

WASHINGTON STATE'S RACE TO THE TOP – EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE

Year 1 progress report | 2013



Washington State Department of
Early Learning

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

In December 2011, Washington won a \$60 million federal Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant to build a statewide early learning system. The Department of Early Learning (DEL) and our partners identified three primary goals for doing that:

- ▶ Improve the quality of early learning and development programs and services.
- ▶ Close the achievement gap for children with high needs.
- ▶ Increase the number of low-income and disadvantaged enrolled in high-quality early learning and development programs.

Washington is using the RTT-ELC award, in conjunction with other early funding, to scale three primary system initiatives:

- ▶ Early Achievers
- ▶ The Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS)
- ▶ Professional development for early care professionals

This report provides a progress report on the first year of implementation on these three initiatives.

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING



The process of applying for the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge was an inspiring opportunity—essentially, figure out how to better organize our early learning programs to ensure that children are benefitting the most from them. We took up the challenge, knowing how important it was and how fierce the competition was going to be. Washington won, in large part because we have our state Early Learning Plan to build upon and years of hard work from partners in every corner of the state who are committed to building a strong foundation for kids.

Washington's application focused on three key initiatives to ensure teachers and early learning professionals have the tools, training, and resources to support children and families: Early Achievers, WaKIDS, and professional development. These three initiatives form the backbone of Washington's early learning system; by bringing these efforts to scale around the state, we expect to improve outcomes for all of Washington's youngest learners.

Washington is putting the \$60 million grant from the federal government to work by implementing our early education reform plan outlined in our application. This feels both like a tremendous amount of money and a drop in the bucket of needed resources. At DEL, we are committed to making the most of every penny to build a sustainable, high-quality system that will ensure that every child in Washington has the opportunity to start kindergarten with a solid foundation for success in school and life.

Thank you for being a part of this work with us.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Betty Hays". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

RACE TO THE TOP – EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE (RTT-ELC) GOALS



Key Strategies	Progress to Date As of December 31, 2012...	Four-Year Targets By 2015...
<p>Early Achievers: Washington's voluntary program for helping licensed child care and Head Start/ECEAP providers offer high-quality care.</p>	<p>Early Achievers: Enrolled 913 programs serving 31,295 children (114% of 2012 participation target)</p>	<p>Early Achievers: 3,982 programs (54% of child care centers and family homes) will participate in Early Achievers, serving 72,725 children</p>
<p>WaKIDS: The Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) is a process that helps to ensure a successful start to K-12.</p>	<p>WaKIDS: Reached 22,710 children (30% of entering kindergartners) in 307 schools in 105 districts in Washington (88% of 2012 participation target)</p>	<p>WaKIDS: Reach 74,972 children (100%) entering public schools by 2014-15 school year</p>
<p>Professional Development: Supporting those who care for and teach young children.</p>	<p>Professional Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 17,570 professionals registered in MERIT (88% of 2012 target) ▶ 3-stage stackable ECE certificate ▶ 198 state-approved trainers 	<p>Professional Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 20,000 professionals registered in MERIT ▶ All training grounded in Core Competencies and Early Learning Guidelines

WASHINGTON'S RTT-ELC PROGRESS TO DATE

Washington's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Performance Tracker

Early Achievers: Levels 2 to 5

	Dec. 31, 2012	2012 Targets	Progress to date	2012 target met?
Total Programs	913	802	114%	✓
Head Start and ECEAP Sites	181	152	119%	✓
Licensed Child Care Programs	732	650	113%	✓
Family home child care	415	439	95%	
Child care centers	317	211	150%	✓
Total Children Served	31,295	20,265	154%	✓
Licensed Child Care Programs	20,106	14,928	135%	✓
Head Start and ECEAP	11,189	5,337	210%	✓

WaKIDS: 2012-13 school year

	Projected 2012-13 School Year	Targets 2012-13 School Year	Progress To Date	
Districts	105	N/A	N/A	
Schools	307	N/A	N/A	
Teachers	1,036	1,138	91%	
Students	22,710	25,714	88%	



WASHINGTON EARLY ACHIEVERS

Every Child Care Aware region in Washington met 2012 targets to reach 732 child care centers and 20,106 children.

High-quality child care helps children get ready for success in kindergarten and beyond. Yet child care quality varies considerably in Washington. Early Achievers, Washington's quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), is a voluntary program for helping licensed child care providers offer high-quality care. Early Achievers:

- ▶ Connects families to child care and early learning programs with the help of an easy-to-understand rating system
- ▶ Offers technical assistance, coaching and incentives for child care providers to support each child's learning and development. Research shows this kind of assistance helps providers improve the quality of their programs

Challenges and lessons learned

- ▶ Ensuring continuity of implementation across all regions of the state is critical.
- ▶ Programs need varying levels of support and varying amounts of time to complete Level 2 requirements.
- ▶ Additional training on the program standards is needed at all levels in the system.



EARLY ACHIEVERS YEAR 1 HIGHLIGHTS

KEY PARTNERS IN EARLY ACHIEVERS

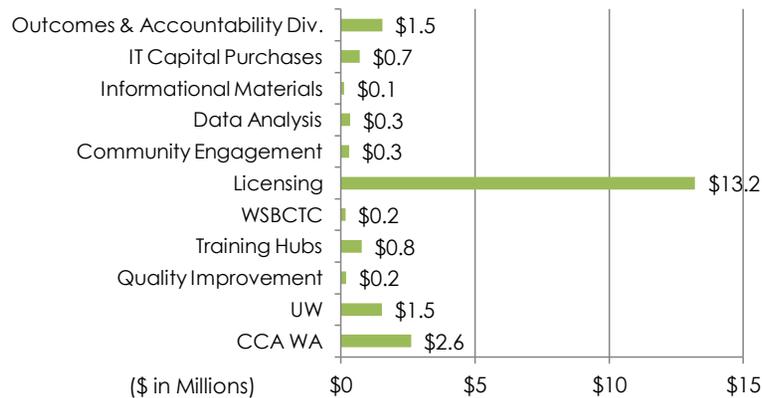


UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

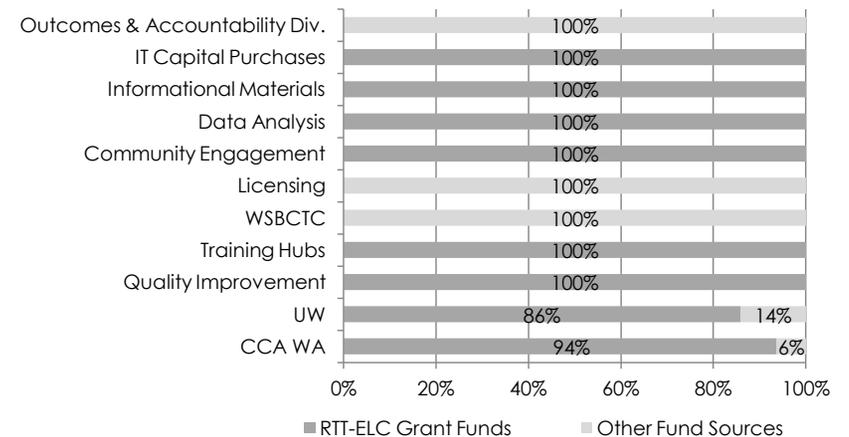


- ▶ 732 child care centers and home enrolled with a capacity to serve 20,106 children.
- ▶ Nine Head Start and ECEAP grantees with 181 sites serving 11,189 children participated in an Early Achievers pilot.
- ▶ All Child Care Aware of Washington (CCA) regions met or exceeded their 2012 RTT-ELC enrollment targets; CCA has strengthened its capacity to provide technical assistance and training in every region of the state.
- ▶ The University of Washington began a pre/post study on the Early Achievers levels and the pre/post gains in children's learning, development, and school readiness.
- ▶ Professional Training Series launched, comprising six required trainings for Level 2 participants of Early Achievers.

2012 Funding for Early Achievers



2012 Funding Share for Early Achievers



WASHINGTON KINDERGARTEN INVENTORY OF DEVELOPING SKILLS (WAKIDS)

The Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) is a process that helps to ensure a successful start to the K-12 experience. WaKIDS has three components:



**22,710 kindergartners
participated in
WaKIDS in 2012.**

- ▶ Family connection welcomes families into the Washington K-12 system as partners in their child's education.
- ▶ Whole-child assessment gives kindergarten teachers information about the social and emotional, physical, cognitive and linguistic development of children in their classrooms so they may tailor instruction to the needs of each child.
- ▶ Early learning collaboration aligns practices of early learning professionals and kindergarten teachers to support smooth transitions for children.

Challenges and lessons learned

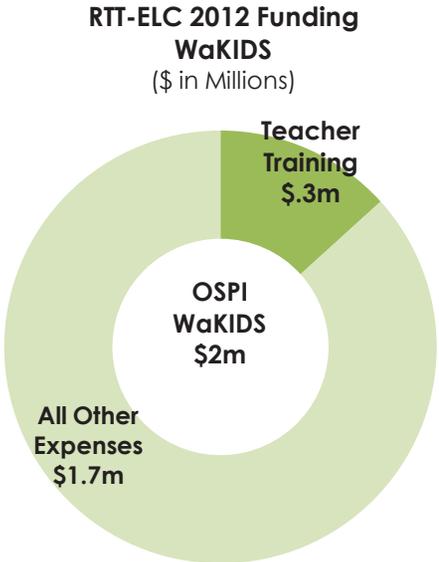
- ▶ Administering WaKIDS in half-day kindergarten classrooms is challenging due to limited time. WaKIDS takes time from classroom instruction, including time to administer the assessment, family visits, and data entry.
- ▶ Teachers and principals found the Family Connection component of WaKIDS to be extremely beneficial.
- ▶ Principals need additional opportunities to understand the purpose of WaKIDS, its connections to other state initiatives, and how to assist their teachers in both administering the assessment and using data to guide future instruction.

WAKIDS YEAR 1 HIGHLIGHTS

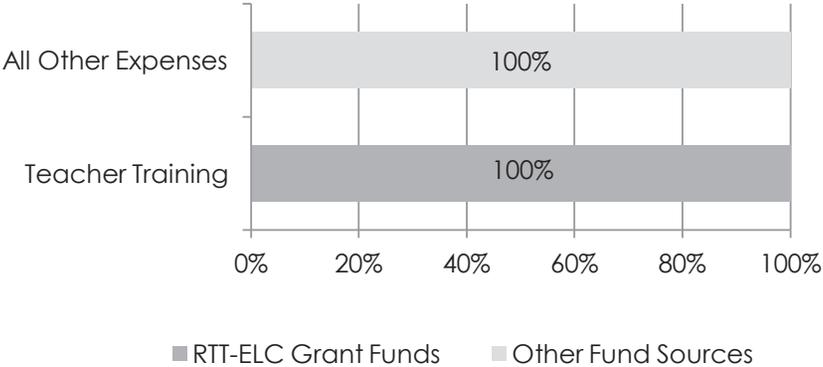
KEY PARTNERS IN WAKIDS



- ▶ WaKIDS reached 23% of Washington kindergartners, implementing the three elements of the kindergarten transition.
- ▶ 1,036 teachers in 102 districts participated in WaKIDS, including 308 schools with 22,710 incoming kindergartners.
- ▶ Results from the Fall 2012 administration of Teaching Strategies GOLD have been available to teachers, principals, and school district administrators since November 2012. OSPI posted the results on its website in January 2013.



WaKIDS 2012 Funding Share



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

11 community colleges launched “stackable” certificates in Early Childhood Education.

Those who care for and teach young children need information and resources to support them as early care and education and school-age professionals. Research shows that increased training and education for early learning professionals relates to higher-quality interactions with children.

In Washington, we can improve the quality of early learning programs by increasing the skills and education levels of those who work with children. Providing clear professional development pathways and training for those who work with young children brings recognition and professionalism to the field of early learning. This supports the development of high-quality services for children and families.

Challenges and lessons learned

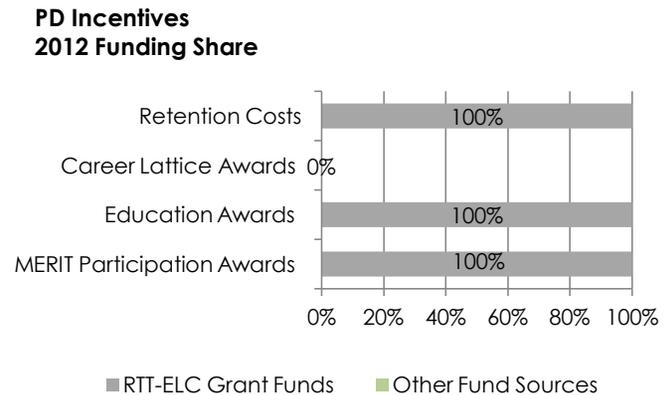
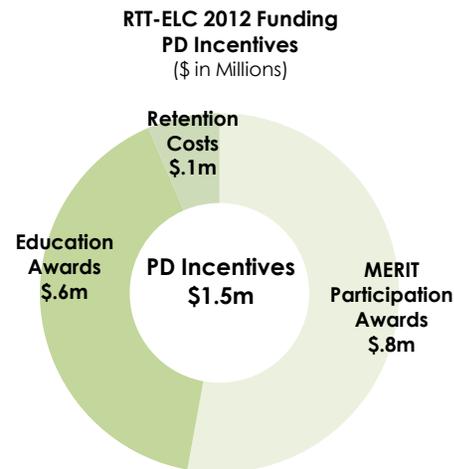
- ▶ MERIT, Washington’s professional development registry system, required additional technical assistance statewide to support registration. DEL responded by training super-users across the state who can help early learning professionals enroll in MERIT.
- ▶ Additional regional support is needed for ongoing MERIT support.
- ▶ In 2013, professional development incentives tied to the 15-step Career Lattice will increase participation in MERIT, acknowledge pre-existing training and education through one-time awards, and provide incentives to professionals who take advantage of RTT-ELC scholarships and move up the Lattice as we meet our targets for increased early learning education levels.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT YEAR 1 HIGHLIGHTS

KEY PARTNERS IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

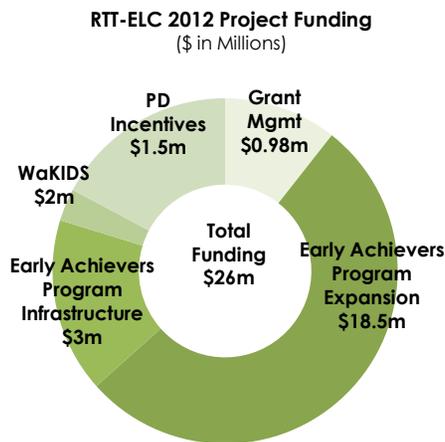


- ▶ 17,570 early learning professionals registered in MERIT, Washington’s professional development registry system. MERIT also tracks workforce data that will help DEL and partners better support early learning professionals.
- ▶ DEL and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges created “stackable” certificates. Two new certificates and one state credential at 11 community colleges align with the early learning core competencies, build upon each other, and feature common course descriptions, course titles and learning objectives.
- ▶ DEL launched a trainer approval process that ensures all trainings are grounded in the state’s core competencies and early learning guidelines.
- ▶ Seven community colleges offer Opportunity Grants to low-income professionals who work in Early Achievers programs. Washington Scholarships have expanded to support professionals employed in Early Achievers programs.



2012 RTT-ELC: BUDGET SUMMARY

Overall RTT-ELC first-year project expenditures were \$24 million, 92 percent of the budgeted \$26 million. The following themes highlight RTT-ELC calendar year 2012 expenditures by expense category:

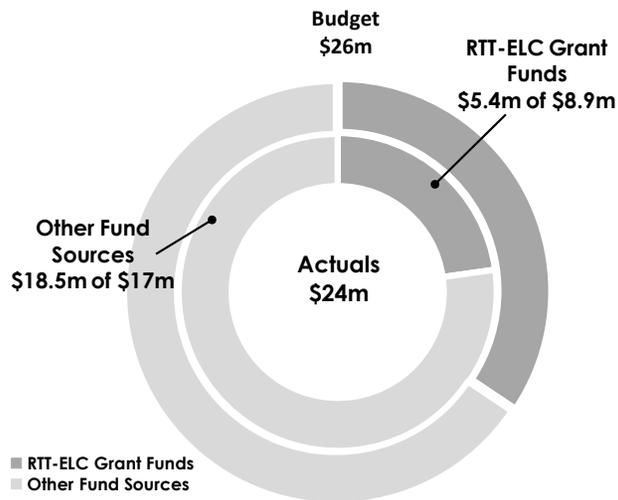


- ▶ **Early Achievers:** Early Achievers represents 82 percent of the grant year 1 budget. DEL has increased non-RTT funds dedicated to RTT-ELC IT systems infrastructure, much of which can be attributed to continuing development work on the MERIT and the Web-based Early Learning System (WELS).
- ▶ **WaKIDS:** Costs reported in this budget category were \$2.4 million; the budget for WaKIDS was \$2 million, which represents 8 percent of the total grant year 1 budget. Major line-item expenses include train the trainers, professional development, assessment materials, student registration costs, and administration.
- ▶ **Professional development:** Washington did not incur expenses in this category in 2012, which resulted in under-spending \$1.5 million that was in the grant year 1 budget. DEL determined it needed to build a payment system prior to releasing professional development awards. This payment system launched in January 2013.
- ▶ **Grant management:** The grant management budget of \$1 million represents 4 percent of the total 2012 grant budget. DEL incurred a \$700,000 positive variance in this category, primarily due to timing as DEL is drawing down funds for implementation prep and IT technical assistance over a longer time horizon than originally planned to help monitor and manage the initial stages of implementation.

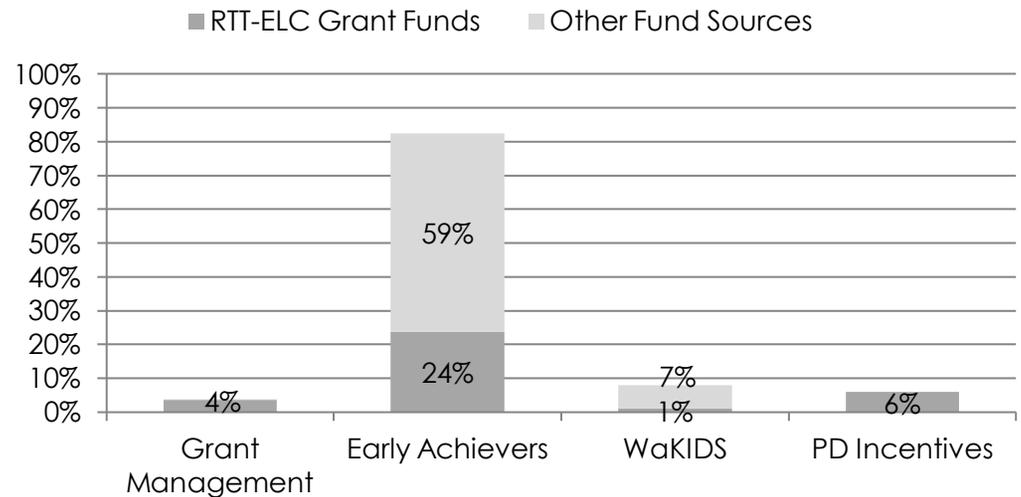
YEAR 1 FINANCIAL REVIEW

	2012 Budget & Expenditures		RTT-ELC Grant Funded		Other Fund Sources	
	Budgeted	Expended	Budgeted	Expended	Budgeted	Expended
Early Achievers	21,483,690	21,298,717	6,195,885	4,685,475	15,287,805	16,613,242
WaKIDS	2,046,723	2,423,228	271,728	482,799	1,774,995	1,940,429
Professional Development	1,543,463	0	1,543,463	0	0	0
Grant Management	987,150	298,801	950,583	298,801	36,567	0
TOTAL	26,061,026	24,020,746	8,961,659	5,467,075	17,099,367	18,553,671

RTT-ELC 2012 Budget & Actuals
(\$ in Millions)



RTT-ELC 2012 Budget



CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED



- ▶ **Sustainability:** RTT-ELC provides Washington with temporary resources to build systems and programs to improve outcomes for young children. DEL has carefully managed the budget to focus RTT-ELC dollars on one-time expenses and reallocate existing funding for ongoing costs. Ensuring adequate funding to continue the work beyond RTT-ELC grant funding is essential to promote the success of all children in Washington.
- ▶ **Complexity:** Simultaneously building and scaling statewide programs has been challenging for partners in this work. It has required everyone to work at top speed, often while not at full organizational capacity. Decisions have needed to be revisited as more is learned through implementation. Learning and refining will continue moving forward.
- ▶ **Balancing consistent quality standards with regional differences:** It is critical to ensure that all children have access to high-quality programs, regardless of where they live. It is also critical to recognize very real and important regional differences in Washington that impact program implementation.
- ▶ **Change is hard:** Scaling Early Achievers, WaKIDS, and professional development opportunities around the state has brought tremendous change to the work of dozens of organizations and thousands of teachers and professionals who care for children. While these changes are essential to improving outcomes for children, they can cause a lot of disruption during the process.
- ▶ **Capacity at all levels:** Bringing new initiatives to scale required building new capacity in organizations around the state, at every level in the early learning system. Much of year 1 focused on recruiting, hiring, and training talented professionals to lead and manage the work. Staffing and infrastructure have been added throughout the system.

LOOKING AHEAD

Moving into year 2, Washington's early learning reform effort will begin the shift from development of new systems and processes to full-scale implementation of a high-quality early learning system built to children's learning and development. For example:



- ▶ While many Early Achievers programs were rated in 2012 through the Head Start/ECEAP pilot, Early Achievers will begin the rating process for child care providers in 2013. As a result, Early Achievers will start to provide coaching and quality improvement awards to participants at higher quality levels.
- ▶ WaKIDS will continue to expand to more schools and will refine its processes as implementation is scaled throughout the state.
- ▶ Professional development incentives are designed to support early learning professionals as they progress on the Washington State Career Lattice. Distribution of incentives began in January 2013.

Moving from development to implementation will no doubt bring future learning as well as the opportunity to impact the most at-risk children. With the foundation in place, all levels of the early learning system are embracing continuous quality improvement as the method to support children, families and providers.



Early Achievers and professional development

- ▶ **Department of Early Learning:** www.del.wa.gov
- ▶ **Child Care Aware of Washington:** www.wa.childcareaware.org
- ▶ **Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges:** www.sbctc.ctc.edu

WaKIDS

- ▶ **Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction:** www.k12.us.wa
- ▶ **Thrive by Five Washington:** www.thrivebyfivewa.org

