



Expand Access to High-Quality Early Learning: Keep the Commitment to PreK from Birth to Five

High-quality early learning lays a foundation for a strong future. But too many young children still don't get a chance to build the fundamental brain architecture that allows them to thrive in school and in life. Washington policymakers should:

- ***Expand ECEAP by 1,500 children in the upcoming biennium and work toward the legislature's commitment of full implementation by 2018***
- ***Make a simultaneous investment in targeted, voluntary, comprehensive programs for infants and toddlers at greatest risk of academic failure.***



Brains are like buildings – they start with a foundation. Birth to age 5 is a crucial time to give kids the kinds of enriching environments that help them make smart choices, express their feelings, control their impulses and learn the other behaviors that put them on a solid footing for the rest of their lives. It's easier, more effective, and less expensive to equip kids with these skills early than to play catch-up later on.

A SMART APPROACH

- Expand ECEAP by 1,500 children in 2013-2015
- Increase average rate per child to \$9300, to promote alignment with federally funded PreK (Head Start) and increase hours for children in the program
- Serve a minimum of 20% of PreK children in licensed child care settings as part of an integrated delivery system
- Focus a minimum of 30% of new funding for the program to fund qualified programs for children ages 0-3 at-risk of school failure for the purpose of providing early, continuous, intensive and comprehensive child development and family support services to help families build a strong foundation for learning to prepare children for later school success. Eligible programs would meet the following criteria:
 - Serve families and children prenatally to age 3
 - Culturally responsive
 - Research-informed, evidence-based, and/or promising practices
 - Implement an element of Washington's Birth to Three Plan
 - Include a component of parent/family involvement with education and/or support
 - Provide comprehensive services across multiple child development domains that promote school-readiness
 - Serve at-risk children and families

The Early Learning Action Alliance is convened by the Children's Alliance.
Learn more by contacting: Leslie Dozono at (206) 324.0340 x20 or leslie@childrensalliance.org

A SMART INVESTMENT IN WASHINGTON'S FUTURE

High-quality early learning prevents crime, lowers K-12 costs, and reduces the need for public assistance. The more time babies, toddlers and young children spend in the kinds of enriching environments that help them build their mental framework, the more money we save down the road.



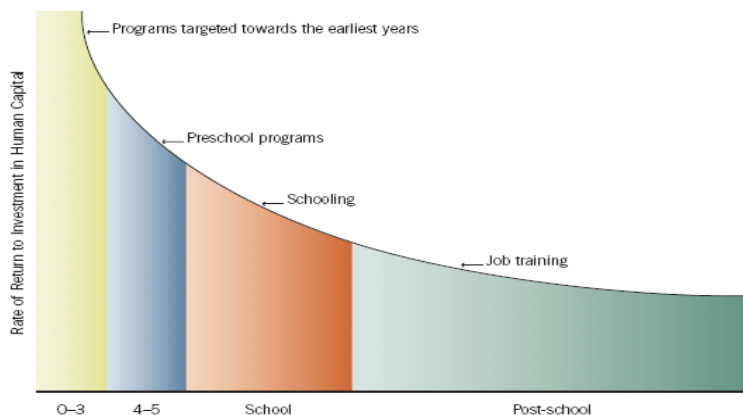
We count on kids to grow into healthy, hardworking adults who can maintain Washington's competitive edge in the global economy. Yet more than half of children entering kindergarten classrooms across our state aren't getting all they can from their first year of K-12.

The best way to ensure a basic education is to prepare children to make the most of our education system. We can do that through access to high-quality early learning. Together, we have the ingenuity and resources to expand access to high-quality early learning, which allows today's children to contribute to a great state tomorrow

HOW WASHINGTON WILL BENEFIT

This session means the difference between taking the next step and missing a prime opportunity. Research shows that high-quality PreK **saves school districts about \$3,700 per child** over the course of the K-12 years. Additionally, there is \$1,000 in savings per preschooler for programs outside the school system, such as health care, drug prevention, child protection, and juvenile justice.¹ For the million school children in Washington, that would result in \$3.7 billion in savings. Expanding Head Start and ECEAP to all families who want it could pay for itself in just three years of savings to the K-12 system.²

Early investments reap huge returns³



¹ National Institute for Early Education Research. *The Economic Consequences of Early Childhood Education on the School System*. 2006.

² "High Quality Pre-K Programs Save Taxpayers Money Right Away," Washington State Assn of Head Start & ECEAP, March 14, 2010.

³ Heckman and LaFontaine (2007)

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