



Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC)

Regional Coalition Updates

Date: Feb. 10, 2026

Inland Northwest Early Learning Alliance, Northeast

Greater Spokane Inc. (our fiscal sponsor) recognized five Regional Child Care Champions at its 2nd Annual State of Education event this Tuesday. We're proud to share that two of the five honorees, Bianka DeSure and Julie German-Murrey, are long-standing INWELA members. Champions were selected based on their impact on families, leadership, and contributions to strengthening child care and early learning in our region. We're honored to celebrate and uplift Julie and Bianka's incredible work.

In the fall of 2025, INWELA gathered community members to talk about the Political, Economic, Social, Technical, Legal, and Economic (PESTLE) factors that influence the early childhood landscape in our region. The full, 30-page report can be read [here!](#)

With support from [Arrowleaf Consulting](#) and our fiscal sponsor, [Greater Spokane Inc.](#), INWELA is pursuing new grant opportunities to support member stipends, strengthen infrastructure, and advance shared regional priorities.

Our Coordinated Recruitment & Enrollment (CRE) team is exploring and testing tools like [Kinside](#) and [Playground](#). We're prioritizing solutions that aim to improve family access to care, support providers, and inform smarter community planning without duplicating efforts or creating more barriers.

- **For more information, please contact: Colleen Condon, colleen@lilaccityelc.com**

Investing in Children Coalition: Central

In December, the Coalition focused on year-end planning, coordination, and infrastructure development to prepare for a strong start to 2026. Key activities included organizing 2026 meeting schedules and content calendars, developing and launching the new 2026 Operating Documents Padlet, and aligning internally on priorities related to equity integration, governance, and early learning coordination. The Coalition also supported planning and promotion for upcoming family engagement activities and continued cross-sector communication with partners despite reduced availability during the holiday season. This period was used strategically to strengthen systems, tools, and alignment in preparation for implementation work in the new year.

In January, the Coalition is prioritizing active implementation and engagement. This includes convening the first Executive Committee meeting of the year, launching monthly coalition

meetings with a new embedded equity segment, initiating targeted outreach and interviews with in-scope care coordinators and navigators, and continuing partner convenings across early learning, health, and family support systems. January work will also focus on strengthening continuity of care, refining coordination strategies, and advancing the 2026 scope of work through relationship-building, systems mapping, and community-centered planning.

- **For more information, please contact: Lindsay Bowsell, lindsayb@yakimavalleycf.org**

North Central

The North Central Early Learning Coalition sent a team of 5 to “Have a Heart for Kids” day to kick-off the WCFC Advocacy week. We met with 6 legislators in-person from Districts 12 and 7 and held 6 additional virtual meetings. We offered our Policy Priority one-pager along with lived experience stories from families, family childcare providers, child-care center directors, school district early learning programs, providers who serve children with complex needs and developmental delays, and ECE programs staff. Our advocacy and policy lead also attended the Childcare for WA Advocacy Day on Feb. 3rd with another team of 6 consisting of both lived experience and service providers, holding meetings with 10 legislators from Districts 13, 12, 14, 15 and 7.

Additionally, we engaged in a PESTLE analysis for our region to consider the Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, and Environmental factors that impact early learning in our region. Participants joined from all 4 counties, Grant, Douglas, Chelan, Okanogan, and represented over 35 organizations and programs. We also participated in the Network Impact and Engagement Survey with Washington Communities for Children. The result of these will support our action planning and updates to our strategic plan.

We look forward to an Early Learning Symposium in March with a local organization, “Our Valley, Our Future”. We are also planning some region-wide activities to raise awareness for early learning during the Week of the Young Child in April.

- **For more information please contact: Nancy Spurgeon, nspurgeon49@gmail.com**

Northwest

Northwest Early Learning Coalition (NWEL) continues to advance coordinated, relationship-based early learning strategies across Island, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom counties. Recent coalition work has focused on strengthening cross-sector partnerships, aligning regional data and messaging, and elevating early relational health (ERH) as a shared priority. NWEL reviewed findings from a regional PESTEL analysis, which highlighted intersecting family stressors, system fragmentation, and the critical role of trusted navigators in helping families access services.

During January, NWEL convened regional partners and constituents to participate in WCFC’s virtual Advocacy Week, supporting coordinated meetings with legislators to elevate

community-informed priorities from the Northwest region. These meetings ensured that policymakers heard directly from constituents about regional early learning needs and the importance of sustained investment in early learning systems.

NWEL is also coordinating implementation and reporting for the WA STEM ECE Access Award, with an emphasis on consistent metrics and cross-county alignment. Regional newborn outreach efforts continue to expand through hospital partnerships and improved distribution models designed to increase family engagement. Planning is underway for NWEL's third annual Inspire Breakfast this April, with a focus on being more data-informed and intentionally centered on connection-building across partners, providers, and policymakers. Ongoing county updates reflect continued progress in coalition engagement, provider collaboration, and cross-county learning across the Northwest region.

- **For more information please contact: Breana Ramos, breana@nwelcoalition.org**

Southwest Washington Early Learning (SWEL)

Over the past month, SWEL work focused on maintaining coalition engagement and strengthening communication across counties. To support continued connection between meetings, the first Southwest Washington Early Learning (SWEL) newsletter was launched as a new communication tool to bridge engagement between bi-monthly coalition meetings. The newsletter provides timely updates, shares resources, highlights regional work, and helps keep partners connected during months without scheduled convenings.

Coalition engagement also included ongoing outreach and relationship-building with partners across Southwest Washington, with an emphasis on ensuring rural and culturally specific perspectives remain represented in coalition activities and communications.

- **For more information please contact: Debbie Ham, Debbie.ham@selfwa.org**

Visions for Early Learning, West Central

The coalition highlighted five cross-cutting themes from recent Prenatal to 3 Story Collection efforts:

1. Belonging: Group connections and trusted staff reduce family isolation.
2. Early Identification: Coordinated screenings lead to faster access for children with developmental needs.
3. Trust: Individual relationships with program staff are pivotal for family confidence.
4. Navigation: Families highly value coordinated systems that eliminate the need to "figure things out alone".
5. Collaboration: System-wide benefits are realized when programs share expertise and

resources

Know and Grow: Early Learning Partnerships

Updates were shared on ongoing collaboration to secure ECEAP slots. Participants emphasized the importance of accurate invoicing to prevent double billing as partnerships expand.

Program Enrollment

Local early learning programs currently have openings in preschool and toddler classrooms and are working toward licensing an infant room pending facility updates.

Behavioral Support Services

A transition is underway as one provider shifts from a larger organization to independent practice, offering behavioral coaching, parent support, and IEP advocacy. Plans include adding this service to local resource directories and sharing outreach materials.

Health Updates

North Pacific County is seeing:

- Increased influenza A and flu/COVID co-diagnoses
- A rise in adult gonorrhea cases

Reminders were shared regarding hygiene practices and symptom guidelines that may affect attendance.

Community Events

Know & Grow will not table at the upcoming Community Connect event but will provide materials for distribution.

Diaper Bank & Resource Sharing

The diaper bank continues to distribute high volumes of diapers and hygiene supplies, with new outreach partnerships expanding visibility. There is an ongoing need for wipes, and food items remain available for families through local community health resources.

Grays Harbor Early Learning (GHLE) coalition:

In collaboration with The Grays Harbor Health Department and VEL, Help Me Grow Grays Harbor is up and running!! Early Learning Expo - April 30th - 4:00 pm - 7:00 pm - Grays Harbor Fairgrounds.

Grays Harbor Early Learning (GHLE) coalition typically meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month from 1:30 – 3:00 pm. Contact Molly Leithold, ghearlylearningcoalition@gmail.com, coalition lead to get connected.

Lewis County Early Learning Coalition (ELC):

We are forming a Work Group to focus on creating a fundraiser this year. We will discuss location, but it looked like the Juice Box was popular last year so we may do this again, Bingo night was a success last year! We will continue to work on our Caregiver's Appreciation event and are looking at a possible in-person meeting if we have interest.

Lewis County's Early Learning Coalition (ELC) typically meets the 2nd Thursday of each month from 11:30 – 1:00 pm. Contact Juli Jager, lewiscountyelc@gmail.com, coalition lead to get connected.

ELC of Mason County:

Coalition Accomplishments – January Highlights

The coalition began 2026 with strong participation and continued momentum, strengthening partnerships and advancing shared priorities that support children and families across Mason County. Over the past month, the coalition has:

- Sustained a strong, diverse partnership network spanning health care, early learning, higher education, child care, disability services, advocacy, and community-based organizations.
- Maintained stable finances and provided oversight of CHOICE funding, OWL purchases, and fiscal agent payments, while exploring a potential fiscal agent transition to better align with future grant needs.
- Elevated community data and needs through Mason County WIC's presentation, highlighting service reach, language access needs, staffing challenges, and successful cross-sector partnerships.
- Supported and promoted advocacy efforts by sharing opportunities such as Advocacy Week and Have a Heart for Kids Day, encouraging rural and parent participation, and preparing for potential state budget impacts.
- Advanced child care system-building work through a Commerce-funded countywide needs assessment, ongoing survey outreach, and movement toward a strategic plan that frames child care as a workforce and economic priority.
- Strengthened family support connections by lifting up programs that provide home visiting, developmental disability services, school-based supports, caregiver trainings, and peer-to-peer family support.

- Helped coordinate resource sharing including diapers, coats, oral health kits, nutrition education tools, and fresh produce distribution.
- Promoted capacity-building opportunities such as national-level trainings, upcoming community events, and recruitment of additional staff and host families.

The ELC of Mason County typically meets the 3rd Wednesday of each month from 8:30 – 10:00 am. Contact April Messenger, masoncountyelc@gmail.com, coalition lead to get connected.

Thurston Early Childhood Coalition (TECC):

The Thurston Early Childhood Coalition (TECC) typically meets the 4th Thursday of each month from 9:30 – 11:00 am. Contact Shawn Thurman, thurstonecc@gmail.com, coalition lead to get connected.

Pacific:


Our recent ELAC focus for North Pacific County centered on several key areas supporting young children and families in our region.

 Enrollment & Assessments

We reviewed current enrollment among early learning centers and partnerships status and assessment timelines, ensuring that programs remain aligned with ECEAP expectations. Continued attention is being placed on maintaining full enrollment and supporting timely completion of required developmental screenings and checkpoints.

 Supporting Children With Complex Needs

A significant portion of our discussion/efforts focused on resourcing for children with complex developmental or behavioral needs, particularly in the absence of Basics Northwest for ASD services in our area. We explored opportunities to strengthen collaboration with partners and identify alternative pathways to ensure families still receive coordinated support and access to care.

 Parent Training & Family Engagement

This quarter, we were able to offer two well-received parent training opportunities focused on:

- Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)
- Community resources and problem-solving for coordinated access

These sessions provided families with practical tools and strengthened connections to local services, especially for families who are underserved or navigating complex systems.

Know and Grow, North Pacific County's early learning coalition typically meets the 3rd Monday of each month from 2:00 – 3:30 pm. Contact Rhonda Johnson, knowandgrowpacificco@gmail.com, coalition lead to get connected.

For more information, please contact: Sheila Kavanaugh, kav.consulting231@gmail.com

Washington Communities for Children (WCFC) Updates

Stay in Touch!

Want to learn more about WCFC, be the first to hear updates, or get connected with your local early childhood coalition? Get in touch with us!

- Website: washingtoncfc.org
- Facebook: WashingtonCFC
- Instagram: Washington_cfc

For more information please contact: Rachel Hall, WCFC State Lead, rachelh@first5fundamentals.org

No updates at this time from Coalitions:

Peninsula Early Learning Coalition

- **For more information, please contact: Kimberly Davies Lohman, Kimberly.davies@gmail.com**

Pierce County Early Childhood Network

- **For more information please contact: Muriel Herrera-Velasquez muriel@first5fundamentals.org**

Southeast (SELC)

- **For more information, please contact: Brittany Hartikainen, brittany@bh-consulting.org**

King County

- **For more information, please contact: Logan Endres or Tristen Hall, kcelc@childcare.org**