Strengthening business through
effective investments in children and youth

ReadyNation

Quality Matters Most

The business case for investments in high-quality early learning in Washington









WHO WE ARE

ReadyNation is the nation's preeminent business leader organization working to strengthen business through effective policies for children and youth. It operates under the umbrella of the non-profit Council For A Strong America. Our more than 1,100 members, including 200 in Washington state, educate policymakers and the public about effective investments that will help businesses compete in today's global marketplace by helping children get on the right track to succeed in school and in life. Our members have contributed to victories for children at the federal level and in dozens of states.

Acknowledgements

This report was authored by Sandra Bishop-Josef, Ph.D., Steve Leahy, M.B.A., William Christeson, M.H.S. and Sara Watson, Ph.D.

The following individuals also contributed to this report: Chris Beakey, Stefanie Campolo, Miriam Rollin and David Kass.

ReadyNation Washington is supported by tax-deductible contributions from foundations, individuals, and corporations. ReadyNation Washington accepts no funds from federal, state, or local governments.

Major funding for ReadyNation is provided by: Alliance for Early Success • Betterment Fund • The Bingham Program • The Frances Hollis Brain Foundation • The California Education Policy Fund • The Annie E. Casey Foundation • Robert Sterling Clark Foundation • The Sam L. Cohen Foundation • Robert H. Dugger • Early Childhood Funders Collaborative • Max M. and Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation • The Ford Foundation • Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation • The George Gund Foundation • Hagedorn Foundation • Irving Harris Foundation • The Heising-Simons Foundation • The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust • The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation • The James Irvine Foundation • Robert Wood Johnson Foundation • W.K. Kellogg Foundation • The Kresge Foundation • The Oscar G. and Elsa S. Mayer Foundation • McCormick Foundation • The Meadows Foundation • The David and Lucile Packard Foundation • The J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation • Raise Your Hands Texas • Rauch Foundation • Texas Education Grantmakers Advocacy Consortium Fund • Bernard van Leer Foundation • Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation.

Quality Matters Most

The business case for investments in high-quality early learning in Washington

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Business leaders certainly know from our own experience that investments in, and attention to, quality are essential for our companies' success. To have a prosperous business, you need a skilled workforce and continuous quality improvement—ongoing, careful monitoring of how things are going and the wisdom, courage and ability to make any needed adjustments. Only with these elements in place are we able to produce high-quality services and products to achieve success in business. So it is with early learning: quality is essential. At the same time, a high quality program won't change the lives of Washington's children if they don't have access to it.



Washington's publicly funded early learning program, called the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), meets nine of the 10 quality benchmarks developed by the National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University.[1] ECEAP conforms to the NIEER standards around comprehensive early learning standards, teacher certification, class size, staff-to-child ratios, and ongoing program monitoring and evaluation.

But recent research conducted by the *Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation* into elements that drive the most beneficial outcomes for children sets some additional targets that Washington should strive to meet. The "Essential Elements of High-Quality Early Learning" call for strong political leadership, a compelling vision and strategy championed by senior education and early learning leaders, and lead teachers with baccalaureate degrees and early learning credentials delivering proven curriculum with fidelity.[2] Additionally, programs of 6-6.5 hours per day have been shown to be more effective in both cognitive and social-emotional gains than those of 2.5-3 hours per day.[3] To stem disruptive turnover in the professional ranks, compensation of lead teachers should be commensurate with K-3 teacher salaries. Ongoing professional development and assessments at every level using valid data need to be part of the continuous quality improvement systems. These elements address factors familiar to any business person – for example, not only the quality of service, but also how much is provided.

ReadyNation's more than 200 Washington business leaders and allies agree: Washington State's early learning programs must continually strive to improve quality and expand access to achieve the full potential of early education.

High-Quality Early Childhood Education Benefits Our Economy and Our Children

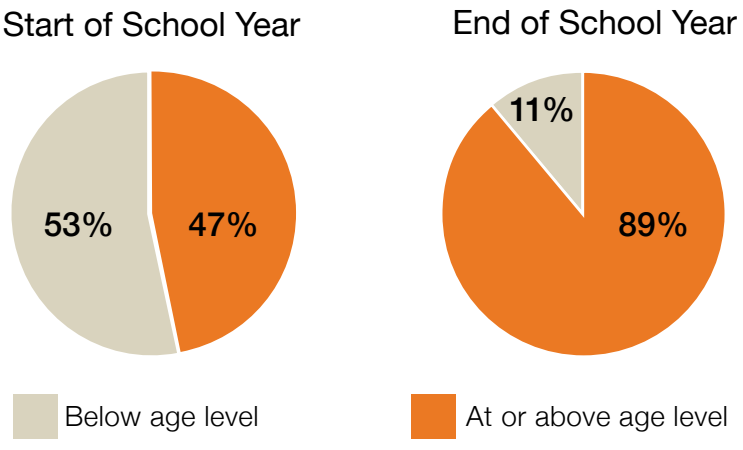
Abundant research has shown that high-quality early childhood education generates both short- and long-term benefits for our economy and for young people. For example:

- At the start of the preschool year, 47 percent of children in Washington's Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) were at or above age level on language development; by the end of the year, **89 percent of children were at or above age level.**[4]
- Children who attended ECEAP also had **significantly higher math and reading test scores** in third, fourth, and fifth grades compared to similar children who did not attend the program.[5] And a separate study showed that children who were reading on grade level by third grade were four times more likely to graduate from high school.[6]
- At-risk children who received high-quality early learning from infancy through age five in the Abecedarian early learning program were **four times more likely to graduate from a four-year college** and 42 percent more likely to be consistently employed as adults.[7]
- By the fourth and fifth grades, New Jersey children who attended high-quality preschool at ages three and four were three-fourths of a year ahead in math and two-thirds of a year ahead in reading, compared to children who did not attend. They were also **31 percent less likely to need special education and 40 percent less likely to be held back**.[8]
- High-quality early childhood education can even have **impacts on lifelong health**: By their mid-30s, boys who had participated in the Abecedarian program had significantly lower risk factors for heart disease, stroke and diabetes.
- **Bottom line:** The Washington State Institute for Public Policy examined results from more than 20 different studies of state and local programs for disadvantaged children and found that high quality preschool can have, on average, **a net return** (after subtracting program costs) **of over $26,000 for**

Quality preschool can have, on average, a net return, after subtracting costs, of over $26,000 for every child served. This means better outcomes for our economy and our families, and more effective use of our tax dollars.

More than 1,000 scientists from all 50 states (including 11 from Washington State) and more than 2 dozen countries agree: An extensive body of research in education, developmental psychology, neuroscience, medicine and economics shows that quality early childhood education programs produce better education, health, economic and social outcomes for children, families, and the nation. (National Institute for Early Education Research)[11]

Percent of ECEAP Participants at Age Level on Language Development



Source: Washington State Department of Early Learning



every child served.[9] The net return for Head Start has been estimated at nearly $14,000 per child served.[10]

EARLY LEARNING IN WASHINGTON STATE

Washington State has three publicly financed programs that provide early learning, benefitting both the current and future workforce:

- **Working Connections Child Care**, which provides child care subsidies for over 40,000 low-income children each year.[12]
- **Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)**, which provided early education for more than 8,700 disadvantaged three- and four-year-olds in the 2013-2014 school year and has 10,091 slots for 2014-2015.[13]
- **Head Start**, the federal program that served nearly 14,000 additional preschool-aged children in 2013.[14]

The Legislature is to be commended for moving ECEAP toward an entitlement program for all eligible 3- and 4-year-olds by the 2018-2019 school year. The need for action is great—currently 27,000 children eligible for ECEAP are not being served due to capacity and funding limitations.[15]

ELEMENTS OF QUALITY

In our business, it's important to know what quality elements make a difference and are worth the investment. Research indicates that in early childhood, several quality elements are especially important and should be the focus of our quality improvement efforts:

1. Teacher-Child Interaction

The heart of any program is the interaction between the teacher and the child. As with business, in order to attract and retain the best employees, early childhood teachers must be well-trained and adequately compensated. At present, ECEAP teachers are required to have only an Associate's degree, while quality standards call for a Bachelor's degree.

2. Play, with a Purpose

Programs must nurture all aspects of children's development—physical, social, emotional and cognitive. And quality early learning programs are fun for children—they are play, but play with a purpose, with developmentally appropriate standards and an evidence-based curriculum delivered with fidelity.

Currently 27,000 children eligible for ECEAP are not being served due to capacity and funding limitations – putting them at greater risk for showing up in kindergarten not ready to learn and possibly continuing to fall behind their peers.

3. Enough Time

Even great teachers can only do so much if they see children for only a few hours a week. Although the hours of operation are locally determined, most of Washington's Head Start and ECEAP programs typically meet for three hours a day, three or four days per week, falling short of the full-school-day, full- school-week quality benchmark.[16] Research suggests that high-quality early learning programs should be full-day. A randomized trial showed that children who participated in a full-day (8 hours) preschool program improved more on vocabulary and math assessments than did children in a part-day (2.5 to 3 hours) program (11 to 12 points versus 6 to 7



Mean Annual Wages in Washington

Preschool teacher	$28,410
Kindergarten teacher	$53,880

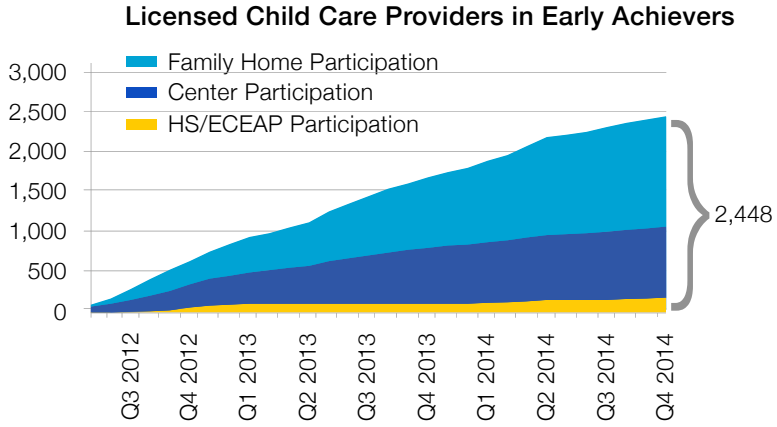
Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

points, respectively).[17] A more recent study found that children who attended preschool full-day had higher school readiness scores (language, math, socio-emotional development, physical health) and better attendance than children who attended preschool part-day.[18]

ENSURING QUALITY CHILD OUTCOMES THROUGH "EARLY ACHIEVERS"

Washington's quality rating and improvement system—**Early Achievers** — uses measures of classroom quality, including teacher-child interactions and teacher instruction, as well as assessments of children's progress in several areas of development.[19] Early Achievers offers training, technical assistance, coaching, scholarships, quality improvement awards, and other benefits to providers to improve the quality of their care. Assessment and accountability are essential for first-rate child outcomes: careful assessments of the classroom can determine which inputs are in place to produce high-quality experiences for children. For example, quality teacher-child interactions have been shown to be especially crucial.[20] Further, programs must evaluate outcomes and then teachers and administrators must be ready to act on that information and other knowledge from the field to continually improve their programs. Just as in business, none of this can be taken for granted.

Progress in Early Achievers' Participation Must Be Sustained



Source: Washington Department of Early Learning

Number of Licensed Providers in Early Achievers	**2,448**
Estimated Number of Children in Early Achievers Programs (42% of children in licensed programs)	**56,184**

As of 2014-2015, the state preschool (ECEAP) programs must participate in Early Achievers. Participation in Early Achievers is voluntary for other childcare and early learning providers, although participants receive higher Working Connections subsidies if they do participate.[21] At 2014 year-end, **2,448 childcare and early learning providers were participating in Early Achievers serving 56,184 children**—significant progress for a program that just began in 2012, funded by a federal Race to the Top grant.[22]

A WISE INVESTMENT

The 2015 Legislature is faced with the challenge of funding the expansion and enhancing the quality of publicly funded early learning programs. Business leaders across Washington State see these as smart public policy and investments that will pay significant dividends in both educational achievement and stronger economic competitiveness. Seven million Washingtonians will derive both short- and long-term benefits in greater kindergarten readiness, increased high school graduation rates, and the innovative workforce required for our own future prosperity. Let's keep moving forward.

ENDNOTES

1 Barnett, W. S., Carolan, M. E., Fitzgerald, J., & Squires, J. H. (2013). The state of preschool 2013 state preschool yearbook. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Graduate School of Education, National Institute for Early Education Research

2 Minervino, J. (2014, September). Lessons from research and the classroom: Implementing high-quality pre-K that makes a difference for young children. Seattle, WA: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Retrieved from: https://docs.gatesfoundation.org/documents/Lessons%20from%20Research%20and%20the%20Classroom_September%202014.pdf

3 Robin, K. B., Frede, E. C., & Barnett, W. S. (2006). Is more better? The effects of full-day vs. half-day preschool on early school achievement. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research. Retrieved from: http://nieer.org/resources/research/IsMoreBetter.pdf

4 Washington State Department of Early Learning (2014).ECEAP outcomes 2013-14. Retrieved from: http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/eceap/docs/ECEAP_outcomes_2013-14.pdf

5 Washington State Department of Early Learning (2014, December).Outcome evaluation of Washington State's Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program. Retrieved from: http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/ReportFile/1576/Wsipp_Outcome-Evaluation-of-Washington-States-Early-Childhood-Education-and-Assistance-Program_Report.pdf

6 Hernandez, Donald J. (2012). Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation. Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

7 Campbell, F.A., Pungello, E. P., Burchinal, M., Kainz, K., Pan, Y., Wasik, B., Barbarin, O. A., Sparling, J. J. & Ramey, C. T. (2012). Adult outcomes as a function of an early childhood educational program: An Abecedarian Project follow-up. Developmental Psychology, 48, 1033-1043.

8 Barnett, W. S., Jung, K., Youn, M., &Frede, E. C. (2013, March 20).Abbott Preschool Program longitudinal effects study: Fifth grade follow-up. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers-The State University of New Jersey. Retrieved from: http://nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/APPLES%205th%20Grade.pdf

9 Washington State Institute for Public Policy (2014, August). Benefit-cost summary State and district early education programs. Olympia, WA: Author. Retrieved from: http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/BenefitCost/Program/270

10 Washington State Institute for Public Policy (2014, January). Early Childhood Education for Low-Income Students: A Review of the Evidence and Benefit-Cost Analysis. Retrieved from: http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/ReportFile/1547/Wsipp_Early-Childhood-Education-for-Low-Income-Students-A-Review-of-the-Evidence-and-Benefit-Cost-Analysis_Full-Report.pdf

11 National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University, ECE Consensus Letter for Researchers Retrieved from : http://nieer.org/publications/ece-consensus-letter-researchers

12 League of Education Voters Foundation (2014, October). Early learning in Washington. Retrieved from: http://educationvoters.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/early_learning_wa_20141021_nobleed.pdf

13 Washington State Department of Early Learning (2014).ECEAP outcomes 2013-14. Retrieved from: http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/eceap/docs/ECEAP_outcomes_2013-14.pdf ; 2014-2015 data provided by Nicole Rose, PreK-3/ECEAP Administrator, Washington State Department of Early Learning.

14 KIDS COUNT Head Start enrollment by age group. http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/5938-head-start-enrollment-by-age-group?loc=1&loct=2#detailed/2/2-52/false/ 36,868,867,133,38/1830,558,559,1831,122/12570

15 Washington State Office of Financial Management (2014, December). Caseload report.

16 Barnett, W. S., Carolan, M. E., Fitzgerald, J., & Squires, J. H. (2013). The state of preschool 2013 state preschool yearbook. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Graduate School of Education, National Institute for Early Education Research.

17 Robin, K. B., Frede, E. C., & Barnett, W. S. (2006). Is more better? The effects of full-day vs. half-day preschool on early school achievement. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research. Retrieved from: http://nieer.org/resources/research/IsMoreBetter.pdf

18 Reynolds, A. J., Richardson, B. A., Hayakawa, M., Lease, E. M., Warner-Richter, M., Englund, M. M., Ou, S., & Sullivan, M. (2014). Association of a full-day vs part-day preschool intervention with school readiness, attendance and parent involvement.JAMA 312(20), 2126-2134.

19 Washington State Department of Early Learning (2014).ECEAP outcomes 2013-14. Retrieved from: http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/eceap/docs/ECEAP_outcomes_2013-14.pdf

20 Sabol, T. J., Soliday Hong, S. L., Pianta, R. C., Burchinal, M. R. (2013, August). Can rating pre-K programs predict children's learning? Science, 341 (6148), 845-846.

21 Frequently asked questions. Washington Early Achievers (n.d.) Washington State Department of Early Learning. Retrieved from: http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/elac-qris/docs/Early_achievers_faq.pdf

22 The 2,448 providers participating in Early Achievers represent 54 percent of the 4,500 licensed providers in the state. The 56,184 children served represent 42 percent of children in licensed early learning settings. Data provided by the Washington Department of early learning.

ReadyNation is a membership organization of business leaders that operates under the umbrella of the non-profit Council For A Strong America.

Add your voice.

Contact us at: ReadyNation
(202) 408-9282
info@readynation.org
twitter: @Ready_Nation
www.Facebook.com/ReadyNation

ReadyNation

ReadyNation I www.ReadyNation.org

Washington Office: 21015 NE 36th Street I Sammamish, WA 98074

National Office: 1212 New York Ave NW, Suite 300 I Washington, DC 20005