



Increase Educational Success: Pass HB 2659

Put access to high quality Pre-K in reach for Washington families by expanding eligibility for ECEAP in 2018

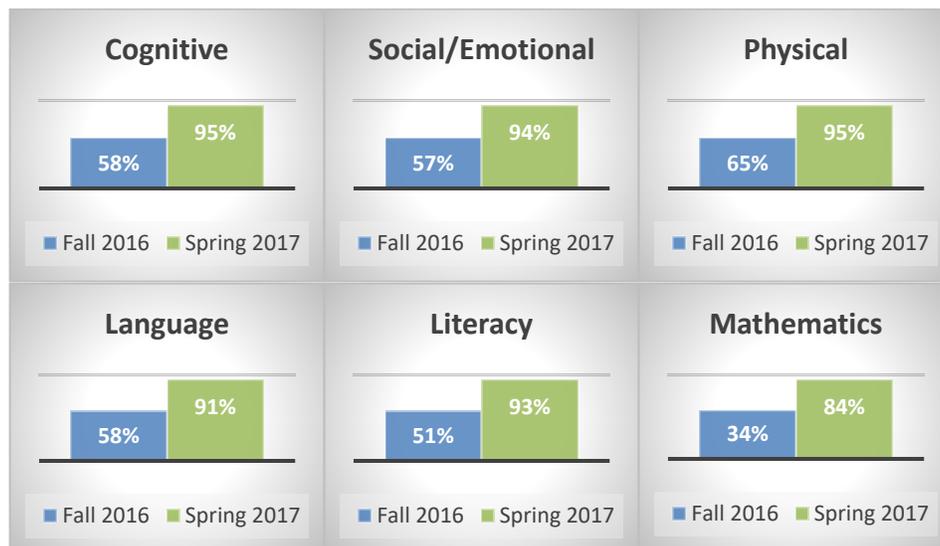
All children deserve the opportunity to reach their full potential. High-quality Pre-K sets children on the path for success in school and beyond. ECEAP, Washington's high quality Pre-K program, delivers proven results for kids and families. Unfortunately, outdated eligibility guidelines are leaving kids behind. By increasing eligibility for the program up to 185% of the federal poverty level, we can help kids enter kindergarten ready to thrive.

What we know about school readiness in Washington

WaKIDS assesses incoming kindergarteners in six developmental domains; literacy, social/emotional, cognitive, physical, mathematics, and language. The Department of Early Learning has set an ambitious goal that 90% of children are school ready by 2020 and that race and income are eliminated as predictors of progress. Current WaKIDS data shows that children in families with incomes below 185% of the federal poverty level are half as likely to demonstrate school readiness as their more affluent peers.

ECEAP sets kids on the path to school success

The 2016-17 ECEAP Outcomes Report found that children made incredible progress in school readiness while in the program. The charts below show the percent of ECEAP children meeting age-level expectations in each of the domains measured by WaKIDS at the beginning of the ECEAP year compared to the end:



The Early Learning Action Alliance is convened by the Children's Alliance.

Learn more by contacting: Jessica Roach at (206) 324.0340 or jessica@childrensalliance.org.

These gains persist over time. An evaluation conducted by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy found that ECEAP children outperformed their peers in reading and math in 3rd and 5th grade.

Current ECEAP eligibility guidelines leave kids behind

Eligibility for ECEAP is set at 110% of the federal poverty level (FPL). For a family of four this is \$27,060. The recently released Self Sufficiency Standard for Washington State 2017 estimates that a family of four including a preschool aged child requires an income of more than three times that amount to afford the basic necessities of life in most parts of the state. Eligibility for ECEAP is currently so restrictive that a single parent with two children working full-time at minimum wage does not qualify for the program.

This restrictiveness not only excludes children deemed ineligible, it hampers the ability to implement ECEAP for currently eligible children by making it difficult to blend and braid with other funding sources such as Working Connections Child Care that have very different eligibility requirements. Overly restrictive eligibility also makes it difficult to implement ECEAP in rural areas where there are many children who would benefit from access to ECEAP but the number of children who are eligible under the 110% FPL guidelines is not sufficient to fill a classroom.



A modest increase to ECEAP eligibility will make a difference

House Bill 2659 increases eligibility for ECEAP from the current limit of 110% of the federal poverty level, to allow children living at 185% FPL to participate. As a result, more kids will arrive at kindergarten ready to succeed and we will maximize the investments being made in K-12 education. Too many children are falling through the cracks between qualifying for ECEAP and living in families who can afford access to Pre-K. Increasing eligibility to 185% FPL will help to close that gap. Pass HB 2659.

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