The Washington State Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), overseen by the Department of Early Learning (DEL), was created in 1985 to prepare 3- and 4-year-olds from low-income families for success in school and in life. ECEAP focuses on the well-being of the whole child by providing comprehensive nutrition, health, education and family support services to Washington's most at-risk young children. Funding for ECEAP is awarded through a competitive process. ECEAP is operated by a variety of agencies including school districts, educational service districts, colleges/universities, nonprofit organizations, and local governments. The program is offered in 35 of the state's 39 counties. Head Start serves 3- and 4-year-olds in three of the counties not served by ECEAP, and the other county is sparsely populated.

Three- and 4-year-olds from families with incomes at or below 110% of the federal poverty level are eligible to attend ECEAP. Children with IEPs are also eligible to enroll in ECEAP, regardless of income. Up to 10% of enrollment can be children who do not meet the income requirement but experience other risks that could jeopardize learning, development, or school success. Enrollment is prioritized based on a combination of income and other risk factors. In 2016-2017 ECEAP and Head Start together served 50% of eligible children. By 2022-2023, all eligible children not served by Head Start will be entitled to ECEAP services.

ECEAP is one strategy behind DEL's goal to ensure that 90% of children in the state are ready for kindergarten by 2020. In 2016-2017, Washington State invested $96 million in ECEAP. State funding comes from both the state general fund and the "opportunity pathways account," which consists of lottery funds. In 2015-2016, the state increased overall funding and enrollment as well as spending per child. The program will expand again in 2017-2018, adding 800 slots for children, and in 2018-2019, adding 1,000 more slots. In 2010, the Legislature passed House Bill 2731 establishing ECEAP as a statutory entitlement for all eligible children by the 2018-2019 school year. This deadline has since been extended to 2022-2023.

DEL completed a second-year pilot using EMPath's Mobility Mentoring as a family support tool. In 2016-2017, families showed gains in many areas related to family stability and ability to support their early learners. The largest gains were in parenting skills, school involvement and advocacy, healthy lifestyle, community resources knowledge, and family savings. This individualized approach, scheduled to be implemented statewide in 2018-2019, strengthens family outcomes and provides intensive services to the families who need them most.

Washington has committed to creating high-quality early learning experiences for young children in all early learning settings, including ECEAP. As of 2015-2016, all ECEAP sites were required to participate in the state's QRIS, Early Achievers, and receive a rating of level four or five by March 2016. Structured observations of classroom quality are conducted every three years using the ECERS and CLASS as part of the QRIS. ECEAP teachers assess children's development three times a year using Teaching Strategies GOLD. To promote a clear progression of quality in early learning programs, DEL is creating one set of standards that connects child care licensing, Early Achievers, and ECEAP.
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (ECEAP)

ACCESS

Total state pre-K enrollment ...................................................... 11,691
School districts that offer state program ........... 90% (counties/parishes)
Income requirement ........................................... 110% FPL
Minimum hours of operation .................................. 2.5 hours/day
Operating schedule .................. School year (part- & school-day); Full calendar year (extended-day)
Special education enrollment, ages 3 and 4 .................................. 9,068
Federally funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 .............. 10,411
State-funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 and 4 ..................... 0

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

POLICY | WA PRE-K REQUIREMENT | CURRENT BENCHMARK | MEETS CURRENT BENCHMARK? | NEW BENCHMARK | MEETS NEW BENCHMARK?
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Early learning & development standards | Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive | Comprehensive | ✓ | Comprehensive, aligned, supported, culturally sensitive | ✓
Curriculum supports | Approval process & supports | New in 2015-2016 | — | Approval process & supports | ✓
Teacher degree | AA | BA | — | BA | —
Teacher specialized training | ECE, CD, ECE SpEd | Specializing in pre-K | ✓ | Specializing in pre-K | ✓
Assistant teacher degree | CDA, 12 ECE credits, WA State ECE Certificate | CDA or equivalent | ✓ | CDA or equivalent | ✓
Staff professional development | 15 hours/year (teachers only); PD plans (some teachers and assistants); Coaching | For teachers: At least 15 hours/year | ✓ | For teachers & assistants: At least 15 hours/year; individual PD plans; coaching | —
Maximum class size | 20 (3- & 4-year-olds) | 20 or lower | ✓ | 20 or lower | ✓
Staff-child ratio | 1:10 (3- & 4-year-olds) | 1:10 or better | ✓ | 1:10 or better | ✓
Screening & referral | Vision, hearing, health & more; Support services | Vision, hearing, health & at least one support service | ✓ | Vision, hearing & health screenings; & referral | ✓
Meals | At least one meal/day | At least one meal/day | ✓ | Discontinued | —
Monitoring/ Continuous quality improvement system | Structured classroom observations; Data used for program improvement | Site visits | ✓ | Structured classroom observation; program improvement plan | ✓

RESOURCES

Total state pre-K spending ...................................................... $96,325,951
Local match required? .............................................................. No
State Head Start spending ....................................................... $0
State spending per child enrolled .............................................. $8,239
All reported spending per child enrolled* ....................................... $8,239

* Pre-K programs may receive additional funds from federal or local sources that are not included in this figure.

** Head Start per-child spending includes funding only for 3- and 4-year-olds.

*** K-12 expenditures include capital spending as well as current operating expenditures.