



Head Start/ECEAP Reciprocity Pilot Project

Executive Summary

July 2013

Pilot overview

Early Achievers, Washington’s voluntary quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), was designed to support high quality learning environments for children in child care centers, family home child care, and preschool programs. Ensuring consistent high-quality programs for children, regardless of the setting, is critical to improving outcomes for Washington’s youngest learners. The Department of Early Learning (DEL) recently conducted a voluntary pilot project with Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program and Head Start providers (ECEAP/Head Start) to determine the best ways to incorporate these preschool programs into Early Achievers.

Many states allow state-funded preschool programs an automatic entry into the higher tiers of their QRIS. DEL took the opportunity to have ECEAP and Head Start programs volunteer to participate in a QRIS pilot to gather data to inform final decisions on how these programs should participate in Early Achievers. The data DEL gathered includes the alignment between Early Achievers standards and existing ECEAP/Head Start standards, and the strengths and challenges that exist in these programs.

Pilot goals

The primary goal of the pilot was to develop a streamlined process for Head Start and ECEAP participation in Early Achievers that builds upon existing practices and monitoring to avoid duplication when possible. Specifically, the pilot programs:

- Tested and implemented Early Achievers registration and application procedures to see how they work in ECEAP/Head Start.
- Provided feedback and input to help define the roles of both grantees/contractors and individual ECEAP/Head Start sites in Early Achievers.
- Participated in data collection to measure how ECEAP/Head Start programs are able to demonstrate quality using Early Achievers tools. The data identified ECEAP/Head Start program strengths and helped determine an Early Achievers participation pathway that builds in credit for programs’ existing quality practices and performance standards.

Including ECEAP/Head Start in Early Achievers is integral to ensuring that all children in Washington enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school and life. ECEAP/Head Start serve some of the highest-need children in Washington and are an essential part of the Washington early learning system. ECEAP/Head Start are state leaders of quality and can share this

Pilot facts at a glance

- DEL invited nine Head Start and ECEAP programs to participate (about 180 sites)
- Pilot ran from summer 2012 through April 2013
- The nine programs represented 45 percent of children enrolled in Head Start and ECEAP in Washington
- Pilot sites had a wide variety of features, including:
 - Geographic location
 - Population served
 - Program models
 - Program size
 - Program configuration

For more information:
www.del.wa.gov/qriscare

leadership to support Early Achievers. Many Early Achievers program standards, such as family support and engagement, assessment, curriculum and individualization, are modeled after ECEAP/Head Start programs.

Results

Early Achievers uses a point-based system to determine a quality rating for each participating site. In addition, sites must meet a minimum threshold on each of the observational assessments—CLASS and the Environment Rating Scale (ERS)—in order to rate a level 3 or higher. Pilot data show that Washington’s Head Start and ECEAP programs are able to demonstrate quality at levels 3 to 5 using their existing practices and program implementation.

Lessons learned

✓ Strong program alignment

Programs that participated in the pilot reported a high degree of alignment between Early Achievers and Head Start/ECEAP. So, Early Achievers participation can be integrated into other Head Start/ECEAP quality assurance activities and goals. Pilot participants reported that Early Achievers activities provided them with new and valuable information about site- and classroom-specific quality.

✓ Head Start/ECEAP programs demonstrate high levels of quality in many of the Early Achievers Quality Standard areas

Pilot data showed that Head Start/ECEAP programs are able to demonstrate high levels of quality through their existing program practices, procedures and policies.

Pilot participants			
Name	Counties	Children	
Community Colleges of Spokane	Spokane	HS: 879	ECEAP: 70
Denise Louie Education Center	King	HS: 244	ECEAP: 0
Puget Sound ESD (ESD 121)	King, Pierce	HS: 1,960	ECEAP: 2,194
Kitsap Community Resources	Kitsap	HS: 298	ECEAP: 85
Lower Columbia Community College	Cowlitz	HS: 320	ECEAP: 178
Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe	Clallum	HS: 64	ECEAP: 0
Rural Resources Community Action Program	Pend Oreille, Stevens	HS: 154	ECEAP: 32
St. James Family Center	Wahkiakum	HS: 0	ECEAP: 24
Washington State Migrant Council	Grant, Walla Walla, Yakima	HS: 3,256	ECEAP: 831
Total		HS: 7,175	ECEAP: 4,014

Head Start includes Head Start, Early Head Start, American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Head Start, AI/AN Early Head Start and Migrant-Seasonal Head Start.

	Early Achievers Head Start/ECEAP pilot results			Pilot sites at levels 3-5
	Possible range of points	Required minimum	Average pilot score	
CLASS (Emotional support and classroom organization)	1-7	3.5	5.27	100%
CLASS (Instructional support)	1-7	2	2.43	72%
ERS	1-7	3.5	3.64	68%
All other program standards	Up to 35	n/a	27	100%

Implications of the pilot for Head Start/ECEAP participation

Early Achievers level 2 was designed as a “readiness” level that provides programs with an opportunity to receive free training and technical assistance prior to being rated through observational assessments. The pilot demonstrated that ECEAP and Head Start program standards are preparing programs to enter Early Achievers without the prerequisites of level 2. Pilot data showed that Head Start and ECEAP programs were, on average, providing a level of quality commensurate with an Early Achievers level 3 or higher.

The pilot demonstrated there are mutual benefits for Head Start/ECEAP programs to participate in Early Achievers. Head Start/ECEAP programs have many strengths that can benefit Early Achievers by sharing resources, experience, and expertise. Head Start/ECEAP programs can benefit from participation in Early Achievers through access to new information, data and resources to support their ongoing commitment to provide a consistent level of high-quality services to the state’s highest-need children. Thus, by participating in Early Achievers, the state’s Head Start/ECEAP programs can contribute to increasing quality in the surrounding system as a whole, and at the same time, continue to advance quality within Head Start and ECEAP itself.

The following differences from licensed child care will apply to Head Start and ECEAP programs that enroll in Early Achievers. Head Start/ECEAP programs will:

- Enter at a Level 3.
- Be strongly encouraged to demonstrate higher EA quality levels 4 or 5 through a full on-site evaluation and streamlined rating process customized for Head Start/ECEAP.
- Not be eligible to receive ongoing Quality Improvement Awards that are available to licensed child care.
- Have the opportunity to apply to become local, regional, or statewide Training Resource Centers if they are rated at levels 4 or 5. Head Start/ECEAP programs that become training resource centers will receive a contract to share training, professional development and other resources with other Early Achievers participants.

“I am thankful that all of [the pilot programs] gave [their] time and effort to making this work. The integration of state systems where we all fit and understand how we can improve quality is important.”

*Katy Warren
Washington State Association of
Head Start & ECEAP*

Parallel paths to Early Achievers participation

Children in Washington are cared for in many different settings throughout their early years. Early Achievers allows parents and staff to have a common understanding about high-quality services as children as well as staff move between settings. Early Achievers includes all programs (licensed child care, Head Start, and ECEAP), creating a statewide system that supports care for children along a common continuum of quality.



What's next?

Training Resource Centers

Pilot participants have the opportunity to apply to become local, regional or state Training Resource Centers (TRC). The goal of the TRCs is to build upon the strengths of ECEAP and Head Start that were highlighted in the pilot so that licensed child care and other early learning programs can benefit from the expertise and resources of these programs. TRCs will share training resources with other Early Achievers participants in areas in which they demonstrated strengths in the pilot. DEL anticipates awarding the first round of TRC contracts to pilot participants in Fall 2013.

Expansion

It was apparent through the pilot that ECEAP/HS programs have much to gain and much to offer Early Achievers. DEL is using the information from the pilot to develop pathways for ECEAP and Head Start programs that will encourage more programs to participate in Early Achievers. ECEAP and Head Start programs that did not participate in the pilot will have the opportunity to join Early Achievers in Fall 2013.

The full pilot report and reciprocity plan are on DEL's website at www.del.wa.gov/care/qris.

"When we stepped in we were worried with the size of our program: 4,000-plus kids and different organizations [including] child care. It has been beneficial to see our strengths. The level of information that we got is amazing, not only for our programs but for each classroom. Now I have the keys, the antidote. If we do not support the foundational base of the classroom then it is hard to improve instructional support."

*Luba Bezbordnikova
Puget Sound ESD*

