EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

When Washington state five-year-olds arrive in kindergarten each year, they are beginning an educational journey on which some of them are already behind their classmates. Our state has a 30-point kindergarten readiness gap – only 31% of kindergarteners from low income families are fully school ready, compared to 60% of their non-low income peers.¹

To achieve readiness for all Washington children, some kids need more support, earlier. Washington has initiated a high-impact, research-proven early childhood education intervention program: the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP).²

ECEAP, our state’s pre-kindergarten program for low income families, provides comprehensive education, health, and family support services to our most at-risk preschoolers. ECEAP is not only a good investment – it returns $5.74 of benefits for each dollar we invest now³ – it catalyzes learning at one of the greatest time periods of brain growth and plasticity.⁴ In fact, at the end of one year of ECEAP, 55% of ECEAP four-year olds – all of them children of low-income parents – are fully kindergarten ready. At the end of two years of ECEAP, 67% of four-year-olds are fully kindergarten ready.⁵ In other words, a dosage of two years of ECEAP more than doubles the kindergarten readiness rates for children from low income families, from 31% to 67%, and eliminates the 30-point income-based kindergarten readiness gap.

Meeting our ECEAP entitlement goal for 2019 will allow 3,600 more kids to get the support and intervention they need to be kindergarten ready. But it also means they will be more likely to meet their third grade reading goal, more likely to persist to high school graduation, less likely to be referred into special education services, and more likely to enroll and persist into postsecondary education.⁶ Our investment today means a lifetime of difference for our children and our communities.

Prioritizing early childhood education will help move us towards a more equitable and just education system.
1 OSPI, Kindergarten Preparedness Analytics, http://www.k12.wa.us/DataAdmin/PerformanceIndicators/Kindergarten.aspx


3 https://www.wsipp.wa.gov/BenefitCost/Program/270

