

High-Quality Early Childhood Education

A two-generation solution for a productive Washington workforce

A skilled, productive workforce is essential for a strong Washington economy. High-quality early childhood education (ECE) supports this workforce now and into the future. Sixty-one percent of Washington children under age six—roughly 324,000 children total—have all available parents working outside the home; yet, many of these children are not in high-quality ECE programs.¹ This lack of access is detrimental to parents' work productivity and puts our future workforce at risk.

Brain development from birth to age 5 sets the foundation for children's future success.² It is therefore essential that early care and education consist of responsive, high-quality environments that nurture optimal brain development and promote cognitive and socioemotional growth. Parents need high-quality ECE programs so they can work and support their families. Employers need engaged, productive employees who are not distracted by concerns about their children's well-being during the work day.

However, the current ECE system does not fully meet the needs of Washington families or employers. Statewide, the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) serves just nine percent of four-year-olds and only five percent of three-year-olds.³



“ 61% of Washington's young children have parents who work outside the home; many of these children are not in high-quality ECE programs.”

High-quality, affordable early education can support a productive workforce— both now and into the future

Research demonstrates that high-quality early childhood education benefits the current workforce and bolsters academic outcomes that aid the future workforce. For example:

- 33 percent of children who had received six or more months of ECEAP were fully ready for kindergarten in all six developmental domains, compared to only 27 percent of other low-income children.
- Students who had participated in ECEAP scored significantly higher in third- to fifth-grade math and reading relative to their peers who did not participate in the program.⁴
- The New Jersey preschool program reduced the likelihood of children's being

held back in school by 40 percent and the likelihood of receiving special education services by 31 percent.⁵

- The Chicago Child-Parent Centers program reported a 29 percent increase in high school graduation rates by age 20 among its participants.⁶ Meanwhile, Michigan's pre-K program reported a 35 percent increase in graduates.⁷

Policymakers should promote access to high-quality early education

Washington policymakers must ensure that more at-risk children have access to high-quality early childhood education that can support critical brain development and help children be prepared for success in school. Without improvements to our early learning system, our state will not have the workforce we need to compete and succeed in the global marketplace.

¹ <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/>

² <https://www.nap.edu/read/9824/chapter/1>

³ http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Washington_YB2018.pdf

⁴ http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/ReportFile/1576/Wsipp_Outcome-Evaluation-of-Washington-States-Early-Childhood-Education-and-Assistance-Program_Report.pdf

⁵ <http://nieer.org/research-report/201311apples205th20grade-pdf>

⁶ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11343481>

⁷ <https://www.bridgemi.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/GSRP-evaluation-may-21-12.pdf>

ReadyNation | Business. Kids. Workforce.

Business executives building a skilled workforce by promoting solutions that prepare children to succeed in education, work, and life.

Council for a Strong America is a national, bipartisan nonprofit that unites five organizations comprised of law enforcement leaders, retired admirals and generals, business executives, pastors, and prominent coaches and athletes who promote solutions that ensure our next generation of Americans will be successful, productive members of society.

6746 Division Ave NW / Seattle, WA 98117 / 206.375.6081



COUNCIL FOR A
STRONG AMERICA

StrongNation.org