



2014 Legislative Agenda

High quality early learning lays a foundation for a strong future. But too many young children don't get a chance to build the fundamental brain architecture that allows them to thrive in school and in life. Children from low-income families and children of color are disproportionately affected by the opportunity gap. Growing our state's early learning system is critical to making sure all children have what it takes to succeed.

❖ **Ensure Access to Early Learning for our Most Vulnerable Children**

Children in our child welfare system struggle with high levels of development and behavior challenges, yet they have inconsistent access to critical early learning opportunities.

- Make children in the child welfare system eligible for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program and authorize them for 12-months of Working Connections Child Care.
- Promote better linkages between child welfare and early learning systems to ensure children have access to a range of early learning opportunities.

❖ **Raise Revenue to Fund a Continuum of Early Learning**

The Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP supports revenue to fund a continuum of high quality early learning programs. Because early learning lays the foundation for the educational outcomes required by the State Supreme Court's McCleary decision, increased investments in K-12 education should be accompanied by robust new investments in children from birth through age five, including Working Connections Child Care, the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), Early Achievers, home visiting and parent/caregiver supports.

❖ **Promote High Quality Care**

High quality child care provides children with positive learning experiences for healthy development.

- Extend 12-month authorizations to all children receiving Working Connections Child Care. Continuity of care is a critical component of quality – science tells us that it is essential for maintaining a healthy relationship between a child and his or her caregiver.



- Raise the reimbursement rates for Working Connections Child Care. Child care providers want the best for children in their care, but current rates fall well short of covering the cost of quality care. Increased reimbursement rates enable providers to embrace continuous quality improvement.

For more information, please contact:

Joel Ryan, Executive Director, Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP
425-453-1227, joel@wsaheadstarteceap.com, www.wsaheadstarteceap.com