# Early Learning Strategic Plan

**Steering Committee**  
**June 14, 2019**  
**9:00-3:00**  
**SeaTac Four Points Sheraton**

## AGENDA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00-9:10</td>
<td>Welcome and Appreciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:10-9:35</td>
<td>Connections and Introductions: <em>Personal connections, build community</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>9:35-10:00</td>
<td>Brief History and Context; Agenda Review: <em>Setting context, preparing for the day, materials review</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00-10:30</td>
<td>Mixer activity: <em>Exploring co-creation</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>10:30-10:45</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:45-11:05</td>
<td>Establishing Community Agreements: <em>Group consensus building around a common framework for how we aspire to work and be together to take transformational action for children and families in WA</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>11:05-11:45</td>
<td>Promising Foundations for our WA Early Learning System: <em>Group exercise to explore hope, possibilities and opportunities for our early learning system</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>11:45-12:15</td>
<td>LUNCH and Connections Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:15-1:25</td>
<td>Organizing Framework and Needs Assessment: <em>In small groups, explore Organizing Framework and Needs Assessment Outline</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1:25-2:45</td>
<td>Community Outreach Planning: <em>In small groups, explore key ingredients for effective community outreach and co-create options for Phase One outreach approach</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>2:45-3:00</td>
<td>Closing: Next Steps, Determine Future Meeting Schedule, Appreciations/Reflections</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:00</td>
<td>Adjourn!</td>
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Summary of ELAC Comments Regarding
Vision, Principles, Organizing Framework, and Needs Assessment Outline
From June 4, 2019 Meeting

In its June 4th meeting, members of ELAC discussed foundational questions for the development of the state’s Needs Assessment and next statewide Strategic Plan for early learning. The following provides several highlights from their conversation.

Vision

• Concern over language about “all children” vs. being explicit about children of color and others traditionally underserved

• Would like to see more recognition of “community” as part of support and of the importance of multi-generational work (i.e., working with parents and children)

Focus age: “Prenatal to 5” or “Prenatal to 3rd Grade”?

• There was a strong consensus that the focus of the strategic plan should be prenatal through 3rd grade. This is consistent with a lot of work done in the past decade to create a stronger relationship between the K-12 and Early Learning system. There was particular interest in ensuring that there was more shared language, practices and tools with teachers and other professionals who work with those up to 8 years old. Suggestion to use pregnancy instead of prenatal for clearer understanding in communities.

• There was some concern that the more expansive ages may dilute focus on earlier stages – in funding, focus, etc.

“Early Learning” or “Early Childhood”

• There was consensus that use of the term “early learning” implies a narrower focus on a child’s development, and does not encompass a broader range of social/emotional development or addressing the influences of early trauma. There was general agreement that the term “early childhood” may imply a more holistic approach to a child’s development. There wasn’t active enthusiasm for the term, but there were no preferred suggestions.

• There was agreement that if new terms are used, education work would have to be done with funders, government, etc. to ensure ongoing support.

Principles

• Strong overall theme of needing to focus on prevention, early identification, equity, inclusion and underserved populations including children and their families

• We must start with a prenatal/pregnancy focus
• Family-centered strategies – meeting families where they are
• Washington Communities for Children, and other local communities, need to have equal footing with state agencies in creating early learning policies and plans
• Addressing systemic institutional racism
• Concern that recognizing only “evidence-based” practices is limiting and may not be appropriate for all communities
• Should include language about “trauma-informed care systems” and match that with “developing and supporting community resilience.”
• Should include leadership development and making room for people of color to lead
• Focusing on transitions is important

Organizing Framework
• A fifth “frame” should be added to focus on support for and strengthening the work of the early learning work force.

Needs Assessment Outline
• It would be helpful to show geographic differences (i.e. urban vs rural, East vs West side, etc.) for racial and ethnic population data
• Aim for utility of information for cross sector planning and building local, regional and state champions
• Include preferences, access, quality and variability across various groups
• Be explicit about needs, gaps; ensure “lack of readiness “or capacity does not exclude communities
• Make data accessible for local communities to access and analyze
• Make sure to focus on regional differences
• Infuse equity throughout
• Importance of including stories/qualitative data for context
• Include information about separations and transitions for children and families in child welfare or juvenile rehab systems
• Describe strengths, protective factors such as social connections and knowledge of child development
• Include trauma-informed work and gaps in systems to support highest need families
• Consider including policy reach, in addition to programs
“We must prepare Washington children to succeed in a global economy and we are making it clear that education in Washington begins long before kindergarten. We now know that children are born learning, and early learning helps Washington’s youngest learners be successful in school and in life.”

- Governor Chris Gregoire

This document was developed in part through funding from the Washington State Department of Health Project LAUNCH grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The views, policies, and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA or HHS.
The Washington Early Learning Plan is a collaborative and comprehensive strategic 10-year roadmap for building the early childhood system in Washington State necessary to improve outcomes in school and in life for children. The Department of Early Learning, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Thrive by Five Washington co-sponsored this effort, but the plan was developed in close collaboration with the Department of Health, the Department of Social and Health Services, and state and local stakeholders.

The plan is built upon the important work of previous planning efforts, namely, Kids Matter, Washington Learns, and the achievement gap reports. The aim of this plan is to provide guidance and direction for priority setting, staffing and budget decisions, advocacy agendas, and partnership opportunities during the next decade. By offering a common vision, defined common outcomes, articulated strategies to achieve those outcomes, and a way to assess progress, partners in early childhood efforts can collectively ensure that all children in Washington State succeed in school and in life.

The vision

In Washington, we work together so that all children start life with a solid foundation for success, based on strong families and a world-class early learning system for all children prenatal through third grade. Accessible, accountable, and developmentally and culturally appropriate, our system partners with families to ensure that every child is healthy, capable and confident in school and in life.
This 10-year plan is the roadmap to build an early learning system in Washington that ensures all children in our state start life with a solid foundation for success in school and in life. This plan is organized not by child age, funding sources or child development domains. Rather, the plan lays out a framework for a comprehensive system of care, education, programs and services for children and families and is organized based on who needs to be involved to make that happen: Families and caregivers, children, communities, schools, educators and systems. The result is the following “early learning equation:”

Ready and Successful Children

+ Ready and Successful Parents, Families and Caregivers

+ Ready and Successful Early Learning Professionals

+ Ready and Successful Schools

+ Ready and Successful Systems and Communities

= a Ready and Successful State
In the past 30 years, there have been several important developments that have influenced the need for a comprehensive early learning plan:

**Changes in family life:** The percentage of mothers of children under age 18 who are in the labor force grew from 47 percent in 1975 to 71 percent today. Two-wage-earner families and single, working mothers have become the norm. This trend has spurred the need for child care and school-age programs for young children.

**Growing diversity:** Washington’s population is becoming more diverse. People of color represented one in five Washington residents in 2000, but are projected to be one in three by 2030. The population of children will be even more diverse. Of the expected 30 percent growth in the number of children birth to 17 between 2000 and 2030, more than three-quarters of that growth will be among children of color.

**New science in brain development:** Research tells us that development of the brain is the most intense from birth through age 3, and that a child’s brain builds
itself in response to children’s experiences. Brain circuits that the child uses in daily life are strengthened. Those not used fade away. A crucial factor in building the child’s brain is the nurturing the child receives, and responsive relationships with parents and caregivers.

**Research on risk factors:** Researchers have identified the key factors that put young children’s well-being and learning at risk. These include: poverty or low income; disparities because of race, ethnicity or language; the parents’ education level; having under- or unemployed parents; and exposure to domestic violence, stressful life events, and violence in communities. Having more than one risk factor compounds the risk. Children with these risk factors start showing poor outcomes as early as 9 months of age.

**Awareness of the preparation gap:** Children with several risk factors are less likely to be ready for kindergarten than their peers. Children who are not ready for kindergarten often have trouble succeeding in school. This gap in preparation leads to a gap in school achievement. Many children and families in communities of color have difficulty accessing high-quality early care and preschool services.

**Research on the benefits of high-quality early learning experiences.** Studies show that every dollar invested in high-quality early learning programs (such as having well-educated, well-trained and well-compensated teachers, and a high teacher-child ratio) returned between $3 and $17 in benefits. These benefits include:

A. Lower costs for special education; child welfare; public health; social welfare from teen pregnancy; and juvenile and adult crime

B. Reduced need to repeat grades in school, lowering school costs

C. Increased tax revenue from successful students’ increased earnings as adults
The Need for an Early Learning System

What it is:

An early learning system brings together the independent systems for:

- Prenatal care;
- Child care and preschool;
- Kindergarten through third grade;
- Health and nutrition;
- Social-emotional development and mental health;
- Parent and community partnerships;
- Parenting education and resources;
- Higher education in child development and early childhood education; and
- Professional development for early learning professionals.

It provides a way for people to work together in a coordinated way toward a common goal for children. The system is the various policies, programs and services for young children, and for the adults who care for and teach them. When these elements each work well and align with the other elements, children will have the best opportunity to reach their full potential.
What we know:

Early learning happens in many places—home, child care, preschool, kindergarten through third grade, libraries, faith organizations, parks, play groups and many other community settings.

Early learning is shaped by many people—parents, guardians, grandparents, other relatives, child care providers, teachers, health care providers and a variety of caring adults—and programs—including government agencies, nonprofits, private businesses, faith-based organizations and community groups.

This variety offers choices for families according to their own needs and values. However, this broad array of programs and services demands significant coordination and management to ensure that:

- Families are able to find and access the services and information they want and need; and
- Resources are not wasted because of duplication of effort.

There have been a number of efforts to build bridges between existing programs, but Washington’s current early learning system is still duplicative, fragmented, confusing, and inaccessible to many of the children and families that most critically need these services.

The Plan is our roadmap to build a comprehensive, coordinated, effective, measurable, and accessible early learning system in Washington State.
Principles of the Plan

The Plan is grounded in national and state level research-based information and embraces best practices in early childhood systems building, service and program development, and coordination and integration. In addition, those involved in developing the plan agreed on a number of guiding principles for the plan. They include:

- **Whole child.** The plan attempts to take into account all areas of a child’s growth, development and learning.

- **Age range.** The plan addresses children’s needs and well-being from prenatal through third grade. It includes recommendations for the parents, families, caregivers, early learning and school-age providers, and teachers who care for or work with children in this age range.

- **All, some and few.** This plan offers strategies that will be available to all children who are in the relevant age group or to all families. The plan also includes strategies that are more targeted. These are strategies for some children, parents, families, caregivers and/or early learning professionals who may need extra support. Finally, there are also strategies for the few for whom special programs are needed.

- **Equity and preparation gap.** The strategies aim to address the lack of equity of opportunity that many children and families face because of race and ethnicity, family income, and the preparation gap that stems from a variety of risk factors.
- **Cultural relevance and respect.** The programs, services and supports for children and families must be relevant to and respectful of their culture and language.

- **Local connections and partnerships.** This plan can work only if everyone involved in early childhood work plays a part. While some of the strategies are programs and services that the state offers, many will need the leadership and support of local community efforts, nonprofits, public-private partnerships, and other organizations and businesses.
The outcomes and strategies that follow were developed by four work groups for this project. Each work group focused on one subject area in the Kids Matter framework: Child Health and Development; Early Care and Education; Family and Community Partnerships; and Social, Emotional and Mental Health. The efforts of each work group built upon the Kids Matter framework, including the outcomes and strategies, to identify what is needed in its subject area in order to develop the early learning system in our state.

In addition, a set of indicators, otherwise known as “vital signs,” are currently in development. These were created to measure the status and progress made across the five areas of readiness. Collectively, the indicators will help describe conditions for children, families, early learning professionals, schools and the early learning system in Washington.
Outcomes:

A. All children have optimal physical health, mental health, oral health and nutrition.

B. Pregnant and postpartum women receive health, nutrition and support services to optimize the pregnancy and the health of their newborns.

C. All children have developmentally appropriate social-emotional, language, literacy, numeracy, and cognitive skills, and demonstrate positive mental health and well being.

D. Families have access to high-quality early learning programs and services that are culturally competent and affordable for those who choose them.

E. All children enter kindergarten healthy and emotionally, socially, and cognitively ready to succeed in school and in life.
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<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>...what it means</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 Optimize Existing Nutrition in Pregnancy and Early Childhood Services and Programs</td>
<td>Increase breastfeeding, access to healthy food and food security, through information and support so that children have optimal nutrition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2 Ensure Insurance and Medical Home</td>
<td>Increase understanding of the importance of preventive care, access to insurance and comprehensive care through a medical home so that children receive the care (both preventative and for acute and chronic illnesses) they need.</td>
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<tr>
<td>#3 Improve Early Childhood Oral Health</td>
<td>Increase education, access to dental services and care coordination among medical and dental providers so that children receive dental care as a part of their comprehensive health services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>#4 Build Continuum of Infants and Toddlers Services and Programs</td>
<td>Build comprehensive services to promote healthy development, birth–3 years, support for families, and an infant-toddler credential.</td>
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<tr>
<td>#5 Make Home Visiting Available to At-Risk Families</td>
<td>Make evidence-based/promising prenatal and child home visitation services more widely available to at-risk families and caregivers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>#6 Ensure Developmental Screening</td>
<td>Make available universal developmental and social-emotional/mental health screening and referral for children, birth – third grade.</td>
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### Strategies:

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Add At Risk Children to Early Intervention Services (Part C)</strong></td>
<td>Amend policy to serve children, birth–3 years, identified as <em>at risk</em> of developmental delay; include in Medicaid payments.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Access to Mental Health Services – Develop Access to Care Standards</strong></td>
<td>Develop developmentally appropriate access to care standards for mental health and Apple Health providers.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Access to Mental Health Services – Increase Availability of Assessment, Diagnosis and Treatment</strong></td>
<td>Increase availability of developmentally appropriate mental health assessment and treatment, birth–6 years.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Increase Use of Early Literacy Services and Programs</strong></td>
<td>Increase use of research-based early literacy programs/practices by parents, families, caregivers and early learning professionals</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Expand Early Numeracy Programs</strong></td>
<td>Promote early numeracy programs/practices, birth – third grade, by parents, families, caregivers and early learning professionals.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Expand and Enhance ECEAP</strong></td>
<td>Expand ECEAP education, health coordination and family support services to cover all low-income and at-risk 3- and 4-year-olds.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Implement Voluntary, Universal Pre-kindergarten</strong></td>
<td>Offer voluntary preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds, to roll out as all-day kindergarten is implemented.</td>
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...indicators for measuring progress

- Percent of students meeting or exceeding third grade reading and math standard, disaggregated by race, ethnicity and income
- Percent of eligible children ages 3-5 enrolled in state-funded full-day pre-K, including ECEAP and Head Start
- Percent of entering kindergartners demonstrating readiness (social-emotional, cognitive, physical, etc.), disaggregated by race and ethnicity
- Percent of young children without health insurance (or percent receiving a well-child check-up in the past year)
- Percent of young children receiving state early intervention services who reach or maintain functioning comparable to their same-aged peers
- Percent of children with untreated dental decay
- Percent of social-emotional growth experienced by ECEAP children in one school year
- Percent of ECEAP children exhibiting social-emotional readiness at the end of the school year
- Percent of children in Working Connections Child Care who receive 12 months of care without interruption
Ready and successful parents, families and caregivers have the information and resources needed to be their children’s first and most important teachers.

Outcomes:

F. Parents are recognized as their children’s first and most important teachers, and have the support they need to help their children “learn to learn” in their first years of life.

G. A comprehensive, culturally and language-appropriate information and referral system about all aspects of child health, development and early learning is accessible to all parents (including expectant parents), families and caregivers.

H. Parents, families and caregivers have the knowledge and skills needed, along with culturally appropriate services and supports, to act and respond in ways that promote optimal child health, development and early learning.

I. Parent, family and caregiver voices help shape policies and systems.
## Strategies:

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<tr>
<td>#14 Create Statewide System of Access to Information and Resources</td>
<td>Expand information resources for parents, families and caregivers on a wide range of topics, and links to community services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>#15 Provide More Parenting Learning Opportunities</td>
<td>Provide parenting learning opportunities and peer supports in diverse and family-friendly venues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>#16 Ensure Social-Emotional Learning – Parents, Caregivers, Early Learning Professionals</td>
<td>Provide opportunities to deepen understanding of social and emotional development skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>#17 Support Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) Care</td>
<td>Conduct statewide outreach and support to FFN.</td>
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<td>#18 Support Strong Families Policies and Programs</td>
<td>Support policies and programs that strengthen families and foster development of supportive relationships.</td>
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<tr>
<td>#19 Increase Mental Health Screening and Services for New Parents</td>
<td>Increase new parent screening for postpartum mood disorders and improve access to mental health services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>#20 Identify and Support Parent Leadership</td>
<td>Identify and nurture parent and caregiver leaders to advocate for families.</td>
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<tr>
<td>#21 Create Formal Pathways for Parent Participation</td>
<td>Expand pathways for parents, families and caregivers to participate in early learning program/system design and in shaping policies.</td>
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...indicators for measuring progress

- Percent of mothers who receive prenatal care in their first trimester
- Percent of new mothers who breastfeed their children
- Additional indicators representing Ready and Successful Parents, Families and Caregivers are currently in development

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Washington Early Learning Plan Executive Summary – September 2010
Ready and successful professionals are prepared and have the knowledge and responsiveness to children’s different learning styles, capabilities and developmental goals so that they ensure a high-quality learning experience for children.

Outcomes:

J. All early learning professionals can demonstrate the competencies to provide children birth through third grade with developmentally and culturally appropriate early learning experiences in healthy and safe environments.

K. All families have access to high-quality, culturally competent, affordable child care and early education programs staffed by providers and teachers who are adequately trained and compensated.

L. A fully-developed Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is established and maintained so that early learning and school-age providers have the support and resources necessary to improve the quality of their programs and environments, and so that families have the information they need to make the best early learning choices for their children.
## Strategies:

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<tr>
<td>#22 Enhance Child Care Licensing Policies</td>
<td>Improve licensing through evidence-based rulemaking, training opportunities, technology and coordination with Seeds to Success (QRIS).</td>
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<tr>
<td>#23 Implement Comprehensive Professional Development and Compensation System</td>
<td>Build a comprehensive, integrated, statewide system of professional development with fair compensation to attain development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>#24 Implement Quality Rating and Improvement System</td>
<td>Implement Seeds to Success (QRIS) statewide to offer support and resources to providers for improving quality, and consumer education for families.</td>
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<tr>
<td>#25 Provide Health, Mental Health and Social-Emotional Consultation in Early Learning Settings</td>
<td>Provide coordinated local-state consultation to early learning professionals.</td>
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### ...indicators for measuring progress

- Percent of licensed early learning settings reporting use of Early Learning and Development Benchmarks
- Number and/or percent of licensed child care slots available in levels one, two, three, and four “Seed” centers and homes
- Number and/or percent of child care slots in centers receiving three seeds on family and community partnerships
- Number and percent of early learning providers enrolled in Washington Scholarship program who receive a degree or credential
- Reimbursement rate for subsidized children
Ready and successful schools are prepared to support the learning and development of every child in their community.

Outcomes:

M. All children and families make smooth transitions among home, early learning settings and school.

N. All schools are ready to welcome all children who attend, including preparing for their individual gifts and needs, level of knowledge, skills, social-emotional and physical development, and their cultural background and language.

O. All students transition from third grade-level activities prepared with the foundations to achieve the more advanced challenges of upper elementary and intermediate grade-level activities.
## Strategies:

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<tr>
<td>#26 Ensure Continuum of Social-Emotional Learning – Children</td>
<td>Make available a continuum of skills development and support to every child in preK-12 public school classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#27 Align Prekindergarten and K-3 Instructional &amp; Programmatic Practices</td>
<td>Ensure that children’s PreK–3rd grade experiences are aligned and coordinated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>#28 Implement Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (WaKIDS)</td>
<td>Create an assessment of learning and development domains, with information from parents, caregivers and early learning professionals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>#29 Implement Phased-In Full-Day Kindergarten</td>
<td>Continue phasing in full-day kindergarten as part of basic education.</td>
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<tr>
<td>#30 Expand Compassionate Schools – Reducing Effects of Complex Trauma</td>
<td>Train families, caregivers and early learning professionals in ways to reduce the effects of adverse childhood experiences.</td>
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### Indicators for measuring progress

- Percent and number of students enrolled in state-funded full-day kindergarten
- Percent of schools with K-3 student-teacher ratio of 17 to 1 (or fewer)
- Additional indicators representing Ready and Successful Schools are currently in development
Ready and successful systems and communities have the resources and information needed to support expansion and excellence of programs and services for children, families and schools, including: governance, financing, accountability, planning and communication.

Outcomes:

P. The early learning system in Washington uses evidence-based and/or demonstrated best practices (as available) to support families in fostering children’s healthy development and learning, and to build high-quality, culturally competent early learning programs for children birth through third grade.

Q. The early learning system in Washington works to close the preparation gap.

R. The early learning system supports children with developmental disabilities and other special needs, and their families, to optimize each child’s health, development and educational outcomes.

S. Governance and accountability systems ensure progress toward achieving the vision for a high-quality, accessible, early learning system for all children in Washington.

T. Communities support families and promote children’s learning and healthy development.

U. The public understands the critical economic and social value of high-quality, culturally competent early learning for every child from birth through third grade, and actively supports related policies and investments.
### Strategies:

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<tr>
<td>#31 Revise and Promote Use of Early Learning and Development Benchmarks</td>
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<td>#32 Expand Registry for Early Learning Professionals</td>
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<tr>
<td>#33 Improve Child Care Subsidies</td>
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<td>#34 Build Statewide Infrastructure for Partnerships and Mobilization</td>
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<tr>
<td>#35 Strengthen Public Awareness and Commitment</td>
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<td>#36 Expand P-20 Longitudinal Data System</td>
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#### ...what it means

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<tr>
<td>Refine the <em>Benchmarks</em> based on constituent input, then promote use in early learning settings, and align with preK–third grade.</td>
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<td>Create a comprehensive registry system for individuals’ professional development, and for planning, evaluation and quality assurance.</td>
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<td>Improve subsidy programs to support high-quality care, increase parental choice, and improve access to care.</td>
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<td>Build statewide infrastructure to strengthen partnerships, build capacity and broaden reach and focus local mobilization efforts.</td>
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<td>Expand public awareness campaigns to deepen the understanding, action and support of local leaders and public to make children a priority.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop a seamless P-20 data system that includes early learning services and programs outside the K-12 system.</td>
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#### ...indicators for measuring progress

- Percent of licensed child care that accepts subsidized children
- How easy or hard it is for parents to find child care in their community
- Cost of child care as a percent of median income
Conclusion

Ideally, a diverse array of stakeholders will “see themselves” in Washington’s Early Learning Plan. It can be a tool to bring people, organizations and communities together in more strategic, integrated and collaborative ways in identifying common outcomes. We hope the Plan will be a useful tool for a variety of stakeholders in supporting and guiding the early learning system in Washington.

For example, a legislator can identify a strategy that needs legislative action to move forward. State level decision-makers can identify agency or organizational actions that are needed to align funding streams, integrate program resources, and create policies to produce and support effective collaboration and system integration. A foundation can choose one or more outcomes and strategies, and use it to guide funding priorities.

Researchers can contribute to the knowledge base linking strategies to outcomes, by, for example, identifying models of services for families of all cultures that contribute to increasing the social and emotional skills of young children.

Local decision-makers can use the Plan to guide local systems integration and service planning efforts, such as the regional Northwest Early Learning Network’s use of the Plan’s outcomes and framework as a basis for regional planning.

Community programs and services can use the Plan to see how they fit into a statewide effort to support children’s development, and to align their program outcomes with those identified for parents and children in the Plan.
Policy advocates can use the Plan as a starting place for selecting priorities, a source of common language for communicating with decision-makers, and a tool to communicate with legislators. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, families can use the Plan to glimpse the systems behind the services they use and add their voices to the ongoing development and formation of early childhood systems in Washington State.

Building a world-class early learning system is not just the right thing do for Washington’s children, it is the smart thing to do for the future of our state. It will take the efforts of everyone in the early learning community – local, regional and statewide – to implement the Plan and build an early learning system that ensures all children are successful in school and in life.
We would like to thank the many organizations and individuals that have contributed to the creation of Washington’s Early Learning Plan.

**Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC)**

**Early Learning Plan Steering Committee**

**Child Health and Development Work Group**

**Community Engagement Work Group**

**Early Care and Education Work Group**

**Social, Emotional and Mental Health Work Group**

**Parent and Community Partnerships Work Group**

**Achievement Gap Working Group**

**ELP Management Team**

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- Kelli Bohanon (Department of Early Learning)
- Molly Boyajian (Thrive by Five Washington)
- Bob Butts (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction)
- Sangree Froelicher (Department of Early Learning)
- Lorrie Grevstad (Department of Health, Office of Maternal and Child Health)
- Bob Hamilton (Department of Early Learning)
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“The future of any society depends on its ability to foster the education, health and well-being of the next generation. Today’s children will become tomorrow’s citizens, workers, and parents. When we invest wisely in children and families, the next generation will pay that back through a lifetime of productivity and responsible citizenship. When we fail to provide children with what they need to build a strong foundation for healthy and productive lives, we put our future prosperity and security at risk.”

—The Science of Early Childhood Development: Closing the Gap Between What We Know and What We Do, 2007
Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University
Draft Strategic Organizing Framework
Washington Early Learning Strategic Planning Process

The following provides a suggested organizing framework for the development of a new long-term strategic plan for the Washington State early learning system. The first strategic plan was a ten-year plan, adopted in 2010; that plan will sunset in 2020. The 2010 plan was organized around a “Ready Framework”. All 36 strategies in that plan were housed inside the five parts of the Ready Framework:

- Ready and Successful Children;
- Ready and Successful Parents, Families and Caregivers;
- Ready and Successful Early Learning Professionals;
- Ready and Successful Schools; and
- Ready and Successful Systems and Communities.

As the 2010 Early Learning Plan describes, the Ready Framework was designed to represent how our partners viewed and experienced the early learning system at that point in time. A decade later, we know that we have not only made tremendous progress, but we also know that our system has grown, evolved and shifted to a new landscape of today. It is important for our early learning community to ensure the organizing framework and strategies we prioritize for the future are reflective of where we are today and where we want to be a decade from now.

Our hope is that a revised organizing framework will reflect and support values and efforts already underway, while incorporating new ideas and offering a strong vision for where our state’s early learning community will go next.

The following organizing framework proposes four main “building blocks” for creating a set of strategies aimed at realizing the comprehensive early learning system we collectively hope for in our state. It includes components focused on ensuring good health for all children; strategies that support strong, stable and attached families; strategies that promote positive early learning experiences across settings; and ensuring our system and communities have supports in place needed to realize full implementation of our collective vision. For each of the four components outlined below, a definition is provided in addition to examples of key strategies or areas of focus important to the component part.

### Healthy Children

Children’s overall health and well-being are central to their development; responsive systems of care exist to ensure they have access to comprehensive health care (physical and oral health), developmental screening, and key social and emotional supports.

Key elements:
Proposed ELP 2.0 strategic framework

- Support for universal developmental screening and responsive early intervention and special education services
- Ensuring health care access and affordability
- Ensure a full range of physical, oral, and mental health services for all children.
- Services that support maternal and family health
- Services that support food security, good nutrition, etc.
- AND much more ...

**Strong, Stable and Attached Families**

Families have the resources they need to support overall family health and stability, including children’s healthy development/school readiness, well-being, and success.

**Key elements:**
- Approaches that foster parental resilience
- Services and supports that foster social connections
- Services that support knowledge of parenting and child development
- Services and approaches that offer concrete support in times of need
- Services and approaches that address housing and family economic needs
- Services and supports for families navigating the child welfare system
- Support continued policy implementation of paid family leave
- AND much more ...

**Positive Early Learning Experiences**

Every child has access to safe, engaging and positive early learning experiences that promote school readiness and lifetime success; families are valued as the most important partners in children’s early experiences; and providers have access to training, supports and compensation necessary to sustain high quality practices and services.

**Key elements:**
- High quality, accessible and affordable early learning settings (Early Achievers, child care, ECEAP, Head Start, developmental preschool, etc.)
- High quality, responsive and available home-based and/or informal services (i.e., home visiting; family, friend and neighbor care, etc.)
- Diverse, culturally responsive, and well compensated workforce
- Inclusive, responsive and integrated early learning settings and services for children with disabilities, behavioral challenges, etc.
- Families are a central partner in children’s early learning experiences across settings and services
Proposed ELP 2.0 strategic framework

- Supportive and seamless transitions for children (e.g., from toddler to preschool, preschool to kindergarten, in and out of the child welfare system, etc.)
- Create high-quality and accessible early learning facilities
- AND much more......

Responsive Early Learning System and Communities

The early learning system and its communities are equity-focused, responsive, coordinated and equipped to support all children, families, providers, and communities.

Key elements:
- Coordinate a wide range of partners (e.g., early learning providers, families, schools, community-based organizations, advocates, state agencies, child welfare, health care, housing, etc.) around common goals, programs and services.
- Develop necessary capacity and infrastructure to support statewide and community-based planning and programming (e.g., governance and planning; data system development and coordination; etc.).
- Develop sustainable financing model(s) for a comprehensive early learning system.
- Policies that are reflective of our state’s commitment to equity and adequately resourced for implementation.
- Strengthening public awareness and support for the system.
- AND much more......
DRAFT outline: WA Early Learning System Needs Assessment

Executive summary
Crosswalk PDG grant domains to Washington State framework.

Introduction

- The opportunity
  - Strong commitment across partners and communities to advance a comprehensive and equity-focused system in the state; long history of sustained support for early learning.
  - Positive progress over the last decade toward meeting the needs of children, families and communities, many strategies outlined in 2010 Early Learning Plan implemented.
  - Many strong programs and services programs in place that support families in accessing needed services and high-quality services that promote healthy development and school readiness for children.
  - Rich diversity of children, families and providers that partner to be responsive to the unique strengths, challenges and needs of families; strong community support across the state.
  - Strong leadership across partners in the field—providers, families/parents, tribal communities, advocates, organizations, schools, state agencies, legislators, etc.
  - New opportunities to build bridges between child welfare and early learning (DCYF) and increase state’s focus on prevention.
  - Strong commitment to ensure unserved and isolated populations are prioritized.
  - Vision for the next ten years

- The context
  - Central focus on advancing equity across and through the system.
  - Continued focus on integration of multiple services and programs to create a comprehensive early learning system (community and state; cross-sector; etc.)
  - Orient in a prevention framework (all, some, few or primary, secondary, tertiary)
    - DCYF outcomes framework (education, health, and resiliency)
    - Other agency, partner, or community frameworks

Approach

- Sources of quantitative and qualitative data
  - State agency and community-based data sources
  - Steering committee
  - Significant learning through Community Conversations (community outreach and engagement)
  - Other sources
Definition of terms [Domain 1]
  - WA State early learning system/definition of mixed delivery system
  - Quality early childhood care and education [1.a]
  - Early childhood care and education availability [1.b]
  - Vulnerable or underserved children [1.c]
  - Children in rural areas [1.d]
  - Early childhood education system [1.e]
  - Analysis of definitions and challenges [1.f–g]

What we know about our children and families
- Pull from multiple sources of qualitative data (community conversations, surveys, prior/current needs assessments, etc.)
- Summary of "universal" data on populations
- Readiness, health, and access among vulnerable or underserved children [2.a, 3.a–b]
  - Children in low-income households
  - Children of color
  - Children in non-English-speaking households
  - Children with disabilities or developmental delay
  - Children involved in the child welfare system
  - Children with housing insecurity/instability
- Readiness, health, and access among children in rural areas [2.b, 3.a–b]
- Strengths and weaknesses of data on children being served [3.c]

Healthy Children
- Physical and social/emotional health outcomes
  - Infant mortality
  - Low birth weight/healthy birth weight
  - Children with special health care needs
  - Health plan enrollment
  - Oral health
  - Behavioral health (draw on new report regarding expulsion)
  - Trauma-responsive care
  - Access to services that support maternal and family health
  - Access to services that support food security and good nutrition
  - Developmental screening
    - Programs and supports to identify children who are developmentally delayed and connect them to services [6.c]
- Strengths and weaknesses of data on physical and social/emotional health outcomes in children in Washington State
Strong, Stable and Attached Families

- Initiatives to address access to information, services, supports and other needs of parents and families
  - Approaches and services that support the "strengthening families" framework
    - Parental resilience
    - Social connections
    - Knowledge of parenting and child development
    - Concrete support in times of need
  - Support for housing and economic needs
    - Programs and supports for access to child care by parents who are employed, looking for work, or in training (including policy implementation of paid family leave) [6.b]
    - Access to basic needs (health care, food assistance, housing support, economic assistance) through the early learning system [6.d]
- Support for children in the child welfare system
  - Data on child welfare and child maltreatment
- Initiatives to increase engagement and involvement of parents/caregivers and family members
- Programs and supports that connect children to high-quality early learning [6.a]
  - Initiatives that address the needs of parents and families with specific cultural/linguistic needs (both existing initiatives and gaps)
- Data on service use in the early learning system among families with children (both families and children) [5.a]
- Strengths and weaknesses of data
  - Data or research on collaboration between programs/services [5.c]
  - Data or research related to maximizing parental choice [5.d]
  - Data on programs and supports available to families and children [5.b]
  - Data on quality and availability of programming
  - Initiatives under way to address gaps

Positive Early Learning Experiences

- Strengths and gaps in quality and availability of early learning programs
  - Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT)
  - Part B Preschool Special Education/Developmental Preschool
  - Early Head Start/Head Start/Migrant & Seasonal Head Start/American Indian & Alaska Native Head Start
  - ECEAP
  - Licensed child care (homes and centers)
  - Early Childhood Intervention Prevention Services (ECLIPSE)
- Initiatives to improve quality and availability of early learning
  - Early Achievers
  - Early Start Act
• Expansion of ECEAP
• Expansion of Home Visiting
  • Availability of and access to home-based and informal services
    o Home visiting
    o Family, friend, and neighbor care
    o Play and Learn Groups
  • The role of early learning providers and building a strong workforce [4.j]
    o Accessible professional development, training and compensation
    o Diverse and culturally responsive provider base
  • Barriers to funding/provision of high-quality early learning services [9.a-b]
  • Transition supports and gaps [10.a-h]
    • WaKIDS
    • Age transitions (infant to toddler; toddler to preschool; preschool to K; etc.)
    • Service transitions (Part C-Part B; EHS-HS/ECEAP, etc.)
  • Strengths and weakness of data

Responsive Early Learning System and Communities

• System integration and interagency collaboration [11.a-c]
  o Policies and practices that support/hinder interagency collaboration [11.a-b]
  o Practices that reflect effective and supportive interagency collaboration [11.c]
  o Community and state coordination and collaboration
  o Support for capacity building in communities to respond to coordination, planning and implementation of services and supports at local level
• Early Learning facilities
  ▪ Issues involving early learning facilities [8.a]
  ▪ Innovative efforts to improve (esp. as they affect focal populations) [8.b]
  ▪ Current plans to address issues [8.c]
  ▪ Opportunities for different early learning programs to work together to improve early learning facilities [8.d]
• Connecting families in crisis to needed programs and services through the early learning system [6.e]
• Connecting children who are non-English speaking or reflect different cultures to services through the early learning system (esp. focal populations) [6.f]
• Need for continued data coordination
• Need to address financial modeling to demonstrate cost of quality across services
• Needs to address multiple financing barriers (cost allocation, braiding and blending, etc.)
• Strengths and weaknesses of data
  o To support collaboration between programs/services
  o On early learning facilities [8.e]

How we know what works [7.a–b]
  • Outcomes framework
- Kindergarten readiness data
- Health outcomes data
- Economic security data

- Evaluation sources/tools
  - ESA
  - ECEAP
  - Home Visiting
  - Child welfare data
- Initiatives to address data gaps

Conclusion
Resources
Glossary
Proposed Approach to Community Outreach
Needs Assessment and Development of Strategic Plan
DRAFT for Steering Committee
June 14, 2019

Background
The process to complete the statewide needs assessment and strategic plan for early learning will include two phases of community outreach in 2019: phase 1 for the development of the Needs Assessment and phase 2 for the creation of the new statewide strategic plan.

Phase 1 Needs Assessment
The Needs Assessment is intended to serve as a useful tool for state agencies, statewide organizations, tribes, families, providers, advocates and local communities to describe the strengths, challenges and needs of our state’s early learning system, with a particular focus on understanding the strengths, experiences and needs of our state’s most vulnerable communities.

The Needs Assessment is also intended to describe the system strengths and current gaps in services and supports for children, families and early learning providers.

The purpose of Phase 1 outreach is to engage in conversation with communities and partners related to the draft Needs Assessment (or a detailed outline). Some examples of prompt questions for these conversations are:

• Based on your experience, are high quality early learning services available in your community? Are they meeting the needs of children and families? Why or why not?
• What types of services do you think are important for young children and families in your community?
• As an early learning provider, what do you experience as key strengths and challenges in providing services in your community?
• Does the data provide an accurate and useful snapshot of early learning needs, particularly for vulnerable populations?
• Will the Needs Assessment be useful for local communities to better understand their needs and service gaps?
• Does the draft accurately identify the key gaps in existing services?
• What additional information or data is needed for more fully describe

The insights, ideas, and information learned during the community outreach process will be summarized and shared with the PDG Steering Committee and used to shape the draft and create a final Needs Assessment.

The schedule for the Phase 1 outreach is to conduct outreach roughly during the month of July. The final Needs Assessment is scheduled to be complete by mid-August.
**Approach to Phase 1 Outreach**

The plan is to create an outreach strategy with four components: 1) community-centered meetings to engage in deep conversations with specific communities across the state; 2) meetings with key partners involved in the early learning system, 3) Webinars which would enable a broad range of interested parties to participate in discussion about the draft Needs Assessment, and 4) an online survey which provides an option for partners to respond and participate in providing ideas and insights when they might not be able to participate in other outreach opportunities.

**Community-Centered Meetings**
A series of meetings will be scheduled across the state, with a particular focus on meeting with communities that are experiencing high levels of toxic stress and/or historically do not have a voice in processes like these. These conversations will specifically engage: immigrant and refugee communities; communities of color; communities known to have the highest rates of child maltreatment; communities with extreme poverty; communities with high numbers of people that speak a first language other than English; communities experiencing high rates of homelessness; etc. The meetings will attempt to create deep conversations regarding the experiences, perspectives and needs of the people living in these communities. The meetings will be organized in partnership with trusted community partners.

**Meetings with Key Partners**
Every effort will be made to leverage opportunities where groups and associations have scheduled meetings in place in the July time frame to engage in conversations about the draft. For other partners, requests will be made to convene special meetings for the purpose of discussing the draft Needs Assessment. Examples of the range of partners who may participate in these meetings include tribes; child welfare advocates; parents/families; early learning providers; local, state and federal government partners; children’s health and mental health advocates; coalitions; advocates; legislative staff; community-based organizations; business community; and many other potential organizations and partners.

**Webinars**
Given the limited window for the Phase 1 outreach, it will be important to provide all interested parties an opportunity to review materials, ask questions and provide comments on the draft Needs Assessment. Several Webinars will be created to allow those who would like to participate in a group setting but cannot participate in the scheduled meetings described above, to participate in the outreach process.

**Online Survey**
For those unable to participate in either the partner meetings of the group settings, or would prefer to provide comments in a more private setting, there will be an online survey so solicit comments about the draft plan.
Questions for Steering Committee about Phase 1 Outreach

➢ Do you have general comments or reactions to the outreach approach?
➢ Do you have specific suggestions for groups or organizations that we should reach out to?
➢ Do you have suggestions for specific communities we should reach out to for the purpose of having deep community-centered conversations?

Approach to Phase 2 Outreach
Outreach in Phase 2 will involve a similar outreach approach (to Phase 1) for the draft strategic plan. Participants may be asked questions such as:

• Do the draft strategies address the most important early learning needs and values for early learning in Washington State?
• Will the strategies address the needs in your community?
• Is anything missing from the strategic plan?
• Do you agree with the priorities suggested by the plan?

The information collected during the Phase 2 outreach will be summarized and provided to the PDG Steering Committee and used to inform the draft plan and prepare the final Strategic Plan. A summary of comments received will be posted on the project web site.

The outreach will occur in Fall 2019, with the final plan scheduled to be completed in December.

Approach to Phase 2 Outreach
There are no detailed plans yet for the Phase 2 outreach, but it is likely to follow a similar outline as the approach to Phase 1.