



Washington State Department of
Early Learning



Helping Children Realize Their Full Potential

2007 Annual Report



Director's Message



2007 was a year of incredible growth for our young agency. I am proud to be the founding director of a department that has the potential to change the way we as a state — indeed, a nation — think about children in their earliest years.

We know the first years of life are absolutely fundamental in a child's development. Quality early learning opportunities help ensure all Washington children grow up healthy, safe and excited to learn. The Department of Early Learning (DEL) is dedicated to supporting parents with the information and resources they want and need to make decisions for their family.

This past year was particularly exciting for DEL, as we moved past the "newborn" phase and dug into the challenge of creating a cohesive statewide early learning system. Among the biggest milestones for DEL in 2007:

- Seeing a historic boost in funding for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) that allowed more than 1,000 more families to join this comprehensive preschool program.
- Selecting pilot sites for the design phase of the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).
- Launching our Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC), a group offering us valuable feedback and beginning development of a statewide early learning plan.
- Disseminating millions of dollars to enhance child care quality, support literacy efforts and help community-based efforts offer innovative programs to parents.
- Working closely with Thrive by Five Washington to build a public-private partnership for early learning.

Looking ahead, 2008 promises to be a year filled with even more opportunities to help Washington's youngest citizens. I'm honored every day to serve as DEL Director, working with people who are so dedicated to helping children reach their full potential.

I encourage DEL staff to ask themselves every day, "What have I done to help a child today?" You'll see throughout this report various answers from DEL staff. Please join us in this work by asking yourself every day what you have done to help Washington's children.

Sincerely,

Jone M. Bosworth, J.D.

Director, Washington State Department of Early Learning

DEL Staff commitment

DEL staff committed to our agency's mission and vision in 2007 by signing their name at an all-staff meeting.

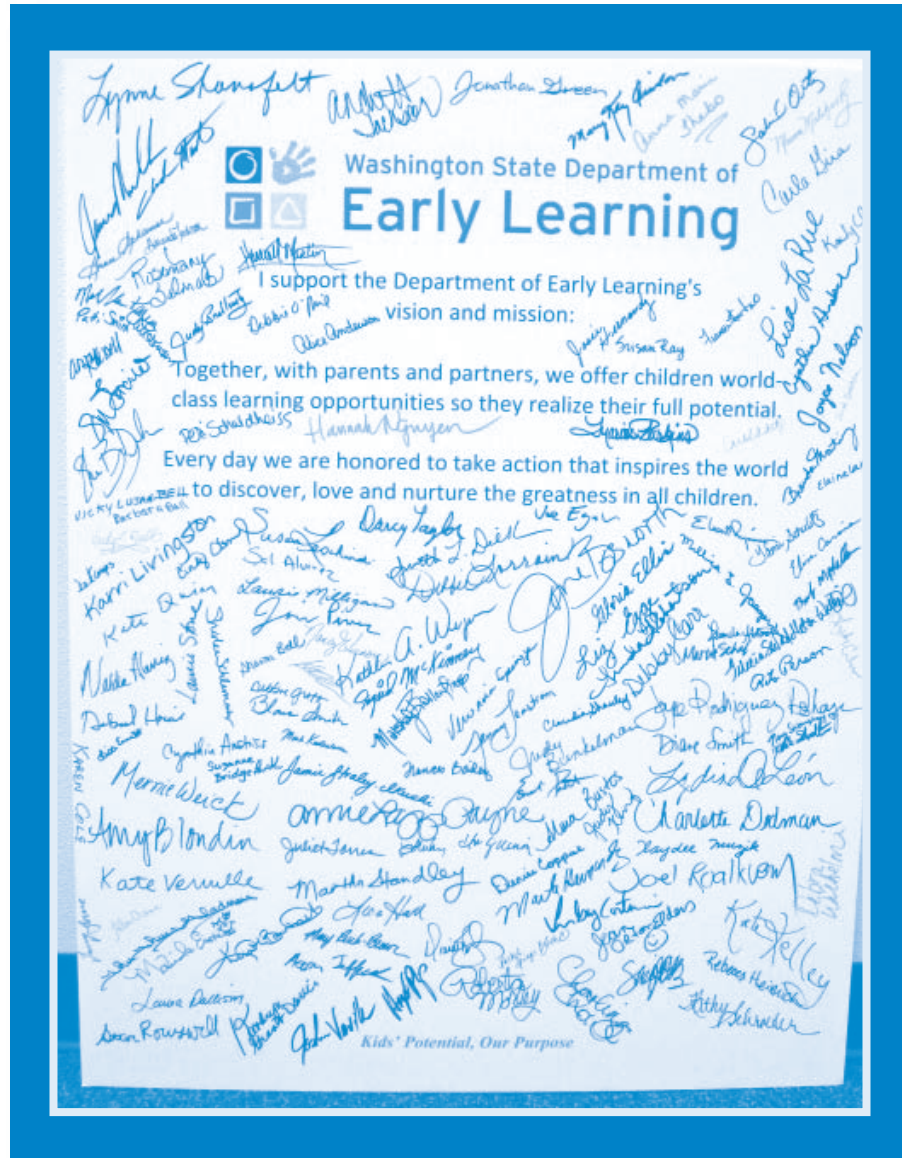




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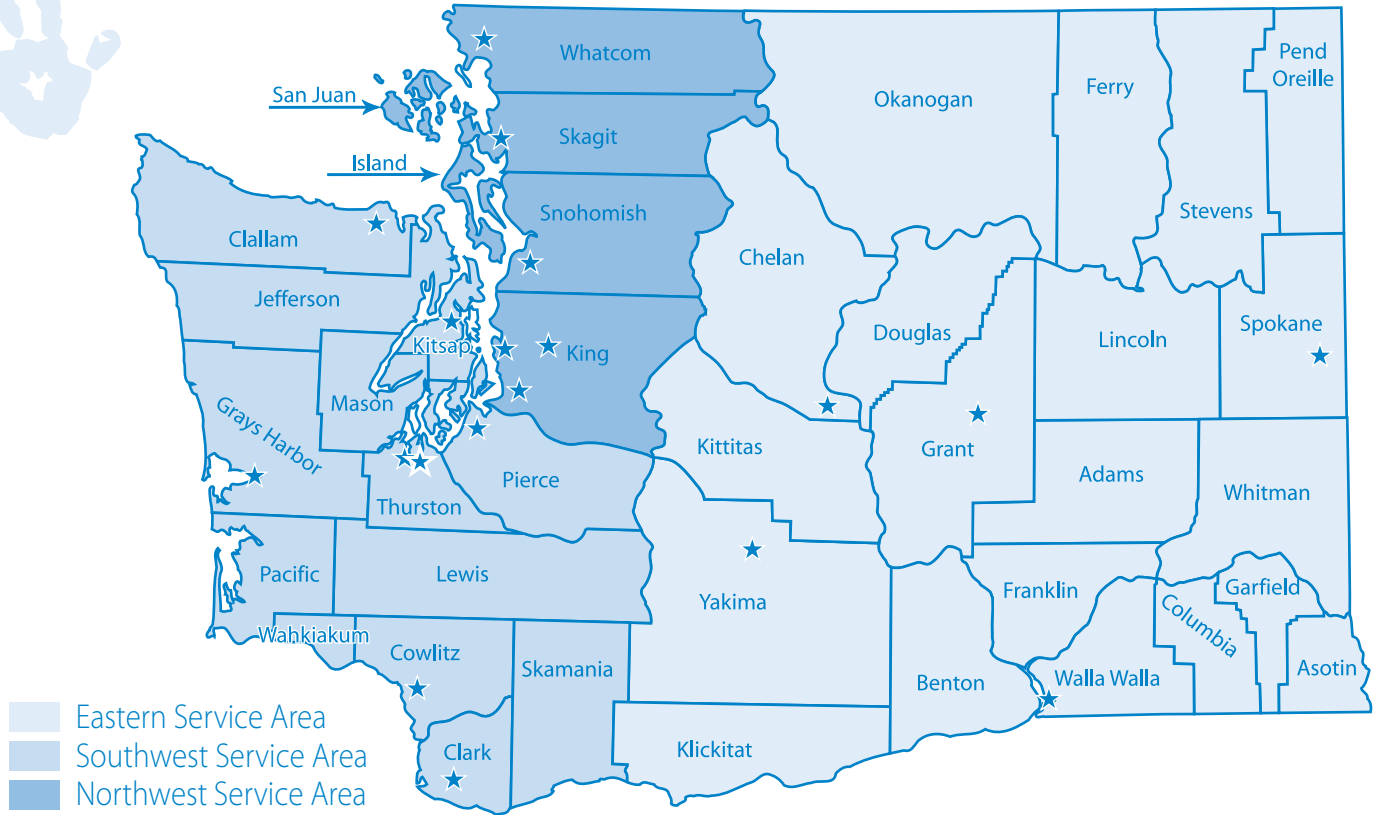
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**Licensed Child Care
 Information System**

www.del.wa.gov or
 (866) 482-4325

Family Help Line

(800) 932-HOPE

**Reporting suspected
 child abuse or neglect**

(866) END-HARM



DEL

Fast Facts



DEL was created

in 2006 as part of the recommendations of Washington Learns, an effort led by Governor Chris Gregoire to build a world-class, learner-focused seamless education system in Washington. Emergent brain research and economic studies have shown that investing in early childhood education promotes the best possible outcomes for children, families and the economy.

DEL's creation brings visibility and focus to early learning. Elevating early learning to a Cabinet-level agency places Washington at the forefront of the nation, positioning our state to become a model for increased school readiness.

DEL came into existence on July 1, 2006, under House Bill 2964. It brought together:

- The Division of Child Care and Early Learning, formerly part of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).
- The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), formerly part of the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED).
- The Early Reading Initiative, formerly part of the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Among our responsibilities at DEL:

- We oversee the 174,000 licensed child care enrollment slots in Washington. Our licensing professionals work with child care providers – both in homes and in child care centers – to support them in offering safe, healthy and nurturing environments.
- We fund the ECEAP, our state's whole-child, family-focused preschool program designed to help low-income and at-risk children and their families succeed in school and life.
- We set policy for the Working Connections Child Care subsidy program, which helps families pay for child care so they can find jobs, keep their jobs and get better jobs.
- We fund the Early Reading Initiative along with our private partner, Thrive by Five Washington, to encourage innovative local literacy and pre-literacy programs.

DEL's FY 2008-2009 budget (state and federal funding): \$329,903,000.



Making smart investments.....

Investing strategically in our youngest citizens is one of the smartest uses of state resources. Research shows that public investment in high-quality early learning programs yields future savings in the form of decreased crime, welfare dependency, illiteracy and unemployment. And children benefit when they start school ready to succeed.

In 2007, Washington made several smart investments to support families, including:

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is DEL's largest investment. This state-funded comprehensive preschool program for 4-year-olds offers educational, health, nutrition and family support services for low-income families. Children living in poverty are at greater risk for entering kindergarten not ready to learn.

In 2007, the Legislature made a historic investment in ECEAP, expanding the program by an additional 2,250 children and the adults in their lives for the 2007-2009 biennium, and increasing the rate for ECEAP providers to \$6,500 per slot. Already, more than 1,000 new families have enrolled in ECEAP, and we have increased the number of children served in ECEAP who:

- Speak a language other than English in their home
- Are in foster care at the time of enrollment
- Are homeless at the time of enrollment
- Have not had a medical or dental exam in the past year
- Are not yet fully immunized



“Every day, my son comes home excited about what he has learned.”

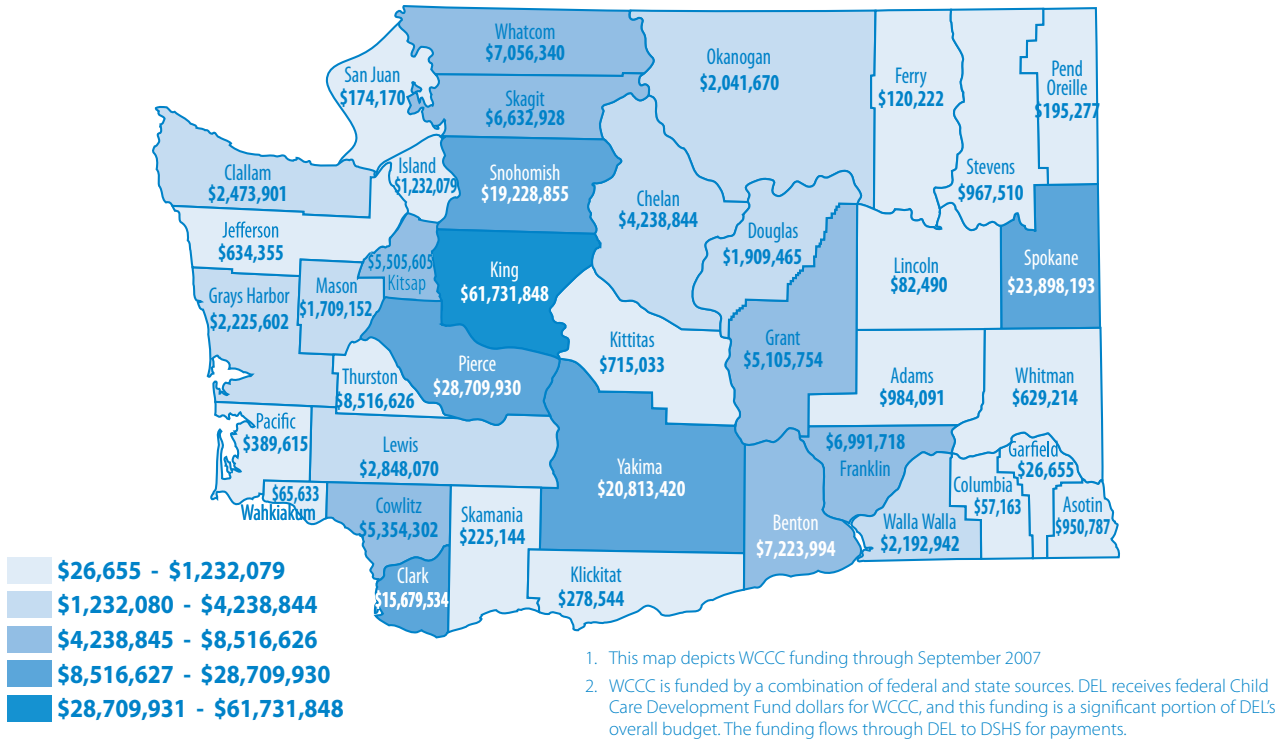
– ECEAP parent



Making Smart Investments cont.

Working Connections Child Care (WCCC)

Payments by County for State Fiscal Year



DEL partners with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) on the Working Connections Child Care subsidy program. DEL sets the policy for the program, while DSHS determines eligibility and makes payments directly to child care providers to support working parents.

DEL also sets policy and determines eligibility for Seasonal Child Care and Homeless Child Care programs, and contracts with community-based organizations to deliver the services.

What have you done to help a child today?

“I saw a non-English-speaking family at their intake interview who didn't qualify for the Seasonal Child Care program because they work year-round. They misunderstood some program rules for Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) and were afraid to call back. I contacted the WCCC hotline, explained the family's circumstances, handed the phone to the father and faxed all their paperwork for them. They left the office qualified for a child care subsidy program.”

– DEL Program Specialist **Jenny Lemstrom**



Reaching out to parents

We at DEL believe parents are children's first and most important teachers. They are the experts when it comes to their own children. Our primary role is to support parents with the information and resources they need to make early learning decisions for their family. In 2007, we worked to ensure all of our work was "parent-tested."

Parent Needs Assessment



In 2007, the Legislature funded a statewide parent needs assessment so DEL could better understand the specific supports, services, and information parents want and need to support healthy family development.



Partnering with SRI International, a national leader in independent early learning research, we have designed an assessment to be fielded in January and February 2008. The data gathered through focus groups and a statewide random survey will guide DEL's decisions in setting priorities and allocating future resources to support parents and families in nurturing and educating young children. The areas of primary interest include:

- How parents define the supports, services, and information they need for healthy family and child development.
- The accessibility and availability of desired supports, services, and information.
- Parental preferences for how they receive supports, services, and information.
- How parents of children ages birth to 6 define quality in child care and early learning settings.
- What parents believe their children's other caregivers and teachers need to support quality early learning opportunities for children.





Reaching out to parents **Cont.**

Access to child care information



Parents seeking licensed child care deserve accurate, easily accessible information about programs in their communities. DEL offers the Licensed Child Care Information System (LCCIS) as one way for parents to find out more about a child care provider's licensing history. In 2007, DEL began the first in a series of improvements to our online LCCIS (www.del.wa.gov/License/Lccis). Parents using the LCCIS can view information about valid licensing complaints, including a definition of the licensing violation and the relevant regulations. And of course, parents may always call our LCCIS line at (866) 482-4325 to speak to a DEL representative about a specific child care program.

We will continue making improvements to LCCIS in 2008 so parents can find the information they need quickly. DEL also will be launching a redesigned Web site in 2008 to help parents find the information and resources they need.

Enhancing parent support

DEL partnered with The Parent Trust for Washington's Children by investing \$215,000 to enhance the Family Help Line, a service that offers parenting information and support. DEL's contribution will:

- Expand the live help line services into evenings, an often stressful time for parents.
- Hire and train Spanish-English bilingual staff.
- Increase public awareness of the support and information available to parents.

Family help line: (800) 932-HOPE





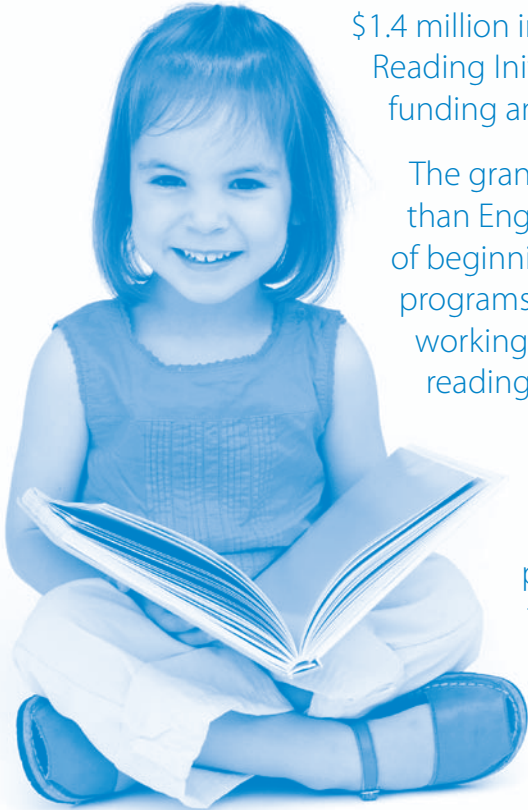
Reaching out to parents cont.

Early Reading Initiative

The road to literacy begins in a child's earliest years. DEL dedicated \$1.4 million in community-based literacy grants through the Early Reading Initiative. Our partner, Thrive by Five Washington, also provided funding and awarded the grants.

The grants serve children whose parents speak a language other than English, who live in rural areas, or who are otherwise at risk of beginning kindergarten without the necessary literacy skills. The programs receiving grants have demonstrated a clear commitment to working closely with parents to increase the amount of time spent reading with their young children.

Because early literacy is a key element of a child's development and means gaining skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, DEL is working with parents, providers and communities to produce a statewide framework for early literacy services. Our partner, Thrive by Five Washington, added funding and brought together communities for conversations about literacy. They awarded the grants and oversee them.



What have you done to **help a child today?**

“I am using technology and data to help our agency and staff reach their full potential so we can support children in realizing theirs.”

– DEL Southwest Service Area Manager **Joshua Verville**



Reaching out to parents cont.

Parent support projects

Because some of the best ideas for supporting families come at the local level, DEL dedicated \$320,000 to culturally relevant local parent and caregiver support projects in 2007. The local interest in accessing this funding was tremendous: From the more than 80 applications, we awarded grants to 22 projects in 17 counties.

The projects will offer support to parents and caregivers around the state. Among the projects:

- A project for East African immigrants to talk with each other about how to help their children transition to American schools.
- A family nutrition and health program at an organic farm in Lewis County.
- Monthly gatherings at the Kalispel Tribe's Early Learning Center for a family-style dinner, educational activities for parents and children, and developmentally appropriate books and materials for families to take home.
- "Learning baskets" filled with educational materials given to Latina moms during gatherings in their community.



Did
you
know?

DEL oversees more than
174,000 licensed child care
positions around the state.

Reaching out to parents cont.

Parent Advisory Group

Through monthly phone-in meetings, DEL uses its Parent Advisory Group as a “real-life” sounding board for decisions, ideas and questions that come up in our work. We hope to expand the Parent Advisory Group in 2008 so we can hear from an even more diverse group of parents.

Parents inform our work in other ways, too. We invite them to participate on hiring panels so the people who join our team have been “parent-approved.” Several parents have been appointed to serve on our Early Learning Advisory Council, where they will have a crucial voice in DEL’s work. In everything we do at DEL, we try to think about how it will affect parents, our primary customers.



Ensuring quality child care settings

Families have different needs when it comes to child care, and different ideas about what “quality” means to them. Our role is to help parents find the child care program that is right for their family. In 2007, DEL’s 85 licensing professionals worked to ensure that parents can trust that the 7,400 licensed child care providers statewide offer safe, healthy programs where children can thrive. We are dedicated to continuously improving Washington’s child care licensing system, one vital component of a statewide early learning system.



Enhancing licensing policy

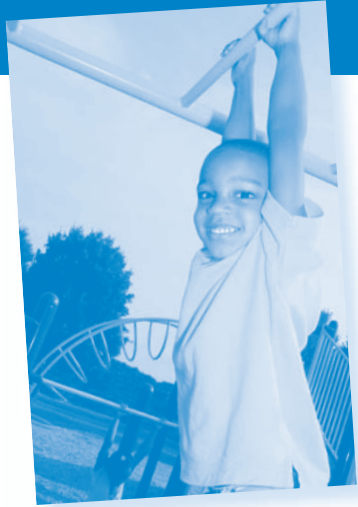
DEL’s Quality Division laid the groundwork in 2007 to strengthen our agency’s internal policy that guides our licensing staff in their work. A full quality improvement plan for our licensing work is expected in April 2008. A standing policy development team is working to identify areas where DEL needs more consistent policy and procedure, and reviewing existing policy and procedures to ensure they match state regulations and best practice models from around the nation. The team also is developing a statewide training curriculum for licensing staff.

Also in 2007, DEL commissioned the National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA) to review Washington’s child care statutes and licensing policy and procedures. As part of the report, NARA conducted a comprehensive workload study involving 84 percent of our licensing staff. This information will help DEL understand how we can achieve balanced caseloads and maximize the effectiveness of licensor visits to child care providers.

**“Being licensed
gives me the
confidence that
I’m a team player
and support is just
a phone call away.”**

– Grace, licensed child
care provider for 13 years

Ensuring quality **child care settings** cont.



Child care education and training

Like other professionals, early childhood care providers strive to increase their knowledge, skills and abilities. Working full-time and continuing their education, thousands of Washington's child care professionals were able to access DEL-funded scholarships, apprenticeships and training sessions in 2007.

This year, DEL launched a new project called "Building Bridges to Higher Education" in partnership with the Washington Association for Educators of Personnel in Early Childhood Programs. Building Bridges reached 700 child care providers in 22 communities around the state, enabling participants to meet their continuing education requirements while receiving college credit.

Since research shows increased education relates to the quality of care for children, DEL made key investments to support child care education and training in 2007:

- Washington Scholarships, a Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network program, provides funding for tuition, fees, books, travel stipends and release time. More than 500 licensed child care providers serving more than 6,000 children accessed these scholarships.
- The State Training and Registry Program (STARS) offers initial and ongoing child care provider training linked to minimum licensing requirements. The Washington Association for the Education of Young Children administers the training program that provided training scholarships to 6,418 child care providers.
- 700 child care providers participated in the Career and Wage Ladder program that allows 72 child care centers in Washington to pay annual wage increases to child care providers who raise their educational levels.
- The Early Childhood Apprenticeship Program combines classroom studies with supervised, on-the-job training and was reestablished in 2007. Clover Park Technical College offers this program to caregivers who have a high school diploma and are seeking child development certification.
- School's Out Washington benefited from DEL funding that supports training events throughout the state that target child care professionals working in after-school child care programs.

"I love touching the lives of young children. I love helping them gain quality life skills. We need some sort of standard to keep the kids safe. Licensing helps us to stay on track."

– Charmaine, licensed child care provider for seven years



Ensuring quality **child care settings** Cont.

- The Collaborative Leadership Institute is a 10-month leadership development program for emerging early learning leaders in Washington. DEL partners with the Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP, the Foundation for Early Learning, and Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network to offer this program that helps emerging leaders understand early learning as a system, increase self-awareness of personal leadership style and develop a project that benefits the community.



Child care consultation

Early learning caregivers tell us one of their biggest challenges is meeting the needs of young children who experience behavioral issues. Research suggests children with behavioral and emotional struggles in their earliest years are more likely to struggle in adolescence and beyond. And according to a recent study by the National Institute for Early Education Research, child care staff access to early childhood behavioral health consultants is among the top three factors for keeping preschool expulsion rates down.

In 2007, the Legislature earmarked \$500,000 for a pilot child care consultation program. DEL has chosen three participants for a pilot program linking child care providers with research-based resources to support them in caring for infants and young children: Child Care Action Council in Olympia; Catholic Family and Child Services in Yakima; and Seattle-King County Health Child Care Health Program.

The pilot program includes an evaluation component that will provide common data across all pilots and demonstrates what works well in a variety of child care environments.

What have you done to **help a child today?**

“Having been a part of the Collaborative Leadership Institute, I now see myself as a leader and have comfortably taken on more leadership roles within my community and workplace.”

– Collaborative Leadership Institute graduate

Ensuring quality **child care settings** Cont.

Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

2007 marked the beginning of DEL's efforts to design, test and implement a statewide Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). The system will provide incentives and resources for child care providers to improve the quality of their programs, while offering parents valuable information about programs available in their community.

Six sites will participate in the design phase:

- Vancouver (Educational Service District #112)
- Bremerton (Olympic Educational Service District #114)
- Yakima (Thrive by Five Washington – East Yakima Early Learning Initiative)
- White Center (Thrive by Five Washington – White Center Early Learning Initiative)
- Washington State University (Spokane)
- Pierce County (Child Care Resource & Referral of Tacoma-Pierce County and United Way of Pierce County)

During the design phase, pilot communities will gather information from parents, providers and other early learning stakeholders about what kind of system they would like to see. The data will be used when the communities make recommendations at the end of the design phase about the kind of system that would be sustainable and most useful. The pilot testing phase will begin in summer 2008.





Family, friends and neighbors



About half of all children ages birth to 5 in Washington are cared for by family, friends or neighbors at least part of the time. These are unlicensed, legally exempt caregivers. Parents choose this option for a variety of reasons, including financial and cultural considerations. In 2007, DEL enhanced its support of family, friends and neighbors (FFN) child care providers through a new contract with the Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network. The expanded supports and services include:

- Implementation funding for four new community-based play and learn sites for children and FFN providers. These groups are a fun way for children to learn through play and for FFN providers to get ideas on ways to promote school readiness through activities with children in their care.
- Planning grants to three resource & referral agencies in unserved or underserved communities in Cowlitz, Wahkiakim, Chelan, Douglas and Pierce counties.
- Materials, training and mentoring for 45 existing play and learn groups in King County.



What have you done to **help a child today?**

“I volunteered to help run a Little League baseball tournament this summer. My college-age son used to play in this league 10 years ago!”

– DEL Eastern Service Area Manager **Karri Livingston**

Ensuring quality **child care settings** Cont.

Spanish Literacy Project

"As a young girl I never had the privilege of going to school because I always had to work. It is sad to grow up and not have an education, but it is never too late to learn." -- *Child care provider participating in the Spanish Literacy Project*

More than 200 Spanish-speaking licensed home child care providers care for about 1,800 children in the Tri-Cities, many with limited literacy skills in either Spanish or English. Child care providers who can read and write are more current on child development issues and are able to read to children, model the importance of education and participate in developmentally appropriate activities with children in their care.

Recognizing the importance of literacy among child care providers, a community coalition led by Washington State University Franklin County Extension, Franklin County commissioners and DEL's Kennewick Office in March 2007 established the Spanish Literacy Project to support Spanish-speaking providers in offering quality care to children. Twenty-eight providers meet several times a week to gain basic literacy skills in their native language, as well as participate in some English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. The providers do much of their work in a computer lab, learning valuable computer skills.

The program was a major success in its first year, with providers reporting improvements in their communication with parents and the quality of their child care. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation recently awarded \$967,000 to WSU Franklin County Extension to create the Literacy and Educational Pathways for Latino Child Care Providers project. The expansion will serve 40 child care providers working on their primary and secondary education. The funding also will allow 20 additional child care providers to begin coursework in early childhood education and ESL at Columbia Basin College in Pasco.





Looking Ahead

At DEL, we closed a year's worth of internal development work by making a commitment to one another about our values, our priorities and how we'll move our young department forward in partnership with the many dedicated individuals and groups focused on early childhood education in Washington. Our commitment to "take action that inspires the world" is clear in our vision and mission statement, and our four goals that encompass all DEL's future work. In 2008 and beyond, we invite you to join us in discovering, loving and nurturing the greatness in all children. Our youngest citizens are not only our future—they need us now. What have you done to help a child today?



Did
you
know?

Nearly one quarter of licensed child care facilities in Washington report one or more staff members speak Spanish. More than 30 additional languages are spoken in child care settings around the state, including French, Vietnamese, Tagalog, German, Somali, Japanese, Chinese, Farsi, Korean, Arabic, Ukrainian, and Punjabi.
– Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network

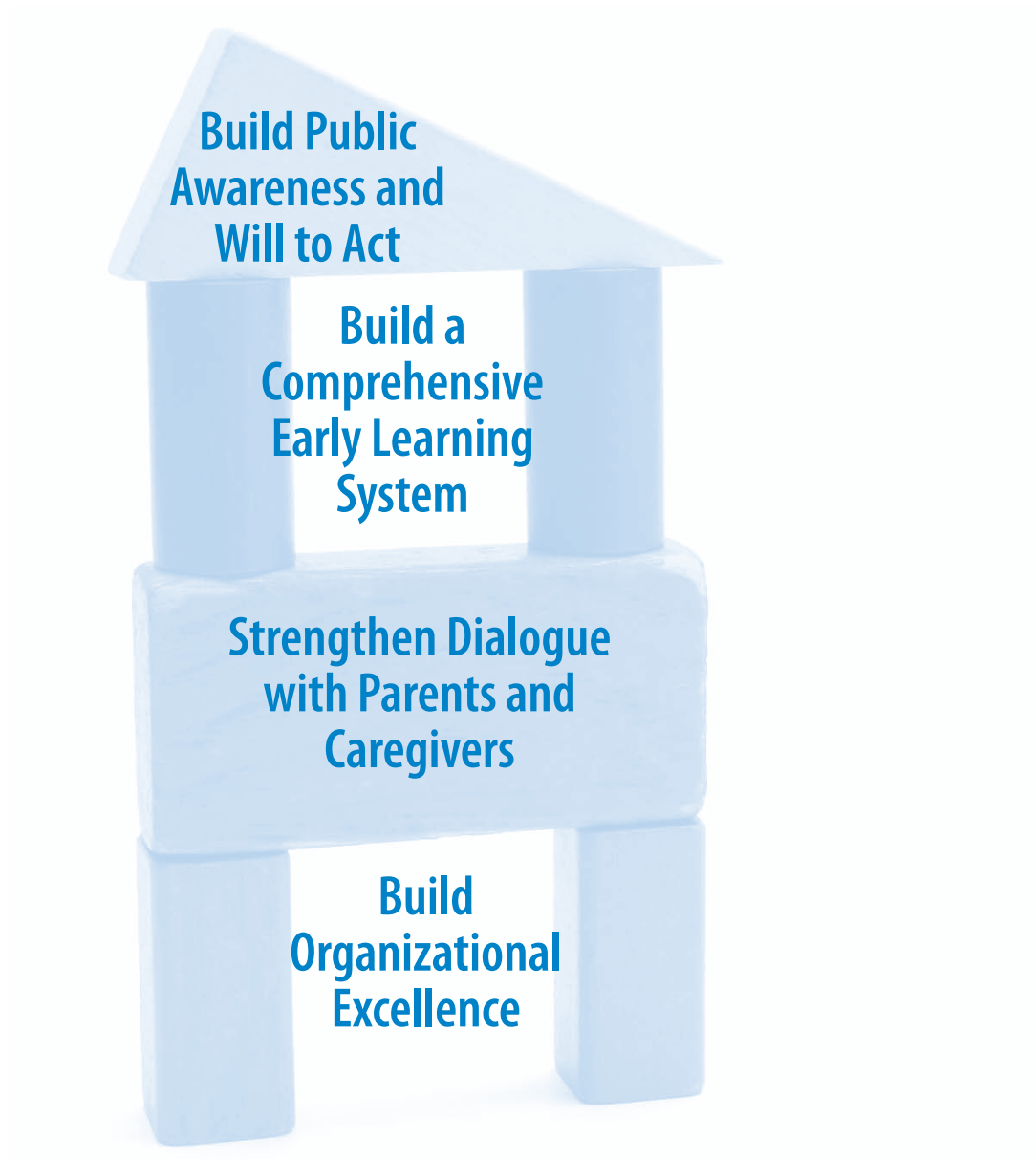


Mission.....

Every day we are honored to take action that inspires the world to discover, love and nurture the greatness in all children.

and Vision.....

Together, with parents and partners, we offer children world-class learning opportunities so they realize their full potential.





Kids' Potential, Our Purpose.
www.del.wa.gov

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