not enough. To be more welcoming, schools can, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize families’ rich and varied backgrounds and life experiences. • Hold information meetings for families on community sites with translators and eliminate language barriers in print materials and at meetings. • Provide families with needed information to navigate the U.S. school system. • Hire family advocates and parent academic liaisons, as utilized, for example, by the Shoreline School District, to bridge relationships between teachers and families. • Collaborate with Asian American community groups and community-based organizations to enhance resources and to make connections with families.
<p>8.</p>	<p>Strengthen School-Community Partnerships.</p> <p>Partnerships and resource sharing can enhance the work of both schools and communities. The operative word in this recommendation is <i>partnerships</i>. Ethnic organizations have other resources, including cultural and heritage language supports.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize the wide-ranging networks and experts within Asian American community groups to assist in closing the achievement gaps. • Engage the community-based organizations that have skills and experience in working with Asian American families, youth, and their issues.

Pacific Islanders

Recommendations/Goals	
1.	<p>Develop and implement a strategic plan that fosters the cultural responsiveness of the school system.</p> <p>A comprehensive plan should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional changes that effectively reduce the barriers that deter Pacific Islander students from reaching their academic potentials. Institutional barriers are factors (i.e., discrimination, bullying, stereotyping, and inappropriate testing) that create a hostile school climate that disengages students and their parents from learning in the classroom or participating in school activities. • Cultural-based education (CBE), shown to be effective among some groups, should be considered as one possible intervention in overcoming some of these institutional barriers. • Recruitment and retention of teachers and administrators from Pacific Islander communities. • Training teachers and administrators to more effectively teach Pacific Islander students and work with their families.
2.	<p>Initiate more extensive partnerships with existing Pacific Islander community groups.</p> <p>Such groups, including the Multi-Ethnic Think Tank, Pacific Islander Community Advisory Group, and the Asian American Community Advisory Group, have extensive community networks that make them potentially strategic partners in helping schools meet the educational needs of Pacific Islander students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operative word in this recommendation is the term <i>partnership</i>.
3.	<p>Ensure that Pacific Islanders, with particular attention to groups at-risk, are included in all academic and co-curricular programs, from early education (such as Thrive by Five) through k-12 and on to college access, information, and recruitment opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with community-based organization: (1) increase resources, including tapping linguistic and cultural experts, and (2) indentify families and ethnic groups who can most benefit. • Hold information meetings for families on community sites with translators. • Consult with Pacific Islander teachers, administrators, other school personnel, and specialists on Pacific Islander education. • Develop partnerships with higher education institutions (2-year and 4-year colleges). Key units include: teacher education, ethnic studies, social work, and student affairs, all of whom have some students who are interested in K-12 experiences. Pacific Islander students, in particular, can serve as role models.

4.	<p>Develop and implement a research and evaluation plan that assesses the reduction of the achievement gap over time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaggregate the different Pacific Islander groups in data collection and analyses to the extent that it does not compromise concerns about confidentiality. As shown in the report, there are substantive differences among the different Pacific Islander ethnic groups. Without this disaggregation, it will be difficult to know whether any changes in academic indicators are for all ethnic groups or for only a few. • Establish data linkages between the CSRS and other data sets, including the WASL. We found discrepancies in data elements, such as in ethnicity and school district, for the same students when different data sets were compared. Work should begin to ensure that data are consistent across data sets and that linkages can occur. Without such longitudinal data, efforts to examine the factors that contribute to improvement over time will be severely limited. • In consultation with Pacific Islander groups, identify research questions about academic achievement that are meaningful for the schools and Pacific Islander communities. • Conduct follow-up of students who graduate from Washington State high schools.
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Latinos

Recommendations/Goals	
1.	<p>Comprehensive Data System & Evaluation Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a statewide evaluation framework to be utilized by schools and districts to examine unequal opportunities to learn for Latinos and ELL students who are not achieving at grade level. • Conduct an audit of school districts with Latino school populations of 25 percent or higher, or with more than 1,000 Latino students, in order to understand the capacity that exists for serving ELL and Latino students in the state.
2.	<p>Student Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase access to curricular resources for Latino students to accelerate learning and support academic achievement. • Address the issue of low graduation rates among Latino students and underrepresented students. The state needs to closely and accurately monitor graduation rates for Latino and all students using a cohort model and work to reduce the Latino dropout rate significantly by 2014. • Remove the use of the WASL as an exit exam for high school graduation. •

<p>3.</p>	<p>Teacher and Instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase teacher diversity by charging teacher training programs and colleges of education in the state to develop an infrastructure for a “grow your own” program of bilingual/bicultural teachers, and provide them with incentives to teach in regions where first generation families live. • Require all future teachers in Washington State to develop competencies related to meeting the instructional and socio-cultural needs of ELL students in order to obtain a certificate. • Require current teachers to participate in cultural competence training and support teachers to attend these professional development opportunities both locally and nationally. • Institute licensure requirements for teachers (changing state certification to require that initial teacher licensure include training on meeting the needs of students whose first language is not English) and provide for ongoing professional development on pedagogical efforts to raise achievement levels among such students. • Examine the use of paraprofessionals in the classroom instruction of English Language Learners and invest in paraprofessionals currently working in high concentration Latino school districts to earn their degrees and become certified teachers.
<p>4.</p>	<p>Promote Parent Engagement and Involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster a welcoming environment for Latino parents with schools, by addressing the cultural and linguistic needs of parents. • The state should require schools and districts (in addition to those required by federal grant requirements) to communicate effectively with parents whose first language is not English, and utilize multiple approaches of communication. Specifically, the state should require: (1) correspondence be sent home translated in English and Spanish; (2) translators should be offered for parents who do not speak English; (3) greater efforts by school staff should be made to verbally communicate with parents over the phone and in person; and (4) require school districts to utilize a common, state-developed instrument for principals and parents to determine their effectiveness in communicating with parents whose first language is not English.
<p>5.</p>	<p>Develop a Seamless P-20 Continuum</p> <p>Establish a foundation for a seamless continuum to college for Latino students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote a P-20 continuum by providing early knowledge about college for all Latino students and their parents by hosting parent workshops with information provided in English and Spanish. • Education about HB 1079 should start prior to high school. The state should provide support to school districts to offer information in English and Spanish for HB 1079 students and their parents to better understand college admission standards and funding sources.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit the implementation of HB 1079 in higher education systems to determine whether college and university admissions offices are responsibly implementing the law as intended by the state Legislature. • Allow students who qualify as HB 1079 students to compete for state-funded need grant financial aid.
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African Americans

Recommendations/Goals
<p>This report was presented as a plan with overarching policy and systemic recommendations, specific goals with benchmarks, and, an implementation plan with a phased-in timeline. Five key areas for change were identified by the advisory committee as they developed the plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Quality “The main policy task is to leverage incentives attuned to the current labor market, to produce more and better candidates, to recruit teachers into struggling schools, and to keep them there long enough to make a difference.” • Teaching and Learning “What African American students need is exactly what all students need. They need teachers and school leaders who have high expectations of them. They need rigorous and relevant curriculum that engages, challenges, and connects them to the world they know with the world they need to know.” • School and District Leadership “To be effective, leaders must have high expectations of all students and teachers, and a high degree of awareness of their own culture and the culture of others. These leaders must be able to mobilize students’ cultures as a force for learning, and they must reach out to engage parents and communities to support educational excellence.” • Student Support “Expanded school guidance programs are needed to focus on the positive development of student attitudes and habits of mind that lead to success in school life.” • Family and Community Engagement “If the achievement gap is to be closed, family involvement must be considered a legitimate and integral part of public education in the State of Washington.” <p>These key areas have been embedded in the following recommendations. In addition, this plan states six assumptions that needed to be upheld in order for the recommendations, goals, and strategies in the plan to be successful. Among the assumptions was a clear discussion for better data. The report issued a call for the State Board of Education to “ensure that summative assessment</p>

instruments such as the [WASL] provide sufficient data to accurately and reliably report disaggregated student progress.”	
1.	<p>Recommendations for Policy and Systemic Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include specific language in RCW 28A.150.210, the state’s Basic Education Act, that spells out the requirement for all Washington P-12 students to be provided an “excellent and equitable” education. ● Expand the state’s definition of Basic Education to include early learning for three- to five-year olds at risk of not meeting state learning standards, as recommended by the Joint Task Force on Basic Education Finance. ● Revise the State Board of Education’s School Improvement Plan requirements under WAC 180-16-220 to require districts and schools to close achievement gaps. ● Establish in CISL (Center for the Improvement of Student Learning) an appointed, statewide achievement gap oversight committee to monitor the implementation of school and district plans to close the achievement gap for African American students. ● Direct the Higher Education Coordinating Board, OSPI, the State Board of Education, and the Workforce Training Board to collaborate in revising existing, and in developing new, agreements to increase college access and technical career opportunities for African American students. ● Establish collaboration between higher education and school districts to co-create and co-deliver pre-service and in-service programs with an emphasis on school climate, engaging diverse classrooms, and instructional strategies for diverse students.
2.	<p>Goal 1: Teacher Quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By 2014, all school districts ensure that teachers, staff and administrators in schools with 20 percent or more African American students are qualified, trained and effectively meeting the academic, cultural and social needs of these students. <p><u>Benchmarks:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By 2014, establish and fund a performance pay system with incentives for high quality teachers to work in schools with high concentrations of African American students. ● By 2014, increase the number of National Board Certified teachers by 25 percent in schools with 20 percent or more African American Students.
3.	<p>Goal 2: Early Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By 2014, provide all African American children, birth to five, with high quality and academically focused early education to prepare them for success in school. <p><u>Benchmarks:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● By 2010, elementary schools with 20 percent or more African American students, establish a baseline of kindergarten

	<p>readiness, as measured by the state adopted kindergarten assessment tool.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2011, elementary schools with 20 percent or more African American students will annually collect readiness data to determine if entering kindergarteners are improving in readiness skills. • By 2014, elementary schools with 20 percent or more African American students will increase partnerships with preschool programs by 20 percent.
4.	<p>Goal 3: Graduation Rates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the on-time and extended graduation rates for African American students to reach parity with the highest-performing demographic group by 2014 and to achieve a 100 percent graduation rate by 2018. All graduates should be work- and college-ready without need for remediation. <p><u>Benchmarks:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2018, increase Advanced Placement participation rates to reach parity with the highest performing demographic group. • By 2018, increase PSAT participation rates to reach parity with the highest performing demographic group.
5.	<p>Goal 4: Post-Secondary Education and Job Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2018, increase the number of African American students entering and completing post-secondary education and/or job training to be at or above parity with the highest-performing demographic group and to achieve 100 percent participation by 2024. <p><u>Benchmarks:</u> The following are listed with 2012 beginning benchmarks which incrementally increase to the 100 percent participation rate by 2024.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase post-secondary entrance rates • Increase post-secondary completion rates for 4-year public colleges • Increase post-secondary completion rates for 4-year private colleges • Increase post-secondary completion rates for 2 -year public colleges • Increase post-secondary completion rates for 2-year private colleges
6.	<p>Implementation Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide resources to achievement gap districts (those with 20 percent or more African American students) to revise and implement district improvement plans to the close the achievement gap for African American students. • Develop and implement K-12 demonstration Millennium Schools focusing on the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) areas.

Native Americans

Recommendations/Goals	
	<p><i>Section 7 of the report presents a “Comprehensive Education Plan to Increase Native American Educational Achievement” which includes various goals (such as achievement and success goals) and recommendations; they are embedded in the following areas.</i></p>
1.	<p>Teachers, Administrators, School Boards, and Tribes <i>Teachers, administration, and governance can benefit from cultural competence, a status of a school district’s understanding of the unique place-based attributes of the communities they serve.</i></p> <p>Develop relationships between school districts and tribes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers, administrators and school boards will have access (by 2010) and a working knowledge (by 2020) of resource materials and strategies pertaining to Native American educational achievement and attainment in Washington. • All tribes and Indian education programs will have access (by 2010) and a working knowledge (by 2020) of resource materials and strategies on working with public school districts. • Two-thirds of tribes will have entered into government-to-government relations with public schools on or near their reservation boundary by 2012. By 2015 all tribes will have entered into relations with public schools. • <i>Native language, culture and history will eliminate the achievement gap. State and school districts will share control over the mission, scope and influence of the education system with tribal governments and Indian education organizations.</i> • <i>By using place-based education, elders, Native community members, family members and parents, along with their children, teachers, and administrators could work together to develop, implement, and evaluate authentic learning experiences that actively engage Native and non-Native students.</i> • <i>Mentors and role models are essential, especially because many youth and adolescents, due to circumstances beyond their control, want to do something with their lives but have obstacles that may interfere with their ability to thrive.</i> <p>Teacher preparation and administrator programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide resources for pre-service and in-service educators and stakeholders. • All teacher preparation and administrative certification programs in Washington will provide resource materials within the curriculum pertaining to Native Americans in Washington (by 2012). • <i>Cultural competence means that teacher preparation and administrative certification programs offer coursework covering</i>

	<p><i>areas of developing relationships, creating relevant practices, and establishing rigorous adherence to values that help Native children achieve and succeed.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It is important that interactions with the Native community members and school personnel are based on this fundamental commitment: both parties are committed to the education of their children. Teachers, educators and school administrators need to understand that disengagement from the school or not understanding how to help their children with homework does not mean “a lack of commitment to education.”</i> • <i>Educators need to be aware that family relations might not be a “traditional” nuclear family by Western standards but rather includes extended family members.</i> <p>Curriculum development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>(By 2011, a third of all tribes, by 2013 two-thirds of all tribes) By 2015 all tribes in Washington will develop language, cultural and history curriculum to be integrated into public schools on or near their reservation boundary.</i> • <i>The need for incorporating Native history, language and culture into regular curriculum was one of the most prevalent themes across elders, parents, educators and Native students. Having elders teach Native history, culture and language was unanimously agreed upon as critical across all educational arenas.</i> <p>Promoting Native culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>(By 2011, a third of all tribes, by 2013 two-thirds of all tribes) By 2015 all Title VII programs (or future equivalent) in Washington will have entered into memorandums of understanding with public schools to promote Native language, culture, and history.</i> • <i>It is through students’ personal, holistic development that they will be able to contribute to this society; that, at its essences, is simultaneous cultures existing together. Outcomes (graduation rates, high achievement rates, etc.) mean nothing to the collective Native community if the child has no knowledge of native language, culture and history.</i> • <i>Being able to attend and practice traditional ceremonies has been identified as supporting students’ development (spiritual, mental, physical and emotional). Providing opportunities for children and youth to thrive will require school system policies and practices that support such experiences as opposed to creating barriers which prohibit or discourage them.</i>
<p>2.</p>	<p>Health and Wellbeing – By 2012</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish measurements on health and wellbeing among Native American children, youth, adults and families. • Establish reliability and validity on measures of health and wellbeing for Native American children, youth, adolescents and families with standardized norms based on a sample of Native Americans in Washington State. • Establish programs that promote the stability and continuity of education and appropriate services for Native American children and adolescents during transitions: such as foster care placement, residential treatment, transfers within state

	<p>districts and dropout students returning to school to receive their high school diploma or equivalency (GED).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the rates of risk factors among Native American youth for substance and alcohol abuse, depression, suicidality and other rates of mental health disorders. • Establish culture-based prevention and intervention programs for “at risk” Native youth, including those who have been placed in foster care, have history of substance of alcohol use, have been in residential treatment, or have dropped out of school. • Have standard assessment instruments in public and tribal schools that assess students’ overall wellbeing and social and emotional functioning.
<p>3.</p>	<p>Academic Achievement and Educational Attainment Increase academic attainment and proficiency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2012, double the percentage of Native American students who are proficient or advanced in reading, writing and math at various grade levels and upon high school graduation (by 2020 - 90% or more). • By 2012, reduce by 50% the number of Native American students failing one or more classes in junior and senior high school (by 2020 – 90% or more pass all classes in junior and senior classes). • By 2010, the top quartile schools serving the largest concentrations of Native American students will triple the number of Advanced Placement courses and course takers. • By 2012, all Native American students will have access to a college prep curriculum. • By 2020, eliminate the college prep gap between Native American high school graduates and their white peers. <p>Graduation rate and dropout/push out rate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2012, reduce by 50% the dropout/push out rate among Native American students (by 2020 reduce rate to zero). • By 2012, increase by 50% the number of Native American high school graduates in at least half of the schools with largest concentrations of Native American students (by 2020 – 90% or more). • <i>Teachers that students found helped them in school: (a) provide encouragement, support and respect for their cultural identity; and (b) are flexible and adaptable to help Native students make up for absences and missed assignments due to family issues, losses and cultural opportunities outside the classroom.</i> • <i>Educational policies need to be reevaluated for applicability and sensitivity for Native students, families and communities.</i> <p>Post-secondary opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2012 all high schools with 15% or more Native American student enrollment will be in partnership with two- and four-

	<p>year institutions of higher education to establish a college going culture and to increase the college going rates of native students to 90% or more by 2020.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2015, two- and four-year colleges will close the Native American college-going gap by half and eliminate it by 2020.
4.	<p>Assessment of Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve Data Collection and Reporting. “There is indeed a need for new narratives and new perspectives in indigenous learning and education.” • By 2010, OSPI will reform assessment of student learning to offer more intervention and direction to students and families to improve student learning. • By 2012, Native American students will be able to demonstrate mastery of subject areas with assessment methods more aligned to Native cultural and community expectations. • By 2020, all students will be able to demonstrate mastery pertaining to ancestral and contemporary history of tribes and urban Indian communities in Washington, with particular emphasis on sovereignty, treaty law, language, culture, and maligned effects of colonization contrasted with intergovernmental relationships that showcase collaborative strategies of communities working together. • (By 2010, a third, by 2012, two-thirds) and by 2015 all tribes and established urban Indian organizations in Washington will develop indicators of achievement and success to be monitored in collaboration with public school districts and OSPI assessment of student learning.
5.	<p>Develop a Partnership with the National Education Association</p> <p>NEA has a number of resources that are available to help close the achievement gap. The NEA’s guide, entitled <i>CARE Strategies for Closing the Achievement Gaps</i>, is a good example. The C.A.R.E. Guide provides a multi-themed approach to closing the achievement gaps, focusing on Culture, Abilities, Resilience, and Effort (C.A.R.E.). It is a guide developed by NEA to enhance the pedagogical skills of educators, particularly addressing minority and low-income students.</p>
6.	<p>Increase State Support and Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is imperative that the state legislature appropriate at least \$250,000 to hire additional personnel and provide program support to OSPI’s Indian Education Office • Continued support should be provided to the Center for the Improvement of Student Learning and Title I, Part A. • The following programs at the Governor’s level need to be maintained: Office of the Education Ombudsman, the Family Policy Council, and the Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs.
7.	<p>An Additional Recommendation</p>

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We recommend that there be a meeting of foundations (tribal and non-tribal) to dialogue about the report’s goals and recommendations with the specific purpose of funding action strategies to close the achievement gap among Native American students. |
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APPENDIX F CRITERIA FOR PRIORITIZING ELP STRATEGIES (10/2/2009)

The following Criteria are meant to help the Early Learning Plan (ELP) Work Groups, the December 1 Drafting Team and Sub Groups, think through the creation of priorities for the recommendations being developed. A strategy, policy, or program recommendation should be put through the “lens” of the criteria to help determine its relative priority. The criteria are meant to be taken as a whole, with the understanding that most strategies will not likely achieve every criterion. A high priority strategy/policy/program should be perceived as having a “high” probability of meeting most of the criteria.

The criteria listed below are not meant to be in rank order (numbers are for ease of discussion), with the exception of the first statement regarding closing the preparation gap. Two weeks ago all of the work groups and the sub groups were asked to consider prioritizing recommendations that could help close the preparation gap. The direction provided stated the following, “In making recommendations to the Governor, it is important to address both the Governor's directive "to develop a broad proposal about what early learning opportunities should be available to every child and their families" and the need to close the preparation gap. We are asking you to accomplish this by (1) identifying the supports, services, and programs that should be available to all who wish to access them [the "all" in Bette's terminology], and (2) identifying the supports, services, and programs for at-risk children and families [the "some" and "few" terminology] as the first focus of a phased-in, comprehensive early learning system.”

Criterion	Evaluation (How well does the recommendation achieve the criterion?)
1. Degree to which this policy/strategy can realize near-term results in closing the preparation gap	High, Medium or Low
2. Degree to which it supports whole child development	High, Medium or Low
3. Degree to which programs are proven to demonstrate child outcomes and ready to go to scale	High, Medium or Low
4. Degree to which elements of infrastructure currently exist to allow us to implement the strategy/policy successfully	High, Medium or Low
5. Degree to which the strategy/policy connects with key foundational frameworks or reports (e.g. Washington Learns, Kids Matter, etc.)	High, Medium or Low
6. Degree to which financing options have been identified, including alignment with federal opportunities	High, Medium or Low
7. Degree to which we already know how to provide targeted services within any desired universal availability	High, Medium or Low
8. Degree to which there is strong and/or broad support which is likely to create “traction” for a policy or budget decision	High, Medium or Low
9. Degree to which the strategy/policy provides a foundation for other important elements of what is needed	High, Medium or Low

APPENDIX G POTENTIAL REVENUE OPTIONS

Potential Revenue Sources

Note: This initial list of potential funding ideas was developed in the fall of 2009. Circumstances surrounding some of the ideas have already changed. However, what follows is meant to stimulate thinking about the kind of funding sources that could be pursued to support some of the strategies in this plan. Funding strategies will need to be assessed annually to take advantage of state and federal opportunities, and are subject to fluctuations in regional economic conditions.

In addition to finding ways to reduce the fragmentation of existing funding sources, new funding will be required to support the creation of a comprehensive system of early learning. A variety of sources will be needed to fund the services, programs and supports described in the Washington Early Learning Plan. The following provides a list of potential federal and state revenue sources that could be utilized.

1. **Early Learning Challenge Fund:** This new federal fund, containing up to \$10 billion spent over 10 years, would establish two types of competitive grants:
 - Quality Pathways Grants would be available to states that already have made significant progress toward establishing systems for improving the quality of early learning settings. These grants would be awarded for five years and would be renewable based on a state's progress in increasing the number of disadvantaged children who participate in high-quality early learning programs, implementing an early learning system that meets components in the bill, and incorporating program quality findings and recommendations reported by a national commission. In the first year, up to 65 percent of funds would be used for these grants, with that percentage increasing to 85 percent by the fourth year. *The size of the grants would be determined by the total number of states with approved applications and the number of low-income children under age five in each state with an approved application.*
 - Development Grants would be available to states with some elements of an early learning system to support planning efforts. These grants would be awarded for three years and would not be renewable, with the expectation that after three years, developing states would have made enough progress to apply for a Quality Pathways Grant.

2. **Head Start Funds for State Advisory Councils on Early Childhood Education and Care (\$1.5 million over three years):** The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) is soliciting applications from eligible states for grants to carry out the activities of the State Advisory Council. To be eligible to receive a grant, a state must prepare and submit an application for a three-year period that meets the requirements specified in the Act and includes the following with the application:
 - A statewide strategic report addressing the activities of the Advisory Council.
 - A description, for each fiscal year, of how the state will make effective use of funds available to facilitate the development or enhancement of high-quality systems of early childhood education and care designed to improve school preparedness by developing or enhancing programs and activities consistent with the statewide strategic plan.
 - A description of the state early learning standards and the state's goals for increasing the number of children entering kindergarten ready to learn.

- Information identifying the agency or joint interagency office, and the individual designated by the Governor to coordinate the activities of the State Advisory Council.
 - A description of how the state plans to sustain activities under paragraph (b) of Section 642B beyond the grant period.
3. **Race to the Top (\$4.35 billion):** The U.S. Department of Education has created the Race to the Top competition, designed to catalyze state-led school reform programs. Race to the Top will send \$4.35 billion to perhaps as few as a dozen states with well-coordinated and aggressive reform plans that touch each of the Administration’s four key priorities or “assurances”:
- Standards and assessments – participation in national efforts to adopt common standards and assessments of student performance, and a plan for instituting them;
 - Data systems to support instruction – statewide longitudinal data system that links student and teacher data, and makes data available to researchers and the public;
 - Great teachers and leaders – differentiation of teachers and principals according to effectiveness, and incorporation of effectiveness data in human capital policies and decisions; and
 - Turning around struggling schools – authority to intervene with struggling schools and a policy framework that supports high-quality charter schools.

States compete for funding by submitting proposals that include the following:

- Description of its progress to date against each required criterion and any selected optional initiatives, including the use of state and federal funding.
- Financial data comparing state education funding relative to the previous year, and showing that education funding has increased as a portion of the state budget.
- Description of support from key stakeholders including local education agencies (LEAs), unions and foundations.
- Budget detailing how grant funds and other resources will be used to improve student outcomes, giving priority to high-need LEAs.
- Detailed implementation plan for each Reform Plan Criterion, including activities, goals and rationale, timing, responsibilities and targets.

How will early learning fit into Washington’s Race to the Top application?

- Raising achievement and closing gaps (targets for achievement gains, gap closing and graduation rates): Quality early learning will be a key strategy outlined to lower high school dropout rates and improve college attendance/completion.
- P-20 Coordination and Vertical Alignment: Coordinate early childhood, K-12 schools, postsecondary and workforce organizations to create a more seamless P-20 path for students. This is an invitational priority, designed to strengthen the overall proposal.
- Expansion and Adaptation of Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems: Expand longitudinal systems to include data from special education, English language learner (ELL) and early childhood programs, human resources, postsecondary and other areas. While implementing a statewide longitudinal data system that includes preschool is a required priority, expanding this data system to begin from birth is considered an invitational priority.

4. **Health Care Reform: America’s Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009 (H.R. 3200):** The adopted health care reform legislation contains provisions that would add significant investments (\$1.5 billion) over five years in funding for maternal, infant, and early childhood home visitation services. Grants would be allotted according to the state’s share of children in low income/high risk families. These provisions could allow Washington to protect or increase state investments in order to leverage federal funds.
5. **Invest in Innovation (i-3) Fund (\$650 million):** As the title suggests, the fund will reward both proven and emerging approaches (Burke, 2009). Individual school districts or groups of districts can apply for the i3 grants, and entrepreneurial nonprofits can join with school districts to submit applications. Colleges and universities, companies and other stakeholders can be supporters of the projects.

Under the proposed priorities, grants would be awarded in three categories:

- **Scale-up Grants:** The largest possible grant category is focused on programs and practices with the potential to reach hundreds of thousands of students. Applicants must have a strong base of evidence that their program has had a significant effect on improving student achievement.
 - **Validation Grants:** Existing, promising programs that have good evidence of their impact and are ready to improve their evidence base while expanding in their own and other communities.
 - **Development Grants:** The smallest grant level designed to support new and high-potential practices whose impact should be studied further.
6. **State Data Systems Grants (\$250 million):** These grants are intended to strengthen states’ longitudinal data systems. Prior to ARRA, the federal government had already awarded data grants to 27 states, including Washington (see http://nces.ed.gov/programs/SLDS/fy09_announcement.asp). Washington has developed a longitudinal database to inform data-driven decisions around educational investments. Washington’s database—the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS)—is a statewide warehouse of student, course, teacher, achievement and graduation information.
 7. **Reform child care subsidy funding mechanism** to better address changing demographics and family needs, and agency/programmatic goals:
 - Revise child care subsidy and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) policies to achieve the twin goals of: (1) family sustainability, and (2) outcomes for school readiness.
 - Redirect a portion of the child care subsidy dollars from vouchers to contracts/grants to support and incentivize high-quality infant and toddler child care.¹⁴
 - Redirect a percent of Title IV-B, Child Welfare Services: State grants to support screening, referral and comprehensive services for early learning programs/settings serving the most vulnerable infants and toddlers.
 8. **Basic Education:** Add universal preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds in the definition of basic education, to be phased in by 2018:
 - Using revenue identified by The Quality Education Council (as tasked by HB 2261) to fund a universal, voluntary preschool program for 3- and 4-year-olds in the definition of basic education.

¹⁴ Center for the Study of Social Policy, “Improving the Economic Success of Families: Recommendations for State Policy,” *POLICY MATTERS: Setting and Measuring Benchmarks for State Policies*, June 2004.

- Funding for the universal preschool program would be braided with current funding for special education preschool and Head Start programs.
 - Integrate and coordinate phase-in of full-day-kindergarten (already in new definition of basic education) with phase-in of universal preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds.
 - Current funding used for 4-year-olds in ECEAP (roughly 75 percent of ECEAP slots) should be redirected to serve 3-year-olds, with the goal of serving 100 percent of eligible, at-risk 3-year-olds with either Head Start or ECEAP.
9. **Create a Public-Private Early Learning Fund:** A strategy in and of itself or a stepping stone mechanism to provide additional funding for proven programs for children and families across the state (such as: home-based early learning programs, requirements in federal Quality Pathways Grant).¹⁵ Could replicate Washington Families Fund (Sound Families Initiative).
10. **High Incomes Tax (09-11 biennium figures)¹⁶ – Net new revenue in 2009-2011: \$2.58 billion** (4 percent paying):
- First \$200,000 of Adjusted Gross Income exempt for joint filers (\$100,000 exempt for individual filers).
 - 3 percent rate on income between \$200,000 and \$999,999.
 - 5 percent rate on income over \$1 million.
11. **Expand Washington’s Sales Tax Base (09-11 biennium figures)¹⁷:**
- Candy and gum: \$61.3 million in state, \$19.8 million in local revenue.
 - Consumer services: \$255.2 million in state, \$98 million in local revenue.
 - Detective/Security: \$108.7 million in state, \$41.7 million in local revenue.
 - Janitorial services: \$10.9 million in state, \$4.2 million in local revenue.
 - Custom software: \$220.3 million in state, \$80.5 million in local revenue.
 - Securities brokers: \$128 million in state, \$49.1 million in local revenue.
12. **Close Selected Tax Breaks and Increase the Small Business B&O Credit¹⁸ – Net new revenue in 2009-2011: \$269.5 million:**
- Suspend selected business tax breaks to broaden the tax base and provide new funds (\$400 million in reclaimed revenue).
 - Increase the small business B&O credit from \$35 to \$100 per month, to encourage small business creation and growth (\$130.5 million revenue loss).
13. **Soda Tax:** (*Note: This tax was approved in the 2010 Legislative session but not specifically for early learning purposes.*) An excise tax that would raise the price of soda in the same way that “sin taxes” raise the price of tobacco and alcohol. There are three potential approaches to a soda tax:
- **Increase retail sales tax on soft drinks:** “Soft drinks” are taxed by the state sales tax. The exemption for food does not apply to soft drinks. The state could conceivably establish an additional sales tax rate on top of the 6.5 percent standard rate as is currently done for rental cars.

¹⁵ Rob Grunewald and Arthur Rolnick, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, May 2005.

¹⁶ Economic Opportunity Institute: http://www.eoionline.org/tax_reform/fact_sheets/FairerTaxesforWA-AHighIncomesTax.pdf

¹⁷ Economic Opportunity Institute: http://www.eoionline.org/tax_reform/fact_sheets/ExpandingWashingtonsSalesTaxBase.pdf

¹⁸ Economic Opportunity Institute: http://www.eoionline.org/tax_reform/fact_sheets/ClosingTaxBreaksIncreaseBOCredit.pdf

- **Raise existing syrup tax:** The syrup tax was adopted in 1989 and originally included a \$0.75 tax per gallon of syrup. Referendum 43, passed by voters in 1994, increased the syrup tax to \$1 per gallon and dedicated the revenue to the Violence Reduction and Drug Enforcement Account. Every 25 cent increase in syrup tax per gallon would raise roughly \$5 million.¹⁹ However, in order to have a net gain in revenue, the B&O exemption would have to be amended.
- **Tax cans and bottles of carbonated beverages:** In addition to the \$0.75 cent tax per gallon of syrup, in 1989 the legislature instituted a \$0.00084 cents per ounce excise tax on bottled and canned carbonated beverages. (This works out to roughly a penny tax on a can of pop.) Referendum 43 eliminated this tax. Reinstating a \$0.0008 wholesale tax would raise roughly \$61 million during the 2009-11 biennium. Taxing all soft drinks five cents per 12 oz can at wholesale would raise \$277 million during the 2009-11 biennium.²⁰

A recent article from the Journal of Public Health Policy lists information on state taxes on soft drinks and snacks as of January 1, 2007.²¹

¹⁹ This estimate is based on the projected cost of the B&O exemption for syrup taxes paid. In fiscal year 2006, the \$1 per gallon syrup tax raised \$9.4 million (http://dor.wa.gov/docs/reports/2007/Tax_Reference_2007/31syrup.pdf).

²⁰ Economic Opportunity Institute: http://www.eoionline.org/tax_reform/reports/Economic_Stimulus_Recovery_Plan-Dec08.pdf

²¹ The full text is not available online, but the key tables are. Table 2 (http://www.palgrave-journals.com/jphp/journal/v29/n2/fig_tab/jphp20089t2.html) contains information on retail sales taxes. Table 1 (http://www.palgrave-journals.com/jphp/journal/v29/n2/fig_tab/jphp20089t1.html) contains information about all other taxes. Table 3 (http://www.palgrave-journals.com/jphp/journal/v29/n2/fig_tab/jphp20089t3.html) summarizes sales tax information.

APPENDIX H CONTRIBUTIONS OF FLOURISHING NONPROFIT PARTNERSHIPS

All across Washington, nonprofit organizations are taking the initiative to create, coordinate and link vital programs and services for children and families as partners, investors and conveners. Beyond the more traditional early care and education and afterschool stakeholders, other influential nonprofits, such as the local United Ways, have long invested in multiple early learning program initiatives, from child care to child abuse prevention to early literacy programs to parent support. In more recent years, many United Ways have intensified their involvement in early learning, working in collaboration with community partners and utilizing their ties to the private sector to engage nontraditional advocates to build local community-driven initiatives. Recently, other “unlikely messengers” have added their voices and clout to the early childhood pitch: including the American Academy of Pediatrics, Washington Chapter; Fight Crime, Invest in Kids (law enforcement); big business; and labor unions.

The following are just a few geographically specific examples of successful nonprofit led collaborations.

Thrive by Five Washington’s Two Demonstration Projects

Thrive by Five Washington (Washington’s public-private early care and education partnership) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation are jointly funding two demonstration communities—one in **White Center (King County)** and one in **East Yakima (Yakima County)**—which bring together many community-based nonprofits, as well as government funded entities such as public health, in a collaborative effort to improve school readiness for all children birth through 5 years of age living in these communities. The approach includes a range of services including: home visiting; quality improvement of licensed child care facilities through the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS); work with family, friend and neighbor (FFN) caregivers; parent and community engagement strategies; and school transition strategies. The purpose of this work is to provide “proof points” of the best strategies that will enhance school readiness so that successful strategies can be replicated and taken to scale across the state as appropriate. Work within these demonstration projects relies intensively upon the expertise and capacity of local nonprofit organizations respected in their communities. Having local partners with a “feel” for the populations being served is essential to gaining the communities’ confidence in the vision and commitment to success.

Spokane County

For the past five years, a collaboration between Spokane County’s United Way and Community-Minded Enterprises (the local child care resource and referral program) has been working to improve the quality of child care in Spokane County. Through this collaboration’s Child Care Center Accreditation Project, 16 local child care centers have accessed mentoring, peer support, professional education and training for staff to help their centers meet national quality standards. Three of the centers are now accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and 13 are actively engaged in the self-study process. The parallel Family Child Care Accreditation Project has assisted 15 family child care providers in attaining NAFCC Accreditation. Six were re-accredited this year.

In 2008, Inland Northwest Alliance for Early Learning received a \$1 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support a local collaborative effort to increase school readiness by enhancing the social and emotional development of young children enrolled in child care and full-day kindergarten

classrooms. The three year grant, awarded to the Spokane County United Way as the fiscal agent, will support child care providers by investing in high-quality training, coaching and strategies to help them increase a child’s ability to overcome challenging life experiences and reach their full potential. The grant is also focused on building a stronger bridge between the child care system and the K-12 systems.

In addition to this grant, the Inland Northwest Alliance for Early Learning, under the direction of Community-Minded Enterprises, is leading one of the five state funded two-year pilot programs across the state to field test the Washington QRIS. In Spokane, 10 facilities are receiving intensive coaching to test and progress through the levels of quality in two areas—Management Practices and Professional Development.

King County

United Way of King County plans to assume responsibility for a home visiting model that has been sponsored by the Business Partnership for Early Learning. They plan to take that model to scale in King County through a special fund-raising campaign, and using that to leverage funds from government and community partners.

The City of Seattle combined all of its substantial child care professional development dollars into one consolidated contract awarded to Child Care Resources (the local child care resource and referral program) so that targeted early learning programs would get intensive support to improve quality.

Pierce County

The Pierce County focus is on a system of intentionally coordinated services provided by multiple partners working on a common goal as identified in the local Early Learning Business Plan. This differs from most other locally-driven efforts, which are more program-focused, often without the cohesion of a comprehensive plan. The plan focuses on providing services to children in the settings where they are: at home; with family, friends, and neighbors; in licensed child care, ECEAP/Head Start; and in elementary schools. Current funding is supporting such programs as Promoting First Relationships, Child Reach Screening, Child Care Quality Improvement Projects, School Linkages, and others.

First 5 FUNdamentals (the local Pierce County early learning coalition) strives to improve school readiness throughout Pierce County, particularly among children up to 5 years of age in low-income families. The consortium is developing: a cohesive system with a common understanding of system partners; a common agreement on tools and approaches; a coordinated system-wide evaluation and improvement; and a common business and strategic plan.

Initiated by a dedicated funding drive by the United Way of Pierce County from local companies and municipalities, the First 5 FUNdamentals coalition has now garnered broader funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Foundation for Early Learning, Thrive by Five Washington, and others leveraging significant investments in early learning throughout Pierce County.

Local public and private partners include: The City of Tacoma Child Care Resource and Referral, City of Lakewood, Pierce County, Russell Investments, The Boeing Company, Rainier Pacific Bank, Totem Ocean Trailer Express, Tucci & Sons, KBTC Public Television, Columbia Bank, Albers & Company, R4 Printing,

TAPCO Credit Union, Financial Insights, Concrete Technology, Thaddeus P. Martin IV – Attorney at Law and Propel Insurance, Puget Sound Educational Services District, Tacoma Children’s Museum, Tacoma/Pierce County Public Libraries, the State Department of Early Learning (local child care licensors) and Tacoma/Pierce County Public Health.

Thurston County

The Thurston Early Childhood Coalition has kicked off two projects through the Child Care Action Council (the local child care resource and referral program) that are serving hundreds of families and child care providers: **Blockfest**, a program designed to help parents support the development of pre-math and science skills through block play for children ages 8 months to 8 years; and **Brainfest**, a train-the-trainer series on key knowledge and strategies for nurturing young children’s growing minds.

In addition, the United Way created the Early Learning Initiative (ELI). ELI will establish a staffed, early learning resource center at each of three neighborhood schools. A coordinated system of programs and services will be offered, connecting the people and aligning the efforts that impact a child’s early years. Initiative work will link families, schools, neighborhoods and early learning resources, creating a localized system that is family-focused, neighborhood-centered and connects all the people who shape a child’s life.

Lewis, Mason, Grays Harbor and Pacific Counties

Lewis County has successfully implemented *Raising A Reader*, an early literacy program, to several rural communities and produced an early learning calendar, which was distributed across the county through a partnership with Child Care Action Council – the local child care resource and referral program, Centralia College and other community partners. The local Rotary Clubs and United Way have funded *Raising A Reader*.

The child care resource and referral program, run by the Child Care Action Council, also works with early care and education and afterschool coalition development in Pacific, Grays Harbor and Mason counties.

Clark County

SELF was founded in 2001 by six community partners following a catalytic public event involving more than 400 community leaders. SELF was awarded one of the first planning grants by the Washington Early Learning Foundation (now the Foundation for Early Learning). The planning grant provided the resources necessary to develop a system plan identifying community gaps, priorities and operating guidelines, as well as a vision for building a system of early learning in Clark County. Throughout its eight-year history, SELF has leveraged the original planning grant, bringing in more than \$3 million in additional financial resources to support early learning in our community. SELF’s efforts have focused on building an early learning system through three strategy groups:

- Ready Families – Empowering families to support the health, wellness, and well-being of their young children.
- Ready Schools – Getting school ready so children succeed in their education and development.
- Ready Professional – Enhancing the quality of early learning care and development so all children thrive in positive environments.

SELF works with community organizations to align services, eliminate gaps, and leverage needed resources and supports within and outside of our community. Through their Ready Schools strategy group, they have partnerships with all nine local school districts, and are building a bridge between the early learning community and K-12 system.

For the last few years, SELF has also worked on building linkages with the medical community, especially pediatric medical offices and local hospitals that are assisting SELF partners in referring young children and their parents to the appropriate early learning system partners as soon as questions or concerns arise. This effort will, over time, allow the partners to identify children and families needing support early and offer them needed resources and services.

SELF is developing cross-system professional development opportunities for professionals in their community. They have supported the efforts of the local Tapestry Conference to bring together early learning professionals and kindergarten teachers. SELF is currently planning a larger conference for late spring 2010, focusing on the professional development needs of partner organizations and their staff and emphasizing Leadership Development in Early Childhood.

Skamania and Klickitat Counties

A group of early learning professionals representing public and private nonprofit organizations has organized successful Read & Play groups for parents and FFN caregivers at two elementary schools in Stevenson and White Salmon, as well as professional development workshops for child care providers. They have also developed a Born Learning trail for use in several of the Gorge communities to communicate the importance of early learning.

Cowlitz and Wahkiakum Counties

A newly formed early learning coalition is working to improve children's readiness for school by discussing and planning for professional development opportunities for child care providers, as well as parent services that include home visiting, parent support groups and parent education opportunities. The group is particularly interested in the medical home model and is working to pull partners together to coordinate, integrate and align services in the community. The community currently has two Play & Learn groups targeting parents and FFN caregivers, as well as Ready! classes for parents that are offered in every school district in Cowlitz County.

Chelan and Douglas Counties

Rural Central Washington cannot have successful program implementation without strong community partnerships and the aligning of funding. United Way of Chelan & Douglas Counties and Child Care Resource and Referral serve as the lead agencies in early learning awareness and community collaboration efforts. Through funding from the Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network, the Foundation for Early Learning, Thrive by Five Washington and the United Ways of Washington, a partnership of local early learning leaders has provided presentations, information and data, and supported the development of a community trends Web site. As a result, many local businesses and funders now understand the return on investment (ROI) that quality early learning environments create, which has resulted in new and diverse funding sources for programs for children and families.

Through funding from Foundation for Early Learning, United Way of Chelan & Douglas Counties, the local Child Care Resource and Referral program hosted by Catholic Family and Child Services and Wenatchee School District 25, kindergarten teachers participated in “Intelligent Cross-Site Visits” to early learning programs to view a variety of settings where children soon to be transitioning into to their kindergarten classrooms spend the majority of the waking hours. Early learning professionals in turn viewed those same children three months later as they were transitioned in to kindergarten classrooms. Follow-up meetings are scheduled as funding is available. Future planning for addressing needs is ongoing. Prior to these visits Department of Early Learning funding paid for focus groups of parents, community members, school personnel and early learning stakeholders to assess gaps in preschool through third grade (P-3) alignment. Data from all of the above were collected and analyzed. Through the strength of community partnerships, a community plan is under development for sustainability.

Whatcom County

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has funded the Northwest Educational Service District (NWESD) to implement the PreK-3rd Grade Alignment Project by taking the work that has been done with David Madison (literacy curriculum alignment), Nooksack School District and HeadStart/ECEAP at the Opportunity Council, and include child care providers in the four Whatcom County school districts over this year to develop demonstration child care sites. The child care resource and referral program (housed at the Opportunity Council) will be taking the lead with child care and will provide on-site literacy consultation. The program’s consultation model continues to be a source of support and professional development to child care providers.

NWESD will also develop the capacity for ongoing planning and implementation at the regional level through the creation of a Regional PreK-3rd Leadership Group, comprised of representation from replication districts, current Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Early Learning grantees, directors of Head Start, Early Childhood Education Assistance Program, Early Head Start, local child care resource and referral programs, and representation from the Northwest Early Learning Systems Network. This group will inform and advance prekindergarten-through-third-grade alignment as a strategy for closing the achievement gap by providing examples of effective practices and strategies for sustainability to the broader region via NWESD’s superintendent, curriculum director and special education meetings and by linking to statewide systems work. Year two of this grant will be using the model to Skagit County.

—Prepared by Sarah Borgida (Foundation for Early Learning), Erica Hallock (United Ways of Washington) and Elizabeth Bonbright Thompson (Washington State Child Care Resource and Referral Network)

APPENDIX I PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONSORTIUM FACT SHEET AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM MODEL

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 age 12. 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.

Mission

Build a comprehensive, integrated, cross sector system of preparation and ongoing professional development for the state's early learning and school age professionals, that include:

- Early Learning Professionals
 - Child Care
 - Early Intervention
 - Early Head Start
 - Head Start
- School Age Care
 - Public Schools
 - Private Academic Schools
- Trainers, Technical Assistance, Coaches, Mentors and Consultants
- Higher Education

Goal

Ready, successful and empowered early learning and school age care professionals that provide high quality services to young children and their families.

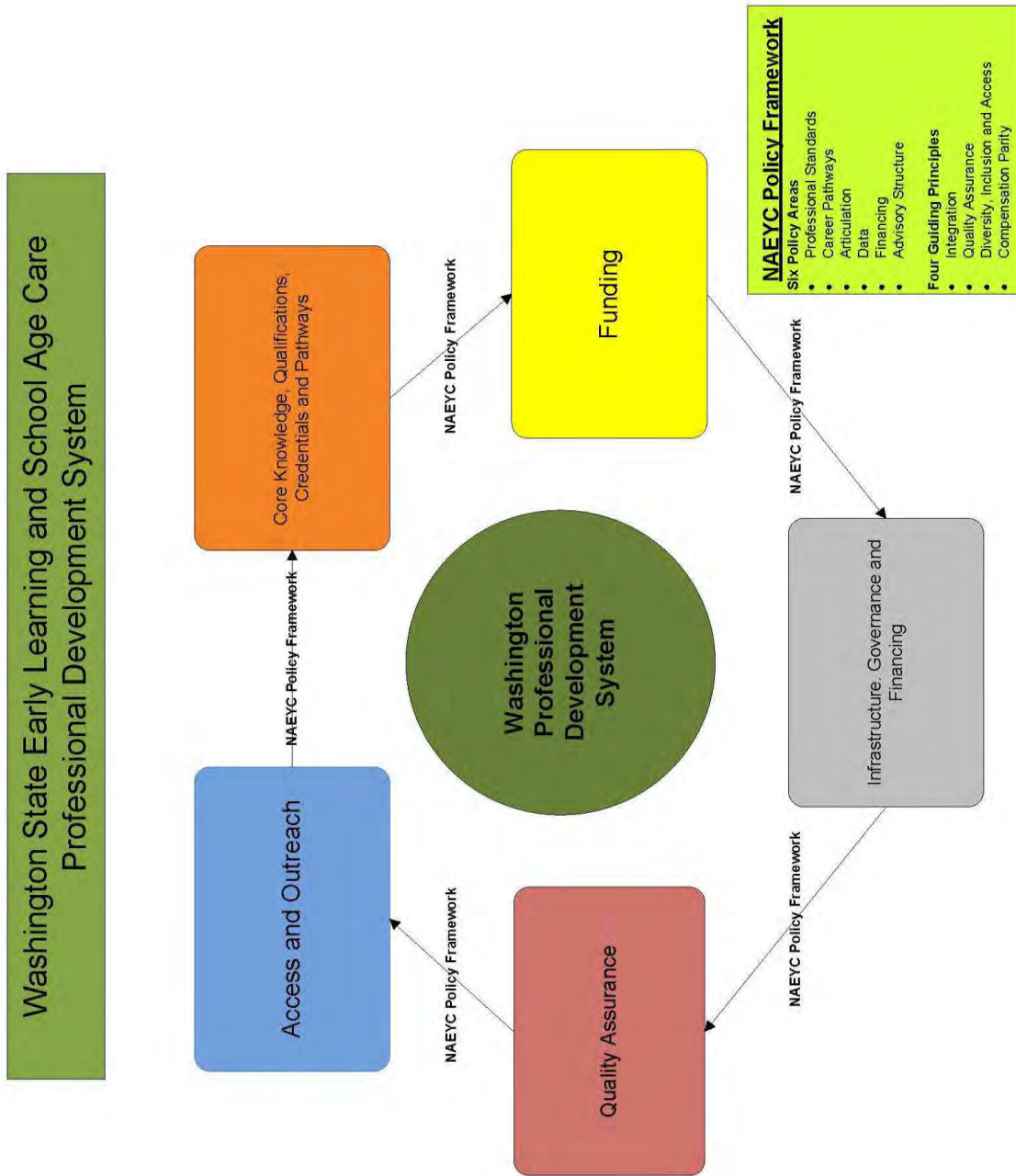
Guiding Values:

Washington State's Early Learning and School Age Care Professional Development System Must Be:

- **Accessible** -- encouraging diversity and minimizing discrepancies in providing professional development resources and diverse opportunities
- **Efficient** -- supportive, cohesive, aligned and seamless, encouraging professional development and compensation
- **High Quality** -- assured by ongoing evaluations at the individual, program and system levels
- **Adaptive** -- dynamic and flexible to meet changing needs of the workforce, children and families
- **User-friendly** -- available to all early learning and school age care professionals in our state
- **Rewarding** -- engagement leads to professionalism and increased compensation

Elements of Washington's Professional Development System

- **Core Knowledge, Qualifications, Credentials and Pathways**
- **Access and Outreach**
- **Funding**
- **Quality Assurance**
- **Infrastructure, Governance and Financing**



APPENDIX J RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNOR (12/1/2009)



EARLY LEARNING

Recommendations to the Governor for Action in 2010

Submitted by

Bette Hyde, Director, Department of Early Learning

Randy Dorn, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Nina Auerbach, President and CEO, Thrive by Five Washington





November 25, 2009

The Honorable Christine O. Gregoire, Governor
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Gregoire:

In response to your June 8, 2009 letter, we respectfully submit the enclosed early learning recommendations, which include proposed actions for the 2010 legislative session. We appreciate your clear prioritization of our youngest learners, and the opportunity to offer options for moving forward in building a world-class statewide early learning system. We are confident the recommendations herein offer good first steps in this process, acknowledging both the importance of investing in early learning and the difficult financial situation our state and nation face.

To help inform these recommendations, we also are submitting a draft version of the statewide Early Learning Plan. This is a “blueprint” for how to build a statewide early learning system. Our state’s Early Learning Advisory Council was charged with creating this plan in the Department of Early Learning’s enabling legislation. Although the final plan will not be complete until spring 2010, we feel it is important to share a draft with you to provide context for the recommendations.

As you directed in your letter, we included Thrive by Five Washington and early learning stakeholders in this work. We invited Thrive to be a full and equal partner in drafting the recommendations and the plan. In addition, 40 organizations served on the drafting team developing these recommendations, and many more individuals are participating in work groups to help complete the plan. Broad outreach via several community meetings around the state and online surveys helped inform the recommendations and draft plan.

We look forward to more conversations with you and stakeholders as you make decisions about how to progress in offering high-quality early learning opportunities for our youngest learners.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Elizabeth M. Hyde in black ink.

Elizabeth M. Hyde
Director
Department of Early Learning

Handwritten signature of Randy Dorn in black ink.

Randy Dorn
Superintendent of Public Instruction

Handwritten signature of Nina Auerbach in black ink.

Nina Auerbach
President and CEO
Thrive by Five WA

“The future of any society depends on its ability to foster the education, health and well-being of the next generation. Today’s children will become tomorrow’s citizens, workers, and parents. When we invest wisely in children and families, the next generation will pay that back through a lifetime of productivity and responsible citizenship. When we fail to provide children with what they need to build a strong foundation for healthy and productive lives, we put our future prosperity and security at risk.”

—*The Science of Early Childhood Development: Closing the Gap Between What We Know and What We Do*, 2007
Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University

RECOMMENDATIONS DRAFTING TEAM

Department of Early Learning	Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction	League of Education Voters
Thrive by Five Washington	Foundation for Early Learning
Department of Health	United Ways of Washington
Department of Social and Health Services	Children’s Alliance
Tulalip Tribes	Association of Washington School Principals
Governor’s Office	Reach Out and Read WA
Early Learning Advisory Council	Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe

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EARLY LEARNING: A SMART INVESTMENT

It is time. Washington State is poised to take bold action on one of the most strategic and important investments we can make in our children, our state, our economy and our future. Early learning is a smart investment and “upstream solution” to some of the biggest problems facing Washington. We produce great gains by investing in early and equal development of human potential.¹

Building on 25 years of interest and attention to the early learning needs of young children in Washington, elected officials, policymakers, parents, families, caregivers, educators and communities have all called for making early learning a priority investment.²

Earlier planning efforts by Governor Christine Gregoire and the Legislature have called for increased resources devoted to early learning and improved coordination among all involved. In recent years, these elected officials and statewide panels have called for a cross-sector and cross-system approach to early learning, including the need for a comprehensive statewide Early Learning Plan.

In June 2009, Governor Gregoire charged Department of Early Learning (DEL) Director Bette Hyde, and Superintendent of Public Instruction Randy Dorn with developing “a proposal for the 2010 legislative session to ensure that all Washington children and families have the benefit of early childhood education.” The two leaders invited Nina Auerbach, CEO and President of Thrive by Five Washington (Thrive), to partner in this work. This report and recommendations are a response to the Governor’s June 2009 request.

These recommendations address both the Governor’s directive “to develop a broad proposal about what early learning opportunities should be available to every child and their families,” and the pressing need to close the preparation gap among Washington children.

Through the Governor’s Washington Learns initiative, the Kids Matter needs assessment and outcome mapping, and the Early Learning Advisory Council efforts to create an Early Learning Plan, we have studied: best practices, multi-disciplinary research, and policy recommendations. We have surveyed and interviewed parents, caregivers, providers, teachers, and experts. We have identified next steps. And we now have a set of key recommendations for action in 2010 that are a first step in implementing a statewide Early Learning Plan. (The draft Early Learning Plan is included as Appendix A).

These proposed policy actions would begin building a phased-in, comprehensive early learning system that reinforces Washington’s role as a national, forward-thinking leader in supporting our state’s youngest learners. Our recommendations reflect and acknowledge the current fiscal situation in our state. We developed these recommendations with an eye on being strategic, cost-sensitive and bold.

TAKE ACTION

The right time. The right state. The right commitment.

Elected officials, policymakers, parents, families, caregivers, educators and communities have said it is time to take bold action and invest in our youngest learners. Now is the time. The science of early childhood and brain development, and the return on investment economics all point to the importance of policies and programs that make a significant difference in the lives of children and all of society.

The following recommendations seize this opportunity by focusing on the four goals from the Washington Learns November 2006 report specific to young children and their families.

- Parents will be their children’s first and best teachers, and will have the support they need to help their children “learn to learn” in their first years of life.
- Families will have access to high-quality, affordable child care and early learning programs staffed by providers and teachers who are adequately trained and compensated.
- All children will enter kindergarten healthy and emotionally, socially and cognitively ready to succeed in school and life.
- All students will transition from third grade with the ability to read well and do basic math, and with the ability to actively participate in a learning environment.

The following are our recommendations for the first steps in building a phased-in, comprehensive early learning system that builds on strategies developed by Washington Learns (the Early Learning Plan includes a table of Washington Learns early learning strategies and progress to date).



RECOMMENDATION I: ENHANCE VOLUNTARY EARLY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL CHILDREN FROM BIRTH TO GRADE THREE, AND WORK TO CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT AND PREPARATION GAPS.

PRIORITIZED INITIATIVES

Continue to phase-in all-day kindergarten as passed in HB2261

Create voluntary universal preschool program for 3 and 4-year-olds as part of basic education; phase-in to serve highest poverty communities first in coordination with phase-in of all-day kindergarten, serving at-risk 4-year-olds first and then at-risk 3-year-olds next; implement universal pre-kindergarten through a mixed-delivery system—through a variety of settings—to draw on the strengths of diverse families, communities, and service providers.

As interim steps, we recommend:

- Continue the state's prekindergarten program for low-income families (ECEAP)
- Allow and encourage ECEAP contractors to form mixed-income classrooms by accepting children funded by other sources including parent-paid tuition, on a space-available basis, provided this does not reduce the level of services or performance standards related to ECEAP children.

Promote support for early language and literacy development and reading success in school for children birth through 3rd grade that are culturally and linguistically relevant

Promote early numeracy and math success in school for children birth through 3rd grade that are culturally and linguistically relevant

Promote funding for existing birth through age 3 programs that includes a continuum of services; identify service gaps for infants and toddlers; and ensure that, as pre-k services are phased-in that a parallel funding stream for birth through age 3 services is developed in tandem:

- Develop a system of home visiting that includes evidence based programs and promising practices
- Amend state ITEIP policy to include serving infants and toddlers identified as at-risk of developmental delay, based upon established risk categories (i.e. infants and toddlers in foster care, premature infants and toddlers, etc.)
- Amend state Medicaid plan to include payment for the developmental therapy needed to support IDEA, Part C service provision for existing and new at-risk populations (i.e., infants and toddlers in foster care, premature infants and toddlers, etc.)

RECOMMENDATION 2: SUSTAIN INVESTMENT IN HEALTH SERVICES FOR CHILDREN.

PRIORITIZED INITIATIVES

Sustain investment in public health care programs for children so that we continue to work towards reaching the Governor's goal that "All children will have access to health coverage that provides effective care by 2010"

Support public awareness to enroll children in publically funded programs

Sustain investments in dental care and oral health programs for children

RECOMMENDATION 3: INVEST IN AND STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS WITH PARENTS, FAMILIES, SCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES.

PRIORITIZED INITIATIVES

Promote parenting education and information

Formally engage parents, families, caregivers, providers, schools and community coalitions in a collaborative governance mechanism that works at both the local and state levels to inform policy and systems development

Include proven initiatives to strengthen families into elements of the early learning system (e.g., QRIS)

Promote and support culturally and linguistically appropriate parenting education and information

RECOMMENDATION 4: INVEST IN AND STRENGTHEN SUPPORT FOR PROVIDERS & TEACHERS.

PRIORITIZED INITIATIVES

Support the Professional Development Consortium's planning for a comprehensive professional development system that focuses on achieving high-quality, and that promotes a qualified and well compensated early learning work force and integrates with the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

Continue to implement and strengthen Washington's QRIS model

RECOMMENDATION 5: DEVELOP AND INVEST IN THE EARLY LEARNING SYSTEM INFRASTRUCTURE TO PROMOTE, SUFFICIENTLY FUND, AND PROVIDE ACCOUNTABILITY TO ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS AND QUALITY FOR ALL.

PRIORITIZED INITIATIVES

Build on the Joint Resolution of DEL, OSPI and Thrive by Five and build on ELAC to develop a shared/collaborative governance model that works at both the state and community/regional level

Implement pilot kindergarten assessment process that is culturally- and linguistically-appropriate

Develop a P-20 longitudinal data system and data needed to close the preparation gap

Revise (based on constituent input) Benchmarks, and implement them so that they work in alignment with K-3 education; and inform the standards and curriculum used for professional development of early learning providers and K-3 teachers

Strengthen child care licensing

Move all activities related to child care subsidy/working connections child care program (e.g. authorizations, payment systems, and funding and policy) to DEL

Develop and implement a joint state policy that better integrates programs consistent with Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C with other early learning programs so that services and funding are better coordinated and more streamlined for children and families

Develop agreement among state agencies in coordinating and consolidating a system of home visiting, using report *Senate Bill 5830: Home Visiting Collaboration and Consolidation Report to the Washington State Legislature* as a starting point

FINANCING OPTIONS FOR THE FIVE INITIATIVES

In response to the power and possibilities of this plan, and recognizing the current financial limitations, the following items are presented as potential funding options.

- Use the **Early Learning Plan and Recommendations** to the Governor to set direction for how to invest CCDF/ARRA dollars for improving the quality of care for infants and toddlers.
- Examine current **CCDF Quality dollars** are used and then redeploy.
- Seek new state investment toward **QRIS roll-out** and implementation in communities.
- Seek new state investment for **professional development** offered in local communities that supports early literacy and numeracy.
- Reinstiate the **Reading Achievement Account** (dedicated sub-account of GF-S). An early reading initiative fund that helped to create DEL (called out specifically in the enabling legislation).
- Work closely with **Thrive by Five Washington** to implement a public private matching fund for early learning in a way that best supports the early learning plan and federal opportunities for Washington.
- Apply for **federal grant opportunities**.



BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

The vision and guiding principles for the draft Early Learning Plan and the 2010 recommendations for action (see ELP Appendix, p.25) focus on the direct services children and families need, as well as the significant system building efforts needed to enhance the quality of services. This means developing the infrastructure, resources, and leadership necessary to create a coordinated system of services and supports to address the many needs of young children and their families.

The purpose of the draft plan is to guide the work of everyone who cares for or works with young children, so that the adults in children's lives work collaboratively and toward unified goals. At the heart of this plan is the understanding that "school readiness and early success in school" encompasses a multipronged formula that ensures ready and successful:

- Children
- Parents, Families and Caregivers
- Early Learning Professionals
- Schools
- System and Communities



Success means: children flourishing and reaching their potential.

NEW UNDERSTANDINGS FROM RESEARCH

Brain development

A major report from the National Research Council in 2000, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods*, summarized current scientific understanding of early childhood development. Among the key findings are:

- Development of the brain is the most intense from birth to age 3.
- The brain builds itself in response to the child's experiences. Brain circuits that the child uses in daily life are strengthened. Those that the child doesn't use fade away.
- The nurturing a child receives and responsive relationships with parents and caregivers help to build the child's brain structure. Good parent-child relationships are a crucial foundation for the child's learning, behavior and health.
- A child who experiences extreme poverty, abuse, chronic neglect, severe maternal depression, substance abuse or family violence will be in a state of toxic stress that disrupts brain growth.
- Brain circuits stabilize with age. It is possible to build connections and to adapt later, but it is more difficult and expensive.

Return on investment

Research shows that high-quality early childhood development programs, when combined with access to health care and preventive services, can prepare children for success in school and life.ⁱⁱⁱ Advocates and policymakers frequently quote an exceptional return on investments (ROI) in early learning programs. Various studies show returns of \$3 to \$17 for every dollar spent.

These are based on three specific, well-funded, high-quality intensive programs that address preschool education, parent involvement and support, health, and attention to transitions and connections with early elementary. We cannot expect the same returns on all funds spent on young children. In 2006, The Committee for Economic Development released Ellen Galinsky's study *The Benefits of High-Quality Early Childhood Education Programs: What Makes the Difference?*^v where she examined the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project, the Carolina Abecedarian Project and Chicago's Child-Parent Centers (CPC), and interviewed the principal investigators from those projects, to determine what they did to achieve such lasting impacts. The program similarities among these three ROI programs reflect many of the programs elements of our state-funded Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and the federally funded Head Start program. Similarities also exist within the conditions for state-funded full-day kindergarten in Washington, which requires funded districts to implement a program that builds strong connections with families and early learning providers and programs.

Risk factors

Researchers have also identified the factors that put young children's well-being and learning at risk (e.g. poverty or low-income; disparities because of race, ethnicity, or language; education level of their parents; having under- or unemployed parents; living in a single-parent household; low birth-weight; inadequate medical, dental and vision care; food insecurity; environmental pollutants; and family relations and families stress).^v Researchers have found that having two or more of these risk factors blocks a child's path to success. Children with several risk factors are less likely to be ready for kindergarten than their peers. Those who do poorly in school are more likely to need to repeat classes, need special education, drop out of school, become teen parents, and get into trouble with the law. As adults, drop-outs have trouble making a living wage, and are at risk of poverty and homelessness.^{vi}

Minding the Gap—Equity and Diversity^{vii}

If the goal of a high-quality early learning system is to prepare all children to be ready for and successful in school, then it is critical that such a system address the needs of low-income families, and those of color. The United States is becoming more diverse, and young children are leading the way. Although the ultimate goal of public policy should be to improve the readiness and early success in school for *all* children, attempting to raise the bar for the neediest students should also be its goal. By focusing on the socio-economic, racial and ethnic gaps in readiness and early success in school, we can simultaneously highlight policies that will most likely raise the bar for all students.

Building an early learning system that meets the needs of all children will require explicit attention to a number of current gaps that exist—by income, race/ethnicity, language, and culture—both in the child outcomes and opportunities, and system capacity and response:

- Preparation and early success in school gap;
- Participation gap in formal services and school (particularly health services; preschool and other formal care arrangements; absenteeism in school);
- Cultural awareness and competency gap (particularly for teachers and providers serving children with different cultural and language backgrounds than their own);
- A work force diversity gap (teachers and providers and within professional institutions training and accrediting the work force); and

- A stakeholder planning and decision-making gap (particularly in recognizing the expertise of those whose background and experience may not represent the policymakers' but may reflect those of the children and families for whom policies are being delivered).

Closing the preparation gap

There are ability gaps—cognitive and noncognitive—between the economically advantaged and disadvantaged. This gap opens up early in the lives of children. Many children arrive at kindergarten without the knowledge, skills and good health they need to succeed in school. In a one-time survey conducted in 2004, kindergarten teachers in Washington reported that less than half (44 percent) of children are ready when they enter kindergarten. More startling, they reported that among low-income children, only one out of four is ready on the first day of kindergarten (OSPI, 2005).

Starting school behind their peers sets children up for a lifetime of inequity—it reinforces the disparities that contributed to their lack of school readiness in the first place and contributes to a cycle of inequity.

What are the implications of this research for policy from birth through third grade? *The Disparities in Early Learning and Development: Lessons from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Birth Cohort (ECLS-B)* outlines key findings from their study on implications for policy and investments for young children. These implications are:

Start Early

Meaningful differences are being detected as early as 9 and 24 months; this speaks to the need to intervene early in children's lives to address the gaps in development. In particular, research suggests that interventions should be high-quality, comprehensive and continuous for children ages birth to 3 as well as ages 3 to 5.

Prioritize Children in Poverty and Low-Income Families

As income is the most prevalent risk factor at 9 and 24 months, children in low-income households should be the main targets of early interventions aimed at improving children's health and well-being.

Engage and Support Parents

Given that maternal education is also noted as a prevalent risk factor, early childhood interventions should include a parental education component. A promising avenue is to educate parents of infants and toddlers about issues related to early childhood development. In addition, interventions that support parents in their own educational attainment and/or income self-sufficiency are also pertinent.

Improve the Quality of Early Care Settings

Research indicates that (1) most infants and toddlers, especially those who are from low-income households, are cared for in home-based settings; and (2) high-quality early care and education has the potential to moderate the effects of demographic risk factors for young children. In particular, it is important to ensure a safe, supportive and stimulating environment for young children. Two promising ways to address the quality of early care environments would be to focus on curriculum development and professional development within both home-based and center-based settings that serve infants and toddlers.

Promote and support pre-k through third grade connections ^{viii}

Children have very different early care and education experiences before they arrive at school. While some have participated in private or federally or state-funded preschool, others are in licensed child care and most will at some time be cared for by family, friends or neighbors.

Regardless, most children have one thing in common when starting school. With few exceptions, there has been little or no connection between their early care and education setting and the school they will enter.

Research shows young children learn best when what they are learning has meaning or connection to who they are and builds on their prior learning and experience. The disconnect between early learning settings and the early elementary years makes transitions challenging for both children and teachers. Opportunities to build on prior learning take a back seat as children adjust to a new setting and teachers assess how each student approaches learning, and what they know and are able to do.

Research shows that third grade marks a critical turning point in children's education. Children who cannot read or do math on grade level by third grade are unlikely ever to achieve proficiency.^{ix} Ensuring children reach third grade with the foundational skills for long-term success in school requires that schools, families and early learning providers work together.



Promoting pre-kindergarten through third grade connections does not mean that the elementary school curriculum and instructional practices are pushed down into preschool programs, nor that 3- and 4-year-olds are moved out of community based early childhood education settings and into the public school system. Rather, effective pre-k through third grade connections combine the best of both the early childhood and K-12 education systems.

Comprehensive pre-kindergarten through third grade connections would:

- improve young children's access to high-quality pre-K programs,
- strengthen the capacity of elementary schools to sustain student learning gains in the early elementary school years, and
- integrate these two efforts so that all children receive a seamless, high-quality early learning experience that enables them to be proficient in reading and math, and develop the social and emotional skills that support academic success by the end of third grade.

All children and families deserve affordable, high-quality aligned early care and education opportunities. Research indicates that accessing these opportunities is especially important for families of color or families with low to moderate incomes.^x

Children cannot achieve these goals/outcomes alone. Families, communities, schools, early learning coalitions, public-private partnerships, stakeholders, the state, and all of those who care for and teach young children have pivotal roles to play in children's development and early learning.

FUTURE FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

Using available funds wisely in tight budget times

Parents, communities and policymakers are struggling with the issue of how to pay for early learning opportunities for children in Washington. Early learning supports and programs function in both the market economy and in a publicly subsidized sector.

Parents provide the largest source of revenue for the early care and education aspect of early learning. Child care often costs too little to achieve high quality, but it costs too much to be affordable for many parents. The average cost of full-time child care for one child is almost 20 percent of the average take-home pay.

Current government funding is largely from federal sources, not state or local. Federal investments in early learning are sometimes episodic or inconsistent, often leaving programs, policies and services to operate with unfunded mandates, in isolation, at cross purposes, or without enough resources to meet critical needs.

The creation of DEL and ELAC were important first steps in coordinating early learning. However, early learning programs and services (birth through third grade) currently are administered in at least five different state agencies, and numerous federal agencies. Systems and accountability for each funding source are “siloed,” resulting in fragmented early learning services. We need to create a mindset and infrastructure to align efforts and reduce fragmentation.

Reducing fragmentation will improve coordination and collaboration across agencies for state-wide planning. We can also work toward ensuring that money being spent on young children and their families is set in a strategic direction toward school readiness and early success in school, and children’s overall health and well-being. To enhance and expand benefits for children birth through third grade, we need to align funding and service delivery. Public agencies could create and use a unifying policy and investment framework.

Create an ‘outcomes orientation’ tied to financing^{xii}

An outcomes orientation focuses on results, and drives both funders and service providers to think more realistically about the connections between investments and outcomes. It clarifies how often the best results come from the effective implementation of a combination of several promising interventions that, in isolation, would have little effect.

So if the outcomes we are working toward require contributions (staffing, funding) from many agencies, organizations and stakeholders, we have to be willing to measure multiple contributions toward shared outcomes and indicators. Individual agencies will not be able to legitimately claim responsibility for changing life trajectories or community conditions.



A three-tiered approach^{siii}

In Washington, we are seeking to build an early learning system that ensures all children achieve their greatest potential. As a result of Washington’s limited resources, it is important to use a model that most effectively impacts the healthy development of children. The model below, from the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, reflects a science-based, three-tiered approach that significantly impacts school readiness and ensures healthy development. It is based primarily on evaluation research, with consideration of the biology of toxic stress (multiple risk factors) and brain architecture.^{iv}

DEL could establish program/initiative goals to support the three-tiered model. Once adopted, these program goals will serve as a framework in guiding future DEL funding, programs and partnerships.

TYPE OF PREVENTION INVESTMENT	DEFINITION
ALL, UNIVERSAL, PRIMARY, AND PROMOTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted to the general public or a whole population group that has not been identified on the basis of individual risk. <p><i>We do not equate universal financing with a uniform delivery system. A variety of financing mechanisms may be made available, with different families eligible for different ones. Families may use the financial support made available to them through a variety of financing mechanisms to purchase the types of services that best reflect their values, preferences, and their children’s learning styles and developmental needs.</i></p>
SOME, SELECTED, SECONDARY, AND PREVENTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted to individuals or a subgroup of the population who is at-risk or target individuals or organizations/programs who are doing exceptionally well (reward high-quality). • Broadly targeted interventions for children in poverty/low-income (e.g., income supports and early enrichment) to give all the chance to succeed.
FEW, INDICATED, TERTIARY, AND EARLY INTERVENTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted to high-risk individuals/families (e.g. children with disabilities, homeless; families involved with CPS; socio-economic and racial disparities). • Narrowly targeted, specialized services for children experiencing tolerable or toxic stress to prevent later problems.

Striking a balance among quality, continuity and quantity⁹

Finding a balance among quality, continuity and quantity in funding subsidies for child care programs is a struggle. Some seek to improve the quality of programming for at-risk children, even if the added costs limit the number of children who can enroll at existing funding levels. Others want to ensure children can be served throughout the year. Others want to add as many kids as possible, even if quality is not high.

DEL needs to engage with partners in leading the policy discussion about what the right balance is among quality, continuity and quantity. A certain minimum threshold of quality is absolutely essential, and funders, both public and private, should demand that a baseline of quality be outlined for programs to receive funding. Low-cost services that have little impact can be a waste of money. Responsible investments focus on effective programs that are staffed appropriately, implemented well, and improved continuously. Once all child care subsidy activities are moved to DEL, then we can begin to look at how we can achieve greater impact and outcomes for children.

Strategic approaches to optimizing existing public funds

While there is currently no overarching school readiness framework guiding cross-system and cross-sector early learning efforts, we do have a foundation and progress is being made. The Washington Learns report and Kids Matter Framework both call for a seamless system of early learning, and this past summer DEL, OSPI and Thrive signed the *Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution*, formalizing a relationship between these three significant cross-sector partners.

Additionally, the attached draft Early Learning Plan provides a vision for what our state hopes to achieve for young children and their families, and a vision for how to get there. The Early Learning Plan has the potential to align and develop shared purposes, goals, outcomes, and accountability across agencies, fund sources and programs.

Additional recommendations for optimizing existing public funds:

- Developing a governance authority focused on financing that sets the strategic direction funding, assess results and hold agencies and programs accountable;
- Developing financing standards;
- Developing a funding planning tool—for both public and private sector use—that can guide Washington in planning and acting toward a more effective use of funds toward a common mission;
- Redeploying funds, which involves shifting money in a set, strategic direction to improve school readiness and early success in school
- Working closely with Thrive to implement a public private matching fund for early learning in a way that best supports the early learning plan and maximizes federal funding opportunities for Washington
- Moving all activities related to child care subsidies (e.g. authorizations, payment systems, and funding and policy) to DEL.

- Creating a technical assistance network for agencies, communities and programs on how to braid, blend and orchestrate an optimized funding approach, such as:

Coordination—a community- and program-level strategy for using separate categorical streams together to support seamless services. This strategy is also often referred to as “braiding,” because separate public and private funding streams are wrapped together to support unified services.

Pooling—a strategy, most commonly used at the state and county levels, in which more flexible pots of funding are blended into one funding pool.

Decategorizing—another state-level strategy that is focused on making funding streams less “categorical” by removing, reducing, or aligning requirements and regulations. Funds from more than one program are “blended” into a unified funding stream. Interagency agreements to jointly administer (align eligibility requirements, program regulations and administrative requirement and procedures) or transfer responsibility of programs to promote coordination

- By linking multiple services and systems, including health, mental health, early care and education, and family support, state policies can have substantial impact on unequal access and treatment.^{vi}
- Support early childhood systems development in communities with concentrations of poor and minority families: direct resources for regional and local systems; offer incentives for community development; assess community risks and strengths/assets; and focus on achieving high-quality status
- Improving customer service to vulnerable populations. The absence of a profit motive does not mean that customer satisfaction is unimportant in the public and nonprofit world. Canadian researchers found that service satisfaction is a strong driver of citizen trust and confidence in public institutions. In addition, they documented a relationship between customer/client satisfactions and engaged public employees. The satisfaction of public sector customers/clients both improved employee engagement and was improved by it.

Potential revenue sources

The amount invested in early learning is miniscule in relation to that invested in the school or college-age years. New revenue sources would help invest in building a comprehensive state-wide early learning system. The attached draft Early Learning Plan outlines a list of potential revenue sources. At this time, we are not recommending or endorsing any specific potential sources.



New federal investment in early learning

"I'm issuing a challenge to our states: Develop a cutting-edge plan to raise the quality of your early learning programs; show us how you'll work to ensure that children are better prepared for success by the time they enter kindergarten. If you do, we will support you with an Early Learning Challenge Grant that . . . will reward quality and incentivize excellence, and make a down payment on the success of the next generation."

—President Barack Obama, March 10, 2009, remarks to U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

The Obama Administration, in partnership with Congress, will be providing federal grant opportunities to states eager to achieve high-quality in early learning, and to ensure affordable health care. For 2010, Washington will be applying for the following federal opportunities if and when they become available:

- Early Learning Challenge Fund (*up to \$10 billion spent over up to 10 years*)
- Head Start Funds for State Advisory Councils on Early Childhood Education and Care (*\$1.5 million over three years to Washington*)
- Health Care Reform: America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009 (*H.R. 3200*)
- Race to the Top (*\$4.35 billion*)
- State Data Systems Grants (*\$250 million*)
- Invest in Innovation (i-3) Fund (*\$650 million*)

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY: STATEWIDE & COMMUNITY EARLY LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS

What is the role of government for early learning in the 21st century?

Increasingly complex societies are forcing public officials to rethink and develop new governance models. In many ways, 21st-century challenges and the methods of addressing them are more numerous and complex than ever. One-size-fits-all solutions have given way to customized approaches as the complex problems of diverse and mobile populations increasingly defy simplistic solutions. Governments' core responsibilities no longer center on managing people and programs but on organizing resources—often belonging to others—to produce public value. This trend is referred to as "governing by network."¹¹

Roles of DEL, OSPI and Thrive—Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution

As announced this summer in the Early Learning Partnership Joint Resolution, DEL, OSPI and Thrive have committed to collaborate on behalf of all young children—birth through third grade—and their families in Washington. The primary areas of focus are:

- Improving safety and well-being of children in child care and education programs.
- Making parenting information and support readily available and ensuring materials reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of families throughout Washington.
- Developing and implementing a QRIS.
- Developing and implementing a kindergarten readiness assessment process.
- Phasing in enhanced early learning options (e.g., infant/toddler services, pre-k programs, full-day kindergarten)
- Continuing to build public-private partnerships.
- Exploring funding opportunities to promote creativity and advance early learning goals.
- Promoting early literacy programs and strategies.
- Reviewing and revising the *Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks*.
- Developing a statewide Early Learning Plan and implementation recommendations to the Governor

Roles and relationships between state and community planning and governance structures

Currently, the lion's share of funding for early learning programs and services (health, early intervention, child care, and pre-school) comes via federal and state funding streams. At the state level in Washington, we have DEL, Thrive, and OSPI as the beginnings of a formal governance structure to manage at least some part of an early learning system.

Nonprofits and communities can play a role in building and managing that system. In Washington, we have established two "high-impact" demonstration initiatives in White Center and East Yakima. In addition, regions and communities across the state have established local planning coalitions to focus attention on and build early learning systems in their communities, even apart from formal state authorization. At this point in time, both Thrive

and the Foundation for Early Learning are supporting these coalitions, and other nonprofit organizations.

Regional/local coalitions can often more effectively address the particular needs and issues of their communities than we at the state level. Communities differ in their racial, cultural, and language make-up, with young children leading the way in diversity. Developing culturally competent and congruent early learning systems is essential for success in a multicultural society. Community planning and governance helps to ensure that such issues are addressed in the variety of ways that they present themselves across the state. While state actions need to be culturally congruent, there is no “one size fits all” solution and effective early learning systems need to be contoured in this respect to the children and families they serve.



The appropriate respective roles and relationships between state and community planning and governance structures have not always been clearly articulated, however. In Washington, the next step is to strengthen statewide coordination to address the purpose, functions and benefits of state-community relationships; and the appropriate respective roles and relationships between state and community planning and governance structures.

As a next step, Washington can: 1) promote new, and recognize existing, community public-private collaborations/coalitions and how they can lead meaningful engagement; (2) connect to an existing or new communication network; 3) foster two-way learning between systemic community and state-level early childhood efforts; and 4) continue to fund the coalitions currently being supported by private funders in developing a network that allows communities to learn from each other, so that it builds on successful pre-k through third grade models and creates opportunities.

Together, we can work better and smarter to stretch our dollars, accelerate our momentum, and harness the strengths of existing community level public-private partnerships. This is essential for us to develop innovative solutions that increase coordination and improve planning affecting infrastructure, funding, and communication. Local entities should all be a part of an integrated approach to building an early learning system.



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APPENDIX K PUBLIC FEEDBACK ON DRAFT EARLY LEARNING PLAN (12/2009—6/2010): SUMMARY AND RESPONSES (07/2010)

I. TALLY OF FEEDBACK RECEIVED

The Draft Early Learning Plan (ELP) was released for public comment on December 1, 2009. The Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL) posted the ELP and an online survey on its Web site. Originally, feedback was due in March 2010, but that date was later extended to June 18, 2010. Feedback was accepted through the online survey, by e-mail, postal mail, fax and in person at presentations and meetings held across the state. There were responses from a total of 3,489 individuals and from 14 identifiable groups (see table below). One of the early learning coalitions held meetings and interviews with parents and providers, not only in English but also in Spanish, Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin, Somali and Vietnamese.

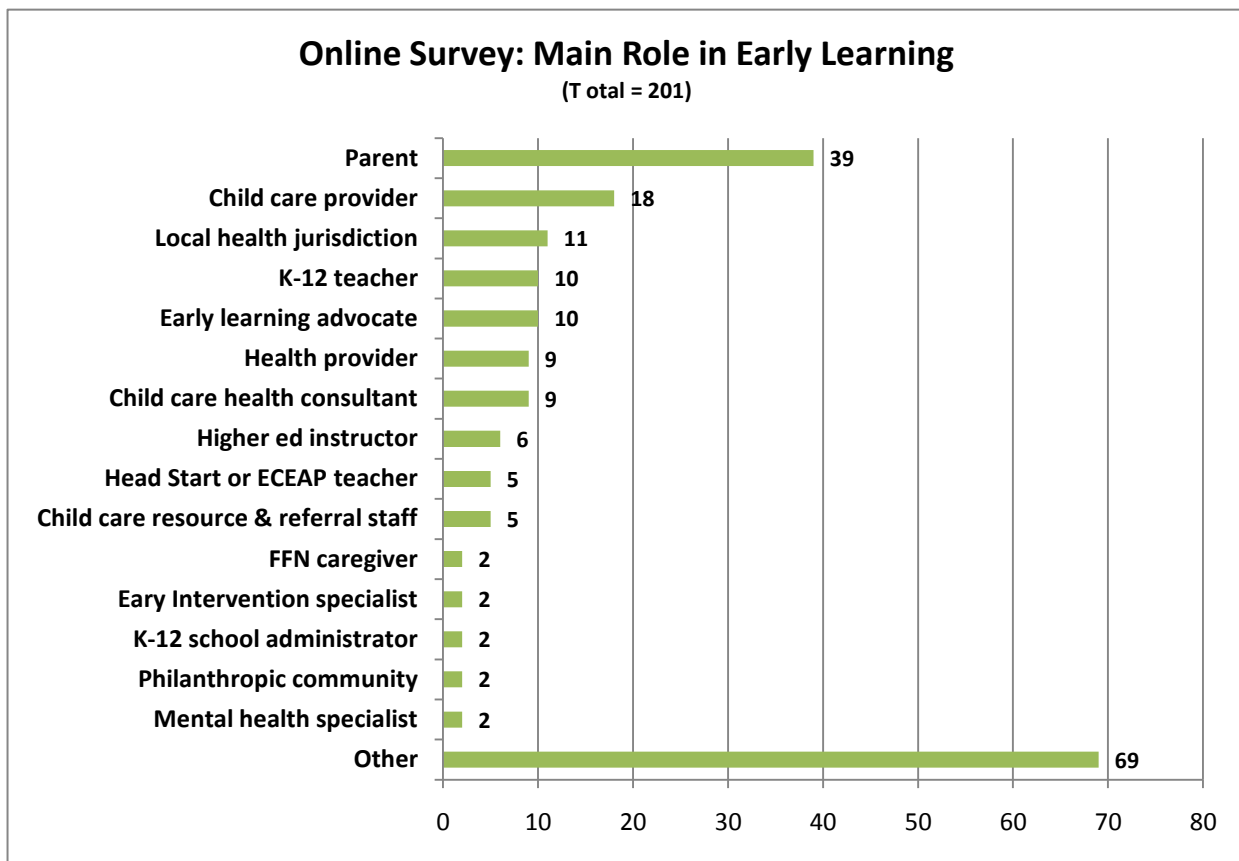
There were two versions of the online survey. The initial version, used from December 1, 2009, through April 23, 2010, consisted of 51 questions about the outcomes and strategies in each of the five “ready” areas of the plan (children, parents/families/caregivers, early learning professionals, schools, and system/communities). In late April, the survey was shortened and offered the opportunity to comment on either the whole plan or just on one section or strategy. This survey had four questions: (1) What do you like about the plan/strategy; or which parts seem relevant to you and your community? (2) Is there something you would like to see added or changed? (3) Are there ways you can see using this plan/strategy in your community or work? If yes, how? And (4) After reading the draft plan/strategy, what do you want more information about?

ELP Feedback Received, 12/09 – 7/10

Source	Date	# Individuals	# Groups
Online survey – first (long) version	12/1/09 – 4/23/10	79	
Online survey – second (four-question) version	4/23/10 – 6/18/10	123	
Eastside Human Services Forum letter	4/5/2010		1
Bette Hyde summary memo from group meetings/presentations	4/4/2010	2668	
SELF summary from town hall meeting on the ELP	4/28/2010	20	1
Washington Afterschool Network – comments from network meeting and discussions w/ key stakeholders, in track changes in Draft ELP	5/21/2010		1
OSPI Dream Team (e-mail from Bette Hyde)	6/2/2010	50	
FFN Statewide Advisory Team and King County FFN Advisory Group (memo)	5/19/2010	35	2
King County EL Coalition (summaries of 10 meetings held in seven languages)	6/17/2010	498	4
DSHS Kinship Workgroup (memo)	6/16/2010		1
Community Health Leadership Forum (of Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials) (memo)	6/17/2010		1
Comments letter from ECE professional Patty Shastany, and from EL directors and teachers in the CDA classes she teaches (# not given)	6/18/2010	1	1
United Way of Thurston County’s Success by Six Committee (letter)	6/18/2010	11	1
Comments on mental health strategies – Sheri Hill (e-mail)	6/18/2010	1	

Source	Date	# Individuals	# Groups
Comment on perinatal support/ed for fathers and couples as well as mothers, from Aly Frei (e-mail)	6/23/2010	1	
Provider Caucus (from Agda Burchard, notes from a meeting on 5/22)	6/25/2010		1
Comment on adding direct references to fathers, from B. Dorsey (e-mail)	6/10	1	
Comment by e-mail on Early Numeracy strategy	7/10	1	
Total		3,489	14

The online surveys also asked respondents for their primary role related to early learning. These responses were as follows:



II. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE FEEDBACK

The vast majority of the feedback was offered with a view to improving what was in the Draft ELP. A few groups and individuals reviewed major sections or even the entire plan, and provided detailed comments and suggestions. Because of the ELP's length, many individuals and groups commented more generally on what children and families need for early learning, rather than on the content in the ELP. In many cases, the strategies in the Draft ELP did address the needs and suggestions that respondents said they would like to see. It is hard to know if these points were not clear enough, or whether the respondents did not have the opportunity to read the ELP or the relevant section.

Some of the feedback can be addressed with additions to or changes in the language in the ELP. Others provided suggestions that would apply to implementation rather than to the ELP. In drafting the ELP, the Early Learning Partnership agencies, the ELP Steering Committee and the Work Groups decided to keep the strategies at a high enough level that those who implement them can make choices about how best to put the strategies into action, and to fit their local community. The Early Learning Partnership agencies will keep a list of implementation ideas to consider in the future. Finally, a few comments were on related needs that are outside the scope of the ELP, such as the need for free health care and changes in the foster care system.

III. RESPONDENTS' LIKES AND DISLIKES

The online surveys asked what people liked about the plan and what they were concerned about. The themes from these responses are as follows:

Liked:

- Comprehensive and well thought-out.
- Developed by a collaborative effort.
- Builds on existing programs and services, and is multidisciplinary.
- Addresses the preparation gap and cultural values.
- Based on recent research on child health and development.
- Starts with basic needs; envisions a continuum of services starting with prenatal needs and learning from birth through third grade; and provides a multitude of strategies.
- Addresses the whole child, and parent/family needs, along with early learning professionals and schools.
- Open to continued input and ongoing revision.

Expressed Concern About:

- Impact on current child care providers.
- Doesn't recognize or celebrate the great work that parents, families and early learning professionals are doing now.
- Statewide coordination is not realistic .
- Too long and difficult to follow.
- Needs a big picture overview.
- Disagreed with some basic premises of the plan, such as that early learning needs to be aligned, that the state has any role, that it's a problem if children are behind when they start kindergarten, and that early learning providers need education about child development.
- Didn't like anything at all about it (three people).

Some Liked, Others Disliked:

- Connection to Kids Matter.
- Using the whole child approach.
- Emphasizing infants and toddlers.
- Addressing social-emotional development.
- Addressing cognitive development.
- Including oral health as a strategy.
- Emphasizing the medical home.
- Focusing on family involvement.
- Supporting parenting education.
- Universal preschool.
- QRIS.
- Kindergarten readiness assessment.
- Full-day kindergarten.
- Data collection.

IV. FEEDBACK AND RESPONSES

The most often repeated comments were on the following topics:

- **Cultural competence** should be established in early learning programs at all age levels, practiced by early learning professionals, and attended to in relationships with families.
- **There is a need to build knowledge, skills and abilities** of parents, families, caregivers and early learning professionals.
- **Care options** should be available, affordable and high-quality.
- **Health, safety and nutrition** information and training should be provided for parents, caregivers, and early learning professionals, and applied in early learning programs and schools.
- **There is a need for collaboration** among everyone involved in early learning.

The following charts summarize feedback sent in by multiple respondents, and the response of the Early Learning Partnership agencies.

General Feedback:

Feedback	Response
<p>Culture and language – Emphasize improving cultural competence and understanding throughout the plan. Recognize institutional racism. Ensure staff reflects the language and culture of the children; hire bilingual/bicultural staff. Offer translated materials for children and for families. Provide for English language learners (ELL) and for English as a Second Language (ESL) education, and training for early learning professionals.</p>	<p>See Preparation Gap (Section I.F.). Also, most strategies for children and parents/families/ caregivers say that services will be culturally competent. Strategies #14 Access to Information and Resources, and #15 Parenting Learning Opportunities include providing information to families in their own language. Added serving ELL and ESL needs to Strategies #10 Early Literacy, #23 Professional Development and Compensation, and #27 Aligned PreK and K-3 Instructional and Programmatic Practices. Added to Strategy #23 a step to attract bilingual/ bicultural teachers.</p>
<p>Implementation, infrastructure, changes over time – Questions about how the plan will be implemented, and concerns that there be a strong infrastructure at a state level and about the plan's longevity.</p>	<p>See Section IV. D. Governance regarding infrastructure. Added Section VI. Implementation, which includes the intention to revise the plan periodically.</p>
<p>Quality assurance – Concerns about whether or how this section would apply to parents and FFN caregivers.</p>	<p>Several strategies make information and resources available to parents and FFN caregivers (see Strategies #14, 15, 16, 17). One of the quality</p>

Appendix K Public Feedback on Draft Early Learning Plan (12/1/09—6/18/10):
Summary and Responses (July 2010)

Feedback	Response
	assurance mechanisms, the Benchmarks (Strategy #31) will be distributed to parents and caregivers as well as to professionals.
Vision statement – Suggestions to revise the vision statement wording.	No change at this time. The vision statement was developed by the Early Learning Steering Committee and the six Work Groups, and received wide review in public comment. This topic could be addressed when the ELP is revised.
Guiding principles – Add principles on children’s health and safety, and on training opportunities for FFN caregivers.	See Outcome J regarding health and safety, and Outcome H regarding learning opportunities for caregivers.
All, some, few – Concerns that “all children” really means “all,” and questions on how the strategies were designated as all, some or few.	Clarified the all-some-few approach in Section IV.B. Scope of this Plan, and added “all children” and “all-some-few” to the Glossary.
“Ready” framework and partners – Questions on the ready children, ready parents, etc. framework of the plan, and about references to the partners or sponsors of the plan.	Added an explanation of the ready framework to IV.C. Explained early in the plan what the Early Learning Partnership Agreement is, made later references consistent, and added Early Learning Partnership to the Glossary.
Research background – Emphasize the importance of early brain development and of providing nurturing relationships to a child.	See Section I.C.2. New Understandings from Research.
Fathers, caregivers and school-age providers – Address fathers, kinship caregivers, FFN caregivers, and school-age care/program providers. Provide pre- and postnatal services and parenting education to fathers and families, as well as mothers; same w/ mood disorder. Expand the existing statewide FFN Initiative through the State CCR&R Network.	Added the definitions of “parents,” “caregivers” and “early learning professionals” at the beginning of the plan, at the start of Section V. Outcomes and Strategies, and in the Glossary. Added a note that caregiver/provider terms have been used in different ways in the past, but this plan aims to be cross-disciplinary. Most strategies involving parents say “parents, families and caregivers.” Changed most references to “pregnant women” to “expectant parents.” Changed Strategy #19 Maternal Mood Disorder to Postpartum Mood Disorder and noted a study on new fathers. Strategy #17 FFN Care addresses the FFN Initiative.
Length of document - Concerns about the length and complexity of the plan.	The Early Learning Partnership is providing a separate plan overview document for wide distribution. The plan itself is a reference source.
Clarifications, additional examples – Suggestions for rewording some outcomes, wording clarifications, and additions and updates to examples, resources and references.	Accepted most of these suggestions.

Feedback about the Strategies for Ready Children:

Feedback	Response
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Appendix K Public Feedback on Draft Early Learning Plan (12/1/09—6/18/10):
Summary and Reponses (July 2010)

Feedback	Response
Nutrition – Improve nutrition in all early learning settings and provide nutrition education for families, caregivers and early learning professionals.	See Strategy #1 Nutrition in Pregnancy and Early Childhood. Added nutrition to Strategy #14 Access to Information and Resources (for families and caregivers).
Health care – Emphasize the medical home model of health care, and partnership/cooperation between educators and health care providers, and between parents/families and health care providers. Ensure good quality and affordable health care for all; health insurance. Address immunizations. Provide public health consultation for early learning professionals.	Strategy #2 recommends that care be coordinated through a medical home, and addresses health insurance and actions to get more children covered. Added immunizations as an example of preventive care. See Strategy also #25 Health/Mental Health/Social Emotional Consultation in Early Learning Settings.
Health and safety – Health & safety should be a primary issue, including ensuring the health and safety of early learning settings, and providing health literacy to parents, families and caregivers. Address the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study.	Outcome J. and Strategies #22 Licensing, #24 QRIS, and #25 Health Consultation in Early Learning Settings address health and safety in child care. Strategies #1 Nutrition in Pregnancy and Early Childhood, #2 Insurance and Medical Home, and #14 Access to Information and Resources address health and safety information for families and caregivers. Strategies #8 Access to Mental Health Services – Access to Care Standards, #9 Access to Mental Health Services – Assessment, Diagnosis and Treatment, and #30 Compassionate Schools – Reducing Effects of Complex Trauma all refer to the ACE study.
Developmental screening, special needs – Start developmental screening earlier. Identify at-risk children. Provide adequate supports and access to services for special needs, and training and support for families and early learning professionals.	Strategy #6 Developmental Screening makes screening available from birth. Outcome R and Strategies #6, #7 Add At-Risk Children to Early Intervention Services, #9 Access to Mental Health Services – Assessment, Diagnosis and Treatment, #17 Support FFN Care, #23 Comprehensive Professional Development and Compensation System, and #25 Health Consultation in Early Learning Settings all address special needs services and training.
Home visits – Expand home visitation services, especially to serve high-risk families.	See Strategy #5 Home Visiting.
Attachment, social-emotional development – Add strategies that strengthen attachment, nurturing caregiving and environmental stimulation in a child’s first three years. Emphasize social-emotional development.	See Outcome H and Strategies #5 Home Visiting; #16 Social-Emotional Learning – Parents, Caregivers, Early Learning Professionals; #18 Strong Families; #19 Postpartum Mood Disorder; and #26 Social-Emotional Learning – Children.
Early literacy – Emphasize the importance of family literacy activities. Mention Even Start.	See Strategy #10 Early Literacy.
Affordable and available early learning programs – Make high-quality early learning programs available to all. Affordable or free child care.	See Strategies #12 Enhanced ECEAP, #13 Voluntary, Universal Prekindergarten, #29 Full-Day Kindergarten, and #33 Child Care Subsidies.

Appendix K Public Feedback on Draft Early Learning Plan (12/1/09—6/18/10):
Summary and Responses (July 2010)

Feedback	Response
School-age care – Expand before/after-school programs.	Not included at this time. There are many regulatory and licensing issues that need to be resolved.
Arts, play, sports – Ensure that children have experiences in the arts, creative expression, outdoor play, movement and sports.	These activities are part of high-quality early learning. Added to the definition of early learning in the Glossary. The ELP does not specify curriculum.

Feedback about Strategies for Ready Parents, Families and Caregivers:

Feedback	Response
Emphasize parent/family/caregiver services – Parents, FFN and kinship caregivers have the most influence on young children and provide the most care for diverse cultures, so ELP should provide the most resources in this area.	The ELP includes more strategies for parents, families and caregivers than it does for early learning professionals. This comment relates more to the priorities in implementation.
Building skills and knowledge – Affordable/free parenting classes and support. Provide education/ information for parents-to-be and teen parents; provide high school classes in child development. Training for FFN and kinship caregivers. Emphasize parent education programs and co-op preschools of community colleges. Normalize support for families by making it available to all families and caregivers. Make services available without regard to income. Promote/expand CHILD Profile mailings on developmental milestones. Provide links to life services programs for parents, such as adult basic education, ESL, job skills, and services for mental illness and substance abuse. Reach families with information about how to choose high-quality care and early learning, how to use the QRIS ratings. Provide support to parents who teach their children at home.	See Strategies #14 Access to Information and Resources, #15 Parenting Learning Opportunities and #20 Parent Leadership. Added the resources suggested, including Parent Trust, Community Café conversations, parent co-ops and community college parenting programs. See Strategy #18 Strong Families re other supportive services for families. Regarding choosing high-quality care, see Strategy # 23 QRIS. See Strategy #17 FFN Care re training for FFN. All parent strategies are for any parent, whether teaching children at home or using child care or preschool. Some of the specific suggestions, such as high school classes and expanding CHILD Profile, could be addressed in implementation.
Peer support – Provide support to help families share information and experiences. Partner with local organizations to provide Play & Learn groups and other opportunities for families to learn how to help their children learn. Expand family centers and parent information resource centers. Provide transportation to parent-child programs.	See Strategies #15 Parenting Learning Opportunities and #18 Strong Families. Some of the suggestions here are relevant to implementation.
Parent/family/caregiver involvement – Train parents, FFN and kinship caregivers as volunteers in early learning settings and classrooms. Promote parent/caregiver involvement in their child’s education at all	Added parent involvement to Strategy #27 Aligned Prekindergarten and K-3 Instructional and Programmatic Practices. Training classroom volunteers could be part of implementation for Strategies #12 Enhanced ECEAP, #13 Voluntary, Universal

Feedback	Response
levels.	Prekindergarten, and/or #29 Full-Day Kindergarten.
Parent voice – Enable and encourage parents/caregivers to have a voice in policies, program decisions and legislative decisions.	See Strategy #21 Parent Participation.

Feedback about Strategies for Ready Early Learning Professionals:

Feedback	Response
Quality of staff – Promote quality of teaching and care by providing accessible and affordable education, training and continuing ed. Address the role of higher education. Provide scholarships and incentives. Provide mentoring and coaches. Include home visiting and early intervention staff in education/training opportunities. Ensure that high-quality STARS-approved classes are available. Increase the training required of early learning staff beyond the current 20 hours.	Strategy #23 Professional Development and Compensation addresses many of these points. Added text about the role of higher education. Strategy #22 Child Care Licensing addresses pre-service curriculum.
Licensing process, adding preschools – Create positive working relationships between licensors and early learning professionals, including keeping in touch by e-mail or visits once or twice a year. Start licensing and create standards for preschools. Include preschools in QRIS.	See Strategy #22 Child Care Licensing. Regarding preschools, see Strategies #12 Enhanced ECEAP, #23 Professional Development and Compensation, and #24 QRIS.
Integrated professional development – Integrate professional development among those serving each age level.	See Strategy #23 Professional Development. Added integrated professional development for all professionals working with children birth through third grade.
Compensation, supplies and insurance – Provide adequate compensation. Use the Career/Wage ladder to provide a pathway and incentive to improvement that is tied to compensation. Would like help buying supplies and curriculum materials, and insurance.	See Strategy #23 Professional Development and Compensation. QRIS (Strategy #24) will help to create a career ladder. The ideas about supplies and insurance could be part of an implementation approach.
Family home providers – Provide for recruitment of family home child care providers, and provide training and mentoring support. Provide QRIS for family home care.	Family home providers are included in QRIS (Strategy #24). The ELP does not include provider recruitment specifically.
Collaboration with families – Improve/increase communication and collaboration between early learning professionals and parents/families/ caregivers. Bridge information gaps.	See Strategies #16 Social-Emotional Learning – Parents, Caregivers, Early Learning Professionals, and #27 Aligned Prekindergarten and K3 Instructional and Programmatic Practices.
Accountability and school readiness – Build a culturally and developmentally appropriate	See Section IV.D.2. Quality Assurance, and Strategy #28 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. Sharing the

Appendix K Public Feedback on Draft Early Learning Plan (12/1/09—6/18/10):
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Feedback	Response
accountability system to ensure that children are ready for school. Provide the kindergarten readiness assessment tool to preschool teachers.	readiness assessment tool could be an implementation step for Strategy #28.

Feedback about Strategies for Ready Schools:

Feedback	Response
Early learning principles – Strengthen the entire Ready Schools section by utilizing early learning principles in K-3. This includes supporting all learning styles and the whole child. Focus on the individual child, that child’s learning style and family culture.	Added a bullet to Strategy #27 Aligned Prekindergarten and K-3 Instructional and Programmatic Practices about infusing the whole child approach of early care into K-3 learning. Individualized instruction is included.
Alignment, continuity, transition – Use a team approach for transition, including family, caregiver, early care provider and school staff. Build continuity and consistency across all learning settings birth through third grade, but allow flexibility. Promote sharing of resources. Provide kindergarten guidelines to preschools.	Strategy #27 Aligned Prekindergarten and K-3 Instructional and Programmatic Practices includes using a team approach idea and building continuity. Sharing guidelines could be part of implementation.
Relationships – Encourage the development of relationships across silos—parents, caregivers, early learning professionals, schools and communities.	See Strategy #27 Aligned Prekindergarten and K-3 Instructional and Programmatic Practices.
Class size – Provide small class sizes for K-3, and use a classroom assistant or volunteer to provide additional staffing.	Added small class size to Strategy #27 Aligned Prekindergarten and K-3 Instructional and Programmatic Practices.
Kindergarten assessment – Include diverse parents, families, caregivers and providers in developing and piloting a culturally competent kindergarten assessment.	This is part of the implementation of Strategy #28 Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, which DEL, Thrive by Five Washington and OSPI are undertaking.

Feedback about Strategies for the Ready System and Communities:

Feedback	Response
Priority – Make children a priority in the community.	Added this idea to Strategy #35. Public Awareness and Commitment.
Subsidies – Subsidy rate needs to match the cost of providing care and education, equitable to the market rate. Adopt incentives for providers who accept subsidies and/or penalties for those who don't. Revise policies so children have continuity of care. Ensure that subsidy policies related to FFN caregivers are reasonable and appropriate.	Strategy #33 Child Care Subsidies goes a long way toward these goals.
Promising practices – Focus on promising and progressive practices rather than evidence-based practices.	Promising practices are included along with evidence-based programs in Outcome P, and underlie many of the strategies in the plan. It is important to include both.
Longitudinal data system – Involve diverse parents, families, caregivers and providers in developing the longitudinal data system.	This is part of the implementation of Strategy #36, which is underway.

V. HOW THE ELP MIGHT BE USED BY LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The short version of the online survey asked how respondents might see themselves using the ELP in their local community. A total of 41 respondents answered this question for the plan as a whole and 13 for an individual section/strategy they responded to. The following is a summary of their responses.

- **Direction and alignment:** Useful to help align local efforts. Increase collaboration. Help in connecting work for birth through 5 and the school district. Provide a unified direction. Guide work within local co-op preschool. Work with educational systems and communities to help them understand the need to support families and caregivers. Advocate for full-day kindergarten in my district and expand involvement in kindergarten transition.
- **Resource for information and for planning services:** ELP provides a better understanding of resources available to parents and providers. Basis for expanding outreach to parents not directly involved in center-based care. Use it to inform training programs for child care providers. Identify gaps in the community and priorities. Use it to expand a program's use and refer more children and families.
- **Evaluation:** ELP indicators could enable communities to compare their progress.
- **Advocacy and funding:** Build our annual policy agendas. Advocate for resources. Promote increased funding support to co-op preschools.

APPENDIX L SUMMARY OF PUBLIC FEEDBACK ON THE DEVELOPING EARLY LEARNING PLAN (FALL 2009)

A committed group of more than 120 stakeholders worked on creating a draft Washington State Early Learning Plan. This process included a public comment period between October 26 and November 11, 2009. During that time the public was asked to comment on a nine-page outline that included the draft Vision Statement, Guiding Principles, Outcome and Strategies. Feedback was received from various types of stakeholders, including: social workers, psychologists, parents, Head Start/ECEAP providers, school board members, educators, family service coordinators, health care providers, higher education representatives and business owners. Input came from across the state through a variety of mechanisms including, work group efforts, community meetings, key communicator online surveys, direct email, and the outcomes/strategies survey. Overall, we heard from approximately 1000 people who care about early learning in Washington state.²²

The following provides an informal summary of the comments received, and a brief explanation (*in italics*) of how/whether the December 1, 2009, Draft Early Learning Plan incorporated these comments.

K-3

- Schools need to be ready for all kids (**Response:** *Draft plan is based on concept of targeting strategies for “all, some and few” of the state’s children.*)
- Need to be more specific about strategies to eliminate the achievement gap in K-3 (**Response:** *Draft plan includes list of strategies to close preparation gap, and see descriptions for strategies #26, #27, and #28*)
- Transitions are critical – how will previous experiences be documented; and how will we ensure that the information moves with the child (**Response:** *See the description of strategy #26 regarding transitions, and strategy #32 regarding development of longitudinal data system*)
- Better involvement of the K-3 principals and administrators (**Response:** *See next comment*)
- Need for stronger K-3 involvement in the ELP♦ (**Response:** *Additional review and involvement can occur during four month comment period on draft plan*)
- Kindergarten Assessment (**Response:** *Strategy #27 included in the draft plan*)
- Benchmarks- what’s happening? (**Response:** *See strategy #30 for explanation*)
- Communication and common language needed for alignment (**Response:** *See strategy #34 regarding public awareness and plan Glossary*)
- It needs to be P-3 and we can build off existing systems (**Response:** *Plan includes several strategies to strengthen pre-kindergarten through 3rd grade programs – see strategies # 11 regarding Enhanced ECEAP, #12 regarding Voluntary Universal Pre-K, and strategies #25 - #29 regarding school readiness*)

²² Due to time limitations and resources, this is not a statistical analysis. Rather, it represents highlights of the feedback received.

♦ Indicates that comment was received multiple times

- Need stronger language around after-school care

Licensing

- Regulations ♦ *(Response: Strategy #21 will address licensing. It is being drafted by DEL and will be included in the final plan.)*
- Continue to build a QRIS system ♦ *(Response: See strategy #23)*
- Stronger incorporation of school-age care in QRIS
- Need for dispute resolution
- Concerns regarding cost effectiveness of QRIS

Professional Development

- It is critical ♦
- Staff salaries and benefits ♦ *(Response: See strategy #22 regarding professional development and compensation)*
- Better coordination and articulation of professional development trainings *(Response: See descriptions of strategies #22 and #23)*
- After-School providers need support
- Career and Wage Ladder – vital to centers in the program ♦ *(Response: See description of strategies #22 and #23)*
- Support QRIS *(Response: See strategy #23)*
- QRIS – incentives to promote quality improvements; tiered reimbursement *(Response: See description of strategy #23)*
- Finding qualified staff is challenging
- Diversity of children served reflected in providers serving them (special needs, cultural diversity, etc)
- Education levels equal higher pay *(Response: See descriptions of strategies #22 and #23)*
- Need to make stronger connections with higher education and meet providers where they are ♦ *(Response: See description of strategy #22)*

Subsidies

- Full rate reimbursement to providers ♦ *(Response: Strategy #21 will address subsidy. It is being drafted by DEL and will be included in the final plan.)*
- Leverage private dollars to increase the subsidy rate
- Parent education tied to subsidy

Parent Supports

- College parent education programs exist and could be expanded ♦ *(Response: See description of strategy #16)*
- Build on existing programs *(Response: All of the Parent, Family and Caregiver strategies (#13 - #20) describe the need to build on existing programs, services)*
- Paid Family Leave *(Response: See description of strategy #17)*
- Play and Learn groups *(Response: See description of strategy #4, regarding Infants and Toddlers, and strategy #17 regarding Strong Families)*
- Community Cafes and other models for parent engagement ♦ *(Response: See description of strategies #14, #16, #19)*

- Parent drop-in programs (**Response:** Strategy #13 regarding Access to Information and Resources, recommends greater use of telephone and web resources)
- Parent/community linkage and connections to supports at all levels (**Response:** See descriptions of strategies #13 - #20)
- Acknowledge the importance of connections made between schools and families thru after-school care
- Language needs to be broader to include supports for fathers ♦
- Parents need basic education/training in basic child development before they can be an engaged partners (requested in DEL parent survey) ♦ (**Response:** See description of strategies #13 - #15)
- Feels like government control over parenting ♦
- Supports for teens ♦

Funding

- We need to fund this plan ♦ (**Response:** See Financing description, regarding need for new funding and reducing fragmentation of current funding. See also Appendix regarding potential new sources of revenue)
- Needs to be affordable for all families
- Paid Family Leave
- Tiered reimbursement for high quality
- Funding support from K-12 since they reap all the benefits/savings from a comprehensive EL system (P-3 schools) (**Response:** See description of strategy #12, regarding Voluntary, Universal Prekindergarten)
- Supports are needed for middle-income families; middle class getting squeezed by child care costs ♦ (**Response:** See discussion of the cost of child care, and strategies #12, regarding Voluntary, Universal Prekindergarten, and #28 regarding full day kindergarten)
- Without funding, outcomes and strategies are meaningless
- Need to fund quality (QRIS) ♦
- Fund developmental screening ♦

Universal PreKindergarten/Full Day Kindergarten

- It needs to be a constitutional right (**Response:** See strategies #12 & #28)
- Need to speed up FDK implementation
- What will happen to providers if UPK is implemented? ♦
- We need to do both UPK and FDK ♦ (**Response:** See strategies #12 & #28)
- Make sure UPK includes both 3 – and 4 year olds ♦ (**Response:** See strategy #12)
- Who will implement UPK – OSPI?
- How will a mixed delivery system work? ♦
- Is FDK really worth the investment for ALL kids?
- We should not push kids into formal schooling, fear of losing childhood to academic push – stay away for institutionalization of children
- Too much focus on academics instead of whole-child development
- Expand eligibility of ECEAP (**Response:** See description of strategy #11)

- Negative impact on private providers ♦
- Spend money on at-risk programs like ECEAP vs. FDK for all kids (**Response:** See strategies #11, #12, and #28 regarding phasing of programs, focusing first on at-risk children and families)

Implementation/Infrastructure

- Pilots make system-building difficult
- More details needed on how implementation of the plan will happen ♦ (**Response:** See System Infrastructure section)
- How will local private and public partners implement? (**Response:** See System Infrastructure section regarding governance)
- How will we measure progress? ♦ (**Response:** See description of proposed system indicators in Evaluation section beginning on page 98)
- How will we hold people accountable? (**Response:** See System Infrastructure section regarding governance, and accountability)
- Build coordinating mechanism between lead and partner agencies and local coalitions (**Response:** See description of Connections and Partnerships)
- Data system is necessary (**Response:** See strategy #32 regarding P-20 Longitudinal Data System)
- Only implement what can be sustained
- Liked the shared governance between state and local
- Need to address lack of facilities ♦
- Zoning and city ordinance issues

Diversity

- Ensure plan is multi-cultural ♦ (**Response:** Numerous Outcomes and Strategies address the need for culturally competent, language-appropriate services and programs. Indicators recommendations suggest collection of data, where applicable, by race/ethnicity, and/or first language)
- Children with disabilities – early interventions, diagnostics testing earlier ♦ (**Response:** See outcome R and the description of strategy #6 regarding developmental screening)
- ELL – multiple languages among providers other than English ♦
- Rural communities
- Disparities/disproportionality (**Response:** See Preparation Gap section)
- Need support to serve at-risk children (**Response:** See strategies #11, #12, and #28 regarding phasing of programs, focusing first on at-risk children and families. See strategies listed in Table 6 for closing the preparation gap. Also see strategy #7 regarding Adding At-Risk Children to Early Intervention Services)
- Cultural competency not strong enough in the outcomes and strategies
- Defining success is not the same for all kids and cultures ♦
- Diversity of children served reflected in providers serving them (special needs, cultural diversity, etc)
- Guiding principles need to include Latino, African-American and Native children/families
- Translation is difficult for families trying to find/access services

- How does the plan address immigrants? ♦

Preparation Gap/Achievement Gap

- Need to be more specific about how we address the achievement gap and diversity ♦ *(Response: See descriptions of strategies listed in Table 6 for closing the preparation gap.)*
- It is not visible in the plan *(Response: See Need to Close the Preparation Gap and Prevent the Achievement Gap, and Minding the Gap – Equity and Diversity.)*
- Guiding principle around all/some/few needs clarification ♦ *(Response: A new principle statement was added)*
- Need to call out Latino, African-American and Native children if we are ever going to eliminate the achievement gap *(Response: Ethnic population and language data and risk profiles for Latino, African-American and Native children are described in the Current Picture section and in Preparation Gap section.)*

Comprehensive Services and System

- Infants/Toddlers care ♦ *(Response: See description of strategy #4 regarding Infants and Toddlers)*
- Need a bigger focus on health and safety ♦ *(Response: See descriptions of strategies #1, #2, #3, #8, #9 and #18)*
- Reach Out and Read should be specified ♦ *(Response: See description of strategy #10 regarding Early Literacy)*
- Full range of services to serve at-risk children *(Response: See strategies #11, #12, and #28 regarding phasing of programs, focusing first on at-risk children and families. See strategies listed in Tables 6 and 7 for closing the preparation gap. Also see strategy #7 regarding Adding At-Risk Children to Early Intervention Services)*
- Coordination of services despite funding source (e.g. military, Head Start, standards and monitoring, etc) ♦ *(Response: See System Infrastructure regarding need to reduce fragmentation of current system.)*
- Services/systems should be based on brain research *(Response: See New Understandings from Research.)*
- Include Strengthening Families as a guiding principles *(Response: Program is included in description of strategy #17 regarding Strong Families.)*
- Developmental screening should be the norm, not the exception *(Response: See strategy #6.)*
- Concern regarding lack of curriculum-specific content in plan (i.e. numeracy)
- Focus on all components (oral health, social/emotional, etc) ♦ *(Response: Strategies address the whole child, focusing on the healthy physical, mental, social emotional development of children. Also see strategy #3 on oral health.)*
- Strengthen nutrition and physical activity ♦ *(Response: See strategy #1 regarding Nutrition in Pregnancy and Early Childhood)*
- Continued support and expanded implementation of Reach Out and Read *(Response: See description of strategy #10 regarding Early Literacy)*
- Support FFN ♦ *(Response: See strategy #16 regarding Family, Friends and Neighbors Care)*

- Fear of losing “learning through play” ♦
- Need to include numeracy ♦

Transitions

- Focus on critical times such as transitions ♦ (**Response:** See description of strategy #26 regarding Aligned Prekindergarten and K-3 instructional and Programmatic Practices)
- Options and support for 5 year-olds and families who aren’t “ready” for Kindergarten
- K-Assessment – need to clarify purpose (**Response:** See description of strategy #27 regarding Kindergarten Assessment)
- Summer programs to protect gains
- Transitions needs to be its own outcome
- Schools need to be more welcoming to children and families

Glossary

- Need to define high quality ♦ (**Response:** Included in the Glossary)
- Success means different things in different cultures (**Response:** Included in the Glossary)
- Terms to describe parents/families as partners (**Response:** Included in the Glossary)
- Need to define all/some/few (**Response:** Included in the Glossary)
- Need to define preparation gap vs. achievement gap (**Response:** Included in the Glossary)
- Domains are at different levels – need to explain why that the unevenness is deliberate and reflects what already exists ♦
- Define evidence-based and research (**Response:** Included in the Glossary)
- Define world-class
- Define culturally responsive
- Define longitudinal data system (**Response:** Included in the Glossary)
- Define mixed delivery in terms of implementation
- Parents – label as parents and guardians (**Response:** Included in the Glossary)
- Define competencies under professional development
- Need to make plan more user-friendly – friendlier language

PARKING LOT

- Public awareness ♦ (**Response:** See strategy #34)
- Library involvement ♦ (**Response:** See description of strategy #10 regarding early literacy)
- Governance – how will it be mandated?
- Need to reach out to economic associations, Association Washington Business and major businesses throughout the state. We need a larger foundation of support to make this happen and be sustainable
- More child specific outcomes vs. system level outcomes

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September 2010