

The Early Start Act 2017 Annual Report



Washington State Department of
Early Learning



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Letter from the Director

The past year has been another one of successes, challenges, and continuous adaptation. I myself am part of that adaptation, as I took over the role of Director of the Department of Early Learning in August when the new Department of Children, Youth, and Families was formed. Throughout the changes DEL led this year, we've kept a laser-eyed focus on the outcomes mandated by the Early Start Act, bringing us closer to our goal of getting 90% of children ready for kindergarten by 2020, regardless of race or family income.

During this year we:

- 👉 Helped more than 1,500 licensed child care providers complete Early Achievers Level 2 activities, meaning that 97 percent of providers serving our most vulnerable families met this important milestone in quality improvement.
- 👉 Expanded ECEAP to provide high-quality preschool for 800 more children for the 2017-18 school year.
- 👉 Held a robust and productive enhanced negotiated rulemaking process for our Standards Alignment efforts.
- 👉 Released a report on Expanded Learning Opportunities, a pilot quality assessment and improvement process for programs serving school-age youth between the ages of 5-18 years.

This year marked the successful achievement of the second Early Start Act milestone for providers accepting subsidy. DEL also significantly streamlined Early Achievers participation by simplifying Level 2 requirements and creating a more efficient rating process. DEL is committed to doing more to make success in Early Achievers a realistic goal for all child care providers, regardless of their starting point or their resources.

In the 2016-2017 school year, after attending an ECEAP program for two years, 67 percent of 4-year-olds were ready for kindergarten, showing that readiness is improved by participation in ECEAP. In fall of 2017, DEL began developing capacity for an ECEAP Expansion Team to support the planning involved in meeting entitlement by the 2022-23 school year, ensuring this high-quality program is on target to serve all eligible children.

We've had three guiding principles that have carried us forward through this year:

- 👉 Early learning is a cornerstone for improving outcomes for children in Washington, and will continue to grow its influence and effect within the new Department of Children, Youth, and Families.
- 👉 We continue championing excellence in our dynamic field, one which thrives on adaptation and innovation.
- 👉 We all honor the critical relationships that keep this broad-based, mixed delivery field moving forward.

That last principle has been the key to each success we've had. Everyone from the child care providers of whom we are asking a lot of new things, to our trainers, coaches and support staff have pulled together and made incredible strides. For instance, Early Achievers participants received a combined 81,277 hours of coaching, technical assistance and consultation, offered in English, Spanish, Somali, and

Russian from our valued partners at Child Care Aware of Washington. School districts and private providers stepped up to provide the space and programming for the newest 800 ECEAP slots. Representatives from family home provider and child care centers, ECEAP providers, families, and licensors have spent more than 115 voluntary hours in negotiations of our aligned program standards. **Implementing the Early Start Act has truly been a community effort.**

This is the last year in which the Department of Early Learning will be submitting an Early Start Act Annual Report. By this time next year, all ESA efforts will be under the purview of the new Department of Children, Youth, and Families. We are excited for this opportunity and framework to apply our hard-earned lessons from ESA implementation to the task of developing an improved, integrated service delivery model for an even larger population of Washington’s children and families.

As we continue planning for the transition into DCYF, DEL staff will focus on:

- 👉 Continuing to provide high-quality programs and supports for Washington’s early learning community (keep doing what we do, and do it well);
- 👉 Working deliberately to identify, support and sustain our unique agency culture; and
- 👉 Supporting the collective transition efforts to ensure DCYF starts out strong.

While this transition represents meaningful change for DEL employees and the thousands of partners and clients in the early learning world, it does not signal a departure from the relentless focus on outcomes for children set forth in the Early Start Act. We look to the next year with anticipation and excitement for the innovation and opportunities for improvement it will bring.

Sincerely,



Heather Moss
Director

“To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often.”
— Winston S. Churchill

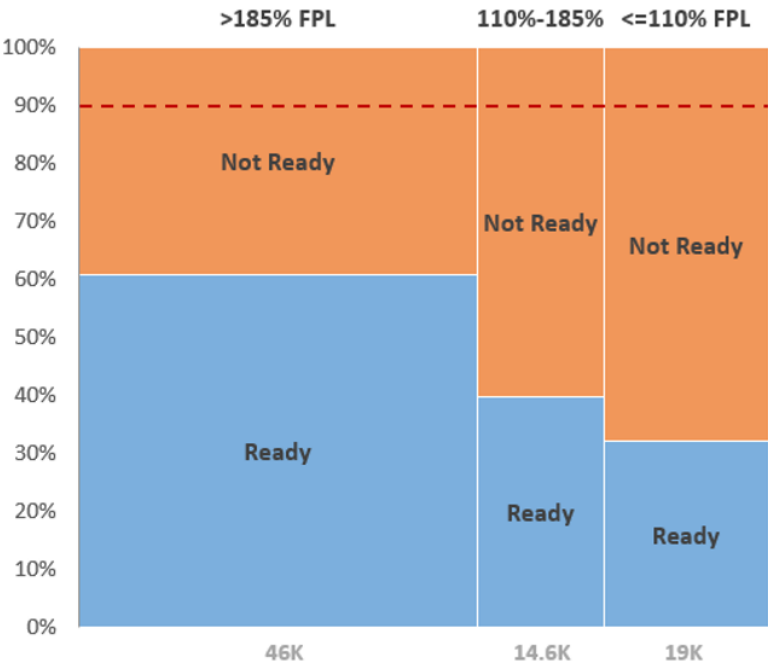
Executive Summary

The 2015 Early Start Act set a mandate for Washington to increase access to high-quality early learning opportunities in the state as a key element to improving outcomes for young children and strengthening kindergarten readiness statewide. Research clearly demonstrates that the quality of early learning environments is critical to supporting child growth and development, and that children need access to high-quality programming and stability of participation in these programs. The Early Start Act responded to this need by providing supports to help early learning providers reach a level of quality that promotes strong child outcomes, focusing on improving quality for children most at-risk for not being ready for kindergarten. The Early Start Act mandates levels of quality for licensed child care providers – child care centers and family child care homes – that accept children on child care subsidy or Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) funding.

The Early Start Act highlights several key goals:

- 👉 Continue to build a child-focused system that supports high-quality services that will improve child outcomes and prioritize early learning services for children who need them most;
- 👉 Build upon and strengthen the existing system by making sure it is accessible to all children, families, and providers in Washington;
- 👉 Use data to drive ongoing policy and programmatic decisions;
- 👉 Ensure services are seamless for families, particularly child care and preschool, and are working together to promote quality and efficiency; and
- 👉 Support the early learning workforce in their efforts to provide quality services to children and families through educational support and ongoing training.

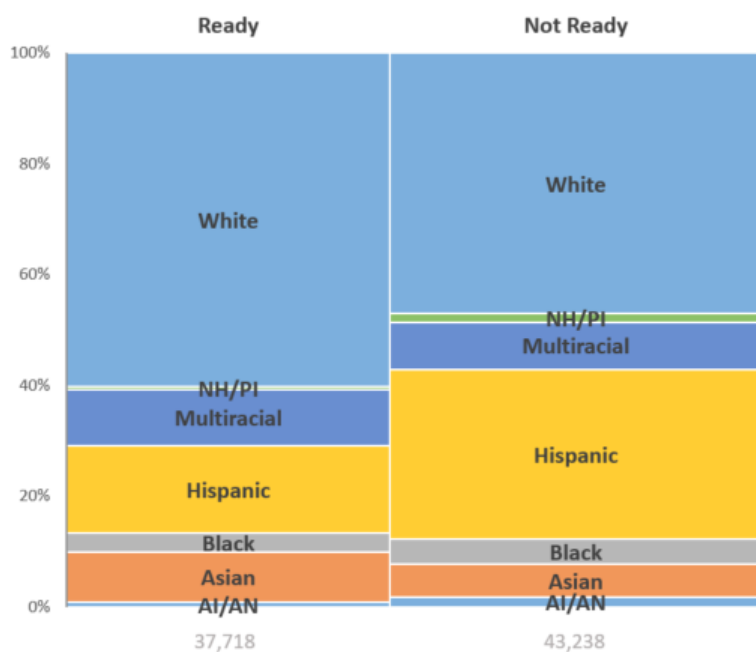
Washington’s Kindergarten Readiness



In fall 2016, only 47.4 percent of Washington’s children demonstrated readiness for kindergarten on all six domains of development. The data highlight that children from low-income households and children of color are less likely to arrive at kindergarten ready for success.

Entering kindergarteners in households >185% FPL demonstrate the highest rate of readiness at 61 percent, whereas we estimate that 40 percent of those from households with incomes 110%-185% FPL and 32 percent of those from households with incomes

<=110% FPL arrive at kindergarten ready for success. DEL estimates that without current ECEAP and Head Start preschool programs, only 28 percent of children in households <=110% FPL would arrive at kindergarten ready for success.



All racial groups are reported as non-Hispanic

Similarly, children of color entering Washington’s public kindergartens are under-represented among children who arrive ready for success and over-represented among children who are not yet ready for success. Only 40 percent of children who arrive ready for kindergarten on all of the six WaKIDS domains are children of color, while 53 percent of those not yet ready are children of color.


It is imperative that Washington’s early learning system is designed and implemented to best support all children and families to succeed.

How the Early Start Act Will Improve Outcomes

The Early Start Act is focused on improving the quality and scale of early learning programs in Washington in order to improve school readiness rates for children. In order to achieve these goals, the Early Start Act outlined key, achievable targets that will increase access to high-quality early learning opportunities to the children most likely to benefit:

- 👉 All licensed child care providers serving non-school-age children on subsidy will rate an Early Achievers level 3-5 by 2020;
- 👉 ECEAP will be available to all eligible children by the 2022-2023 school year;
- 👉 ECEAP providers will offer part-day, full-school-day, and extended-day models according to demand for services and availability of supply;
- 👉 DEL will develop a single set of standards across licensing and ECEAP using Early Achievers as the framework for quality;
- 👉 DEL will create assurances that early learning programs are available, supported, and appropriate for diverse communities across the state, and address barriers to participation;
- 👉 All existing ECEAP providers will rate an Early Achievers level 4-5 by March 2016 or begin remedial activities by September 2016 to rate a level 4¹; and

¹ This was accomplished in FY 2016.

 DEL will implement a 12-month authorization for Working Connections Child Care subsidy to promote stability and high quality for low-income children.

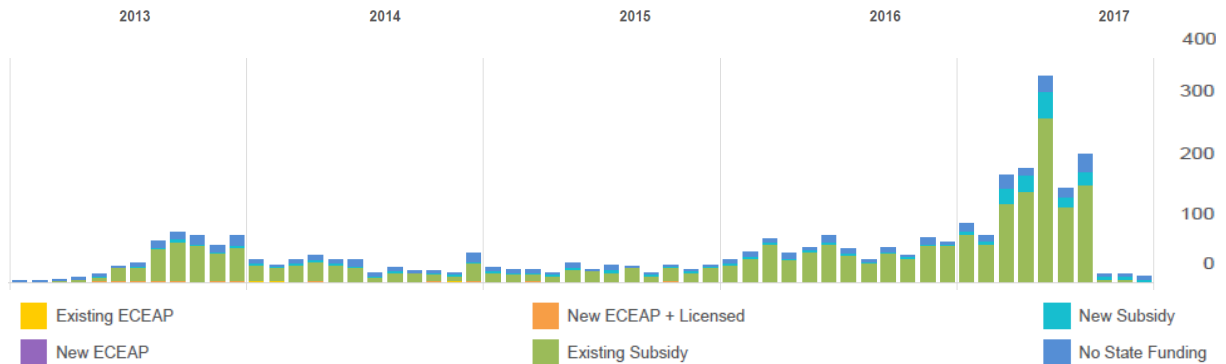
Progress to Date

By the August 1, 2017 Early Achievers Level 2 deadline, 97.3 percent of all required providers had met Level 2 requirements – those non-school-age providers taking subsidy or with ECEAP funding in the past year who had a required enrollment date no later than August 1, 2016. This includes 100 percent of all required ECEAP providers, 97.8 percent of all required childcare centers, and 97.1 percent of all required family child care homes. These providers cared for 99.0 percent of the over 37,000 children under age 5 who received subsidy care with a licensed provider in FY 2017.

Additionally, subsidy providers representing racial/ethnic/language diversity generally enrolled in Early Achievers by the August 1 deadline at rates higher than other providers, preserving important access for subsidy care in communities of color and non-English speaking communities. For example, among required family child care homes, 100 percent of Spanish-speaking, 98.7 percent of Somali-speaking, 100 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native, and 96.7 percent of Asian providers met their Early Achievers Level 2 requirements by August 1, 2017.

The figure below illustrates the trend of increasing provider’s completing Level 2 requirements leading up to the August 1 deadline. The highest monthly Level 2 completion rate yet occurred in the month ending May 15, 2017 when approximately 300 subsidy providers passed this threshold in one month.

Early Achievers Monthly Level 2 Completion Trend, 2013-2017



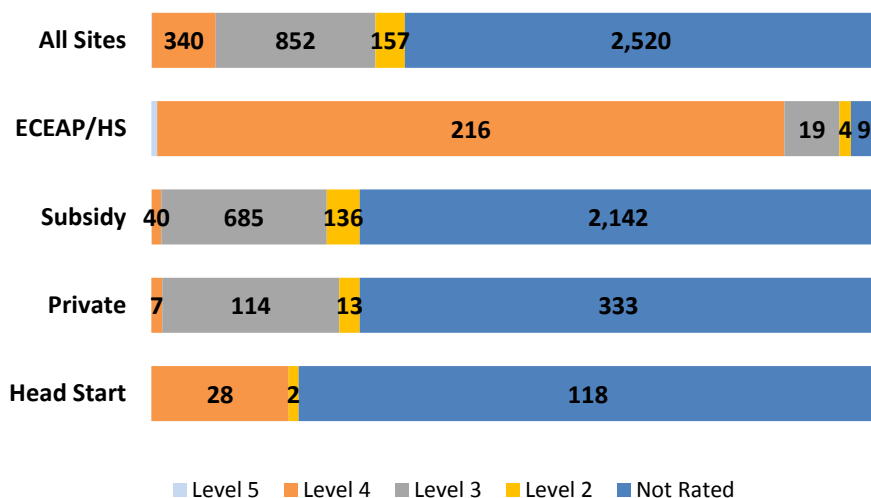
Data Source: EA Dashboard October 15, 2017

The success observed with the August 1 enrollment deadline means that in the short term Early Achievers implementation has not created new gaps in services. However, DEL acknowledges there are concerns in some communities about lack of adequate access for subsidy-eligible children that existed before the August 1 deadline. Planned ECEAP expansions, efforts to convert unlicensed care to licensed care, and encouragement of private providers to accept subsidy may help address part of this need. However, passage of the recent minimum wage initiative has raised concerns about the business viability of subsidy-dependent providers if subsidy reimbursements do not meet the increasing cost of

wages. Longer term, there is the need to better understand the larger issues of supply and demand for subsidy care across the state, and to more effectively match policy solutions with the specific needs.

As of December 2016, 2,787 of the 3,991 providers enrolled in Early Achievers, or 70.2 percent, are not yet rated. To date, 80.8 percent of ECEAP and subsidy providers that have been rated are “at quality” (level 4 or higher among ECEAP and level 3 or higher among child care centers and family child care homes), and 19.2 percent of these providers are not yet rated at quality and will require additional supports.

Early Achievers Ratings, by Provider Type



Data Source: EA Monitoring Report and QRIS Participation Report Sept. 2017

As of September 2017, there were an estimated 95,408 children 0-5 being served by early learning providers participating in Early Achievers. The majority of these children (64 percent) were being served in licensed child care centers, while 16 percent were in family child care homes, and 20 percent were in ECEAP or Head Start sites. Note for licensed centers and family child care homes these numbers represent the total number of children 0-5 that providers report are in their care, regardless of payment source.

Estimated Total 0-5 Year Olds at Early Achievers Sites	
Total Children Served	95,408
ECEAP	19,055
Family Child Care Homes	15,310
Child Care Centers	61,043

Data Source: Early Achievers Monitoring Report, Sept. 2017

Standards Alignment

In the 2015 Early Start Act, the legislature directed DEL to implement a single set of licensing standards for child care and ECEAP by November 1, 2016.

Aligned standards demonstrate the progression of quality that is at the heart of Washington's commitment to all of its children and families. They eliminate duplication, increase consistency, and reduce provider burden in Licensing, Early Achievers, and ECEAP. Quality begins with licensing, and all early learning sites will meet licensing standards as the foundation of quality. Standards alignment provides a clear and measurable progression from licensing to Early Achievers and ECEAP with minimal duplication and with similar language. This process will ensure that providers can see the progression of the standards from licensing through ECEAP and understand the expectations and next steps for participation in quality improvement.

Weighting standards is part of a new approach to enforcement that focuses on risk to children, ensuring that enforcement of these rules is both timely and consistent. It will also provide more information and clarity about the risk of each standard and the consequences for violations. Community engagement has been a priority of the standards alignment process. In the past year DEL has accomplished an initial community input process, developed an initial draft of aligned family home and center standards, solicited community feedback on the initial draft aligned standards, filed an initial rulemaking proposal for the aligned and weighted standards process, begun redrafting of the aligned standards, developed Early Achievers and ECEAP standards progression, and planned for the standards weighting process.

ECEAP

The Early Start Act confirms the legislature's intent to make ECEAP an entitlement by the 2020-2021 school year [Section 12(2)]. Since 2011, the legislature has increased ECEAP slots for children by 46 percent (3,667 slots). Based on the estimates of the Caseload Forecast Council, ECEAP will need 6,185 more slots by fall of 2022 to serve all eligible children who are likely to participate.

The Early Start Act requires all existing ECEAP providers to be rated at a level 4 or higher by March 1, 2016 [Section 9(4)(b)]. In order to support ECEAP contractors in meeting the March 1, 2016 deadline, DEL created an ECEAP rating cohort with the University of Washington's Cultivate Learning (formerly CQEL). All sites in the ECEAP cohort had data collection completed by February 29, 2016. As of September 2017, 319 ECEAP sites (on all pathways) were rated in Early Achievers and of those sites, 260 sites (81 percent) rated a level 4 or 5. There were 53 sites that rated a level 3. These sites were either on the licensed pathway or a part of the Hybrid Project. Sites that rated a level 3 and met the minimum thresholds in ERS and CLASS in their ECEAP classrooms are considered *certified* and operating at an Early Achievers level of quality. Sites that are rated a level 2, or a level 3 *without* a certified ECEAP classroom, are receiving additional coaching support and will have the opportunity to re-rate within six months of their finalized rating.

Key Accomplishments:

- Nearly all required subsidy providers successfully completed Early Achievers Level 2 by the August 1, 2017 Early Start Act deadline.
- Subsidy providers representing racial/ethnic/language diversity generally completed Early Achievers Level 2 by the August 1, 2017 deadline at rates comparable to other providers, preserving important access for subsidy care in communities of color and non-English speaking communities.
- Over 83 percent of rated ECEAP and subsidy providers are rated “at quality”.
- DEL and its partners have built substantial capacity at all levels to provide training, relationship-based professional development, and rating data collection throughout the state.
- DEL and its partners have made substantial improvement in using data to drive decision-making and improvements.
- DEL and its partners have made substantial progress in the standards alignment process.
- The Early Achievers Review Subcommittee (EARS) has made specific recommendations to DEL for improving access for children from diverse backgrounds to high quality programs.

Key Challenges:

- Building systems capacity to address barriers that remain for reaching level 3 among subsidy providers by the June 30, 2020 Early Start Act deadline.
- The high volume of newly-enrolled providers in Early Achievers that will need to be supported through initial rating.
- The high volume of providers that need to attain level 3 or higher within Early Start Act timeline.
- Ensuring that Early Achievers protocols work well for all providers, particularly those from diverse communities.
- DEL and partners must continue to ensure that supportive services are scalable and cost effective.
- More and different supports are needed for some providers. It is necessary to assess customized pathways so that adequate resources are available to individual participants.
- Provider motivation to participate in Early Achievers is unequal and is a significant factor in their overall success in undertaking quality improvements and attaining high rating levels.
- Champions for Early Achievers are needed to create a broad messaging strategy that can increase understanding of Early Achievers.
- Partners need to better understand longer-term issues of supply and demand for subsidy care across the state, and develop more effective solutions to meet the needs.

Early Achievers is moving a whole industry toward positive change in the belief that lasting, meaningful growth occurs when the system is individualized, inclusive, and built on a shared vision. DEL is committed to improving Early Achievers and will continue to review and adapt the system, within legislative requirements and available resources, as more information becomes available about what works to improve quality and improve child outcomes.

Early Start Act Reporting Requirements

On June 30, 2015, the Washington State legislature passed E2SHB 1491, the Early Start Act, which was signed into law by Governor Jay Inslee on July 6th, 2015. The legislature defines the intent of this bill to be as follows:

“(1) The legislature finds that quality early care and education builds the foundation for a child's success in school and in life. The legislature acknowledges that a quality framework is necessary for the early care and education system in Washington. The legislature recognizes that empirical evidence supports the conclusion that high quality programs consistently yield more positive outcomes for children, with the strongest positive impacts on the most vulnerable children. The legislature acknowledges that critical developmental windows exist in early childhood, and low quality child care has damaging effects for children. The legislature further understands that the proper dosage, duration of programming, and stability of care are critical to enhancing program quality and improving child outcomes. The legislature acknowledges that the early care and education system should strive to address the needs of Washington's culturally and linguistically diverse populations. The legislature understands that parental choice and provider diversity are guiding principles for early learning programs.

“(2) The legislature intends to prioritize the integration of child care and preschool in an effort to promote full day programming. The legislature further intends to reward quality and create incentives for providers to participate in a quality rating and improvement system that will also provide valuable information to parents regarding the quality of care available in their communities.”

A requirement of the Early Start Act is the development of an Annual Progress Report. Beginning December 15, 2015, and each December 15th thereafter, the Department of Early Learning, in collaboration with Child Care Aware of Washington and the Early Achievers Review Subcommittee of the Early Learning Advisory Council, shall submit, in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, a progress report to the Governor and the legislature regarding providers' progress in Early Achievers, Washington's quality rating and improvement system, progress in expanding the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), as well as other topics that are important in the implementation of the Early Start Act.






Acknowledgements

This report was produced by DEL’s Early Start Act Annual Report Advisory Team. The Early Achiever Review Subcommittee provided valuable recommendations, feedback and ongoing review of this report. Child Care Aware of Washington provided much of the data for this report, as did Third Sector Intelligence (3SI), and the University of Washington’s Center for Child Care Quality and Early Learning. All of the early learning providers who have participated in Early Achievers, including child care centers, family child care homes, early care and education settings, and ECEAP/Head Start providers have made this work possible.

These providers continue to demonstrate their commitment to high quality, provide feedback essential to improve programs, and offer invaluable support to children and families every day.

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

The 2015 Early Start Act set a mandate for Washington to increase access to high-quality early learning opportunities in the state as a key element to improving outcomes for young children and strengthening kindergarten readiness across the state. Research clearly demonstrates that the quality of early learning environments is critical to supporting child growth and development, and that children need access to high quality programming and stability of participation in these programs. The Early Start Act responded to this need by providing supports to help early learning providers reach a level of quality that promotes strong child outcomes, focusing on improving quality for children most at-risk for not being ready for kindergarten. The Early Start Act mandates levels of quality for licensed childcare providers – childcare centers and family child care homes – that accept children on child care subsidy or Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) funding. The Early Start Act highlights several key goals:

-  Continue to build a child-focused system that supports high-quality services that will improve child outcomes and prioritize early learning services for children who need them most;
-  Build upon and strengthen the existing system by making sure it is accessible to all children, families, and providers in Washington;
-  Use data to drive ongoing policy and programmatic decisions;
-  Ensure services are seamless for families, particularly child care and preschool, and are working together to promote high-quality, efficiently-managed services; and
-  Support the early learning workforce in their efforts to provide quality services to children and families through educational support and ongoing training.

Enactment of the Early Start Act was possible because of a decade-long focus on early learning in Washington. The ESA itself covers many areas of the early learning system, but does not address the impact that birth-to-three services and other family supports have on a child’s success. Accordingly, in the first year of the ESA’s implementation, the Department of Early Learning put forth an ambitious goal of getting 90 percent of children ready for kindergarten, with race/ethnicity and family income no longer predictors of readiness. This goal is a unifying direction for the entire early learning system, leveraging the other services and outcomes that DEL supports to accomplish the ESA’s targets and strategies.

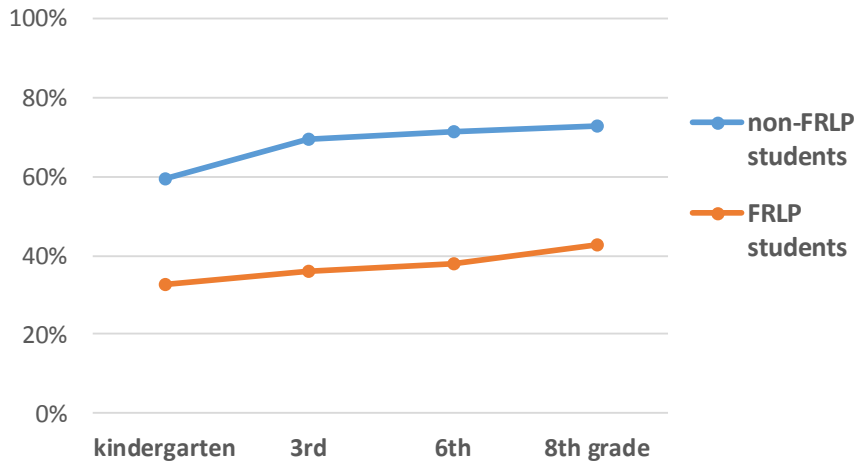
Why Kindergarten Readiness is Important

School readiness, or ensuring that children enter kindergarten with the cognitive and non-cognitive skills and supports necessary for school success, is a key goal of the Early Start Act. Supporting school-readiness goals begins at birth and includes ensuring that the right mix of services are available to support the healthy growth and development of all children, with a focus on the children most at-risk for not being ready for success. Research demonstrates that the skills children develop prior to entering the school system have a large impact on their future educational experiences. School readiness has effects beyond the first few months of kindergarten; children with higher levels of school readiness at age five are generally more successful in grade school, are less likely to drop out of high school, and earn more as adults, even after adjusting for differences in family background.² Children entering school without the prerequisite skills are unlikely to catch up with their peers over time. In fact, the reverse is true, and children entering kindergarten with lower skill levels of school readiness generally “do not

² J.B. Issacs, 2012, “Starting School at a Disadvantage: The School Readiness of Poor Children,” Brookings Institute.

progress at the same rate as their more advantaged peers, so achievement gaps tend to widen over time.”³ This type of persistent gap is illustrated in Figure 1 showing opportunity and achievement gaps among Washington students from kindergarten entry through eighth grade. The gap between Washington children from low-income households (those eligible for the free/reduced lunch program) and those from higher-income households is evident at kindergarten entry and persists.

Figure 1. Washington Opportunity Gap by Household Income Group, 2016



*Data source: OSPI WaKIDS and ELA SBA data from 2016-2017 school year Report Card website
FRLP-Free and Reduced Lunch Program*

How Washington Assesses Kindergarten Readiness

Since 2011, Washington has used WaKIDS (Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills) to support the transition process from early learning to kindergarten. A joint effort between DEL, OSPI, and Thrive Washington, WaKIDS has three components:

1. The **Family Connection** is an opportunity for families to build a relationship with the kindergarten teacher and share valuable information about their child. Teachers can do this through a home visit or a one-on-one meeting with children and families in their classroom. The Legislature allows school districts to use up to three days at the beginning of the school for the family connection component of WaKIDS.
2. Using a **Whole Child Assessment** made up of a subset of objectives from Teaching Strategies GOLD®, the WaKIDS observational assessment gathers information on a child’s skills, abilities, and areas for growth at kindergarten entry. When compiled, it provides data on all the Essential Domains of School Readiness of entering kindergartners allowing teachers to use what they learn about students’ entering strengths to individualize student learning. OSPI compiles this school readiness data and reports it on the OSPI Report Card and Washington’s P-20W Longitudinal Data System at the Office of Financial Management.
3. The **Early Learning Collaboration** is an opportunity for early learning professionals and kindergarten teachers to come together and engage in shared professional development, develop common goals

³ RAND, 2005, Children at Risk: Consequences for School Readiness and Beyond”.

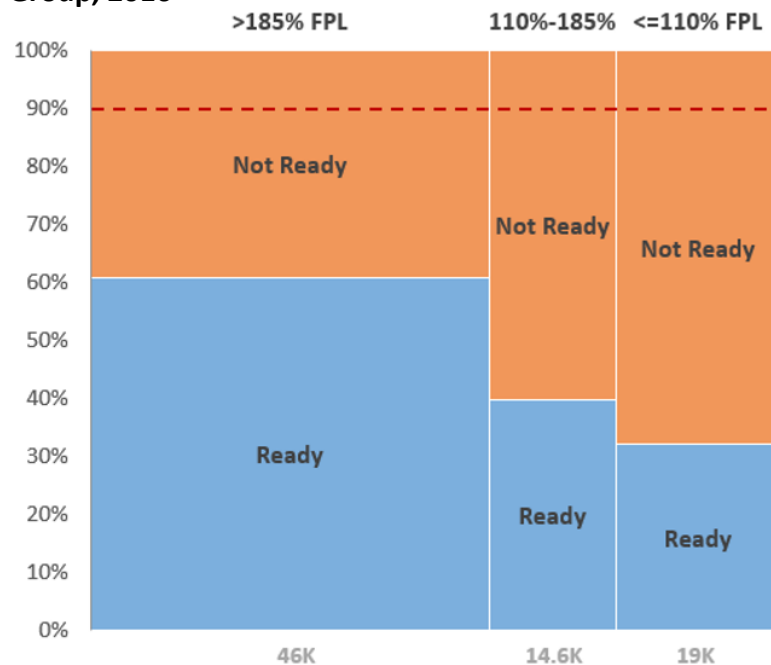
and expectations about school readiness, and analyze regional data including WaKIDS, GOLD®, and Early Achievers to inform practice and improve future school readiness.

In the 2016-2017 school year, 76,466 entering kindergarteners in Washington participated in the WaKIDS whole-child assessment, approximately 94 percent of the state’s entering kindergarteners. WaKIDS implementation is aligned with the roll out of full day kindergarten, and WaKIDS is expected to reach all entering kindergarteners in Washington by the 2017-18 school year. The WaKIDS assessment includes six domains (Cognitive Development, Language, Literacy, Math, Physical Development, and Social-Emotional Development), and teachers assess children on the extent to which they demonstrate characteristics of entering kindergarteners on each of the six domains. DEL counts entering kindergarteners as “ready for kindergarten” if they demonstrate readiness on all six of the six domains assessed.

As with other educational outcomes, kindergarten readiness is not equally distributed throughout the population of Washington’s entering kindergarteners – children from lower-income households are less likely to demonstrate readiness than are children from higher-income households. To help guide agency-wide work toward the 90 percent kindergarten readiness goal, DEL has used available data about WaKIDS assessments in the 2016-2017 school year to estimate kindergarten readiness by household income groupings for the entire class of entering kindergarteners. These groupings are chosen based on DEL’s programming – ECEAP primarily serves children in households <=110% Federal Poverty Level (FPL), and subsidized childcare primarily serves children in households <=185% FPL.

Approximately 81,099 children entered public kindergartens throughout the state in 2016, and OSPI reports that 47.4 percent of children assessed on WaKIDS in 2016 demonstrated readiness on six of the six domains. As illustrated in Figure 2, entering kindergarteners in households >185% FPL demonstrate the highest rate of readiness at 61 percent, whereas 40 percent of those from households with incomes 110%-185% FPL and 32 percent of those from households with incomes <=110% FPL arrive at kindergarten ready for success. DEL estimates that without current ECEAP and Head Start preschool programs, only 28 percent of children in households <=110% FPL would arrive at kindergarten ready for success.

Figure 2. Kindergarten Readiness by Household Income Group, 2016

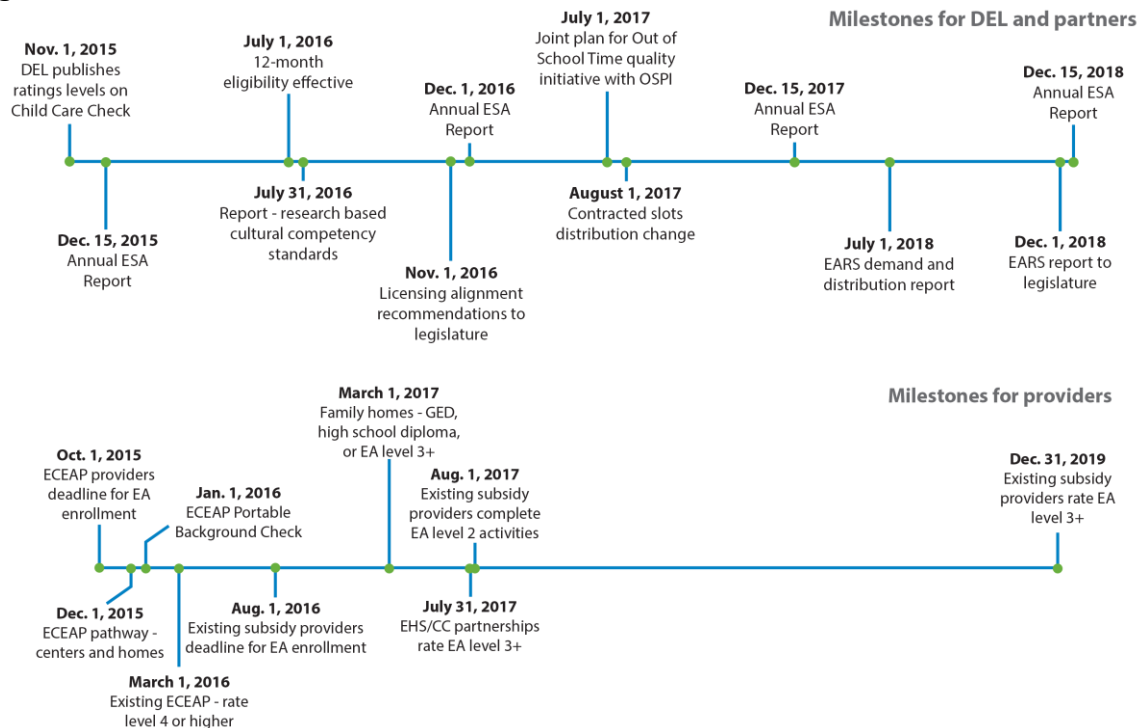


How the Early Start Act Will Improve Outcomes

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- 👋 All licensed child care providers serving non-school-age children on subsidy will rate an Early Achievers Level 3-5 by 2020;
- 👋 ECEAP will be available to all eligible children by the 2021-22 school year;
- 👋 ECEAP providers will offer part-day, full-school-day, and extended-day models according to demand for services and availability of supply;
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- 👋 DEL will create assurances that early learning programs are available, supported, and appropriate for diverse communities across the state, and address barriers to participation;
- 👋 All existing ECEAP providers will rate an Early Achievers Level 4-5 by March 2016 or begin remedial activities by September 2016 to rate a Level 4⁴; and
- 👋 DEL will implement a 12-month authorization for Working Connections Child Care subsidy to promote stability and high quality for low-income children.³

Figure 3. ESA Timeline as of June 28, 2015



Dates from Second Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 1491

⁴ This was accomplished in FY 2016.

Overview of this Report

This report measures the progress of the implementation of the Early Start Act against baseline data on early learning programs in Washington supported by DEL. This report also highlights several areas that need to be enhanced, including future data collection, to strengthen the impact of the Early Start Act and ensure that early learning programs are effective in achieving the goals of the Early Start Act. Finally, there are new or enhanced components to this year's report, reflecting the importance of non-subsidy providers to the overall system of quality in the state as well as a beginning analysis of provider turnover not previously published.

This report is not a comprehensive review of all of the early learning programs and child services in Washington. Complementary programs such as birth-three programs and programs for children with special needs are not examined in this report but they are also essential to supporting Washington's school readiness goals.

CHAPTER 2: Overview, Data Snapshot, and Current Implementation Status

What is Early Achievers?

Early Achievers, Washington’s quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), was designed to help early learning providers offer high quality care that supports each child’s learning and development. Early Achievers is designed to:

- Provide resources including coaching, training, and incentives to early learning providers to support their efforts to enhance quality;
- Help parents and caregivers find high-quality child care and early learning programs that fit their needs by providing information about facility quality; and
- Ensure that children have high-quality early learning experiences that help them develop the skills they need to be successful in school and life.



Early Achievers is designed to support early learning providers on a path to continuous quality improvement. Attaining a high level of quality is a long-term commitment. Rather than crossing a finish line, it is embracing a philosophy of continuing to learn and grow over time. Providers at all levels in Early Achievers are assisted in this effort by:

- Learning about strengths and areas to grow using multiple sources of information;
- Creating a plan with goals, timelines, and responsibilities;
- Testing and implementing solutions; and
- Evaluating the results and revising the plan.

Early Achievers launched on July 1, 2012 with a staggered roll-out to regions across the state. Some regions began implementing Early Achievers on July 1, 2012, while other regions did not begin implementation until July 1, 2013. The Early Start Act requires participation in Early Achievers by providers that accept children on subsidy who are not yet in school. For the purposes of this report, a subsidy provider is defined as an active child care center, family child care home, or Head Start/ECEAP site within Washington that has received a Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) or Seasonal Child Care (SCC) subsidy payment for at least one child (excluding school age) within the last 12-month period. Homeless Child Care subsidy is a temporary assistance program that will be included in the subsidy provider definition in future reports when the necessary supporting data systems are in place.

Washington’s 2015 Early Start Act established the expectations that all licensed early learning providers serving children on state subsidy (excluding school-age only providers) would enroll in Early Achievers by August 1,

2016 and subsequently engage in activities to improve child care quality. In addition, the Early Start Act established the expectation that by August 1, 2017 all required providers enrolled by August 1, 2016 would complete Level 2 pre-rating activities. These pre-rating activities include entering facility information into MERIT, working with a coach to receive individualized support and participating in the Professional Training Series. The Professional Training Series is made up of six required courses, available free of charge to Early Achievers contacts. Three are available online (Introduction to the Environmental Rating Scale and CLASS, Washington Early Learning Guidelines, and Washington's Core Competencies for Early Childhood Education Professionals) and three are available in person (Introduction to Cultural Competence, Strengthening Families, and School Readiness). Participants can request an in-person version of any of the online classes.

School-age-only child care providers are currently excluded from the definition until Early Achievers introduces a pathway for participation designed for this facility type. The legislature approved a pilot to explore how the state can best support providers serving children before and after school with training and resources needed to encourage high-quality programming. The Expanded Learning Opportunity Quality Initiative (formerly known as the Out-of-School Time Quality Initiative) builds on the success and lessons learned from Early Achievers. Fifty programs from four counties (King, Pierce, Spokane, and Walla Walla) have been chosen to participate in a quality assessment and improvement process. Participants include licensed family homes and child care centers (who serve school-age children and families) already participating in Early Achievers; 21st Century Community Learning Centers; and other programs serving youth between the ages of 5-18 years.

The Department of Early Learning (DEL) and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) are working in partnership with School's Out Washington, Child Care Aware of Washington, and the University of Washington to provide training, coaching, and assessment using the best national research on promoting youth outcomes. The pilot is well underway. DEL and OSPI submitted a joint report to the Legislature in the fall of 2017 sharing preliminary data from the pilot as well as recommendations for the next phase of the work.⁵

August 1, 2017 Deadline

Washington's 2015 Early Start Act established the expectations that all licensed early learning providers serving children on state subsidy (excluding school-age only providers) would enroll in Early Achievers by August 1, 2016 and subsequently engage in activities to improve child care quality. In addition, the Early Start Act established the expectation that by August 1, 2017 all required providers enrolled by August 1, 2016 would complete Level 2 pre-rating activities. These pre-rating activities include entering facility information into MERIT, working with a coach to receive individualized support, and participating in the Professional Training Series. The Professional Training Series is made up of six required courses, available free of charge to Early Achievers contacts. Three are available online (Introduction to the Environmental Rating Scale and CLASS, Washington Early Learning Guidelines, and Washington's Core Competencies for Early Childhood Education Professionals) and three are available in person (Introduction to Cultural Competence, Strengthening Families, and School Readiness). Participants can request an in-person version of any of the online classes.

As of August 1, 2017 there were 3,960 child care centers, family child care homes, and ECEAP/Head Start providers participating in Early Achievers. This includes 979 child care centers taking subsidy in the past year, 2,071 family child care homes taking subsidy in the past year, 345 ECEAP/Head Start providers, and 563 private providers not taking subsidy in the past year. This represents an increase of 8 percent over the 3,669 providers enrolled in Early Achievers reported in the 2016 ESA Annual Report.

⁵ <https://del.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/QRIS/expanded-learning-opportunities-quality-initiative.pdf>

Child care providers in Washington represent the rich racial/ethnic and language diversity of the communities they serve. In the 2015 Early Start Act the Washington legislature articulated its commitment to maintaining culturally and linguistically diverse providers and instructed DEL to maximize and encourage participation in Early Achievers among diverse providers. Table 1 below details the share of required child care and family child care home providers (those that have taken subsidy in the past year for children not yet school age) who had completed their Early Achievers Level 2 deadline by the August 1, 2017.

**Table 1. August 1, 2017 Deadline
Cohort of Providers Required to Meet Level 2 by Aug 1, 2017**

	Child Care Centers		Family Child Care Homes	
	Number EA Enrolled	Percent EA Enrolled	Number EA Enrolled	Percent EA Enrolled
Total	895	97.8%	1,838	97.1%
Race/Ethnicity of Primary Contact				
American Indian/ Alaska Native	15	100.0%	13	100.0%
Asian	23	95.7%	46	97.8%
Black/African-American	54	100.0%	363	98.1%
Hispanic/Latino	74	98.6%	646	99.2%
Multiracial/Other	13	92.3%	70	97.1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	9	100.0%	9	100.0%
White	590	98.0%	548	94.2%
Unknown	117	95.7%	143	96.7%
Language of Primary Contact				
Amharic	---	---	7	100.0%
Arabic	---	---	8	100.0%
Cantonese	---	---	1	100.0%
English	785	97.8%	941	94.2%
French	---	---	3	100.0%
German	2	100.0%	---	---
Japanese	2	100.0%	---	---
Korean	4	100.0%	2	100.0%
Mandarin	2	100.0%	1	100.0%
Oromo	---	---	13	100.0%
Other	4	100.0%	24	100.0%
Punjabi	---	---	4	100.0%
Russian	1	100.0%	10	100.0%
Somali	1	100.0%	226	98.7%
Samoan	2	100.0%	---	---
Spanish	26	100.0%	574	100.0%
Tagalog	1	100.0%	4	100.0%
Ukrainian	---	---	2	100.0%
Vietnamese	---	---	9	100.0%
Unknown	65	95.4%	9	77.8%

All racial groups are reported as non-Hispanic

Data Source: MERIT Early Achievers Monitoring Report, Aug 3 2017; EA registered, level 2 deadline=8/1/2017, active participant, active license, existing subsidy timeline.

In the months leading up to the August 1, 2017 deadline specified in the Early Start Act for subsidy providers, DEL and its partners engaged in focused monitoring and outreach to identify and engage providers taking subsidy. Regular meetings with partners involved reviewing up-to-date provider enrollment and childcare authorization data, and included examining local geographic (county and zip code) and provider race/ethnicity and language data to determine potential challenges with specific local subpopulations of subsidy providers. On August 1 only 80 licensed subsidy providers who had provided subsidized care in the past year serving children less than age 5 had not yet completed their required Level 2 activities, representing a 97.1 percent level 2 completion rate among required subsidy providers by the deadline.

DEL acknowledges there are concerns in some communities about lack of adequate access for subsidy-eligible children. This 2017 report contains a new chapter (Chapter 9) devoted to examining the issue of supply for subsidized child care. Planned ECEAP expansions, efforts to convert unlicensed care to licensed care, and encouraging private providers to accept subsidy may help address part of this need. However, passage of the recent minimum wage initiative has raised concerns about the business viability of subsidy-dependent providers if subsidy reimbursements do not meet the increasing cost of wages. Longer term, there is the need to better understand the larger issues of supply and demand for subsidized care across the state, and to more effectively match policy solutions with the specific needs.

Rating Information

The Early Achievers Quality Standards provide Washington with a statewide framework for quality in care for children birth to school age. The Quality Standards focus on external evaluations of learning environment (using the Environmental Rating Scale – ERS tool) and adult-to-child interactions (using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System – CLASS tool). In addition, participants earn points for meeting criteria in a variety of standard areas including Child Outcomes, Curriculum and Staff Supports, Professional Development, and Family Engagement. These standard areas were modeled after and are aligned with ECEAP and Head Start performance standards.

Providers who have completed all of the level 2 requirements and have worked with their regional Child Care Aware of Washington Technical Assistance Specialist to gauge readiness can request a rating. Data collection is done by a data collection team at Cultivate Learning in the University of Washington’s College of Education.

The goal of Early Achievers is to support providers to attain a high level of quality, defined as attaining a rating of a level 3 or higher.



Levels 3 to 5 are based on points. Your facility rating is determined by the number of points you earn during your independent evaluation. Each assessed facility/family home child care must score at least a 2 on Instructional Support in the CLASS, a 3.5 on Emotional Support and Classroom Organization/Emotional and Behavioral Support in the CLASS and a 3.0 on the ERS to achieve a Level 3 to 5 rating. Facilities that do not meet these minimum thresholds will receive a Level 2 rating.

POINTS AWARDED FOR THESE AREAS:

- ← Child Outcomes
- ← Facility Curriculum & Learning Environment & Interactions
- ← Professional Development & Training
- ← Family Engagement & Partnership

Your overall points will determine your final rating. Degrees and credentials must be verified in MERIT in order to earn professional development points. The points are:

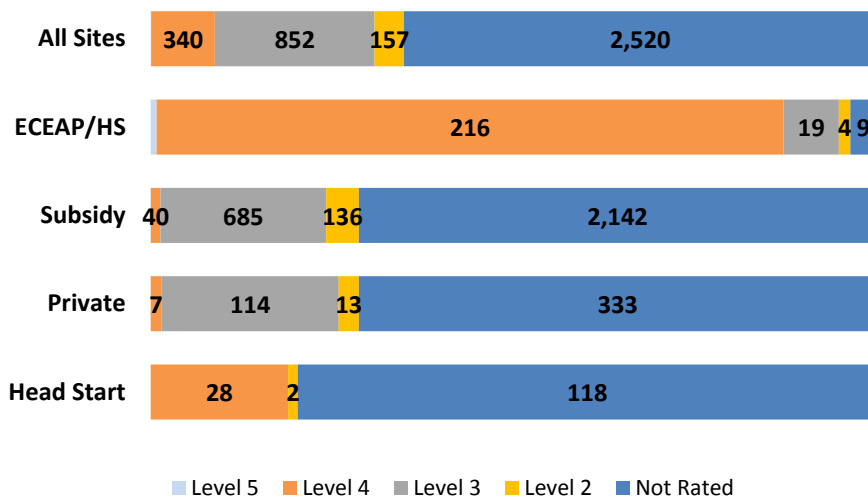
Child Outcomes	+10 points
Facility Curriculum and Learning Environment and Interactions (70 points total)	
Classroom/FCC Home Environment (CLASS/ERS)	+55 points
Curriculum, Learning and Assessment	+15 points
Professional Development and Training	+10 points
Family Engagement and Partnership	+10 points
Grand Total	100 points



Ratings by Provider Type

As illustrated in Figure 4 below, as of September 2017, 2,787 of the 3,991 providers enrolled in Early Achievers, or 65.1 percent, are not yet rated. To date 85.6 percent of ECEAP and subsidy providers that have been rated are “at quality” (level 4 or higher among ECEAP and level 3 or higher among child care centers and family child care homes), and 14.4 percent of these providers are not yet rated at quality and will require additional supports.

Figure 4. Early Achievers Ratings, by Provider Type



Data Source: EA Monitoring Report and QRIS Participation Report Sept 2017

Children Reached

As of September 2017, there were an estimated 95,408 children ages 0-5 being served by early learning providers participating in Early Achievers. The majority of these children (64 percent) were being served in licensed child care centers, while 16 percent were in family child care homes, and 20 percent were in ECEAP or Head Start sites. Note for licensed centers and family child care homes these numbers represent the total number of children ages 0-5 that providers report are in their care, regardless of payment source.

Table 2. Estimated Total 0-5 Year Olds at Early Achievers Sites	
Total Children Served	95,408
ECEAP	19,055
Family Child Care Homes	15,310
Child Care Centers	61,043

Data Source: Early Achievers Monitoring Report, Sept. 2017

In FY 2017, 43,176 children under age 5 received subsidized childcare. 63.6 percent of these children received care in licensed child care centers during the fiscal year, 27.7 percent received care in licensed family child care homes, and 19.3 percent participated in subsidized family, friend, and neighbor care.

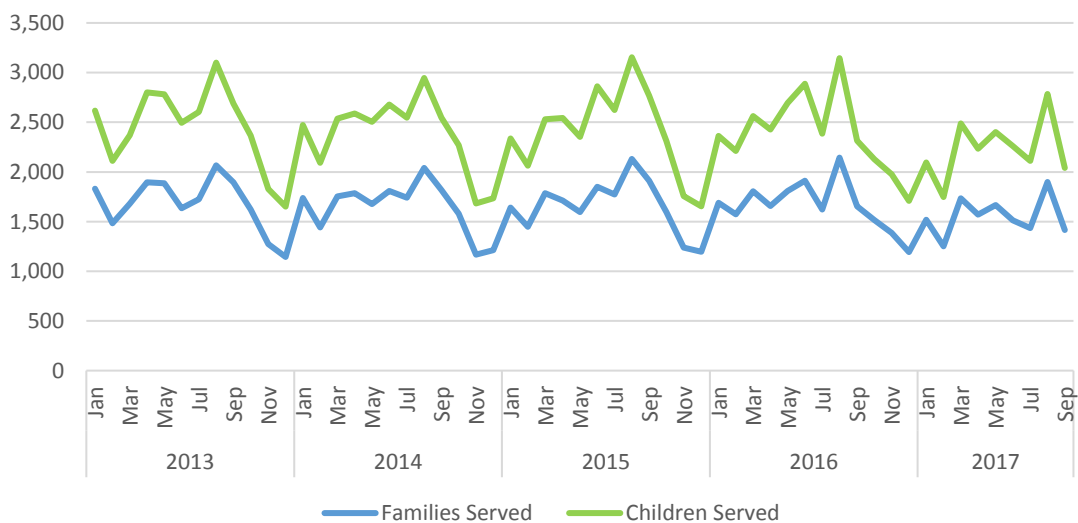
Some children participated in more than one type of care, so these percentages total more than 100 percent.

Of the 37,090 children under age 5 who received subsidized care with either a licensed child care center or family home during FY 2017, 97.5 percent were in the care of providers who completed their Level 2 Early Achievers deadline by the August 1, 2017 deadline.

Family Center and Referral Data

In 2017, the Child Care Aware of Washington Family Center (managed by Child Care Resources, a Child Care Aware of Washington agency) received more than 20,000 calls for information and referrals for child care. The Family Center provides consumer education materials to help families in their search for high-quality child care that matches their needs. This includes information about child development, Early Achievers and questions that families can ask when visiting different programs.

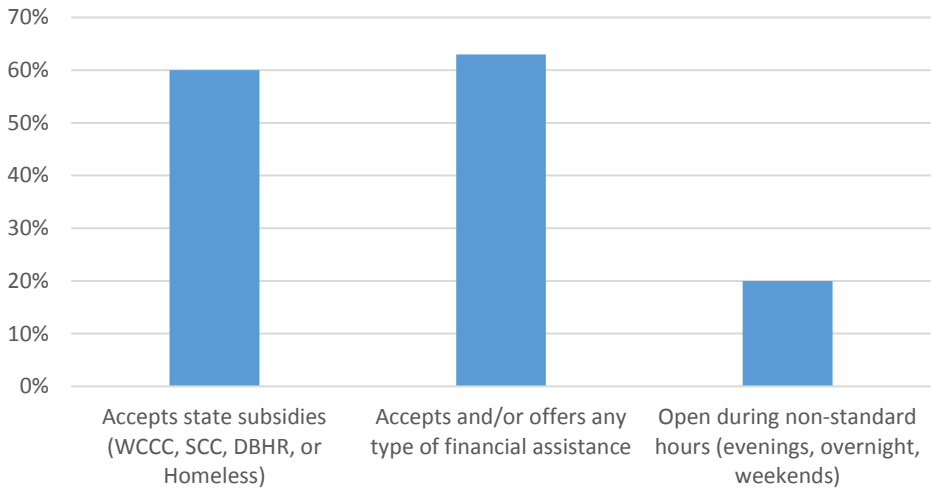
Figure 5. Families and Children Served by CCA Referrals, 2013-2017



Data Source: NACCRRAware, prepared by CCA of Washington

In FY 2017, more than half of the calls received were looking for child care that accepts children in state subsidy and/or offers financial assistance. In addition, 20 percent of the calls were seeking child care that is available during non-standard times, such as evenings and weekends.

Figure 6. Percentage of Calls Seeking Specific Providers, FY 2017



Data Source: NACCRRAware, prepared by CCA of Washington

The Family Center has dedicated English and Spanish language phone lines. In addition, the Family Center uses interpretation services that enable the resources to be accessed in nearly any language. In FY 2017, the Family Center was accessed by families speaking 24 languages other than English and Spanish – the most-accessed other languages being Somali, Russian, Amharic, Arabic, Tigrigna, Vietnamese, and Farsi. Overall 7.9 percent of the calls were from non-English speakers.

Key Accomplishments:

- ☑ Nearly all required subsidy providers successfully completed their Early Achievers Level 2 requirements by the August 1, 2017 Early Start Act deadline.
- ☑ Subsidy providers representing racial/ethnic/language diversity generally completed their Early Achievers Level 2 requirements by the August 1, 2017 deadline at rates higher than other providers, preserving important access for subsidy care in communities of color and non-English speaking communities.
- ☑ Over 85 percent of rated providers are rated “at quality.”
- ☑ DEL and its partners have built substantial capacity at all levels to provide training, relationship-based professional development, and rating data collection throughout the state.
- ☑ The historic joint communication collaborative effort by DEL, DSHS, Child Care Aware of Washington (CCA of WA), and SEIU Local 925 encouraging providers to complete their Level 2 requirements.

Key Challenges:

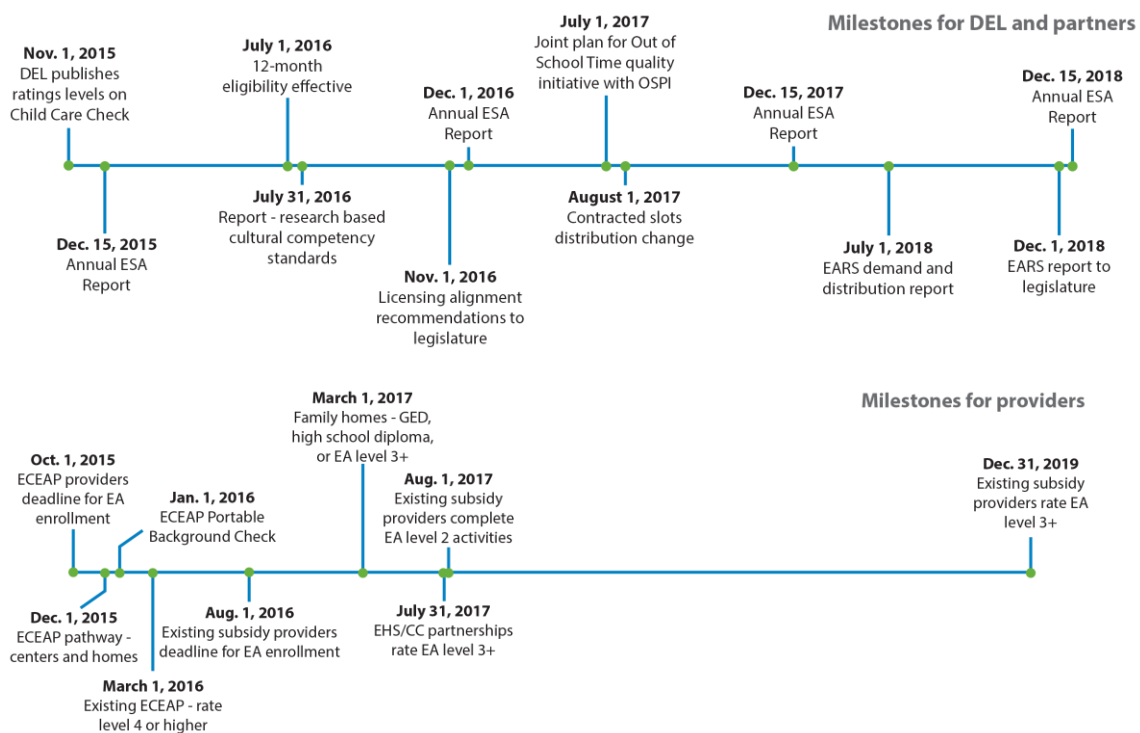
- ☐ The removal of unintended barriers for communities of color or rural communities in reaching level 3 requirements.
- ☐ Building systems capacity to address barriers that remain for reaching level 3 among subsidy providers by the June 30, 2020 Early Start Act deadline.

- ▣ Partners and policymakers need to better understand longer-term issues of supply and demand for subsidy care across the state, and develop more effective solutions to meet the needs (see further discussion of this issue in Chapter 9 of this report).

CHAPTER 3: Progress toward Meeting the Early Start Act Requirements

The Early Start Act created new requirements for early learning providers that accept state funding for Working Connections Child Care subsidy, Seasonal Child Care (referred to collectively in this report as “subsidy providers”), or ECEAP to participate in Early Achievers and to meet certain levels of quality within prescribed timeframes. The requirements for participation and quality attainment for these providers are outlined below:

Figure 7. ESA Timeline as of June 28, 2015



Dates from Second Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 1491

The Early Start Act requires that all child care centers, family child care homes, and ECEAP sites serving subsidy-eligible children not yet in school complete Level 2 requirements by August 1, 2017. As of August 1, 2017 there were 3,960 child care centers, family child care homes, and ECEAP/Head Start providers participating in Early Achievers. This includes 979 child care centers taking subsidy in the past year, 2,071 family child care homes taking subsidy in the past year, 345 ECEAP/Head Start providers, and 563 private providers not taking subsidy in the past year.

In the months and weeks leading up to the August 1 deadline, DEL and its partners worked to identify providers with open subsidy child care authorizations who had not yet completed their Level 2 requirements, communicated with those providers to address barriers to completion, and worked with families on subsidy to find alternatives. Of the licensed subsidy providers serving any subsidy-eligible

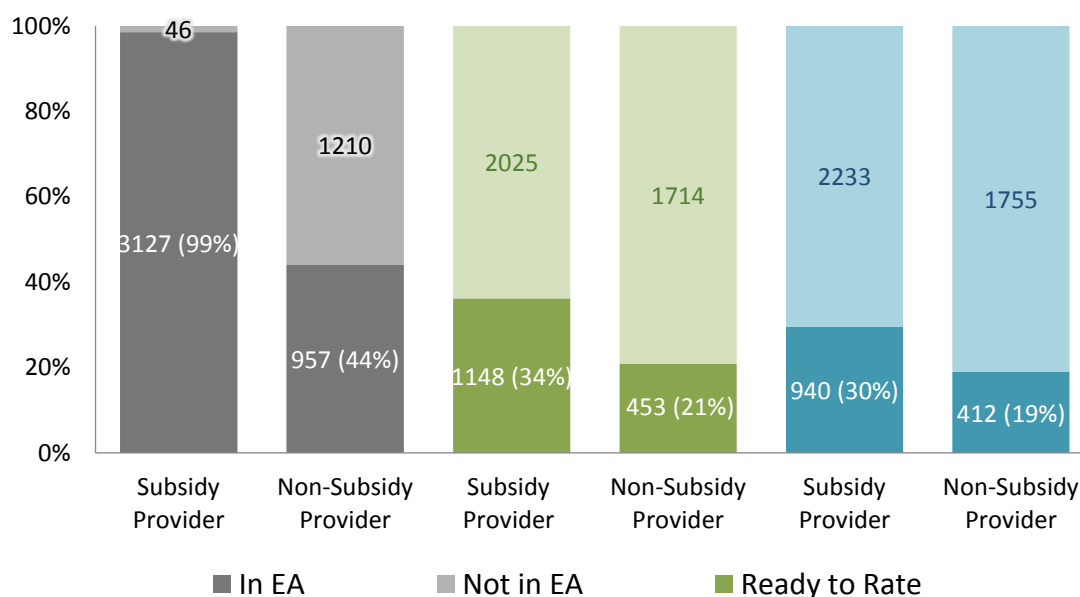
children in the past year who were required to complete Level 2 requirements in order to continue to participate in the childcare subsidy program, 97.8 percent of child care centers and 97.1 percent of family child care homes completed Level 2 requirements by the deadline.

Following enrollment in Early Achievers, licensed subsidy providers have 30 months to participate in quality improvement prior to being rated. Licensed child care providers that accept children on subsidy must rate at a level 3 or higher within 30 months. Providers that do not rate a level 3 within in this time frame are given the opportunity to 1) complete remedial activities and request a free re-rate if they have already rated at a level 2, or 2) request an extension for “exceptional circumstances” to postpone rating by up to six months. Both of these options are discussed below.

New ECEAP providers must enroll in Early Achievers within 30 days from the start of ECEAP services and must rate at a level 4 or higher within 12 months. Licensed child care centers or family child care homes that receive an ECEAP contract have 18 months to rate at a level 4 or higher.

Figure 8 below illustrates progress on three key Early Achievers milestones – enrollment in Early Achievers, ready to rate, and rating – by subsidy and non-subsidy providers. Subsidy providers enrolled at roughly twice the rate of their non-subsidy counterparts, likely due to the required timelines imposed on subsidy providers.

Figure 8. Comparison of Early Achievers Milestone by Subsidy and Non-Subsidy Providers



Data Source: EAMR-PPH RTT extract, as of September 15, 2017

Different types of support are needed at each stage of the Early Achievers rating and quality improvement pipeline to support provider progression to each subsequent milestone. DEL is working with its partners, CCA of WA and University of Washington Cultivate Learning (formerly CQEL), to

prepare for the substantial downstream work anticipated by the large number of subsidy providers who completed their level 2 requirements just before the August 1, 2017 deadline.

The majority of licensed providers accepting subsidy have not yet been rated. DEL is working with its partners at CCA of WA and UW Cultivate Learning to implement strategies to help ensure the process of scheduling data collection for either an initial rating or re-rating does not compromise provider eligibility. These strategies include streamlining the rating evaluation through electronic data collection and allowing providers to schedule their evaluation farther in advance.

In addition to the initial free rating, all Early Achievers participants are eligible for one free re-rate if they do not achieve the required quality rating level on their initial rating, including licensed child care sites that need to attain a level 4 rating to provide ECEAP. This free re-rate option is currently available to help Early Achievers participants meet their Early Start Act rating timeline requirement, and is available once per three-year rating cycle. The re-rate will only cover the area(s) in which the facility did not achieve the minimum threshold for the required quality level rating. For example, the re-rate may only include the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) or Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) assessments. No additional facility information will be considered.

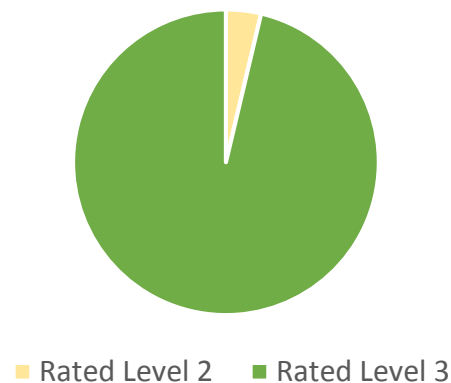
If a provider does not achieve the required quality rating level on the second rating, they have the option of paying for additional re-rates. The fee charged is dependent on the size of the facility. Based on current data, DEL expects that this option will be used infrequently as a small portion of rated facilities have not achieved the required quality rating level after the re-rate process.

Re-Rating Success Rate

As of October 2017, 27 licensed child care providers that previously achieved a level 2 have attempted re-rating. Of these, 96.3 percent have attained a level 3 or higher on the re-rate.

The licensed providers spent an average of just under one year between their initial rating and the re-rating. These licensed providers showed significant improvements in their scores during the re-rate, with the greatest improvements occurring in the CLASS ratings.

Figure 9. Level 2 Re-Ratings, Licensed Pathway



Data Source: MERIT Rated Facilities report and PRISM, as of October 2017

Extension Protocol

The Early Start Act requires all licensed early learning providers that accept children on subsidy and ECEAP providers to participate in Early Achievers and attain the required quality rating levels. It also requires the development of an Extension Protocol that allows Early Achievers participants a one-time (no longer than 6-month) extension to the rating requirement for “exceptional circumstances” [Sec 2(10)]. DEL developed this extension protocol in collaboration with the Early Learning Advisory Council and the Indian Policy Early Learning (IPEL) committee, and it went into effect in December 2015. The

protocol defines the requirements for consideration of an extension, and defines exceptional circumstances such as leadership changes, high staff turnover, natural disasters, facility move, and others. Since the implementation of this protocol, 49 providers have requested an extension, 48 of which were granted. The majority of these requests cited high staff turnover as the reason for their request.

Twelve-month Authorization

As mandated in the 2015 Early Start Act [Section 6(2)], twelve-month eligibility became effective July 1, 2016 to support quality for children by providing more consistent child care arrangements. This means that a family that qualifies for child care subsidy will maintain eligibility for 12 months regardless of any increases or decreases of income, so long as income does not exceed absolute federal limits. Further, these families will maintain eligibility regardless of a loss of approved activities (work, training, and education). De-linking the parent's activity from the child's child care eligibility is intended to produce a more stable arrangement for the child in a quality environment. This is intended to support positive child outcomes, offer stability in monthly income for the provider, and provide support to the parents as they work and/or go to school.

Parents will no longer need to worry about the impact of a small pay increase at work, or temporary loss of work, leading to the loss of their child care subsidy for a 12-month period as parents will no longer be required to report changes in their circumstances that would affect care needs and eligibility. These changes are aligned with the federal reauthorization of the Child Care Development Block Grant Act which requires states to ensure that, after 12 months of eligibility, families reapplying for benefits whose incomes now exceed state program limits (but remain within federal limits) continue to receive benefits for a 12-month phase-out period during which they transition to paying for care on their own.

Key Accomplishments:

- ☑ DEL has worked with partners and stakeholders to update ratings protocols and policies to reflect ongoing learning and continuous quality improvement.
- ☑ The strong success in re-rating highlights the strength of the quality improvement supports as well as the provider base.

Key Challenges:

- ☐ High volume of newly-enrolled providers in Early Achievers that will need to be supported through initial rating.
- ☐ High volume of providers that need to attain level 3 or higher within Early Start Act timeline.
- ☐ Ensuring that Early Achievers protocols work well for all providers, particularly those from diverse communities.
- ☐ High staff turnover within the early learning field makes continued focus on quality improvements challenging within early learning facilities.

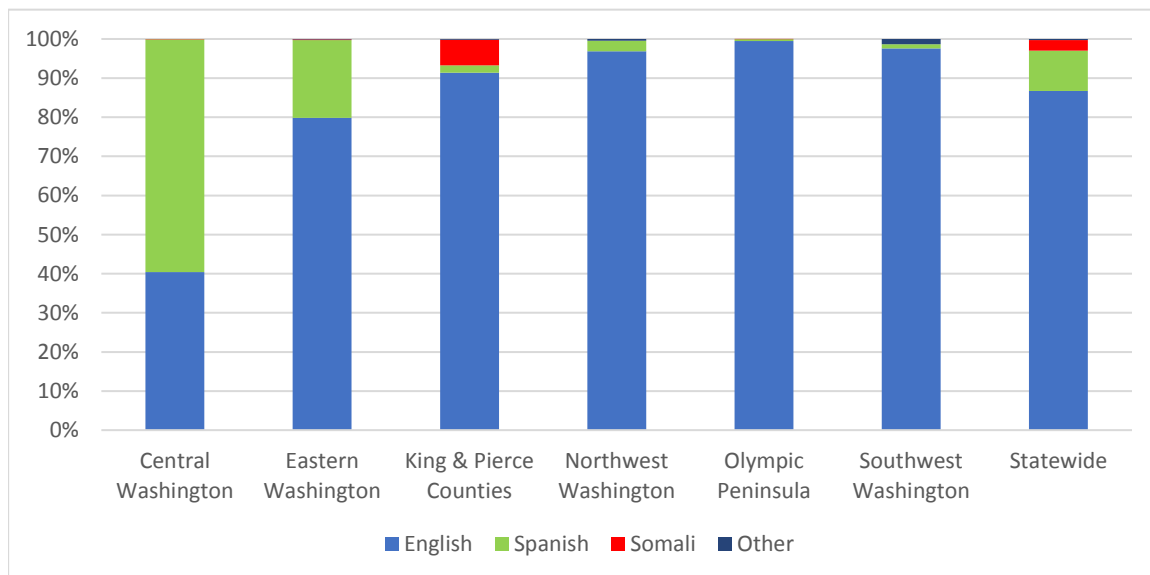
CHAPTER 4: Available Supports and their Effectiveness at Improving Quality

Early Achievers participants have supports and resources available to assist them throughout their journey through the Early Achievers quality improvement system. These aids include pre-enrollment supports, level 2 supports, and quality improvement tools and incentives. This chapter provides a detailed description of each type of support, along with data on utilization of each support type during the most recent fiscal year.

Pre-Enrollment Supports

Child Care Aware of Washington uses many outreach strategies to reach child care providers including: newsletters, a website, one-on-one orientations, telephone recruiting, training sessions, conference participation, creating and distributing marketing materials in multiple languages, and scheduled trainings in multiple languages. In addition, they have developed partnerships with other community organizations that have relationships with child care providers to encourage participation in Early Achievers including DEL child care licensors, colleges, family child care provider associations and center directors groups, the Early Learning Regional Coalitions, ECEAP/Head Start providers, school districts, public libraries, Educational Service Districts, nurse consultants/health departments, infant/toddler consultants and networks, resource centers, local and national conference planning committees, media organizations, and other local programs.

Figure 10. Individual & Small Group Outreach Hours by Language & Region, 2017



Data Source: ETO. NACCRRAware. through September 2017

Child Care Aware of Washington offers pre-enrollment supports, such as helping providers complete necessary tasks in MERIT⁶, and addressing barriers to enrollment. This assistance can clarify enrollment in Early Achievers while beginning a trusting relationship by paving the way for success on the Early Achievers journey.

Understanding that the existing strategies may not reach all diverse communities, Child Care Aware of Washington has also developed a number of targeted approaches to reach communities that may need additional outreach and support including:

- Hiring bilingual Early Achievers staff when and where possible;
- Developing cohorts of non-English speaking providers;
- Hiring staff in rural areas who are able to focus their time in a specific area or county;
- Contracting for special language services;
- Offering trainings in rural areas, to both Early Achievers and non-Early Achievers facilities;
- Collaborating with partner organizations and licensors on how to work together to reach these communities;
- Attending the Dual Language Immersion trainings; and
- Partnering with community-based organizations currently working with target populations.

Level 2 Supports

Early Achievers level 2 activities are designed for professional growth and facility management and require facility leaders (family home child care primary provider/child care center director) to complete a series of Early Achievers preparation activities and training. New participants have 12 months from enrollment to complete the level 2 requirements. Early Achievers participants receive support to help them complete the level 2 requirements and prepare for rating, including 1) the Early Achievers Professional Training Series, 2) support in facility self-assessment, 3) relationship-based professional development, and 4) rating readiness consultation.

1. **Early Achievers Professional Training Series:** All Early Achievers participants must complete the Early Achievers Professional Training Series, designed to support providers as they prepare themselves for quality improvement work. The trainings are intended for child care center directors and family home child care primary providers and are offered free of charge.⁷ The training series is designed as three online and three in-person classes; however, in order to make accommodations for language, technology, and learning style, each of the sessions is also accessible in person. Regions work to offer classes on days and times and in geographic areas that meet the needs of the providers who are required to participate. Providers who speak a language other than those offered by their local Child Care Aware of Washington office have the option to have the support of a professional interpreter service during the training. “The Professional Training Series” includes the following six courses:

⁶ The Managed Education and Registry Information Tool (MERIT) is Washington Professional Development registry, a statewide tool to document and recognize the professional achievements of early care and education, and school-age professionals. This online tool helps professionals find training opportunities, access information on career pathways and track their individual career progress. MERIT also identifies approved trainers who provide education to professionals.

⁷ The online trainings are offered free of charge to anyone that signs up. The Core Competencies for Early Learning Professionals has been taken over 12,000 times, the introduction to the ERS/CLASS has been taken over 11,000 times and the Early Learning Guidelines training has been taken more than 13,000 times.

(a) Introduction to the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) (Online, approximately two hours)

This course provides an overview of the two standardized assessments used in Early Achievers as part of the comprehensive measure of program quality reflected in the rating. The focus of the ERS is on safety, organization, and the age-appropriateness of daily schedule and materials within the environment. The CLASS focuses on teacher-child interactions as a means to promote children's social and cognitive development. Together these two assessments provide a comprehensive measure of the learning environment.⁸

(b) Washington State Early Learning Guidelines (Online, approximately two hours)

This course is an introductory overview of the *Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines (ELGs)*, which can help orient adults to child development. The module examines the history and purpose of the ELGs and who can use them and for what purpose. Additionally, the module provides an overview of the structure of the 2012 ELGs document and presents examples of how to use them to support child development.

(c) Washington State Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals (Online, approximately two hours)

This course is an introductory overview of the *Washington State Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals*. The goal of this course is for professional providers who care for children ages 0-8 in Washington to become familiar with the Core Competencies and identify content areas of professional development.

(d) Introduction to Cultural Competence (In person, two hours)

The understanding and respect of children's cultural heritage is a foundation of their social/emotional well-being as well as their intellectual development. Through this training, early childhood professionals will reflect on their daily caregiving and teaching practices of young children, heighten their level of awareness of cultural influences, and increase their ability to interact competently with children and families.

(e) QRIS School Readiness (In person, four hours)

School readiness means that children are ready for school, families are ready to support children's learning, and schools are ready for children. Early learning providers have a wonderful opportunity to support this process and ensure success for children. This training introduces and models instructional techniques measured in the CLASS: emotional support, well organized learning environments, and instructional techniques. Participants can apply these skills to increase the quality of interactions in their facility and prepare themselves for an Early Achievers on-site evaluation.

(f) QRIS Strengthening Families Training for Early Learning Professionals (In person, six hours)

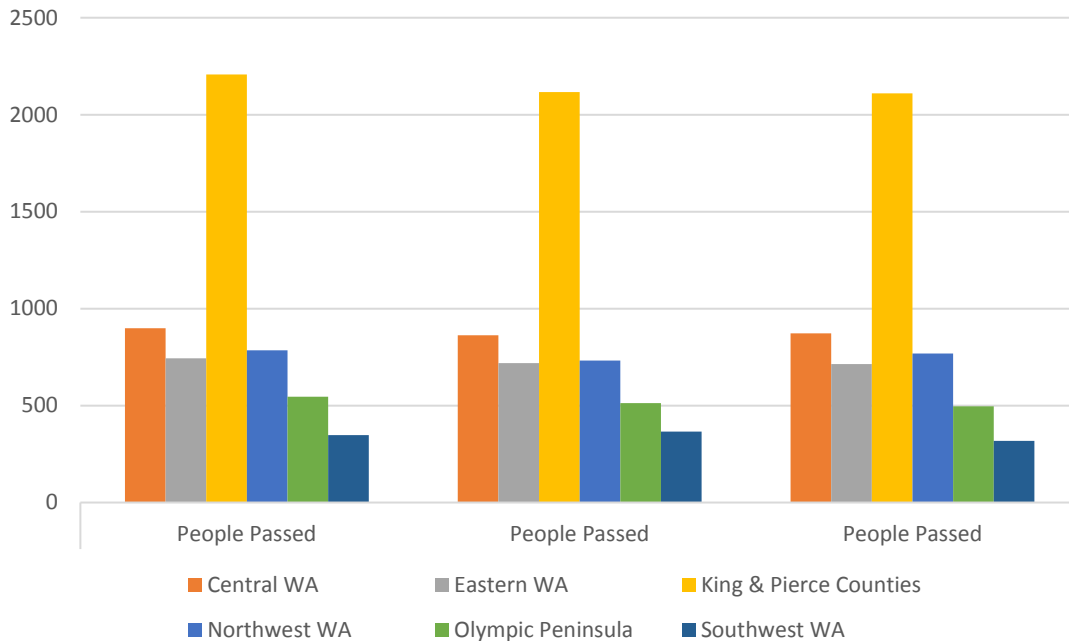
Strengthening Families Protective Factors are a new framework for preventing child maltreatment and promoting optimal child development. The protective factors shift the focus of child abuse and neglect prevention efforts from family risks and deficits to family

⁸ Training accommodation has been made available regionally for groups of providers to attend online training together with language interpretation. It's been typically used for providers that have limited English/Spanish literacy.

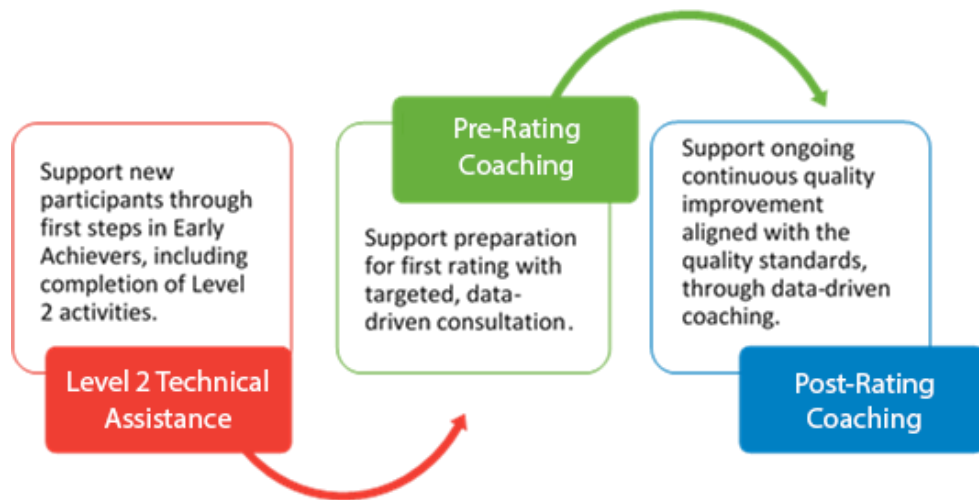
strengths and resiliency. By recognizing and building on existing strengths within communities and families, all providers can support all families in providing a healthy, safe, and loving environment for children.

Figure 11 below illustrates the high numbers of individuals completing the in-person level 2 trainings – in the year ending September 2017, 5,527 individuals completed Introduction to Cultural Competence, 5,307 completed School Readiness, and 5,280 completed Strengthening Families.

Figure 11. Individuals Completing In-Person Level 2 Trainings, by Region 2017

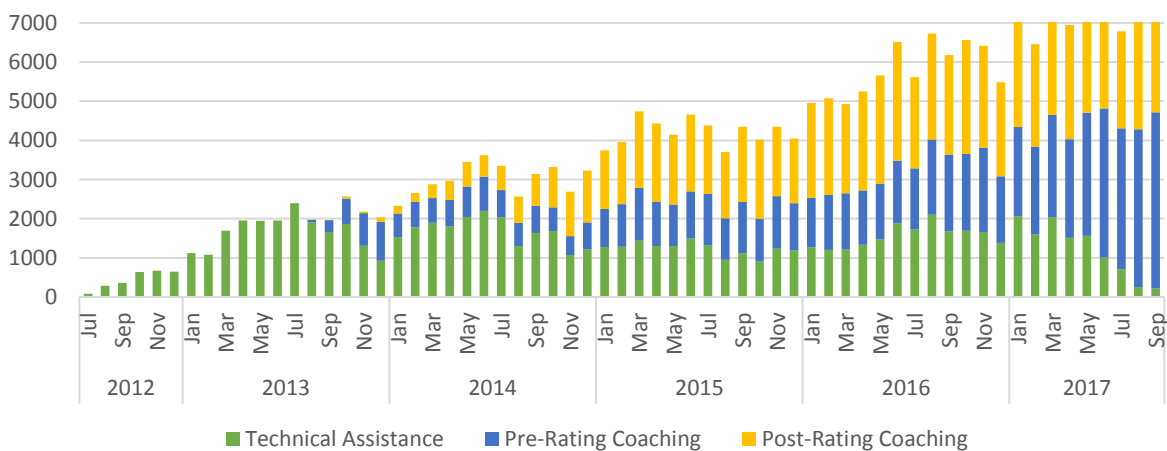


- 1. Facility self-assessment:** This year DEL eliminated the facility self-assessment. Feedback from participants, implementation partners, and the Early Achievers Review Subcommittee (EARS) stated the self-assessment was a barrier to providers. Self-assessment results often presented a barrier to progress when a provider scored themselves higher than the child care quality baseline (CCQB) assessment provided by CCA of WA. The CCQB is conducted by staff who are reliable in ERS and CLASS. The data from the baseline assessment helped providers and coaches generate tangible next steps and the self-assessment did not. Based on this feedback the self-assessment was eliminated from level 2.
- 2. Relationship-based professional development:** Relationship-based professional development focuses on building trusted relationships to foster change and facilitate improvement. Early Achievers uses relationship-based professional development across all of its direct service work with providers including (a) technical assistance, (b) pre-rating coaching, and (c) post-rating



coaching. While these three elements are often tracked separately and refer to distinct points in a provider’s participation in the Early Achievers system, they are part of an integrated approach to working with providers over time to support continuous quality improvements. In any given month, the majority of Early Achievers participants will receive some type of relationship-based professional development. Figure 12 below illustrates the provision of relationship-based professional development hours by type from 2012 through September 2016.

Figure 12. Relationship-Based Professional Development Hours by Type, 2012-2017



Data Source: ETO, PRISM

(a) Level 2 Supports Technical Assistance: Upon registration for Early Achievers, facilities will be assigned a Technical Assistance Specialist (TA Specialist) by their local Child Care Aware of Washington agency to support them as they move through level 2 requirements. The TA Specialist will work with the child care center director/family child care home provider to develop a work plan and timeline for successfully moving through level 2 activities. The work

plan will identify specific required activities of level 2 as well as additional resources available to help the facility meet the Early Achievers standards.

Technical assistance is delivered in multiple ways including individual sessions and group sessions, and remotely via phone and email. Participants work individually with TA Specialists on their unique work plans during one-on-one TA sessions in level 2. In order to build community connections and peer support, the regional Child Care Aware of Washington agency offers small group TA sessions including topics that address continuous quality improvement and the Early Achievers Quality Standards. The goals of TA are:

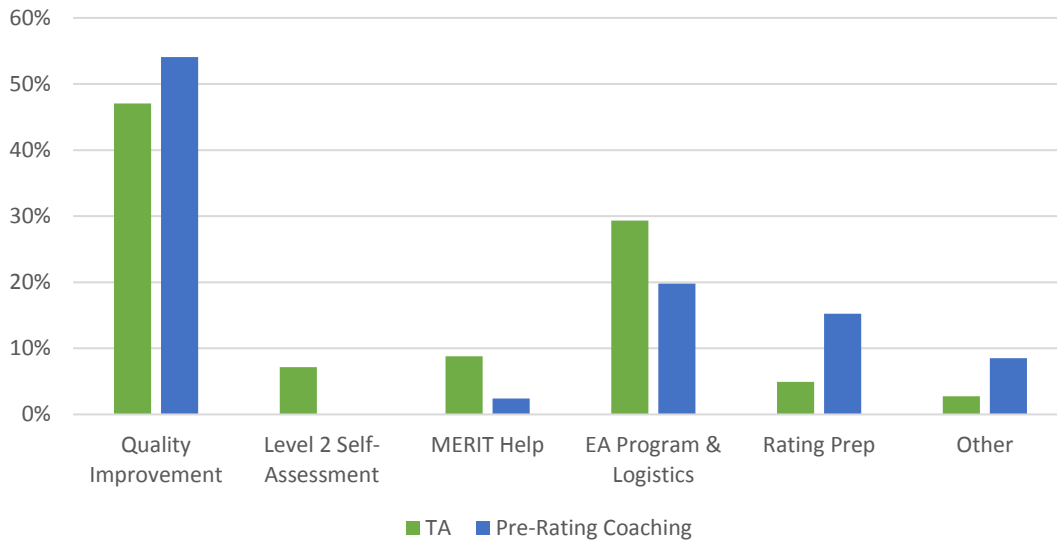
- 👉 Participants will **understand** Early Achievers program requirements, quality standards, and the process to successfully complete level 2 activities;
- 👉 Participants will **apply** new knowledge gained from self-assessments, the level 2 Professional Training Series, and personal reflections by **developing** action plans that prepare them to receive a facility rating; and
- 👉 Participants will begin to **value and embody** the concept of continuous quality improvement, laying the groundwork for deeper goal-setting through coaching in levels 3-5.

(b) Pre-rating coaching: Facilities that successfully complete all level 2 activities and intend to pursue an on-site evaluation have the opportunity to access pre-rating coaching. This targeted coaching is customized on-site support to help facilities prepare for a quality rating of level 3 or above. It is distinct from Technical Assistance in terms of the type of support provided. In particular, there is a focus on key elements of the quality standards that have the most impact on ratings, including preparing for the CLASS and ERS assessments. Rating readiness consultation may be provided to classroom teachers, as needed to prepare them for successful interactions and learning environments as defined by CLASS and ERS.

(c) Post-rating coaching: Coaching is a long-term continuous service available to all rated facilities. Coaches are employed by Child Care Aware of Washington. After an Early Achievers facility receives their first rating, they will be assigned a coach by their local CCA agency. The role of the coach is to help facilities:

- 👉 Understand and use Early Achievers ratings and assessment data;
- 👉 Identify goals and make plans to achieve goals;
- 👉 Access resources to support achievement of goals; and
- 👉 Implement strategies that sustain and continue to build on quality gains over time.

Figure 13. Technical Assistance & Pre-Rating Coaching Hours by Topic Area



Data Source: *Data Source: ETO, PRISM*

The Early Achievers rating is a measure of *facility* quality, rather than specific classroom quality, so coaches and center directors/family child care home owners will work together to best allocate coaching resources across the facility to different teaching staff. The total amount of coaching that a facility receives is flexible and varies based on the areas of need identified in the facility Quality Improvement Plan, and the facility’s rating level. Coaching services will change as facility rating increases, with rated level 2 and 3 facilities receiving more coaching than rated level 5 facilities. Coaches *partner* with participants through the quality improvement process; the facility is ultimately *responsible* for implementing and maintaining positive changes.

Quality Improvement Tools and Incentives

Once they enroll in Early Achievers, providers have a number of tools and incentives available to support their progression through Early Achievers in addition to pre-enrollment supports and level 2 supports described above. These include child care quality baseline assessments, quality improvement plans, and scholarships and other financial incentives.

1. **Child Care Quality Baseline (CCQB):** CCQB is a pre-rating formative assessment that Child Care Aware of Washington offers to providers prior to rating to provide baseline quality data to providers before moving through the rating process. Providers that have completed all of the level 2 requirements are eligible to request a CCQB in either the ERS, CLASS, or both to give them feedback prior to rating about how they may score on the actual assessment. This pre-rating assessment tool provides a data driven road map that increases the likelihood that providers will achieve a successful rating. Child Care Aware of Washington has conducted over 4,100 CCQBs in individual classrooms between 2014 through September 2017.
2. **Quality Improvement Plans (QIP):** Rated participants set goals with their coaches based on their facility rating results including:

- 👉 ERS and CLASS assessment scores;
- 👉 Components of the Quality Standards;
- 👉 Overall facility rating; and
- 👉 Components of the Early Achievers Coach Framework.

Child Care Aware of Washington coaches work with providers to apply evaluation data to develop a QIP that addresses facility strengths and areas of growth identified by evaluation results. The QIP acts as a “roadmap” for the ongoing continuous quality improvement process, and will guide the work of the facility and the Coach.

3. **Professional Development and Scholarships:** Scholarships are available to students employed in Early Achievers facilities to pursue Child Development Associate (CDA) programs, state stackable certificates, and Associates Degrees (AA) and Bachelor’s Degrees (BA) in Early Childhood Education (ECE). Early Achievers Opportunity Grants and Washington Scholarships for Child Care Professionals are two student financial aid resources prioritized for students employed by Early Achievers facilities.

👉 **Child Care Aware of Washington Scholarships** are administered by Child Care Aware of Washington and supports educators working towards their CDA, state stackable certificate, and AA/AAS or BA degree in Early Childhood Education. WA Scholarships also offers CDA Assessment fee scholarships once students have completed CDA coursework.


Since July 1, 2012, the WA Scholarships program has awarded over 3,180 scholarships to over 2,140 individual ECE professionals. The majority of scholarships have funded students pursuing degrees and certificates at community and technical colleges. In FY17, BA scholarships grew to be the largest segment of the program. WA Scholarship recipients have completed over 35,000 credits of coursework from Washington colleges and universities, and earned more than 900 degrees, certificates, and credentials.

👉 **Early Achievers Grants** are administered by the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges and help employees at Early Achievers facilities pursue Early Childhood Education credits towards state stackable ECE certificates and Associate degrees in ECE. The Early Achievers Grant program helps fund a Point-of-Contact to assist students from initial contact with the college through enrollment and completion of Early Childhood Education certificates and degrees. The colleges’ Points-of-Contact monitor student progress and assist students when they encounter barriers affecting their participation and persistence in their programs.

Launched in 2012, the *Early Achievers Grant* program has been in operation for five full years (not counting the start-up school year 2012-2013). Participating colleges have increased from 18 in Year 2 to 26 in Year 5. The number of grant recipients has increased by over 144 percent from 555 in 2013-2014 to 1,358 in 2016-2017.⁹

⁹ SBCTC (2017) DEL Annual Report, Early Achievers Opportunity Grant Program 2016-2017

4. **Other Financial Incentives:** Early Achievers provides additional financial incentives for participation and for attaining higher quality levels including need-based grants, new enrollment incentives, quality improvement awards, and tiered reimbursement.

 **Needs-based Grants:** Family home child cares and child care centers working on Early Achievers level 2 activities are eligible to receive a needs-based grant for the purpose of improving program quality (up to \$750 and \$1,000 respectively). A majority of eligible participants worked with their coach to prepare and submit a needs-based grant proposed spending plan and submission form. Needs-based grants are administered by DEL, and in FY 2017 DEL awarded these grants to over 600 family home child care participants and over 150 child care centers. Funds were prioritized for providers serving low-income families and/or offering culturally diverse services. This fiscal year needs-based grant funding was used primarily for:




-  Purchasing items such as books, math and science materials, and gross motor equipment;
-  Substitute time; and
-  Other items identified by the Technical Assistance Specialist or coach.

Table 3 below details the regional distribution of needs-based grants awarded in FY 2017.

Table 3. Needs-Based Grants Awarded, FY 2017				
Region	Child Care Centers		Family Child Care Homes	
	Amount Awarded	Number of Providers	Amount Awarded	Number of Providers
Central	\$ 8,500	9	\$ 87,881	118
Eastern	\$ 19,650	20	\$ 37,331	50
King County	\$ 29,831	30	\$ 203,895	272
Northwest	\$ 21,990	22	\$ 44,216	58
Olympic Peninsula	\$ 31,744	32	\$ 42,220	57
Southwest	\$ 8,000	8	\$ 18,000	24
Pierce County	\$ 32,803	33	\$ 35,213	47
TOTAL	\$ 152,518	154	\$ 468,754	626



 **Level 2 Completion Awards:** In FY 2017 DEL provided an opportunity for Early Achievers participants who completed Level 2 to apply for a one-time enrollment incentive to purchase resources to support participation in Early Achievers. A Level 2 Completion Needs-Based Grant of \$250 was available for participants who completed Level 2 in Early Achievers between July 1, 2016 and June 1, 2017. Receipt of the grant funds was initiated when providers submitted the Early Achievers Application for Level 2 in MERIT. Over 1,100 Level 2 completion awards were paid in FY 2017.

Table 4. Level 2 Completion Awards, FY 2017

Region	Child Care Centers		Family Child Care Homes	
	Amount Awarded	Number of Providers	Amount Awarded	Number of Providers
Central	\$ 5,750	23	\$ 52,500	210
Eastern	\$ 8,500	34	\$ 34,000	136
King County	\$ 11,500	46	\$ 83,250	333
Northwest	\$ 12,000	48	\$ 30,000	120
Olympic Peninsula	\$ 7,750	31	\$ 16,750	67
Southwest	\$ 4,000	16	\$ 10,500	42
Pierce County	\$ 9,500	38	\$ 13,000	52
TOTAL	\$ 59,000	236	\$ 240,000	960

 **Quality Improvement Awards:** As specified in the Early Start Act [Section 2(9)], Quality Improvement Awards are reserved for participants offering programs to an enrollment population consisting of at least five percent of children receiving a state subsidy. In response to community feedback regarding this change, DEL expanded the list of qualifying subsidies to include those offered by municipalities, state colleges or universities, local school districts, and federally recognized tribal organizations. These updates were written into WAC¹⁰ and took effect October 13, 2016.

QI Awards are annual cash awards provided to participating child care centers that achieve rating levels 3 through 5 and participating family home child care that achieve rating levels 2 through 5. Quality Improvement (QI) Awards recognize achievement and support facilities to implement quality improvement goals. All QI Award funds must be used towards achievement of quality improvement goals outlined on a coach-approved facility QIP and must align with the Early Achievers Quality Rating and Improvement System Standards. To be eligible to receive QI Awards, facilities must:

- Achieve an Early Achievers rating of level 2¹¹, 3, 4, or 5;
- Create a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) with assigned coach; and
- Maintain active participation throughout the 3-year rating cycle by participating in ongoing coaching and maintaining the goals set in the facility’s QIP.

Table 5 below details the eligibility limits for Quality Improvement Awards for family child care homes and child care centers at different levels of quality.

¹⁰ WAC 170-290-0210

¹¹ QI Awards are provided to Level 2 rated family child care home providers.

Table 5. Quality Improvement Awards Eligibility Limits, FY 2017

Level Attainment	Family Homes	Child Care Centers
Level 2	\$750	N/A
Level 3	\$2,000	\$5,000
Level 4	\$2,250	\$7,500
Level 5	\$2,750	\$9,000


 **Tiered Reimbursement** is a tool to support the cost of quality above the basic base rate paid for children on subsidy. Providers enrolled in Early Achievers receive an additional 2 percent increase in the subsidy base rate. These providers are expected to advance to a rated level of 3 or higher within 30 months of enrolling in Early Achievers. Facilities who receive a level 3 through 5 rating are eligible to earn an additional increase to the subsidy base rate, as detailed in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Tiered Reimbursement Schedule, by Provider Type and Rating Level

Family Child Care Homes	Level 3	10 percent above the base rate ¹²
	Level 4	15 percent above the base rate
	Level 5	20 percent above the base rate
Child Care Centers	Level 3	4 percent above the base rate
	Level 4	10 percent above the base rate
	Level 5	15 percent above the base rate

Key Accomplishments:

- ☐ A relationship-based professional development approach engages providers in the long-term investment in quality and has empowered thousands of early learning professionals to undertake quality improvement efforts.
- ☐ Streamlined Level 2 by eliminating the self-assessment and the facility profile questions which were identified by participants, EARS, and implementation partners as barriers.
- ☐ Training in the ERS, CLASS, and other quality standards-related topics has increased and improved.
- ☐ Using data to drive services such as the CCQBs and the use of data in coaching to develop quality improvement plans promotes rating success.
- ☐ Customized, community-based services ensure providers are reached with culturally, linguistically, geographically, and educationally appropriate services.

¹² This makes the subsidy payment for family child care homes equivalent to the 75th percentile of market rate costs, which is industry best practice for subsidy rates. 75th percentile of market rate costs means that within a local community and dependent on age and category of care rate variations, subsidy care recipients would be able to purchase 75 out of 100 available child care slots. This applies only to family child care homes.

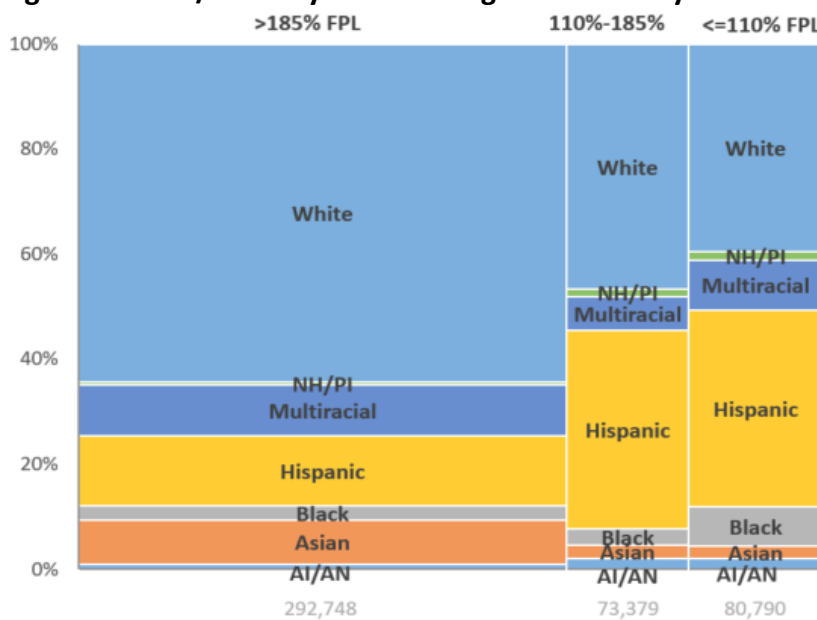
Key Challenges:

- ❑ DEL and partners must continue to ensure that supportive services are scalable and cost effective.
- ❑ Early Achievers level 1, licensing are not yet aligned to support overall quality improvement efforts. This alignment work is underway, but not yet complete.
- ❑ More and differentiated supports are needed for some providers. It is necessary to assess customized pathways so that adequate resources are available to individual participants.
- ❑ Provider motivation to participate in Early Achievers varies and is a significant factor in their overall success in undertaking quality improvements and attaining high rating levels.
- ❑ Champions for Early Achievers are needed to create a broad messaging strategy that can increase understanding of Early Achievers.
- ❑ DEL must continue to assess Early Achievers' language and culturally appropriate training and services to ensure that diverse communities are well served.
- ❑ Recruitment and retention of child care providers continues to be a barrier to sustainable quality improvement. Extra supports are needed to help child care center directors create a sustainable workforce model.
- ❑ Recruitment and retention of culturally and linguistically diverse coaches and professional development staff is a challenge due to a shortage of qualified candidates within these communities.

CHAPTER 5: Supporting and Promoting Diversity – Children, Families, and Providers from Diverse Backgrounds¹³

Washington is becoming increasingly diverse – 43 percent of the estimated 447,000 children younger than five years of age are from racial and ethnic backgrounds that are either American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black, Hispanic/Latino, multiracial, or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. These children, referred to in this report collectively as children of color, are the fastest growing subgroup of all children under 5, and currently make up 60 percent of children under 5 years of age living in the lowest-income households.

Figure 14. Race/Ethnicity of WA Young Children <5 by Household Income, 2016

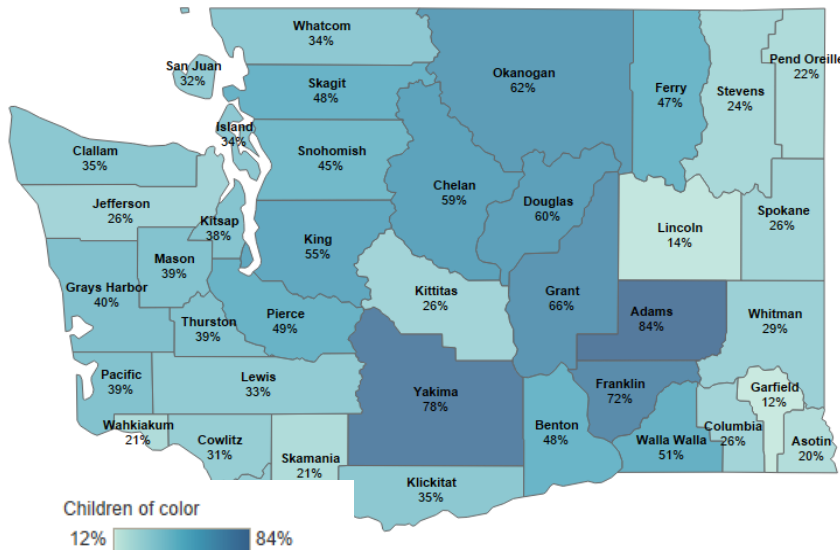


*Data Source: American Community Survey PUMS 2016 1-year data
All racial groups are reported as non-Hispanic*

The portion of the young child population made up of children of color varies throughout the state. In Adams County for example, children of color make up 84 percent of all children under age 5, while in Garfield County they make up only 12 percent.

¹³ In this report “diverse backgrounds” refers to children, families, providers, and communities who may be distinguished [from the mainstream culture] by race, ethnicity, and/or language. As such, this term may refer to children, families, providers, and communities who are from non-white racial and/or ethnic groups, and/or whose primary language is not English.

Figure 15. Children of Color as Share of Young Child Population (0-4) by County, 2016



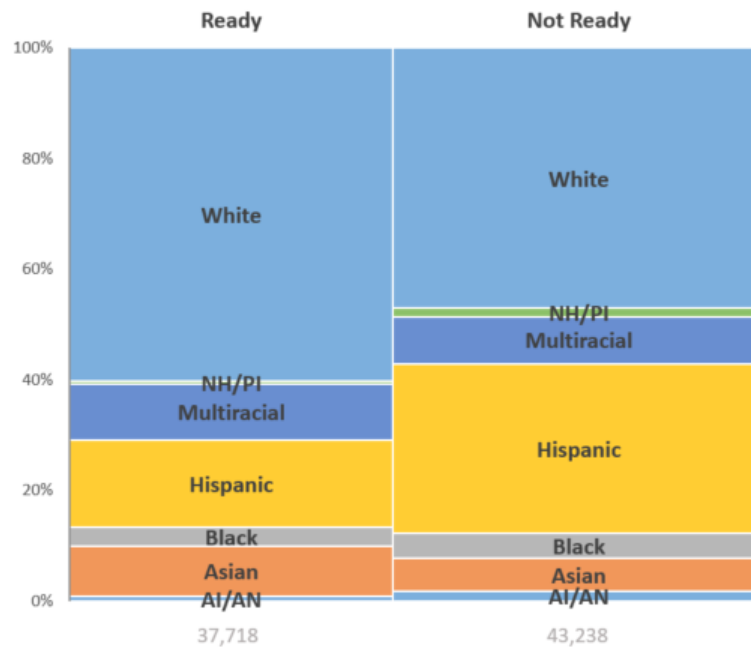
Data Source: OFM Small Area Demographic Estimates (SADE)

Children of color made up 46.8 percent of the class of entering kindergarteners in Washington’s public schools in 2017, and are expected to make up a greater share in future years.

Children of color entering Washington’s public kindergartens are under-represented among children who arrive ready for success, and over-represented among children who are not yet ready for success. Only 40 percent of children who arrive ready for kindergarten on six of the six WaKIDS domains are children of color, while 53 percent of those not yet ready are children of color.

The reasons for this opportunity gap are likely many; for example, a higher portion of children of color are from low-income households and thus may have less access to high quality early learning

Figure 16. WaKIDS Readiness by Race/Ethnicity, 2017



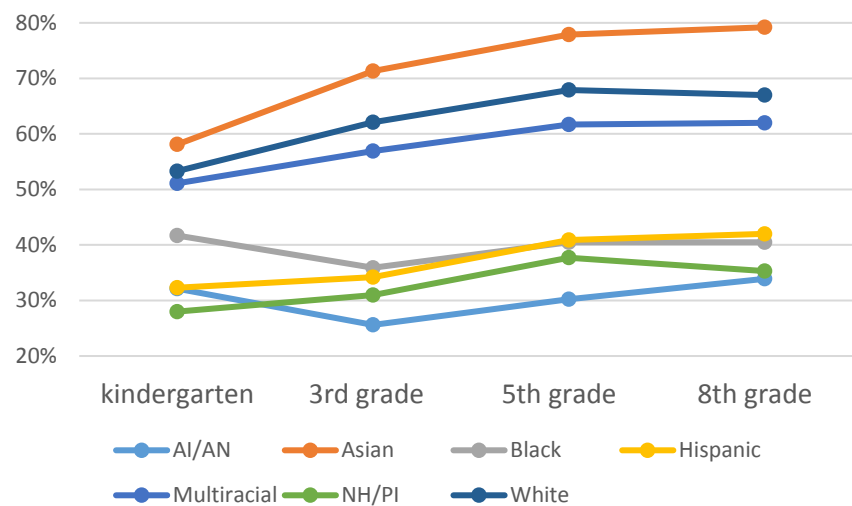
Data Source: WaKIDS 6/6 readiness rates and kindergarten enrollment
All racial groups are reported as non-Hispanic

environments. In addition, there may be linguistic and/or cultural barriers in the way the WaKIDS assessment is administered that may prevent kindergarten teachers from learning about the skills and strengths of the children in their classrooms so they can meet the needs of each child. This prevents some children of color from demonstrating what they know and can do.

As with children from low-income households, many children of color demonstrate opportunity gaps that persist

throughout the public school system. Figure 18 illustrates the opportunity gap between children of different racial/ethnic groups that persist from kindergarten through eighth grade. On average, Asian, White, and Multiracial children are more likely to be ready for kindergarten and persistently demonstrate higher achievement throughout their public-school experience. While on

Figure 17. Washington Opportunity Gap by Race/Ethnicity, 2016-2017



Data source: WaKIDS 6/6 readiness and ELA assessment data, percent meeting standard

average American Indian/Alaska Native, Black/African American, Hispanic, and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander children are less likely to be ready for kindergarten and consistently demonstrate lower achievement throughout their public-school experience. Taken together, these data demonstrate how imperative it is that Washington’s early learning system is designed and implemented to best support success for all children and families.

The Early Start Act aspires to create a Washington early learning system that addresses the needs of the most vulnerable of Washington’s children and families, and seeks to address the specific needs of children and families from racially/ethnically and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The specific requirements related to ensuring the system is culturally and linguistically responsive include:

- 👉 Address cultural and linguistic diversity when developing the professional development pathway for early learning professionals [Section 2(8)(c)];
- 👉 Explore the use of alternative quality assessment tools that meet the culturally specific needs of the federally recognized tribes in the state of Washington [Section 2(12)];
- 👉 Implement a protocol to maximize and encourage participation in Early Achievers for culturally diverse and low-income center and family home child care providers [Section 5(1)(a)];

- 👉 Provide recommendations on research-based cultural competency standards for early learning professional training [Section 13(3)(b)]¹⁴;
- 👉 Reduce barriers to participation for low-income providers and providers from diverse cultural backgrounds, including a review of Early Achievers rating tools, quality standard areas, and components, and how they are applied [Section 16(9)(a)(iii)]; and
- 👉 Provide oversight and accountability by establishing an Early Achievers Review Subcommittee to review the availability and effectiveness of efforts to support providers and children from diverse cultural backgrounds [Section 16(9)(a)(iv)].

Diversity of Children Served and Early Learning Professionals

The diversity of the state is largely reflected in the population of children who participate in publicly-funded early learning programs. A total of 83,652 children were served in Washington’s subsidized childcare program in FY 2017, and 37,090 of these were children less than 5 years of age served in licensed care. An additional 13,410 children were served in the state’s ECEAP preschool program in the 2016-2017 school year. Table 7 below details the race/ethnicity and non-English home language status of children served in WCCC and ECEAP. For comparison, columns are included detailing the race/ethnicity/language of the corresponding underlying income-similar populations across the state – children in households with incomes under 200 percent FPL for subsidy, and under 110 percent FPL for ECEAP.

The diversity of children participating in Washington’s childcare subsidy program is closely related to that of the state’s TANF program. This is consistent with findings from a 2016 50-state study of subsidies funded by the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF).¹⁵

Table 7. Children Served in Subsidized Child Care & ECEAP by Race/Ethnicity and Language, FY 2017

	Subsidy <5 (licensed care)	WA <5 <=200% FPL, 2016	ECEAP	WA 3-4 <=110% FPL, 2016
N=	37,090	168,387	13,410	28,701
American Indian/ Alaska Native	2.3%	2.0%	2.6%	1.8%
Asian	1.6%	2.9%	3.6%	2.1%
Black/African American	15.7%	5.4%	9.5%	10.5%
Hispanic/Latino	28.3%	36.0%	39.3%	36.0%
Multiracial/other/unkn.	15.2%	8.2%	6.9%	7.3%
Nat Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.6%	1.4%	1.6%	0.5%
White	36.3%	44.1%	36.4%	41.9%
Non-English Home Language	10.7%	40.2%	33.9%	41.4%

Data Source for Subsidy: DEL tabulation of DSHS Barcode data

Data Source for ECEAP: DEL ELMS, 2016-2017 school year

Data Source for WA comparisons: Census Bureau, ACS 2016 1-year PUMS

All racial groups are reported as non-Hispanic

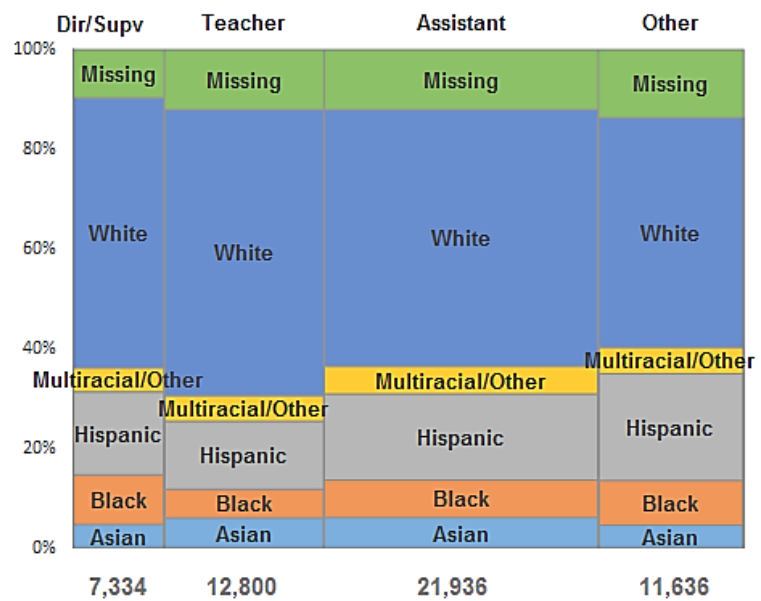
¹⁴ Report completed July 2016.

¹⁵ GAO (2016) Child Care: Access to Subsidies and Strategies to Manage Demand Vary across States. GAO-17-60.

Washington’s early learning workforce represents many different racial, ethnic, and language groups. Diversity is higher in some job titles/roles within the active early learning workforce than others, as seen in Figure 19. For example, while overall 35.9 percent of the active early learning workforce working in licensed facilities across the state are people of color, only 30.6 percent of teachers (or primary staff working with children) are people of color.

The racial/ethnic makeup of the early learning workforce also varies by region, with higher portions of the workforce made up of people of color in the Central Washington (61.7 percent), King County (43.3 percent), and Tacoma/Pierce County (31.0 percent) regions.

Figure 18. Race/Ethnicity of Active Early Learning Workforce, 2016



Data Source: MERIT, ELMS, Famlink
All racial groups reported as non-Hispanic

Table 8. Active Early Learning Workforce Racial/Ethnic Diversity 2016, by Region

	Central	Eastern	King	North west	Olympic	South west	Tacoma Pierce	Unkn. Reg.
N=	5,466	7,312	19,091	7,337	4,577	3,759	4,813	1,351
American Indian/ Alaska Native	<1%	1.8%	<1%	1.9%	2.9%	1.6%	1.6%	3.0%
Asian	<1%	1.6%	10.7%	5.5%	3.3%	1.7%	3.4%	3.9%
Black/African American	<1%	2.0%	15.5%	3.0%	3.1%	1.4%	10.8%	4.2%
Hispanic/Latino	58.8%	22.4%	10.8%	12.4%	7.8%	7.8%	9.9%	22.1%
Multiracial/Other	<1%	1.6%	4.6%	2.4%	2.6%	1.5%	3.3%	2.3%
Pacific Islander	<1%	<1%	1.0%	<1%	1.7%	1.1%	2.0%	<1%
White	28.2%	58.4%	43.5%	61.3%	67.6%	74.0%	57.2%	54.3%
Unknown	10.2%	11.6%	13.3%	12.7%	11.0%	10.9%	11.8%	9.5%

Data Source: MERIT, ELMS, Famlink
All racial groups reported as non-Hispanic

Washington’s Language Diversity

Census data indicate that 33 percent of young children in Washington under 5 years of age live in households where English is not the primary language. When the data are disaggregated by household income we see that language diversity becomes even more common in lower-income households.

Language Group	All	<200% FPL	<110% FPL
English Only	67.2%	59.8%	60.0%
Spanish	15.5%	26.0%	25.4%
Other Indo-European Language	7.0%	4.4%	5.6%
Asian/Pacific Islander Language	7.5%	5.1%	4.1%
Other	2.9%	4.7%	4.9%

Data Source: American Community Survey PUMS 2016 1-year data

Table 10 below summarizes the reported household language of children under 5 years of age participating in licensed subsidy care in FY 2017. The proportion of children served by the subsidy program whose primary household language is not English is not representative of the eligible population.

English	67.2%
Spanish	15.5%
Somali	7.0%
Other	2.9%

Data Source: DEL tabulation of DSHS Barcode data

Approximately 89 percent of children under 5 years of age participating in child care subsidy in licensed care are from households where English is the primary language, and 8.7 percent are from households where Spanish is the primary language. Less than 1 percent are from households where Somali is spoken, and another 1.5 percent are from homes where other languages are spoken.

Washington’s early learning educators speak many languages reflective of the communities they serve. The languages most frequently reported by those in the active early learning workforce are English and Spanish. As with racial/ethnic diversity, language capacity other than English is least common among teachers (or primary staff working with children).

Also as with racial/ethnic diversity, regional variation is evident in language diversity. Only 40.6 percent of the active early learning workforce in the Central Washington region and 61.8 percent in the King County region speak only English.

Figure 19. Language Diversity of Active Early Learning Workforce, 2016

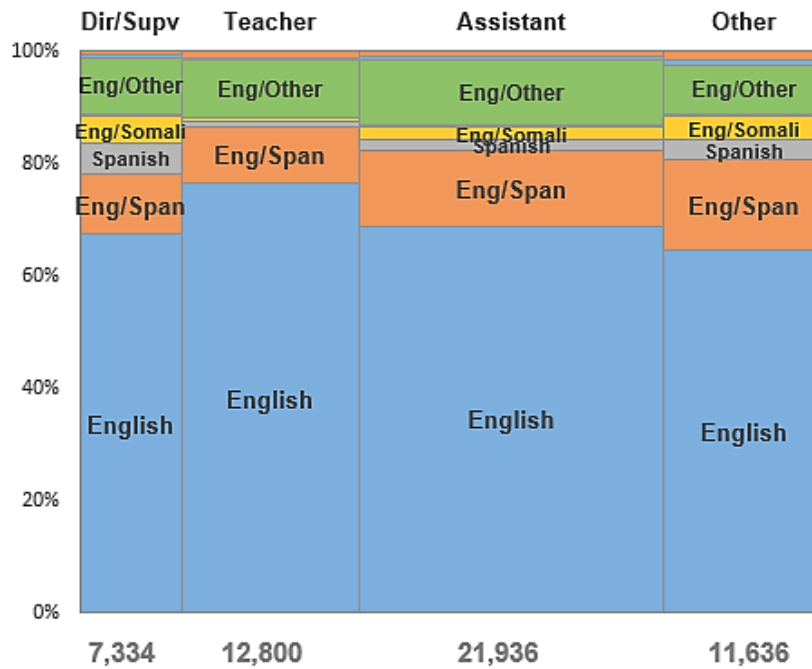


Table 11. Active Early Learning Workforce Language 2016, by Region

	Central	Eastern	King	North west	Olympic	South west	Tacoma Pierce	Unkn. Reg.
N=	5,466	7,312	19,091	7,337	4,577	3,759	4,813	1,351
English only	40.6%	74.9%	61.8%	76.6%	88.2%	85.4%	84.1%	68.8%
English/Other	1.5%	3.7%	18.4%	10.5%	5.6%	6.7%	7.3%	8.4%
English/Somali	---	<1%	7.1%	<1%	---	6.2%	---	<1%
English/Spanish	42.0%	15.9%	9.0%	9.7%	4.8%	<1%	6.8%	19.5%
Other	<1%	<1%	1.4%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Somali only	---	---	<1%	---	---	---	---	1.2%
Spanish only	14.6%	4.4%	<1%	<1%	<1%	1.3%	<1%	1.4%
Unknown	1.2%	<1%	<1%	1.5%	1.2%	---	1.1%	---

Data Source: MERIT, ELMS, Famlink

Supports for Dual Language Learners (DLL)

DEL is continuing to promote policies and resources for dual language learners in publicly-funded early learning programs. Early Achievers is ensuring that quality for all early childhood programs includes supporting diverse linguistic and cultural needs across programs.

Families with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) who are participating or seeking to enroll in ECEAP have access to the following services:

- 👉 Applications and informational materials are available in English and Spanish statewide, and available in other languages in parts of the state by select providers;
- 👉 Training and technical assistance for providers in non-English languages;
- 👉 Website in non-English languages;
- 👉 Lead agency accepts applications at community-based locations;
- 👉 Bilingual caseworkers, interpreters, and outreach workers in many locations across the state;
- 👉 Partnerships with community-based organizations;
- 👉 Uses home language as eligibility criteria for ECEAP;
- 👉 Tracks enrollment of DLLs in ECEAP; and
- 👉 Able to report DLL enrollment by home language.

In addition, ECEAP contractors must ensure a culturally relevant curriculum that:

- 👉 Reflects the cultures of enrolled children;
- 👉 Supports ongoing development of each child's home language, while helping each child learn English;
- 👉 Includes and demonstrates respect for diverse family structures and cultures; and
- 👉 Respects family beliefs, culture, language, and child rearing practices.

Opportunities for growth include:

- 👉 Ensuring that Early Achievers includes criteria specific to supporting DLLs;
- 👉 Providing recruitment and enrollment materials in non-English languages;
- 👉 Requiring DLLs in ECEAP to be assessed in their home language;
- 👉 Requiring Pre-K teachers to have qualifications related to DLLs; and
- 👉 Allocating extra ECEAP resources to serve DLLs.

In addition, through the passage of Substitute House Bill 1445 in 2017, DEL will work with community partners to support outreach and education for parents and families around the benefits of native language development and retention, as well as the benefits of dual language learning.

As the population of DLLs continue to grow, policies and resources that support cultural and linguistic diversity that meet the unique learning needs of dual language learners are vital to ensuring equitable access to high-quality programs for all.

Supports for a Diverse Early Learning Workforce

Ensuring that Early Achievers is culturally and linguistically competent and serves diverse communities well has been both a priority and an area for growth and development for DEL and its partners since the inception of the Early Achievers system. With the passage of Substitute House Bill 1445 in 2017, DEL is working to create training and professional development resources on dual language learning, such as supporting dual language learners, working in culturally and linguistically diverse communities, developing strategies for family engagement, and improving cultural responsiveness. This includes designing training modules to be culturally responsive and supporting dual language learning communities for teachers and coaches.

Child Care Aware of Washington, the main provider of relationship-based professional development for Early Achievers, have incorporated understanding about the diverse communities they serve and have adopted culturally relevant practices.

Examples include:

- 👉 Offering bilingual staff in each region for relationship-based professional development services;
- 👉 Providing orientation and trainings in multiple languages;
- 👉 Giving hands-on support for non-English speakers to register in MERIT;
- 👉 The creation of cohorts of non-English speaking providers to build supportive networks through the Early Achievers quality improvement process;
- 👉 Nurturing ongoing engagement with tribes to build trust and co-develop strategies to meet provider needs;
- 👉 Offering dual-language immersion trainings;
- 👉 Partnering with organizations that currently work with target populations;
- 👉 Making translation and interpretation services accessible;
- 👉 The creation of an Early Achievers Level 2 User Guide and updated guide for filing supporting materials available in English, Spanish, and Somali; and
- 👉 Adapting and enhancing visual guides to each of the different ERS (Environmental Rating Scale) assessments available in English, Spanish, and Somali. The guides include information about the assessment, checklists, and pictures of example materials for each part of the Activities scales. The guides are also a useful tool for providers who speak other languages or have limited literacy because they use pictures to illustrate what is needed for a high quality early learning environment.

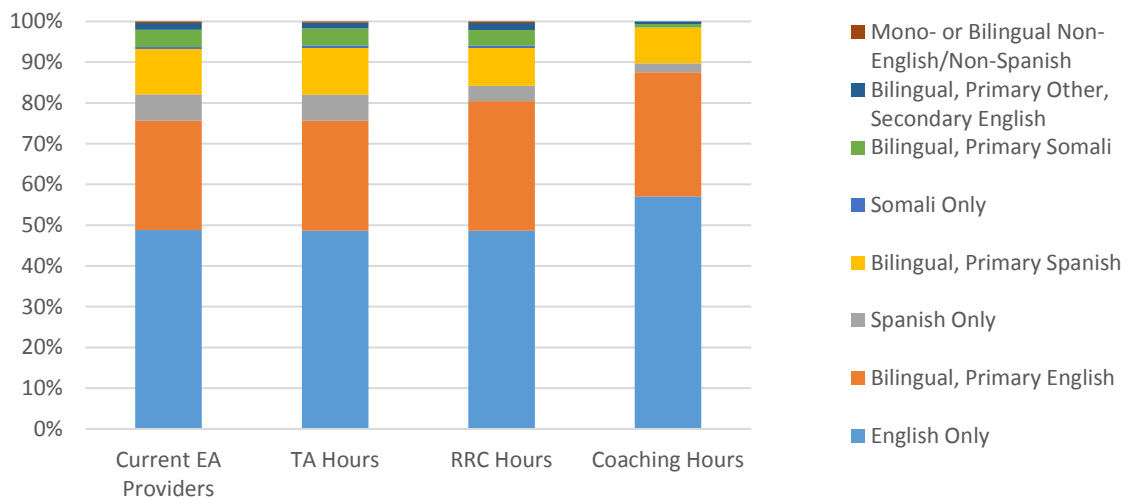
Through experience, training, and actively reflecting on practice, Child Care Aware of Washington (CCA of WA) and other DEL partners have deepened their understanding of working with racially/ethnically and linguistically diverse providers such that they have developed and implemented a number of specialized approaches. Hiring staff who represent the community and who are able to help bridge the cultural context is important. CCA of WA Technical Assistance Specialists and coaches reflect community diversity in staff composition and culturally responsive practices. About a third of the 165 CCA of WA staff that provide coaching and technical assistance through Early Achievers speak other languages in addition to English including Spanish, Somali, Russian, Tagalog, Arabic, Bahasa Indonesian, Amharic, Ukrainian, and Japanese. In addition, through experience, training, and actively reflecting on practice, Child Care Aware of Washington and other DEL partners have deepened their understanding of working with racially/ethnically and linguistically diverse providers such that they have developed and

implemented a number of specialized approaches. Hiring staff who represent the community and who are able to help bridge the cultural context is important. As important however is taking time to work with providers, building trust, and establishing supportive relationships that emphasize co-learning and “doing with” instead of “doing for”.

CCA of WA has increased flexibility to allow for tailored services for unique regional populations, such as specific communities or language groups. Regions with high language diversity have the highest percentage of bilingual staff, including Central (74 percent of staff bilingual in Spanish), Eastern (41 percent of staff bilingual in Spanish, including nearly all the staff serving the Tri-Cities area), Northwest (24 percent of staff bilingual in Spanish), and King & Pierce (21 percent of staff bilingual in Spanish, Somali, or Amharic, with additional staff covering half a dozen languages).

As illustrated in Figure 20 below, CCA of WA’s provision of relationship-based professional development services are largely reflective of the language diversity of the Early Achievers provider base.

Figure 20. Relationship-Based Professional Development by Provider Language



Data Source: ETO, PRISM, and MERIT

Data collectors at the University of Washington’s (UW) Cultivate Learning visit child care centers and family child care homes that are ready for rating and perform the assessments that result in the Early Achievers ratings. In addition, Cultivate Learning community liaisons provide support to providers participating in Early Achievers by conducting in-person interviews and ensuring that the ratings team has up-to-date information around the individual needs of the facility such as enrollment information and language support. The Cultivate Learning community liaison serves as the facility’s point of contact and advocate as the facility moves through the rating process. Once the community liaison completes their process, Cultivate Learning data collectors visit the early learning facility to conduct the evidence-based assessments that result in the actual Early Achievers rating.

Cultivate Learning’s Early Achievers Ratings team is made up of staff and leadership, with different backgrounds, spoken languages, and life experiences to reflect the diversity of Washington State, and to

drive a culture of equity. In honoring the government-to-government relationship between Washington's 29 sovereign nations and the federal and state government, Cultivate Learning's tribal liaison provides critical support for Tribes participating or considering participation in Early Achievers. Cultivate Learning is committed to conducting our work with knowledge, cultural competency, and respect for the rich cultures and diversity in the great state of Washington.

Cultivate Learning's regionally-based community liaison and data collection teams are made up of early learning professionals who are a part of the communities they serve. Qualifications for the data collectors include a bachelor's degree, experience working in early learning environments, and experience and ability working with people from various racial, cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Cultivate Learning has worked to build diversity in its data collector and community liaison teams – currently these are 45 individuals in eight regional teams across the state.



Cultivate Learning's community liaison and data collection teams have the capacity to collect data in any language. Early learning programs are matched with data collectors and community liaisons based on language – 48 percent of the Cultivate Learning team speak only English, 24 percent are bilingual Spanish/English, 13 percent are bilingual Somali/English, and 13 percent are bilingual in other languages (including Cantonese, Korean, Mandarin, Oromo, Russian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese). Because some languages are not yet represented on the data collection and community liaison teams, Cultivate Learning staff make use of language interpreters. Interpreters and data collectors work together using a headset and microphone system for simultaneous interpretation. The Cultivate Learning data collection team conducts about one quarter of the Early Achiever's quality assessments in a language other than English, including Mandarin, Hindi, Telugu, Colville, Okanagan, Russian, Kalispell, Salish, Vietnamese, Oromo, Amharic, Tigrinya, and Ukrainian, Somali, and Spanish.

Partnerships with Tribal Communities

Supporting children and families from tribal communities in the Early Achievers system, and establishing productive relationships with tribes to support high quality early learning in tribal communities within the context of government-to-government relationships, is a priority of DEL. In fiscal year 2017, 2,249 children whose parents identified them as American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) participated in ECEAP and WCCC programs, about 2.3 percent of the total.

DEL has identified 62 tribal child care program sites across the state with licensed capacity to serve up to 2,814 children. These sites include private child care centers and family child care homes operating as private businesses under tribal licensing authority (certified for WCCC payment), as well as tribally-sponsored child care centers and Head Start programs. Of the 64 tribal child care facilities, 35 are enrolled in Early Achievers – eight are rated at a level 4, two are rated at a level 3, and twenty-five are not yet rated. The Early Start Act makes provision for inter-local agreements between tribes and DEL for participation in Early Achievers.

Nine ECEAP sites are operated by tribes or tribal organizations. All are participating in Early Achievers – one rated level 3 and eight rated as level 4. Two contract directly with DEL for ECEAP services:

-  Lummi Indian Business Council
-  Suquamish Tribe

Seven tribes or tribal organizations are ECEAP subcontractors:

- 👉 Puyallup Tribe (Chief Leschi ECEAP)
- 👉 Kalispel Tribe
- 👉 Swinomish Tribe
- 👉 Salish School of Spokane
- 👉 Spokane Tribe of Indians
- 👉 Tulalip Tribes
- 👉 Upper Skagit Tribes

DEL's Tribal Liaison and Early Achievers staff provide individualized consultation to support tribal providers, based on the needs of providers and relevant tribal government context. DEL is working to build a toolkit for its staff and partners working with tribes, including sample participation agreements, options for modifying quality standards, assessment tools, and coaching methods.

Other DEL Early Achievers-related activities in tribal communities include:

- 👉 **STARS Training:** 20-hour and 10-hour STARS trainings are offered annually to tribal child care providers. DEL reimburses \$250 per year for eligible professionals, for state-approved training costs.
- 👉 **Tribal Certification Process:** A certification process for child care licensing is available for Tribes, allowing tribal providers to access the Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) subsidies while respecting the alternative licensing procedures of sovereign tribal governments.
- 👉 **UW Cultivate Learning Tribal Liaison:** Cultivate Learning's Community and Tribal Liaison Lead is responsible for direct support to tribal programs once they enter the Early Achievers rating queue.
- 👉 **Conferences:** DEL sponsors Tribal Early Care and Education Conferences for early learning professionals who work with tribal children and families every two years.
- 👉 **Curriculum Supports:** DEL supports the implementation of the *Since Time Immemorial* curriculum for preschool.
- 👉 **Early Head Start:** DEL's HSSCO supports the Early Head Start Child Care Partnership grantees, including the tribal grantee, the Nisqually Tribe.

Additionally, a primary mechanism for developing partnerships with providers in tribal communities is through the Indian Policy Early Learning (IPEL) Committee. This committee was established in 2013 to ensure quality, comprehensive delivery of early learning services to AI/AN children in Washington, as well as to guide DEL's implementation of policies that impact tribes. The IPEL Committee does not circumvent the sovereign authority of individual tribal governments, but rather advises DEL, promotes shared learning, and guides DEL's implementation of the Centennial Accord and DEL's policies that impact tribes. Each of the 29 federally recognized tribes of Washington are entitled to appoint one delegate and alternates to participate as members.

The IPEL Committee meets quarterly and in 2017 provided guidance to DEL on engaging with tribes and reducing barriers in Early Achievers.

Key Accomplishments:

- ☉ DEL successfully supported a majority of culturally and linguistically diverse providers into and through the Early Achievers Level 2 Milestone.
- ☉ After identifying a risk to access to subsidy care in a community of Spanish-speaking providers in the Yakima Valley, DEL partnered with CCA of WA to work with a trusted community messenger to reach out with providers in this community. These efforts preserved the access to subsidized child care for many families who are the heart of the agriculture community in that region.
- ☉ DEL and partners cultivated a relationship with Voices of Tomorrow to better understand the different needs of the communities of East African providers that they support.
- ☉ CCA of WA coaches with bilingual/bicultural capacity supported non-English speaking and culturally diverse providers with Early Achievers enrollment, subsidy eligibility, and professional development.
- ☉ CCA of WA has conducted training on Opening Doors (Abriendo Puertas) curriculum with two CCA of WA staff and UW Cultivate Learning staff in each region. UW Cultivate Learning is working to develop a culturally-grounded version (not simply a translation) in Somali as an option for Somali-speaking providers. This training has been added to the list of approved trainings for parent education for Early Achievers.
- ☉ DEL collaborated with community colleges to offer dual-language classes for providers working on meeting their educational requirements.
- ☉ DEL launched a racial equity initiative to provide a more critical focus on its work to support diverse children, families, and providers. This has included a report that evaluates the extent to which children of color have access to early learning services.
- ☉ DEL has implemented a robust engagement plan for the negotiated rulemaking and public comments processes and has ensured that the diverse voices of families and providers are represented.

Key Challenges:

- ☐ DEL and its partners must continue to examine child care capacity across the state and its impacts on communities of color.
- ☐ DEL and its partners must examine the use of translated materials to ensure that the right materials are available to diverse communities in a timely manner.
- ☐ DEL and its partners must continue their focus on hiring and developing bilingual, bicultural staff (e.g. teachers, technical assistance specialists, coaches, trainers, data collectors, etc.) to ensure that the early childhood workforce reflects the diverse communities in Washington.
- ☐ The challenge of developing a diverse workforce includes ensuring meeting the qualifications and characteristics required by the system, but must also include developing staff who are viewed as qualified by the diverse communities they serve.
- ☐ DEL and its partners must ensure ongoing availability of professional development with a focus on cultural competency, racial equity, language acquisition, and best practices in educating DLL students.
- ☐ DEL and its partners must develop strategies for engaging and supporting diverse providers in Early Achievers, including providers operating in isolated areas and providers offering non-standard hours of care.

- ❑ DEL and its partners must work to increase parent awareness about Early Achievers across diverse communities in a way that is contoured to the family's culture, traditions, experiences and community.
- ❑ While DEL and its partners have created many services to support the unique populations around the state, there remain unique challenges in providing differentiated supportive services for both rural and urban providers.




CHAPTER 6: How Early Achievers Has Changed and Developed

Throughout its development, Early Achievers staff and partners have built a culture of learning, assessing, and using data to inform decisions. Over the past year, changes to Early Achievers have focused on streamlining the system and removing barriers to participation. Early Achievers is dedicated to helping providers succeed because we know that improving the quality of early care has lifelong benefits for children and their families. The Department of Early Learning (DEL) is committed to improving Early Achievers and will continue to review and adapt the system, within legislative requirements and available resources, as more information becomes available about what works best to improve quality and promote positive child outcomes.

How Have Early Achievers Standards Developed?

As directed by the 2009-2011 legislature, DEL, in partnership with Thrive Washington and the University of Washington's Childcare Quality & Early Learning Center (CQEL, now Cultivate Learning), conducted a pilot of a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS). Known as "Seeds to Success," the QRIS pilot was completed in June 2011 and focused on field testing, evaluating, validating, and refining an initial QRIS set of standards. The Seeds to Success pilot provided Washington with valuable data that served as the basis of Early Achievers. Early Achievers launched in July of 2012, adding new processes and requirements at all levels. For a full history of the development of Early Achievers, please refer to the 2015 Early Start Act Annual Report.

The knowledge garnered from the pilot formed the basis of revisions to the program standards and modifications to the implementation plans. The end result was the Early Achievers model that was taken to scale following passage of the Early Start Act 2015 with several distinguishing features:

-  **Quality teaching practices:** Early Achievers uses a research-based coaching model for improving quality of care and interactions with children. Evaluations of the Washington model demonstrated a significant increase in the quality of learning environments and teacher-child interactions. While the framework rewards early childhood educators for attaining higher levels of education, the model invests highly in promoting day-to-day, concrete changes and actions that lead to high-quality learning experiences, nurturing relationships and rich learning environments for young children.
-  **Alignment:** Early Achievers promotes the use of common strategies, assessments, and curricula that are based on the statewide Early Learning and Development Guidelines and the kindergarten entry assessment (WaKIDS), and promotes use of evidenced-based family engagement strategies that align with those used in other programs serving high-need children and families (e.g. Head Start, ECEAP, and home visiting).
-  **Maximizing Participation and Inclusion:** Early Achievers was designed to seamlessly support programs that serve high-need children and families. Standards and tiered quality levels align with Head Start/ECEAP performance standards and types. The initial expansion plans focused on increasing participation of all programs, with targeted strategies for increasing participation and quality of programs that serve high-need children and families.

- 👉 **Child outcomes-focused:** Early Achievers promotes quality practices that are demonstrated through research to have direct impact on children’s progress. Early Achievers evaluations are testing the effects of higher tiers of quality on child outcomes.
- 👉 **Strong supports and incentives:** The quality standards include incentives and support for providers to achieve higher Early Achievers ratings and to maintain quality levels.

The current Early Achievers model assesses quality through the use of three primary assessment tools: the Environmental Rating Scales, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System, and Quality Standards.

Environmental Rating Scales (ERS): The ERS is an observational tool designed to assess the learning environment in multiple early learning settings. The tool reviews quality practices related to health and safety, the types of materials and activities children can access, and how providers facilitate children’s learning. The ERS is among the most utilized valid and reliable tool nationally to measure the quality of environments in an objective way. Using the ERS, coupled with coaching, has led to significant improvements in the quality of early learning facilities. The minimum threshold on the ERS to attain a rating level of quality in Early Achievers has been set at 3.0, as previous research has shown that overall ERS scores are predictive of some child outcomes.

The ERS scales are designed to assess *process quality* in early childhood classrooms. Process quality refers to the various interactions that go on in a classroom between staff and children, staff, parents, and other adults, among the children themselves, as well as the interactions children have with their environment including space, schedule, materials, and activities that support these interactions. Process quality is assessed primarily through observation and has been found to be more predictive of child outcomes than structural indicators such as staff to child ratio, group size, cost of care, and type of care.¹⁶

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS): CLASS measures the quality of interactions between providers and children. Facilities must score a minimum of 2.0 on Instructional Support/Engaged Support for Learning and 3.5 on Emotional Support and Classroom Organization/Emotional and Behavioral Support. These domains measure:

- 👉 **CLASS Instructional Support/Engaged Support for Learning:** Discussion and activities that encourage development of children’s reasoning and logic skills, frequent conversations with open-ended questions and advanced language, use of children’s past knowledge and understanding to build upon and increase learning, and active and engaged children.
- 👉 **CLASS Emotional Support & Classroom Organization/Emotional and Behavioral Support:** Warm and respectful relationships, responsive providers, awareness of children’s needs, proactive behavior management, and organized routines that maximize learning time and children’s involvement.

Quality Standards: Early Achievers Quality Standards provide a roadmap for planning and implementing quality early learning services, which includes goals for children and families, the experiences and materials provided by the facility to help children achieve those goals, and how providers and families work together to support children. The quality standards are comprised of five areas of quality: child outcomes, learning environment and interactions, curriculum and staff supports, professional development and training, and family engagement and partnership.

¹⁶ Source: <http://www.ersi.info/scales.html>

The Early Achievers Standards Validation Study: Published in May 2016, the Early Achievers Standards Validation Study addressed whether the quality standards and assessments of Early Achievers are associated with measurable gains in children’s outcomes across developmental domains. UW Cultivate Learning conducted this study from June 2014 through December 2015 in partnership with the Department of Early Learning.

The validation study used records review; surveys with early learning professionals, parents and families; observational assessments of center care classrooms and family child care homes; and individual direct child assessments to explore whether children who attend higher-rated Early Achievers sites show greater gains than children who attend lower-rated Early Achievers sites. The study also sought to determine how Early Achievers’ quality standards and instruments are associated with children’s learning.

The final analyses found that children made greater developmental gains in sites with higher-level ratings than in sites with lower ratings in the learning domains of receptive language, expressive language, and fine motor skills. A relationship of practical significance was found between site ratings for professional development and children’s acquisition of letter word knowledge. The study also found some associations between domains of CLASS and child outcomes including receptive language, letter word knowledge, fine motor skills, and early writing. In addition, there were positive associations between the Environmental Rating Scales (ERS) – when alternative administration was used – and gains in receptive language, early science, expressive language, cognitive, and social-emotional skills. The full study is available on the DEL website.¹⁷

The results and recommendations from Washington’s 2016 QRIS Validation Study have been used by DEL staff and partners to inform changes to both our quality standards and the weighting of those standards in 2017. These changes include removing standards that were not shown to correlate with positive outcomes for children and increasing the points received for standards that showed high correlation with child outcomes. In the spirit of continuous improvement, DEL and UW Cultivate Learning are planning additional analyses of these and future data to further validate and inform improvements in Early Achievers, especially for vulnerable children.

Early Achievers Practice Changes in 2017

The three primary implementing partners – DEL, Child Care Aware of Washington, and UW Cultivate Learning – work together to assess the progress of Early Achievers implementation and to develop recommendations for future changes. These changes are typically made each year on July 1 and reflect the learning from the prior year of implementation as well as the stage of development of the system. The major practice changes made in July 2017 include those in the areas of increased support for quality improvements and system enhancements, improved accommodations for diverse providers, and implementation efficiencies.

¹⁷ <https://del-public-files.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/EA%20Report%205.31.16.pdf>

Increased Support for Quality Improvements and System Enhancements

Quality Standards and Point Distribution: Based on the results of the University of Washington's 2016 validity study, DEL eliminated three existing standards, reduced the points for two standards, and increased the number of points possible for the ERS. These changes simplified the rating process and ensured that the Early Achievers Quality Standards are linked to positive child outcomes.

Streamlined Data Collection: Changes in the distribution of Quality Standard points allow facilities that are ready for the on-site evaluation to choose the components they want to include in their rating. Facilities may now select either a streamlined evaluation that includes the ERS and CLASS assessments or full data collection that includes the ERS, CLASS, and a review of all Quality Standard components selected by the participant. Professional development point calculation is part of both the full and streamlined data collection. These changes allow for more targeted rating readiness coaching, simplify the rating process, and ensure that quality improvement is linked to positive child outcomes.

Substitute Pool: In 2017, DEL and the Imagine Institute partnered to create a substitute pool for providers working toward an initial rating of Level 3 or higher. The substitute pool provides services to participating child care centers and family home child care providers serving children receiving child care subsidies. Qualifying participants may request substitutes for time spent participating in approved Early Achievers rating readiness activities. All substitutes meet the current minimum education standard for a licensed facility lead teacher, have completed DEL training, and have a cleared Portable Background Check.

Accreditation Recognition: As mandated by the ESA of 2015, the Early Achievers Review Subcommittee (EARS) worked with the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) to develop a method to recognize providers that have demonstrated a commitment to quality through national accreditation. Eligible participants now receive an additional five points toward their final rating, as well as an Accreditation Area of Specialization on their rating certificate.

Simplified Curricular and Assessment Alignment: Since Early Achievers began, providers have submitted evidence to demonstrate alignment to state curricular and assessment guidelines through the Curricular and WaKIDS alignment tools. Together with the University of Washington, DEL has created a list of those curricula and assessments that have demonstrated alignment. Providers using any of the aligned curricula and assessments no longer need to complete the alignment tools. The lists will be updated periodically and participants will receive notification when new curricula/assessments are added. For participants who are using a curriculum or assessment not included on the list, DEL and UW have shortened and simplified the alignment tools. Together, these improvements have simplified the curricula and assessment alignment process for participants.

WA Compass: DEL staff members are working with our partners and vendor to build WA Compass, an integrated data system that includes licensing and Early Achievers provider information and data. This system will offer a more user-friendly Early Achievers journey for participants, which includes greater access to rating data and transparency about the rating process. WA Compass will also improve coordination between Early Achievers and licensing, and create a more efficient rating and quality improvement tracking system. This phase of the WA Compass project is expected to be completed by the end of calendar year 2018.

Children with Behavioral and other Special Needs: Based on early feedback from the field, Early Achievers coaches began in 2016 receiving training through internships at the Haring Center at UW to help them support providers who work with children needing behavioral and other special supports. The focus of the internships is inclusive care where children with and without special needs learn side by side, ensuring all children have equitable opportunities to engage in the early learning environment. Internships include ongoing consultation and mentoring for coaches, with the goal of promoting continuity of care, inclusion of children with special needs, and providing relevant support to providers.

Early Achievers Provider Hotline: As participation in Early Achievers has increased, DEL has taken steps to provide additional supports in an effort to be more responsive to provider needs. In April 2016, DEL launched the Early Achievers Provider Hotline. The hotline number was initially sent to all providers accepting subsidy to answer questions about Early Achievers and facilitate enrollment but has since been expanded to offer assistance to all Early Achievers participants. The Early Achievers hotline offers translation services and supplements the supports offered through the QRIS inbox. Since its inception, the hotline has fielded more than 640 calls from early learning professionals.

Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Support Services: To assist providers with interpreting ERS scoring indicators and better prepare facilities for rating, DEL has focused on building capacity in ERS reliability among Child Care Aware (CCA) of Washington staff. Coaches in each region have achieved high levels of inter-rater reliability¹⁸ and participated in ERS “Train the Trainer” sessions, adding capacity to train others to reliability in each of the 3 ERS measures used in Early Achievers – the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS), and the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale (FCCERS)

This investment has built local capacity and bolstered the confidence of coaches to assist providers. While regional needs on the ERS differ, each region now has the capacity to provide ERS expertise – the six CCA regions have an average of 13 and a minimum of six staff who are reliable in each of the three ERS tools (ECERS, ITERS, FCCERS), for a statewide CCA total of 78 staff reliable on the ECERS, 83 reliable on the ITERS, and 71 reliable on the FCCERS. This investment in widespread ERS reliability increases CCA’s capacity to maintain reliability as a system and provide continuous ERS support to providers across the state.

Licensing Requirements: DEL shifted Early Achievers participant eligibility requirements to allow providers with initial and probationary licenses to complete Level 2 activities, thus eliminating a barrier for newer providers. Providers still need a full non-expiring license to request an on-site evaluation.

Family Outreach: The Early Achievers Family Outreach internal workgroup has worked with the Early Achievers Review Subcommittee (EARS) and the Parent Advisory Group (PAG) to develop and deploy a simplified message to increase awareness of and demand for Early Achievers, including development of promotional materials, an updated webpage for families, and an increased online presence through social media.

¹⁸ Inter-rater reliability, in Early Achievers, is the degree of agreement among data collectors. It gives a score of how much consensus data collectors have when they code a particular measure.

Improved Accommodations for Diverse Providers

Ensuring that Early Achievers works for all early learning educators has been a focused area of improvement. Initial feedback highlighted that Early Achievers participation was difficult for some providers. Improvements to Early Achievers have been made, ensuring that all providers, particularly providers who speak languages other than English, have the supports they need to enhance the quality of their services. Improvements to the supports for these providers in Early Achievers include:

Staff Composition: Child Care Aware Technical Assistance Specialists and coaches reflect community diversity in staff composition and culturally responsive practices. About a third of the 165 CCA staff that provide coaching and technical assistance through Early Achievers speak other languages in addition to English including Spanish, Somali, Russian, Tagalog, Hindi, Arabic, Bahasa Indonesian, Amharic, Ukrainian, and Japanese.

In addition, through experience, training, and actively reflecting on practice, Child Care Aware of Washington and other DEL partners have deepened their understanding of working with racially/ethnically and linguistically diverse providers such that they have developed and implemented a number of specialized approaches. Hiring staff who represent the community and who are able to help bridge the cultural context is important. As important however is taking time to work with providers, building trust, and establishing supportive relationships that emphasize co-learning and “doing with” instead of “doing for”.

Regional Customization: Child Care Aware has increased flexibility to allow for tailored services for unique regional populations, such as specific communities or language groups. Regions with high language diversity have the highest percentage of bilingual staff, including Central (74 percent of staff bilingual in Spanish), Eastern (41 percent staff bilingual in Spanish, including nearly all the staff serving the Tri-Cities area), Northwest (24 percent of staff bilingual in Spanish), and King & Pierce (21 percent of staff bilingual in Spanish, Somali, or Amharic, with additional staff covering half a dozen languages).

Early Achievers Data Collection: The Early Achievers data collection team at UW Cultivate Learning is a group of skilled early learning professionals who are focused on collecting culturally responsive, reliable, and valid data on the quality of early learning environments. The data are provided to early educators and their coaches so they can collaborate and plan for continuous quality improvement.








This team is made up of two smaller groups: *Community Liaisons* and *Data Collectors*. Both data collectors and community liaisons live and work in the communities they serve. These early learning professionals have, at a minimum, bachelor’s degrees in early learning or a related field and have experience working with young children in early learning environments such as family childcares, large centers, small and non-profit programs, the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), Head Start, Montessori, Reggio, and Waldorf programs.

In addition, UW Cultivate Learning honors the government-to-government relationship between Washington State’s 29 sovereign nations and the federal and state government through Tribal liaisons and data collectors who have experience working with Tribal communities or are members themselves. The Tribal liaison’s goal is to support Tribes participating, or considering participation, in Early Achievers.

UW Cultivate Learning offers data collection in many languages. For languages not represented on the team, Cultivate Learning uses an interpreter and headset system for real-time interpretation. Languages currently represented on the team include Cantonese, English, Korean, Mandarin, Somali, Oromo, Uzbek, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Russian.

Early Achievers Institutes: Since 2012, Early Achievers Institutes have been supporting participants in the understanding and implementation of Early Achievers standards, offering sessions ranging from improving instructional support to incorporating developmental screenings. Sessions and handouts are available in English, Spanish, and Somali, and interpretation services are available for all keynote presentations. Additionally, upon registration, participants can request language services in any language they choose, and an interpreter will be provided to them at the institute. Bilingual staff provide direct outreach to Spanish, Somali, Oromo, Russian, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Korean language providers, assisting them with the registration process and providing support at the Institutes. Participants will have opportunities for team building, community connections, and to earn STARS and clock hours. The registration fee of \$30 includes validated parking, breakfast, and lunch for each day a participant attends, as well as all session materials.

Each year, more sessions are offered in languages other than English, and in response to requests from participants more sessions on helping providers support the needs of all children have been offered. In 2017, three Early Achievers Institutes were held in Wenatchee, Bellevue, and Spokane and covered the following topics:

-  High-quality interactions (CLASS focus) and environments (ERS focus)
-  Supporting social and emotional competence (CSEFEL)
-  Evidence-based curriculum implementation
-  Practice-based coaching
-  STEAM-based practical strategies
-  Leadership challenges
-  Continuous quality improvement

BUILD Think Tank: Beginning in 2017 and continuing through 2018, DEL has been selected to participate in BUILD's QRIS think tank. Washington's think tank consists of DEL staff, partners, and stakeholders. The think tank has shared Washington's focus on equity with other states through webinars and conferences and is currently working with a representative from Child Trends and the National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance (NCECQA) to develop a theory of change for equity and communications within Early Achievers.

Equity Work Group: DEL has created an internal equity work group that is tasked with investigating the effect of the use of standardized assessments within Early Achievers on diversity in child care. The group's scope of work will include gathering feedback from providers and partners, reviewing existing standards through an equity lens, and making recommendations based on their findings. The group will engage with EARS to support and supplement the equity working happening within the subcommittee.

Targeted Outreach: DEL works with community organizations and contracts with respected community members to perform outreach.

- 👉 *Level 2 Support:* Child Care Aware Professional Development Academy and level 2 trainings have been held in Spanish and Somali, and provided additional interpretation support for other languages where needed. Child Care Aware of Washington staff also make accommodations to the online trainings by providing them in-person. For example, if a provider speaks a language that is not currently reflected by the CCA of WA staff, a professional interpreter is used to support them.
- 👉 *Voices of Tomorrow:* Voices of Tomorrow is a non-profit organization providing culturally responsive services focused on early childhood education within East African communities in King County. Early Achievers has partnered with Voices of Tomorrow to engage and support providers in these communities. Outreach efforts include Early Achievers participation in the Annual East African Family Child Care Conference and the development of trainings in Somali by Voices of Tomorrow and UW staff. These efforts have resulted in 100 percent Early Achievers participation among Somali providers in King County.

Implementation Efficiencies

Participation agreement: The Early Achievers participation agreement is now required once every three years. Participants sign the agreement upon enrollment and when they request a rating (instead of annually). Incorporating the participation agreement into the three-year rating cycle means providers do not have to provide duplicative information and coaches have more time to focus on supporting participants.

Streamlined Level 2 application: In April 2017, Early Achievers eliminated several steps for providers working on level 2 requirements. The Facility Profile and Facility Self-Assessment were removed from the level 2 application as part of DEL's ongoing efforts to ensure that Early Achievers components are relevant for providers and contribute to positive outcomes for children and families.

Simplified file sampling: As part of DEL's commitment to streamlining the data collection process for providers, data collectors now sample child files, instead of reviewing all files. Beginning July 16, 2017, data collectors began reviewing one-third or three child files in each sampled classroom, whichever is greater.

Mobile data collection: DEL has contracted with Branagh Information Group to incorporate their ERS mobile application into our ratings process. Together with the CLASS mobile application that is being built as part of the WA Compass project, these tools will make the data collection process more efficient and reduce the likelihood of data entry errors.

Orientation: As part of our efforts to provide coordinated services, DEL is incorporating the Early Achievers orientation into the licensing orientation for new providers. In addition to providing more scheduling options, this shift in policy also allows Licensors to have a greater role in recruiting and enrolling providers in Early Achievers.

MERIT Improvements: Over the last year, enhancements have been made to the MERIT¹⁹ and WELS²⁰ data systems to improve the functionality and ease of use for providers, DEL and other partners:

- 👉 Built free and paid re-rating choices, so providers can choose to re-rate in between initial and renewal ratings, in order to meet their required rating levels.
- 👉 Removed the automatic withdrawal from Early Achievers for providers who do not sign their Participation Agreements by the required dates.
- 👉 Removed the requirement for providers to complete an Orientation Training prior to being able to access the Early Achievers registration application.
- 👉 Built the Early Achievers Participation Monitoring Report so DEL could track the progress of providers required to participate in Early Achievers (non-school-age providers receiving state subsidy and those serving ECEAP).
- 👉 Built the Barcode upload process to send data from the monitoring report to the DSHS Barcode system so that DSHS case workers know which providers are in compliance with Early Achievers milestones.
- 👉 Built the percent subsidy calculation process to determine which providers are eligible for Quality Improvement Awards. This process runs automatically.
- 👉 Also built a manual QI award process to pay providers who receive other types of subsidy and are not eligible under the automated process.
- 👉 Streamlined the Level 2 application and made the approval process automatic.
- 👉 Created the streamlined Level 3 rating option, where providers can choose to be rated only on ERS, CLASS, and professional development points.
- 👉 Renewal ratings may now be requested up to 12 months before participants' current rating expires (instead of six months) to provide greater flexibility for participants.

Early Achievers Framework for Continuous Quality Improvement

Continuous quality improvement is a foundational element of Early Achievers participation. The responsibility for continuous quality improvement lies with DEL and its implementing partners – Child Care Aware of Washington, UW Cultivate Learning, and Early Achievers providers.

Providers enrolled in Early Achievers agree to engage in an ongoing process of learning, developing improvement plans, implementing and testing those plans, evaluating the results, and then making modifications. This cycle provides a path for providers to build on current strengths and capacities to grow and offer the highest quality early learning programs to children. It also provides a path to the Department of Early Learning for how the agency accomplishes its own work.


DEL wishes to be intentional about building a learning system with multiple feedback loops at multiple levels that is continuously improving. In such a system, collaboration, coordination, and communication with external partners and providers are essential. These goals are supported by and accomplished through a variety of approaches, including coordinated strategies, efficient infrastructure, and utilizing feedback from the Early Achievers Review Subcommittee and participating providers.


¹⁹ MERIT is DEL's Managed Education and Registry Information Tool, which serves as the state's early learning professional registry.


²⁰ WELS is DEL's provider portal, and serves as the electronic repository for Early Achiever's rating data.

Coordinated Strategies

With limited resources, it is imperative that services designed to support high-need children and families work together across agencies and departments. DEL is prioritizing the development of a coordinated approach to our work that maximizes services to children and families while looking for efficiencies within DEL and with our state agency partners.

 **Cross-Agency Collaboration:** Multiple state agencies manage programs designed to benefit children and families. The Department of Early Learning recognizes that the health and safety of young children has a tremendous impact on their learning and is working with other state agencies to develop strategies that support the many interconnected needs of children and families more efficiently and effectively. DEL has convened a cross-agency communications group that meets each month and includes representatives from the Department of Health, the Department of Social and Health Services, Child Care Aware of Washington, SEIU 925, Thrive Washington, the Washington State Head Start and ECEAP Association, among others.

 **Aligning Systems:** DEL is working to establish a common set of expectations and standards that define, measure, and improve the quality of early learning and child care and education settings. This includes the development and implementation of a single set of standards for child care and the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program within the Early Achievers framework.

 To develop these new standards, DEL has implemented a collaborative, state-wide approach that includes a statewide community-based Alignment Advisory Committee, an internal DEL Steering Committee, and a statewide community input process that includes reaching out to diverse communities, such as tribes, racial and ethnic communities, cultural and linguistic communities, and child care providers (both centers and family home child care). The Steering Committee and the Advisory Committee have dedicated many hours to the alignment work.

Cross-Agency Collaboration:

Key Goals

- All of Washington’s child-focused agencies align services for high-need children and families.
- Cross-sector mechanisms, resources, and structures reflect, support, and sustain shared vision, collaborative relationships, and mutual accountabilities between all of Washington’s child-focused services.




Aligning Systems:

Key Goals

- Align health and safety standards to ensure sustainable wellbeing of children.
- Address quality issues by establishing and implementing consistent and coordinated monitoring processes and protocols.
- Promote the ongoing improvement of health and safety practices for all early learning settings.

Efficient Infrastructure

DEL is committed to using data to inform decisions and assess the effectiveness of our work. DEL has focused on improving our infrastructure in order to access the data we need and do a real-time, in-house analysis of that data by:

-  Creating an in-house Research and Analysis team to allow for quicker, cost effective, and more flexible analysis of data.
-  Working toward improving the licensing system to support modern architecture and implement less intrusive research-based and data-informed practices focused on children’s health and safety.
-  Field testing ways to create and implement an attendance tracking software to improve ease of data collection for DEL and early learning providers, ensure federal auditing compliance, and track data to analyze progress toward improving child outcomes.




Efficient Infrastructure:

Key Goals

- Data systems support staff and provider base to achieve quality improvement goals.
- Sufficient internal DEL capacity and capability.

Early Achievers Review Subcommittee

The subcommittee of the statewide Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) provides feedback and guidance on strategies to improve the quality of instruction and environment for early learning, as well as providing input and recommendations on the implementation and refinement of Early Achievers. In January 2016 the subcommittee established a work plan focused on the continuous quality improvement of Early Achievers. The minutes for all subcommittee meetings are available on the DEL website. Three bodies of work the subcommittee focused on this past year are inclusion, revisions to quality standards, and rating barriers.

-  *Inclusion:* In Fall 2017, EARS heard from the Department of Health and inclusive child care providers about the lack of quality child care for children with special needs and barriers faced by providers currently serving or wishing to serve these children and their families. EARS discussed barriers and opportunities to support inclusion within the Early Achievers system and has begun the process of identifying strategies to increase supports for children with special needs among Early Achievers providers. This work will continue into 2018.
-  *Quality standards and data collection:* The subcommittee reviewed the proposed quality standards revisions and identified short-term and long-term goals for standards review and data collection. Short-term proposals included the elimination of the need for providers to assemble a file of supporting materials, which had previously been identified as a barrier. Long-term goals focused on helping providers view data collection as an opportunity to engage more meaningfully in continuous quality improvement rather than as a test and identifying ways to recognize unique provider strengths and diversity within the rating system.
-  *Early Achievers barriers:* Last year, the committee worked with community organizations to identify a number of barriers at each phase of Early Achievers, including registration, rating, data systems, supports, and resources. This information was shared with their home communities to learn what actions were already in process to address the identified barriers. In 2017, the committee addressed barriers around rating and supports and resources. Members identified a need to ensure that resources were accessible and meaningful for diverse providers and identify possible cultural conflicts within the Quality Standards. The committee is reviewing data and

soliciting information from implementation partners to help understand the scope of the supports and identify the gaps in services. This work will be ongoing.

EARS members are currently examining ways to make meetings more productive and increase opportunities for stakeholder engagement. Their goal for 2018 is to create time and space to address topics in a way that encourages stakeholder involvement and ensure that multiple feedback loops are in place and informing the recommendations proposed by EARS members. The subcommittee has prioritized the following areas for review in 2018:

- 👉 Review data related to technical assistance and coaching and make recommendations to improve their impact.
- 👉 Propose strategies in response to data on the effectiveness of Early Achievers program standards in relation to providers and children from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- 👉 Examine the use of standardized assessments during the on-site evaluation through a racial equity lens and propose strategies to reduce the impact on the diversity of care.
- 👉 Continue to monitor the impact of the subsidy mandate on the availability of care and propose strategies as needed.
- 👉 Review member participation to ensure diverse perspectives are represented and suggest improvements to eliminate barriers to participate in the subcommittee.
- 👉 Provide feedback on standards alignment related to the progressions for Early Achievers and ECEAP.
- 👉 Addressing the cost of quality and its impact on the availability and quality of care for all children in Washington.

Participant Feedback

Participant feedback informs and influences change within Early Achievers and comes from both formal and informal sources:

- 🔴 *Training feedback:* Every training (in-person and online) includes a post-training participant survey.
- 🔴 *Exit survey:* Participants that withdraw from Early Achievers are asked to complete an exit survey.
- 🔴 *Rating feedback:* Participants are given the opportunity to submit feedback immediately after onsite data collection takes place.
- 🔴 *Ongoing feedback:* Child Care Aware of Washington coaches and Technical Assistance Specialists receive ongoing feedback from providers and share that feedback internally.
- 🔴 *Licensors:* Beginning in September 2016, DEL Early Achievers staff serve as communication liaisons for each licensing region, allowing licensors to share provider questions and concerns directly with the Early Achievers team.
- 🔴 *QRIS inbox and Early Achievers Provider Hotline:* The QRIS inbox and provider hotline give participants the opportunity to directly communicate with DEL Early Achievers staff.
- 🔴 *Early Learning Regional Coalitions:* DEL partners with Thrive Washington to attain feedback through the Early Learning Regional Coalitions.
- 🔴 *Early Achievers Review Subcommittee:* While some members of the Early Achievers Review Subcommittee are Early Achievers participants, all members are encouraged to bring feedback from participants in their home communities to the group.

- *Annual Survey and Focus Groups:* Child Care Aware of WA conducts a statewide annual survey of all Early Achievers participants; focus groups are led by independent evaluators in a few different cities each year. DEL also conducts an online annual survey of Early Achievers participants, available in English and Spanish, and is assessing the most effective way to reach providers with other language needs.

As part of DEL's focus on prioritizing responsive, system-wide improvements, DEL has developed an Early Achievers Provider Feedback Protocol and Tracking System. Together, these procedures give DEL the ability to track and monitor trends in Early Achievers feedback while ensuring timely responses to participant input.

During the course of 2017, provider feedback indicated that some Early Achievers providers feel that subsidy rates are too low, that for some providers the annual quality improvement awards are not enough of an incentive to continue to serve subsidy-eligible children nor to incentivize private providers to serve subsidy-eligible children. These concerns appear especially pronounced among providers who are at or near the 5 percent requirement for quality improvement awards, where the loss of one subsidy child can make the difference between receiving the award or not.

In the 2017 report of Early Achievers Annual Survey and Focus Groups, Early Achievers providers and staff reported improvements in the implementation of Early Achievers, but expressed concerns with the lack of sustainability of quality improvements in light of what they perceive as low subsidy rates, and the need for improved supports for non-English speaking providers. From the report's final evaluation:

"Providers and staff are reporting improvements in areas that have been ongoing challenges in the past. The amount and type of information available on rating results has improved, and staff feel much more confident about what is required to prepare providers for ratings. Staff and providers appreciate the efforts made to translate materials into other languages and to provide more examples of family child care programs in the training materials. Staff also expressed gratitude for the increases in training, supervision, and staff resources from their regions and CCA of WA, and are reporting fewer workload challenges than they experienced in the past.

"Providers and staff also provided some constructive recommendations for improvement. Family child care centers and their TA and RRC staff would still like to have more visual examples of high-quality family child care programs, and would like all training materials to be fully developed for providers who speak languages other than English. Staff and providers would both still like to have more detailed information on their rating results. This would help providers better understand their ratings, and help Early Achievers staff develop more effective coaching plans. Staff also expressed the need for more fully developed supports, supervision and structure for the coaching phase, to help them more effectively serve the increasing number of providers in coaching and preparing for their three-year renewal ratings.

"Lastly, providers and staff continue to be concerned about the administrative and financial impacts of Early Achievers on child care providers that serve low-income communities and which have many children on subsidy. Many providers continue to express worry that remaining in Early Achievers is not financially sustainable for them,

and staff are concerned that the financial costs, combined with low subsidy rates, will lead to these providers closing their businesses, resulting in a reduction in child care options for low-income children” (page 46).

Key Accomplishments:

- 🕒 System responsiveness to providers and partners, making modifications as needed.
- 🕒 Using data to make informed decisions and program improvements.
- 🕒 Streamlining the participation process by simplifying the application for level 2 and offering a streamlined rating option to providers.
- 🕒 Developing the Remedial Activities Policy and a menu of tools and supporting resources.
- 🕒 Creating multiple opportunities for targeted, individualized, and culturally responsive outreach and communication.

Key Challenges:

- 🚫 Providers are entering Early Achievers at varying levels of quality and successful participation requires tailored, differentiated services based on their unique needs.
- 🚫 Changes, even when positive, can be confusing to the field and difficult to implement.
- 🚫 Maintaining a healthy balance between understanding the current baseline of quality and pushing for quality improvements.
- 🚫 Longer term, there is need to better understand the actual cost of implementing high-quality early learning so as to most efficiently and effectively align incentives.

Next Steps:

- 👉 DEL is working to streamline standards through an alignment process by eliminating duplication or conflicts with licensing standards.
- 👉 DEL and its partners will continue to simplify the participation process without compromising the commitment to quality by eliminating barriers.
- 👉 DEL and its partners will better align pre-rating trainings and initial data collection and rating.
- 👉 DEL is undertaking a “cost of quality” study to better understand the actual cost of implementing high quality early learning, using methodology and support from the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO).
- 👉 Continue developing changes to the training and supports offered to providers in level 2 in order to better align pre-rating training with preparing providers strategically for their initial data collection and rating.

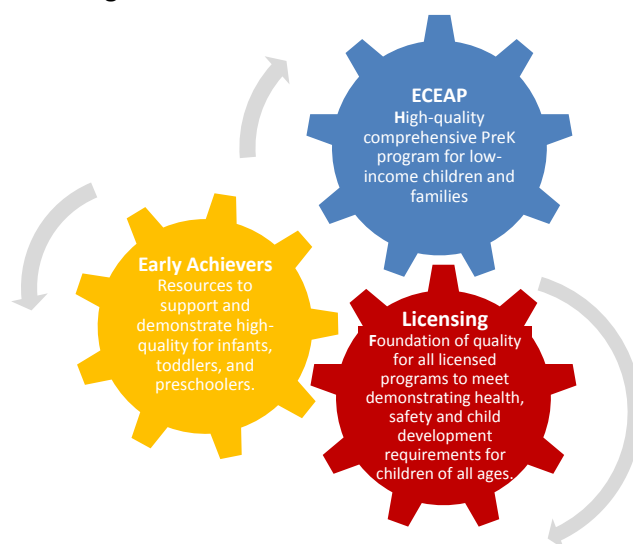
CHAPTER 7: Standards Alignment

As directed in the Early Start Act, the Department of Early Learning (DEL) is working to create a single set of licensing standards for child care licensing, Early Achievers, and ECEAP. “The department shall streamline and eliminate duplication between early achievers standards and state child care rules in order to reduce costs associated with the early achievers rating cycle and child care licensing”.²¹ The Early Start Act specifies that the single set of licensing standards must:

- 👉 Provide minimum health and safety standards for child care and state-funded preschool programs;
- 👉 Rely on the standards established in the Early Achievers program to address quality issues in participating early childhood programs;
- 👉 Take into account the separate needs of family child care home providers and child care centers; and
- 👉 Promote the continued safety of child care settings.

What is Standards Alignment?

Children receive services in many different early learning settings. During their early years many children will attend some combination of early care and education programs. These programs may be licensed, participating in Early Achievers, and/or offering ECEAP services. To provide children the greatest benefit, it is essential that these early learning programs all operate with a consistent foundation of quality.



Why is alignment good for children and families?

The aligned standards inform families about quality as they decide which programs and opportunities are best for their children.

Why is alignment good for early learning providers?

Aligned standards simplify the process for early learning providers to engage in quality improvement efforts and clarify the steps to participate in licensing, Early Achievers, and ECEAP.

Why is alignment good for Washington?

The aligned standards support efficiency, clarify rules, and link high-quality early learning experiences with children’s success in school and life.

²¹ 1491 Sec 2(5)

The current rules and standards for these various programs were developed independently. While the existing rules and quality performance standards already exhibit much alignment between licensing, Early Achievers, and ECEAP, there are some areas of inconsistencies in the standards and requirements. The standards alignment process is examining the requirements and standards for each of these programs, making sure there is consistency and clarity in the rules and intentionally aligning the requirements to form a clear progression of quality.

Aligning the quality standards across program types offers a streamlined administrative process for providers, particularly benefiting those offering multiple services. In addition, it allows DEL to provide consistent supports to providers engaging in quality improvement efforts.

Last, it provides assurances to families about the quality of the programs they are accessing. This will support all providers to be able to offer high-quality services to children and families.

Guiding Principles of Standards Alignment

In 2015, in collaboration with stakeholders, DEL created a set of guiding principles for the Standards Alignment process that have provided guidance for all aspects of the process including:

- 👋 **Evaluation and Observation:** ongoing evaluation and observation of the standards monitoring compliance in a variety of settings;
- 👋 **Simplicity and Clarity:** establish plain, consistent, and measurable language for the standards;
- 👋 **Efficiency:** eliminate duplication and inconsistencies in the standards;
- 👋 **Transparency:** clearly defined levels that align with each other;
- 👋 **Community Engagement:** an ongoing state to local collaboration process to seek stakeholders' expertise;
- 👋 **Equity and Community Impact:** be aware of racial, cultural, linguistic, and other education systems inequalities that impact the state opportunity gap populations; and
- 👋 **Cultural Humility:** maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the person.



Objectives of Standards Alignment

- 👋 Quality begins at licensing. All sites meet licensing health and safety standards as the foundation of quality.
- 👋 Standards are clear and measurable.
- 👋 Standards provide a progression from licensing through Early Achievers and ECEAP.

- 👉 Duplication is eliminated and similar language is used across licensing, Early Achievers, and ECEAP.
- 👉 Early learning providers can see the progression of the standards and understand the expectations of Early Achievers and, if they receive funding, ECEAP.

Process to Develop Aligned Standards

There are two important elements of aligning the standards across programs:

1. Updating licensing, Early Achievers, and ECEAP requirements.
2. Creating a progression of standards and regulations between licensed child care, Early Achievers, and ECEAP, so that the early learning system has a unified set of regulations that are easy to understand by providers in the field.

Updating Licensing, Early Achievers, and ECEAP requirements

Standards alignment began in early 2015 with a focus on updating the current regulations for licensing, Early Achievers, and ECEAP. Licensing regulations are the foundation for quality in licensed sites as well as Early Achievers and ECEAP. Therefore, revising the licensing standards was the first step in aligning Early Achievers and ECEAP.

DEL began the standards alignment work with development of a community input process, an analysis of the existing standards, and consultation with national experts on standards development. DEL also had to ensure consistency between family child care homes and child care centers-based licensing standards as one of the first priorities of the Standards Alignment process.

Creating a Progression of Standards and Regulations

The Early Start Act mandated that DEL update the child care licensing rules so that the early learning system has a unified set of foundational health, safety, and child development regulations that are easy to understand and align with other requirements by providers in the field. In this complex process, DEL has organized the standards for licensing, Early Achievers, and ECEAP within the same set of categories, based on the Early Achievers framework:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| 👉 Intent and Authority | 👉 Professional Development, Training, and Requirements |
| 👉 Administration and Oversight | 👉 Environments |
| 👉 Child Outcomes | 👉 Interactions and Curriculum |
| 👉 Family Engagement and Partnerships | |

In 2016, the Early Achievers and ECEAP teams began assessing and revising the standards for each of those programs with a priority of ensuring consistency between program standards and allowing for efficiency on many levels:

- 👉 Licensing, Early Achievers, and ECEAP will have clear, unduplicated requirements that are consistent across programs. For example, a standard that is included in child care licensing will no longer be listed separately for Early Achievers or ECEAP;

- 👉 Standards will build upon each other, enabling early learning providers to see the differences in standards and how Early Achievers builds on licensing and how ECEAP builds on licensing and Early Achievers;
- 👉 DEL will plan coordinated monitoring of licensing, Early Achievers, and ECEAP to streamline the monitoring processes in order to reduce duplicate visits for providers.

Standards have been structured to make sure that there is a clear and consistent progression of the standards from licensing, Early Achievers, and ECEAP. Duplicated standards were eliminated and consistency was achieved through research, discussion, and decision-making.

Each standard in all three programs has been carefully considered, revised when appropriate, aligned with the other programs, and shared with community stakeholders for feedback. This iterative process will continue until the standards are finalized. For more information about standards alignment process please visit DEL website (<https://del.wa.gov/government/standards-alignment>).

Weighted WACs

All licensing rules provide a foundation of protection for children. Each rule is designed to provide for the health, safety, and development of children in licensed care. However, a violation of some standards poses a greater risk to children than others. After being legislatively mandated to complete a standards alignment process as part of the Early Start Act, DEL decided to go a step further and weight the licensing standards. The process of “weighting” licensing standards will identify those rules that are most important for keeping children safe. Weighting standards will allow an enforcement system that matches up with the level of risk to children and DEL will ensure that enforcement of these rules is both timely and consistent. DEL will also provide more information and clarity about the risk of each standard and the consequences for violations.

Goals of Weighted WAC Process

- 👉 Protect children from direct and indirect harm;
- 👉 Establish a common understanding of risk;
- 👉 Help identify and address trends, disparities, and risk to children more effectively and efficiently;
- 👉 Support consistency of actions taken for similar compliance history; and
- 👉 Clarify the connection between not complying with a regulation and the consequences.

Process for Weighing the WACs

The weighted WAC methodology adopted by DEL is based on Dr. Richard Fiene’s national best practices model for child care weighted risk assessment. Two parallel processes were conducted to collect input from stakeholders from across Washington:

- 1) **Focus Groups:** In December 2016 and January 2017 DEL, in partnership with Public Consulting Group, Inc., Thrive Washington, and local regional coalitions, DEL facilitated 14 focus groups across the state of Washington. The goal was to collect input from key stakeholders in the field of early childhood education on which regulations within the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) should be included in a survey to be weighted in accordance with best practices for

differential monitoring. For more information about the focus group process and results, see the Washington Weighted WAC Survey Final Report in the appendix.

- 2) **Surveys:** DEL and its contractors designed a Washington Weighted WAC Survey to ask an array of expert participants to designate the weight – or level of risk – of the proposed licensing rules. The survey was made available for a three-week period, from February 20 to March 13. Frequently asked questions (FAQ) and a live-recorded webinar offered information about the process, survey methodology, and logistics. In addition, a dedicated e-mail address and toll-free hotline were made available to participants throughout the survey to provide participants with technical assistance. 391 people participated in the survey, and the results of the survey will be used to determine the “weight” of each of the regulations. For more information about the survey process and results, see the Weighted Washington Administrative Code (WAC) Licensing Survey Informational Document in the appendix.

In order to ensure the accuracy of the risk assessment to identify provider needs, DEL will need to validate the enforcement system. This will be completed through four validation processes over the next 18 months. The first step is to ensure the aligned regulations correlate with national best practice through a standards validation process. This step will begin as soon as Negotiated Rule Making is complete.

The second step will be to validate the weights themselves during a four- to six-month pilot of the new regulations and enforcement system. This will ensure weighted regulations correlate with the risk assessment scores by ensuring non-compliance is occurring in the more highly non-compliant programs and vice versa. Also during the same pilot, DEL will gather data to ensure the risk assessment scores match the licensing and enforcement decisions being made. The pilot used to complete the second two steps of validation will take place before the proposed regulations and weights are put into effect and may begin as early as summer 2018.

The final validation will be to compare the risk assessment rules to outcome data such as injury reports as well as licensing and enforcement actions. This final validation will take place over a 12-month period and will begin as soon as the proposed regulations go into effect.



Community Feedback

Hearing from communities is an essential part of the Standards Alignment process. DEL has provided a variety of options for community members and stakeholders to provide feedback into all aspects of the Standards Alignment process including:

Negotiated Rule Making

DEL is required by statute to organize a public comments process, as well as negotiate rules with the family child care home providers' union on behalf of represented family child care licensees, and include all other affected parties in this negotiation. DEL has created a robust plan to engage the early learning community in the public comments process, and to negotiate with the various affected parties in this situation, including child care centers, ECEAP and Head Start providers, and families. There are three ways to participate in Negotiated Rule Making:

- 1) **Negotiated Rule Making meetings:** In Negotiated Rule Making, stakeholder groups are brought together in a facilitated process to discuss all licensing standards with the opportunity to come to consensus in their recommendation to the Department of Early Learning. Stakeholder groups, representing those that are impacted by the licensing requirements, include:
 - 👉 **Center providers** (coordinated by Thrive Washington);
 - 👉 **Families/parents** (coordinated by Child Care Aware of Washington);
 - 👉 **ECEAP/Head Start providers** (coordinated by Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP)
 - 👉 **Family child care home providers** (coordinated by SEIU); and
 - 👉 **DEL team** (coordinated by the DEL licensing division).
- 2) **Public comments:** DEL is required by statute [RCW 34.05.320](#) to organize a public comments process, as well as negotiate rules with the family child care home providers' union on behalf of represented family child care licensees, and include all other affected parties in this negotiation. DEL has created a [public comments portal](#) that allows for feedback on both preliminary drafts and proposed rule changes.
- 3) **Alignment Community Cafés:** Some people prefer to share their comments in a community meeting, instead of typing them into an online portal. In support of that, DEL, in partnership with Thrive Washington, has encouraged groups to self-organize conversations or Community Cafés to gather feedback.

Some of the guiding principles of the NRM process include:

- 👉 Decisions are made by consensus and participants understand that consensus means support for or at least acceptance of the proposed rule.
- 👉 All positions and agreements on specific issues are tentative and may be modified until there is a final decision on an acceptable package that addresses all issues.
- 👉 Constituents may have to ratify decisions agreed to by their representatives at the negotiating table and that all parties, including DEL representatives, may have to seek approval from organization representatives who have final decision-making authority.
- 👉 Ensure adequate, equitable, and diverse representation per state-wide data.

There are 113 standards that are being discussed in the Negotiated Rule Making process. As of November 19, 2017, all 113 standards have been negotiated and consensus has been reached on 66 percent of the standards.




Status	# of Standards
Total number of standards being negotiated	113
Consensus reached	75
Partial consensus reached	10
Sections tabled for further discussion	5
In queue for consensus	23

Negotiated Rule Making began in early 2017 and expected to be completed in February 2018.

For more information about the Negotiated Rule Making process please visit DEL website (<https://del.wa.gov/Negotiated-Rule-Making>), and also see the Department of Early Learning Negotiated Rule Making protocol in the appendix.

Standards Alignment Advisory Committee

Beyond the statutory requirements of the Early Start Act, DEL recognized the need to seek input, guidance, and participation of our early learning partners to serve as advisors to the standards alignment process. DEL sought out committee participation from numerous child-centered organizations, educators, parents, providers, trainers, and advocates. In addition, DEL sought a diversity of perspectives, taking into account geography, race/ethnicity, and stakeholder types. These individuals advised DEL on the standards alignment of licensing by:

-  Sharing their expertise and experience;
-  Informing the principles, framework, and approach; and
-  Playing an active role in community outreach and engagement.

The Standards Alignment Committee members provided invaluable input and this process would not have been possible without their participation. The following meeting materials document the Advisory Committee's participation in this process.

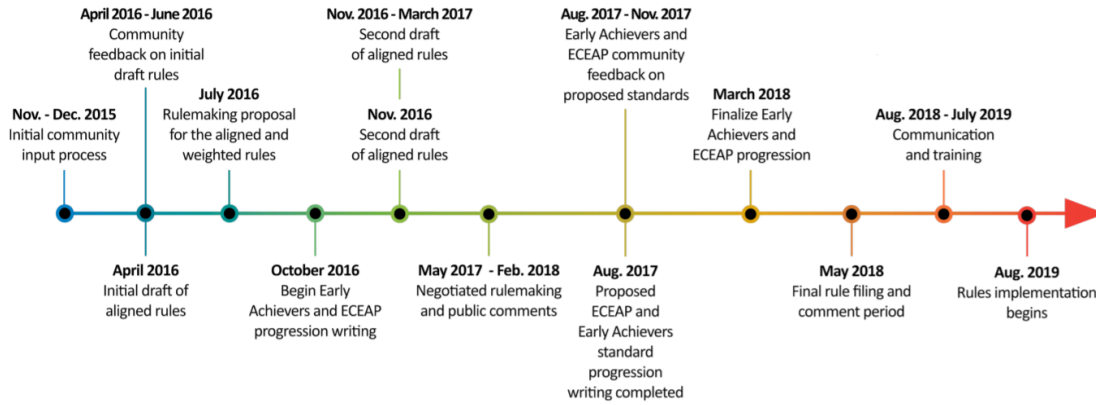
ECEAP Community Engagement Meetings

DEL worked with Thrive Washington to solicit feedback from Early Achievers and ECEAP providers on the proposed set of standards during the fall of 2017. These regional groups reviewed a subset of the standards, paying particular attention to standards that changed significantly or are of high interest. Many standards are being simplified and/or eliminated and will not be discussed at the community meetings; however, a full set of the proposed changes is at <https://del.wa.gov/government/ea-eceap-alignment>. Thrive is compiling the community feedback and will release a full report in early 2018. DEL will provide companion information detailing how the feedback was used to finalize the standards.

Timeline

The Standards Alignment process will continue through August of 2019 when all rules will take effect. Please see the timeline below for more information.

Figure 21. Negotiated Rule Making Timeline



CHAPTER 8: Promoting Quality Expansion of ECEAP

Washington launched its comprehensive Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) in 1985 to prepare 3- and 4-year-old children from low-income families for success in school and in life. ECEAP focuses on the well-being of the whole child by providing comprehensive nutrition, health, education, and family support services to young children from Washington’s lowest-income households. ECEAP reaches the children most in need of these foundations for learning, with a focus on children in families with household income at or below 110 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). The program is aligned with nationally-researched programs that have shown strong returns on investment.

In the short-term, ECEAP is effective at:

- 👉 Increasing children’s social-emotional, physical, and pre-academic skills.
- 👉 Helping families move toward self-sufficiency and build their capacity to support their children’s success.
- 👉 Ensuring that each child receives medical and dental care to start school healthy.

In a longer-term study of ECEAP, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy found that ECEAP has a positive impact on third, fourth, and fifth grade test scores. The study further found that ECEAP’s impact on elementary school test scores is almost twice as large as the average effect of early childhood programs in other states.²²

During the 2017-18 school year, ECEAP is serving 12,491 children at 365 sites. DEL administers ECEAP through 52 contracts with school districts, educational service districts, community colleges, local governments, tribal organizations, child care centers and homes, and non-profits. Table 13 below details ECEAP sites by location type.

Table 13. ECEAP Sites by Location Type, 2017-18

Facility Type	# Sites	% Sites
Public Schools	198	54.2%
Child Care Centers	49	13.4%
Head Start Facilities	42	11.5%
Non-Profit Facilities	39	10.7%
Faith-based Facilities	18	4.9%
Other	19	5.2%
TOTAL	365	100%

Since 2011, the legislature has increased ECEAP slots for children by 56 percent (4,467 slots) and has allocated funding for an additional 1,000 slots beginning in 2018-19. Based on the February 2018 estimates of the Caseload Forecast Council, ECEAP will need 5,185 more slots by fall of 2022 to serve all eligible children who are likely to participate.














²² Washington State Institute for Public Policy (2014) Outcome Evaluation of Washington State’s Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program.

Prior to 2008, ECEAP was a part-day-only model. Preschool class sessions were a minimum of 2.5 hours per day and 240 hours per year. In 2008, the ECEAP program model was increased to a minimum of 320 hours per year. In the 2015-16 ECEAP expansion, new part-day slots required a minimum of three hours a day and 360 hours per year, and the new full-school-day and extended-day models were added on a limited scale. Full-school-day slots average six hours per day and a minimum of 1,000 hours per year. Extended-day is year-round, and available 10 hours per day. Table 14 below details the distribution of program model slots during the 2017-2018 school year.

Table 14. ECEAP Slots by Program Model, 2017-2018

Program Model	# Slots	% Slots
Part Day	10,037	80.3%
Full School Day	1,998	16.0%
Extended Day	456	3.7%
TOTAL	12,491	100%

DEL is not yet able to analyze the impact of ECEAP full-school-day and extended-day models on child development and learning outcomes, due to small numbers of these slots and the fact that most have gone to novice ECEAP sites. However, we can see that these models are enrolling children who on average have different characteristics than those enrolled in traditional part-day ECEAP slots.²³ For example:

-  Children in part-day ECEAP are:
 -  More likely to be Hispanic – 41 percent, compared to 32 percent in full school day and 24 percent in extended day.
 -  More likely to speak Spanish as their home language – 27 percent, compared with 20 percent in full school day and 12 percent in extended day.
 -  More likely to have be on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for special needs – 11 percent, compared to 8 percent in both full school day and extended day.
 -  More likely to have parents employed for wages – 74 percent, compared with 69 percent in full school day and 71 percent in extended day.
 -  More likely to have a parent without a high school diploma or GED – 38 percent, compared with 32 percent in full school day and 14 percent in extended day.
-  Children in full school day ECEAP are:
 -  More likely to speak a home language other than English or Spanish – 15 percent, compared to 8 percent in part day and 4 percent in extended day.
-  Children in full school day and extended day ECEAP are:
 -  More likely to be Black or African-American – 20 percent, compared to 8 percent in part day.
-  Children in extended day ECEAP are:
 -  More likely to speak English as their home language – 84 percent, compared with 65 percent in both part day and full school day.
 -  More likely to be male – 57 percent, compared to 51 percent in part day and 49

²³ Data Source: ELMS 2016-17 Child Demographics Report

- percent in full school day.
- More likely to be in foster or kinship care – 12 percent, compared to 6 percent in part day and 7 percent in full school day.
- More likely to be in single parent families – 61 percent, compared to 41 percent in part day and 45 percent in full school day.
- Most likely to have a parent who is incarcerated – 9 percent, compared with 5 percent in part day and 6 percent in full school day.
- Least likely to have parents with less than a sixth-grade education – 2 percent, compared with 11 percent in part day and 10 percent in full school day.
- More likely to be in families with CPS involvement, substance abuse, or domestic violence.
- Less likely to be in ECEAP 180 or more days – 57 percent, compared to 79 percent in part day and 77 percent in full school day.

Overview of Participating ECEAP Families

ECEAP serves families with demonstrated need, including families at or below 110 percent Federal Poverty Level (\$27,060 for a family of four), children who qualify for special education, families involved with Child Protective Services (CPS) or Family Assessment Response (FAR), or children with developmental or environmental risk factors related to school success.

Table 15. ECEAP Child/Family Characteristics, 2017-2018

Race/Ethnicity	
American Indian/Alaska Native	2.0%
Asian	3.7%
Black/African American	9.3%
Hispanic/Latino	41.7%
Multiracial/other	6.5%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1.5%
White	35.4%
Unknown	0.0%
Home Language	
English	65.0%
Other	7.4%
Spanish	26.0%
Somali	1.6%
Family Income	
<=50% FPL	35.1%
50.1%-80% FPL	22.4%
80.1%-110% FPL	29.4%
>110% FPL*	13.1%

All racial groups reported as non-Hispanic

**This includes children with IEPs who are exempted from the statutory 10 percent limit on children above 110 percent federal poverty level.*

ECEAP Improves Child Outcomes

All ECEAP contractors assess the progress of participating children quarterly using Teaching Strategies GOLD® Online (TS GOLD®), a valid and reliable whole-child observational assessment. DEL can access all ECEAP GOLD® child data entered under the DEL agency license, allowing it to report statewide ECEAP child assessment results and assure alignment with WaKIDS. Kindergarten teachers with a child previously enrolled in ECEAP can access an ECEAP WaKIDS report in Teaching Strategies GOLD® and view the child's spring checkpoint. Beginning in 2016-17, DEL supplied ECEAP teachers that use the Creative Curriculum® with a license to *GOLDplus*® along with extensive training opportunities. This added feature in TS GOLD® supports teachers in linking curriculum planning to assessment results.

As detailed in Figure 22 below, across all six learning domains assessed in TS GOLD®, children who participate in ECEAP show significant growth during the course of the program. These data include all 3- and 4-year-olds who were assessed in both fall of 2016 and spring of 2017.

Figure 22. Percentage of Children at or Above Age Level by Domain, 2016-2017 School Year

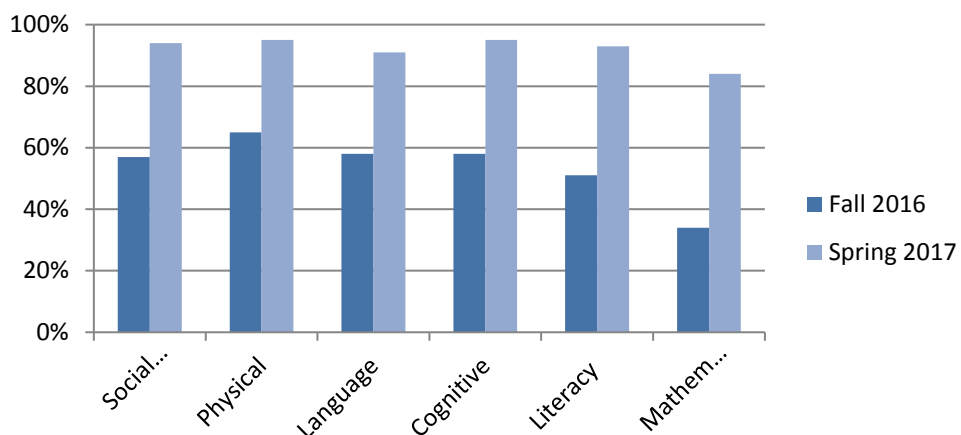
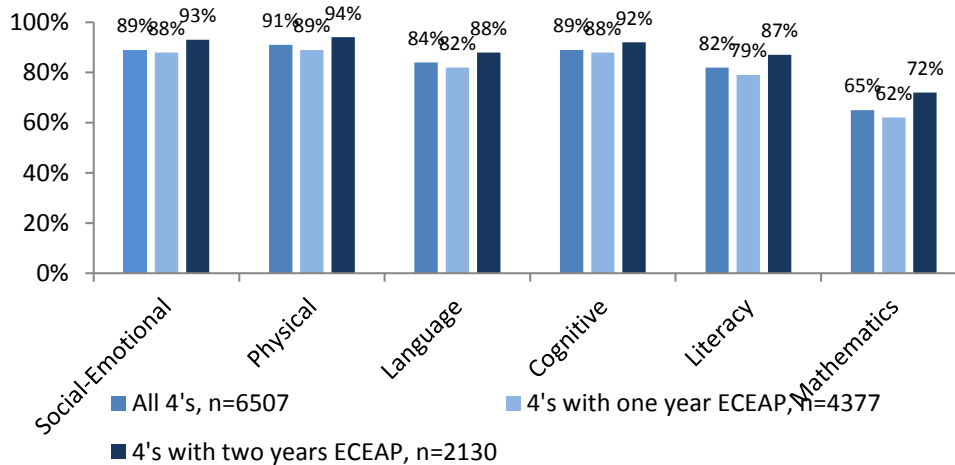


Figure 23 below displays end of ECEAP assessments for children who were eligible for kindergarten in fall 2017. Children demonstrating the highest likelihood to be ready are children that participated in ECEAP for two full years.

Figure 23. End-of ECEAP Kindergarten Readiness by Developmental Domain, Spring 2017



Alignment with WaKIDS

ECEAP’s TS GOLD® assessment is aligned with OSPI’s WaKIDS assessment. Both are whole-child observational assessments using the same six developmental domains. The main difference is that WaKIDS is made up of a subset of the larger TS GOLD® assessment objectives.²⁴ ECEAP contractors are required to maintain communication with local kindergarten staff, which aligns with the early learning collaboration component of WaKIDS. In 2015, DEL began reporting GOLD® results for ECEAP children using the kindergarten readiness scale in GOLD, better aligning with OSPI WaKIDS report. In 2016-17, Teaching Strategies revised the scale nationally based on their most current research. This is expected to support closer alignment of ECEAP and WaKIDS assessment results.

In early 2016, Washington’s Education and Research Data Center (ERDC) was for the first time able to link ECEAP TS GOLD® assessment scores with WaKIDS assessment scores for ECEAP participants. This allowed DEL to undertake a first-ever analysis of ECEAP outcomes in terms of kindergarten readiness for children entering kindergarten in fall 2015. The main findings of that analysis include:

- 1) A very high share of ECEAP-enrolled children assess as ready for kindergarten on all six TS GOLD® domains in spring of their ECEAP year (59.4 percent);
- 2) A greater share of children who have participated in ECEAP arrive at kindergarten ready for success on six of six WaKIDS domains (36.9 percent) than do all entering kindergartners from low-income households (30.6 percent);
- 3) ECEAP children who are English-language learners, those who are Hispanic, and those who participate in Special Education are significantly more likely to experience “drop-off” in readiness between spring of their ECEAP year and fall of their kindergarten year.

²⁴ WaKIDS assesses 31 objectives and dimensions compared with 75 objectives and dimension in the full TS GOLD® preschool assessment

Alignment between ECEAP and Licensing

The Early Start Act supports the strong alignment between ECEAP and child care for a single set of licensing standards [Sec 3(1)]. About 35 percent of current ECEAP sites are licensed and that number will grow as more full-school-day and extended-day ECEAP slots are made available. Ensuring that all early learning programs have strong health and safety practices is a priority for DEL.

Increase of Licensed Sites in ECEAP

In the 2014-2015 school year, DEL implemented Full School Day (FSD) and Extended Day ECEAP slots for the first time. Extended Day slots serve children for 10 hours and these sites are fully licensed. FSD sites follow school district calendars and serve children for approximately 6 hours per day. Currently, some sites are licensed while others are exempt from licensing. Any ECEAP site with a classroom operating over 4 hours a day that is not exempt from licensing needs a child care license. For 2017-18, licensing is required when:










1. ECEAP contractor is a non-government agency and offers ECEAP through direct services.
2. ECEAP contractor is a non-government agency with subcontracted sites and a non-government agency operates the subcontracted site.

Previously FSD sites requiring licensing have participated in the expedited licensing process. This process used a combination of the ECEAP performance standards and child care Washington Administrative Codes. This was a temporary solution put in place during the standards alignment process and is no longer implemented. All FSD sites who meet the criteria above will be fully licensed.

Standards Alignment in Early Achievers and ECEAP

Department of Early Learning licensing, Early Achievers, and ECEAP teams are collaborating to create one set of aligned standards across licensing WAC, Early Achievers standards, and ECEAP performance standards as a main focus of DEL's standards alignment project. This cross-functional work is presenting a range of learning opportunities for child care licensors, Early Achievers staff, and ECEAP staff to better understand where existing work aligns. It is also setting the stage for developing coordinated monitoring, and training and quality improvement systems in the future.

Key Accomplishments:

-  Draft Early Achievers and ECEAP progression from WAC completed
-  Early Achievers and ECEAP community input gathered from the following sources:
 -  Online community comment portal
 -  Three rounds of Community Engagement Meetings in five regions across the state occurred. DEL's partner, Thrive Washington, reached out to communities in all regions to engage providers such as:
 -  Child care center providers
 -  Providers who speak a language other than English
 -  Tribal early learning providers
 -  Family child care homes
 -  ECEAP providers

- ☐ Communication with ECEAP contractors
- ☐ Multiple committees comprised of community representatives, stakeholders, and partners

Continuing Work:

- 👉 Creating a system for coordinated monitoring across WAC, Early Achievers, and ECEAP
- 👉 Updating standards based on community input
- 👉 Developing training and supports for staff and providers
- 👉 Developing an implementation approach

Alignment between ECEAP and Early Achievers

Standards Alignment in Early Achievers and ECEAP

Through the Standards Alignment process, Early Achievers and ECEAP have worked closely on aligning standards to better support providers, families, and children. In an effort to streamline expectations of all providers, Early Achievers is creating one simplified rating pathway that all providers will participate in.

Coordinated Services Framework

The Department of Early Learning (DEL) is working to ensure that individuals and partner agencies who work with early learning professionals have the support they need to successfully collaborate across partner agencies. In partnership with Child Care Aware of Washington (CCA of WA), we've developed a multi-tiered framework for coordinated services. Our approach focuses on creating opportunities and guidelines for communication and collaboration. The framework provides staff with training, regular meetings with peers, and support from cross-sector leadership. The end goal is to establish consistency and strengthen communication among partner agencies.

This framework details formal opportunities to communicate and collaborate and is meant to work as a platform from which to strengthen relationships. We encourage ongoing communication with each other in between these formal meetings, especially when there are specific and timely issues that need to be addressed.

Coaching coordinated between Early Achievers coaches at CCA and ECEAP is a vital piece of this framework. DEL outlines the following partnerships to encourage coordination across the system of support for all Early Achievers providers:

- 👉 **Partnership Summits:** This shared professional development opportunity will occur once per year in each DEL licensing region across the state. All DEL licensing staff and partner agency staff who support early learning and child care providers in the DEL licensing region will be invited to attend this training.
- 👉 **Relationship-based professional development meetings:** These meetings provide an opportunity for local coaches, licensing staff, and ECEAP Pre-K Specialists to connect each quarter to discuss the intersections of their work.
- 👉 **Local tactical meetings:** These quarterly meetings are solutions-focused and look for

approaches that will help front-line staff succeed in their coordinated efforts. Here, management staff from the local DEL licensing office will meet with management staff from the local CCA of WA office to discuss trends, develop methods to strengthen practice in the field, and create joint communications.

- 👉 **State systems meetings:** Three times a year, the state systems management teams at DEL, CCA of WA, and other regional system partners come together to discuss statewide trends, develop systems-wide solutions, and discuss strategic planning and policy decisions.

Progress of ECEAP Sites in Meeting Early Start Act Requirements

The Early Start Act required all existing ECEAP providers to be rated at a level 4 or higher by March 1, 2016 [Section 9(4)(b)].²⁵ In order to support ECEAP contractors in meeting the March 1, 2016 deadline, DEL created an ECEAP rating cohort with UW CQEL. All sites in the ECEAP cohort had data collection completed by February 29, 2016. The cohort included sites receiving an initial rating or a re-rating in order to meet the ESA rating requirements. Following rating, DEL reviewed detailed information with providers on the areas where they failed to meet the quality standard along with barriers needing to be addressed to make the needed quality improvements.

As of September 2017, 319 current ECEAP sites (on all pathways) have been rated in Early Achievers. Of those sites, 260 sites (81 percent) rated a level 4 or 5. There were 53 sites that rated a level 3. These sites were either on the licensed pathway or a part of the Hybrid Project. Sites that rated a level 3 and met the minimum thresholds in ERS and CLASS in their ECEAP classrooms are considered *certified* and operating at an Early Achievers level of quality. Sites that are rated a level 2, or a level 3 *without* a certified ECEAP classroom, are receiving additional coaching support and will have the opportunity to re-rate within six months of their finalized rating.

Sites in remedial activities receive support through:

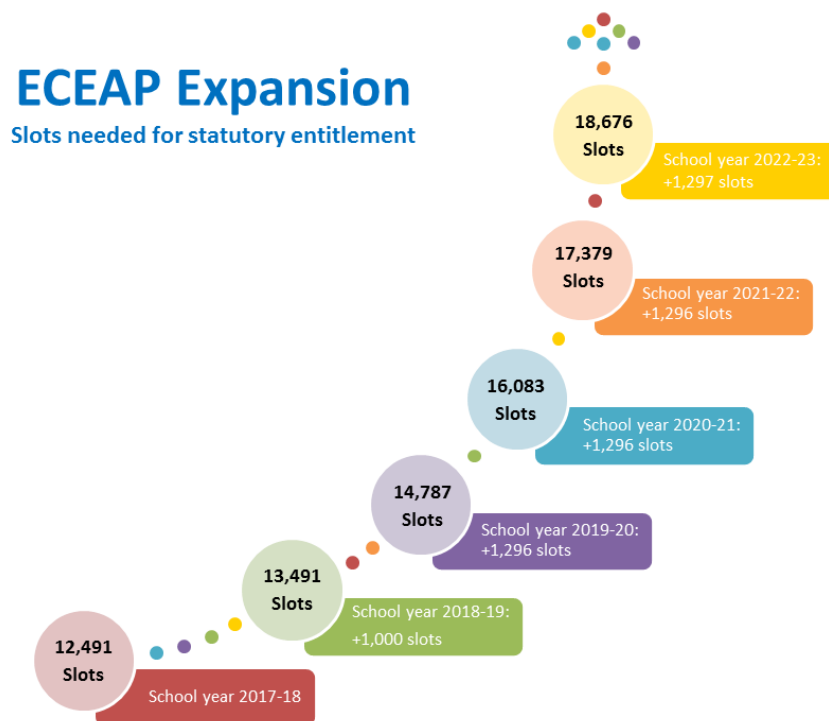
- 👉 Webinars to build on coaching skills and create a profession learning community of support and resources
- 👉 Their assigned ECEAP Pre-K Specialist for technical assistance
- 👉 Prioritizing coaches at remedial sites for ERS and CLASS training and reliability
- 👉 Coach consultation through Cultivate Learning at the University of Washington

²⁵ New ECEAP providers must enroll in Early Achievers within 30 days of receiving an ECEAP contract and must rate at a Level 4 or higher within 12 months. Licensed child care centers or family child care homes that receive an ECEAP contract have 18 months to rate at a Level 4 or higher.

ECEAP: The Road to serving all Eligible Children

In its first 32 years, ECEAP has gradually expanded from serving 1,000 children per year to 12,491 in the 2017-2018 school year, while maintaining the same basic program design. In the remaining five years before ECEAP becomes an entitlement, the program must expand much more rapidly. Based on the February 2018 Caseload Forecast, DEL estimates we must add 6,185 children to serve all who are eligible whose families will choose to enroll. 1,000 of these slots will be awarded in 2018-19. To expand at this rate, ECEAP will need to add an average of 1,296 slots per year from 2019-20 through 2022-23 while maintaining high quality and continuing to enhance child outcomes (see graphic below).

ECEAP has a strong base of research demonstrating its effectiveness in contributing to school readiness, and expansion to entitlement levels is essential if DEL is to reach its goal of having 90 percent of all children ready for success when they enter kindergarten.



2017-18 and 2018-19 Expansion




In 2017, the legislature funded an additional 1,800 ECEAP slots for the 2017-19 biennium across all three ECEAP model types. See Table 16 below of detailed projected distribution of expansion slots by model type based on this funding.

Model	FY 2018	FY 2019
Part Day	280	350
Full School Day	480	600
Extended Day	40	50
Total	800	1,000





ECEAP Expansion Think Tank

Charge and Members: To grapple with the challenges and seize the opportunities of ECEAP expansion, DEL created the ECEAP Expansion Think Tank, which is currently planned to be in place from March 2017 through December 2019. The Think Tank and its work groups provide a way for DEL to seek insights and advice from stakeholders across the state about ECEAP expansion through quarterly meetings, work groups, and additional communications. Members include current and potential contractors, subcontractors, and partners working in different settings, such as higher education, OSPI, child care centers, family child care homes, K-12 schools, Educational Service Districts, rural and remote providers, Child Care Aware, parents, and advocates.

Through the Think Tank, DEL and members explore how our state can best:

-  Build upon and expand ECEAP’s current strengths and capacities.
-  Identify ways to recruit and prepare new contractors and subcontractors.
-  Create a strong system of high-quality ECEAP services in mixed-delivery settings.

Work Groups: Think Tank work groups are convened as needed. The Contracting Work Group is exploring contracting processes, methods, and relationships to achieve statewide coverage and required contractor and subcontractor capacities. Four short-term work groups have also met to develop individual readiness pathways for:

-  Child care centers
-  Family child care homes
-  K-12 schools
-  Providers in rural and remote communities

In addition, a work group for communication and outreach will be convened to advise DEL on communication and outreach to communities across the state.

Tribal Pathways

ECEAP is working with the ECEAP Tribal Pathways Subcommittee and the Indian Policy Early Learning Committee to create a tribal pathway that reflects the steps and actions necessary to enable more of tribal providers to deliver high-quality ECEAP services.

Five Priorities to Address Barriers to Quality Preschool Expansion

The Think Tank began by helping to develop an ECEAP program theory of change and three “maps” of elements that must be in place to enable ECEAP expansion: sufficient **facilities**; an ample highly-capable **workforce**; and the means to provide the **right slot in the right place**. All of these elements were designed with key ECEAP Expansion principles guiding them. These principles are: prioritizing racial equity, focus on DEL’s goal of 90 percent of children ready for kindergarten, ensuring access for families at entitlement, and partnership and collaboration with early learning stakeholders across Washington State.

The maps focus on steps to achieve success, actions for providers, DEL and system partners, and the system and policy development needed to advance each element. Work is now underway on five priority areas drawn from these maps.

Provider Pathways: Provider pathways are the steps and actions necessary to enable different types of providers to deliver high-quality ECEAP services.

Think Tank work groups have helped to create draft readiness pathways for licensed child care and family child care homes, K-12, and rural and remote providers. These pathways articulate what is needed to tailor policy, practice, and supports so that we can engage and prepare more of each type of provider to participate in a strong Request for Application response and to deliver high-quality ECEAP services. Early actions to be taken over the next six months have been drafted and work plans for each are being developed.



DEL ECEAP, in partnership with DEL’s tribal liaison and the Indian Policy Early Learning Committee (IPEL) will convene an ECEAP Tribal Pathway work group to develop strategies to ensure the success of ECEAP expansion in tribal communities.

Quality Improvement: Washington is one of four states participating in the Partnership for Pre-K Quality. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation provides funding for this work and the Ounce of Prevention provides technical assistance to the participating states (Washington, Oregon, and Tennessee).

👉 **Self-Assessment of Preschool Quality.** Through the Partnership, Washington is completing a self-assessment of preschool quality. Preliminary results show:

- 🔵 **Nine Areas of Strength**
 - 🔴 Professional development provider qualifications
 - 🔴 Curriculum & assessment requirements
 - 🔴 Information in DEL data systems
 - 🔴 Quality assessment, contractor CQI
 - 🔴 Comprehensive services and family engagement
 - 🔴 Family access and outreach
 - 🔴 Teaching quality
 - 🔴 Child outcomes
- 🔵 **Five Areas for Growth**

- ☐ Instructional leadership/professional learning system
- ☐ Cultural competency and support of dual language learners
- ☐ Support for children with special needs in inclusive settings
- ☐ Data collection and analysis
- ☐ Educational requirements, scholarships, and compensation parity

👉 **Next Steps in Quality Improvement.** After finalizing the self-assessment, DEL will identify leads for each area for growth. Then DEL and partners will work with the Partnership for Pre-K Quality to create improvement strategies and phase implementation to systematically improve the identified areas for growth.

Workforce: Building the workforce is identified as a high priority for ECEAP expansion by the Think Tank. The shortage of qualified staff is impeding expansion efforts. System-wide workforce development (child care and ECEAP) is being led by DEL’s Professional Development Team with advice from the Early Childhood Workforce Council. Early actions include formation of four work groups: compensation, equivalents, career pathways, and community engagement.

Workforce diversity: Another key issue identified for ECEAP expansion is the diversity of the workforce and ensuring that staff are representative of the diverse cultural backgrounds of ECEAP families and children. Table 17 below details the racial/ethnic breakdown of the ECEAP workforce by role as represented in the MERIT database. In reporting language, we report both the primary and secondary language where a secondary language is listed.

Table 17. ECEAP Workforce Race/Ethnicity and Language, 2016

	Administrator	Teacher	Assistant	Family Support Staff
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.3%	2.0%	3.1%	2.1%
Asian	5.5%	4.0%	5.4%	1.6%
Black/African American	0.9%	3.7%	3.7%	5.3%
Hispanic/Latino	11.4%	13.1%	21.6%	23.6%
Multiracial/other	0.0%	1.6%	0.4%	0.7%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.6%	1.7%	2.0%	2.1%
White	74.4%	63.6%	53.9%	57.0%
Unknown	5.9%	10.2%	9.9%	7.6%
Language				
English	84.7%	78.0%	66.9%	71.8%
English/Other	3.7%	6.7%	10.0%	2.8%
English/Somali	--	0.1%	0.3%	0.7%
English/Spanish	11.2%	12.6%	20.4%	24.5%
Other	--	0.2%	0.2%	--
Somali	--	--	0.1%	0.2%
Spanish	--	0.5%	0.6%	--
Unknown	0.4%	1.9%	1.5%	--

Data Source: 2016 active workforce file refined by 3SI for 2016 Workforce Report




Contracting and statewide coverage: Achieving statewide coverage – with high quality services – through a manageable number of contractors is key to ECEAP expansion. The Think Tank’s Contracting Work Group has worked with the ECEAP Team to provide advice about streamlining contracting processes and tools working within the DEL/DCYF systems. It is now exploring roles that can best be performed regionally, contractor and subcontractor capacities needed to provide high-quality services, guidance regarding pass-through of funding to subcontractors, and strategies to ensure statewide coverage in locations where there are few children or inadequate potential contractors or subcontractors ready.

Facilities: Many new and renovated classrooms and spaces are needed by 2023 to support ECEAP expansion into an entitlement program. ESSHB 1777, passed in the 2017 legislative session, created the Early Learning Facilities Grant and Loan program. If funded, this program, to be operated jointly by the Department of Commerce and DEL, will provide grants and loans to ECEAP and other Early Achievers-rated providers in the system to support facilities development. When the 2017-19 capital budget was released, approximately \$14 million was allotted to support this grant and loan program, but the capital budget has not yet passed. The program is critical to enable ECEAP expansion. Existing ECEAP contractors have reported that they are rapidly losing ground on available space to serve children in areas where need continues to exist. DEL is working with the Department of Commerce to plan and prepare for implementation of the grant program as soon as funds become available.

Preschool Expansion in Low-Income Neighborhoods and Communities

In 2016-17, DEL began using the DEL ECEAP and Head Start Saturation Study to analyze access to ECEAP across the state. The Study estimates the number of ECEAP-eligible children who are not served by Head Start or ECEAP within each school district boundary. DEL uses the Caseload Forecast Council assumptions that 51 percent of the estimated eligible 3-year-olds and 82.5 percent of the estimated eligible 4-year-olds are in families that will choose to enroll in ECEAP.

Through a detailed methodology, DEL assigns school district boundary areas points to determine the district’s priority group for ECEAP expansion. The main weighted priorities for new ECEAP slots are:

-  Points given for 50 percent of eligible children or less served
-  Points awarded for the number of unserved children. The more unserved eligible children estimated in a school district, the more points that district receives.
-  Points given based on the opportunity gap as measured by the Washington Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) whole child assessment.

School districts are then sorted into eight priority groupings based on points, with Priority Group 1 having the highest points, and Priority Group 8 having the lowest points. However, a lower priority group does not indicate that no new slots are needed. In most cases, a higher percentage of eligible children are already served, meaning less priority points are given.

Between the years 2014-15 and 2017-18, ECEAP added 3,750 slots in communities around the state. During that time, ECEAP contractors began offering ECEAP within 31 new school district boundaries, for a total of 824 slots. The remaining slots were offered within school district boundaries that already provide ECEAP. Currently, there are no ECEAP services in 117 out of 295 school districts in the state. However, some are served by Head Start, and some have children transported to a neighboring district for Head Start or ECEAP services. It is important to note that while the Saturation Study sorts by school

district boundary, ECEAP services within any given school district boundary are provided through a mixed delivery system, which includes the following providers: school districts, educational service districts, community colleges, local governments, tribal organizations, child care centers and homes, and non-profits.

The net slot increases* by Saturation Study Priority groups since 2013-14 are:

Group	Net Slot Increases
1	900
2	676
3	438
4	487
5	563
6	117
7	249
8	297






**As of November 2017, twenty-three slots are not yet assigned to sites and therefore are not reported in this count.*

Overall, ECEAP slots have been generally awarded in higher priority group areas since 2013-14. DEL continues to update the Saturation Study based on updated information from the Caseload Forecast Council and refer to it when allocating any ECEAP slots available. The ECEAP Think Tank is also engaged in planning methods to reach geographic statewide coverage, to ensure all eligible children whose families choose to enroll have ECEAP services available.

Barriers to Implementing Extended Day ECEAP

ECEAP contractors continue to share feedback that Extended Day ECEAP is more difficult to enroll. They are seeing that difficulty increase as minimum wage increases affect working families particularly in the Extended Day model, as families have to work a minimum number of hours per week to qualify for this model. ECEAP Contractors note the increase in families applying for ECEAP who report income just above the 110 percent eligibility requirements for ECEAP.

Key Accomplishments

-  In fall 2017, DEL placed 800 more part-day, full school day, and extended day ECEAP slots in communities and supported contractors to bring on new types of subcontractors.
-  81 percent of ECEAP sites have attained an Early Achievers rating of level 4 or level 5.
-  DEL continues to conduct a successful family support pilot project with 19 volunteer ECEAP contractors to strengthen ECEAP’s comprehensive family support services statewide. Included in the accomplishments for the pilot are:
 -  Adding family outcome data gathering into ECEAP’s existing database, the Early Learning Management System
 -  Seeing statistically significant outcomes in:

- ❑ Families participating in the family support pilot reporting significantly greater levels of agreement with 10 out of 14 survey items from the Customer Satisfaction Survey
 - ❑ Children at sites implementing the family support pilot showing significant gains in 5 out of 6 TS GOLD® domains
 - ❑ 2,585 families participating in the family support pilot set a total of 3,203 goals throughout the year, which is an average of 1.3 per family
- 👋 DEL's continued success in supporting ECEAP children's health outcomes, ensuring that children had medical and dental coverage; regular providers; up-to-date well-child exams, dental screenings, and immunizations; and vision and hearing screening; and that they received treatment as needed.
- 👋 Curriculum implementation accomplishments:
 - 🔵 359 ECEAP sites are implementing DEL-ECEAP approved curriculum
 - ❑ 95 percent implementing Creative Curriculum
 - ❑ 4 percent implementing High Scope
 - 🔵 DEL is continuing to work on completing an alternative curriculum approval process. In the meantime:
 - ❑ 1 percent of ECEAP sites are using an alternative curriculum
 - ⚠️ 4 sites are using Tools of the Mind
 - ⚠️ 1 site has not yet completed the alternative curriculum approval process
 - 🔵 Cultivate Learning at the University of Washington (formerly CQEL) provided 25 curriculum trainings between July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2017.
 - 🔵 DEL ECEAP provided:
 - ❑ 246 Creative Curriculum Kits
 - ❑ 163 Creative Curriculum Objectives for Development and Learning GOLD® resources
 - ❑ 150 Coaching to Fidelity Resources
- 👋 For more information, see the [2016-17 ECEAP Outcomes Report](#)

Key Challenges

- 👋 Ensuring the internal capacity at DEL to monitor and support a growing portfolio of contractors.
- 👋 Availability of appropriate facilities to accommodate growth in communities where program expansion is most needed.
- 👋 Building a workforce of qualified staff, including recruitment and retention of qualified staff in an increasingly competitive market.
- 👋 Equitable distribution of new ECEAP slots.
- 👋 Ensuring that diverse communities are served in high quality environments with culturally appropriate language, staff diversity, instruction, and cultural competency.
- 👋 Areas preliminarily identified as areas of growth from the Pre-K Self-Assessment are:
 - 🔵 Instructional leadership/professional learning system
 - 🔵 Cultural competency and support of dual language learners
 - 🔵 Support for children with special needs in inclusive settings
 - 🔵 Data collection and analysis

Chapter 9: Supply of Subsidized Child Care

Washington State continues to experience a decline in providers in the subsidy market for young children and among licensed providers overall. Given reports of shortages of licensed child care accepting subsidy for young children in a number of local communities across Washington, this potential mismatch between supply and demand for care is of concern to many.

Previous Washington analysis of licensed providers has described a decrease among overall licensed providers since at least 2010. Research nationally has described similar decreases in licensed child care facilities. For example, the National Center on Child Care Quality Improvement reported a 19 percent decline in the number of total licensed facilities nationally between 2008 and 2014, including a 22 percent decrease in the number of licensed family homes accompanied by a small 3 percent increase in the number of licensed centers.²⁶

Provider Churn

The child care market is a dynamic one, with providers entering and exiting the market constantly. In order to better understand if the child care market is being impacted by Early Achievers requirements, over the past months DEL has undertaken an analysis of provider churn for licensed providers serving subsidy children under 5 years of age in the Working Connections Child Care subsidy program.²⁷ This requires examining data on licensed providers serving children on subsidy by fiscal year, as well as when they began and stopped serving children under age 5 on subsidy. In this analysis for each provider serving children under 5 on subsidy in a given fiscal year we categorize each provider as “entering” (if they did not provide care to subsidy children under age 5 in the previous year) and “exiting” (if they did not provide care to subsidy children under age 5 in the following year). Note that these two categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive, a provider may be both entering and exiting in the same fiscal year²⁸, and most providers each fiscal year are neither entering nor exiting.

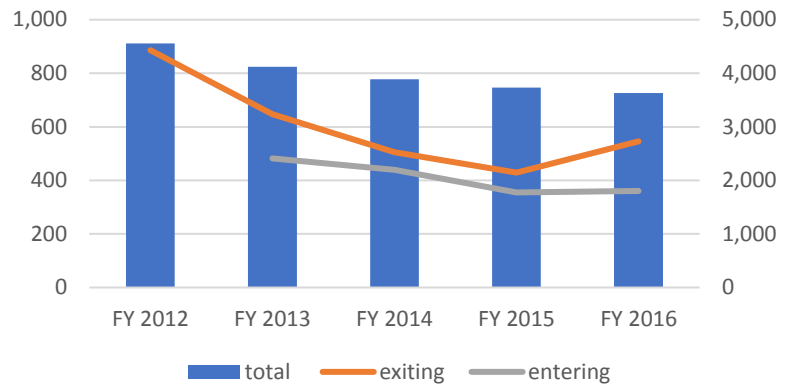
²⁶ 2015, Fischer and Orłowski, “Trends in Child Care Licensing: 2015 NARA Licensing Seminar”, slide 12.

²⁷ Throughout the remainder of this chapter “children on subsidy” refers to children participating in the state’s Working Connection Child Care subsidy program, including Seasonal Child Care.

²⁸ Between 18 percent and 19 percent of entering providers each fiscal year are also classified as exiting.

Figure 24 at right illustrates the trend in overall child care providers serving children under age 5 on subsidy statewide from FY 2012 through FY 2016, including the trend in exiting and entering providers. In these dual-axes charts the right axis corresponds with the blue bars and the left axis with the lines. Here we see that while providers continue to enter the subsidy under 5 market each year, the downward trend is driven by more providers exiting this market than entering each year.

Figure 24. Providers Serving Children <5 on Subsidy, Total, Exiting, Entering



When we further disaggregate this analysis by provider type, licensed centers and licensed family child care homes, we see that the trend is driven largely by family homes (see Figures 25 and 26 below). While there has been some decrease in the overall number of centers serving children under age 5 on subsidy between FY 2012 and FY 2016 (1,218 to 1,121), in recent years this trend among centers appears to have leveled off.

Figure 25. Centers Serving Children <5 on Subsidy, Total, Exiting, Entering

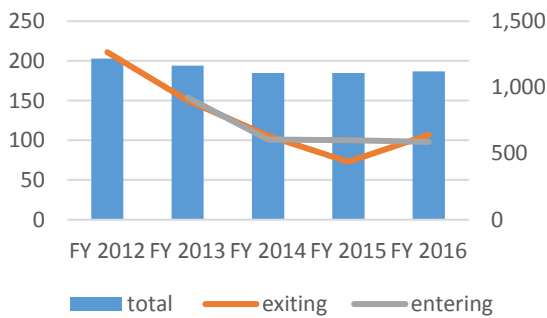


Figure 26. Family Homes Serving Children <5 on Subsidy, Total, Exiting, Entering

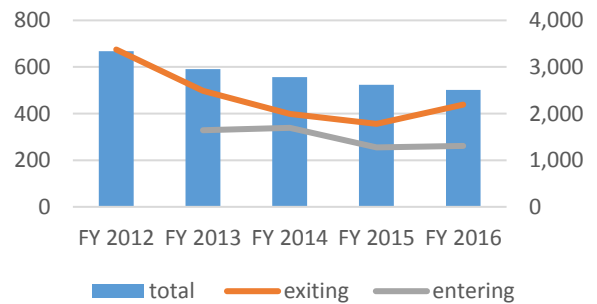


Table 19 below details the number of unique licensed providers, both centers and family child care homes, serving children on subsidy each fiscal year from FY 2012 through FY 2017. The table details the number of licensed providers serving children on subsidy under age 5, and because of interest in providers serving infants and toddlers specifically, detail on the number of providers serving children on subsidy under age 3 each year.

Table 19. Licensed Providers Serving Children on Subsidy by Child Age Group, by Fiscal Year

	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
Centers:						
Number	1,779	1,746	1,713	1,716	1,679	1,651
# Serving Children Under age 5	1,363	1,333	1,307	1,320	1,287	1,236
# Serving Children Under age 3	1,134	1,108	1,111	1,130	1,092	1,036
Family Child Care Homes:						
Number	3,629	3,232	3,014	2,875	2,716	2,499
# Serving Children Under age 5	3,368	2,994	2,810	2,701	2,551	2,350
# Serving Children Under age 3	2,819	2,564	2,451	2,378	2,241	2,100

Data Source: FY flat files produced by DEL annually from subsidy warrant data used to produce the CCDF 801 report.

Note: Providers have up to a year to submit warrants. Most warrants are submitted within 90 days of providing care.

Among licensed subsidy providers exiting the subsidy under age 5 market each year, the vast majority close out their child care license, so are no longer providing licensed care at all, by the year following the last year serving children on subsidy under age 5. Table 20 below details license closure among these exiters by fiscal year. Here we see that among licensed providers providing care for children under age 5 on subsidy in FY 2016 who did not provide such care in FY 2017 (exiters), 84.6 percent closed their license by FY 2017. Those exiters who do not close out their license could still be providing licensed care for school age children on subsidy and/or children not on subsidy.

Table 20. License Closure among Providers Exiting Subsidy under 5 Market, by Fiscal Year

	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Total:					
Number of Exits	886	647	505	429	546
% License closed by following yr.	79.8%	83.0%	79.6%	86.7%	84.6%
Centers:					
Number of Exits	211	150	106	73	107
% License closed by following yr.	65.9%	75.3%	78.3%	82.2%	83.2%
Family Homes:					
Number of Exits	675	497	399	356	439
% License closed by following yr.	84.1%	85.3%	80.0%	87.6%	85.0%

Data Source: DEL Churn files (Licensing data and FY flat files)

The next logical question has to do with potential impact of this decrease in licensed providers on services available to children on subsidy under age 5 (and those under age 3). Table 21 below details the number of unique unduplicated children on subsidy in both of these age groups served by licensed providers each year from FY 2012 through FY 2017. The trend we observe here is one of small increases each year in the total number of children under 5 on subsidy served in licensed care between FY 2013 when 36,216 children under age 5 were served, and FY 2016 when 38,895 children under age 5 were served, with a slight decrease (4.6 percent) between FY 2016 and FY 2017 when 37,090 children under

age 5 were served. Care should be taken in interpreting the decrease in that these data are based on warrant data pulled December 2017, and providers have one year to submit warrants. Thus FY 2017 numbers served may rise slightly once a full year has passed since the end of the fiscal year.

In this table unduplicated children on subsidy are also reported as to licensed provider type where they received care – centers or family homes. Between 6 and 7 percent of children in subsidy received care in both licensed centers and family homes each year, these children are reported in the “both” category.

Table 21. Children on Subsidy Served by Licensed Providers by Fiscal Year (unduplicated children)

	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
Total:						
Children under age 5	36,528	36,216	37,754	38,131	38,895	37,090
Children under age 3	18,930	19,274	20,362	20,808	21,215	20,111
Centers:						
Children under age 5	22,930	23,272	24,728	25,264	26,080	25,120
Children under age 3	11,535	12,144	12,980	13,378	13,780	13,171
Family Child Care Homes:						
Children under age 5	11,155	10,551	10,396	10,215	10,244	9,644
Children under age 3	6,121	5,917	5,953	6,018	6,045	5,666
Both:						
Children under age 5	2,443	2,393	2,630	2,652	2,571	2,326
Children under age 3	1,274	1,213	1,429	1,412	1,390	1,274

Data Source: FY flat files produced by DEL annually from subsidy warrant data used to produce the CCDF 801 report.

Note: Providers have up to a year to submit warrants. Most warrants are submitted within 90 days of providing care.

Approaches to Understanding the Issues

As noted above, the child care market is a dynamic one, with providers entering and exiting the market constantly. Any examination of the larger issue of decrease in child care providers must take this dynamic into consideration.

Surveying providers and reviewing provider records as to their stated reason for leaving is one approach sometimes used to understand why providers leave a child care market. A 2016 DEL review of records of 38 family home providers closing in the Southwest Region who voluntarily gave up their licenses indicated a wide variety of reasons for closure including dislike/inability to comply with regulations including but not limited to Early Achievers (34.2 percent), change in work/school circumstances to increase income (13.2 percent), moved away (13.2 percent), own children aging out of care (10.5 percent), medical reasons (10.5 percent), lack of enrollment (7.9 percent), other economic factors (5.3 percent), and others (5.3 percent). Other states that have conducted more systematic surveys of family home providers closing their businesses have similarly found a variety of reasons including retirement, health, career change, moving, low enrollment, not earning enough money, regulatory pressures, and no longer needing to be home to care for their own young children.^{29,30}

²⁹ MN: <http://www.ruralmn.org/a-quiet-crisis-minnesotas-child-care-shortage/>

³⁰ 2012, “Why Family Child Care is Declining: 2012 4-C Study of Family Child Care Closures”.

Surveying providers and reviewing reported reasons for closure can provide important insight into why providers exit; however, it does not provide a systematic approach to assessment of market forces, nor does it address the entering side of the market. So while understanding contemporaneous reasons why providers leave the market in any given year may be important, it is not sufficient to understand the phenomena of a long-term decrease in providers over time.

Classic economics describe structural market forces at work in most markets for goods and services that can affect both the demand and the supply side of a market. In the child care market structural factors impacting changes in demand include the need for child care by working parents and the underlying changes over time in the population requiring care, parental income relative to cost of available care, and underlying population demographic changes that may drive structural changes in parental preferences. In Washington the low-income population requiring care of young children has changed since before the recession. There are over 10,000 fewer young children in the lowest income households (<100 percent of FPL) now than before the recession (64,687 in 2016 compared with 75,761 in 2005-2009). Additionally, the characteristics of low-income families in Washington have changed since before the recession in ways that may be impacting demand for care, including a lower portion of single mothers (39.0 percent in 2015-2016 compared with 57.8 percent in 2000) and a lower portion of employed mothers (29.7 percent in 2015-2016 compared with 43.9 percent in 2000). Table 22 below provides descriptive data about the young child population living in poverty in Washington and their mothers.³¹

Table 22. Washington’s Young Children and Their Mothers in Very Low Income Households

	2000	2005-2009	2010-2014	2015-2016
Child Population:				
Children <5 in HH <100% FPL	61,225	75,761	88,282	64,687
Children <5 in HH >100% FPL	324,096	347,572	346,406	377,939
Mothers of children <5 in HH <150% FPL:				
Employed Full Time	19.5%	21.6%	12.1%	12.0%
Total Employed	43.9%	44.1%	35.2%	29.7%
Not Employed	56.1%	55.9%	63.7%	70.5%
Single	57.8%	52.9%	45.2%	39.0%
Race/ethnicity				
American Indian/Alaska Native	6.1%	1.8%	0.8%	4.6%
Asian	1.0%	4.0%	9.9%	5.4%
Black/African American	6.6%	9.8%	13.2%	10.3%
Hispanic/Latino	21.8%	22.0%	24.2%	30.5%
Multiracial/Other	4.9%	5.6%	5.9%	4.9%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	--	1.8%	0.2%	--
White	59.6%	55.0%	45.8%	44.4%

Source child data: Census 2000 PCT150; ACS B17006 (2009 and 2014 5-year; 2016 1-year)

Source mother data: IPUMS-CPS and IPUMS-USA tabulations, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org

³¹ Note that while we would have preferred to report on all available parents in the home, the Current Population Survey tabulations report these data on parents of young children primarily on mothers. ACS Table B17006 estimates that in 2016 49.6 percent of Washington children under age 5 in households <100 percent FPL are in single-mother households, 38.7 percent are in married-couple households, and 11.7 percent are in single-father households.

Changes implemented in 2011 in how Washington administers Working Connections Child Care, such as increases in co-pays for higher-income eligible families and an end to eligibility for some TANF client groups, may have also affected the demand for subsidized child care.

Published research examining how market forces work to impact the supply side of child care report a number of potential structural factors that may decrease supply, including state regulation on ratios of adults to children in licensed care, educational requirements³², and expansion of public preschool.³³ Washington has not instituted changes in adult-to-child ratios in licensed care since prior to 2002, and educational requirements for all licensed providers has not changed since 2004 for center directors and 2012 for family home licensees. However, DEL is currently engaged in a Negotiated Rule Making process³⁴ that will result in revised educational requirements for licensed providers, including roles in both centers and family homes. It is currently proposed that providers will have a window of time to complete one of Washington's Early Childhood Education (ECE) Stackable Certificates or approved equivalent to meet these requirements. The proposed changes in educational requirements are not a part of the 2015 Early Start Act; however, section 2(8) directs DEL to build a professional development pathway, and federal CCDF requirements call for a progressive professional development system.

Previous research on high staff turnover in the child care industry may provide additional clues as to forces at work. This body of research points to low wages, less stable work environments, low training levels, and high levels of work stress as significant contributors to high turnover among child care workers.^{35,36} In child care centers these factors may be expressed by high turnover among staff³⁷, while among family home providers they may be expressed as churn in the provider market given that the majority of licensed family home providers are owner operated with no paid employees.³⁸

Finally, a rising state minimum wage may also affect supply as subsidy providers experience increases in costs without the ability to pass the full cost of increases along to consumers in rates. In fall 2016 Washington voters approved Initiative 1433, which provided for stepped increases in the state's minimum wage starting with an increase from \$9.47 to \$11.00 an hour in 2017. In January 2017 DEL deployed a Provider Minimum Wage Impact Survey and based on these data estimated that licensed centers were likely to experience an average total statewide business impact of 3.5 percent increased

³² 2011, Hotz and Xiao, "The Impact of Regulations on the Supply and Quality of Care in Child Care Markets", *American Economic Review* 101(5): 1775-1805.

³³ 2014, Bassok, Fitzpatrick, and Loeb, "Does State Preschool Crowd-out Private Provision? The Impact of Universal Preschool on the Child care Sector in Oklahoma and Georgia", *Journal of Urban Economics*, 83(18-33).

³⁴ Up to date information on the Negotiated Rulemaking process can be found at the DEL website: <https://del.wa.gov/Negotiated-Rule-Making-Documents>

³⁵ 2003, Whitebook & Sakai, "Turnover begets turnover: An examination of job and occupational instability among child care center staff", *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 18(3): 273-293.

³⁶ 1996, Todd & Deery-Schmitt, "Factors affecting turnover among family child care providers: A longitudinal study." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 11(3): 351-376.

³⁷ DEL's 2015 Market Rate Survey reported 42.8 percent turnover among assistants and 23.5 percent turnover among teachers in licensed centers statewide (see Table 17, page 40).

https://del.wa.gov/sites/default/files/imported/publications/communications/docs/2015%20Market%20Rate%20Survey%20Report%20Final_SLEDITS.docx

³⁸ DEL's 2015 Market Rate Survey can be used to estimate that at most, 33.5 percent of family homes employ paid staff (see Table 3, page 13).

costs in 2017 as a result of the minimum wage increase. DEL estimated licensed family homes were likely to experience an average total business impact of 1 percent increase in costs in 2017.

DEL Research Response

In addition to development of the churn analysis described above, the Department of Early Learning has initiated two research and analysis projects intended to provide more information on the gap between supply and demand of licensed care for young children on subsidy and the impact of public policy on the subsidized child care market.

Targeting Underserved Populations Analysis

During FY 2018 DEL has engaged an analytic contractor to analyze existing program data against measures of demand for services at the local level (school district, zip code, legislative district), and to quantify potential gaps in services. This project is called the Targeting Underserved Populations analysis. Given the need for local data in multiple variations and across multiple programs, this is a large analytic effort. This analysis will result in descriptive data at the state and local levels of the gap between supply and demand for most of DEL programs, including subsidized child care for children on subsidy under age 5 and under age 3. Results and deliverables from this analysis are expected to be available by the end of June 2018 and will help inform planning for future early learning programs.

Time Series Analysis

In an additional attempt to investigate causal drivers of subsidized licensed child care supply over time, DEL researchers are planning to conduct a time series analysis using county-level panel data from 2012-2017, incorporating market forces and economic factors. The purpose of the time series analysis is twofold, both to better understand the drivers of supply for subsidized child care and to help inform development of leading indicators for monitoring purposes. At this point in planning the inputs into the time series analysis are expected to include demand factors, subsidy rates, community demographics, economic indicators, public preschool enrollment, and year (major policy change) at the county level for all 39 Washington counties. These inputs would be tested for their impact on the outcome of supply of subsidized child care, which may be calculated separately for non-school-age children, school-age children, and infants/toddlers. Time series analyses using panel data in this way require a reasonably high number of units to detect significant causal factors if they exist. While DEL researchers are hopeful that a 2012-2017 time series analysis across all 39 Washington counties will supply sufficient analytic leverage, it is possible it will not. In that case data for additional years will be added in future, as reliable subsidized provider data are not available in a useful form prior to 2012. Provided the analysis proves feasible, DEL researchers expect results from the initial time series analyses to be available by June 2018.

Non-Subsidy Providers in Early Achievers

While the requirement to participate in Early Achievers applies only to providers serving children on subsidy before school age, Early Achievers continues to accept licensed child care providers not serving subsidy children on a voluntary basis. Non-subsidy licensed providers have participated in Early Achievers since its inception and they continue to be an important part of the overall system of child care in the state. Given that approximately half of children in households above 185 percent of FPL are

not ready for kindergarten, high quality childcare clearly has an important role to play in kindergarten readiness for children beyond those in low income households and those in subsidized childcare. The 2015 Early Start Act focused much of the state’s Early Achievers investment on subsidy providers. Prior to July 1, 2016, all rated (Levels 2-5 for family homes; Levels 3-5 for centers) providers received annual Quality Improvement (QI) awards, regardless of whether they served subsidy children or not. The Early Start Act changed that, and since July 1, 2016 providers have had to serve a minimum of 5 percent subsidy children in order to be eligible for QI awards. Non-subsidy providers who have participated in Early Achievers since before the Early Start Act received their first and sometimes second QI awards, but are now no longer eligible. This change has also impacted subsidy providers who are required to participate in Early Achievers, but may only serve a small number of subsidy children and thus do not meet the 5 percent requirement. These providers may be unable to withdraw from Early Achievers without ending their non-school age subsidy eligibility, but have lost one of the main financial incentives for participating. In response, DEL has added additional types of non-state subsidy – such as city, tribal and military – which providers can count toward the 5 percent requirement. This has allowed several non-subsidy providers to continue to qualify for QI awards who otherwise might not. Table 18 below details participant incentives currently available to Early Achievers participating providers, and identifies the changes in incentive availability made by the Early Start Act.

	Non-Subsidy Providers	Subsidy Providers
Needs-based grants	No*	Yes
Substitute pool	No	Yes
Personal Development Scholarships	Yes	Yes
Tiered subsidy reimbursement	No	Yes
Infant-Toddler Consultation	No*	Yes
Quality Improvement Awards	No*	Yes

**Available to all providers prior to Early Start Act*

DEL and its Early Achievers partners are aware of several non-subsidy providers who have chosen to withdraw from Early Achievers, citing the fact they no longer receive these financial incentives. This led to the question of whether or not the policy change regarding private providers has resulted in a decrease of non-subsidy providers participating in Early Achievers, and the further examination of non-subsidy providers who are participating.

Table 24 below details Early Achievers participation by non-subsidy providers for 2015, 2016, and 2017 and indicates that there has been a 7.1 percent decrease in the number of non-subsidy providers participating, from 606 in 2016 to 563 in 2017.

Table 25 below compares the characteristics of non-subsidy providers participating Early Achievers with those of subsidy providers (licensed providers serving at least one non-school age child receiving subsidy during the past year, and who are enrolled in Early Achievers). Subsidy providers are disaggregated into those serving a lower portion of children receiving subsidy (bottom quartile) and those serving a higher portion receiving subsidy (all providers above the bottom quartile). Where available, data for non-participating non-subsidy providers is also included for further comparison. These data indicate that non-subsidy providers participating in Early Achievers are more likely to be rated a quality rating level 3 or 4, are more likely to be operated by white and Asian owners/operators, and are much more likely to speak only English compared with higher subsidy providers. In addition, non-subsidy providers not participating in Early Achievers are much more likely to be family homes than those participating (79.6 percent v. 66.6 percent), with lower subsidy providers the least likely to be family homes (46.7 percent).

Year	Count	Percentage
2015	442	26.2%
2016	606	33.2%
2017	563	30.5%

Source: Early Achievers Dashboards, using data from 6/30/2015; 8/15/2016; and 8/15/2017; all non-state funded providers enrolled

Table 25. Characteristics of Early Achievers Participating Providers, Subsidy and Non-Subsidy

	Early Achievers Participating			Non-Participating
	Higher Subsidy	Lower Subsidy	Non-Subsidy	Non-Subsidy
N	2,406	572	509	926
Rated	555	221	114	0
Quality Ratings				
2	19.5%	11.3%	9.7%	
3	79.3%	81.9%	83.3%	
4	1.3%	6.3%	7.0%	
5	0%	0.5%	0%	
Facility Type				
Center	26.0%	53.3%	33.4%	20.4%
Family Home	74.0%	46.7%	66.6%	79.6%
Race/Ethnicity				<i>only 16 reported</i>
AI/AN	1.0%	1.5%	1.2%	
Asian	2.8%	4.4%	15.4%	
Black	20.9%	3.4%	6.9%	
Hispanic	32.6%	8.8%	8.7%	
NH/PI	0.8%	1.1%	0.5%	
Other	3.7%	2.9%	3.5%	
White	38.3%	78.0%	63.9%	
Language				<i>only 17 reported</i>
English	59.0%	90.9%	85.3%	
Somali	0.04%	0.2%	0%	
Spanish	25.3%	4.3%	3.4%	
Other	0.3%	0.0%	0.9%	

Source: July 2017 Early Achievers Monitoring Report

Lower Subsidy counted as bottom quartile of percent subsidy (using proxy measure of number of subsidy children served/licensed capacity), Higher Subsidy all other subsidy providers

Table 26 below details the characteristics of the communities served by the non-subsidy providers participating in Early Achievers compared with those served by subsidy providers. Again, non-subsidy providers not participating in Early Achievers are included for further comparison. These data indicate that non-subsidy providers are, on average, serving communities that are less concentrated in terms of childhood poverty than subsidy providers, with higher subsidy providers serving zip codes with the highest concentration of childhood poverty (49.0 percent). Lower subsidy providers serve zip codes with the highest concentration of children of color in the under-5 age group (58.0 percent). In addition, the non-subsidy providers not participating in Early Achievers appear to be serving communities that on average are similar in terms of childhood poverty, child race/ethnicity, and urban/rural as those served by non-subsidy providers participating in Early Achievers.

Table 26. Characteristics of Communities Served by Early Achievers Participating Providers, Subsidy and Non-Subsidy

	Early Achievers Participating			Non-Participating
	Higher Subsidy	Lower Subsidy	Non-Subsidy	Non-Subsidy
N	2,406	572	509	926
Average % children in low-income households (<200% FPL) in provider zip code	49.0%	36.4%	30.4%	30.4%
Average % children of color <5 in provider zip code	44.2%	58.0%	43.3%	42.0%
Rural-Urban zip codes				
Rural	3.5%	4.3%	1.6%	1.6%
Urban	32.9%	35.0%	40.2%	38.5%
Suburban	63.7%	60.8%	58.2%	59.9%

Sources: July 2017 Early Achievers Monitoring Report merged with zip-code level data from Census Bureau; 2015 5-year American Communities Survey - Tables B05010, B01001H, and B09001; Census 2010 Urban Area Tabulation files. Low income household defined as <200% FPL.

Taken together, these findings indicate that, while some non-subsidy providers have chosen to exit Early Achievers between 2016 and 2017, the overall number of non-subsidy providers in the system remains only slightly lower than it was in 2016, and substantially higher than in 2015. In addition, non-subsidy providers participating in Early Achievers demonstrate distinct characteristics in terms of owner/operator diversity and communities served compared with subsidy providers. Non-subsidy providers participating in Early Achievers represent an important part of the overall childcare ecosystem in Washington State and an additional quality child care resource that may be helpful in reaching the goal of having 90 percent of children ready for kindergarten.

Glossary

Child Care Aware of Washington (CCA of WA): a non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring that every child in Washington has access to high-quality child care and early learning programs. CCA of Washington is comprised of six regional agencies in six regions across the state.

Child Care Center: "Child care center" means the same as a "**child day care center**" or a facility providing regularly scheduled care for a group of children one month of age through twelve years of age for periods less than twenty-four hours.

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP): Washington's state-funded comprehensive Preschool program.

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (or ECEAP) provider: an organization that provides site level, direct, and high quality early childhood education and assistance program services under the direction of an early childhood education and assistance program contractor.

Early Childhood Educator: any professional working in Early Learning and Development Programs, including but not limited to center-based and family home child care providers, infant and toddler specialists, early intervention specialists and early childhood special educators, home visitors, related service providers, administrators, Head Start teachers, Early Head Start teachers, preschool and other teachers, teacher assistants, family service staff, and health coordinators.

ELMS (Early Learning Management System): the data system that tracks information about ECEAP services and the children and families served.

Efforts to Outcomes (ETO): a data system managed by CCA of WA used to track CCA staff caseloads, key milestones of providers' progress through Early Achievers, and many different supports CCA staff deliver to child care providers before they are rated: orientations, outreach, pre-enrollment assistance, technical assistance, rating readiness consultation, and several types of assessments.

Family Child Care Home: means a facility licensed by the department where child care is provided for twelve or fewer children in the family living quarters where the licensee resides as provided in [RCW 43.215.010](#) (1)(c).

FamLink: the data system managed by the Department of Social and Health Services and maintained, in part, by DEL child care licensing staff to track child care licensing information.

Kindergarten Readiness: a child's ability to demonstrate the foundational skills and behaviors in all 6 Domains of Learning that comprise the WaKIDS Assessment (Cognitive Development, Language, Literacy, Math, Physical Development, and Social Emotional Development).

MERIT (Managed Education and Registry Information Tool): Washington Professional Development registry, a statewide tool to document and recognize the professional achievements of early care and education and school-age professionals. This online tool helps professionals find training opportunities, access information on career pathways, and track their individual career progress. MERIT also identifies

approved trainers who provide education to professionals. MERIT is also a cornerstone system for Early Achievers, used by child care providers, DEL staff, and CCA staff for Early Achievers registration, the level 2 application process, on-site evaluation requests and approvals, etc.

Service provider: an entity that operates a community facility, either an ECEAP provider, a family child care provider, or a child care center.

Social Service Payment System (SSPS): the data system managed by the Department of Social and Health Services that tracks payments for social services such as child care subsidy.

Teaching Strategies GOLD (TS GOLD): is a whole child assessment system for children from birth through kindergarten. Washington State adapted the TS GOLD instrument to create the WaKIDS Assessment. Extensive field tests have shown it to be both valid and reliable. Available online and in print, the system can be used with any developmentally appropriate early childhood curriculum.

University of Washington Childcare Quality and Early Learning Center (CQEL): a research center at the University of Washington dedicated to enhancing the quality of early learning environments for all children and eliminating the achievement gap that exists among children.

Web-Based Early Learning System (WELS): The QRIS database that calculates ratings and tracks rating information, quality improvement plans, and coaching data.

APPENDIX A: COUNTY AND ZIP CODE TABLES - PROVIDERS REQUIRED TO COMPLETE LEVEL 2 BY 8/1/2017 DEADLINE

	Providers Required to Meet Level 2 by 8/1/2017		% Required Providers Meeting Req	% FY2017 subsidy children <5 served by providers who met requirement
	Met Level 2 Req	Did not meet Level 2 Req		
Adams	28	29	96.6%	99.3%
Asotin	3	3	100.0%	100.0%
Benton	70	72	97.2%	99.6%
Chelan	89	91	97.8%	95.8%
Clallam	28	30	93.3%	99.7%
Clark	90	91	98.9%	100.0%
Cowlitz	25	25	100.0%	100.0%
Douglas	51	51	100.0%	100.0%
Ferry	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
Franklin	109	109	100.0%	100.0%
Garfield	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
Grant	102	106	96.2%	97.6%
Grays Harbor	38	39	97.4%	100.0%
Island	17	17	100.0%	100.0%
Jefferson	4	4	100.0%	100.0%
King	770	789	97.6%	99.2%
98001	10	10	100.0%	100.0%
98002	16	16	100.0%	100.0%
98003	28	28	100.0%	100.0%
98004	4	4	100.0%	100.0%
98005	1	2	50.0%	100.0%
98006	6	7	85.7%	98.3%
98007	10	12	83.3%	96.7%
98008	6	6	100.0%	100.0%
98009	2	2	100.0%	100.0%
98010	2	2	100.0%	100.0%
98011	6	6	100.0%	100.0%
98019	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
98022	5	5	100.0%	100.0%
98023	24	26	92.3%	96.5%
98027	7	7	100.0%	100.0%
98028	3	3	100.0%	100.0%
98029	2	2	100.0%	100.0%
98030	23	23	100.0%	100.0%
98031	39	41	95.1%	99.3%
98032	14	15	93.3%	98.5%
98033	8	8	100.0%	100.0%
98034	19	19	100.0%	100.0%
98035	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
98038	2	3	66.7%	98.9%
98040	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
98042	16	17	94.1%	99.4%
98045	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
98047	7	7	100.0%	100.0%
98052	8	8	100.0%	100.0%
98055	15	15	100.0%	100.0%
98056	5	5	100.0%	100.0%
98057	5	5	100.0%	100.0%
98058	14	14	100.0%	100.0%
98059	5	5	100.0%	100.0%

APPENDIX A: COUNTY AND ZIP CODE TABLES - PROVIDERS REQUIRED TO COMPLETE LEVEL 2 BY 8/1/2017 DEADLINE

98065	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
98070	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
98072	4	4	100.0%	100.0%
98074	2	2	100.0%	100.0%
98075	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
98092	15	16	93.8%	99.6%
98093	2	2	100.0%	100.0%
98101	3	3	100.0%	100.0%
98103	9	9	100.0%	100.0%
98104	9	9	100.0%	100.0%
98105	4	4	100.0%	100.0%
98106	19	20	95.0%	98.8%
98107	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
98108	59	59	100.0%	100.0%
98112	3	3	100.0%	100.0%
98115	6	6	100.0%	100.0%
98116	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
98117	5	5	100.0%	100.0%
98118	52	53	98.1%	94.0%
98119	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
98122	18	19	94.7%	100.0%
98125	24	24	100.0%	100.0%
98126	30	30	100.0%	100.0%
98133	17	17	100.0%	100.0%
98134	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
98136	3	3	100.0%	100.0%
98144	10	10	100.0%	100.0%
98146	12	13	92.3%	96.2%
98148	6	6	100.0%	100.0%
98155	15	15	100.0%	100.0%
98166	8	8	100.0%	100.0%
98168	44	45	97.8%	99.8%
98177	3	3	100.0%	100.0%
98178	16	16	100.0%	100.0%
98188	30	31	96.8%	99.7%
98198	15	16	93.8%	98.8%
98199	2	2	100.0%	100.0%
98360	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
(blank)	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
Kitsap	53	55	96.4%	96.8%
Kittitas	10	11	90.9%	98.3%
Klickitat	3	3	100.0%	100.0%
Lewis	22	24	91.7%	97.7%
Lincoln	2	2	100.0%	100.0%
Mason	23	23	100.0%	100.0%
Okanogan	22	23	95.7%	99.1%
Pacific	6	6	100.0%	100.0%
Pend Oreille	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
Pierce	238	252	94.4%	99.2%
98092	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
98093	2	2	100.0%	100.0%
98321	6	6	100.0%	100.0%
98327	2	2	100.0%	100.0%
98328	2	2	100.0%	100.0%

APPENDIX A: COUNTY AND ZIP CODE TABLES - PROVIDERS REQUIRED TO COMPLETE LEVEL 2 BY 8/1/2017 DEADLINE

	98329	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
	98332	3	4	75.0%	78.7%
	98335	4	4	100.0%	100.0%
	98338	8	9	88.9%	95.0%
	98354	3	3	100.0%	100.0%
	98360	2	3	66.7%	77.8%
	98371	4	4	100.0%	100.0%
	98372	2	2	100.0%	100.0%
	98373	8	9	88.9%	99.6%
	98374	11	11	100.0%	100.0%
	98375	7	8	87.5%	98.2%
	98387	21	22	95.5%	100.0%
	98388	2	2	100.0%	100.0%
	98390	6	7	85.7%	98.5%
	98391	5	5	100.0%	100.0%
	98394	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
	98402	2	2	100.0%	100.0%
	98404	11	12	91.7%	100.0%
	98405	8	8	100.0%	100.0%
	98406	4	4	100.0%	100.0%
	98407	5	7	71.4%	95.1%
	98408	17	18	94.4%	98.6%
	98409	11	11	100.0%	100.0%
	98411	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
	98415	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
	98418	8	8	100.0%	100.0%
	98422	2	2	100.0%	100.0%
	98424	2	2	100.0%	100.0%
	98433	5	5	100.0%	100.0%
	98443	2	2	100.0%	100.0%
	98444	12	12	100.0%	100.0%
	98445	7	7	100.0%	100.0%
	98446	2	2	100.0%	100.0%
	98464	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
	98465	5	7	71.4%	99.4%
	98466	6	6	100.0%	100.0%
	98467	3	3	100.0%	100.0%
	98498	9	10	90.0%	97.6%
	98499	12	12	100.0%	100.0%
	98580	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
San Juan		1	1	100.0%	100.0%
Skagit		70	71	98.6%	99.8%
Skamania		4	4	100.0%	100.0%
Snohomish		193	203	95.1%	99.5%
	98012	9	9	100.0%	100.0%
	98020	3	4	75.0%	93.8%
	98021	3	4	75.0%	92.9%
	98026	13	13	100.0%	100.0%
	98036	20	21	95.2%	98.2%
	98037	10	11	90.9%	100.0%
	98043	6	6	100.0%	100.0%
	98082	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
	98087	4	6	66.7%	99.5%
	98201	6	6	100.0%	100.0%

APPENDIX A: COUNTY AND ZIP CODE TABLES - PROVIDERS REQUIRED TO COMPLETE LEVEL 2 BY 8/1/2017 DEADLINE

	98203	13	14	92.9%	98.9%
	98204	9	9	100.0%	100.0%
	98208	18	18	100.0%	100.0%
	98223	10	11	90.9%	97.4%
	98251	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
	98252	3	3	100.0%	100.0%
	98258	9	10	90.0%	100.0%
	98270	22	22	100.0%	100.0%
	98271	12	12	100.0%	100.0%
	98272	4	4	100.0%	100.0%
	98275	7	8	87.5%	99.4%
	98290	3	3	100.0%	100.0%
	98292	3	3	100.0%	100.0%
	98294	4	4	100.0%	100.0%
Spokane		132	137	96.4%	99.5%
	99001	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
	99003	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
	99004	2	2	100.0%	100.0%
	99005	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
	99006	3	3	100.0%	100.0%
	99019	2	2	100.0%	100.0%
	99021	0	1	0.0%	0.0%
	99022	3	3	100.0%	100.0%
	99027	2	3	66.7%	100.0%
	99037	6	6	100.0%	100.0%
	99110	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
	99201	10	11	90.9%	92.7%
	99202	8	8	100.0%	100.0%
	99203	3	3	100.0%	100.0%
	99204	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
	99205	16	17	94.1%	100.0%
	99206	14	14	100.0%	100.0%
	99207	13	13	100.0%	100.0%
	99208	10	11	90.9%	98.6%
	99209	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
	99212	5	5	100.0%	100.0%
	99216	10	10	100.0%	100.0%
	99217	5	5	100.0%	100.0%
	99218	2	2	100.0%	100.0%
	99223	7	7	100.0%	100.0%
	99224	4	4	100.0%	100.0%
	99228	1	1	100.0%	100.0%
Stevens		10	10	100.0%	100.0%
Thurston		97	101	96.0%	97.9%
Walla Walla		26	29	89.7%	98.1%
Whatcom		48	48	100.0%	100.0%
Whitman		8	8	100.0%	100.0%
Yakima		258	263	98.1%	98.9%
Grand Total		2653	2733	97.1%	99.2%

EARLY ACHIEVERS

2016-17 EVALUATION

Child Care Aware of Washington

June 29, 2017



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation assesses the Early Achievers services Child Care Aware of Washington (CCA of WA) and its regional partners provide to child care providers, including their efforts to prepare licensed providers for Early Achievers rating and to coach providers after they receive their rating. Early Achievers continued to develop and grow this year, its fifth year. New provider enrollments increased substantially last summer, prior to the August 1, 2016 enrollment deadline for providers who serve children on the Working Connections Childcare subsidy, and an increasing number of providers are completing the first cycle of coaching and preparing for their renewal ratings. CCA of WA and its regional partners continued to onboard new staff and further develop support services to meet these program developments.

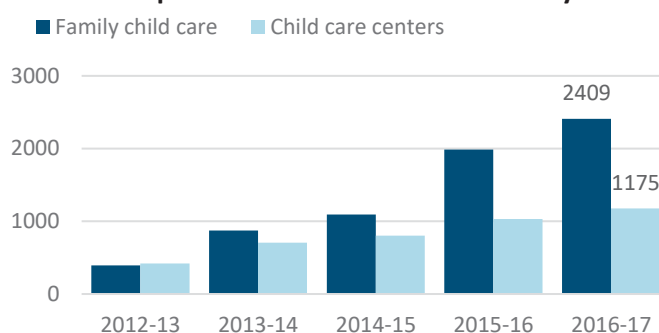
Highlights of the year

Enrollment is up

This end of the last program year and the start of this year brought big increases in enrollment with child care providers joining because of the subsidy mandate. In the six months prior to the enrollment deadline, 1,100 providers enrolled in Early Achievers.

As of the start of May 2017, just over 70 percent of all licensed child care providers have enrolled in Early Achievers. An estimated 74,000 children are served by these 3,600 providers.

Number of providers enrolled increased last year



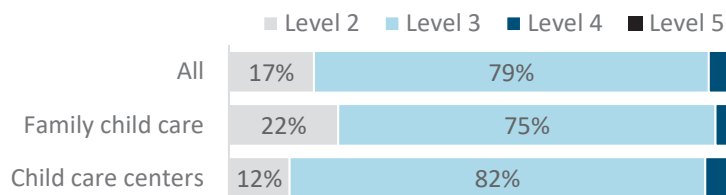
Source: Early Achievers cumulative enrollment data.

Most rated providers are receiving Level 3 or higher

Since Early Achievers has started, most providers have received a Level 3 or higher, with 79 percent receiving a Level 3 and four percent receiving a Level 4. A higher percentage of child care centers achieved a Level 3 or higher than family child care providers.

Compared to last year, the same percent of providers received a Level 3 or higher. However, the percent of providers receiving a Level 4 increased from two percent to seven percent, and for the first time this year, a licensed pathway child care provider received a Level 5 rating.

Most providers are rated Level 3 or higher



Source: Ratings data, all years. Includes each provider's most recent rating.

Providers are taking more time to prepare for rating

The length of time for providers to get rated has increased substantially over last year so that providers now average 21 months to get ready to rate. One of the reasons for this provided by region staff is that some providers joining Early Achievers because of the subsidy requirements are less proactive about progressing through the program, and others have higher program development needs that require more time to prepare for rating. Because of these factors, regional staff have experienced difficulty working with these providers to meet the Early Start Act deadline of August 1, 2017 for completing Level 2, and have concerns about providers' ability to achieve a Level 3 rating by December 2019.

More providers are receiving coaching and preparing for their renewal rating

CCA of WA regions have continued hiring and training of new coaches as well, and continued developing coaching services. Many providers are in the process of completing their first phase of coaching and are preparing for their three-year renewal rating. Some have already received their renewal rating.

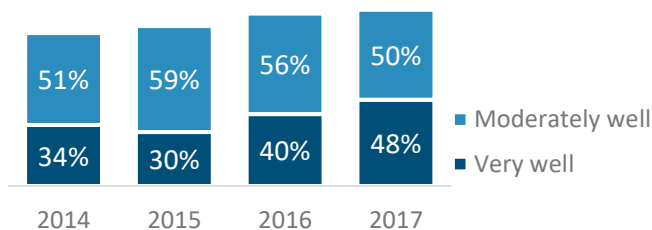
Some staff and providers would like more structure and supports for the coaching phase. In particular, some coaches would like more mentoring and job opportunities.

Regional staff are increasingly positive about Early Achievers

Staff opinions on how well Early Achievers implementation is going continues to improve. As shown in the chart, the percent of staff who think the program is going very well increased to 48 percent this year, up 8 percentage points from last year, and significantly higher than previous years.

Staff comments show that they are very pleased with how their regions and CCA of WA have responded to their past feedback and concerns, and feel that their work is being supported with additional training, staff resources, and program materials and tools. They appreciate the additional information on ratings results compared with past years. However, they continue to say that more detail is needed for coaches to develop appropriate Quality Improvement Plans and to effectively coach providers.

Most staff think Early Achievers is going moderately or very well



Source: Early Achievers regional staff surveys.

Staff also think their workload levels are more manageable than in past years and are pleased with the support they receive from their regions and CCA of WA. They provided suggestions for further improvements, including more frequent communication from their supervisors and CCA of WA, opportunities for more cross-regional training and collaboration among peer communities of practice, and additional training, frameworks, and support for the coaching and renewal rating phase.

Provider satisfaction is slightly lower

Overall provider satisfaction with Early Achievers declined slightly this year, following the same trend of recent years. The percent of providers completely satisfied with the program has continued to decline each year, as shown in the chart. Providers who joined one year or less ago tend to be slightly less satisfied than providers who enrolled two or more years ago.

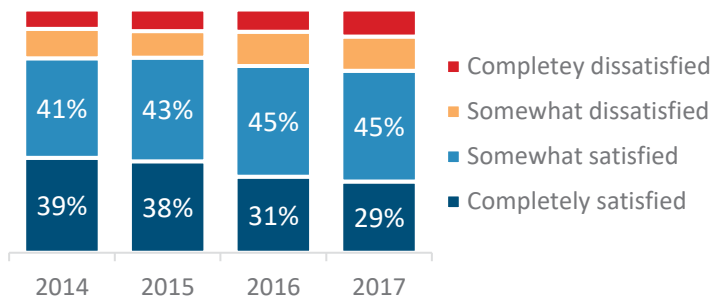
Although the majority of providers are still completely or mostly satisfied with the program, many continue to be concerned about the program’s complexity and costs.

The mandated participation in Early Achievers if they have children under age 5 on subsidy, and discontinuation of the Quality Improvement Awards if they do not continue to serve a certain number of subsidy children, has increased the financial impact of the program. In the survey 51 percent of *not rated* providers found the Quality Improvement Awards very important. However, the awards become more important to rated providers, with 78 percent of *rated* providers finding them very important, passing “improve quality of child care” (75 percent) as the biggest benefit to Early Achievers.

Many providers and staff in the surveys and discussion groups expressed concern that providers in more affluent areas may choose to discontinue serving children on subsidy. Additionally, some programs in low-income communities, all or most of whose children are on subsidy, may chose to leave Early Achievers because the program costs and low subsidy reimbursement rates make the program financially unsustainable. Staff and providers are concerned that this will unintentionally reduce the amount of licensed child care available for low-income families.

Overall, Early Achievers has continued to make great strides in program development this year, and the positive feedback from providers and staff demonstrate that the program is substantially strengthening the skills and capacity of child care directors and staff, and having very positive effects on the quality of child care provided to children.

Participants are slightly less satisfied with Early Achievers



Source: Early Achievers participant surveys

Child Care Attendance Policy

Section 13(5)(a) of the Early Start Act requires DEL to provide recommendations to the legislature on child attendance policies pertaining to the working connections childcare program and the early childhood education and assistance program. The recommendations should include the following:

- (i) Allowable periods of child absences;
- (ii) Required contact with parents or caregivers to discuss child absences and encourage regular program attendance; and
- (iii) A de-enrollment procedure when allowable child absences are exceeded.

The intent of this requirement is to resolve two separate concerns:

- That families and providers are motivated to encourage stable attendance of children in childcare and/or preschool.
- That the Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) program strike the appropriate balance between adequately compensating providers for their costs when a child calls in absent and not paying for too many “vacant” slots that could be better utilized by another child and family.

Stable attendance is important for the continuity of care for children – children thrive when they can establish stable relationships with caring adults. Additionally, regular attendance in childcare and preschool may be predictors of reduced absenteeism in the school-age years.

Recommendations:

1. Continue requiring ECEAP providers to follow an attendance policy.
Status: This has been in place since the beginning of the program, and addresses requirements i, ii, and iii above.
Current ECEAP Performance Standard B-112 Attendance states:
 - Contractors must maintain records of children’s attendance in ECEAP classes.
 - If a contractor’s average daily attendance falls below 85% for any month, contractors must analyze the causes and patterns of absenteeism and develop a plan to improve attendance.
 - Contractors must retain attendance records at least three years after their completion.
 - If any child has three or more consecutive absences and staff is not aware of the reasons, staff must contact the family to offer support and help address obstacles to attendance.
 - If these absences continue after intensified family support, the slot must be considered vacant and offered to a family on the waiting list.
2. Develop and implement an attendance policy as part of the Early Achiever requirements for participating providers.
Status: This is being developed as part of the standards alignment and progression work that DEL is currently undertaking. The child care-based policy will be adapted from the existing ECEAP policy and will address the three requirements listed above.

Adequately compensating providers for the care they provide to children enrolled in WCCC requires the state allow providers to charge for days they planned the child to attend when he/she does not show up due to illness, vacation, or some other reason. In the private sector, for example, families often pay a flat rate for the child care they plan to use, whether they actually attend or not. The state has not moved to such an “enrollment-based” funding model, but does recognize a need to compensate providers for their fixed costs, to a point.

The current absent day payment policy allows providers to bill up to a full month of eligible days for any child who attended at least one day in that month. Under the 12-month authorization rule established in the Early Start Act, this would imply that a provider could be paid for a full year of child care for a child who attended only 12 days in the year – leaving that child care “seat” mostly vacant and unavailable to another child or family in need.

Recommendations:

3. Negotiate with the union representing licensed family home childcare providers to establish an absent day billing policy that will leave fewer seats vacant and encourage attendance.
Status: The State successfully negotiated with the union to meet this requirement. As a result, the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the State of Washington and Service Employees International Union 925 for 2017-19 states that “Upon implementation of an automated system for billing absent days, the State shall pay licensed providers for up to sixty (60) days per twelve (12) month authorization period when the subsidized child is absent.” This contract language will support providers who have to pay for costs when children do not attend, but will not allow children to be chronically absent for multiple months. DEL is working with DSHS/ISSD to enhance the Social Services Payment System to allow providers to affirmatively claim payment absent days distinct from days they provided care. Once in place, this enhancement will constitute the “automated system for billing” that is a condition of the CBA language.
4. Implement a similar policy for licensed childcare centers.
Implementation of policy for Family Homes and Centers depends on the automated system currently under development with DSHS/ISSD. Center policy will reflect the requirements of monitoring attendance and the 60 billable absent days per 12-month authorizations.

The recommendations above are centered largely on childcare provider behavior. Although parents are responsible for getting their children to care on a consistent basis, the state does not yet have a system for monitoring an attendance policy for children on subsidy. However, DEL is procuring an Electronic Attendance System for subsidy providers to be piloted January 2018 and deployed February/March 2018. All subsidy providers will be required to use an electronic attendance system starting Spring 2018. With this system, coupled with the SSPS enhancement described above, DEL will have the ability to track attendance and absences billed by providers, and compare these to total hours the child is authorized to attend. This will allow the agency to fine-tune the attendance requirements in ECEAP and Early Achievers and consider an additional recommendation as to whether attendance history should be included as a factor in determining ongoing parent eligibility to participate in WCCC.

Caseload Tracking

The OFM Caseload Forecast Council tracks and forecasts paid households for the Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) program, consulting with a Technical Work Group comprised of OFM, Legislative Fiscal Committee Staff, DSHS and DEL. OFM's most recent caseload counts contains the following data:

The most recent Council forecast was released in June 2017. The Caseload Forecast Council tracks households that are paid and not paid. A paid household is an eligible household with a provider authorized to receive payment and receives payment for services. For the month of June 2017, the WCCC caseload consisted of 31,647 paid households, including 4,059 receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and 1,046 Child Only TANF households.

Authorized without warrant

Households that are not paid may become paid in the future. They include eligible households with a provider authorized to receive payment who has not yet submitted an invoice (authorized without a warrant) and households that are eligible for WCCC but do not have a provider authorized to receive payment (eligible but not authorized). As of June 2017, 7,456 households were eligible and had an authorized provider who had not submitted an invoice for that month.

Homeless Grace Period

July 1, 2017, the Homeless Grace Period began. As of September 1, 2017, the eligible household count in the Homeless Grace Period was 132 and 86 of these households had providers. This program is expected to reach its full size November 1, 2017. These cases are counted separately from the regular WCCC cases.