



THE EARLY START ACT 2018 ANNUAL REPORT



WASHINGTON STATE
**Department of
Children, Youth, and Families**



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Department of
Children, Youth, and Families

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Letter from the Secretary

This past year has been one of transition and adaptation. On July 1, 2018, the Department of Early Learning and Children's Administration (CA) at the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) came together to form the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). Even as we work to build new systems and procedures to bring together early learning and child welfare, we are preparing for another transition in July 2019, when we will bring into our fold DSHS's Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR) and the Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) subsidy program, which funds most of our state's child care and early learning subsidies.

The 2015 Early Start Act envisioned a number of major milestones over the course of five years to get to full implementation of the statewide Early Achievers quality rating and improvement system. The Department, along with our many partners in the field, have made substantial progress—92.5 percent of all required providers enrolled by the August 2016 deadline and 97.3 percent of all required providers met Level 2 requirements by the August 2017 deadline.

Our continuing commitment to early learning is reflected in the many successes in early learning in Washington in 2018. In the past year:

- We revised our queue management to ensure all providers with milestones meet their rating requirements by their deadline while maintaining their choice of ratings cohorts.
- Early Achievers continues to be successful in meeting inclusion and diversity goals, as diverse providers serving diverse communities continue to meet the required deadlines at rates higher than other providers, on average.

DCYF has also worked to fulfill another legislative directive in the Early Start Act to implement a single set of licensing standards for child care and ECEAP. These rules are developed and were put forward for public comment and finalization in March 2018. The final rules will go into effect on Aug. 1, 2019. These aligned standards demonstrate our ongoing commitment to ensuring quality child care and early learning for Washington's children and families.

Looking ahead to the next year, we are preparing for the next Early Achievers milestone. By Dec. 31, 2019, providers need to be rated "at quality" to serve children whose families are receiving child care subsidies. This will require a lot of work on our part – we still have a high volume of providers that need to be rated. Between now and the end of 2019, we will be working to build our systems capacity to address barriers that remain for providers still needing to reach that benchmark. DCYF's Early Achievers program is integral to improving the quality of child care available for children furthest from opportunity and helping to ensure all children are ready for kindergarten. Early Achievers is a continuously improving system, and in the months and years ahead, we will continue to make changes to make it better.

Early learning is a critical component of DCYF's eventual integrated service delivery model, which will aim to ensure accountability, seamlessness and effectiveness of state services for children and their families. Under DCYF, high-quality early learning is one of the earliest prevention services we provide to Washington state residents. In 2019 and beyond, we intend to continue that commitment to early learning and our belief that high-quality early learning is essential to helping children and families flourish.

Ross Hunter
DCYF Secretary

Executive Summary

The 2015 Early Start Act set a requirement 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 furthest from opportunity. 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.

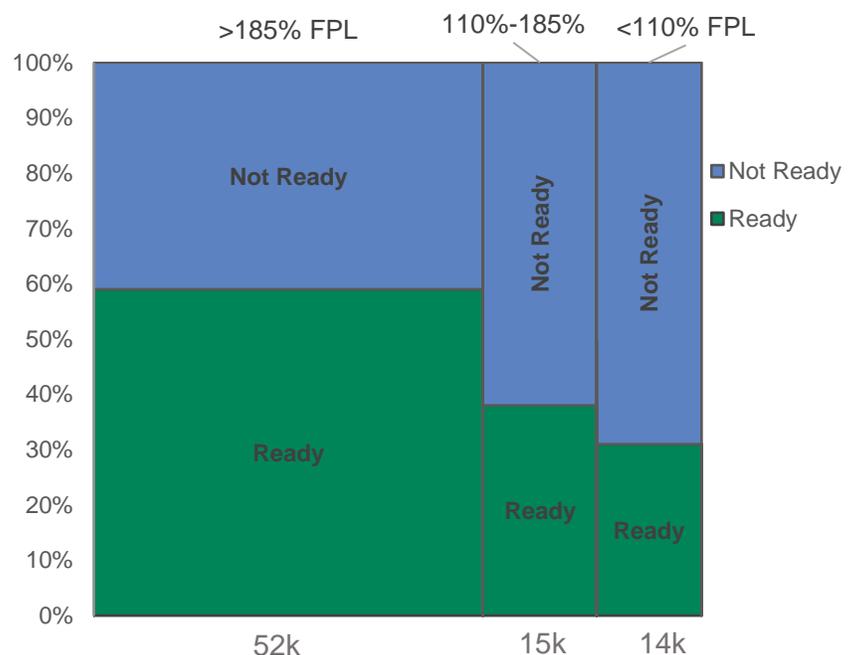
The Early Start Act highlights several key goals:

- 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 2017, only 46.7 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 percent FPL demonstrate the highest rate of readiness at 59 percent, whereas we estimate that 38 percent of those from households with incomes 110-185 percent of the FPL (Federal Poverty Level) and 31



All racial groups are reported as non-Hispanic

percent of those from households with incomes ≤ 110 percent of the FPL arrive at kindergarten ready for success. DCYF estimates that without current ECEAP and Head Start preschool programs, only an estimated 28 percent of children in households ≤ 110 percent of the FPL would arrive at kindergarten ready for success.

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 existing subsidy providers serving non-school age children on subsidy will rate an Early Achievers Level 3 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;
- DCYF has collaboratively developed a single set of standards, which will apply across licensing and ECEAP using Early Achievers as the framework for quality. These standards will be released to providers prior to August 1, 2019, and are expected to launch mid-year 2020;
- DCYF will continue to assure that early learning programs are available, supported and appropriate for diverse communities across the state, and address barriers to participation; and
- DCYF implemented a 12-month authorization for Working Connections Child Care subsidy in July 2016 to promote stability and high-quality for low-income children.

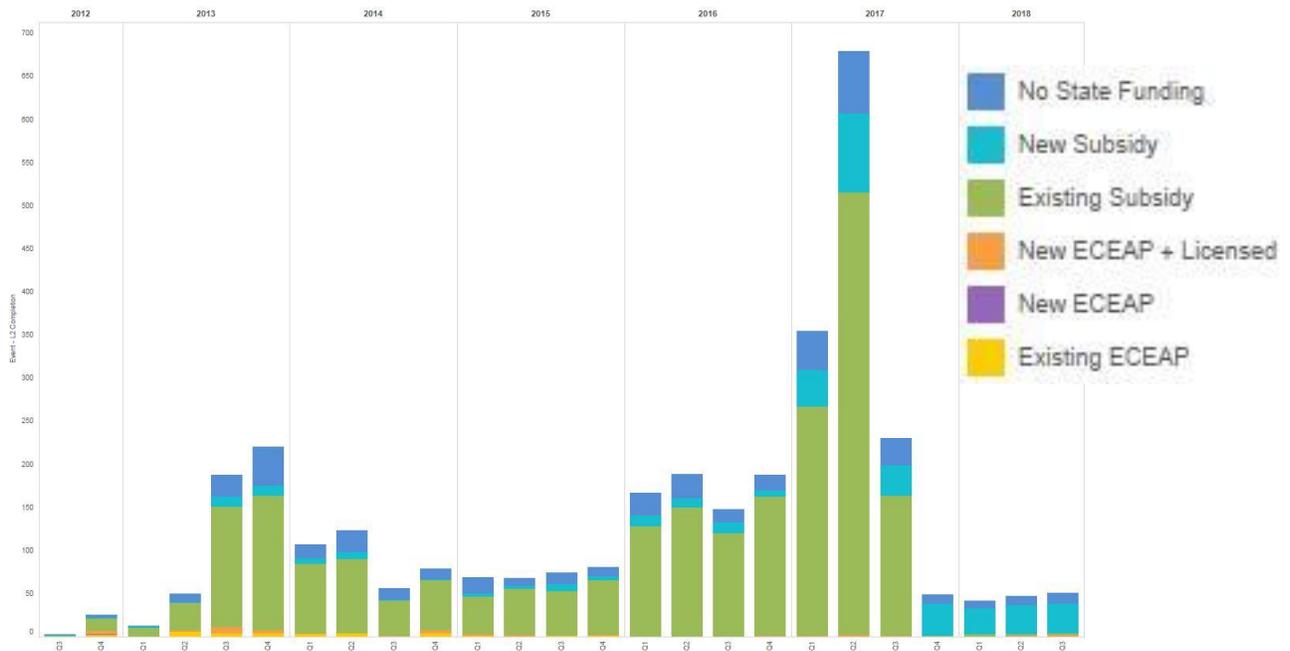
Progress to Date

The Early Start Act established the expectations that all licensed 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. By December 31, 2019, all existing providers required to enroll must achieve a level 3 rating or higher through an on-site evaluation. As of September 2018, there were 3,838 child care centers, family child care homes, and ECEAP/Head Start providers participating in Early Achievers. This includes 2,885 child care centers and family child care homes taking subsidy in the past year, 406 ECEAP/Head Start providers, and 546 private providers not taking subsidy in the past year. Of those required to rate level 3 or higher by the end of 2019, as of October 2018, 1,240 (54 percent) have gone through the rating process, and of those rated, 88 percent have achieved a level 3 or higher.

Additionally, subsidy providers representing racial/ethnic/language diversity generally have rated a level 3 or higher at rates consistent with all rated providers, preserving important access for subsidy care in communities of color and non-English speaking communities. For example, among required family child care homes, 98 percent of rated Somali-speaking providers are rated at level 3 or higher.

Figure 1 below illustrates the trend of increasing provider enrollment, particularly among existing subsidy providers, leading up to the August 1, 2017 enrollment deadline. While a small number of required subsidy providers continued to enroll in August and September, most enrollments since the August 1 deadline have been new subsidy and private providers.

Figure 1. Early Achievers Quarterly Level 2 Completion, 2012-2018



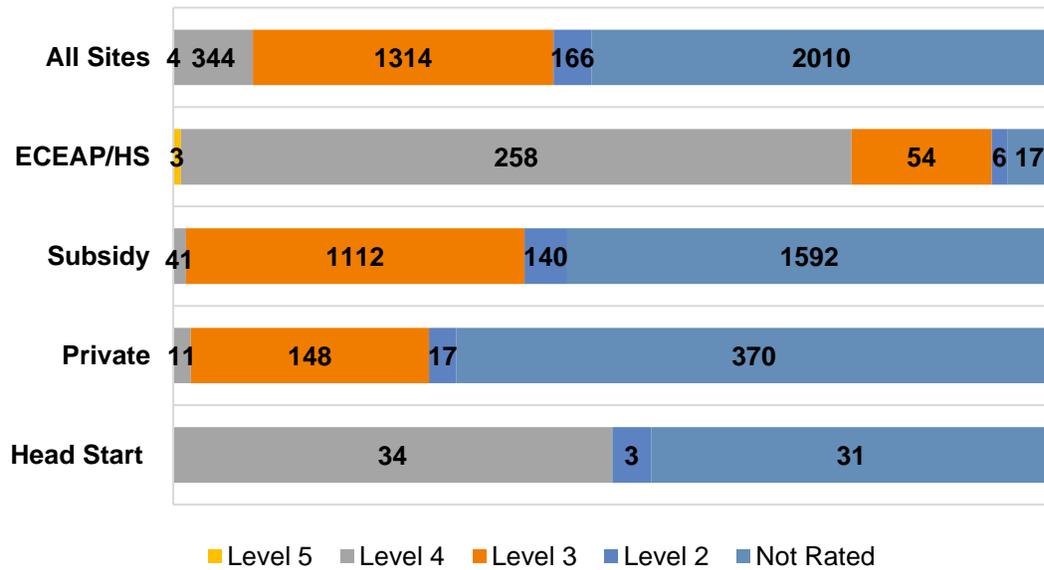
Data Source: Early Achievers Private Pay Monitoring Report, 9/15/18

The success observed with Early Achiever’s implementation to date indicates that in the short term Early Achievers implementation does not appear to have created new gaps in services. However, there are concerns in some communities about lack of adequate access for subsidy-eligible children reflecting decline especially of licensed family home providers serving young children on subsidy, a trend that began before the recent Early Achievers deadlines. 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, the passage of the statewide 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. Additionally, DCYF’s most recent Market Rate Survey¹ indicates a substantial gap between subsidy rates and the market rate in many communities around the state. 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.

¹ https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/2018_Washington_State_Market_Rate_Survey.pdf

As of September 2018 2,010 of the 3,838 providers enrolled in Early Achievers, or 52.4 percent, are not yet rated. To date 87.6 percent of ECEAP and subsidy providers that have been rated are “at quality” (level 4 or higher among sites delivering ECEAP services and level 3 or higher among sites that do not provide ECEAP services), and 12.4 percent of these providers are not yet rated at quality and will require additional supports.

Early Achievers Ratings, by Provider Type



Data Source: EA Private Pay Monitoring Report, 9/15/18

As of September 2018, there were an estimated 97,920 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 15 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 is in their care, regardless of payment source (non-subsidy child numbers estimated).

Estimated Total 0-5 Year Olds at Early Achievers Sites	
Total Children Served	97,920
ECEAP	19,651
Family Child Care Homes	14,778
Child Care Centers	62,861
<i>Data Source: Early Achievers Dashboard Appendix, Sept. 2018</i>	

Standards Alignment

In the 2015 Early Start Act, the legislature directed the former Department of Early Learning (DEL) to develop and implement a single set of licensing standards for child care and ECEAP by November 1, 2016. On May 9, 2018, DEL put forward the rules for public comment and finalization. The final rules will be released to providers prior to August 1, 2019, and are expected to launch mid-year 2020.

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 support providers in aligning licensing requirements, ECEAP performance standards, and the Early Achievers Quality Framework. 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 of standards from licensing through Early Achievers and ECEAP with minimal duplication and with similar language. This process ensures 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.

The new standards focus on ensuring monitoring and compliance, prioritizing the safety of children. This will be completed by developing weighted standards, which have a numerical value of priority for the health and safety of children. 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/DCYF has led efforts in Negotiated Rule Making to engage the early learning community on the public comment process and convened an equivalency workgroup to recommend recognized equivalents to professional development education requirements. In 2018-2019, DCYF will conduct an alignment awareness and education campaign to assure a smooth transition from the publication of the final updated licensing regulations to their implementation in 2020.

ECEAP

The Early Start Act confirms the legislature's intent to make ECEAP an entitlement by the 2022-2023 school year [Section 12(2)]. Since 2011, the legislature has increased ECEAP slots for children by 68 percent (5,467 slots). Based on the estimates of the Caseload Forecast Council, ECEAP will need 5,917 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 August 2018, 325 current ECEAP sites (on all pathways) are rated in Early Achievers. Of those, 260 sites (80 percent) rated a level 4 and three sites rated a level 5 (1 percent). There are 56 sites (17 percent) rated a level 3. Sites that rated a level 3 and met the minimum thresholds in the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (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:

- As of October 2018, 48 percent of providers serving children on subsidy have already been rated, compared with 29 percent in 2017.
- Over 85 percent of rated providers of color are rated "at quality," preserving important access for subsidy care in communities of color and non-English speaking communities.

- Over 87 percent of rated ECEAP and subsidy providers are rated “at quality.”
- More than 68 percent of ECEAP lead teachers met ECEAP staff qualifications in 2017-18.
- DEL/DCYF and its partners have made substantial progress in the standards alignment process.

Key Challenges:

- Building system 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 providers that need to attain level 3 or higher within the Early Start Act timeline.
- Ensuring that Early Achievers protocols work well for all providers, particularly those from diverse communities.
- DCYF and partners must continue to ensure that supportive services are scalable and cost-effective.
- Provider motivation to participate in Early Achievers is uneven 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 state and local partners need to work to 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. DCYF 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 both quality and 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 6, 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, DEL (now DCYF), 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.

In July 2018 the former DEL merged with the former Children's Administration to form the new DCYF. Because this 2018 report covers activity from before and after the merger, it contains references to many activities that occurred under the former DEL. All of the requirements of the Early Start Act have transferred to the new DCYF.

Acknowledgments

This report was produced by DCYF's Early Start Act Annual Report Advisory Team. The Early Achievers 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 the University of Washington's Cultivate 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 improve outcomes for young children and strengthen 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 can enhance school readiness. 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 furthest from opportunity. 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 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 former DEL 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 set a unifying direction for the entire early learning system, leveraging the other services and outcomes that DCYF supports to accomplish the ESA's targets and strategies.

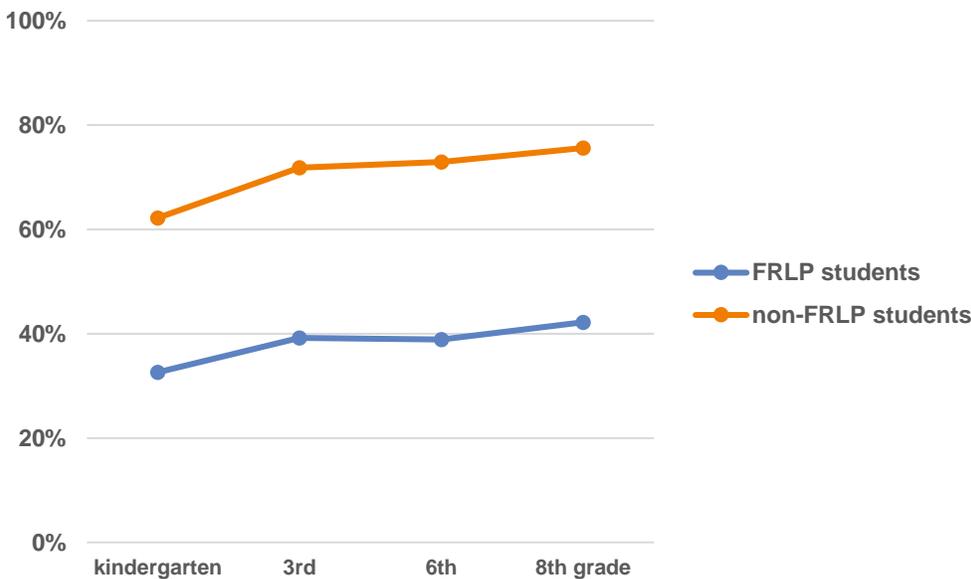
Why Kindergarten Readiness is Important

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 furthest from opportunity. 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

² J.B. Isaacs, 2012, "Starting School at a Disadvantage: The School Readiness of Poor Children," Brookings Institute.

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 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 2, showing the percent of Washington students who met grade-level standards 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 2. Washington Opportunity Gap by Household Income Group, 2017



Data Source: OSPI WaKIDS and ELA SBA Data from 2017-2018 School Year Report Card Website

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 DCYF, 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 year 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 instruction. OSPI compiles this school readiness data and

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

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 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 2017-2018 school year, 80,956 entering kindergarteners in Washington participated in the WaKIDS whole-child assessment. WaKIDS implementation is aligned with the rollout of full-day kindergarten, and WaKIDS was 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. DCYF counts entering kindergarteners as "ready for kindergarten" if they demonstrate readiness on all six of the six domains assessed.

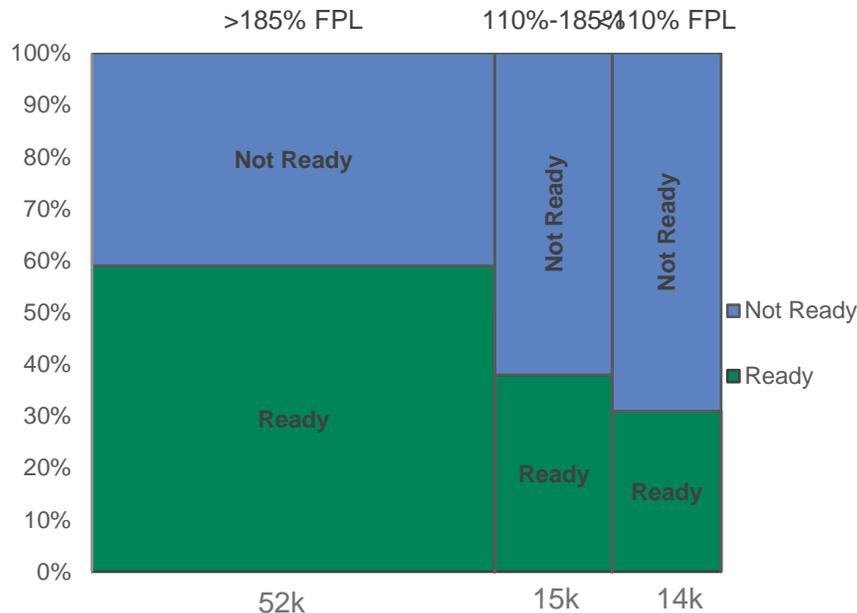
As with other educational outcomes, kindergarten readiness is not equally distributed throughout the population of Washington's entering kindergarteners – children from lower-income households are less likely to demonstrate readiness than are children from higher-income households. To help guide agency-wide work toward its kindergarten readiness goal, DCYF has used available data about WaKIDS assessments in the 2017-2018 school year to estimate kindergarten readiness by household income groupings for the entire class of entering kindergarteners. These groupings are chosen based on DCYF's programming – ECEAP primarily serves children in households \leq 110 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), and subsidized child care primarily serves children in households \leq 185 percent of the FPL.

Approximately 80,981 children entered public kindergartens throughout the state in 2017, and OSPI reports that 46.7 percent of children assessed on WaKIDS in 2017 demonstrated readiness on six of the six domains.⁴

⁴ <http://www.k12.wa.us/WaKIDS/Data/2017FallDataSummary.pdf>

As illustrated in Figure 3, entering kindergarteners in households >185 percent FPL demonstrate the highest rate of readiness at 59 percent, whereas 38 percent of those from households with incomes 110 to 185 percent of FPL and 31 percent of those from households with incomes below 110 percent of FPL arrive at kindergarten ready for success. DCYF estimates without current ECEAP and Head Start preschool programs, only about 28 percent of children in households below 110 percent of FPL would arrive at kindergarten ready for success

Figure 3. Kindergarten Readiness by Household Income Group, 2017



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 developed 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 2022-23 school year;
- ECEAP providers will offer part-day, full-school-day, and extended-day models according to demand for services and availability of supply;
- DCYF has developed a single set of standards across licensing and ECEAP using Early Achievers as the framework for quality;
- DCYF 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 rated an Early Achievers Level 4-5 by March 2016 or began remedial activities by September 2016 to rate a Level 4;⁵ and

⁵ This was accomplished in FY 2016.

- DCYF implemented a 12-month authorization for Working Connections Child Care subsidy to promote stability and high-quality for children from low-income households.⁶

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 DCYF. 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.

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.

⁶ This was accomplished in FY 2016.

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:

- Provides resources including coaching, training, and incentives to early learning providers to support their efforts to enhance quality;
- Helps parents and caregivers find high-quality child care and early learning programs that fit their needs by providing information about facility quality; and
- Ensures 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 supports 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.

December 31, 2019 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 December 31, 2019, all providers required to enroll by August 1, 2016, would achieve a level 3 or higher through an on-site evaluation.

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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 DCYF to maximize and encourage participation in Early Achievers among diverse providers.⁷

Table A details the progress of required child care and family child care home providers who will need to rate level 3 or higher by December 31, 2019.

Table A. December 31, 2019 Deadline Cohort of Providers Required to Rate Level 3 or Higher by Dec. 31, 2019								
	Participating Not Yet Rated	Participating Rated	% Rated (of Participating)	% Level 3 or Higher (of Rated)	Participating Not Yet Rated	Participating Rated	% Rated (of Participating)	% Level 3 or Higher (of Rated)
Child Care Centers					Family Homes			
Total	251	495	66%	91%	788	745	49%	86%
Race/Ethnicity of Primary Contact								
American Indian / Alaska Native	6	5	45%	80%	6	5	45%	100%
Asian	7	10	59%	90%	18	22	55%	59%
Black / African-American	12	38	76%	82%	128	195	60%	92%
Hispanic / Latino	21	38	64%	92%	309	271	47%	83%
Multiracial / Other	5	6	55%	67%	22	36	62%	86%
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	3	2	40%	100%	3	3	50%	67%
White	154	330	68%	93%	233	175	43%	87%
Unknown	43	75	64%	88%	69	38	36%	84%
Language of Primary Contact								
Amharic					1	6	86%	100%
Arabic						6	100%	100%
Cantonese						1	100%	100%
English	213	430	67%	92%	392	330	46%	84%
German			2	100%	100%			
Japanese	1			0%				
Korean	1	2	67%	100%		2	100%	100%

⁷ Please note – the data in Table A show the diversity of the primary QRIS contact. This is often the center director or family child care provider. This data does not show us the rich cultural and linguistic diversity within center classrooms. DCYF is working to get more information about classroom language of instruction. It is likely that centers are more diverse than the data show.

THE EARLY START ACT 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

	Participating Not Yet Rated	Participating Rated	% Rated (of Participating)	% Level 3 or Higher (of Rated)	Participating Not Yet Rated	Participating Rated	% Rated (of Participating)	% Level 3 or Higher (of Rated)
Language of Primary Contact								
Mandarin	1			0%				
Oromo						13	100%	100%
Other	2	3	60%	0%	7	14	67%	64%
Punjabi					1	2	67%	100%
Russian	1		0%		4	5	56%	80%
Somali					99	106	52%	98%
Samoan		1	100%	100%				
Spanish	5	12	71%	100%	271	252	48%	83%
Tagalog					2	1	33%	0%
Ukrainian					1		0%	
Vietnamese					6	2	25%	50%
Unknown	27	54	67%	85%	3	4	57%	100%

School-age-only child care providers are currently excluded from participation in Early Achievers until a pathway is designed for this facility type. Over the past two years, DCYF and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) have worked in partnership with School’s Out Washington, Child Care Aware of Washington, the Raikes Foundation, and the University of Washington, to pilot an initiative to determine 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 (ELO) Quality Initiative (formerly known as the Out-of-School Time Quality Initiative) is designed to build on the success and lessons learned from Early Achievers.

In year one, fifty programs from four counties (King, Pierce, Spokane, and Walla Walla) were chosen to participate in a quality assessment and improvement process. Participants include licensed family child care 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. An evaluation conducted by the University of Washington’s Cultivate Learning examined ELO site quality and the impact of improvement efforts. It also examined the experiences of participating coaches and providers to hear their perspectives on improvement interventions. Key findings include:

- Programs initially rated as lower than average improved after training and coaching.
- Coaching with fidelity to the model was linked with improved program quality.
- Higher levels of student engagement and fewer challenging behaviors were seen as program quality improved.
- Program staff and directors found coaching and data helpful and desired more frequent observations and feedback.
- Programs experienced several systemic barriers to improving quality including unstable staffing, limited time for training and limited funding to support staff.

Building from the 2016 pilot study, the goal and purpose of the second year of study (evaluation year 2017 – 2018) was to refine approaches to providing Practice-Based Coaching, test impact, cost, and understand how to best support programs and coaches to engage in the continuous quality improvement process. In this year of the initiative, three different coaching approaches were offered: in-person coaching (10 weeks all in-person), mostly online coaching approach (10 weeks online with in-person option on weeks 3, 6, 9), and a hybrid coaching approach (first 4 weeks in-person, and last 6 weeks online). Key findings included:

- All coaching intervention approaches (in-person, mostly online, hybrid) had a statistically significant and positive impact on program quality.
- Online coaching had the largest positive effect on a measure of program quality followed by in-person and then hybrid.
- Online coaching was also the most cost-effective to raise the program quality average by one level (i.e., from low to medium or medium to high).
- Across models, participants unanimously indicated that coaching was useful. For staff, being accountable to a single person who helped navigate difficulties in the growth process was encouraging and helpful.

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 the learning environment (using the Environment 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 modified 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. The data collection team at Cultivate Learning at the University of Washington's College of Education complete the required data collection.

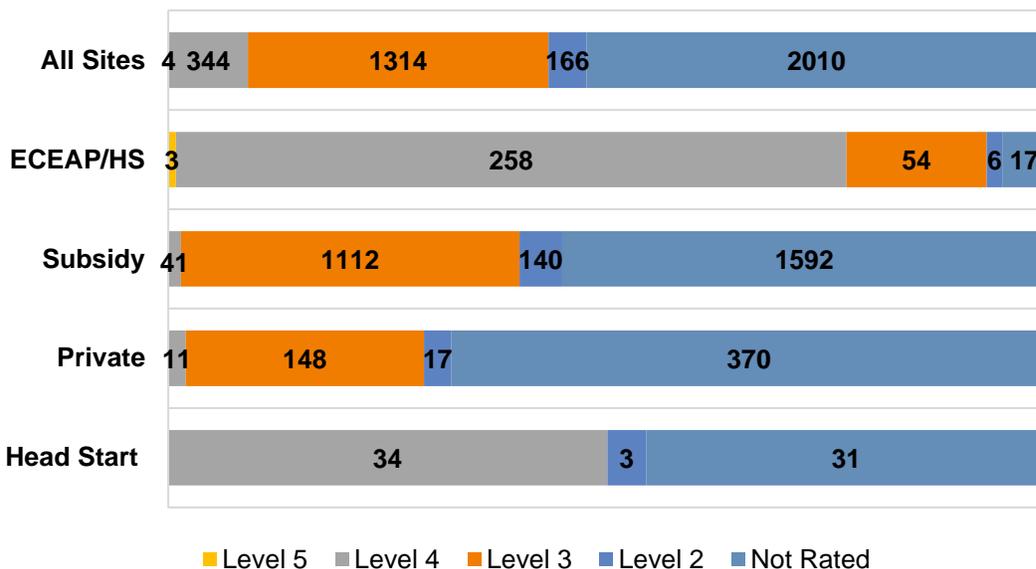
The goal of Early Achievers is to support providers to attain a high level of quality, defined as attaining a rating of a level 3 or higher so that children are ready for success in school and beyond.

Ratings by Provider Type

As illustrated in Figure 5 below, as of September 2018, 2,010 of the 3,838 providers enrolled in Early Achievers, or 52 percent, are not yet rated.⁸ Of those who have been rated, 46 percent of ECEAP and subsidy providers received a quality level of excellence (level 3 or higher), while 54 percent of these providers have not yet rated at quality and are receiving additional supports. When comparing the chart below with the same chart included in the 2017 report, we see a drop of 73 providers in the Head Start only category and a rise of 80 providers listed as ECEAP/HS.



Figure 4. Early Achievers Ratings by Provider Type



Data Source: EA Private Pay Monitoring Report, 9/15/18

⁸ Analytics staff discovered an error in the chart presented here in 2017. The Head Start only and ECEAP/HS numbers are incorrect – Head Start was over reported by approximately 75 providers, and ECEAP/HS was underreported by approximately 70 providers. This error has been corrected in the 2018 chart.

Children Reached

Table B. Estimated Total 0-5 Year Olds at Early Achievers Sites	
Total Children Served	97,920
ECEAP	19,651
Family Child Care Homes	14,778
Child Care Centers	62,861
<i>Data Source: Early Achievers Dashboard Appendix, Sept. 2018</i>	

As of September 2018, there were an estimated 97,290 children⁹ ages 0-5 being served by Early Achievers participants.¹⁰ The majority of these children (65 percent) were being served in licensed child care centers, while 15 percent were in family child care homes, and 20 percent were in ECEAP or Head Start sites. 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 (non-subsidy child numbers estimated).

In FY 18 (July 2017-June 2018), 35,881 children under age 5 received subsidized child care in licensed facilities. 65.3 percent of these children received care in licensed child care centers during the fiscal year, 26.5 percent received care in licensed family child care homes, and 6.2 percent received care in both types of facilities.

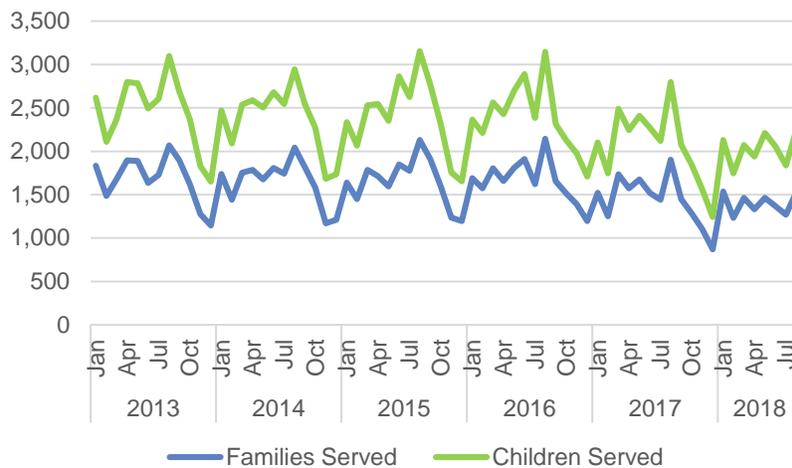
Family Center and Referral Data

In 2018, 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 requests 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.

⁹ The count is based on active Early Achievers sites for each unique child-provider relationship. If a child attends more than one provider, then that child will be counted once for each provider. For example, if a child attends ECEAP in the morning and attends a center in the afternoon, that child would appear twice in this table.

¹⁰ This count includes the estimated total of 0-5 year olds at all active Early Achievers sites, both those that have been rated and those sites that are awaiting a rating.

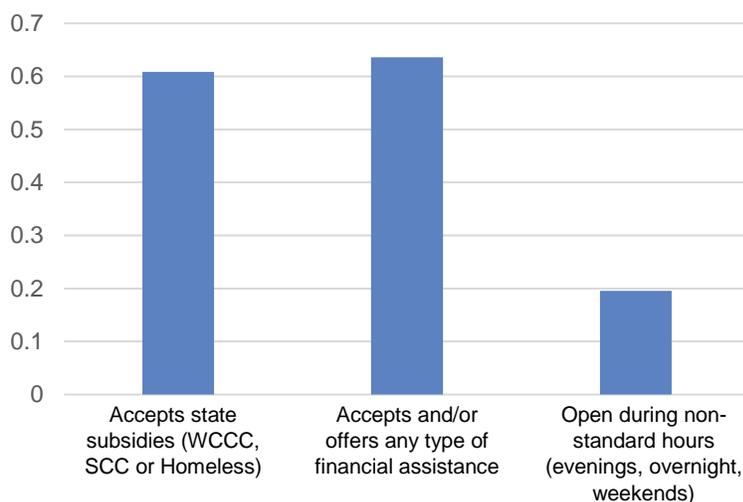
Figure 5. Families and Children Served by CCA Referrals, 2013-2018¹¹



In FY 2018, more than half of the calls received by CCA were looking for child care that accepts children using 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.

Data Source: NDS/Reporting Database, Prepared by CCA of WA

Figure 6. Percentage of Calls Seeking Specific Providers, FY 2018¹²



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 2018, the Family Center was accessed by families speaking 20 languages other than English and Spanish – the most-accessed other languages being Amharic, Russian, Arabic, Tigrigna, Somali, and Farsi. Overall 7.2 percent of the calls were from non-English speakers.

Data Source: NDS/Reporting Database, Prepared by CCA of WA

Key Accomplishments:

- 48 percent of subsidy providers have already been rated, compared with 29 percent in 2017.
- Over 87 percent of rated providers are rated “at quality.”
- Over 85 percent of rated providers of color are rated “at quality.”
- 76 percent of providers accepting subsidy have requested a rating or have been rated.

¹¹ Child Care Aware of Washington provided this chart. Families can have one or more children. The family count represents the number of clients/families/households served during the fiscal year, unduplicated to the best of CCA of WA’s ability. The child count is the number of children for whom those families were searching for care.

¹² In FY ’18, DCYF managed the following child care subsidy programs: Working Connections Child Care (WCCC), Seasonal Child Care (SCC) and Homeless Child Care.

- 78 percent of providers accepting subsidy representing racial/ethnic/language diversity have been rated or requested rating, preserving important access for subsidy care in communities of color and non-English speaking communities.
- Over 98 percent of rated Somali-speaking providers and 84 percent of rated Spanish-speaking providers are rated “at quality.”
- DCYF and its partners have built substantial capacity at all levels to provide relationship-based professional development and rating data collection throughout the state.
- Queue management revisions to ensure all providers with milestones are rated by their deadline while maintaining provider choice of cohorts.

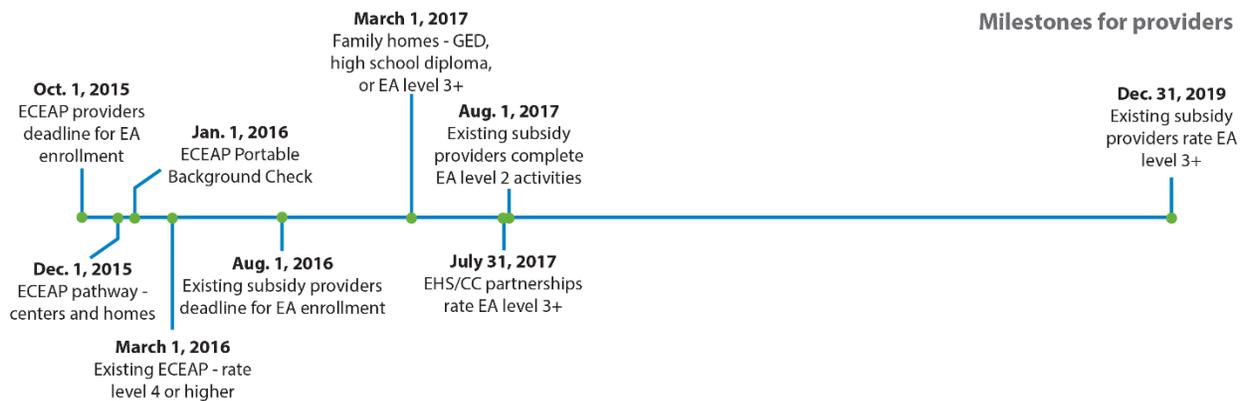
Key Challenges:

- Building system 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).
- 69 percent of rated providers (N = 22) who identify as Asian are rated at quality. DCYF staff will be looking into this in order to understand what barriers may exist that are impacting participants from reaching higher levels of quality.

Chapter 3: Progress Toward Meeting the Early Start Act Requirements

The Early Start Act created new requirements to participate in Early Achievers 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:¹³

Figure 7. ESA Timeline as of June 28, 2015



The Early Start Act required that all existing 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. The next milestone for existing subsidy providers is to achieve a level 3 rating by December 31, 2019. As of September 2018, there were 3,838 child care centers, family child care homes, and ECEAP/Head Start providers participating in Early Achievers. This includes 2,885 child care centers and family child care homes taking subsidy in the past year (both new and existing¹⁴), 406 ECEAP/Head Start providers, and 546 private providers not taking subsidy in the past year.

DCYF and its partners continue to support participants who are working on meeting their rating requirements. These supports include resources and approaches such as cohort groups, increased data collection capacity, and streamlined rating options that solely focus on the environment and interactions. Subsidy providers must reach their rating milestone in order to continue to participate in the child care subsidy program. As of September 2018, 60 percent of child care centers and 42 percent of family child care homes have rated at level 3 or higher.

Following enrollment in Early Achievers, new subsidy providers have 30 months to participate in quality improvement activities prior to being rated. Licensed child care providers who accept children on subsidy must rate at a level 3 or higher within 30 months of enrolling in EA. Providers who 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

¹³ EHS/CC = Early Head Start Child Care partnerships.

¹⁴ “New” and “existing” child care providers differentiate where providers are on the timeline to meet ESA requirements. “Existing” providers are those required to meet “at quality” rating standards by December 31, 2019.

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 of enrolling. 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.

Different types of support are needed at each stage of the Early Achievers rating and the quality improvement pipeline supports provider progression to each subsequent milestone. DCYF is working with its partners, CCA of WA and UW Cultivate Learning (formerly CQEL), to prepare for the substantial downstream work anticipated by the large number of subsidy providers who have completed their level 2 requirements and are working to achieve a level 3 rating before December 31, 2019.

Forty-five percent of licensed providers accepting subsidy who are required to achieve an “at quality” rating by December 31, 2019, have already been rated. For those yet to be rated, DCYF 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 only covers the area(s) in which the facility did not achieve the minimum threshold for the required quality level rating. For example, if the site missed the required threshold in the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) then the re-rate will only include the ERS.

In the fall of 2018, DCYF made a re-rate policy change to ease the burden on participants as well as to maximize data collection capacity. The policy change allows qualifying re-rates to count as a renewal rating, thus restarting the provider’s three-year rating cycle. Historically, sites renewed their ratings every three years and if they had a mid-cycle re-rate, they were still bound by their original renewal cycle. For example, if a site rated level 2 in March of 2016 their renewal date is March of 2019. If they re-rated level 3 in July of 2017, they would still have to renew their rating in March of 2019. Under the new policy, the site that rated level 2 in March 2016 and re-rated level 3 in July of 2017 would now have a renewal date three years after the re-rate. Their updated renewal date would be July 2020.

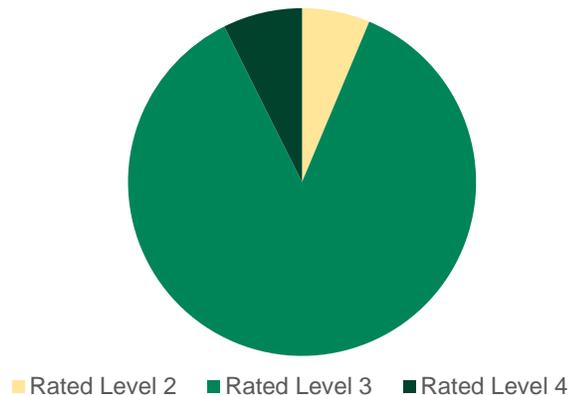
If a provider does not achieve the required quality rating level on the second rating, they have the option of paying for additional re-rates. The fee charged is dependent on the size of the facility. Based on current data, DCYF expects that this option will be used infrequently as a small portion of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

Re-Rating Success Rate

As of September 2018, 95 licensed child care providers who previously achieved a level 2 have attempted re-rating. Of these, 93.7 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. During that time, they participate in relationship-based professional development and quality improvement activities. These licensed providers showed significant improvements in their scores during the re-rate, with the greatest improvements occurring in the CLASS ratings.

Figure 8. Level 2 Re-Ratings, Licensed Pathway



Data Source: MERIT Ratings and Assessments report and PRISM, as of September 2018, Prepared by CCA of WA

Extension Protocol

The Early Start Act requires all licensed early learning providers who 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”. DCYF 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, 63 providers have requested an extension, 62 of which were granted. The majority of these requests cited high staff turnover as the reason for their request.

Key Accomplishments:

- DCYF 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.
- Changed the Early Achievers data collection cohort calendar to allow providers to enter the data collection queue as they are ready, rather than waiting for the approval window.
- Regionalized the Early Achievers data collection cohort calendar so that two cohorts are open in each region at one time. This change allows DCYF to better prepare for the ESA rating timeline.
- As of October 26, 2018, there are 640 providers in the queue for their initial rating. This includes 568 subsidy providers.

Key Challenges:

- High volume of providers who need to attain level 3 or higher within Early Start Act December 31, 2019 timeline.
- High volume of newly-enrolled providers in Early Achievers who will need to be supported through initial rating.
- High staff turnover within the early learning field makes continued focus on quality improvements challenging within early learning facilities.

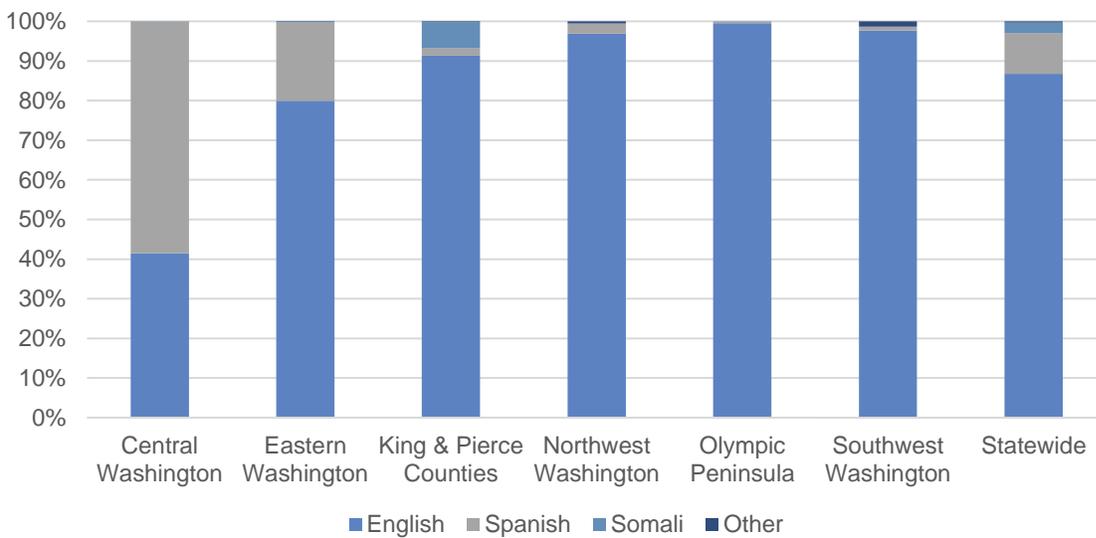
Chapter 4: Available Supports and Their Effectiveness at Improving Quality

Early Achievers participants have access to supports and resources to assist them throughout their journey through the quality improvement system. These aids include pre-enrollment supports, level 2 supports, quality improvement tools, and incentives. This chapter provides a detailed description of each type of support, along with data on the 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 DCYF 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 9. Individual and Small Group Outreach Hours, by Language and Region, 2018



Data Source: Impact, through Sept. 30, 2018, prepared by CCA of WA

Child Care Aware of Washington offers pre-enrollment supports, such as helping providers complete necessary tasks in MERIT¹⁵, and addressing barriers to enrollment. This assistance

¹⁵ 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

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 to support learning together in their primary language and to facilitate peer learning and community building among 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;
- Coaching staff 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 subsidy providers 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 completing the online applications in MERIT, 3) pre-rating coaching focused on practices such as teacher-child interactions and engaging environments, 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. 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 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:
 - a. **Introduction to the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)** (*Online, approximately two hours*)

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.

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.¹⁶

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.

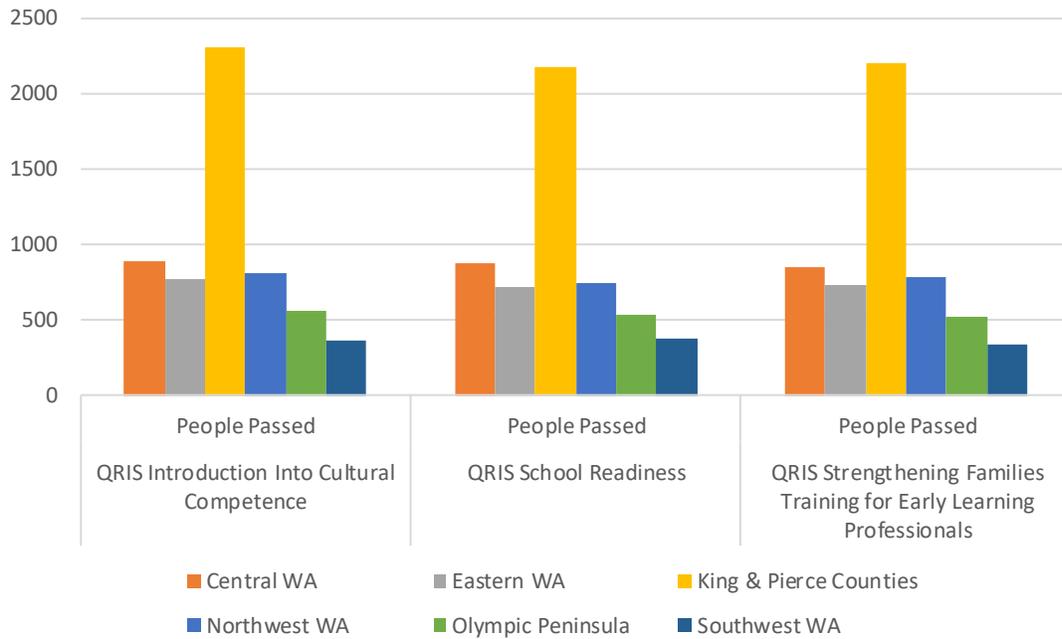
f. **QRIS Strengthening Families Training for Early Learning Professionals** (*In person, six hours*)

Strengthening Families Protective Factors is a 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 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.

¹⁶ Training accommodation is available regionally for groups of providers to attend online training together with language interpretation. It is typically used for providers that have limited English/Spanish literacy.

Figure 11 below illustrates the high numbers of individuals completing the in-person level 2 trainings – between 2012 and July 31st, 2018, 5,714 individuals completed Introduction to Cultural Competence, 5,438 completed School Readiness, and 5,429 completed Strengthening Families.

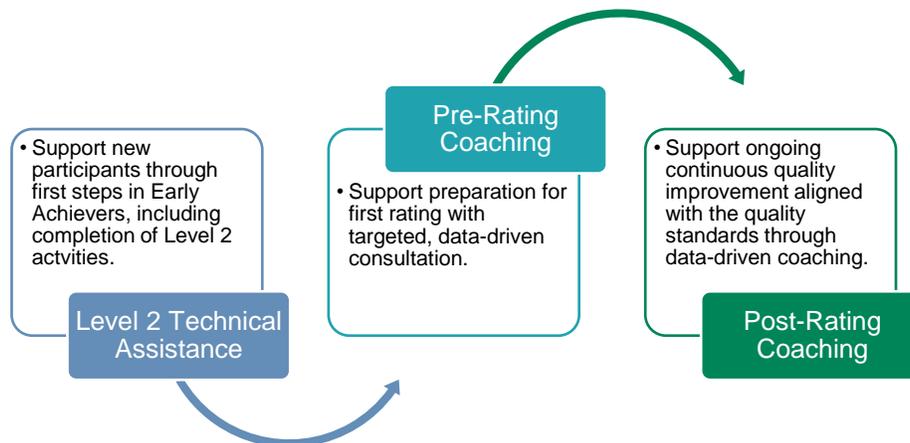
Figure 10. Individuals Completing In-Person Level 2 Trainings, by Region, 2012-2018



*Data Source: Combined Training Report (MERIT), through July 31, 2018, prepared by CCA of WA.
 Note: Online training attendance not reported by region due to being open to anyone in the state, including non-EA providers*

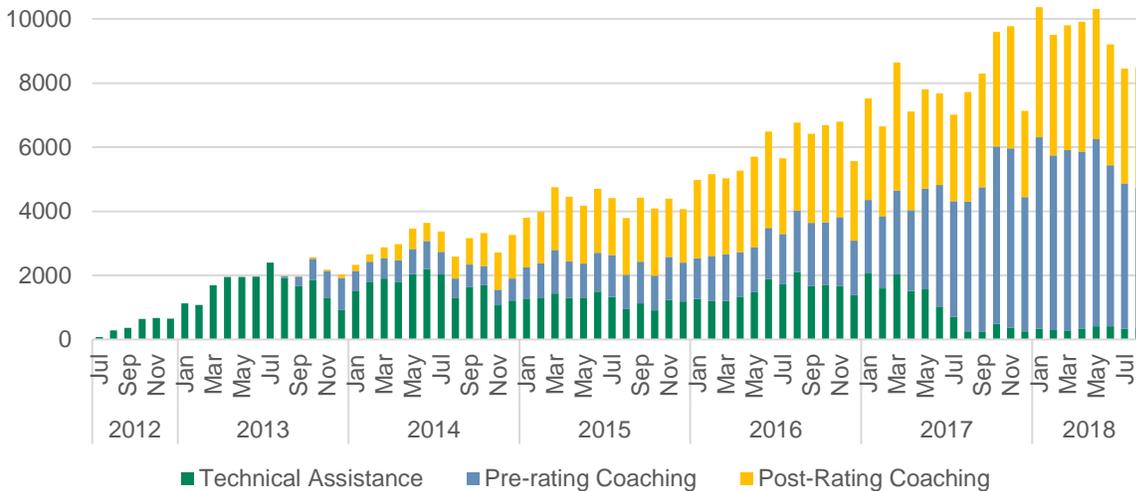
Relationship-Based Professional Development

Relationship-Based Professional Development focuses on building trusted relationships to foster change and facilitate improvement. Early Achievers coaches use relationship-based professional development across all 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 August 2018.

Figure 11. Relationship-Based Professional Development Hours by Type, 2012-2018



Data Source: Impact, PRISM, MERIT

1. **Technical Assistance:** Upon registration for Early Achievers, facilities will be assigned a coach by their local Child Care Aware of Washington agency to support them as they move through level 2 requirements. The coach 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.

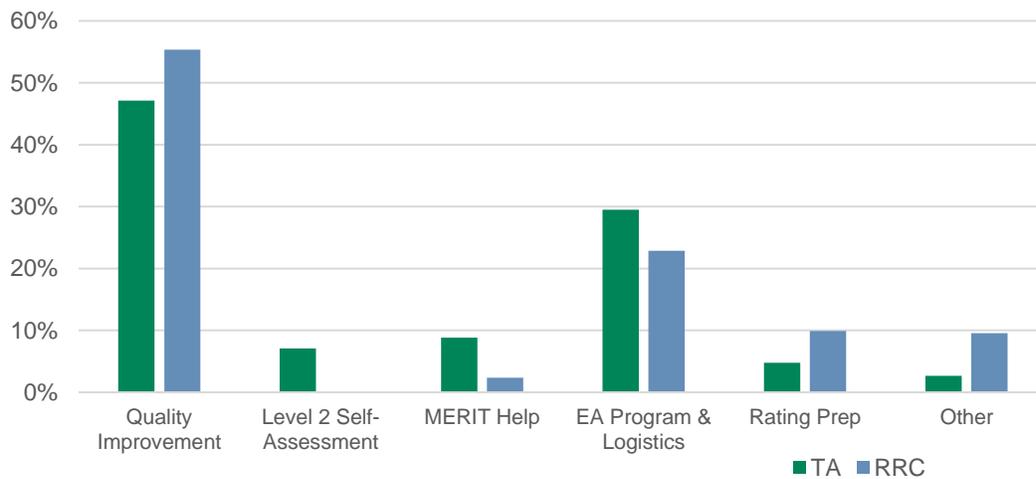
Technical assistance is delivered in multiple ways, including individual sessions and group sessions and remotely via phone and email. Participants work individually with their coaches on their unique work plans during one-on-one sessions in completing their level 2 activities. In order to build community connections and peer support, the regional Child Care Aware of Washington agency offers small group technical assistance sessions that address continuous quality improvement and the Early Achievers Quality Standards. The goals of technical assistance 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.
2. **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. Pre-rating coaching may be provided to classroom teachers, as needed, to help them strengthen their teacher-child interactions and create engaging learning environments which are measured using the ERS and CLASS tools.
 3. **Post-Rating Coaching:** Coaching is a long-term continuous service available to all rated facilities through Child Care Aware of Washington. After an Early Achievers facility receives its first rating, 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.

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.

Figure 12. Technical Assistance and Pre-Rating Coaching Hours by Topic Area



Data Source: *Impact, prepared by Child Care Aware of WA*

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 pre-rating plan for improvements that increases the likelihood that providers will achieve a successful rating. Child Care Aware of Washington has conducted over 5,596 CCQBs in individual classrooms between 2014 through August 2018.
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 state stackable certificates, Associates Degrees (AA) and Bachelor’s Degrees (BA) in Early Childhood Education (ECE), or other specialized certificates such as Montessori credentials. Early Achievers Opportunity Grants and Washington Scholarships for Child Care Professionals are two scholarship programs provided for students employed by Early Achievers facilities.
 - a. **Child Care Aware of Washington Scholarships** are administered by Child Care Aware of Washington and support educators working towards a state stackable certificate, and AA/AAS or BA degree in Early Childhood Education. Since July 1, 2012, the WA Scholarships program has awarded over 3,421 scholarships to over 2,298 individual ECE professionals. The majority of scholarships have funded students pursuing degrees and certificates at community and technical colleges. WA Scholarship recipients have completed over 40,165 credits of coursework from Washington colleges and universities and earned more than 1,100 degrees, certificates, and credentials.
 - b. **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 are intended to enhance student retention by monitoring student progress and assisting students when they encounter barriers affecting their participation and persistence in their college programs. Launched in 2012, the *Early Achievers Grant* program has been in operation for six full years (not counting the start-up school year 2012-2013). Participating colleges have increased from 18 in Year 2 to 28 in Year 6. The number of grant recipients has increased by over 275 percent from 555 in 2013-2014 to 1,534 in 2017-2018, with 40 percent of 2017-18 grant recipients listing an Associate's degree as their educational intent.¹⁷

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.
 - a. **Needs-Based Grants.** Family child care homes 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 DCYF, and in FY 2018 these grants were awarded to over 250 family child care home participants and over 100 child care centers. Funds were prioritized for providers serving families with low-income 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 C. Regional Distribution of Needs-Based Grants Awarded, FY 2018				
Region	Child Care Centers		Family Child Care Homes	
	Amount Awarded	Number of Providers	Amount Awarded	Number of Providers
Central	\$ 19,934	20	\$ 46,451	62
Eastern	\$ 13,622	14	\$ 16,437	22
King County	\$ 15,000	15	\$ 49,132	66
Northwest	\$ 23,999	24	\$ 34,970	48
Olympic Peninsula	\$ 11,724	12	\$ 13,475	18
Southwest	\$ 3,979	4	\$ 6,602	9
Pierce County	\$ 15,964	16	\$ 24,660	33
TOTAL	\$ 104,222	105	\$ 192,728	258

¹⁷ SBCTC (2018) Spring 18 Quarterly Report Early Achievers Grant

- b. **Early Achievers “Bridge Grants.”** In FY 2018, DEL provided an opportunity for qualifying Early Achievers participants to apply for an additional one-time grant incentive to purchase resources to support participation in Early Achievers. Similar to the Needs-Based Grant, a Bridge Grant of up to \$750 for family child care homes and \$1,000 for child care centers was available for participants who served children accessing state child care subsidies, and who were rated Level 2 or had been participating in Level 2 activities for less than 30 months from the date of application. Over 500 Bridge Grants were paid in FY 2018.

Table D. Bridge Grant Awards, FY 2018				
Region	Child Care Centers		Family Child Care Homes	
	Amount Awarded	Number of Providers	Amount Awarded	Number of Providers
Central	\$ 24,322	25	\$ 104,144	139
Eastern	\$ 13,000	13	\$ 26,236	35
King County	\$ 25,935	26	\$ 91,986	123
Northwest	\$ 12,000	12	\$ 28,990	39
Olympic Peninsula	\$ 13,938	14	\$ 13,450	18
Southwest	\$ 19,485	20	\$ 5,249	y
Pierce County	\$ 7,992	8	\$ 18,745	25
TOTAL	\$ 116,672	118	\$ 288,800	386

- c. **Quality Improvement Awards.** Quality Improvement (QI) Awards are annual cash awards provided to qualifying child care centers that achieve rating levels 3 through 5 and family child care homes that achieve rating levels 2 through 5. QI Awards recognize achievement and support facilities to implement quality improvement goals. All QI Award funds must be used toward the achievement of quality improvement goals outlined on coach-approved, facility QIP and must align with the Early Achievers Quality Standards. To be eligible to receive QI Awards, facilities must:
- Achieve an Early Achievers rating of level 2, 3, 4 or 5;
 - Create a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) with the assigned coach;
 - Maintain active participation throughout the three-year rating cycle by participating in ongoing coaching and maintaining the goals set in the facility’s QIP; and
 - Serve an enrollment population of which at least 5 percent of total licensed capacity consists of non-school-age children receiving state or other qualifying child care subsidies.

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

Table E. Quality Improvement Awards Eligibility Limits, FY 2018		
Level Attainment	Family Child Care 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

d. **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 F below.

Table F. Tiered Reimbursement Schedule, by Provider Type and Rating Level		
Family Child Care Homes	Level 3	10 percent above the base rate
	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.
- 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 receive culturally, linguistically, geographically, and educationally appropriate services.

Key Challenges:

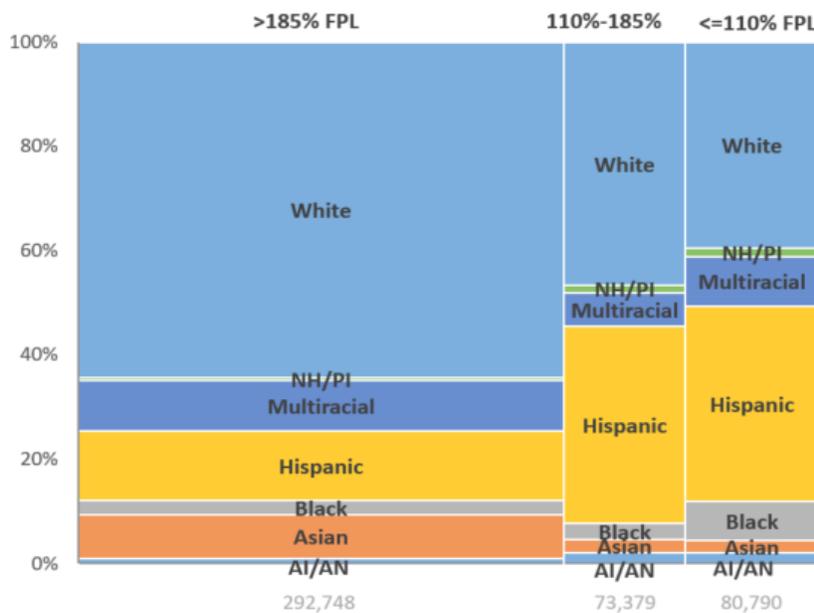
- DCYF and partners must continue to ensure supportive services are scalable and cost-effective.
- Provider motivation to participate in Early Achievers is uneven and is a significant factor in their overall success in undertaking quality improvements and attaining high rating levels.
- Champions for Early Achievers are needed to create a broad messaging strategy that can increase understanding of Early Achievers.
- DCYF must continue to assess Early Achiever's language and culturally appropriate training and services to ensure that diverse communities are well served.
- Recruitment and retention of staff in the early learning field 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 Backgrounds¹⁸

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

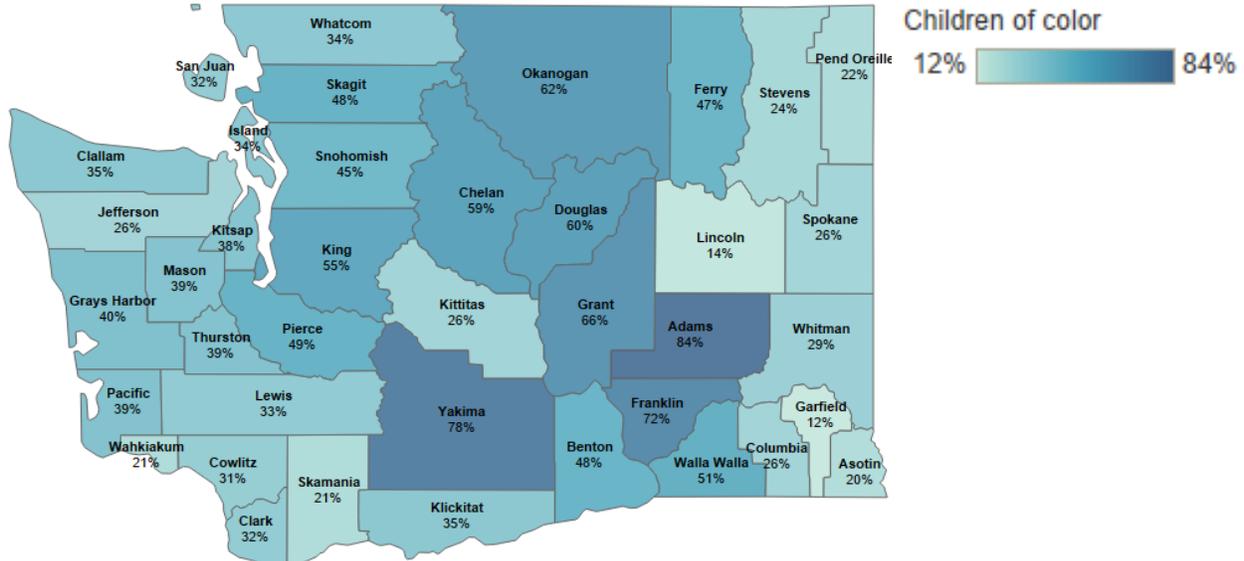


Data Source: American Community Survey PUMS 2016 1-year data

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.

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

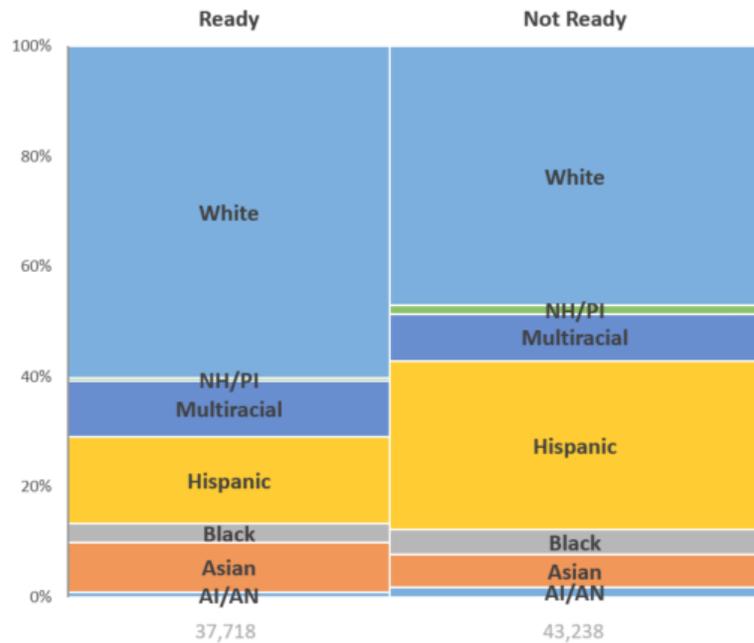


Data Source: OFM Small Area Demographic Estimates (SADE)

Children of color made up 46.9 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 face adversities, such as less access to high quality early learning environments. In addition, there may be linguistic and/or cultural barriers in the way the WaKIDS assessment is administered that may prevent 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.

Figure 15. WaKIDS Readiness by Race/Ethnicity, 2017

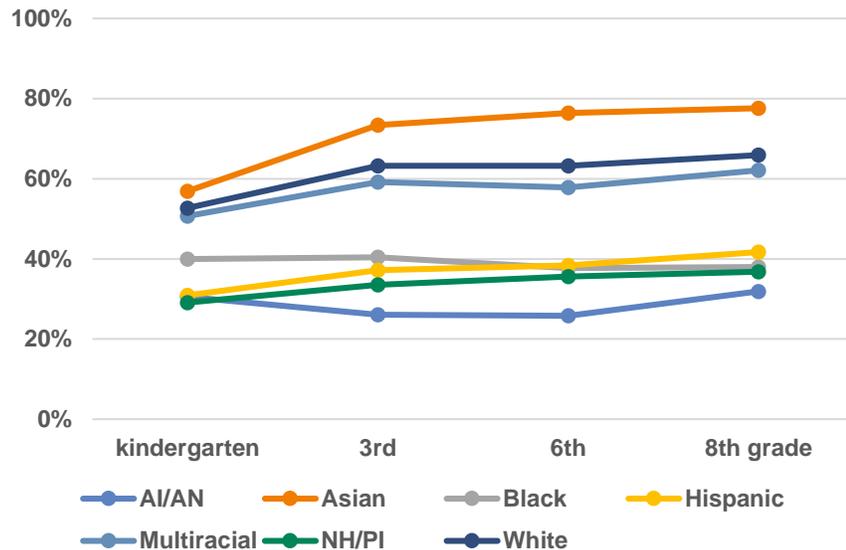


Data Source: WaKIDS 6/6 readiness rates and kindergarten enrollment

As with children from low-income households, many children of color demonstrate opportunity gaps that persist throughout the public school system. Figure 16 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.

Figure 16. Washington Opportunity Gap by Race/Ethnicity, 2017-2018

While on 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.



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

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:

- Addressing cultural and linguistic diversity when developing the professional development pathway for early learning professionals;
- Exploring the use of alternative quality assessment tools that meet the culturally specific needs of the federally recognized tribes in the state of Washington;
- Implementing a protocol to maximize and encourage participation in Early Achievers for culturally diverse and low-income center and family home child care providers;
- Providing recommendations on research-based cultural competency standards for early learning professional training)¹⁹;
- Reducing 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; and

¹⁹ Report completed July 2016.

- Providing 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.

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. 80,955 total children were served in Washington’s subsidized child care program (WCCC and Seasonal) in FY 2018, and 35,508 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 in the 2017-2018 school year. Table G below details the race/ethnicity and non-English home language status of children served in subsidized child care 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.

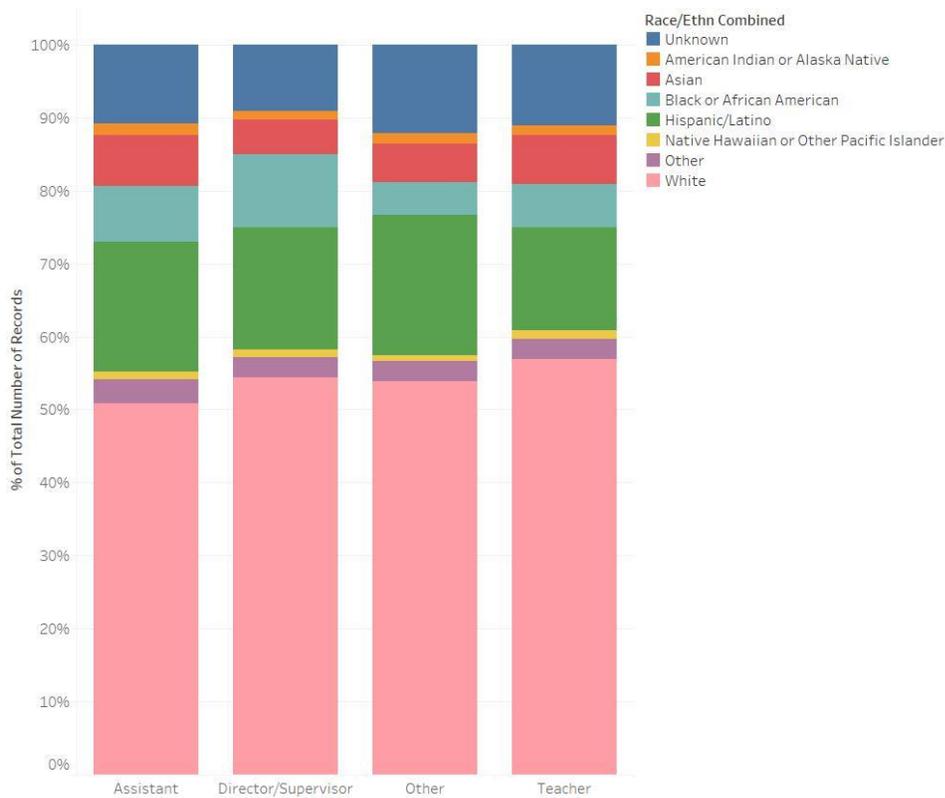
The diversity of children participating in Washington’s child care subsidy program is closely related to that of the state’s TANF program. This is consistent with findings from a 2016 50-state study of subsidies funded by the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF).²⁰

Table G. Children Served in Subsidized Child Care and ECEAP by Race/Ethnicity and Language, FY 2018				
	Subsidy <5 (Licensed Care)	WA <5 <=200% FPL, 2016	ECEAP	WA 3-4 <=110% FPL, 2016
N=	35,508	168,387	13,410	28,701
American Indian / Alaska Native	2.8%	2.0%	2.6%	1.8%
Asian	1.9%	2.9%	3.6%	2.1%
Black / African American	16.7%	5.4%	9.5%	10.5%
Hispanic / Latino	28.2%	36.0%	39.3%	36.0%
Multiracial / Other / Unknown	14.4%	8.2%	6.9%	7.3%
Nat Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	0.6%	1.4%	1.6%	0.5%
White	35.3%	44.1%	36.4%	41.9%
Non-English Home Language	9.5%	40.2%	33.9%	41.4%
<i>Data Source for Subsidy: DCYF tabulation of DSHS Barcode data. Data Source for ECEAP: DCYF 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.</i>				

²⁰ 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.²¹ Overall, the workforce has more racial/ethnic diversity in some categories than the state as a whole, as shown in Table H. As seen in Figure 17, some job titles/roles in the early learning workforce have more diversity than others.²² For example, while overall 35.9 percent of the active early learning workforce in licensed facilities across the state are people of color, only 32.1 percent of teachers (or primary staff working with children) are people of color.

Figure 17. Washington’s Early Learning Workforce, Racial/Ethnic Diversity by Job Title



Data Source: MERIT. Note: all race categories are non-Hispanic.

²¹ While race/ethnicity data are optional in MERIT, most individuals provide an answer to this question. As reflected in Table H, 10.7% of those with workforce records for FY 2017 did not provide their race/ethnicity.

²² For a list of job titles that were grouped into the categories of Assistant, Director/Supervisor, Other, and Teacher, please see Appendix A. “Other” on the X-Axis represents those in job titles other than Assistant, Director/Supervisor, and Teacher. “Other” listed in the color chart under Race/Ethnicity Combined represents individuals who selected “Other” as a racial/ethnic category in MERIT.

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Table H. Washington Early Learning Workforce Racial/Ethnic Diversity Compared with Washington State's Workforce		
Racial/Ethnic Group	State Workforce	Early Learning Workforce
American Indian or Alaska Native	NA	1.5%
Asian	NA	6.3%
Black or African American	4.1%	7.2%
Hispanic / Latino	13.3%	16.8%
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	NA	1.1%
Other / Multiracial	NA	3.0%
White, not Hispanic / Latino	80.3%	53.4%
Unknown	NA	10.7%

Data Source: MERIT, US Bureau of Labor Statistics Expanded State Employment Status Demographic Data, 2017.

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 Central Washington (59.3 percent), King County (43.6 percent) and Tacoma/Pierce County (33.4 percent). The workforce has greater diversity in regions where there is a higher concentration of diverse children and families.

Table I. Active Early Learning Workforce Racial/Ethnic Diversity by Region, 2017								
	Central	Eastern	King	Northwest	Olympic	Southwest	Tacoma Pierce	Unknown Region
N =	4,111	6,343	16,674	6,283	4,035	3,510	4,420	96
American Indian / Alaska Native	<1%	2.3%	<1%	2.2%	3.1%	1.6%	1.5%	1%
Asian	<1%	1.7%	12.3%	5.5%	3%	2%	3.7%	10.4%
Black / African American	<1%	2.2%	13.1%	3.1%	2.7%	1.6%	11.5%	28.1%
Hispanic / Latino	56.3%	20.9%	12.2%	13%	8.4%	9.1%	11%	6.25%
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	<1%	<1%	1%	<1%	1.9%	1.3%	2%	1%
Multiracial / Other	<1%	2%	4.4%	2.4%	2.7%	1.7%	3.7%	1%
White	32.3%	60.4%	44.6%	61.5%	68.1%	73.3%	56.3%	42.7%
Unknown	8.5%	9.9%	11.8%	11.5%	10.1%	9.4%	10.27%	9.4%

Data Source: MERIT. All racial groups reported as non-Hispanic

Washington’s Language Diversity

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

Table J. Household Language for Washington Children <5 Years of Age, 2016			
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 K summarizes the reported household language of children under 5 years of age participating in licensed subsidy care in FY 2018. The proportion of children served by the subsidy program whose primary household language is not English is not representative of the eligible population.

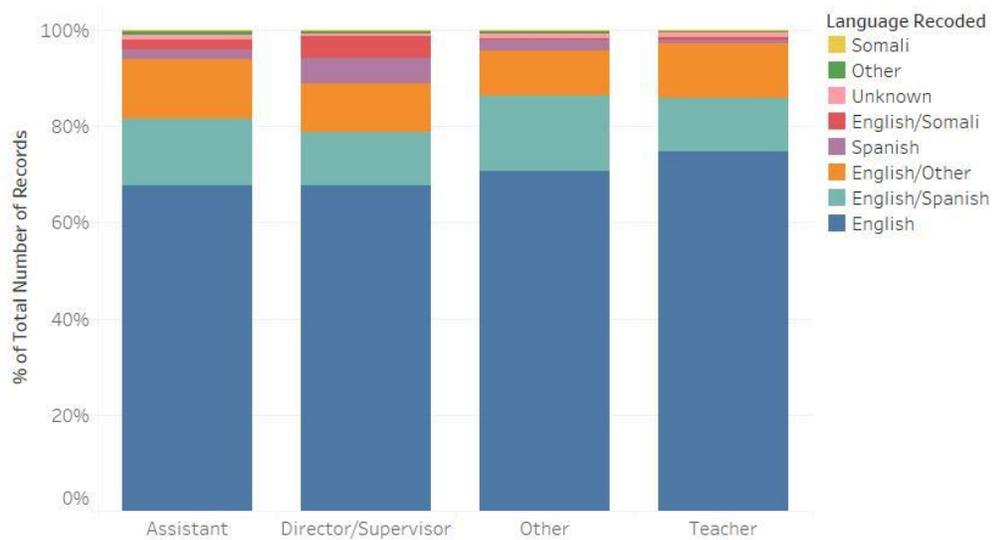
Table K. Household Language, Licensed Subsidy Children <5, FY 2018	
English	89.6%
Spanish	7.8%
Somali	0.6%
Other	2.0%

Data Source: DCYF tabulation of DSHS Barcode data.

Approximately 90 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 7.8 percent are from households where Spanish is the primary language. Less than 1 percent are from households where Somali is spoken, and another 2.0 percent are from homes where other languages are spoken.

Washington’s early learning educators speak many languages reflective of the communities they serve. Among children under 5 statewide in low-income households <200 percent of FPL about 40 percent are from non-English speaking households. This is slightly more than children participating in ECEAP where about 34 percent of children are from non-English speaking households and much higher than young children participating in subsidy where only about 10 percent are from non-English speaking households. Over twenty languages are spoken by the active early learning workforce, with the languages most frequently reported as English and Spanish. In the Central Washington region and King County, the early learning workforces have bilingual staff and are reflective of the children and families served. In the Central Washington region, 38.3 percent of educators speak a second language and in the King County region, 56.7 percent of educators speak a second language.

Figure 18. Language Diversity of Active Early Learning Workforce, 2017



Data Source: MERIT, ELMS.

Table L. Active Early Learning Workforce Language by Region, 2017								
	Central	Eastern	King	Northwest	Olympic	Southwest	Tacoma Pierce	Unknown Region
N =	4,111	6,343	16,674	6,283	4,035	3,510	4,420	96
English Only	43.3%	75.9%	61.7%	76.2%	87.6%	83.8%	82.1%	64.6%
English / Other	1.5%	4.2%	19.8%	10.7%	5.8%	7.2%	8.2%	13.5%
English / Somali	---	<1%	4.9%	<1%	---	<1%	<1%	8.3%
English / Spanish	40.2%	14.9%	10.1%	10.5%	5.4%	7.7%	8.1%	7.3%
Other	<1%	<1%	1.3%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	3.1%
Somali Only	---	<1%	<1%	---	---	---	---	2.1%
Spanish Only	13.9%	3.8%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	---
Unknown	<1%	<1%	<1%	1.2%	1%	<1%	<1%	1%

Data Source: MERIT, ELMS.

Supports for Dual Language Learners (DLL)

DCYF continues to promote policies and resources for dual language learners in 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 home languages other than English who are participating or seeking to enroll in ECEAP have access to the following services:

- Applications and informational materials are available in multiple languages. English and Spanish are available statewide, and 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 agencies accept applications at community-based locations;
- Bilingual caseworkers, interpreters, and outreach workers in many locations across the state;
- Partnerships with community-based organizations; and
- Home language is used as eligibility criteria for ECEAP.

ECEAP tracks the enrollment of dual language learners and can report their enrollment by home language. In addition, program standards require that ECEAP contractors must ensure a culturally responsive curriculum that:

- Reflects the cultural and linguistic diversity 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 in ECEAP include:

- Providing recruitment and enrollment materials in more languages statewide;
- Requiring ECEAP sites to assess children in their home language;
- Requiring ECEAP teachers to have required training related to supporting dual language learners (children); and
- Allocating extra ECEAP resources to serve dual language learners (children).

In response to the enactment of Substitute House Bill 1445 in 2017, DCYF has collaborated with community partners to support outreach and education for parents and families regarding dual language learners, including:

- Creating a position statement about the benefits of native language development and retention, and dual language learning.
- Working close with OSPI to align DLL efforts in early learning and K-12 for dual language learners in traditional school settings as well as tribal school settings.
- Developing a dual language learning curriculum for educators with an associated implementation plan.
 - This curriculum was developed in partnership with the Institute for Learning and Brain Science (ILABS) for early learning providers and community partners. This training includes a section on family engagement with outreach materials for participants.
 - Content includes four modules, two community of practice sessions and a capstone project for a total of 12 hours of professional learning.
 - Content includes family engagement materials and implementation strategy

- Implementing a dual language curriculum.
 - Training became available fall 2018 with seven groups within five or six regions.
 - The delivery of training will be evaluated for content and delivery.
- Coaching within Early Achievers.
 - Early Achievers coaches will complete dual language training and will have access to a customized dual language coaching toolkit. Coaches will adopt dual language learner best practice within the quality framework as they work with providers in Early Achievers.
 - DCYF and partners will select coaches from diverse regions to go through the DLL coach training first. The training includes reflective mentorship to help coaches implement DLL best practices and learn strategies to make connections to Early Achievers Quality Improvement Plans where logical.

Future work includes the following:

- Stakeholder group – DCYF will identify additional opportunities for outreach through this group, which connects those in the community working with early learning providers with those leading outreach. Examples include One America and the Speak Your Language Campaign and materials created by ILABS.
- Continue working with OSPI to align efforts for all WA state DLL students.
- Developing a research component to assess the impact of DLL training.

As the population of DLLs continues to grow, policies and resources that support cultural and linguistic diversity, as well as 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 responsive and serves diverse communities well has been both a priority and an area for growth and development for DCYF and its partners since the inception of the Early Achievers system. As described above, with the passage of Substitute House Bill 1445 in 2017, DCYF has developed training and professional development resources on dual language learning to provide targeted training to the early learning workforce. Training content will increase the knowledge and skills for educators serving dual language learners and for coaches working within Early Achievers, and will also identify family resources to promote the retention of home language and partnership around dual language learning for their child.

Through the aligned standards, educators have new staff qualification requirements ranging from an initial certificate through an Associate degree as a lead teacher in ECEAP. Educators in most positions will have five years to meet qualifications from the date the rule goes into effect or from the date of being promoted into a new position. In the 2017 year, community and technical colleges have been offering the following to meet the diverse workforce needs of early learning professionals:

- 17 colleges have I-BEST programs, which provide language support. Students have two instructors in the classroom, an English Language and an Early Childhood Education instructor
- 9 colleges offer instruction in languages other than English. 6 offer instruction in Spanish, 2 in Somali, and 1 in Arabic

- 11 colleges offer weekend classes
- 20 colleges offer evening classes or online if no evening classes are available
- 23 colleges offer online classes

More information about system supports for early learning educators to meet qualification requirements are described in Chapter 4 of this report.

Early Childhood Workforce Council: In May 2017, Washington established an early childhood workforce council that is a cross-sector group with one of the goals focused on increasing the diversity of the early learning workforce. The 2018-2019 work plan includes exploring multiple routes for professional growth such as apprenticeship models. DCYF is a co-chair to the Early Childhood Workforce Council and provides staffing support to ensure success.

Early Achievers Coaching: Child Care Aware of Washington (CCA of WA), the main provider of relationship-based professional development for Early Achievers, has 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 navigate MERIT;
- Establishing 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;
- Partnering with organizations that have strong relationships with the local community;
- Making translation and interpretation services accessible;
- Creating an Early Achievers Level 2 User Guide and an 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 high-quality early learning environment.

Coach Composition: Through experience, training, and actively reflecting on practice, CCA of WA and other DCYF partners have deepened their understanding of working with racially/ethnically and linguistically diverse providers. CCA of WA is making efforts to ensure that coaches reflect community diversity in staff composition and practice cultural humility. Hiring staff who represent the community and are able to help bridge the cultural context is important. About a third of the 165 CCA of WA staff that provide coaching through Early Achievers speak other languages in addition to English, including Spanish, Somali, Russian, Arabic, Ukrainian, and Japanese. Often, in order to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of the provider community, those who are hired do not meet the education requirements of a coach. These staff are placed on professional development plans and supported with professional

development opportunities such as scholarships and grants in order to meet specific qualifications.

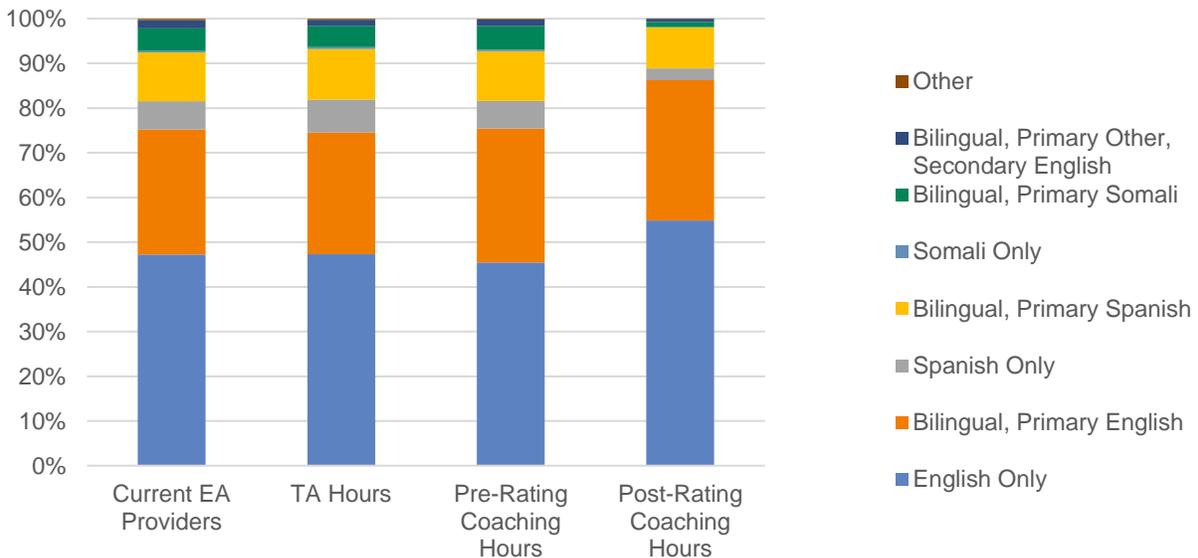
It is important to note that the coaching workforce is fairly new and still developing. DCYF has established a scholarship program for coaches and recognizes that additional efforts are needed in order to continue the work to expand the workforce pipeline and preparation programs to meet community needs for bilingual coaches. This will take time and resources in order to make sure there are enough qualified coaches to serve the diverse early learning workforce well.

Additionally, CCA of WA offers ongoing professional development opportunities for coaches to learn anti-bias strategies and enhance cultural relevancy. Equally as important 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: 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 (82 percent of staff bilingual in Spanish), Eastern (32 percent staff bilingual in Spanish), Northwest (22 percent of staff bilingual in Spanish), and King & Pierce (19 percent of staff bilingual in Spanish, Somali, or Amharic, with additional staff covering half a dozen languages in total).

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 19. Relationship-Based Professional Development by Provider Language



Data Source: ETO, PRISM, and MERIT.

Early Achievers Data Collection: Data collectors at the University of Washington’s (UW) Cultivate Learning program 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 support 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 Data Collection 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 its 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—31 percent of the Cultivate Learning team speak only English, 33 percent are bilingual Spanish/English, 17 percent are bilingual Somali/English, and 19 percent are bilingual in other languages (including Cantonese, Korean, Mandarin, Oromo, Russian, Somali, Spanish, 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 twenty percent of the Early Achiever’s quality assessments in a language other than English, including American Sign Language, Amharic, Arabic, Cantonese, Hindi, Telugu, Kannada, Korean, Mandarin, Oromo, Polish, Russian, Quileute, Tigrinya, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese. Since 2016, the language of instruction in programs that have requested on-site evaluation have been primarily English, Spanish, and Somali as illustrated in Table M.

Table M. Languages of Instruction for Programs Rated or in Rating Queue, since 2016	
Number of Programs	2,363
English	67%
Spanish	22%
Somali	8%
Other	3%
<i>Data Source: UW Cultivate Learning.</i>	

Early Achievers Institutes: Since 2012, Cultivate Learning has been offering Early Achievers Institutes to support participants in their 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 is provided to them at the institute. Bilingual staff provides 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 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, Cultivate Learning has offered more sessions in languages other than English, and in response to requests from participants has offered more sessions on helping providers support the needs of all children. In 2018, three Early Achievers Institutes were held in Yakima, Bainbridge Island, and Renton and covered the following topics:

- Yakima- Bilingual Institute on Best Practices in Early Learning
- Bainbridge Island- Nurturing Learning in the Outdoors
- Renton- Equity and Positive Behavior Support

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

- Level 2 Support: Child Care Aware has held its Professional Development Academy and Level 2 trainings in Spanish and Somali, and provide 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 during in-person training.
- 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. DCYF 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.

BUILD Think Tank: Beginning in 2017 and continuing through 2018, DCYF has been selected to participate in BUILD's QRIS think tank. Washington's think tank consists of DCYF 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 refine a theory of change for Early Achievers that is grounded in racial equity.

Early Achievers Equity Work Group: DCYF has an internal equity workgroup 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.

Partnerships with Tribal Committees

Supporting children and families from tribal communities in Early Achievers, and establishing productive relationships with tribes to support high quality early learning in tribal communities within the context of government-to-government relationships, are priorities for DCYF. In fiscal year 2018, 1,343 children under 5 whose parents identified them as American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) participated in ECEAP and subsidized child care programs, about 2.7 percent of the total.

DCYF has identified 61 tribal child care program sites across the state with the licensed capacity to serve up to 2,882 children. These sites include private child care centers and family child care homes operating as private businesses under tribal licensing authority (certified for subsidy payment), as well as tribally-sponsored child care centers and Head Start programs. Of the 61 tribal child care facilities, 33 are enrolled in Early Achievers – eight are rated at a level 4, four are rated at a level 3, and 21 are not yet rated. The Early Start Act makes provision for inter-local agreements between tribes and DCYF for participation in Early Achievers.

In 2018-2019, 12 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 DCYF for ECEAP services:

- Lummi Nation
- Suquamish Tribe

Ten tribes or tribal organizations are ECEAP subcontractors:

- Kalispell Tribe
- Nisqually Tribe
- Puyallup Tribe (Chief Leschi ECEAP)
- Sauk-Suiattle Tribe
- Swinomish Tribe (La Conner)
- Salish School of Spokane
- Spokane Tribe of Indians
- Squaxin Island Tribe
- Tulalip Tribes
- Upper Skagit Tribes

DCYF's Director of Tribal Relations and Early Achievers staff provided individualized consultation to support tribal providers, based on the needs of providers and relevant tribal government context. DCYF 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 DCYF activities in tribal communities include:

- **STARS Training:** 30-hour and 10-hour STARS trainings are offered annually to tribal child care providers. DCYF 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 child care 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.
- **Early Achievers Government and Tribal Partnerships Liaison:** DCYF has hired a liaison on the Early Achievers team responsible for partnering with tribes to move forward on the Early Start Act mandate to explore using alternate quality assessment tools that meet the culturally specific needs of tribal children.
- **Conferences:** DCYF sponsors Tribal Early Care and Education Conferences for early learning professionals who work with tribal children and families every two years.
- **Language Summit:** DCYF partnered with the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe and the Region XI American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start Collaboration Office to host the 2nd Annual Washington State Tribal Early Learning Language Summit.
- **Curriculum Supports:** DCYF supports the implementation of the Since Time Immemorial curriculum for preschool and conducted four workshops in FY 2018.
- **Early Head Start:** DCYF's HSSCO supports the Early Head Start Child Care Partnership grantees, including the tribal grantee, the Nisqually Tribe.
- **Parenting Activities:** DCYF funds parent support and education projects that provide hands-on parent-child activities, parent education and family support services to tribes. The American Indian Community Center in Spokane and the Lummi Nation are two of four recipients in Washington receiving a Community Based Child Abuse Prevention grant. Through this funding these two programs are offered: Fatherhood is Sacred and Positive Indian Parenting.
- **Tribal Home Visiting:** DCYF contracts with the American Indian Health Commission to advise the agency of ongoing maternal and child health needs and capacity in tribal communities for home visiting and other critical early learning services to support the healthy development of AI/AN children and families. This contract is also to support trainings for addressing Historical Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES). DCYF in partnership with AIHC and the DOH sponsors the Annual Tribal Home Visiting and Maternal Infant Health Summit. DCYF provides Home Visiting grants in tribal Communities. The Lummi Nation and Suquamish Tribes are the recipients of two-year start-up grants. United Indians of All Tribes also receives Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) funding from DCYF.

Draft Consultation Policy Development

DCYF's Secretary Ross Hunter held a joint meeting for tribal leaders, the Indian Policy Advisory Committee (DSHS CA-IPAC) and the Indian Policy for Early Learning Committee (IPEL) to request tribal input on the process for developing a state-tribal consultation and protocol policy. A workgroup consisting of delegates from tribes and staff from DEL, CA and JR met three times to develop a draft policy. This policy will direct the procedures that reflect the government-to-government relationship of Indian tribes and DCYF.

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 DCYF's implementation of policies that impact tribes. The IPEL Committee meets quarterly and in FY 2018 provided guidance to DCYF on areas such as forming a workgroup to focus on issues impacting tribes participating in ECEAP, input in the Dual Language Learning work, and guidance in the Office of Innovation, Alignment, and Accountability's formation of agency outcome goals, baseline performance assessment, and integrated services approach. DCYF is incorporating the former DSHS CA_IPAC subcommittee and IPEL to form the Tribal Policy Advisory Committee (TPAC) for DCYF. Each of the 29 federally-recognized tribes of Washington are entitled to appoint one delegate and alternates to participate as members.

Key Accomplishments:

- 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.
- DCYF collaborates with community colleges to offer classes in Somali, Spanish and Arabic for providers working on meeting their educational requirements.
- Washington's early learning workforce continues to reflect the state's racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity.
- Rated family child care providers who identify their primary language as a language other than English have achieved Level 3 or above at a slightly higher rate than their counterparts who identified English as their primary language.

Key Challenges:

- DCYF and its partners must continue to examine child care capacity across the state and its impacts on communities of color.
- DCYF 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.
- DCYF and its partners must continue their focus on hiring and developing bilingual, bicultural staff (e.g. teachers, coaches, trainers, data collectors, leadership, 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 for the role, but must also include ongoing professional development for staff who do meet required qualifications to continue to grow in knowledge and skill. DCYF must ensure optimal learning and child outcomes for the children providers serve. DCYF must also ensure that the coaching workforce reflects the diversity of the state and has the professional development, supports and resources necessary to make culturally relevant impacts on quality improvement.
- DCYF and its partners must ensure ongoing availability of professional development including racial equity, language acquisition, and best practices in educating and scaffolding learning for DLL students.
- DCYF and its partners must continue to 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.

- DCYF and its partners must work to increase family awareness about Early Achievers across diverse communities in a way that is responsive to the family's culture, traditions, experiences and community.
- While DCYF 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 the development of Early Achievers, DCYF 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 updating the Early Achievers Quality Standards as part of the standards alignment process. 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. DCYF 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 (now DCYF), 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 concluded 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.²³

The knowledge garnered from the Seeds to Success pilot formed the basis of revisions to the program standards and modifications to the implementation plan. 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 the 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.

²³ https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/Full%20ESA%20report_December2015.pdf

- **Child outcomes-focused:** Early Achievers promotes quality practices that research has demonstrated have a 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 Environment Rating Scales, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System, and Records Review of the other Quality Standards. Collectively, these are referred to as the Early Achievers Quality Standards.

Environment 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 interact with children and 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. The ERS is used in many countries around the world including Canada, and various countries of Europe, Asia, and South America. 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 facility average, 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. Research has found that process quality and structural indicators (such as staff to child ratio and staff training) interact to produce child outcomes, and structural indicators of quality may serve as a necessary threshold upon which process quality is built.^{24,25,26}

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 the 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

²⁴ NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2002. Child-care structure→ process→ outcome: Direct and indirect effects of child-care quality on young children’s development. *Psychological science*, 13(3), pp.199-206.

²⁵ Bigras, N., Bouchard, C., Cantin, G., Brunson, L., Coutu, S., Lemay, L., Tremblay, M., Japel, C. and Charron, A., 2010, June. A comparative study of structural and process quality in center-based and family-based child care services. In *Child & Youth Care Forum* (Vol. 39, No. 3, pp. 129-150). Springer US.

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.

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 DEL.

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 Environment 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 DCYF website.²⁷

The results and recommendations from the study have been used by agency staff and partners to inform changes to both the 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, DCYF and UW Cultivate Learning are planning additional analyses of these and future data to further validate and inform improvements in Early Achievers, with a focus on vulnerable children.

Early Achievers Practice Changes Initiated in 2016-2017

The three primary implementing partners – DCYF, 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. Historically, these changes have been made each year on July 1 and reflect the learning from the prior year of implementation as well

²⁷ https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/EarlyAchievers_Validationstudy.pdf

as the stage of development of the system. The major practice changes made in July 2017 were in the areas of increased support for quality improvements and system enhancements, improved accommodations for diverse providers²⁸, and implementation efficiencies.

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, in 2017 DEL (now DCYF) 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 (now DCYF) developed a substitute pool that is administered by the Imagine Institute to support 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, in 2017 DEL (now DCYF) 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 are updated periodically and participants receive notification when new curricula/assessments are added. For participants who are using a curriculum or assessment not included on the list, in 2017 DEL (now DCYF) and UW shortened and simplified the alignment tools. Together, these improvements have simplified the curricula and assessment alignment process for participants.

²⁸ Please see chapters 4 and 5 of this report for more information about accommodations for diverse providers.

WA Compass: DCYF staff members continue to work with partners and a 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 mid-year 2020.

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, the 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 871 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, DCYF 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 reliability²⁹ 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-R), the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS-R), and the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale (FCCERS-R)

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: In 2018, DEL (now DCYF) shifted Early Achievers participant eligibility requirements to allow providers with initial and probationary licenses to complete Level

²⁹ 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.

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.

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/DCYF'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 the agency's commitment to streamlining the data collection process for providers, data collectors now sample child files, instead of reviewing all files. Beginning July 2017 data collectors began reviewing one-third or three child files in each sampled classroom, whichever is greater.

Mobile data collection: Beginning 2017, DEL (now DCYF) contracted with Branagh Information Group to incorporate their ERS mobile application into our ratings process. This makes the data collection process more efficient and reduces the likelihood of data entry errors.

Orientation: As part of our efforts to provide coordinated services, DCYF 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 MERIT³⁰ and WELS³¹ data systems to improve the functionality and ease of use for providers, DCYF 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.

³⁰ MERIT is DCYF's Managed Education and Registry Information Tool, which serves as the state's early learning professional registry.

³¹ WELS is DEL's provider portal, and serves as the electronic repository for Early Achiever's rating data.

- Built the Early Achievers Participation Monitoring Report so DCYF 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 caseworkers 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.
- Participants may now request their renewal ratings up to twelve months before their 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 DCYF 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 DCYF for how the agency accomplishes its own work.

DCYF 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.

1. Coordinated Strategies

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

- A. **Cross-Agency Collaboration:** Multiple state agencies manage programs designed to benefit children and families. DCYF recognizes that the health and safety of young children has an important 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.

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.
-

- B. Aligning Systems:** In 2018, DEL worked to establish a common set of expectations and standards that define, measure, and improve the quality of early learning and child care settings. This includes the development and implementation of a single set of standards for child care licensing, Early Achievers and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) providers. This single set of standards creates a progression for providers where the standards start at the foundation of quality in licensing and move up to higher levels of quality and comprehensive early learning services in Early Achievers and ECEAP. The aligned standards use the same categories across the progression such as Child Outcomes, Interactions and Curriculum, Family Engagement and Partnerships. This alignment helps tie the standards together across the progression and different provider types.

Aligning Systems: Key Goals

- Align health and safety standards to ensure the sustainable well-being 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.
-

All writing teams used the Environment Rating Scales 3rd Edition (ERS-3) tools as one of their resources. This was important since beginning in 2020 DCYF will retire the Environment Rating Scales Revised Edition and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System in order to move to one data collection tool—the ERS-3. The ERS-3 tools have been updated using the latest research on child development. The indicators have been updated, moved or removed in order to improve the scaling. The ERS-3 tools place less emphasis on the number of materials in the environment and a greater emphasis on child engagement and teacher-child interactions.

To develop these updated Early Achievers standards, between 2015-2018 DEL completed a collaborative, statewide approach that included a community-based Alignment Advisory Committee, an internal agency Steering Committee, and a statewide community input process involving outreach 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 dedicated many hours to the alignment work.

DCYF will implement the updated Early Achievers Quality Standards mid-year 2020 with the launch of the Early Achievers functionality in WA Compass. Through the standards alignment process, DCYF eliminated ten Early Achievers Quality Standards.

- Moved some standards from Early Achievers to other areas of the standards progression.
- The standards were written using a racial equity lens and evaluated by the DEL (now DCYF) QRIS Equity team and the Early Achievers Review Subcommittee using the BUILD Cultural and Linguistic Competence Standards matrix.
- Clarified Quality Standards language to increase understanding.
- Clarified evidence and expectations to meet the Quality Standards.
- Moved closer to one-to-one correspondence between Quality Standard indicators and points in order to provide insight to work that is already happening. This offers a clearer way of adding up quality points and is a more useful approach for data-informed program planning.

2. Efficient Infrastructure

DCYF is committed to using data to inform decisions and assess the effectiveness of our work. DCYF has focused on improving our infrastructure in order to access the data we need and do 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 DCYF capacity and capability.
-

3. 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 DCYF 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 2019 by working to understand data collection processes and the impact on inclusive environments, exploration of participation and rating barriers and strategies to encourage providers to serve children with special needs.

- **Quality Standards:** The subcommittee reviewed the proposed quality standards revisions using the BUILD Cultural and Linguistic Competence Standards matrix. Their review provided critical feedback that resulted in several changes to the standards such as clarification of the intent of the standards and more specific standard language.
- **Early Achievers Barriers:** In 2016, 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. Early Achievers Review Subcommittee members shared this information with their home communities and worked with them 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 2018-2019 is to create time and space to address topics in a way that encourages stakeholder involvement and ensures 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 2018-2019:

- Review data related to pre- and post-rating 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.

4. 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 who 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:** DCYF 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 DCYF Early Achievers staff.
- **Washington Communities for Children:** DCYF partners with Thrive Washington to attain feedback through Washington Communities for Children (WCFC), formerly known as 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.

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

During the course of 2017 and 2018, 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 2018 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. The evaluation’s conclusion suggest that Child Care Aware of WA and its partners should consider further strengthening Early Achievers services and sustaining quality practices by:

1. Developing additional training, guidance and supports for post-rating coaching, and more advanced professional development training opportunities for regional staff and providers.
2. Providing additional peer learning opportunities for regional staff, both within regions and cross-regionally, and continuing to invest in professional development and program training for newly hired coaches.

3. Collaborating with regions to support improved approaches to balancing staff caseloads, fieldwork, professional development, and documentation responsibilities.
4. Increasing public and family knowledge of Early Achievers to help build improved community understanding of the importance of high-quality child care.
5. Supporting ongoing quality improvement efforts for both providers and coaches by continuing to improve the transparency of the rating process and results.

From the report's final evaluation:

- “[I would like] ...more training for the post rating period. Existing trainings are too basic for providers with lots of experience and ECE degrees.” – *Center child care provider (page 14)*
- “Our coach has been instrumental in the improvements we have made over the last 3 years and we would like to continue to grow with her in the years to come.” – *Child care provider (page 20)*
- “Our participation has brought so much in the way of support, it is clearly reflected in our work with children and their families. Parent participation has grown tremendously, as confidence and competence has become a strong-suit among our staff.” – *Center child care provider (page 21)*
- “... turnover in coaches sets us back in terms of relationship building and goal setting.” – *Child care provider (page 22)*
- “All of the training and information is very clear before the assessment. However, when we receive our scores, no one can tell us exactly how we can do better in certain areas. It would be extremely helpful in improving our schools if programs and coaches could see [the data gatherer's] notes.” – *Child care provider (page 27)*
- “Strengthen transparency in rating – it would build trust!” – *Family child care provider (page 28)*
- “Delivering and interpreting rating results has been a lot better with the additional information given on the reports. It would still be helpful to have some additional notes on CLASS Scores.” – *Coach (page 29)*
- “Children are playing and interacting with each other, they have routines and show that they are learning. Children are more organized, they know where things go.” – *Family child care provider (page 32)*
- “There is not continuous improvement because of staff turnover. I am constantly starting over with staff at centers due to new staff.” – *Coach (page 33)*
- “We are not paid enough to get ready for rating. The costs are far higher than our subsidy rates can maintain.” – *Child care provider (page 34)*
- “All coaches, but especially new coaches, might benefit from follow up training/ guidance/support around the coach framework.” – *Coach (page 38)*

Key Accomplishments:

- System responsiveness to providers and partners, making modifications as needed.
- Using data to make informed decisions and program improvements.
- Creating multiple opportunities for targeted, individualized and culturally responsive outreach and communication.
- DCYF has streamlined the Early Achievers standards through an alignment process by eliminating duplication or conflicts with Licensing standards.

- DCYF has completed three phases of 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).
- Phase II report: Licensed Centers.³²
- Phase III report: Licensed Family Homes.³³
- Training for coaches and providers on the ERS-3 tools is underway to help prepare the system for the 2020 transition.

Key Challenges:

- Providers are entering Early Achievers at varying levels of quality, and successful participation requires tailored, differentiated services based on their unique needs.
- The vast number of changes in the early learning system that are occurring on the same or overlapping timelines highlights the critical importance of effective and coordinated communication. Not doing so can result in confusion and frustration from the provider community.
- 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:

- DCYF and its partners will continue to simplify the participation process without compromising the commitment to quality by eliminating barriers. Beginning in 2020, DCYF will retire the CLASS tool and the ERS-R tools for Early Achievers data collection and will implement the ERS-3 tools.
- DCYF and its partners will better align pre-rating trainings and initial data collection and rating.
- 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.

³² https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/Cost_of_Quality_2_Licensed_Centers.pdf

³³ <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/COQ-PhaseIII.pdf>

Chapter 7: Standards Alignment

Standards Alignment

As directed in the Early Start Act ([RCW 43.216.255](#)), DCYF continues to work to create and implement a single set of licensing standards for child care licensing, Early Achievers, and ECEAP. 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.

To accomplish these requirements, DCYF's work involves:

- Updating Licensing, Early Achievers and ECEAP requirements
- 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.

Throughout 2017 and into early 2018, DCYF engaged with the Standards Alignment Advisory Committee. Participants included representatives from numerous child-centered organizations, educators, parents, providers, trainers, and advocates. These individuals advised the agency on the standards alignment of licensing by:

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

The Standards Alignment Advisory Committee members provided invaluable input and the progress in standards alignment would not have been possible without their participation.

Negotiated Rule Making

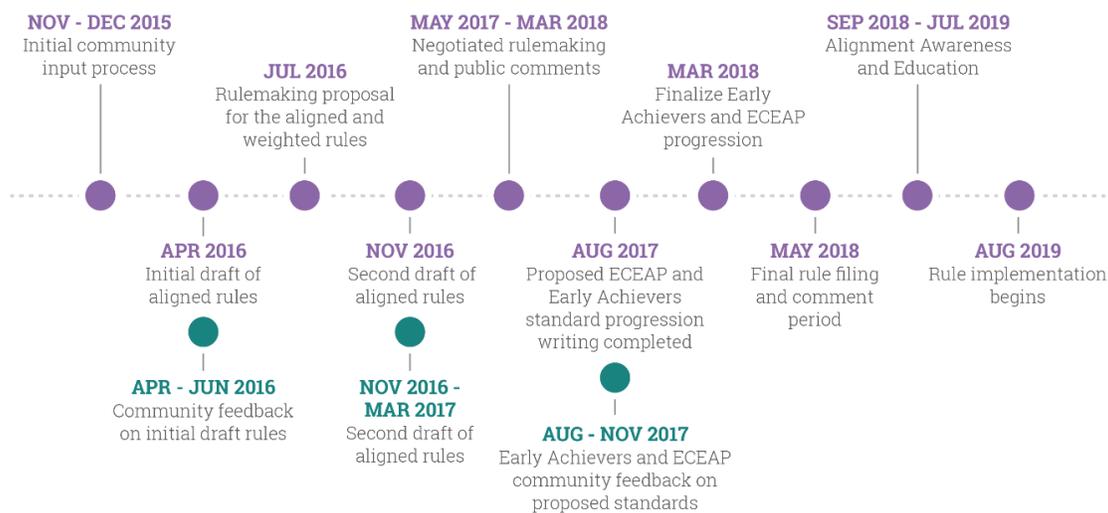
DCYF is required by statute RCW 34.05.320 to organize a public comments process as well as negotiate rules with the Family Home Providers' union on behalf of represented family child care licensees, and include all other affected parties in this negotiation. DCYF created and executed a robust Negotiated Rule Making (NRM) plan to engage the early learning community in the public comments process and to negotiate with the various affected parties in addition to family child care homes, including child care centers, ECEAP and Head Start providers and families.

Negotiated Rulemaking for the licensing regulations took place from June 2017 through March 2018. NRM was used to modify the initial updated drafts of the licensing regulations, which were based on analysis and community input. NRM built consensus among the representatives on updates to the licensing regulations. A total of five teams participated in this intensive process, including a center-based team; a Head Start/ECEAP team; a family child care home team; a parent team; and a licensing staff team. There were 43 NRM meetings, of which 10 were full group negotiations. The negotiated rulemaking process took 220 hours and involved over 50

people across the five teams. During the NRM process, public comment was a critical aspect of the process. Over 1,500 public comments informed the NRM teams of parents, providers, and licensors.

The NRM process concluded with consensus on revised licensing regulations for review and state agency approval and final submission. The director of DEL reviewed the recommendations of the NRM in early 2018. In keeping with a pledge made to the NRM team to honor their work, only 30 of 116 draft sections—representing about 25 percent of the rules-- were revised after the negotiated rulemaking process, based on critical health and safety needs of children, compliance with federal child care rules, language clarity, stakeholder needs and state priorities.

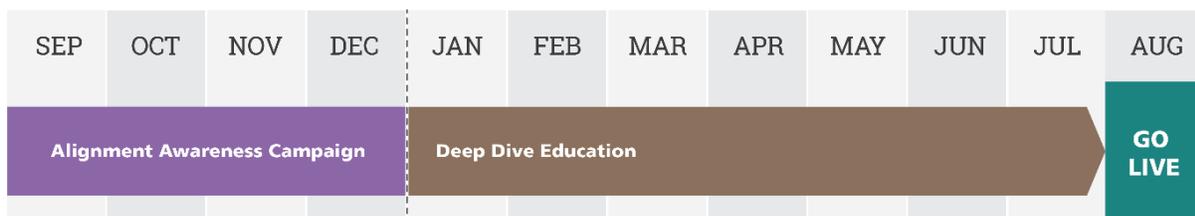
On May 9, 2018, DEL (now DCYF) put forward the new proposed aligned rules for public comment and finalization and 460 public comments were received. The final rules will go into effect on August 1, 2019.



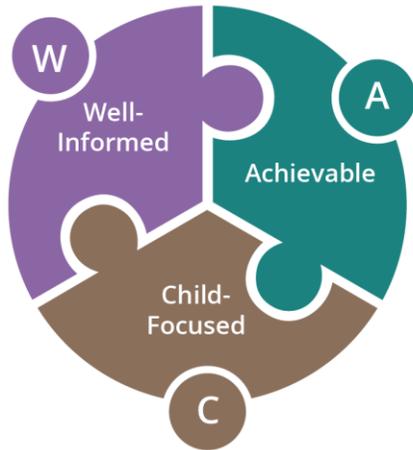
Alignment Awareness and Education Campaign

Following the conclusion of the negotiated rulemaking process, DCYF planned an alignment awareness and education campaign to assure a smooth transition from the publication of the final updated licensing regulations to their implementation in August 2019. For 2018, the focus is on improving awareness of the pending updates to the licensing rules, and in 2019, the planned focus is a “deep dive” on the content of the rules. The timeline below shows how awareness feeds into deeper dive educational opportunities for providers in 2019 so that everyone is well prepared for the August 2019 “go live” of the updated regulations.

The Alignment Awareness and Education Campaign is designed for providers and licensors to learn collaboratively together.



In support of the Alignment Awareness and Education Campaign, DCYF convened stakeholders including provider and licensing representatives to discuss how to approach this work. The stakeholders helped inform the development of the Awareness and Education Campaign, providing input on messaging, content to cover, and types of activities that would be meaningful to providers. Many of the stakeholders responded to an invitation from DCYF to partner with DCYF to help get the word out through their various networks.



The Alignment Awareness and Education Campaign is premised on the updated regulations being well-informed, achievable with support, and child-focused.

Key elements of the 2018 awareness campaign include a set of four introductory webinars and six in-person meetings. Topics included interconnectivity and navigation of the updated rules, professional development and training, environment, and interactions and curriculum. DCYF is preparing a Guidebook that will be available as a desk reference to support the provider community. DCYF is also preparing a video featuring providers, parents and state staff involved in the development of the updated child care regulations as

part of the suite of outreach materials. Key stakeholders are conducting outreach to ensure that providers know about the changes that will be implemented in August 2019. To assist stakeholders in spreading the word about the various awareness and education opportunities, a social media toolkit is available for use by stakeholders, and DCYF licensing staff also attended many provider-sponsored community meetings and forums to raise awareness about the updated standards for child care licensing.

Following the awareness efforts, 2019 will bring a deeper dive focus with online learning modules and live education opportunities each month on one content area, in four different locations in Washington. The content for these sessions includes:

January	February	March	April
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family Partnerships for Children's Success ● When is a License Required? ● Protecting and Reporting ■ Creating a Positive Environment for Learning  <p>● Online ■ Live</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Licensing Journey ● Building a Winning Team ■ Inclusion and Equity of Care  <p>● Online ■ Live</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Indoor Space and Furnishings ● Program, Activities, and Schedule ■ Professional Development and Staff Qualifications  <p>● Online ■ Live</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Purposeful Screen Time ● Outdoor Play – Fun and Safe! ● Weather, Gardens, and Water Safety ● Capacity, Ratio, and Supervision in your Family Home Early Learning Program—Key Elements for Success ● Capacity, Ratio, and Supervision in your Center Early Learning Program — Key Elements for Success ● Hazard Free and Safe Environments ● Be Prepared—Handling Emergencies and Fires  <p>● Online ■ Live</p>

May	June	July	August
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serving Safe Water Keeping it Clean, Sanitary and Safe for Kids! Prohibited Substances in Early Learning Programs Eating and Brushing—What's healthy for kids? Safe Responses for Challenging Behaviors  <p>● Online ■ Live</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allergies and Individual Food Needs Food Service from A to Z The Golden Rules for Healthy Programs – Understanding Medication, Illness, and Hand-washing Babies, Waddlers, and Toddlers — What do I need to Know?  <p>● Online ■ Live</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bathrooms, Toileting and Diaper Changing Pets and Animals in Early Learning Programs Sleep, Rest and Overnight Care Absence or Inactive Program Steps Understanding Enforcement Actions and Provider Rights It's All About Record Keeping and Retention Understanding Waivers and Variances—What are the differences? Immunizations  <p>● Online ■ Live</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GO LIVE 

Education Qualifications and Equivalencies

The section below covers the educational qualifications that resulted as an outcome of Negotiated Rule Making. The Negotiated Rule Making process is included in Early Start Act, but the specific education qualifications are not required per the Early Start Act.

During the negotiated rulemaking process, participants reached consensus on recognizing Washington's early childhood education stackable certificates as the entry point into the early learning field by connecting the state's stackable certificates with each licensed provider's role when education is required. For each role qualification, there is also an option to meet an "equivalent" in order to recognize the diverse backgrounds of early learning educators. Educators in most positions have five years to meet qualifications from the date the rule goes into effect or from the date of being promoted into a new position. For center directors, assistant directors and program supervisors, these roles must have an Early Childhood Education (ECE) state certificate which is equal to 47 credits or equivalent at the time of hire starting August 2019.³⁴

Following the negotiated rulemaking process, DCYF initiated an equivalency workgroup that included over 40 state agency and community representatives to recommend the recognized equivalents. The equivalency workgroup reached consensus in the recommendation that the following be included as equivalent:

- Alternate credentials
 - The table below outlines the alternate credentials that will be recognized
- Competency Review
 - The competency review process will be guided by the state's core competencies and is still under development.

Related Degrees

- Associates degree in ECE or related major
- Bachelor's degree in ECE or related major
- A valid Washington State Teaching Certificate with an endorsement in Early Childhood Education (Pre-K-Grade 3) or Early Childhood Special Education

³⁴ See Governor's directive #19-05 for updated deadline requirements for early learning providers to meet education standards.

Related Degree Majors

- Human development with a specialization in ECE
- Children’s studies/childhood education
- Elementary education with one of the following endorsements:
 - Early childhood education
 - Early childhood special education
 - P-3
 - P-3 special education

All degrees and college coursework is reviewed in alignment with the Washington State Core Competencies and ECE Credential Standards, which is a current process. Starting in August 2019, the foundational quality standards require that all degrees and college coursework be verified and recorded in the workforce registry (MERIT).

Role	New WAC Staff Qualification	Related Credentials List (Meets the Education Requirement)
Center Director; or Assistant Director; or Program Supervisor	WA ECE State Certificate (47 credits)	One of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate degree in ECE or related major • Bachelor’s degree in ECE or related major • A valid Washington State Teaching Certificate with an endorsement in Early Childhood Education (Prenatal-Grade 3) or Early Childhood Special Education • 1 year ECE certificate with a minimum of 45 aligned credits or related • Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE) accredited teacher credential in infant/toddler • Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE) accredited teacher credential in ECE • Association Montessori Internationale diploma in assistants to infancy (B-3) • Association Montessori Internationale diploma in primary (age 3-6) • A current CDA + 35 aligned college credits* • 47 aligned college credits*
Center Lead Family Home Licensee	WA ECE Short Certificate (20 credits)	Options above or one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 aligned college credits* • A current CDA + 8 aligned college credits*
Center Assistant Family Home Assistant	WA ECE Initial Certificate (12 credits)	Options above or one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military Modules • A current CDA • 12 aligned college credits*
Aides	HS Diploma or equivalent; or enrolled	Options above or one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GED • A current CDA • Initial Certificate
<i>The asterisk indicates college coursework will be reviewed in alignment with Washington Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals and requires similar knowledge as completed in the named credential, per WAC definition of “equivalent”.</i>		

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 publicly funded preschool programs in other states.³⁵

During the 2018-19 school year, ECEAP is serving 13,491 children at 373 sites. DCYF administers ECEAP through 53 contracts with school districts, educational service districts, community colleges, local governments, tribal organizations, child care centers and homes, and local non-profit organizations. Table N below details ECEAP sites by location type.

Facility Type	# Sites	% Sites
Public Schools	198	53.1%
Child Care Centers	53	14.2%
Head Start Facilities	47	12.6%
Non-Profit Facilities	43	11.5%
Faith-based Facilities	15	4.0%
Other	17	4.6%
Total	373	100%

Between the state fiscal year 2011 and 2019, the legislature has increased ECEAP slots for children by 68 percent (5,467 slots). Based on the November 2018 estimates of the state

³⁵ Washington State Institute for Public Policy (2014) Outcome Evaluation of Washington State’s Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program.

Caseload Forecast Council, ECEAP will need 5,926 more slots by fall of 2022 to serve all eligible children who are likely to participate, for a total of 19,417 slots.

Prior to 2008, ECEAP class sessions were a minimum of 2.5 hours per day and 240 hours per year. In 2008, class sessions were 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 O below details the distribution of program model slots during the 2018-19 school year.

Program Model	# Slots	% Slots
Part Day	10,387	77.0%
Full School Day	2,598	19.3%
Extended Day	506	3.8%
Total	13,491	100%

DCYF is still analyzing the impact of ECEAP full-school-day and extended-day models on child development and learning outcomes, due until this year to small numbers of these slots. However, it is clear that these models are enrolling children who on average have different characteristics than those enrolled in traditional part-day ECEAP slots.³⁶ For example, among children who attended in the 2017-2018 school year:

- Children in Part Day ECEAP are:
 - More likely to be three years old – 37 percent, compared to 31 percent in full school day and 27 percent in Extended Day.
 - More likely to be on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for special needs – 12 percent, compared to 8 percent in full school day and 9 percent in extended day.
 - More likely to have a parent without a high school diploma or GED – 37 percent, compared with 31 percent in full school day and 16 percent in extended day.
 - Less likely to be up-to-date on well-child exams, dental screenings, or immunizations prior to ECEAP and therefore make the largest gains in health services attainment during ECEAP.
- Children in Full School Day ECEAP are:
 - More likely to speak a home language other than English or Spanish – 13 percent, compared to 6 percent in part day and 5 percent in extended day.
- Children in Full School Day and Extended Day ECEAP are:
 - More likely to be Black or African-American – 18 and 19 percent, compared to 8 percent in part day.

³⁶ Data Source: ELMS 2017-18 ECEAP Child Demographics Report

- Children in Extended Day ECEAP are:
 - More likely to speak English as their home language – 81 percent, compared with 67 percent in both part day and full school day.
 - More likely to be male – 55 percent, compared to 51 percent in part day and 49 percent in full school day.
 - More likely to be in foster or kinship care – 13 percent, compared to 6 percent in part day and 7 percent in full school day.
 - More likely to be in single-parent families – 62 percent, compared to 41 percent in part day and 46 percent in full school day.
 - Most likely to have a parent who is incarcerated – 8 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 10 percent in part day and 9 percent in full school day.
 - More likely to be in families with CPS involvement, substance abuse, or domestic violence.
 - Most likely to be up to date on their well-child exam prior to ECEAP– 71 percent, compared to 59 percent in part day and 66 percent in full school day, and most likely to be fully immunized.
 - Most likely to be up to date on their recommended dental screening prior to ECEAP– 57 percent, compared to 42 percent in part day and 51 percent in full school day, and most likely to be fully immunized.
 - More likely to receive a mental health consultation while in ECEAP – 15 percent, compared to 5 percent in part day and 6 percent in full school day, and most likely to be fully immunized.
 - Less likely to be in ECEAP 180 or more days – 57 percent, compared to 78 percent in part day and 79 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 (\$27,610 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 P. ECEAP Child/Family Characteristics, 2017-2018	
Race/Ethnicity	
American Indian / Alaska Native	2.1%
Asian	3.5%
Black / African American	9.7%
Hispanic / Latino	41.3%
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	1.6%
Two or More Races	6.6%
White	35.2%
Home Language	
English	67.6%
Other	5.6%
Spanish	25.3%
Somali	1.5%
Family Income	
<=50% FPL	36.0%
50.1%-80% FPL	22.5%
80.1%-110% FPL	28.5%
>110% FPL*	13.0%
<i>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.</i>	

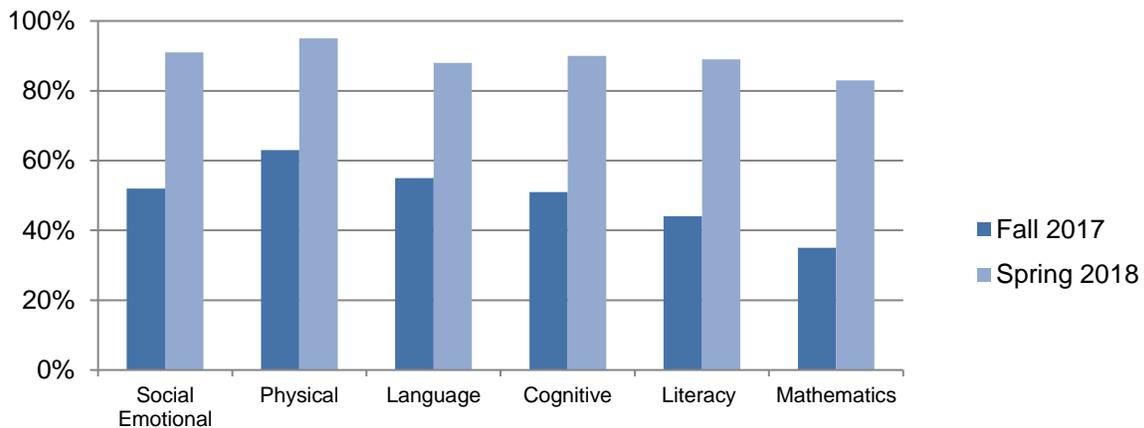
ECEAP Improves Child Outcomes

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. DCYF can access all ECEAP GOLD® child data entered under the DCYF 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, DCYF 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 21 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 three and four-year-olds who were assessed in both the fall of 2017 and spring of 2018.

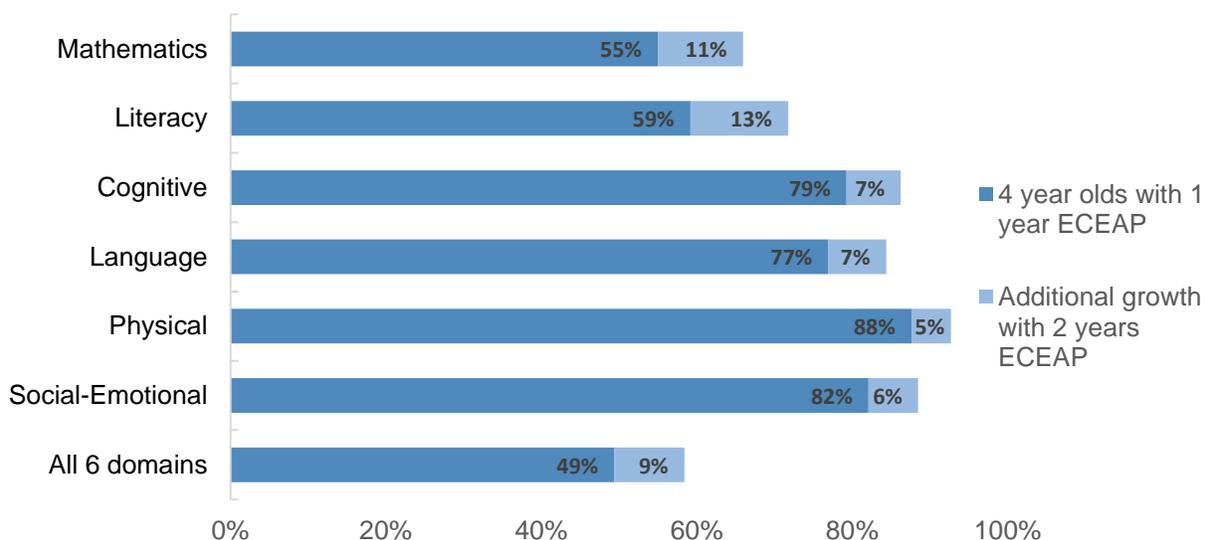
Figure 21. Percentage of Children at or Above Age Level by Domain, 2017-18 School Year



Data Source: Teaching Strategies GOLD®

Figure 22 below displays end-of-ECEAP assessments for children who were eligible for kindergarten in fall 2018. Children demonstrating the highest likelihood to be ready are children that participated in ECEAP for two full years.

Figure 22. End-of-ECEAP Percent of Children Ready for Kindergarten by Developmental Domain and Length of Attendance, Spring 2018



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. However, WaKIDS is made up of a subset of the larger TS GOLD® assessment objectives.³⁷ Both ECEAP Performance Standards and the WaKIDS early learning component require cross-sector communication between ECEAP staff and local kindergarten staff to aid in children's transition.

Washington's Education and Research Data Center (ERDC) produces an [Early Learning Feedback Report](#), linking previous ECEAP children with their WaKIDS results. The most recent report is for children who entered kindergarten in fall 2016. It shows a greater share of children who have participated in ECEAP arrive at kindergarten ready for success on six of six WaKIDS domains (35 percent) than do all entering kindergartners from low income households (31 percent), even though ECEAP income eligibility is below 110 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) and the low-income group is below 185 percent of FPL. ECEAP exceeds the low-income cohort in each developmental domain. DCYF has estimated that among children from comparably low-income households below 110 percent of FPL who have not participated in ECEAP, only about 28 percent demonstrate kindergarten readiness on 6/6 WaKIDS domains.

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)]. As of October 2018, 45 percent of ECEAP sites are licensed and 31 percent are exempt. Ensuring that all early learning programs have strong health and safety practices as the foundation for quality is a priority for DCYF.

Increase of Licensed Sites in ECEAP

In the 2014-2015 school year, DCYF implemented Full School Day 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 that is not exempt from licensing needs a child care license. For 2018-2019, 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, Full School Day sites requiring licensing participated in the expedited licensing process. This process used a combination of the ECEAP performance standards and child care Washington Administrative Codes (WAC). This was a temporary solution put in place during the standards alignment process and is no longer implemented. All Full School Day sites who meet the criteria above are fully licensed.

Standards Alignment in Early Achievers and ECEAP

As described in Chapter 7 of this report, DCYF licensing, Early Achievers, and ECEAP teams are collaborating to create one set of aligned standards across licensing WAC, Early Achievers

³⁷ WaKIDS assesses 31 objectives and dimensions compared with 75 objectives and dimension in the full TS GOLD® preschool assessment

standards, and ECEAP performance standards as a main focus of DCYF'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
 - Communication with ECEAP contractors
 - Multiple committees comprised of community representatives, stakeholders, and partners
 - Community Engagement Meetings in five regions across the state occurred. DCYF's partner, Thrive Washington, reached out to communities in all regions to engage child care center providers, providers who speak a language other than English, tribal early learning providers, family child care homes, and ECEAP providers

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 ECEAP and Early Achievers

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 in which all providers will participate.

Coordinated Services Framework

DCYF 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), DCYF 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 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. DCYF 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 DCYF licensing region across the state. All DCYF licensing staff and partner agency staff who support early learning and child care providers in the DCYF 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 CQI 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 DCYF 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 DCYF, 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

New ECEAP sites must enroll in Early Achievers within 30 days of starting ECEAP services and must rate at a Level 4 or higher within 12 months if they are not also licensed to provide child care, or within 18 months if they are licensed.

As of October 2018³⁸, 374 current ECEAP sites (on all pathways) are rated in Early Achievers. Of those, 259 sites (69 percent) rated a level 4 and three sites rated a level 5 (1 percent). There are 53 sites (14 percent) rated a level 3. 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.

Coaches who are assisting sites in remedial activities receive support through:

- Webinars to build on coaching skills and create a professional learning community of support and resources
- Prioritizing coaches at remedial sites for ERS and CLASS training and reliability
- Coach consultation through Cultivate Learning at the University of Washington

Sites in remedial activities receive support through:

- Focused coaching on the areas that need the greatest improvement
- Access to professional development
- Higher coaching dosage to prepare for a re-rate

³⁸ Early Achievers Dashboard, November 2018

- Technical assistance from their assigned ECEAP Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Specialist

Coaching supports for ECEAP providers that transition between pathways:

- Technical assistance from their assigned ECEAP CQI Specialist.
- Coordination with CCA of WA to provide information about pathway changes for ECEAP providers and the option to maintain their Child Care Aware coach in the transition.

DCYF provides technical assistance and support to ECEAP providers who move to a new location after receiving their Early Achievers rating.

Supports provided include:

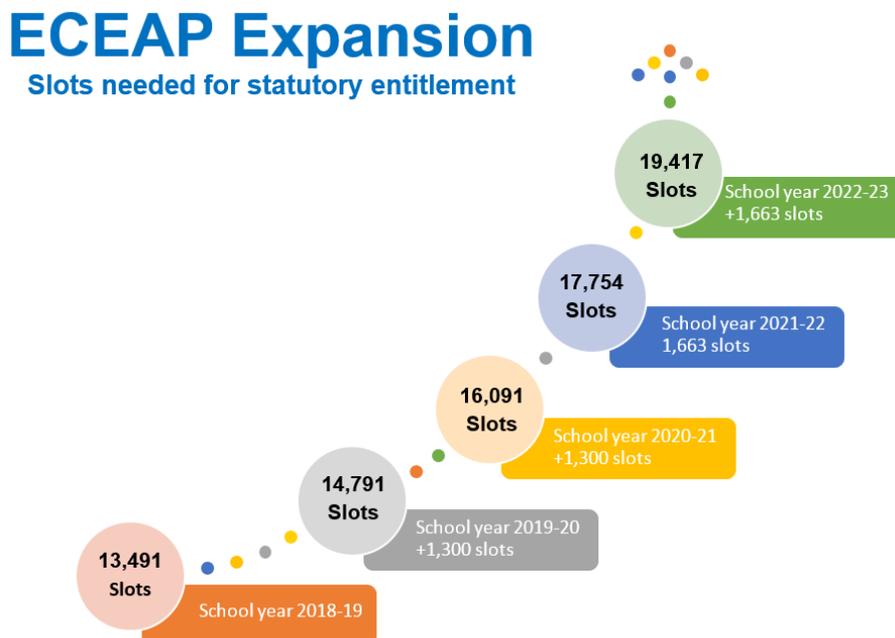
- Technical assistance from their assigned ECEAP CQI Specialist.
- Coordination between DCYF ECEAP and Early Achievers to review the circumstances of the move.

In some cases, the Early Achievers rating may be moved to the new site until due for renewal.

ECEAP: The Road to Serving All Eligible Children

In its first 33 years, ECEAP has gradually expanded from serving 1,000 children per year to 13,491 in the 2018-2019 school year. In the remaining four years before ECEAP reaches entitlement, the program must continue rapid expansion averaging about 1,300 new slots per year, while maintaining high quality and continuing to enhance child outcomes. Based on the November 2018 state Caseload Forecast, DCYF estimates an additional 5,926 children will be eligible by 2022-23 and whose families will choose to enroll (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 DCYF is to reach its goal that all children are ready for success when they enter kindergarten.



Impact of Expansion on ECEAP Models

ECEAP added 1,600 slots in the 2015-2017 biennium and 1,800 slots in the 2017-2019 biennium across all three ECEAP model types. See Table Q below to see how classroom dosage shifted between 2014-2015, the first year with full school day and extended day slots, and 2018-2019.

Table Q. Impact of Expansion on ECEAP Models				
Model	FY 2015 Slots	FY 2019 Slots	FY 2015 %	FY 2019 %
Part Day	8,165	10,387	81%	77%
Full School Day	1,359	2,598	13%	19%
Extended Day	567	506	6%	4%
Total	10,091	13,491	100%	100%

ECEAP Expansion Think Tank

1. Charge and Members

To grapple with the challenges and seize the opportunities of ECEAP expansion, in May 2017 DCYF created the ECEAP Expansion Think Tank. The Think Tank and its work groups provide a mechanism for DCYF 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 of Washington, parents, and advocates.

Through the Think Tank, DCYF 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.

Throughout 2018, the Think Tank:

- Facilitated development of the Expansion Plan.
- Created guidance on state, regional, and local roles and functions.
- Created guidance to help ensure adequate funds are passed from contractor to subcontractor.
- Helped refine needed capacities for contractors and subcontractors to provide ECEAP services.
- Facilitated discussions on the creation and necessity of expansion policy, such as how to operate once the state reaches entitlement.
- Advised on tools to recruit additional providers to ECEAP.
- Created additional workgroups to meet the need of expansion planning and work

2. Work Groups

DCYF convenes Think Tank work groups as needed. As the state continues to move towards entitlement and the work weaves together, the Think Tank advised combining the Contracting Work Group and the Think Tank into one larger group.

The current workgroups on the Think Tank are:

Work Group Name	Purpose
Racial Equity Work Group	To hold the Think Tank to its primary guiding principle of racial equity by evaluating policy, work, recommendations, and the Expansion Plan for racial equity.
K-12 Pathway	To continue to develop and carry out a pathway for school district providers to offer ECEAP.
Family Child Care Pathway	To continue to develop and carry out a pathway for family child care home providers to offer ECEAP.
Child Care Pathway	To continue to develop and carry out a pathway for child care providers to offer ECEAP.

In 2018, DCYF gathered information from Think Tank members to help inform ECEAP Expansion communication individually and in small groups, instead of in a workgroup format.

3. Tribal Pathways

ECEAP is working with the ECEAP Tribal Pathways Group and the Indian Policy Early Learning Committee (IPEL) to facilitate a tribal pathway that reflects the steps and actions necessary to enable more tribal providers to deliver high-quality ECEAP services. This group met several times throughout 2018, and made recommendations around:

- Changes in ECEAP expansion policy
- Additional webinars for tribal providers interested in applying for slots
- A potential ECEAP tribal consultant to help support this group and partnership

Six Priorities to Address Barriers to Quality Preschool Expansion

In 2017, the Think Tank began by helping to refine 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; focusing on DCYF’s goal of 90 percent of children ready for kindergarten; ensuring access for families at entitlement; and partnering and collaborating with early learning stakeholders across Washington state. The maps focus on steps to achieve success, actions for providers, DCYF 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.



1. 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 helped 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 DCYF 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. To support these provider pathways, the following work was completed:

- Guidance created for pass-through amounts from contractor to subcontractor;
- Competency assessment choice proposed for providers to meet staff qualifications;
- Documents drafted for outreach to potential ECEAP providers;
- ECEAP Pathways Training complete for child care providers who wanted to learn more about ECEAP;
- Introductory webinar completed for school districts who wanted to learn more about ECEAP;
- Providers connected with the Commerce Early Learning Facilities Grant Program to increase quality early learning facilities in the state; and
- Work started to enhance integration of early learning classrooms across multiple funding streams, such as ECEAP, Head Start, special education preschool, Title 1 preschool, child care subsidy, and private pay.

2. 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 participating states (Washington, Oregon, and Tennessee).

- A. Self-Assessment of Preschool Quality. Through the Partnership, Washington completed a *Self-Assessment of Pre-K Quality*. Results show:
 - Areas of Strength
 - Professional development provider qualifications
 - Curriculum & assessment requirements
 - Information in DCYF data systems
 - Quality assessment
 - Contractor continuous quality improvement
 - Comprehensive services and family engagement
 - Family access and outreach
 - Teaching quality
 - Child outcomes
 - Opportunities for Growth
 - Instructional leadership and Professional Learning System
 - Cultural Competency, Anti-Bias, and Dual Language Learners
 - Children with Special Needs in Inclusive Settings
 - Data Specification, Monitoring, and Analysis
 - Education, Scholarships, and Compensation Parity
- B. Next Steps in Quality Improvement. With the completion of the *Partnership for Pre-K Improvement (PPI): State Self-Assessment Tool*, DCYF ECEAP began the work of implementing 5 workgroups in April of 2018. Each workgroup is led by an ECEAP team

member and will address each of the identified opportunities for growth through a racial equity lens. In partnership with workgroup participants, DCYF staff identified the scope of work necessary to address areas of growth and strategies that can be developed in the 2018-19 school-year and beyond.

Continuing work includes identifying needed resources, authorizing entities and content experts for participation, and partnering with the state's research-practice partner at Cultivate Learning Washington. Through the research-practice partnership, DCYF will be able to help identify areas of data collection, continuous quality improvement and research priorities that support state strategic plans for improvement. Additionally, the co-construction of research plans to meet those priorities will be developed. The expansion of research-practice partnerships in Washington also allows researchers to collaborate across the states participating in the PPI. DCYF ECEAP workgroup leaders participate in ongoing technical assistance meetings with the Ounce of Prevention team members and the DCYF project leaders.

3. Workforce

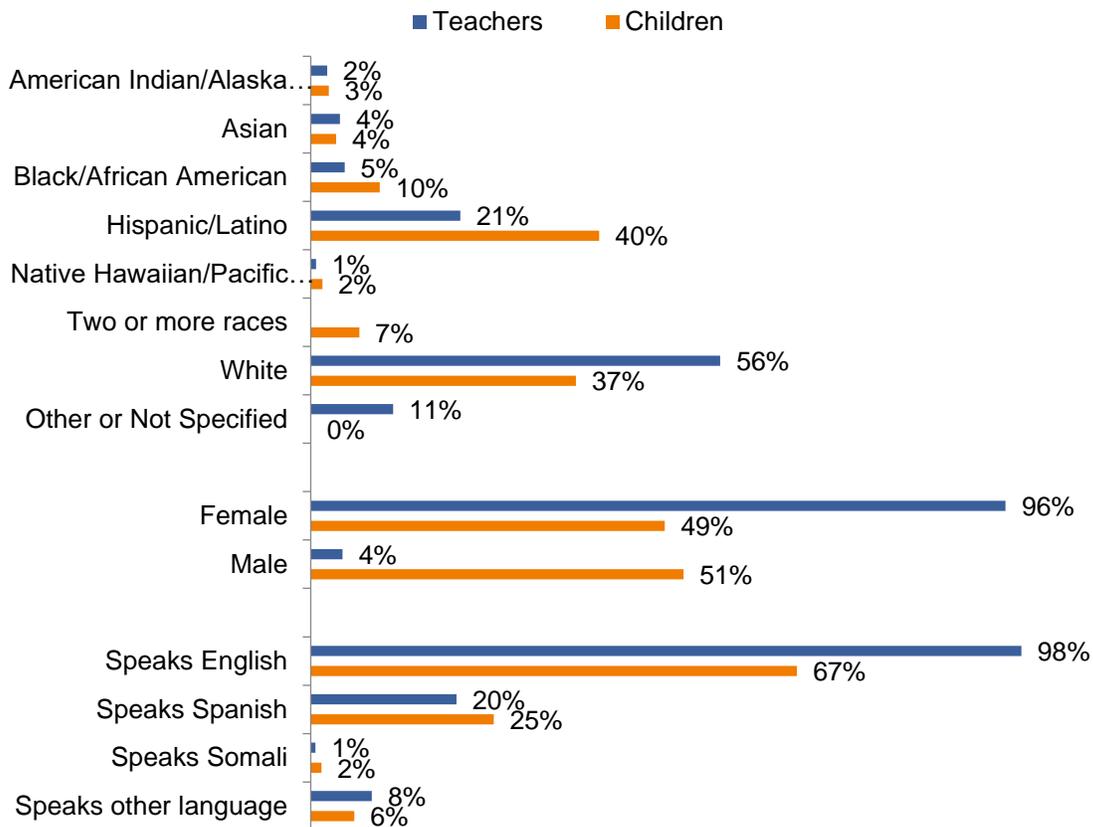
Building the workforce is identified as a high-priority for ECEAP expansion by the Think Tank. The shortage of qualified staff is impeding expansion efforts. System-wide workforce development (child care and ECEAP) is being led by DCYF's Professional Development Team with advice from the Early Childhood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

4. 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. Figure 23 compares the race/ethnicity, language, and gender of ECEAP lead and assistant teachers with ECEAP children. For teachers, both primary and secondary languages are included; therefore the percentage totals more than 100 percent.³⁹

³⁹ For children, only the primary home language is represented. For teachers, the option to select "Two or more races" was not available. If ECEAP teachers were more similar to ECEAP children, we would need twice as many Black and Hispanic teachers as we currently have and many more male teachers.

Figure 23. Comparison of ECEAP Lead and Assistant Teachers and ECEAP Children, 2016-17



5. 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 made recommendations on the following:

- 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
- Strategies to ensure statewide coverage in locations where there are few children or inadequate potential contractors or subcontractors ready

These recommendations were shared with the larger ECEAP contractor community in October 2018 and will continue to be refined through input, feedback, and conversation.

6. Facilities

The 2017-19 capital budget allocated \$15.5M to the Early Learning Facilities program to create additional early learning facilities across Washington. The budget specified:

- \$4.5M to direct appropriations
- \$11M for grants and loans

- A directive to submit a list of prioritized K-12 projects to the legislature for consideration in the next budget cycle.

The Department of Commerce partnered with DCYF to create program guidelines, a scoring team and rubric, technical assistance strategies, outreach opportunities, and a webpage with other pertinent information for the competitive grant program. After an eight-week application period, 127 applications were submitted, requesting close to \$35M in capital funds. The scoring rubric prioritized projects that created additional slots for children in ECEAP and the Working Connections Child Care subsidy program, as well as projects that leveraged the most local funds.

In October 2018, the scoring team finalized the awards for 10 grants totaling around \$5.5M that will create approximately 800 additional early learning spaces for children from low-income households. In addition, seven \$10,000 grants were approved for organizations to conduct feasibility and pre-design activities for future projects.

A loan program through a Community Development Financial Institution is under development with Enterprise Community Partners and will utilize the other half of the appropriation, \$5.5M, for small business loans to early learning providers.

Preschool Expansion in Low-Income Neighborhoods and Communities

DCYF uses the [ECEAP and Head Start Saturation Study](#) to analyze unmet need 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. DCYF 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, DCYF assigns points to each school district boundary area to determine the district's priority group for ECEAP expansion.

Points are given for:

- 50 percent or less of eligible children served
- Large numbers of unserved, eligible children.
- Opportunity gap as measured by the Washington Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) 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. A lower priority group district may still need some additional slots but is likely already serving a higher percentage of eligible children.

Between the years 2014-15 and 2018-19, ECEAP added 4,750 slots in communities around the state. During that time, ECEAP contractors began offering ECEAP within 36 new school district boundaries, for a total of 824 slots. The remaining slots were offered within school district boundaries that already provided ECEAP. Currently, there are ECEAP services in 172 out of 295 school districts in the state. However, some districts unserved by ECEAP are served by Head Start, and some districts transport children 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.

Table R shows the net slot increases by Saturation Study Priority groups since 2013-2014.

Overall, ECEAP slots have generally been awarded in higher priority group areas since 2013-14. DCYF continues to update the Saturation Study based on updated information from the state 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 when ECEAP entitlement is implemented in the 2022-23 school year. DCYF also considers provider readiness and capacity, quality of existing services, and availability of facilities when awarding new slots.

Group	Net Slot Increases
1	1,089
2	1,104
3	622
4	584
5	638
6	167
7	249
8	297

In 2013-2014, ECEAP was offered within the boundaries of 146 of the 295 school districts in the state. In 2018-2019 ECEAP is offered within 172 districts. Currently, there are no ECEAP or preschool-aged Head Start services in 88 smaller districts, however, some children are transported from their homes to a nearby district for ECEAP or Head Start services.

Barriers to Implementing Extended Day ECEAP

ECEAP contractors continue to share feedback that Extended Day ECEAP is more difficult to enroll, and they are seeing that difficulty increase as minimum wage increases affect working families particularly in the Extended Day model, because families must work a minimum amount 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:

- DCYF placed 1,000 more part-day, full school day, and extended day ECEAP slots which began services in summer or fall 2018.
- 81 percent of ECEAP sites have attained an Early Achievers rating of level 4 or level 5
- DCYF completed a three-year pilot of the Mobility Mentoring family support project. Based on the success of the pilot, Mobility Mentoring is now adopted for statewide ECEAP use. In the final pilot year:
 - 3,100 families participated for the entire school year, including a pre-assessment, goal-setting for family resilience and self-sufficiency, and a post-assessment.
 - Families set 4,516 concrete goals and met 2,081 of these goals within the school year.

- Mobility Mentoring enhancements were added to the Early Learning Management System (ELMS), allowing consistent statewide data collection.
- ECEAP successfully supported children’s health outcomes, ensuring that children had medical and dental coverage; regular providers; up-to-date well-child exams, dental screenings, and immunizations; vision and hearing screening; and received treatment as needed.
- ECEAP completed developmental screenings for 13,644 children, referring 648 to local school districts for additional evaluation, most of whom qualified for new Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). In all, ECEAP served 1,584 children who qualified for special education services.
- ECEAP assessed all enrolled children three times a year in social-emotional, physical, cognitive, and language development and in pre-academic math and literacy skills, documenting gains in each of these domains.
- Curriculum Implementation Accomplishments:
 - 359 ECEAP sites are implementing DCYF-ECEAP approved curriculum
 - 95 percent implementing Creative Curriculum
 - .Three sites (.008 percent) implementing High Scope
 - DCYF 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
 - Cultivate Learning at the University of Washington (formerly CQEL) provided curriculum trainings between July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2018
 - Two UWCL trainers provided 40 trainings to 863 participants
 - Six Coaching to Fidelity training to 115 participants
 - 34 Creative Curriculum 2-day Implementation trainings to 748 participants
 - DCYF ECEAP provided the following resources for the period of July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2018:
 - Total of 405 Creative Curriculum kits provided to ECEAP staff at sites since the pilot began
 - 75 kits purchased in the last year were Spanish/English Bilingual kits
 - Replaced HighScope materials
 - 150 Coaching to Fidelity Resources
 - 373 Creative Curriculum Objectives for Development and Learning GOLD resources provided
 - 1000 GOLDplus® licenses
- For more information, see the [ECEAP Outcomes Report](#)

Key Challenges:

- Ensuring the internal capacity at DCYF 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.

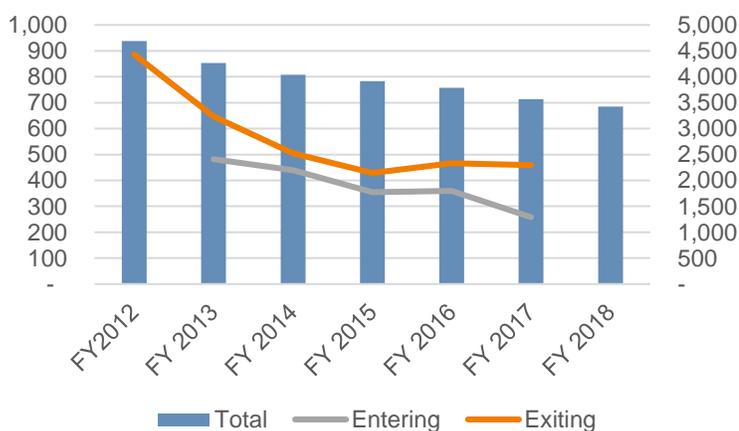
Previous Washington analysis of licensed providers has described a decrease among overall licensed providers in Washington since at least 2010. Research nationally has described similar decreases in licensed child care facilities. For example, the National Center on Child Care Quality Improvement reported 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.⁴⁰

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, DCYF analyzes provider churn for licensed providers serving subsidy children under 5 years of age in the child care subsidy programs⁴¹, since these are the providers required to enroll in Early Achievers per the Early Start Act. These analyses require 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. For each provider serving children under 5 on subsidy in a given fiscal year we categorize each provider as to “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 year,⁴² and most providers each fiscal year are neither entering nor exiting.

Figure 24 illustrates the trend in overall child care providers serving children under age 5 on subsidy statewide from FY 2012 through FY 2018, including the trend in exiting and entering providers.⁴³ In these dual-axes charts, the right axis corresponds with the blue bars and the left axis with the lines. 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



⁴⁰ 2015, Fischer and Orlowski, “Trends in Child Care Licensing: 2015 NARA Licensing Seminar”, slide 12.

⁴¹ This term encompasses the state’s Working Connection Child Care subsidy program, including Seasonal Child Care.

⁴² Between 18 percent and 19 percent of entering providers each fiscal year are also classified as exiting.

⁴³ Note that for 2018 data limitations prevent calculating entering providers, and a one-year lag is required to calculate exiting providers.

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 2018 (1,363 to 1,249), in recent years this trend among centers appears to have leveled off and may be starting to recover.

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

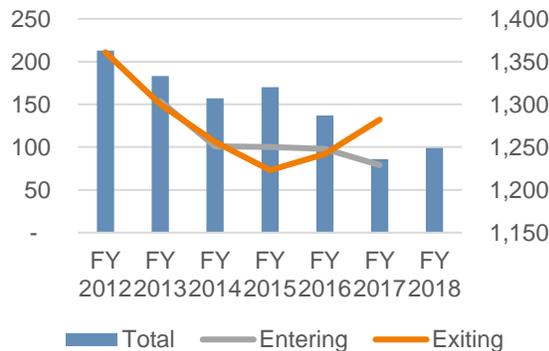


Figure 26. Family Homes Serving Children <5 on Subsidy, Total, Exiting, Entering

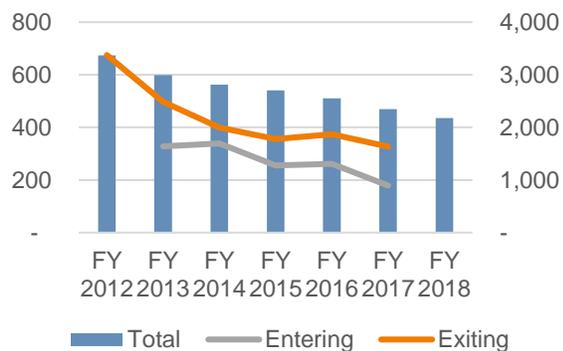


Table S below details the number of unique licensed providers, both Centers and Family Child Care Homes, serving children on subsidy each fiscal year from FY 2012 through FY 2018. The table details the number of licensed providers serving children on subsidy under age 5, and because of interest in providers serving infants and toddlers specifically, detail on the number of providers serving children on subsidy under age 3 each year.

Table S. Licensed Providers Serving Children on Subsidy by Child Age Group, by Fiscal Year							
Centers	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Number	1,779	1,746	1,713	1,716	1,679	1,651	1,720
# Serving Children Under Age 5	1,363	1,333	1,307	1,320	1,287	1,236	1,249
# Serving Children Under Age 3	1,134	1,108	1,111	1,130	1,092	1,036	1,055
Family Child Care Homes	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Number	3,629	3,232	3,014	2,875	2,716	2,499	2,332
# Serving Children Under Age 5	3,368	2,994	2,810	2,701	2,551	2,350	2,179
# Serving Children Under Age 3	2,819	2,564	2,451	2,378	2,241	2,100	1,981

Data Source: FY flat files produced by DCYF 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 T 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 2017 who did not provide such care in FY 2018 (exiters), 88 percent closed their license by FY 2018. Those FY 2017 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 T. License Closure Among Providers Exiting Subsidy Under 5 Market, by Fiscal Year						
	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
Total						
Number of Exits	886	647	505	429	546	459
% License Closed By Following Year	79.8%	83.0%	79.6%	86.7%	84.6%	88.0%
Centers						
Number of Exits	211	150	106	73	107	132
% License Closed By Following Year	65.9%	75.3%	78.3%	82.2%	83.2%	87.1%
Family Homes						
Number of Exits	675	497	399	356	439	327
% License Closed By Following Year	84.1%	85.3%	80.0%	87.6%	85.0%	88.4%
<i>Data Source: DCYF Churn Files (Licensing data and flat files)</i>						

The next logical question has to do with the potential impact of this decrease in licensed providers on services available to children on subsidy under age 5 (and those under age 3). Table U 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 2018. The trend we observe here is one of the 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 small decrease (7.7 percent) between FY 2016 and FY 2018 when 35,881 children under age 5 were served. Care should be taken in interpreting the decrease in that these data are based on warrant data pulled in October 2018, and providers have one year to submit warrants. Thus FY 2018 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 on subsidy received care in both licensed centers and family homes each year. These children are reported in the “both” category.

Table U. Children on Subsidy Served by Licensed Providers by Fiscal Year (Unduplicated Children)							
	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Total							
Children Under Age 5	36,528	36,216	37,754	38,131	38,895	37,090	35,881
Children Under Age 3	18,930	19,274	20,362	20,808	21,215	20,111	19,135
Centers							
Children Under Age 5	22,930	23,272	24,728	25,264	26,080	25,120	24,126
Children Under Age 3	11,535	12,144	12,980	13,378	13,780	13,171	12,497
Family Child Care Homes							
Children Under Age 5	11,155	10,551	10,396	10,215	10,244	9,644	9,512
Children Under Age 3	6,121	5,917	5,953	6,018	6,045	5,666	5,455
Both							
Children Under Age 5	2,443	2,393	2,630	2,652	2,571	2,326	2,243
Children Under Age 3	1,274	1,213	1,429	1,412	1,390	1,274	1,183

Data Source: FY flat files produced by DCYF 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.^{44,45}

⁴⁴ MN: <http://www.ruralmn.org/a-quiet-crisis-minnesotas-child-care-shortage/>

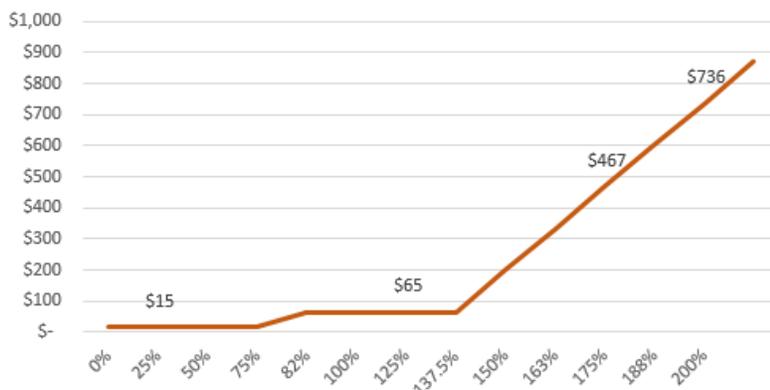
⁴⁵ 2012, "Why Family Child Care is Declining: 2012 4-C Study of Family Child Care Closures".

Surveying providers and reviewing reported reasons for closure can provide important insight into why providers exit the child care market; however, it does not provide a systematic approach to the 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, adequacy and structure of subsidies available for low-income households, and underlying population demographic changes that may drive changes in parental preferences. In the [2017 Early Start Act Annual Report](#), DEL reported on changes that have occurred in the population of low-income families in Washington since before the recession. Characteristics of low-income families with young children have changed since before the recession in ways that may have some impact on the demand for care, including a lower portion of single mothers and a lower portion of employed mothers.

On the demand side, 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 starting in 2011. Co-pays in Washington’s child care subsidy program are flat at a \$15 per month for incomes up to 82 percent of FPL, and \$65 per month for families with incomes between 82 percent and 137.5 percent of FPL. However, above 137.5 percent FPL, co-pays increase steeply by 50 percent for every dollar of income above 137.5 percent FPL.

Figure 27. Current Child Care Subsidy Co-Pay Structure, by Family Income Levels



As illustrated in Figure 27 at left, the co-pay for a family of three rises from \$65 per month for a family earning \$30,000 to \$467 per month for a family earning \$37,000. The share of income jumps from less than 3 percent of family income at the \$30,000 income level to over 15 percent of family income at the \$37,000 income level.

Ironically, as Washington’s economy recovered from the

great recession and families with incomes in the low end of eligibility for subsidized child care moved up to higher levels of income while still eligible, fewer may have been able to accommodate this jump in co-pays, which may, in turn, contribute to the decrease in demand for services. DCYF estimates that while as many as 38 percent of eligible children may be receiving child care subsidies at family incomes between 75 percent and 150 percent FPL, that drops to 16 percent of eligible children at 150 percent-to-174 percent FPL, and 7 percent of eligible children at family incomes between 175 percent-to-199 percent FPL. As more families with

incomes below 200 percent FPL move up the income distribution, Washington's steep co-pay structure discourages many of those families from participating.

On the supply side, published research examining how market forces work to impact the supply 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 requirements⁴⁶, and expansion of public preschool.⁴⁷ 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, DCYF recently finished a Negotiated Rule Making process⁴⁸ that resulted in revised educational requirements for licensed providers, including roles in both centers and family homes. Early childhood education professionals 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 changes in educational requirements were part of the standards alignment process, required by section 3 of the Early Start Act. Section 2(8) also directs DCYF 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.^{49,50} In child care centers these factors may be expressed by high turnover among staff⁵¹, 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.⁵² Available subsidy rates may be a factor contributing to low reimbursement and reluctance on the part of providers to care for children on subsidy. The most recent 2018 Market Rate Survey for Washington⁵³ found state subsidy rates in most regions for children under 5 below the 75th percentile.

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 costs in 2017 as a result of the minimum wage

⁴⁶ 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.

⁴⁷ 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).

⁴⁸ Up to date information on the Negotiated Rulemaking process can be found at the DCYF website:

<https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/services/early-learning-providers/standards-alignment/archive>

⁴⁹ 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.

⁵⁰ 1996, Todd & Deery-Schmitt, "Factors affecting turnover among family child care providers: A longitudinal study." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 11(3): 351-376.

⁵¹ DEL's [2014 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).

⁵² 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).

⁵³ [State of Washington 2018 Child Care Market Rate Survey Final Report](#)

increase. At that time, DEL estimated licensed family homes were likely to experience an average total business impact of a 1 percent increase in costs in 2017.

DCYF Research Response

In addition to the development of the churn analysis described above, DCYF has initiated three 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.

Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Research Project

In September 2016 DEL was awarded a 30-month CCDBG Research Planning grant from the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) to plan for a multi-year research project examining the impact of policy changes associated with the 2014 federal Reauthorization of the CCDBG. In 2019 DCYF will have the opportunity to submit a grant application under a limited competition to ACF to implement a four-year research project.

During the planning phase of the project researchers at DCYF have worked to develop measures for the key outcomes of interest using available administrative data, clarified definitions of vulnerable populations, crafted research questions, and proposed methods. Additionally, the research planning grant allowed DCYF researchers to establish important linkages and partnerships with early learning researchers at other state agencies within Washington and to participate in a researcher learning community with early learning researchers from other states in the same federal grant cohort.

DCYF researchers anticipate that the main goal of the research proposal in the 2019 grant submission will be to generate new policy-relevant research regarding how implementation of the CCDBG Act of 2014, Washington's 2015 Early Start Act, and related regulatory changes are 1) impacting continuity of care for children in families receiving subsidy; 2) impacting stability for child care providers who accept subsidy; and 3) contributing to or preventing disproportionate impacts on vulnerable groups of children and providers. Further, the project will generate new policy-relevant knowledge regarding 4) how the primary variables studied here – continuity of care for children and families receiving subsidy and stability among child care providers who accept subsidy – are related to one another and 5) related to children's well-being and kindergarten readiness.

This research project represents substantial additional research resources for Washington toward understanding how the changes in policy affecting Working Connections Child Care are impacting continuity of care for children and stability among child care providers with a particular focus on vulnerable populations. DCYF researchers will utilize quasi-experimental statistical methods to attempt to address questions of causation. Although, even if funded, full results from the new 4-year project will not be available until 2023, if funded, DCYF will report progress and interim research findings annually.

Needs Assessment

In January 2019 DCYF was awarded a federal Preschool Development Birth Through Five Grant (PDG B-5) from the federal Department of Health and Human Services. One of the major grant activities involves the development of a statewide birth-to-5 needs assessment. The process, with broad stakeholder input, will integrate existing data sets and community and

program-level needs assessments with new data to update and fill data gaps. The result will be a detailed picture of Washington’s early learning system capacity, quality, availability, needs, and gaps, as well as an in-depth look at the unique needs and characteristics of young children and families in our state.

DCYF’s work plan leverages data already reported in existing programmatic needs assessments. This project will synthesize these program-level data into a comprehensive birth-to-5 product. DCYF will analyze program quality and availability and calculate the number of unduplicated children being served, as well as those likely to take up services if they were available.

Additionally, DCYF’s Office of Innovation, Alignment, and Accountability (OIAA) plans to use the products and methods from the needs assessment work to enable the production of updated data on a regular basis, and at a local level to enable sharing with local communities for planning purposes. These will include indicators of supply and demand at the local level, as well as identifying and reporting on child care deserts using nationally-developed methodology.

Time Series Analysis

In an additional attempt to investigate causal drivers of subsidized licensed child care supply over time, researchers in the DCYF OIAA are planning to conduct a time series analysis using county-level panel data from 2012-2018, 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 the 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 the 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 DCYF researchers are hopeful that a 2012-2018 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 the future, as reliable subsidized provider data are not available in a useful form prior to 2012. Provided the analysis proves feasible, DCYF researchers expect results from the initial time series analyses to be available by next year’s report.

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 the children in households above 185 percent of FPL are not ready for kindergarten, high-quality child care clearly has an important role to play in kindergarten readiness for children beyond those in low-income households and those in subsidized child care.

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 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 also impacts 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, DCYF added additional types of non-state subsidy—such as city, tribal and military—which providers can count toward the 5 percent requirement. This allows several non-subsidy providers to continue to qualify for QI awards who otherwise might not. Table V below details participant incentives currently available to Early Achievers participating providers, and identifies the changes in incentive availability made by the Early Start Act.

Table V. Early Achievers Participation Incentives		
	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 the Early Start Act*

DCYF 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 W details Early Achievers participation by non-subsidy providers for 2015 through 2018 and indicates that there are 36 percent more non-subsidy providers participating in Early Achievers in 2018 than there were in 2014, 602 vs. 442. This highlights provider commitment to high-quality early learning environments and continuous quality improvement.

Table W. Non-Subsidy Provider Participation in Early Achievers, 2015-2018		
Year	Count	Percentage
2015	442	26.2%
2016	606	33.2%
2017	563	30.5%
2018	602	29.6%

Source: Early Achievers Dashboards, using data from 6/30/2015; 8/15/2016; 8/15/2017; and 8/24/2018; all non-state funded providers enrolled

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 WA is comprised of six regional agencies in six regions across the state.

Child Care Center: 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.

Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF): a cabinet-level agency focused on the well-being of children. DCYF’s vision is to ensure that “Washington state’s children and youth grow up safe and healthy – thriving physically, emotionally and academically, nurtured by family and community.”

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.

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 DCYF 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).

Impact: 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.

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, DCYF 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 Cultivate Learning: 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: Workforce Job Title Categorization

Chapter 5 presents data on the early learning workforce. The chart below shows how job titles were categorized.

Table X. Workforce Job Title Categories, Chapter 5	
Assistant	Early Head Start Assistant Teacher ECEAP Assistant Teacher Family Child Care Assistant Head Start Assistant Teacher School-Age Child Care Assistant Child Care Center Assistant or Aide
Director/Supervisor	Child Care Center Director Child Care Center Assistant Director Child Care Center Program Supervisor Owner School-Age Program Director School-Age Assistant Director Family Child Care Licensee
Other	ECEAP Family Support Staff ECEAP Family Support Manager Head Start/EHS Family Support Specialist ECEAP Health Advocate Head Start Home Visitor Early Head Start Home Visitor ECEAP Child Development/Education Manager ECEAP Health Manager ECEAP Other ECEAP Site Contact/Manager Head Start/EHS Site Contact/Manager School-Age Site Coordinator Other
Teacher/Primary Student Staff Person	Child Care Center Lead Teacher Early Head Start Lead Teacher ECEAP Lead Teacher Family Child Care Primary Worker Family Child Care Staff Head Start Lead Teacher School-Age Lead Staff or Group Leader
<i>Data Source: MERIT</i>	

Appendix B: Early Achievers Evaluation Study

Executive Summary from the Early Achievers 2017-18 Evaluation created by Child Care Aware of Washington.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation assesses the Early Achievers services Child Care Aware of Washington (CCA of WA) and its regional partners provide to licensed child care providers, including preparing providers for Early Achievers rating and coaching providers in quality improvement before and after they receive their rating.

Highlights of the year

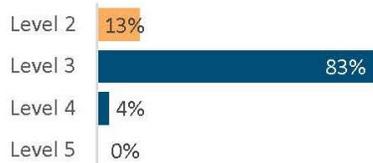
Enrollment remains steady

After a major push to meet the 2016 enrollment deadline for child care providers who serve children on the Working Connections Child Care Subsidy, enrollment has plateaued with the same percent of providers enrolled this year as last year. Now, most of the providers who enroll are newly licensed child care providers.

Just over half of providers are ready to rate and in the rating queue or already rated. Early this fiscal year, providers who serve children who receive subsidy payments had to meet an August 1, 2017 deadline to complete Level 2, including all required trainings. Many of these providers are now preparing for rating, waiting for rating, or already rated.

Most providers received Level 3 or higher

87% received a Level 3 or higher



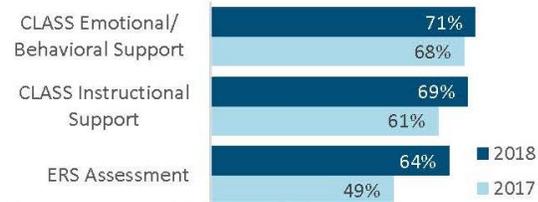
Source: Early Achievers data, April 23, 2018.

One big area of improvement from previous years is that an increasing percentage of rated providers have ratings results that were the same or better than expected. This was true for every single aspect of their score. The biggest improvement was in the ERS: this year 64 percent said their ERS score was the same or better than expected, up from 49 percent last year.

Since Early Achievers has started, most providers have received a Level 3 or higher, with 83 percent receiving a Level 3 and 4 percent receiving Level 4.

This last year the highest percent of providers achieved Level 3 or higher compared to previous years: 90 percent this year, up from 84 percent last year. However, fewer providers also received a Level 4 this year (2 percent).

More providers received scores equal to or better than they expected



Source: Survey of participants rated in the previous year.

Key numbers:

71% of licensed providers statewide are in Early Achievers.

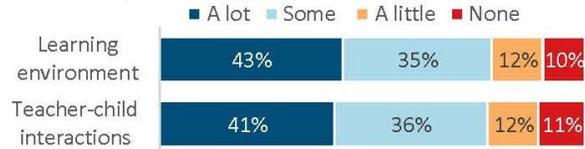
About 74,000 children are served by these providers.

Providers rated Level 3-5 make up one-third of the state's licensed capacity.

Providers are improving quality of child care, but need continued support

Most providers responding to the survey reported making some or a lot of improvement to their child care in each of several areas. In particular, about 80 percent of respondents reported making some or a lot of improvement in their learning environment and teacher-child interactions.

Providers report making some or a lot of improvement



Source: Survey of all Early Achievers participants, May 2018.

Both providers and regional staff agree that providers need continued support to maintain quality levels. Almost all providers said they think they can maintain their current level of quality; however, 61 percent believe they will continue to need support services, such as coaching and training, to do so.

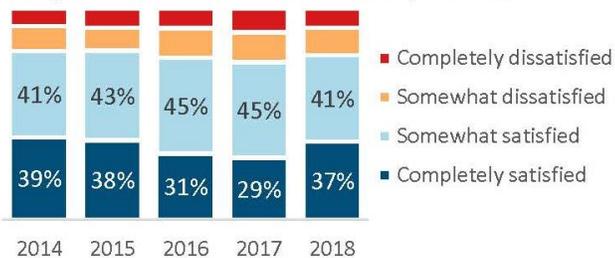
Regional staff agreed that providers will only be able to sustain change if they continue to receive coaching and supports. Altogether about 80 percent of staff agreed that most or almost all providers would be able to sustain their current level of quality *with a lot of coaching and supports*. Without this coaching and support, most staff (71 percent) agreed that few providers would be able to maintain their current level of quality. Regional staff said that child care provider staff and teacher turnover can be an obstacle for continuous quality improvement.

Participant satisfaction with Early Achievers has increased

Participant satisfaction with Early Achievers increased this year across a variety of measures. The percent of participants who said they were completely satisfied increased to 37 percent from 29 percent last year.

Participants are also satisfied with the training and pre- and post-rating coaching they receive (80 percent are completely or somewhat satisfied with each area).

Participants are more satisfied with Early Achievers

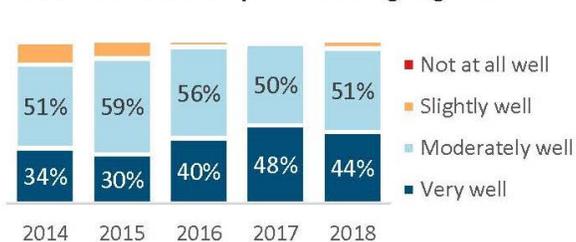


Source: Annual surveys of all Early Achievers participants.

Regional staff are also generally positive about Early Achievers

Staff opinions on Early Achievers are generally positive, although they are slightly less positive than last year. As shown in the chart, the percent of regional staff who think Early Achievers is going very well declined to 44 percent from 48 percent. However, the majority of staff still believe Early Achievers is going moderately or very well (95 percent).

Most staff think Early Achievers is going well



Source: Annual surveys of Early Achievers regional staff.

Most staff believe they have the information and support they need to be successful. However, regional staff want more supports and training for post-rating coaching, as well as opportunities for peer learning and communities of practice, both within their region and cross-regionally. They have found many of the trainings they have received to be valuable, especially CLASS and ERS assessment trainings, reliability testing, and rechecks.

We also heard that most staff are usually or always able to complete their work; although there are some variations among regions. In particular, staff in some regions are concerned about their ability to meet contact hour targets established by their region.

Recommendations

Based on the evaluation's conclusions, CCA of WA and its partners should consider further strengthening Early Achievers services and sustaining quality practices by:

1. Developing additional training, guidance and supports for post-rating coaching, and more advanced professional development training opportunities for regional staff and providers.
2. Providing additional peer learning opportunities for regional staff, both within regions and cross-regionally, and continuing to invest in professional development and program training for newly hired coaches.
3. Collaborating with regions to support improved approaches to balancing staff caseloads, fieldwork, professional development, and documentation responsibilities.
4. Increasing public and family knowledge of Early Achievers to help build improved community understanding of the importance of high-quality child care.
5. Supporting ongoing quality improvement efforts for both providers and coaches by continuing to improve the transparency of the rating process and results.