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## WSA State Advocacy Goals for 2010

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

WSA opposes any effort to further cut funding for ECEAP programs. Despite the increase in the number of eligible families due to the economic downturn, 173 children were dropped from the program this year due to the state budget crisis. We believe that ECEAP serves as an important safety net for low income families and has built a strong track record of getting low income children ready for school. In a 12-year longitudinal study of ECEAP 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 subsidies program so that low-income parents can give their children the continuity of care they need.**

WSA supports piloting several changes to the child care subsidies system including a) extending the authorization period for families from the current 6 months to 12 months; and b) capping family co-payments to 10 percent of income.

**3. Voluntary universal preschool for three- and four-year-olds should be included in an expanded definition of basic education. The program should be phased-in, beginning with targeted interventions and expanded to ensure that all children are *school ready*.**

By including early learning in the definition of basic education the state is making a strong and clear commitment to fund preschool services for all young children so they can enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

**4. Design an early learning system that provides opportunities for all children pre-natal to age 8, their families, and early learning caregivers and educators.**

WSA supports the recent initiative being worked on by State Superintendent Randy Dorn and Director Bette Hyde. We would like to suggest several key principles in guiding this important work. We believe a well designed system will:

- a. Establish greater intensity of services for greater need families;
- b. Build on the existing mixed delivery system;
- c. Be administered by the Department of Early Learning;
- d. Encourage strong parental involvement and engagement;
- e. Support the professional development and compensation needs of early learning caregivers and providers;
- f. Better align Head Start and ECEAP services for at risk families; and
- g. Establish a comprehensive pre-natal to age 3 component.