

How Do We Get Washington's Kids Kindergarten-Ready?

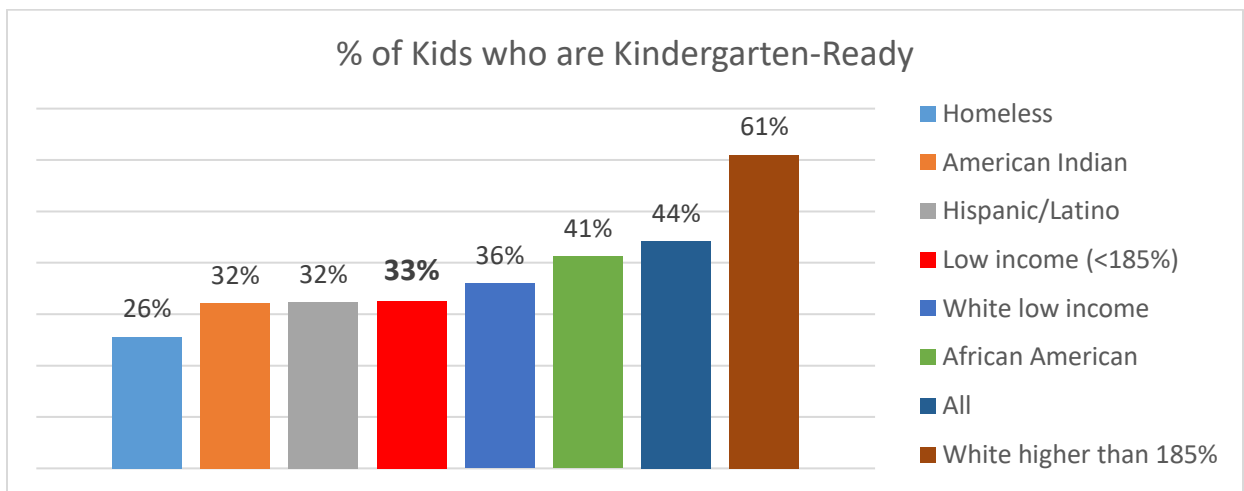
Align ECEAP Eligibility with the Free and Reduced School Lunch Program

22,468. That's how many children in low income families—defined by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction—arrived at kindergarten not ready to succeed in 2016. These are children that live in families below 185% of the poverty level, the current cut-off for the free and reduced school lunch program. Unfortunately, almost half of those kids did not qualify for ECEAP. Why? Because ECEAP has one of the most stringent and outdated pre-k eligibility levels in the country. We need to update our eligibility to line up with the national research consensus on kindergarten readiness.

Those 22,468 children face an uphill battle. It has become evident that a great pre-k program that serves a very small population will not ensure that all our children are ready for school and will not get our state where it needs to be for long-term economic success.

OSPI Data Shows Huge Readiness Gaps

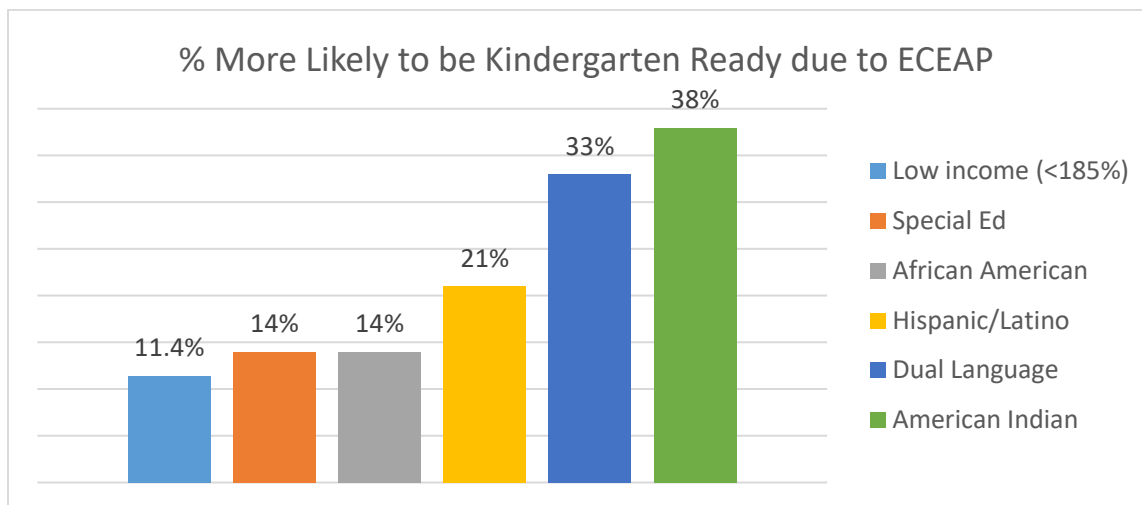
The WaKIDS Kindergarten Assessment data paints a vivid picture of the work we need to do in Washington to ensure that all children are arriving at school ready to learn and thrive. Currently only 32.6% of low income children arrive fully ready.



School districts spend millions on special education, remedial programs, and repeating grades. At the same time, kids who arrive behind tend to stay behind throughout their education, despite these K-12 investments.

ECEAP Gets Kids Ready

ECEAP is helping our most at risk children get ready for school.¹ **The data is telling us that far too many kids who could get extraordinary benefit from ECEAP are being left behind, unable to afford quality pre-k and ineligible for ECEAP under our very strict guidelines.**



An ECEAP child is 11.4% more likely to be ready than a child without ECEAP under 185%, and for more targeted populations, the program has an even greater impact.

Rural Areas & Low Income Working Parents Disadvantaged by 110%

The legislature has committed to reaching all eligible children by 2022-23, but in rural areas where children often have few options and large readiness gaps this is impossible due to the 110% requirement. A town in which there may be 5 or 10 or even 15 eligible children is unlikely to be able to offer ECEAP without sizable outside investment. So in this town and many like it, those 5-15 children would be eligible and wanting to attend ECEAP, but it would not be offered.

The 110% also makes it extremely difficult for working parents to access ECEAP. A single mom with 2 kids working a minimum wage job does not qualify for ECEAP.

What's the Solution?

Washington is failing thousands of kids in families who can't pay the high cost of pre-school, but who deserve the best chances for success in school and life. **This legislative session we ask lawmakers to allow more families to benefit from ECEAP by:**

- **Expanding ECEAP eligibility to 185% of FPL, and**
- **Enabling programs to prioritize their spaces based on child and family risk.**

Support HB2659 and SB6419!

¹ [Outcome Evaluation of Washington State's Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program ECEAP \(WSIPP December 2014\); ECEAP Outcomes Report 2016-2017\(Department of Early Learning November 2017\);](#)

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