

Early Care and Education Of Young Children

Birth to Five



A Report by
The League of Women Voters of Washington

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	3
I. INTRODUCTION	4
II. EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION SYSTEM.....	6
III. RECENT CHANGES IN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION	11
IV. QUALITY OF EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION.....	17
V. CHILD CARE AFFORDABILITY	21
VI. COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES.....	24
VII. EMERGING ISSUES	31
VIII. CONCLUSION	35
IX. APPENDICES	36
X. ENDNOTES	46

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PREFACE

In 1984, the League of Women Voters of Washington (LWVWA) did a statewide study that focused on licensing child care facilities. In 2005, the League of Women Voters of Seattle (LWVS) did a local area study of early care and education of young children. In 2007, the state convention of the League of Women Voters of Washington authorized a new statewide study of early care and education of young children that would update and expand upon the 2005 Seattle study.

This report is the result of that work. Included are recent changes in early care and education, current research results, the quality and affordability of current care, community-based services, and emerging issues in the field. Because the League of Women Voters focuses on public policy issues, the study includes a discussion of governments' (especially state government's) role in this issue.

Some of the questions raised by the study are as follows:

- Which early learning and child care services should be provided? Who should provide them? How will they be funded?
 - What are the roles of state and local governments and the private sector?
 - Should the focus be on children birth to three, or on preschool and pre-kindergarten age children?
 - What is the best way to improve the quality of child care?
 - Can a state provide every child access to quality care?

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I. INTRODUCTION

Interest in the status of children from birth to five has exploded among business, community, and government leaders over the last ten years.

In the 1980s and 90s, the focus of children's issues was on providing adequate services especially for children at risk. Child care was seen primarily as providing a safe place for children to stay when their parents worked. Welfare reform put more parents in the workforce, thus increasing the need for child care.

With the increase in working parents raising young children, and the new brain research showing the vital importance of children's development from birth to three, the key issues today are early care and the education of children in their early years. As a result, the terminology has changed from child care to early care and education of young children birth to five. This current terminology reflects the new reality that children learn from birth, if not before. Children who are ready for school, and schools that are ready for children, are seen as key indicators of future academic and personal success.

Much has happened in Washington State that has placed the early learning of children at the forefront of state, community and private efforts:

- Recognizing the importance of early brain development, and the connection between the quality of children's early care and education and later success in school and life, the 2005 Legislature authorized *The Early Learning Council*. The Council became part of Governor Gregoire's *Washington Learns*, a comprehensive examination of learning in Washington State from birth to graduate school.



- Based on recommendations from *Washington Learns*, the 2006 Legislature authorized creation of a new state cabinet-level department, the Department of Early Learning (DEL). Programs for the early care and education of young children were transferred to DEL from the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED).
- The 2006 Legislature also authorized the creation of a public-private partnership, *Thrive by Five Washington*, which has received substantial funding and staffing from the Gates Foundation and private entities such as Boeing, Weyerhaeuser, and 12 others.
- Across the state, public agencies and non-profit community organizations have worked together to improve early learning opportunities for all children.

Central to any discussion of early care and education is the child. As shown in both the brain research and long term studies, the time from birth to five is critical to the development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills. A child's parents are the most important and primary resource for this development. However, many parents have to rely on the help of others in caring for their child. This study provides examples of the many resources and programs that focus on giving parents and other caregivers the knowledge and skills they need to provide a nurturing environment for the growing child.

The often quoted, “It takes a village to raise a child,” is fundamental to understanding the complex system of early care and education. Community agencies, child care providers, families, friends and neighbors, private organizations, and public agencies are all part of the “child care system.” The support for parents varies by community and by the financial ability of parents to provide care for their children. In the absence of clearly defined roles and responsibilities within the “child care system,” communities across the state are attempting to integrate the efforts of all the players in order to provide services to families in an efficient and productive way.

Key issues include the quality of early care and education of young children and access to high quality care. Across the country, states are playing a major role in providing preschool to all children, with emphasis on those families with limited means and with special attention to pre-kindergarten for four year olds. Government and other public-private agencies are leading the efforts to improve quality, but many agencies are looking to the state to provide more funds to carry out these efforts. Whether this is possible is a key issue for State Legislatures in the future. There is ongoing debate about how much and for whom the state should provide these services.



II. EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION SYSTEM

“A system is a group of interacting, interrelated, and interdependent components that form a complex and unified whole.”¹ Its overall purpose or goal is achieved through the actions and interactions of its components. The Washington State early care and education “system” is not a hierachal system. It more nearly resembles a garden, with different types of plantings, flowers, shrubs, groundcovers and trees. In some places it is vigorous, and in other spots it is sparse.

At the heart of this system are the child and his/her parents or caregivers. Surrounding the child and parents are system “pieces”—state agencies, tribal entities, federal programs, state legislators, local elected officials and agencies, statewide and local foundations, institutes, funding sources, statewide and local stakeholders, and direct care providers. The system includes federal, state, and local funding, national, state, and local foundations, tribal funding, and direct parental payments to providers.

Choices for Early Care and Education of Young Children

One of the most important decisions parents make is choosing early child care. The settings in which children receive care encompass a

wide range of options—parental care, informal care by family, friends, and neighbors (FFN), nannies, unlicensed care, state regulated licensed child care centers and family child care homes, parent cooperatives, preschools, preschool special education programs or pre-kindergarten programs such as Head Start and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). Parents can obtain consumer information from multiple sources, including family and friends, resource and referral agencies and the Department of Early Learning (DEL). DEL regulates licensed child care centers and family homes.

According to *Washington Kids Count*,² 472,275 children, birth to five, lived in the state in 2005. In spring 2006, an estimated 166,980 children in Washington State (birth to twelve) were in licensed child care. About 75 percent were in child care centers with the remaining 25 percent in licensed family child care homes.³ Most families do not receive state subsidies to pay for child care. Thirty two percent of children in all licensed facilities received subsidies in 2006.⁴ The following table summarizes the different types of care, includes a brief description of the care, and enumerates the numbers of providers and children in that type of care. The data for each type is the latest information available.



Types of Child Care (based on most recent data available)

Type	Description	Numbers in Care
Child Care Center <i>(licensed by DEL)</i> 2,092 in 2006. ⁵	Centers provide both full-time and part-time care. Children are grouped by their ages. Many take infants and provide care up through kindergarten. Are not in residences.	125,100 children received care in 2006. ⁶
Family Child Care Homes <i>(licensed by DEL)</i> 5,767 in 2006. ⁷	Care in the home of the provider, both full-time and part-time. Children are in mixed age settings, with a maximum of 12. Depending on the age and number of children an assistant may be required.	41,900 children received care in 2006. ⁸
Family, Friend and Neighbor Care (FFN) <i>(unlicensed)</i> Approximately 295,000 caregivers in 2001. ⁹	Care provided by relatives, friends or other unregulated caregivers in the neighborhood or community where parents live or work. Many families may use this as their primary care or use it in addition to licensed care.	About 480,000 children, birth to 12, in 2001. ¹⁰ The largest group of children in care.
Preschool Care: <i>(not required to be licensed if providing care for fewer than 4 hours per day for preschool children)</i> Unknown number	Variety of types offer care for children ages 3 to 5: parent cooperative preschools; Montessori preschools; private preschools; Head Start, a federally funded program, ECEAP, a Washington State supported program; and playgroups--informal arrangements made by groups of families.	Unknown. In 2008, there were 9,512 Head Start slots in Washington state; and 7,081 slots in ECEAP. ¹¹
Pre-Kindergarten Programs <i>(might be licensed if part of a center/family child care home)</i>	For 4-5 year olds. Can be part of a preschool, a child care center, a family child care home, or a program operated by a school district.	Unknown
In Home Care by a Nanny <i>(unlicensed)</i>	Nannies are hired to come to the home or may live with the family. Others come during the times when the family needs care.	Unknown

Aspects of the Early Care and Education System

The system includes federal, state, and local agencies working to fund and support early care and education efforts. Other organizations working on child care issues include: the resource and referral network and its member agencies, colleges and universities, private foundations and institutes, business groups, the statewide Educational Service Districts, and many stakeholder groups. In 2005, *Kids Matter* was developed as a "framework for building an early childhood system in Washington State to improve outcomes for children."¹² *Kids Matter* has been adopted by state agencies and *Thrive by Five Washington* as the systems framework for Washington's early childhood system. *Kids*

Matter organizes and prioritizes outcomes for children, based on four goal areas:

- Access to health insurance and medical homes (family doctors)
- Mental health and social-emotional development
- Early care and education/child care
- Parenting information and support*

*See [Appendix C](#)

Federal Funding and Support

The federal government works through the federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to allocate funding, offer training and technical assistance, and monitor compliance with federal program and fiscal requirements. In Washington State, HHS Region 10 staff actively work with state and local entities, with the goal of improving



EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION SYSTEM

programs and services for children and families.¹³ HHS funds early learning and child care in Washington State by allocating funds in several categories: Head Start/Early Head Start; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (Welfare); Child Care Development Fund; Individuals with Disabilities Act; Child and Adult Care Food Program; and Tribal Entities. The Washington State Resource and Referral Network receives some earmarked funding to support its services directly from federal funds. Most of these funds are passed on to the responsible state agencies for allocation to state programs and services. HHS distributes Head Start/Early Head Start funds directly to local and tribal programs.

Washington State funds a variety of activities using both its own funds and those received from the federal government. The 2007-2009 biennium budget for the Department of Early Learning (DEL) is \$363 million. Of this amount, 38% or \$140 million comes from state general funds. The budget is divided into 5 areas: agency administration (\$25 million), licensing of child care facilities (\$22 million), quality initiatives (\$58 million), child care subsidies to parents (\$147 million), and early learning programs such as the Early Care and Education Assistance Program (ECEAP) at \$111 million. ECEAP is funded exclusively from state funds. In addition to DEL, other state agencies provide services to children and their parents.¹⁴

Major State Agencies Involved in Early Learning

Name:	Functions:
The Department of Early Learning (DEL, formed 7/1/2006)	Lead state agency responsible for early learning and child care. 2009-2011 budget: \$363 million. \$140 million from state general funds. Agency administration: \$25 million; Licensing: \$22 million; Quality Initiatives: \$58 million; Child Care Subsidies \$147 million; Early Learning (ECEAP) \$111 million.
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)	Manages the Child and Adult Food Program and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) program.
Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)	Manages the Infant/Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP) and manages the Working Connections child care subsidy program. ¹⁵
Department of Health (DOH)	Maternal Child Health Division administers Healthy Child Care Washington (HCCW). ¹⁶

Washington State Child Care Resource and Referral(R&R) Network and Local R&R Agencies

The Child Care Resource and Referral Network coordinates the work of 11 regional community resource and referral network agencies. These agencies provide child care referrals for parents, offer training and support to child care providers, highlight local efforts to support and enhance local child care and early learning efforts, work with business by developing child care programs to benefit employees and provide in-depth data and analysis on child care supply and demand.¹⁷

Four Year Colleges, Universities, and Community Colleges

Child care for student-parents at higher education institutions is critical in order for a student to access and complete higher education. The Child Care Grant program promotes high-quality, accessible, and affordable child care for students attending public colleges and universities. The students, however, provide the majority of financial support for campus child care.¹⁸ Higher education institutions also provide advanced education for child care providers; campus child care facilities are often practicum sites for these students. Community colleges also offer parent cooperative preschools and parenting classes.



Educational Service Districts (ESDs)

Educational Service Districts are regional educational service agencies. Created by the State Legislature, the nine ESFs function primarily as support agencies for school districts and deliver educational services that can be more efficiently or economically performed

regionally. Four of the nine ESFs are grantees for Head Start and ECEAP funds, contracting with providers to offer these programs. Two ESFs are pilot sites for *Thrive by Five Washington* early learning demonstration community projects—Puget Sound ESF 121 in White Center and Yakima ESF 105 in East Yakima.

Representative Foundations and Institutes in Washington State

Name, Date Established	Focus
Foundation for Early Learning, April 2000.	Plays a key role in developing community-based initiatives that support parents as their children's first teachers and programs to ensure that all children have access to high-quality child care. ¹⁹
Thrive by Five Washington July 2006 Public-private partnership	Catalyst for improving parenting education and support, child care, preschool, and other early learning environments throughout Washington. Funded by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, other foundations and businesses, and the State of Washington. ²⁰
Talaris Research Institute 2000	Supports parents and caregivers in raising socially and emotionally healthy children. ²¹
Comprehensive Health Education Foundation (C.H.E.F. ®) 1974	Helps people and communities improve the quality of their lives through health education. Has developed three comprehensive early childhood programs. ²²
Institute for Learning and Brain Science (I-LABS) University of Washington 2003.	Conducts innovative interdisciplinary research on lifelong learning and the brain. Dedicated to discovering the fundamental principles of human learning that will enable all children to achieve their full potential. ²³



Representative Stakeholders and Advocates

Name	Focus
The Collaborative	Coalition of statewide early learning and after-school organizations representing the direct service providers and the families and children whom they serve. ²⁴
Early Learning Action Alliance (formerly Early Learning Advocates Table)	Coalition working to develop and implement a long-term policy advocacy vision and plan for a high quality early learning system in Washington. ²⁵
Children's Alliance	Statewide child advocacy organization. Champions public policies and practices that deliver the essentials that kids need to thrive - confidence, stability, health, and safety. ²⁶
Children's Home Society	Offers early childhood programs in Eastern Washington and in King County. Advocates for early learning issues statewide. ²⁷
United Way of Washington	Encourages and assists 27 local United Ways in their efforts to help people care for one another. Coordinates statewide <i>Born Learning</i> campaigns, a national parent-information campaign. ²⁸
Docs for Tots	Collaborates with public and private partners to increase doctors' awareness about and involvement in efforts to enhance early learning opportunities for children and families in Washington State. ²⁹
Fight Crime, Invest in Kids	Bipartisan, non-profit law enforcement leaders advocating for programs proven to keep kids from becoming criminals in the first place. ³⁰ Police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors and crime survivors dedicated to preventing crime.
League of Education Voters	Grassroots advocates lobbying at the state level; supports early learning and child care issues. ³¹
Service Employees International Union	Bargains for rate increases, health insurance benefits, and training opportunities for family child care homes. Lobbies at the state level in support of early learning issues. ³²
Washington Educators in Early Learning (American Federation of Teachers and Washington Education Association)	WEEL believes that the link between high-quality child care and the working conditions and wages of child care providers are key to high-quality, stable early learning. ³³



III. RECENT CHANGES IN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

The 2005 Washington State Legislature established *Washington Learns* and *The Early Learning Council*. The legislature asked these bodies to conduct a “comprehensive review of the state’s entire education system, from early learning through K-12 and post-secondary education.”³⁴ In July 2006, *The Early Learning Council* issued a *Proposal to the Steering Committee, Five “Big Ideas.”* They are...

1. Support parents as their child’s first and best teachers.
2. Refocus and change public perceptions about education for children birth through age ten.
3. Provide fair, sufficient and stable funding for early education.
4. Support early educator professional development, compensation, and competency.
5. Build community-level capacity in support of the “Learning to Learn” years.

These ideas create the underpinnings of the early learning and child care system in Washington State. They are not fully realized but are goals that various parts of the system are working to implement.

The *Washington Learns* report, issued in November 2006, recommends specific strategies to improve the system of early learning. They include: 1) Create a cabinet-



level Department of Early Learning that reports to the Governor and is accountable to the public, (implemented in July 2006); 2) Support public-private partnerships focused on engaging the public and improving the quality of early learning (*Thrive By Five Washington* created in 2006); 3) Make parenting information and support readily available to parents, grandparents, and other caregivers; 4) Improve the safety and well-being of children in child care and early education programs; 5) Phase in a five-star voluntary quality rating improvement

system(QRIS) that gives parents better information about the quality of early care and education programs, and expands the availability of high-quality early learning opportunities.³⁵

Early Care and Education in a Changing Economy

No matter how much parents strive to be the primary teachers of their children during the preschool years, economic and social changes in society make it difficult to do so. As a result, the need remains high for parents to access high quality and affordable early care and education programs. Nationally, 62% of children under age 6 had all available parents working in 2006. In Washington State, the percentage was slightly lower—60%. This was a slight increase since 2000 both nationally (61%) and in Washington State (58%).³⁶

In 2008, almost 279,000 children in Washington State under the age of 6 needed some form of child care because their parents

worked.³⁷ The number of children living under the poverty level highlights the economic pressures on these families. For example, 463,000 children under age 18 are living below 200% of the poverty level; of these, almost 18% are under the age of five.³⁸ In 2008, the poverty level for a family of three is \$17,600 (see [Appendix D](#)). A more refined measure of poverty, proposed by Deb Came and Erica Gardner with the Washington State Office of Financial Management, considers local costs and shows that the level of economic distress is not evenly distributed throughout the state. Using 2001 data, this analysis showed that “For families with young children in the more rural areas of the state, more than half do not have sufficient income to be self-sufficient.”³⁹ Came and Gardner noted in their study that poverty among parents of young children is common because the parents themselves are also young and have not reached their full wage-earning potential.

Based on these combined factors, many families require some form of subsidy for early care. In Washington State, costs for full-time infant care for families in which a woman is the sole parent, took 50% of her income. Even for middle-class two-parent households, the cost of care for an infant is substantial—16% of income.⁴⁰

The Economic Impact of the Child Care Industry

“The care of children is an industry that is vital to our economy” reports the Northwest

Finance Circle in 2003.⁴¹ The child care industry in Washington State produces gross annual revenues of \$836 million from 9,012 licensed child care businesses. A total of \$566 million in wages is paid each year to 30,600 child care employees. By spending these wages, \$1.64 billion in sales is generated.

There are additional child care benefits to the economy:

- In 2003, Washington State’s investment of \$50 million for child care subsidies was matched by approximately \$350 million from the federal government.
- Child care supports the workforce and small businesses by making employment possible for parents and by supporting parents in low- and moderate-wage jobs.
- Licensed child care employs more people than the hotel or retail industry.
- High return on investment; For every \$1 invested in a high-quality early child care program, a \$7 savings is generated in remedial education, criminal justice and social costs.



Current Brain Research

According to *The Scientist in the Crib: Minds, Brains and How Children Learn*, “Everyone should be interested in understanding children because the future of the world, literally, depends on them.... But getting public policies about children right depends on getting the science right.... If citizens and voters are going to make the right political decisions about children, they need to understand what science tells us (and what it doesn’t).”⁴² There have been remarkable changes in the understanding of the growth and development of an infant’s brain as a result of new research. Studies indicate that a child is born with 50 trillion neurons (nerve cells). Between the ages of three and five, this number has expanded to one quadrillion. The synapses, or connections, between them start

RECENT CHANGES IN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

to form before birth; after birth, the number explodes. Most synaptic connections are made before the age of two. This does not mean that learning afterwards is impossible; but it does mean that what happens in the early years is very important.

The National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering and the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council formed a *Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development*, which met from 1998-2000. The Committee had two complementary agendas: How can society use knowledge about early childhood development to maximize the nation's human capital and ensure the ongoing vitality of its democratic institutions? How can the nation use knowledge to nurture, protect, and ensure the health and well being of all young children as an important objective in its own right, regardless of whether measurable returns can be documented in the future?⁴³ The Committee reviewed extensive multi-disciplinary research from before birth through the first day of kindergarten. Their conclusions support those of other researchers:

- From the time of conception to the first day of kindergarten, development proceeds at a pace exceeding that of any subsequent stage of life.
- Nature versus nurture is no longer an argument - both shape our development.
- Human relationships are the building blocks of human development.
- The course of development can be altered in early childhood by effective interventions that change the balance between risk and protection, thereby

shifting the odds in favor of more adaptive outcomes.

At the University of Washington, the Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences (I-LABS) has done seminal research in brain development. Drs. Andrew Meltzoff and Patricia Kuhl established the Institute in 2003. Dr. Meltzoff determined that, within minutes after birth, the child focuses its vision preferentially on the human face, and mimics the actions of the observer's face even though it has never seen its own face.

Dr. Kuhl has done extensive studies of sound recognitions and language development. Within the first year, a child can recognize and differentiate all the sounds that occur in human language. At about eight to ten months of age, we lose the ability to imitate the language sounds that we do not hear. Continued research has shown Dr. Kuhl,

among others, the importance of conversation with and reading to young children, and the inadequacy of television and electronic media as sources of education in the early years of childhood.

Dr. Meltzoff says that learning before age



three is hugely important, but agrees that our brains do not stop developing at three. It is surprising that it begins so early, but the truth is that it continues into adulthood. "When we can get the scientists and the educators together to connect learning from birth to 3 with learning from 3 and beyond, then we will really be getting somewhere."⁴⁴

John Bruer, the author of *The Myth of the First Three Years: A New Understanding of Early Brain Development and Lifelong Learning*, makes a case against the zero to three focus. He claims that we are wired for life-long

learning, and feels that the zero to three focus over-emphasizes infant and toddler nurturing to the detriment of long-term educational and parental responsibilities. Yet, he does agree that critical periods exist in brain development.⁴⁵

The point of all the brain research is not only to further our understanding, but also to use knowledge gained to find ways to prevent problems and to put funding in the proper areas to assist future developmental success in all children. Brain research tells us to nurture young children, to touch them, to talk to them, to read to them, to sing to them, to dance with them. For example, babies who react to sounds differently from most children when tested are thought to be at higher risk for dyslexia. The right interventions could be found and begun very early. Tests can be done as early as fifteen weeks on babies' reactions to the greater highs and lows we put in our voices ("motherese" or "parentese") when talking to them, which almost all prefer. Children with autism do not react in the same way to this way of talking. Early findings could lead to early interventions.

The Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development concludes that all children are born wired for feelings and ready to learn; early environments matter and nurturing relationships are essential; society is changing and the needs of young children are not being addressed; interactions among early childhood science, policy, and practice are problematic and demand dramatic rethinking.

What happens during the first months and years of life matters a lot, not because this period of development provides an indelible blueprint for adult well being, but because it sets either a sturdy or fragile stage for what follows.

Three Studies of Long Term Early Care and Education

Longitudinal studies show that there are both monetary and societal benefits for the money spent on the early years of a child's development. Three long-term studies have followed the recipients of high quality and comprehensive preschool programs through their teen and adult years. These studies differ from others done in the past in that they have included rigorous documentation, a larger sample, and followed standard procedure for longitudinal studies.

These studies, published in the last few years, are as follows:

- Child-Parent Center (CPC) a program from Chicago, Illinois, a study that included over 1400 participants
- Age 21 Follow-up Executive Summary, Early Learning, Later Success: The Abecedarian Study from North Carolina. A study of direct services to children in infancy
- The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study from the Michigan School District

All three programs involved a large percentage of at-risk low-income children, the majority of whom were nonwhite. The programs put emphasis on early literacy, parent education, and parental involvement. They provided well-trained teachers and staff, child health screening, family social services, and transition assistance between preschool and elementary school.

The findings from these carefully controlled, childhood-long studies were similar. Short-term gains were found in cognitive development and fewer children needed to attend special education for other than hearing and speech difficulty. In the long term, more adults finished high school, more attended a four-year college institution and more obtained a wage of at least \$20,000 per year. Young women tended to have their first



RECENT CHANGES IN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

child 2 years later than the control group; juvenile and adult legal problems were fewer; even the rate of home ownership increased.

The Chicago Title I Child-Parent Center (CPC) Program conducted its first cost analysis in 2001. Data in this on-going study were collected from family surveys, educational records, and justice system records up to age 21. They found the following economic benefits from the high quality and comprehensive services that were provided:

- Reduction in expenditures for the school remedial services of grade retention and special education
- Reduction in criminal justice system expenditures for both juvenile and adult arrest and treatment
- Reduction in child welfare system expenditures associated with child abuse and neglect
- Averted tangible costs to crime victims
- Increases in adult earnings and tax revenues projected for increased in educational attainment⁴⁶

The North Carolina Abecedarian Project yielded similar results in its carefully controlled

study, in which 57 infants from low-income families were randomly assigned to receive early intervention in a high-quality child care setting, while 54 were in a control group that did not receive care. Those receiving early intervention were more likely to be still in school at age 21 (40%, versus 20% of the control group.) Employment was higher and legal problems were lower for those receiving services early in life. Throughout their schooling, participants had higher reading and math scores.⁴⁷

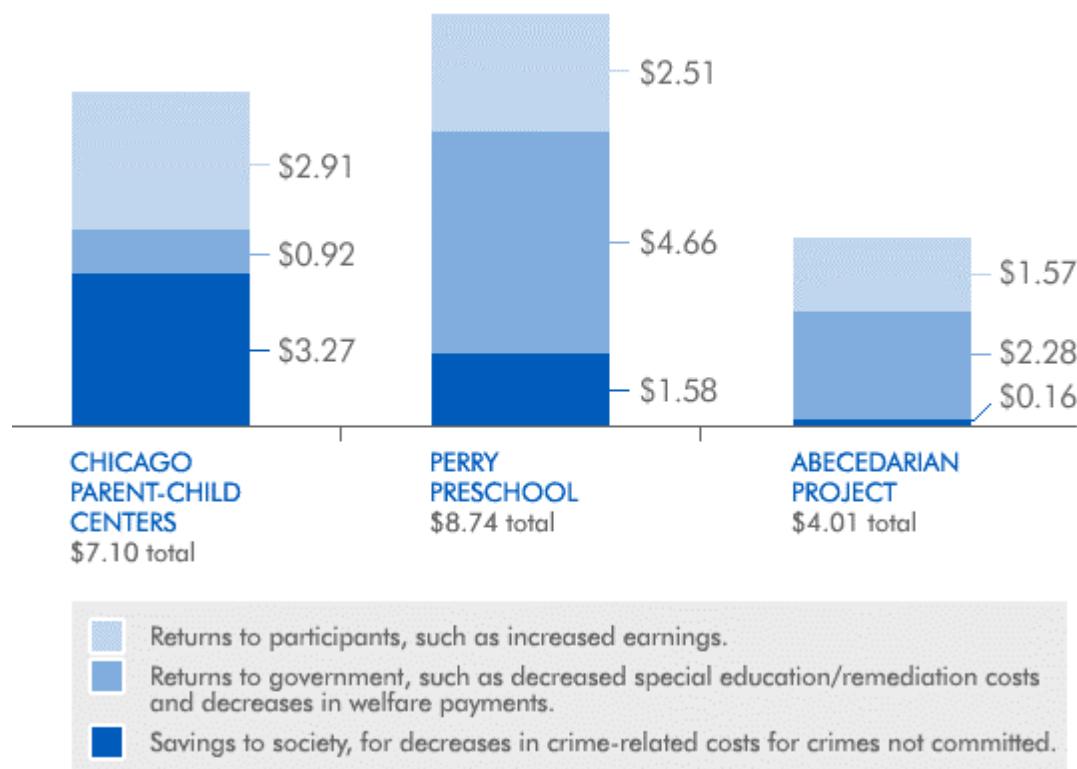
The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study followed children from between ages 3-4 up to age 40. The study found that adults at age 40 who had been in the preschool program had higher earnings, were more likely to hold a job, had committed fewer crimes and were more likely to have graduated from high school than adults who did not have preschool⁴⁸ (see chart in [Appendix B](#)).

As the following chart from *Thrive by Five* Washington research shows, cost benefits averaged around \$6.50 for every public and private dollar spent.⁴⁹



Successful Research-based Models Exist

Benefit Costs Table for Three Early Childhood Programs
(dollars returned for each dollar invested)



SOURCE: BRUNER et al., *EARLY LEARNING LEFT OUT*

These studies demonstrate the benefit of providing families in our community with the education and resources they need to ensure that children do better in school and have more successful lives. Society also benefits through savings on school remedial services, increased tax revenues and avoided crime victim costs.⁵⁰

IV. QUALITY OF EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

In the studies done on the success of high quality and comprehensive early learning programs, the key phrase is “high quality.” But when we observe a program, how do we know what quality is? These studies indicate that certain program characteristics must be in place such as: an appropriate adult-child ratio, stable and adequately compensated staff, staff well-trained in child development, developmentally appropriate curriculum and activities, primary emphasis on meeting individual needs of children, and parental support. How do parents determine if a program is high quality? What efforts are going on to raise the quality of programs locally or statewide? How can a program have high quality if it depends on governmental reimbursements, which might not be sufficient to pay staff adequately? Will parents be able to afford a higher quality program? There is a delicate balance between having a high quality program and having it affordable to most parents.

There are a number of state efforts going on to raise the quality of care: 1) help for child care centers to be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); 2) development of a quality rating system to help parents in choosing care; 3) higher governmental reimbursements for higher quality of care (tiered reimbursements); and 4) support for child care teachers to get more education and higher wages.



Accreditation

Accreditation is one method of improving child care quality. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accredits child care and school-age centers nationwide while the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) accredits family child care homes.

NAEYC accreditation includes an extensive self-study by the center's staff and parents that identifies areas for improvement, a site visit by the NAEYC staff that validates the program, and a review by a national council of experts to determine if the center should receive accreditation. Accreditation is for five years. Key criteria for accreditation are staff qualifications, staff-child ratios, age-appropriate materials, and teachers' relationships with the children.

Nationally, about 10% of all centers are accredited. In Washington State, 126 child care centers are accredited out of a total of 2,158, including school-age programs. There are 10,442 children served in the 126 accredited programs.

NAFCC criteria for accreditation of family child care home providers include education and experience, completing a self-study process, and having a site visit for observation purposes. The accreditation focuses on routines, relationships between children and providers, developmental learning activities and the environment, and record keeping. Accreditation is valid for five years.

Child care providers in the King County area may apply to Child Care Resources (CCR) to receive enhanced support services, which could include more financial support to complete the accreditation process. The accreditation costs are too high for many centers to afford. CCR in King County estimates it takes from \$5,000-8,000 per

center to provide this “enhanced support”, excluding the costs of CCR staff, which are donated. At this time, there is no other known assistance for accreditation in other areas of the state.

Quality Rating Systems

A quality rating improvement system (QRIS) is a voluntary system used to evaluate the quality of licensed early care and education programs. It helps parents when choosing child care and is used to provide incentives and resources for child care providers. It can also be used as a benchmark for providers in their efforts to improve the quality of their programs. Programs are rated on different levels, usually beginning with licensing as the first level and established national standards or national accreditation as the top level.

Quality systems can be tied to tiered reimbursement systems to provide increased funding to develop higher quality programs.

Responsibility for implementing QRIS was delegated to the Department of Early Learning (DEL) when it was established in 2006, based on the development work done by *The Early Learning Council*. The 2007-2009 state budget included \$5 million to develop the system. In 2008, DEL began its design phase by choosing five pilot sites to develop a QRIS appropriate to each community’s needs. DEL chose these sites to be sure that the final QRIS design would include representation from communities across the state.

Communities participating in the QRIS pilot design phase are:

- Vancouver (Education Service District # 112)
- Bremerton (Olympic Educational Service District # 114)
- Yakima (*Thrive by Five Washington – East Yakima Early Learning Initiative*)
- White Center (*Thrive by Five Washington-White Center Early Learning Initiative*)

QUALITY OF EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

- Spokane (Washington State University)⁵¹

These pilot sites were to solicit input from parents, child care providers, and their communities on a QRIS proposal that met their needs. The department then designed one QRIS system for the state based on designs from the local communities. A draft is now available to be piloted in the five sites. Preliminary results from the QRIS pilot work will be reported to the legislature in December 2008.

Tiered Reimbursements

Tiered reimbursement is a strategy to reward child care centers and family homes that are of higher quality. The providers must accept children who receive public subsidies in order to receive reimbursements. State or local governments provide higher rates of reimbursement if the centers or homes go beyond the basic licensing requirements. Some reimbursement systems have just two levels, basic licensing and national accreditation. Others include steps between these two ends. The reimbursement systems can also be an aid to parents in understanding the quality of a provider.⁵²

Currently, DSHS is funding a Tiered Reimbursement pilot program in Spokane County child care centers and in family child care homes in Northeast Washington. The program originally began in 2004 and ended in December 2006. Subsequently, the legislative session in 2007-09 continued to fund the pilot. Participants must be working toward accreditation and at least 25% of children enrolled must receive subsidies. When a program is accepted into a formalized accreditation process, it will receive higher subsidy reimbursements to complete the accreditation process.



Professional Development

In 1997, the Washington State Legislature allocated funds to establish an integrated State Training Approval and Registry System (STARS) for all child care providers. The Department of Early Learning (DEL) contracts with the Washington Association for the Education of Young Children (WAEYC) to administer the STARS program which includes selecting trainers, training curriculum approval, scholarships, and provider services. DEL maintains a state registry of participants and their training in early childhood education. Current licensing statutes require new child care workers to complete a 20 hour STARS basic course prior to or within six months of employment and 10 hours of continuing education each year after the initial training.



Providers are trained through STARS-approved community agencies, colleges and local child care resource and referral agencies. A provider can receive a national Child Development Associate credential (CDA) after completing 120 hours of this community training, writing a portfolio, and being assessed by an approved CDA evaluator. Community colleges recognize the CDA with twelve college credits as an intermediate step to earning an Associate Arts Degree (AA). *Washington Scholars for Child Care Professionals* (formerly the T.E.A.C.H Early Childhood Washington) subsidizes tuition for programs in early childhood education at

QUALITY OF EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

community and technical colleges. It will also pay a CDA credential application fee.⁵³

Thirty-one community and technical colleges offer a full array of early childhood education programs. Eleven have strong matriculation agreements with state and private four-year colleges and universities so that students may continue their education to earn a bachelor's degree and beyond. In 2006-07, Washington's community and technical colleges enrolled 3,739 students in early childhood education certificate and degree programs.⁵⁴

In 2007, the legislature funded a new Early Childhood Apprenticeship program through the Department of Early Learning in partnership with Clover Park Technical College. Students earn credits through on-the-job training and course work at the college to obtain certificates in the categories of Child Care Associate I, Child Care Coordinator/Associate II, and Education Paraprofessional.

Career and Wage Ladder Projects

"The most essential components of quality early learning and care are the commitment, education, experience and continuity of the teacher."⁵⁵ The 2006 *Licensed Child Care in Washington* report stated that the average child care teacher's hourly pay is \$10.50 and that of a teacher's aide is \$8.82. Wages paid in King County were higher than in other areas of the state. The Seattle Post Intelligencer on May 7, 2008 reported that the average child care worker in the United States earned \$18,820 in 2006. The article also reported that in Washington State, a child care worker's average salary was \$19,710, according to the American Federation of Teachers. Among all states, Washington actually had the 15th highest average salary for child care workers.

To counteract the problems of inadequate wages and high turnover, the state piloted a

career and wage ladder model for three years. A primary goal of the pilot program was to create financial incentives for child care center staff to gain greater academic and professional education. At the end of the program, participating staff had higher levels of education than those who had not participated. Many continued their education, acquiring a CDA or an AA in Early Childhood Education. Quoting a child care worker in Burlington, Washington, participating in this program, "As our staff gets more education, they become better teachers and now have the financial reward associated with increased training."⁵⁶

Another goal of the pilot program was to retain staff for a longer period. The evaluation of the program found that staff at centers in the program did stay longer. *Tiny Tots*, a child care program in South Seattle, participated in the pilot. Angie Maxie, the director, said the program was successful in that 90% of her staff got more education. However, when the pilot ended, she was unable to continue to pay the higher salaries, and many staff left for better opportunities.

While the pilot Career and Wage Ladder Project demonstrated positive benefits of having child care staff achieve higher education status, it was not funded beyond 2003. However, the 2006 state budget included \$1 million for the Career and Wage Ladder Project which allowed those centers formerly participating to reinstate the program.

The biennium state budget in 2007-09 included another \$1 million increase for the project. As of July 2007, DEL had 55 contracts covering 61 centers and 620 child care staff. The increase will allow 10 new centers to participate, averaging 10 child care workers per center. Spokane is a focus area for new contracts with preference given to those in the tiered reimbursement project.

QUALITY OF EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

Early Learning Benchmarks

As the focus on early learning grows, and in an educational climate in which there is an emphasis on measuring and testing, there has been a corresponding effort to establish benchmarks or standards by which to evaluate and guide programs. Benchmarks are "clear, specific descriptions of knowledge or skills that can be supported through observations, descriptions, and documentation of a child's behavior and by samples of a child's work, often used in connection with more broadly stated content standards (what a child should know and be able to do in specific content area at a particular level)."⁵⁷

The individual goals within the content areas have been linked to known curriculum goals in Early Head Start, Head Start, and OSPI (Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction) programs. Standards have been established in five domains:

- Physical Well-Being, Health, Motor Development
- Social and Emotional Development
- Approaches Toward Learning
- Cognition and General Knowledge
- Language, Literacy, and Communication

In Washington State, early learning and development benchmarks are tools to help parents and caregivers better understand and support children's development. They are meant to help measure school readiness.

Marcia Riggers, former Assistant Superintendent at OSPI, has stated that the

benchmarks are not designed to be an assessment system to measure children for entry into kindergarten. They should be used as a guide only and are designed to take into consideration the socio-economic, geographic, and cultural differences that exist in birth to five populations.⁵⁸ DEL and OSPI are amending the benchmarks to recognize culturally relevant practices.



V. CHILD CARE AFFORDABILITY

The cost of child care is high, and is a major expense for parents, especially the cost for infant care. According to the July 2008 report on child care costs from the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA), the average annual cost in Washington State for full time infant care ranged from \$8,424 in a family child care home to \$12,000 in a child care center. For a 4 year-old, the cost was \$7,140 to \$8,804 respectively.⁵⁹

Most parents pay the cost of care as government assistance is only available to eligible low-income parents on a sliding fee basis. The 2008 Washington State cost for infant care represents 50.6% of income from a single parent of median income. Likewise, for a 4 year-old, the cost would be 37.1% of parental income. The price of child care has risen faster than inflation. Nationally, the rate of increase is 6.5% for infant care and 5.2% for a 4 year-old. These increases are roughly twice the rate of inflation.⁶⁰

Washington State Child Care Subsidies

Washington State subsidies for child care are available on a sliding fee scale for families who are working in low-paying jobs, looking for work, or in an approved training program. Washington State serves all eligible families who apply for child care subsidies whereas many other states have waiting lists. Families with incomes up to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) are eligible for state subsidies. The FPL for 2008 is \$17,600 for a family of three. All families who receive subsidies are required to help pay for their child care services with a co-payment. The monthly co-pay for a family of three ranges from \$15 to \$443 based on the total family income.

In 2006, 36,198 Washington State families with 60,820 children received state subsidies per month. The type of care subsidized was 51% in child care centers (31,000 children), 28% in licensed family homes (17,000 children), and 21% in unlicensed family, friend and neighbor care (13,000 children).



State subsidized child care is funded largely by a blend of federal dollars from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Child Care Development Fund (CCDF). Some state general funds are allocated for subsidies. *Working Connections*, in DSHS Economic Services, administers these funds, but subsidy policies are developed by the Department of Early Learning (DEL). The 2008 legislative session assigned the administration of the seasonal child care for agricultural workers, homeless child care, and tiered reimbursement to DEL.

Market for Child Care Subsidy Programs

Federal regulations require states to tie child care subsidy rates to the amount that child care providers charge families who pay privately. Washington State University conducts a survey of child care providers every two years to determine what parents currently pay for child care. DEL uses that

CHILD CARE AFFORDABILITY

information to set the child care subsidy rate in different regions.

When a child care provider cares for a child receiving state subsidy, providers charge the parents the program's usual private rate or the child care subsidy rate, whichever is less. Subsidy payment rates for child care vary depending on where the family lives, amount of care needed, type of care, and child's age.

State subsidies are generally much lower than the rate that providers charge private paying parents. This low subsidy rate tends to decrease revenues for the providers and further reduces the child's access to quality child care programs. In the mid 1990s the subsidy rate was at the 75% percentile as required by the federal government. After welfare reform in 1996, Washington State chose not to fully implement the results of its market rate studies, and provider reimbursements have not kept up with what providers charge their private paying families. Subsidies are closer to the 38th percentile. Access to good, quality child care is problematic for many families because some providers do not accept, or limit, the number of children whose care is subsidized by the state.

Union Impact on Child Care Subsidies

In the 2007 legislative session, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) achieved a collective bargaining contract between Washington State and the family child care home providers, an historic first. The contract focused on increasing state subsidy rates. In the first year, subsidy rates increased by 10% for licensed family home providers as well as an hourly wage increase for unlicensed providers. In 2008, there was a 7% subsidy increase for licensed providers. All subsidized providers must pay either membership union dues or non-member fees in order to receive the subsidy from the state.

Union dues of 2% of the increase in subsidy received by the provider are collected. Based on this contract with family child care home providers, the state voluntarily paid the child care center providers the same increase in subsidy rates in order to achieve parity between homes and centers.

City of Seattle Child Care Payment Assistance

For over 30 years, the City of Seattle has helped low and moderate income families find and pay for child care services. This includes full time care for children from birth to five and before and after school care for older children through twelve years of age. The subsidies are available to families that earn 200-300% of the federal poverty level. This is higher than the state income guidelines, which cover up to 200% of poverty level.

In 2007, the city provided approximately \$2 million in direct aid to families. The families receive a voucher, which then can be used for one of the 165 licensed providers who are under contract with the city. The list of providers includes both family child care homes and child care centers. The city pays between 25% and 90% of the costs of child care depending on the family's eligibility and the family pays the remaining cost. For 2007, six hundred and sixty-five children received subsidies.

In the 2008 legislative session, the Washington Educators in Early Learning, in collaboration with the American Federation of Teachers and the Washington Education Association, lobbied with SEIU for a collective bargaining agreement for child care centers. The legislation would have allowed child care center teachers and directors to join together



CHILD CARE AFFORDABILITY

to bargain with the state over resources to improve the quality of child care. The resources included higher subsidy rates, funding for professional development, and health insurance. Large groups of child care providers supported this legislation, but opposition came from the parks and

recreation programs, the YMCA, and private child care chain centers. In the end, it failed because the House and the Senate could not agree on the budget. This issue will probably come up again in the 2009-2011 legislative session.



VI. COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES

In 2008, a survey of early childhood initiatives listed 18 local community initiatives, with participants from 23 of Washington's 39 counties. These local communities have joined together to foster coordinated, collaborative work on early childhood issues across the state.

They are being developed or are in place to expand early learning programs and services that serve children from birth to five. Some programs assist parents from prenatal time through preparing their children for school. Along the prenatal to kindergarten continuum, a patchwork of programs is funded by governments, businesses, nonprofit organizations, foundations, and public-private partnerships.

Programs for Parents

Communities throughout the state are working to increase parental involvement in the literacy of their children and to address parenting issues. In some cases, these efforts support parents, other family, or friends who are providing the early learning because of a lack of affordable and/or available licensed child care. In other cases, the families are seeking ways to augment and complement the learning the child is receiving in early learning facilities.

1. Support to Parents at Home

Research on home visitor programs has shown them to be a positive form of intervention. These programs facilitate early learning and address a wide range of parenting issues, such as improved pre-natal and post-natal health. These programs can range from a single visit to more intensive programs of longer duration. The Department of Early Learning provides funding for parent and visitation

services through contracts with local organizations.⁶¹

Several communities are conducting outreach to parents of newborns in order to offer them literacy materials. The Asotin-Anatone School



District, in partnership with the regional hospital, gives all new parents information about the school district, and invites them in to receive a free baby blanket and an educational book for the child. Junior high students make the blankets, and the

materials for both the blankets and the books are donated by local businesses. If parents decide to participate in the early learning program, a preschool teacher from the district, who is also certified in special education, will make regular visits to the family until the child is eligible for kindergarten. In addition, the family receives developmentally appropriate educational materials once or twice a year for that entire period.

Clarkston School District also offers developmental packets to participating parents of preschool children, recruiting parents not only through the hospitals, but also through community agencies and newspaper ads. A variety of community groups, including school district staff, the Retired Teachers Association, the Health District, the Even Start Program (Walla Walla Community College), and the Asotin Library prepare the packets. The Library also offers incentives to encourage parents to bring their children in for books and other learning activities.

The Parent-Child Home Program is a national model and is offered by Atlantic Street Center in Seattle and the West Yakima School District, among others.⁶² This early literacy and parenting program serves low income families with two to three year olds through twice weekly visits by a trained home visitor, 10 months a year for two years. The program provides the child with books and developmental toys, and then models interactive activities for the parents. Research has shown that children participating in this program graduate from high school at a higher rate than a comparable group that have not received this intervention.⁶³

2. Play and Learn Groups

Twenty or more communities throughout the state offer some form of Play and Learn groups for adults and children. The primary audience for these groups consists of family, friends, neighbors and children. Group format can vary somewhat in order to accommodate the needs of its specific audience. In general, however, the groups offer developmental information, model appropriate ways of interacting with children, and give participants an opportunity to practice these skills. In some cases, the Play and Learn groups are one part of a more extensive parenting education curriculum. The very nature of the groups also offers a support structure for parents of young children.⁶⁴

3. READY! For Kindergarten

This program is operated by the Kennewick School District, which set a goal in 1995 that 90% of all children would read at or above grade level by third grade.⁶⁵ In 1996, they formed the Reading Foundation to accomplish this goal. In 1999, they conducted a standardized assessment of all children entering kindergarten, which showed vastly different levels of school readiness. (The Reading Foundation has since evolved into the National Children's Reading Foundation).⁶⁶



The READY! For Kindergarten program consists of 15 different lessons, three sessions a year for each year birth to five. Parents are divided into classes based upon the age of their children; classes are held either in the evening or on a Saturday morning. Spanish language classes are available. The curriculum was designed to target those areas considered the best predictors of success in reading (specifically letters and sounds), math, and social skills. A large portion of the class is spent teaching parents how to use the learning kit that they are given in each session.

READY! For Kindergarten requires a substantial investment of time and resources. Over 6500 parents have attended since the program began, approximately 1000 in each session. Thirty instructors and 5-7 classes each session are needed to implement the program. The National Children's Reading Foundation prepared the materials. Washington State University is currently working with the National Children's Reading Foundation in order to do a comprehensive evaluation. Outcome data indicate that the number of children most at-risk educationally has declined since the program began.

4. Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS)

MOPS began in 1973 when eight women formed a group to socialize and to share information regarding the care and education of their preschoolers. Since then, the

organization has spread to 3900 different groups around the world. MOPS groups are chartered through faith-based organizations. Their size, structure, and format vary according to the needs of the women in the group.

The overall purpose of the groups, however, remains as it was from the beginning. The groups offer a vehicle for the moms to socialize and share their experiences. More experienced parents can offer their perspectives and help mentor newer moms. Speakers can be invited to give formal education sessions to meet the needs of the group. Finally, women have the opportunity to gain leadership experience by, for example, facilitating group sessions.

Community Integration of Services

Given the complexity of early care and education services and providers, there are efforts in a number of communities to combine or integrate services to parents and their children. Following are examples of these integrated efforts which are representative of efforts across the state to expand the availability, accessibility, and quality of early childhood programs.



City of Seattle Early Learning Networks

In 2004, Seattle voters passed a seven year, \$117 million Families and Education Levy (FEL) to improve academic achievement and reduce the achievement gap for Seattle students in six focus areas. The Early Learning area includes early learning networks which are focused in two geographic areas: southeast and southwest neighborhoods in Seattle. The aim is to provide a comprehensive set of services to children from birth to five with the goal of having students ready for kindergarten when they enter the public schools. There are five areas of services:

Step Ahead Preschool Program that serves low income four year olds; Parent-Child Home Program for low income families with two and three year old children; Teacher Training, which includes early childhood education, professional development, and on-site coaching; Kindergarten Transition to help a successful transition to kindergarten for children in the network areas; and increased compensation for teachers in the early learning programs.

While the majority of funding for these programs comes from the FEL, others such as ECEAP or Head Start programs fund many of the students in the preschools. The ultimate goal is to provide these crucial services to all children regardless of funding source. The aim is to break down the barriers created by different funding sources with different requirements.⁶⁷ Seattle's Early Learning program and goals are very similar to *Thrive by Five Washington's* demonstration programs. Both programs serve a specific geographic area and are using the *Creative Curriculum* and other emerging preschool curricula. Both programs also blend funds from different sources to provide a common set of services for all children.

Thrive by Five Washington

Thrive by Five Washington (TB5) is a state-wide public-private partnership that advocates for improvement of early learning opportunities for every child. Funding for *TB5* comes from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Ackerley Foundation, Kirlin Charitable Foundation, Boeing Company, Foundation for Early Learning, other private foundations, businesses, and the State of Washington. Created in 2006 by the State Legislature, *TB5* has become a major catalyst in funding improvements in the areas of preschool, parenting education, child care and other early learning activities. *TB5* works closely with DEL and OSPI to coordinate and complement activities when possible.

There are four major components to the activities:

- Development of Promising Models
- Nurturing Families
- Culture of Literacy
- School Connections



Parent and Community Outreach

This effort is designed to increase awareness among parents and the community of the importance of early learning in preparing children for school and for life. The *Born Learning* activities across the state, which began in 2005, are examples of opportunities to increase public awareness of early learning.

Statewide Systems

While there are many communities across the state that are actively working on improving early learning opportunities, *TB5* sees a need for increased public investment and the creation of policies statewide.

Thrive Communities

In White Center and Yakima, local community leaders, in conjunction with *TB5*, have developed model programs to provide early learning opportunities in and out of the home. All of the services will be coordinated within each specific geographic area. Full implementation of each program will occur in 2009-10. Funding sources include *TB5*, Head Start, ECEAP, Washington State DSHS, USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program, DEL, Medicaid, and local community investments, and public support.

White Center Early Learning Initiative

White Center Early Learning Initiative (WCELI) is one of the two Thrive communities. White Center is an unincorporated area in King County bordering West Seattle. WCELI will:

- Build on existing services.
- Join with community partners to achieve its goal of providing high quality early learning opportunities for families and children.
- Demonstrate that a coordinated system of high quality early learning services will create success for children that can inform and advance availability of similar services across the state.

The plan for WCELI was developed with significant community input through a Community Advisory Committee and public meetings.⁶⁸

WCELI has the following components:

- Greenbridge Early Learning Center as the center for services.
- Services that improve the quality of licensed child care programs, community preschools and other early learning opportunities.
- Community-wide activities and services for any parent, child, or caregiver include parent support groups, parenting information, and play-and-learn groups.

System-wide supports to help ensure that all services are coordinated. Supports include professional development, training and technical assistance, literacy training, parenting education, early learning materials, school readiness connections to Highline Public Schools.

East Yakima Early Learning Initiative

In Yakima County, parents are the driving force of a coalition that makes up the East Yakima Early Learning Initiative (EYELI).

Supported by funding from the Gates Foundation and TB5, EYELI began in 2006 by holding community meetings and by surveying parents regarding which early learning services were important to them. Forty three different groups participated in the community meetings. Many of those same groups continue to be involved in the project.

EYELI is now in the early stages of developing a stand-alone facility to house its Early Learning Center. The Center will contain programs in two areas:

- Head Start and other early learning programs will operate within the building, creating a model child care center.
- Social service agencies from the community will offer services to the children and families, allowing the center to offer “one-stop” shopping.

This facility will begin offering programming in late 2008, with full operations in place during 2009.⁶⁹



Clark County

In 2001, Clark County began SELF-Support for Early Learning and Families. Starting with six organizations, it has now grown to 22 participating community organizations and public agencies, including the library, health district, hospital, social service agencies, businesses, Head Start, school districts, and child care providers. The coalition has also developed a good relationship with pediatricians in the community.⁷⁰

With a grant from the Foundation for Early Learning in 2002, SELF created a plan to improve outcomes for birth to five populations. The plan is composed of four different elements:

- Provider support and education
- Family support and education
- Community awareness and sustainability, and community collaboration and networking
- Involvement of parents through all levels of planning

The coalition has emphasized the development of an organizational infrastructure with a governing body, a committee, and task force to implement the plans. Participating entities all sign agreements which clearly define roles and responsibilities.

SELF organized geographical networks of 12-15 family child care providers. These networks create a mutual support group for the providers, and offer a structure through which professional development activities can be delivered to the group. Consultation and professional development to licensed child care providers are available free-of-charge through a three person interdisciplinary team called the Clark County Child Care Resource Team. Other parts of the continuum include three demonstration “best practice” family home care sites, and community learning centers in five targeted neighborhoods.

Pierce County Early Learning Consortium

In Pierce County, child care professionals, parent advisory groups, school districts, local governments, business leaders, along with United Way and other civic organizations, joined together to address the fact that Pierce County has the highest percentage (60%) of children in the state who are not ready to enter school. In an effort to change this, the consortium is coordinating existing organizations and providers through the use of evidence-based methods and practice.

The goals of the Consortium include:

- Improving the quality of care by making it more developmentally appropriate and effective
- Reaching more children through increased enhanced outreach
- Increasing the likelihood that children will be ready to succeed by the time they enter school

The Consortium chose three neighborhoods as the first to receive interventions. They were chosen because the rates for free and reduced lunch were 50% or higher. The Consortium will use activities and interventions to enhance quality and improve access to services, regardless of where the children are currently receiving care--at home, with family, friends, and neighbors, in licensed child care, or Head Start/ECEAP preschools. The Consortium will measure outcomes to establish improvements at the kindergarten level. Boys and Girls Clubs are building new Hope Centers in Pierce County and have agreed to provide space for early childhood programs. Eleven different Family Support Centers will promote the First Relationships model.



Bremerton School District

In 2006, the Bremerton School District began offering free all-day kindergarten to all children within the district, building on the success of their earlier Extended Kindergarten, which had been offered on a more limited basis. Although the program gives preference to children from within the Bremerton School District, it is also open to children from outside the district. No income restrictions are required for entry.⁷¹ The current data indicate that full-day kindergarten is already improving outcomes. Children entering first grade are showing improvement both in academic preparation and in behavior when compared with students entering prior to the inception of the full-day kindergarten.⁷²

This program complements the already-existing Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Partnership. This collaboration is between the Bremerton School District, Head Start, Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program, private and faith-based child care and preschool programs, and families. ECCE has improved access to and availability of quality child care for special needs and low income preschoolers through coordinating and supporting child care in a variety of settings. From the 2001-2002 school year to the 2004-2005 school year, outcome measures showed almost a 20% improvement in one of the key indicators of reading fluency.⁷³



VII. EMERGING ISSUES

State Funded Preschools

Across the country, forty states have state-funded preschools for three to five year olds. The primary focus has been on providing pre-kindergarten for 4-year olds; however, there is growing interest in serving more 3-year olds. The federal government funds Head Start programs, but some states provide extra funds to those programs since federal funds do not cover all eligible children. The biggest increase in preschool education has come from these state programs. In 2006-07, more than a million children attended state-funded preschools, making the states the biggest source of public pre-kindergarten.⁷⁴ Twenty-two percent of all 4-year-olds in the nation attended state pre-kindergarten programs. Total state spending also increased with the per child average spending rising to \$3,642.

In spite of the overall increase, there are significant disparities among states. The economic condition of the state and its subsequent revenue play a major role in determining the extent of its support for preschool education. The top ten states supporting pre-k now serve more than one-third of all 4-year-olds. Oklahoma, Florida and Georgia have more than half of 4-year olds in state pre-k programs. While states such as California, Florida, Massachusetts and New York have universal pre-k as a goal, they have not appropriated sufficient funds to achieve high rates of enrollment. All of these preschools are provided on a voluntary basis to parents.

Washington State funds the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) which is modeled after the federal Head Start program. Services include health and nutrition screening and assistance, parent and family support, as well as preschool for 3 and 4-year olds. By 2009 there will be 8,226 slots for children at an annual cost of \$55 million.⁷⁵

Universal vs. Targeting as Basis for Funding Preschool

Because of the cost associated with providing preschool to 3 and 4-year olds, many states have targeted their efforts toward enrolling children, mostly those from families with incomes of 100-300% of the federal poverty level (roughly \$17,600-\$52,800 for a family of three). Other states try to provide preschool for all children (universal). There are pros and cons to both approaches:⁷⁶

Targeted Preschool Advantages

Programs that target children from low income families are shown to provide more benefit with lower costs to the public. Head Start, for example, targets lower income families. This conclusion of greater benefit indicates that low income children benefit the most because they tend to be behind in cognitive and social skills needed for school readiness. For a state it is less expensive to target a small number of children. There is also some belief that the public will pay for services for people with the greatest need but might not be willing to pay for children whose parents could afford to pay the cost.



Universal Preschool Advantages:

Advocates for state-funded preschool for all children counter that children of all incomes need preschool to ensure school readiness. Targeted programs do not cover all of the children eligible. Head Start is estimated to provide services to only 60% of those eligible. They also assume that universal programs engender more public support because of the larger, more influential population that benefits from the programs, in spite of the greater costs. There is also the notion that children benefit from being in more heterogeneous classes, not just classes for children from low-income families.

What do studies say to all this?

While the arguments for and against targeting depend on people's perceptions, there are studies on the "return on investment" of expanding preschool programs toward universal enrollment in three states: Massachusetts, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The National Institute of Early Education Research summarized the results in a 2006 report.⁷⁷ The conclusions are:

Higher tax revenues will result from more highly educated children entering the workforce and earning higher pay. This assumes that fewer children will drop out of school if they are more prepared in the beginning.

K-12 education will have a reduction in costs (or more efficient use of resources) due to fewer drop outs and fewer grade retentions over the 12 years of schooling. Fewer children will be in special education classrooms if learning disabilities are discovered at an earlier age.



The report also estimated there would be reductions in criminal activity and thus criminal justice costs. This follows what the Perry/High Scope study concluded.

There was an estimated reduction in the health and welfare costs of states based on less risky behavior and fewer emotionally disturbed children.

Having more children in preschool enabled more parents to be in the workforce, thus generating more benefits to the families and to the state tax revenues.

These results suggest that any improvement in school readiness conveys major cost savings throughout the school and work life of the children. Another assumption is that if the state provides universal preschool, the state could mandate higher quality and standards for all preschool providers. Universal

preschool also eliminates the need to determine eligibility and is likely to include more children. The key factor limiting universality is the ability of states to fund universal preschools. California voters rejected a ballot measure that would have increased taxes on the wealthy to pay for universal preschool. Both Maryland and Virginia are currently struggling to pay for expansion of their preschool programs.

The Committee on Economic Development, a national business group, states that the goal for federal and state governments should be "to ensure that all children have the opportunity to enter school ready to learn" through "universal access to free, high quality, pre-kindergarten classes offered by a variety of providers, for all children whose parents want them to participate."⁷⁸

Funding Sources for State Pre-Kindergarten

With the increased demand for and popularity of pre-k programs, states are seeking sustainable funding sources to meet the demand. Most states use general revenues although these funds depend on states' economic health. General revenues also have to be allocated during the budget cycle and so can vary substantially.

Other Sources of Revenue

General revenues tied to school funding formulas. Eleven states include pre-k in their kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) funding formula, which assures dedicated funding. However, some states require a local match for these funds.

Lottery, gaming, tobacco revenues. Seven states use revenues from these sources although some of the public consider these regressive taxes and promote sinful behaviors.

Public-Private Partnerships. Six states, including Washington (*Thrive by Five Washington*), utilize state revenues in

conjunction with private funds. North Carolina Smart Start was one of the first partnerships established by a State Legislature. Smart Start exists in all North Carolina counties in cooperation with 82 private organizations.⁷⁹

The Global Challenge States

The *Washington Learns* report proposed a new benchmark in judging how Washington's educational system compares with other states that are part of the new global economy. It compared Washington's educational system to "Global Challenge States such as California, Colorado, Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Virginia."⁸⁰ Preschool education was not included in the *Washington Learns* report. However, these Global Challenge states will be used here for comparative purposes for state-funded preschool education. The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) yearbook for 2006-07 has extensive information on each state. The key indicators are included here.

STATE FUNDED PRESCHOOL

State (2006-07)	Total Enrollment	% enrolled		Rank among all states in enrollment		State Spending per Child	State Rank for Spending	Number of Benchmarks Achieved
		3 year olds	4 year olds	3 year olds	4 year olds			
CA	84,666	5	11	8	24	\$3,486	18	4
CO	14,147	3	15	11	22	\$2,047	36	5
CT	8,532	4	16	9	18	\$7,707	3	6
MD	25,674	1	34	20	10	\$2,918	27	7
MA	17,882	9	10	6	25	\$3,681	16	6
NJ	45,499	15	25	3	13	\$10,494	1	8.5
VA	12,501	0	13	0	23	\$3,577	17	7
WA	5,837	1	6	16	29	\$6,010	6	9



All of these states have income requirements for enrollment, even if their goal is to have universal preschool education. States such as Washington, California and Colorado have either expanded their enrollments in 2007-08 or will in 2008-09. New Jersey is working on a new funding formula to include all 3 and 4-year olds for schooling in school districts with a high concentration of at-risk students. Massachusetts Universal Pre-K began in 2006-07 and will increase funding this coming year.

NIEER has 10 benchmarks on which it evaluates states. The benchmarks include early learning standards, requirements for teaching degrees, specialized training, teacher in-service training, class size and staff-child ratios, screening and support services, meals, and state monitoring. Alabama and North Carolina were the only states to attain all 10 benchmarks.⁸¹

While public funding has increased substantially in the last few years across the country, and pre-k has become a top priority for governors, most states are still seeking additional sources of funding to increase both the availability and the quality of preschool programs.

Kindergarten Readiness

The 2008 Washington State Legislature funded DEL to develop a kindergarten readiness assessment study. DEL was asked to collaborate with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, TB5 and other entities to study and make recommendations to the legislature by Dec. 15, 2008.

The study will identify a preferred kindergarten entry assessment tool which is sensitive to cultural and socioeconomic differences in child

development. It will analyze how the assessment can be used to improve and individualize instruction, and also to identify cost. The study will recommend how to ensure that the assessment is not used to exclude children from kindergarten.

Washington State Basic Education Finance Study

In the last few years, Washington State has moved forward in the area of early care and education with the creation of the Department of Early Learning (DEL). DEL has expanded its efforts at working with private organizations and local communities to improve the services to parents and their children. The 2007 State Legislature increased funding for full day kindergarten in schools with high rates of low income students. However, the State Basic Education Act does not include early learning since the act only talks about the public school system requirements.

Currently, the Basic Education Finance Task Force is tackling the issues of how to define basic education for K-12 and how to finance it. However, members of the task force have been discussing whether to include early learning in its mandate. The Legislation establishing the Task Force required the task force to develop a new basic education funding structure aligned with the expectations of the *Washington Learns* report. The *Washington Learns* report included early learning. The final report of the task force is due in December 2008. Whatever the final result, the 2009 legislative session will consider the conclusions of the report. The State Budget has not yet addressed how to pay for expanded early learning services.



VIII. CONCLUSION

This study has briefly examined many of the programs and issues related to the education and care of young children. Given the conclusions of brain research and longitudinal studies described in this study, it seems clear that children ages birth to five need informed support from parents, caregivers, and the broader community.

Some of the public policy questions raised by the study follow:

What services should be provided? Who should provide them? How will they be funded?

What are the roles of state and local governments and the private sector?

Should the focus be on children birth to three or on preschool and pre-kindergarten age children, or both?

What is the best way to improve the quality of child care?

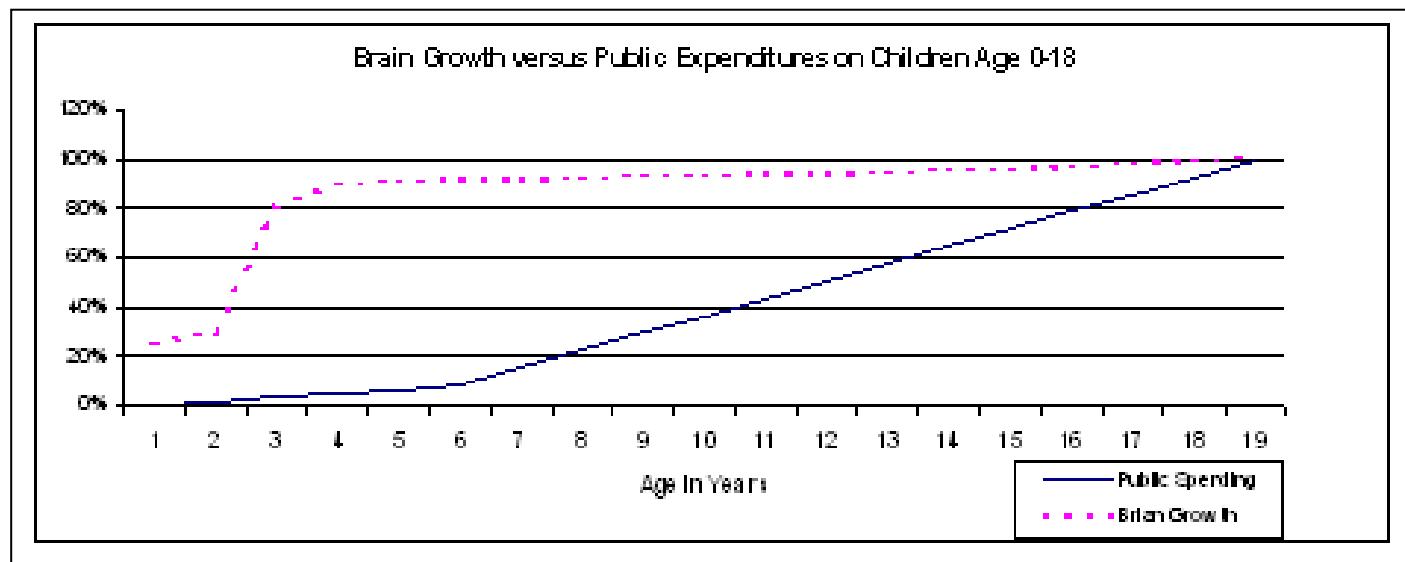
Can a state provide every child access to quality care if he/she wants it?

These questions will be the focus of community and governmental discussions for the next few years.



IX. APPENDICES

Appendix A. Brain Growth versus Public Expenditure On Children Age 0-18

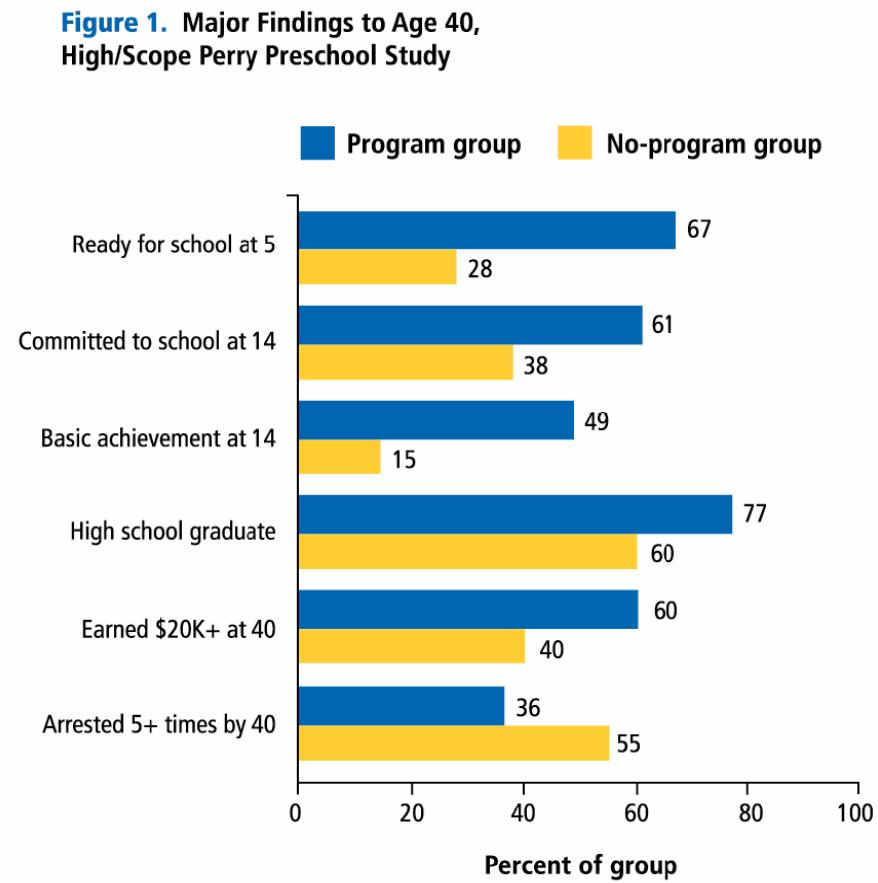


This chart illustrates the differences in the timing of brain development versus public spending on children. As we illustrate here, the path of brain development as a child ages is one indication of the dramatic maturational events occurring in the early phases of child development. Research demonstrates that the human brain achieves approximately 85 percent of its adult size by age 2 and one-half years, and 90 percent of total growth by age 3. This period of brain growth corresponds to the young child's acquisition of important developmental milestones, including emotional regulation and attachment, language development, and motor skills. This increase in brain size occurs not through the addition of new brain cells but as a result of changes in cell size and maturity and in the complexity of connections between the brain cells present at birth. Although the brain reaches its full adult size in adolescence, it retains some degree of malleability through adulthood as the environment continues to shape the connections between cells. However, the highest level of plasticity and responsiveness to environmental influences occurs in the earliest ages.

The second curve shows the cumulative percent of total spending on children through age 18 that is attained at each age based on data for 1992. For example, 8 percent of all public spending (by the federal, state, and local governments) that will be spent on the average child has occurred by age 5, one-quarter of the time spent in childhood. Per child public spending averages about \$1,472 per year (in 1992 dollars) for children through age 5. This includes expenditures on programs such as early childhood development, welfare programs, and health care. For children age 6 to 18, public spending averages \$6,567 per child per year (in 1992 dollars). The increase is due primarily to expenditures on primary and secondary schools. Other public expenditures at those ages include funds for criminal justice, youth employment, and other youth programs.

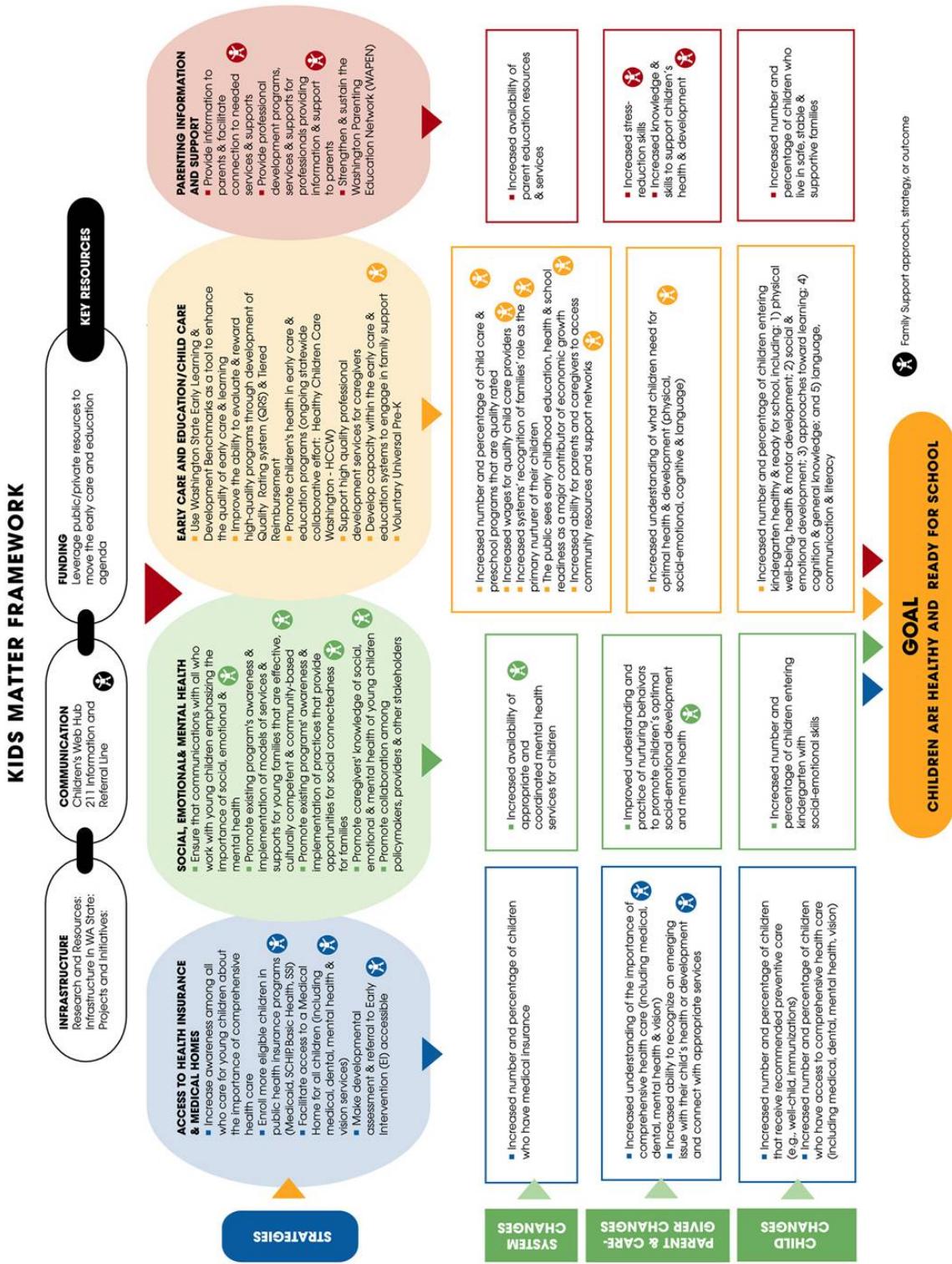
The relationship between the two curves in the chart poses a challenge for policy makers: What is the optimal time-profile of public spending on children? At what age and in what form would public expenditures on children have the greatest return for the investment?⁸²

Appendix B. Findings from High Scope Study



Source: Schweinhart and others 2005.

Appendix C. Kids Matter



Appendix D. Federal Poverty Level Chart

2008	Annual Income by Percentage of Federal Poverty Level				
Family Size	100%	185%	200%	250%	300%
1	\$10,400	\$19,240	\$20,800	\$26,000	\$31,200
2	\$14,000	\$25,900	\$28,000	\$35,000	\$42,000
3	\$17,600	\$32,560	\$35,200	\$44,000	\$52,800
4	\$21,200	\$39,220	\$42,400	\$53,000	\$63,600
5	\$24,800	\$45,880	\$49,600	\$62,000	\$74,400
6	\$28,400	\$52,540	\$56,800	\$71,000	\$85,200
7	\$32,000	\$59,200	\$64,000	\$80,000	\$96,000
8	\$35,600	\$65,860	\$71,200	\$89,000	\$106,800
9	\$39,200	\$72,520	\$78,400	\$98,000	\$117,600
10	\$42,800	\$79,180	\$85,600	\$107,000	\$128,400



Appendix E. State Agencies

The Department of Early Learning (DEL)

(formed July 1, 2006.) Combined Division of Child Care and Early Learning from Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) from Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED), and the Early Reading Initiative from Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).⁸³

- Lead state agency responsible for early learning and child care.
- Regulates licensed child care facilities (child care centers and family child care homes) by inspecting and licensing these facilities.
- Develops the regulations that govern licensed child care facilities.
- Conducts statewide surveys to determine subsidized child care rates, and sets child care subsidy policies in consultation with Department of Social and Health Services and SEIU representing family child care home providers.
- Funds projects to improve child care and replicates projects where possible.
- Funds programs to support early care and education efforts locally and in tribal entities.
- ECEAP is Washington State's preschool program, similar to Head Start, for preschool children in poverty. In 2008, the Legislature approved and Governor Gregoire signed SHB 3168 renaming ECEAP "Washington Head Start" and asking DEL to work on aligning state and federal standards and funding.⁸⁴
- Early Reading Initiative supports efforts to encourage early literacy.

The Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development

Manages the child care facilities fund with assistance from DEL and gives grants to improve child care facilities.

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)

- Manages the Child and Adult Food Program which furnishes food subsidies to child care providers caring for poor children.
- Manages the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) program which funds special education preschool programs via US Department of Education funding and local funds.

Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)

- Manages the Infant/Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP), which provides early interventions services to young children with disabilities and their families.⁸⁵ ITEIP is funded by the US Department of Education, and collaborates with OSPI's IDEA program along with local community partners.
- Manages the *Working Connections* child care subsidy program within the Economic Services Administration which provides subsidies for children whose parents are working or are participating in a DSHS approved work activity and whose children meet citizenship requirements.⁸⁶

Department of Health (DOH)

- Maternal Child Health Division administers Healthy Child Care Washington (HCCW), a partnership among DOH, DEL, and Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network. HCCW is a statewide network of Child Care Health Consultants located in every local health jurisdiction. The Child Care Health Consultants work with local child care providers, families, child care licensors, Child Care Resource & Referral programs, and others in the community.⁸⁷

People Interviewed:

- Rick Allen, Director of Pierce County United Way
- Brenda Blasingame, Director of Program Development, *Thrive by Five Washington*
- Jean Bombadier, Child Care Payment Assistance, City of Seattle
- Carla Bryant, Office of Education, City of Seattle
- Garrison Kurtz, *Thrive by Five Washington*
- Holly Miller, Director, Office of Education, City of Seattle
- Margie Viall, Manager, Early Learning and After School Program, City of Seattle
- Billie Young, Technical Assistance Specialist, Region X, NCCIC



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Appendix G. Early Care and Education Web Sites

<http://www.cdd.unm.edu/ecspd/about.asp> Preschool Network Children with Disabilities

<http://www.ilabs.washington.edu> Institute for Learning and Brain Science

<http://www.nieer.org> National Institute for Early Learning

<http://www.ccw.org/states/Washington.html> Center for Child Care Workforce

<http://www.chef.org> Comprehensive Health Education Foundation

<http://www.aap.org> American Academy of Pediatricians

<http://www.aft.org> American Federation of Teachers

<http://www.bornlearning.com> United Way and Civitas

<http://www.ccw.org> Center for the Child Care Work Force

<http://www.ced.org> Committee for Economic Development

<http://www.childcare.org> Child Care Resources for King County

<http://www.childcarenetwork.org> Washington State Child Care and Referral

<http://www.childrensalliance.org> The Children's Alliance

<http://www.childrenshomesociety.org> Children's Home Society

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0430/p12s03-lepr.html>

<http://www.del.wa.gov> Department of Early Learning Washington State

http://www.digitalarchives.wa.gov/Governor_Locke/early_learning.pdf

<http://www.docsfortots.org> Docs for Tots

<http://www.coh.wa.gov> Department of Health, Washington State

<http://www.earlycareandeducation.org> Early Care and Education Coalition

<http://www.earlychildhoodfinance.org> Alliance for Early Childhood Finance

<http://www.earlyeducationcoalition.org> Early Education Coalition

<http://www.earlylearning.org> Foundation for Early Learning; Kids Matter

<http://www.k12.wa.us/earlylearning/benchmarks> Superintendent of Public Instruction, Early Learning, State of Washington

<http://www.econop.org> Economic Opportunity Institute

<http://www.educationvoters.org> League of Education Voters

<http://www.fightcrime.org> Fight Crime Invest in Kids

<http://www.giamusic.com> Early Childhood Learning through Music

<http://www.hedb.wa.gov> Higher Education Coordinating Board

<http://www.highscope.org> Perry Preschool Study

<http://www.hspc.org> Human Services Policy Center, Evans School of Public Affairs, UW



- <http://www.k12.wa.us> Office of Washington State Public Instruction, Benchmarks for Early Learning
- <http://www.naeyc.org> National Association for the Education of Young Children
- <http://www.nccic.org> National Child Care Information Center
- <http://www.nhsa.org> National Head Start Association
- <http://www.parent-child.org> Parent Child Home Visit Program
- <http://www.pathwaystoutcomes.org> Pathway to Outcomes, Pathways Mapping Initiative, School Readiness, Action Overview
- <http://www.seiu925.org> Washington State SEIU Local 925 Union
- <http://www.talaris.org> Talaris Institute
- <http://www.thrivebyfive.wa.org> Thrive by Five
- <http://www.unitedway-wa.org> United Ways of Washington State
- <http://www.uwkc.org> United Way of King County
- <http://www.waeyc.org> Washington Association Education for Young Children
- <http://www.washingtonearlylearning.com> Washington Early Learning
- <http://www.washingtonlearns.wa.gov>
- <http://www.wsmconline.org> Migrant Seasonal Head Start Programs
- <http://www.zerotothree.org> Zero to Three
- <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov> Department of Social and Health Services

X. ENDNOTES

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² KIDS COUNT is a national and state-by-state project of the Casey Foundation to track the status of children in the United States. At the national level, the principal activity of the initiative is the publication of the annual KIDS COUNT Data Book, which uses the best available data to measure the educational, social, economic, and physical well-being of children state by state. The Foundation also funds a national network of state-level KIDS COUNT projects that provide a more detailed, county-by-county picture of the condition of children. The first national KIDS COUNT Data Book was published in 1990.

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⁵ Licensed Child Care in Washington State: 2006, Washington State DEL pg 4.

⁶ Ibid, p. 14.

⁷ Ibid, p. 6.

⁸ Ibid, p. 19.

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¹⁰Ibid, p. 15.

¹¹ Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education, *Senate Bill Report*, 2SHB 3168, February 18, 2008 p. 1.

¹² *Kids Matter*, Executive Summary, 2005.

¹³ ACF Region 10 Website, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/region10>

¹⁴ Presentation to Basic Education Task Force on 7/14/08, *DEL Budget Overview*.

¹⁵ <https://fortress.wa.gov/dshs/f2ws03esaapps/onlinecso/WCCC.asp>

¹⁶ <http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/mch>

¹⁷ <http://www.childcarenet.org/>

¹⁸ *Senate Bill Report*, SHB 2582, 2008 Legislative Session.

¹⁹ FEL: <http://www.earlylearning.org>

²⁰ TB5WA: <http://www.thrivebyfivewa.org>

²¹ <http://www.talaris.org>

²² C.H.E.F. www.chef.org

²³ I-LABS <http://ilabs.washington.edu/>

²⁴ <http://www.waeyc.org>

²⁵ ELAT <http://www.childrensalliance.org>

²⁶ <http://www.childrensalliance.org>

²⁷ <http://www.chs-wa.org>

²⁸ <http://www.unitedway-wa.org>

²⁹ <http://65.36.225.239/program/projects/ELAP.asp>



³⁰ <http://www.fightcrime.org/wa>

³¹ <http://www.educationvoters.org>

³² http://www.seiu.org/public/child_care/put_kids_first.cfm

³³ <http://wa.aft.org>

³⁴ *Washington Learns*, November 2006, p. 10.

³⁵ *Washington Learns*, November 2006, pp. 19-22.

³⁶ <http://www.kidscount.org/datacenter> (March 31, 2008).

³⁷ NACCRRA, the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies, 2008 *Child Care in the State of Washington*. <http://www.naccrra.org/randd/data/docs/WA.pdf> April 6, 2008.

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⁵⁴ *2008 Early Learning Report*, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

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⁶¹ Washington Council for Prevention of Child Abuse & Neglect, Children's Trust of Washington. *Senate Bill 5830: Home Visiting Collaboration and Consolidation, Report to the Washington State Legislature*, June 18, 2008.

⁶² The Parent-Child Home Program Inc, <http://www.parent-child.org/> (12/27/07).

⁶³ "Home Based Early Literacy Programs", West Yakima School District (citation). P. Levenstein, S. Levenstein, J. A. Shiminski, and J. E. Stolzberg. *Long-Term Impact of a Verbal Interaction Program for At-Risk Toddlers: An Exploratory Study of High School Outcomes in A Replication of the Mother-Child Home Program* Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, Vol. 19, 1998.

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⁶⁶ <http://www.k12.wa.us/EarlyLearning/EarlyLearningToolkit/EffectivePractices.html> (12/26/07).

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⁶⁸ The White Center Early Learning Initiative Business Plan Executive Summary.

⁶⁹ http://www.esd105.wednet.edu/AboutESD/Thrive_FAQ.htm (March 31, 2008)

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