



Coalition Members:

American Federation of Teachers Washington
Business Partnership for Early Learning (BPTEL)
Child Care Resources
Children's Alliance
Children's Home Society of WA
Community Network Coalition
Denise Louie Education Center
Economic Opportunity Institute
First Five Fundamentals of Pierce County
Kirlin Charitable Foundation
League of Education Voters
League of Women Voters Washington
Minority Executive Directors Coalition of King County
Nurse Family Partnership
Parent Trust for Washington Children/Parents as Teachers State Office
Program for Early Parent Support (PEPS)
Reach Out and Read Washington State
Ready by Five
SEIU, Local 925
SOAR
WA Association for the Education of Young Children (WAEYC)
WA Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics
WA State Child Care Resource & Referral Network
WA State Family Child Care Association
WA Federation of State Employees (WFSE)
White Center Early Learning Initiative
WPEA/UFCW 365

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

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Include Early Learning in Basic Education HB 2261/SB 6048

A central purpose of public education is to ensure that all children—no matter their families' economic status—have an equal opportunity to succeed in school and life. This starts with making sure that all students enter kindergarten ready to succeed. Today, too many students start kindergarten behind their peers, and many are never able to catch up.

Rigorous research finds that high-quality early education, especially for low-income children, can boost elementary school achievement, lower enrollment in special education, increase college attendance rates, and improve a myriad of other social and economic outcomes.

Including voluntary preschool for all low-income children in the revised definition of basic education in HB 2261/SB 6048 will narrow the kindergarten readiness gap by ensuring that these children have access to high quality early learning.

A SMART INVESTMENT IN WASHINGTON'S FUTURE

Smart investments in early learning yield positive returns for families and communities across Washington State. The Early Learning Action Alliance urges the Legislature and Governor Gregoire to adopt the Joint Task Force on Basic Education Finance recommendation to include preschool for all children in low-income families in the definition of basic education. We support a six year phase-in within the current mixed delivery system, which includes public schools, educational service districts, family child care homes, and private and nonprofit child care centers and preschools.

"Therefore, the Task Force proposes defining basic education to include funding for preschool programs for all children age three and four whose family income is at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level, and whose parents choose to enroll in the program."

- Final Report, Joint Task Force on Basic Education Finance

TARGETED EARLY LEARNING BELONGS IN THE DEFINITION OF BASIC EDUCATION

A 2005 school readiness survey of Washington state teachers found 56 percent of children entering kindergarten were not considered ready to succeed; that number increased to 75 percent in the lowest-income classrooms. The 2006 Washington Learns report states, "[T]he child who is not ready in kindergarten starts behind other children, and children who start behind tend to stay behind throughout their time in school."

It is currently estimated that nearly 13,000 three- and four-year-old children are eligible for Head Start or the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), but cannot participate because there are not enough slots available. In addition, the current quality and funding levels for existing ECEAP programs need to be increased to the same standard as Head Start. ECEAP slots are currently funded at \$6,630 per child while funding for Head Start is \$9,500 per child.

Currently, 13 states and the District of Columbia fund early learning through their school funding formula. These states include: Colorado, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Texas, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.