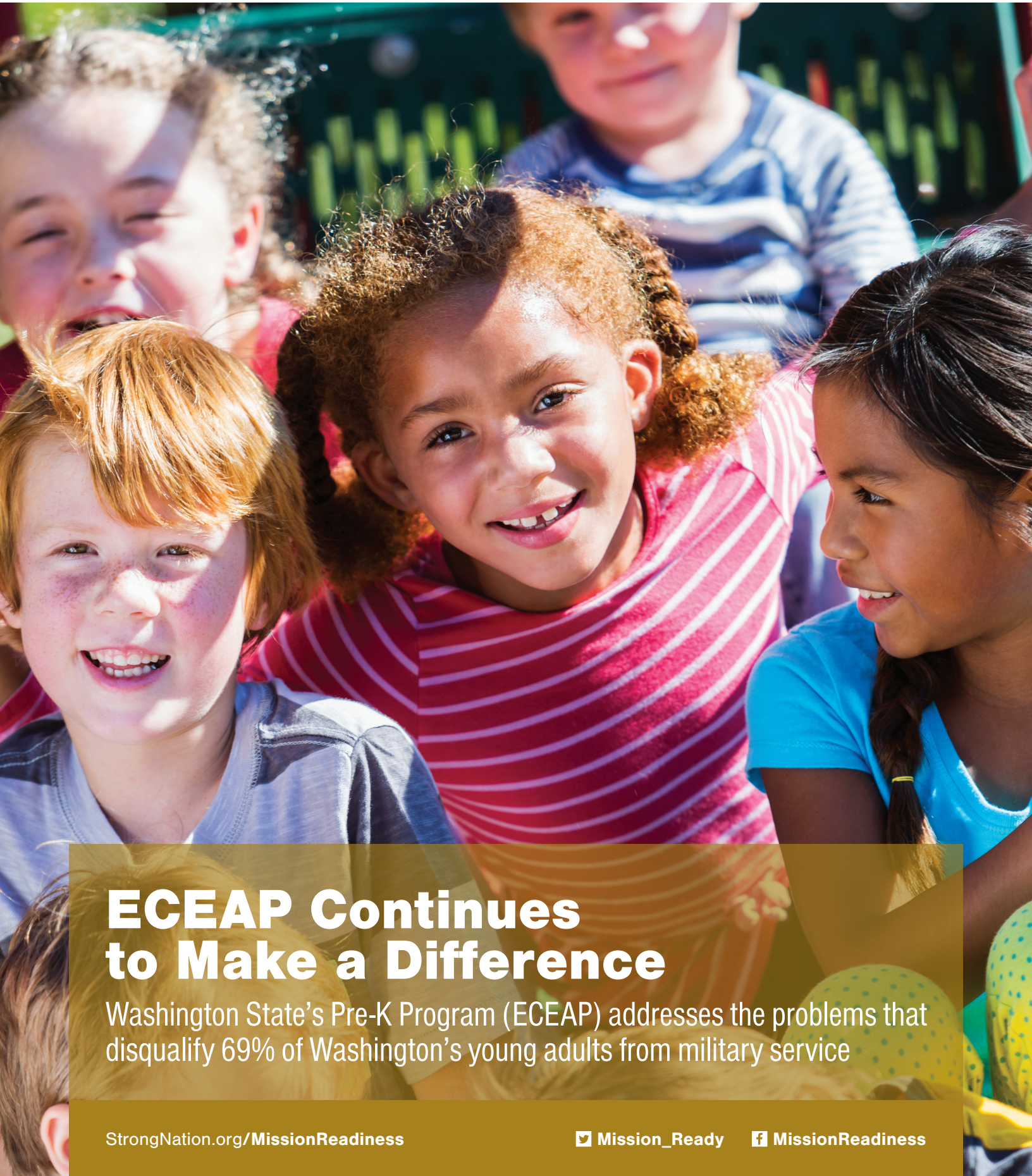
MISSION: READINESS
COUNCIL FOR A STRONG AMERICA
WASHINGTON

REPORT



# ECEAP Continues to Make a Difference

Washington State's Pre-K Program (ECEAP) addresses the problems that disqualify 69% of Washington's young adults from military service

# Acknowledgements

**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 citizen-ready.

**Mission: Readiness**
Retired admirals and generals strengthening national security by ensuring kids stay in school, stay fit, and stay out of trouble.

*Supported by tax-deductible contributions from foundations, individuals, and corporations.*

**Major funders:**
Annie E. Casey Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Bostock Family Foundation, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Ethel Klein and Ed Krugman, First Five Years Fund, Fisher-Cummings Family Endowment Fund, George Wallerstein and Julie Lutz, Heising-Simons Foundation, J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Foundation, Raikes Foundation, Robert Dugger, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views of these foundations.

**Authors:**
Paula Acevedo, Senior Research Associate
Kristin Wiggins, Mission: Readiness and ReadyNation Washington State Director

**Contributors:**
Sandra Bishop-Josef, Ph.D., Research Director
Jamie Lockhart, Mission: Readiness Acting National Director
David Carrier, Communications Deputy Director
Mariana Galloway, Graphic Designer

**September 2017**

©2017 Council For A Strong America. All Rights Reserved.



**22,290**
**eligible children in Washington are not being served by publicly-funded state pre-K (ECEAP) or Head Start**

**The military leaders of Mission: Readiness in Washington State recognize the need for enough qualified candidates to defend our nation. The lack of recruits is a growing concern given that 71 percent of young adults nationwide and 69 percent in Washington are ineligible for military service due to problems related to education, health, and behavior (substance abuse and crime).**[1]

Military leaders also recognize that the foundation for military-eligible young adults is built early, with high-quality pre-K that helps students develop the needed pre-academic skills like recognizing letters and numbers, as well as character skills like problem-solving, perseverance, and the ability to work in groups. Washington's **Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)** is a proven strategy to increase children's academic and social-emotional skills. Giving children the right start is essential for preparing the next generation of military

> "From an early age, children need regular immersion in a positive learning environment in which they can develop the needed pre-academic habits and skills that will prepare them for life's challenges."



Rear Admiral Bill Center
U.S. Navy (Retired)

recruits (if they choose to join) and for strengthening our national security.

## Too Many Young Adults in Washington Are Not Eligible to Serve

### Unfit and delinquent for military service

More than 70 percent of young Americans aged 17 to 24 are not eligible to serve in our nation's military.[2] The military today very rarely accepts applicants without a high school diploma, yet 22 percent of students do not graduate from high school on time.[3] Even among high school graduates, another 16 percent who tried to join the Army scored too low on the military's entrance exam to qualify.[4] Thirty-one percent of young adults nationwide would not qualify for military service because they are too overweight, and 40 percent would be disqualified due to a record of crime or drug abuse.[5]

### How ECEAP can help

Early childhood is a time when children acquire specific skills and knowledge, including literacy and working with numbers, social and emotional skills critical for relationships, and engagement in school and learning.[6] The development of critical executive functioning skills that shape the way we manage our attention, our emotions and our behavior to achieve our goals also begins in early childhood.[7] High-quality pre-K programs can also help improve military eligibility by helping young children learn positive behaviors and healthy habits that carry into adulthood.

But in Washington state, **22,290 eligible children are not being served by publicly-funded state pre-K (ECEAP), or Head Start**.[8] In 2016-17, only 39 percent of eligible three-year-olds and 63 percent of eligible four-year-olds were enrolled in ECEAP or



Head Start..[9] Many children from low-income families without access to high-quality pre-K start off behind their more advantaged peers.[10] For example, differences in cognitive abilities emerge as early as nine months of age. By age 3, poor children hear 30 million fewer words than their more-affluent peers.[12]

**The good news: ECEAP is proven to help children make significant gains in the development of their pre-academic skills, positive behaviors and healthy habits.[13] Expansion of this program will help our children start on the right track so they are prepared for success in school and in life.[14]**

## Pre-K Can Help Prepare Children and Keep Our Nation Strong

High-quality pre-K is essential to improving early reading and math skills to ensure Washington's children are ready for further education and tomorrow's jobs—including the military, if they choose to serve. Research has shown that high-quality pre-K can help reduce the problems that can later render young adults ineligible for military service and unqualified for many civilian jobs. For example:

- During the 2015-16 school year, the percentage of ECEAP children at or above age level in literacy development increased from 49 percent in the fall to 92 percent in the spring. The increase was even higher for the percentage of children at or above age level in math skills, which increased from 20 percent in the fall to 82 percent in the spring.[15]
- 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.[16] Another rigorous study showed that children who were reading on grade level by third grade were four times more likely to graduate from high school.[17]
- Michigan's Great Start Readiness Pre-K program reported a 35 percent increase in the number of high school graduates.[18]
- The risk for obesity is shaped in the early years of life. Children who are overweight or obese in early childhood (which is the case for 20 percent of children in the U.S.)[19] are four times as likely to become overweight or obese adults.[20] Two randomized studies of nutrition programs in Head Start centers found that participating children had a lower risk of obesity two years later.[21]
- Long-term studies of high-quality early education programs have demonstrated they can help to prevent crime. For example, children who did not participate in the Chicago Child-Parent Centers program were 70 percent more likely than participants to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18.[22]
- There is also some evidence that high-quality early education programs lessen drug abuse in young adulthood. A rigorous study of the Abecedarian early learning program found that, among young adults who had participated in the program as children, half as many had used marijuana in the past 30 days compared to young adults who did not participate in the program.[23]

> "I believe—strongly—that children need the right path from the beginning to acquire critical skills that will qualify them as young adults for the high-tech roles within the military."



Rear Admiral Mark Heinrich
U.S. Navy (Retired)

## Quality is Essential to Yield Benefits

To achieve the best results for our youngest learners, research shows we must invest in quality.[24]

### High-quality instruction

Students receive a quality education when they are taught by qualified teachers who know how to tailor their instruction to students' learning styles, are adequately compensated, and receive ongoing professional development opportunities to continue improving their teaching. ECEAP meets nine of the 10 current quality benchmarks developed by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).[25] Despite increasing understanding of the importance of early education and increases in teachers' educational requirements, early childhood education professionals receive low wages, resulting in high turnover and instability for both teachers and their students.[26]

### Evidence-Based Curriculum

High-quality pre-K uses evidence-based, developmentally-appropriate curricula. ECEAP focuses on evidence-based instruction that advances social-emotional, physical, language, and cognitive development, in addition to early literacy, math skills and English language acquisition (if applicable).[27]

## ECEAP helps kids succeed

During the 2015-16 school year, children in ECEAP made progress in all areas of development, including social-emotional development, physical development, language development, cognitive development, and math skills.

Percentages of children who moved from "below age level" to "at or above age level" in the following areas:[28]

**41%** social-emotional

**35%** language

**35%** physical

**39%** cognitive

**43%** literacy

**62%** math skills

But quality is not only up to pre-K teachers and the curriculum. Leaders of early childhood programs need to focus on instructional leadership (adopting curricula and assessments, and working with teachers to improve teaching and student learning), not just operational leadership (managing finances, personnel, and communicating with parents).[29] Over 60 percent of elementary school principals oversee pre-K programs, but their job expectations vary from those of early learning center directors.[30] Both early learning center directors and elementary school principals should have the opportunity for professional development in instructional leadership with a focus on high-quality pre-K.[31]

### Sufficient Learning Time ("Dosage")

To achieve learning outcomes, children must attend pre-K for more than a few hours a week.[32] Research shows that a full-day (7-8 hours) of high-quality, developmentally appropriate, play-based pre-K benefits children the most. A randomized trial showed that children who participated in a full-day preschool program in New Jersey 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 points, respectively).[33] A more recent study in Chicago found that children who attended preschool full-day had higher school readiness scores (language, math, social-emotional development, physical health) and better attendance than children who attended preschool part-day.[34]

### Parent/family engagement:

High-quality pre-K engages parents, who are children's first and most important teachers. ECEAP focuses on family engagement and the whole child, which refers to all areas of development, not just academics. Families benefit from the support they receive in preparing their children for elementary school, in addition to the individualized family support services that provide them with referrals and community resources, opportunities to volunteer in the classroom, parent education, and parent leadership development activities.[35]



**Research shows that children who participate in a full-day (7-8 hours) high-quality preschool program improve more on vocabulary and math assessments than children in a part-day (2.5 to 3 hours) program.**

### Data and accountability

To continue to make quality improvements, pre-K programs need to be assessed on their performance at every level to ensure the needs of their students are being met and that they are well prepared for kindergarten. ECEAP evaluates its students three times during the school year to track their social-emotional, physical, language, and cognitive development, in addition to their early literacy, math skills and English language acquisition (if applicable).[36] The data collected is then used by teachers to plan the curriculum and individualized instructional supports that will best meet the needs of their students.[37]

### Continuing Access to ECEAP

ECEAP needs ongoing investments so that more children have access and to ensure programs are high-quality. Demand from eligible families is projected to remain strong at 1,275 new slots each year from 2020-2023.[38] Current law specifies that all ECEAP eligible children, who are not served by Head Start and whose parents want pre-K, should be served by ECEAP by the fall 2022 school year.[39]



## Conclusion

**Military leaders in Washington recognize the need to continually improve access to ECEAP and support quality in order to build a solid foundation for the development of children's mind, body and character.**

Investing in our youngest children will help build the future generation of military leaders of Washington state and strengthen our national security.

## Endnotes


**1** Department of Defense, "2013 Qualified Military Available (QMA)." Acquired through personal communication with the Accession Policy and Joint Advertising, Market Research and Studies teams at the Department of Defense in July 2014.

**2** Ibid.

**3** National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Science, U.S. Department of Education. (2015). Table 1. Public high school 4-year adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR), by race/ethnicity and selected demographics for the United States, the 50 states, and the District of Columbia: School year 2014-2015. Retrieved from: https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/tables/ACGR_RE_and_characteristics_2014-15.asp

**4** Service. Theokas, C. (2010). Shut out of the military: Today's high school education doesn't mean you're ready for today's Army. Washington, DC: The Education Trust. Retrieved from http://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/ASVAB_4.pdf

**5** These factors overlap with one another (the same person may have more than one) and therefore they do not sum to 100%. Department of Defense, "2013 Qualified Military Available (QMA)." Acquired through personal communication with the Accession Policy and Joint Advertising, Market Research and Studies teams at the Department of Defense in July 2014.

**6** National Association of Elementary School Principals. (2014). Leading Pre-K-3 Learning Communities, Competencies for Effective Principal Practice. Retrieved from: https://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/leading-pre-k-3-learning-communities.pdf.

**7** Ibid.

**8** WA State Dept. of Early Learning. (2017). DEL ECEAP and Head Start Saturation Study. Retrieved from: https://del.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/ECEAP/ECEAP_and_Head_Start_Saturation_Study_-_March_2017.pdf.

**9** Retrieved from communication with Joyce Kilmer, ECEAP Data Analyst at Washington's Dept. of Early Learning, on September 28, 2017.

**10** National Association of Elementary School Principals. (2014). Leading Pre-K-3 Learning Communities, Competencies for Effective Principal Practice. Retrieved from: https://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/leading-pre-k-3-learning-communities.pdf.

**11** Halle, T., Forry, N., Hair, E., Perper, K., Wandner, L., Wessel, J., & Vick, J. (2009). Disparities in early learning and development: lessons from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study–Birth Cohort (ECLS-B). Washington, DC: Child Trends, 1-7.

**12** Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (1995). Meaningful differences in the everyday experience of young American children. Paul H Brookes Publishing

**13** Ibid.

**14** Department of Defense, "2013 Qualified Military Available (QMA)." Acquired through personal communication with the Accession Policy and Joint Advertising, Market Research and Studies teams at the Department of Defense in July 2014.

**15** Washington State Dept. of Early Learning. (2016). ECEAP Outcomes 2015-16. Retrieved from: https://del.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/ECEAP_Outcomes_2015-16%20revised.pdf.

**16** Washington State Dept. of Early Learning. (2014). 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.

**17** Hernandez, D. J. (2012). Double jeopardy: How third-grade reading skills and poverty influence high school graduation. Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

**18** Michigan Great Start Readiness Program evaluation. (2012). High school graduation and grade retention findings. Retrieved from http://bridgemi.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/GSRP-evaluation-may-21-12.pdf.

**19** Ogden, C. L., Carroll, M. D., Kit, B. K., & Flegal, K. M. (2014). Prevalence of childhood and adult obesity in the United States, 2011-2012. JAMA, 311(8), 806-814.

**20** Freedman, D. et al. (2005). The Relation of Childhood BMI to Adult Adiposity: The Bogalusa Heart Study. Pediatrics.

**21** Lumeng, J. C., et al. (2017). Improving Self-Regulation for Obesity Prevention in Head Start: A Randomized Controlled Trial. Pediatrics, 139(5). Fitzgibbon, M. L., Stolley, M. R., Schiffer, L., Van Horn, L., Kaufer Christoffel, K., & Dyer, A. (2005). Two-year follow-up results for Hip-Hop to Health Jr.: A randomized controlled trial for overweight prevention in preschool minority children. Journal of Pediatrics, 146 (5), 618-625.

**22** Reynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., Robertson, D. L., & Mann, E. A. (2001). Long-term effects of an early childhood intervention on educational achievement and juvenile arrest. Journal of the American Medical Association,

285(12), 2339-2380.

**23** 39**%** vs. 18%. Campbell, F.A., Ramey, C.T., Pungello, E., Sparling, J, & Miller- Johnson, S. (2002). Early childhood education: Young adult outcomes from the Abecedarian Project. Applied Developmental Science, 6(1), 42-57;

**24** Minervino, J. (2014). 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.

**25** Barnett, W. S., Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Gomez, R. E., Horowitz, M., Weisenfeld, G. G., Clarke Brown, K., & Squires, J. H. (2016). The state of preschool 2015. National Institute for Early Education Research. Retrieved from: http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Executive_Summary_2015_rev1.pdf.

**26** Institute of Medicine and National Research Council of the National Academies Press. (2017). Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation. Retrieved from: https://download.nap.edu/cart/download.cgi?record_id=19401.

**27** NIEER. (2016). Implementing 15 Essential Elements for High Quality: A State and Local Policy Scan. Retrieved from: nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/1520Essential20Elements20Scan_0.pdf.

**28** Washington State Dept. of Early Learning. (2016). ECEAP Outcomes 2015-16. Retrieved from: https://del.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/ECEAP_Outcomes_2015-16%20revised.pdf.

**29** Lieberman, A. (2017). What “Transforming the Workforce” Says About Leaders. New America. Retrieved from: https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/what-transforming-workforce-says-about-leaders/.

**30** National Association of Elementary School Principals. (2014). Leading Pre-K-3 Learning Communities, Competencies for Effective Principal Practice. Retrieved from: https://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/leading-pre-k-3-learning-communities.pdf.

**31** Ibid.

**32** Barnett, et. al. (2017). The state of preschool 2016. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research. Retrieved from: http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/FullYB_7.11.17_compressed.pdf.

**33** Robin, et. al. (2006). Is more better? The effects of full-day vs. half-day preschool on early school achievement. NIEER. Retrieved from: http://nieer-www1.rutgers.edu/resources/research/IsMoreBetter.pdf.

**34** Reynolds, et. al. (2014). Association of a full-day vs part-day preschool intervention with school readiness, attendance and parent involvement. JAMA 312(20), 2126-2134.

**35** Ibid.

**36** Ibid.

**37** Ibid.

**38** Institute for Research on Poverty. (2015). Table: U.S. Census Bureau Poverty Thresholds, 2015. Retrieved from: http://www.irp.wisc.edu/faqs/faq1.htm.

**39** Washington State Caseload Forecast Council. (2017). Meetings. Retrieved from: http://www.cfc.wa.gov/Meetings.htm.

**Mission: Readiness**
Retired admirals and generals strengthening national security by ensuring kids stay in school, stay fit, and stay out of trouble.

6746 Division Avenue NW / Seattle, WA 98117 / 206.375.6081

**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 citizen-ready.

1212 New York Avenue NW / Suite 300 / Washington, DC 20005 / 202.464.7005

COUNCIL FOR A
STRONG AMERICA

StrongNation.org