



2009 State Advocacy Goals

1. **Maintain investments in the Early Childhood Education Assistance and Program (ECEAP)**

WSA opposes any effort to cut funding for ECEAP programs. ECEAP has a strong track record of getting low income children ready for school. In a 12-year longitudinal study, researchers found that ECEAP children made significantly greater academic gains, displayed more positive behaviors, enjoyed school more, and had fewer health problems than non-ECEAP children.

2. **Reform components of the existing child care subsidy program so that low-income parents can give their children the stability of care they need.**

The current child care subsidy system does a poor job of ensuring that low income children receive consistent, high quality care. The Department of Early Learning requires parents receiving a child care subsidy to renew their applications every 6 months and sometimes more frequently. Small changes for a family can unfortunately mean kids lose out on consistent access to programs. Increasing efficiency in the system will give more kids a fair chance to access high quality early learning.

We are calling upon the Governor and state lawmakers to phase in these proposed changes:

- change the current renewal process for families receiving child care subsidies from 6 months to 1 year starting with Head Start and ECEAP families;
 - establish more flexibility in the number of paid absences; and
 - limit to 10 percent of income the amount families would be required to contribute in co-pays.
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3. **Protect \$3.5 million for Council for Children and Families home visiting programs that serve 1,600 at-risk families per biennium.**

Parents are their children's first and most important teachers and research shows that home visiting programs provide parents with the support they need to get their children ready for school.

4. **Adopt Basic Education Finance Task Force recommendation to include early learning in the definition of basic education.**

Including preschool for all children from low-income families in the definition of basic education would narrow the kindergarten readiness gap by ensuring that at a minimum 12,500 currently eligible children not being served by Head Start or ECEAP would have access to quality early learning. The Washington Head Start model (following the completion of the WA Head Start study) can form the basis of the basic education preschool program.
