

# Racial Equity Initiative

## Overview

The Department of Early Learning (DEL) has committed to a goal of ensuring that ninety percent of children in Washington are ready for kindergarten by 2020, with race and family income no longer being a predictor of success. During the 2013-14 school year, only forty-one percent of Washington's children were ready for kindergarten, and the data highlights that low-income children and children of color are less likely to enter school with the proficiencies they need to thrive. The purpose of the Racial Equity Initiative is to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy that strengthens DEL's capacity to advance racial equity and eliminate disparities in child outcomes.

## What We're Doing

DEL's school readiness goal is a complex and major undertaking that will likely present many challenges, particularly around eliminating racial disparities. Making an impact on child and family outcomes will require a long-term commitment and strategy developed and implemented in partnership with families, communities of color and key partners. The focus for 2016-2017 is to lay a strong foundation for ongoing efforts. As a starting point, DEL will:

1. Develop and implement a comprehensive racial equity strategy. This strategy must include:
  - A *racial equity framework* or shared approach to leading for equity. This framework should include a vision for the early learning system, principles, and a shared understanding of the historical and current context, language/definitions, and key concepts.
  - A *racial equity plan* with specific goals, data, benchmarks and priorities that lead to the greatest impact on closing opportunity gaps and removing barriers for children, families and professionals of color. This plan will build on the [Racial Equity Theory of Change for Early Learning](#) and include both internal and external-facing strategies for DEL programs, policies and practices with clear actions and accountability mechanisms.
2. Develop and continually refine tools and processes (building in time to gather input and consider impacts at planning and decision points) necessary to implement the racial equity strategy, including:
  - Tailored *racial equity impact analysis tools* for program, policy, grant application, initiative and budget development.
  - An agency-wide *family, community and stakeholder engagement protocol* to ensure policies and decisions are meaningfully informed and influenced by those most impacted and marginalized.
  - Disaggregated *data and metrics* to track results and measure the impact of DEL's actions at the child/family/community level and outcomes at the program/agency level.
3. Train and support DEL staff to increase their knowledge, awareness and capacity to lead for equity. The first step is to convene and support a *Racial Equity Team* that will provide leadership in developing the racial equity strategy, tools, training and processes, as well as model culturally and linguistically responsive practices. The team will play a critical role in setting the conditions and environment necessary to engage others in racial equity conversations and efforts.