

Update from the Department of Early Learning November 2008

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

On a recent rainy day in Lacey, I was able to join a group of wonderful people, including the mayors of Lacey and Olympia, for the first South Sound Buddy Walk for Down Syndrome Awareness. As it is our mission at the Department of Early Learning to help ensure *all* children in Washington reach their full potential, it was an honor to be among parents and others who are so committed to ensuring children with varying strengths and challenges are able to reach toward the future.



I met one couple, Becca and Kim Brandt, who after having two daughters decided to adopt their son, Chris, more than 20 years ago. Only after their adoption did they learn Chris had Down Syndrome, a challenge that at first seemed overwhelming. Together, Becca and Kim began to learn about Down Syndrome while, of course, falling madly in love with their son. Chris brought so much joy to their family that they later adopted Sam, who also has Down Syndrome, and then adopted four more children who do not. They used their experience to encourage other parents of children with Down Syndrome and to help improve practices in their school districts.

What an inspiration the Brandts are to all of us! I applaud them and all of you who work to help children in Washington every day.

Finally, I want to congratulate Nina Auerbach on her appointment as the new president and chief executive officer of Thrive by Five Washington, one of DEL's key partners. Nina worked tirelessly for Washington children and families for years, and at DEL, we very much look forward to working with her!

Jone Bosworth, Director
Department of Early Learning

DEL adds new online resources for child care providers

We at DEL have heard from licensed child care providers that they need access to additional resources to support them as business owners. DEL has posted a new page on its Web site for providers with links to information about owning and running a business, including:

- Business planning
- Marketing
- Conducting market research
- Hiring
- Funding opportunities

This page can be found at: <http://www.del.wa.gov/requirements/info/BusinessResources.aspx>

Also new on DEL's Web site: Information on hearing and appeal rights related to child care licensing. Find this section at www.del.wa.gov/laws/Appeals.



Kindergarten readiness assessment planning continues

More than 1,400 parents, caregivers and other early learning stakeholders responded to an online survey asking for input and opinions regarding a kindergarten readiness assessment process for Washington. DEL and its contractor, SRI International, also are conducting focus groups with Tribal Nations, special education experts and others to gather information for the final report, which is due to the Governor and the Legislature in December.

The report will include:

- A summary of the literature on best practices for assessment of young children
- A summary of various types of large-scale kindergarten assessment processes used nationwide and by other states
- A summary of interviews and surveys with Washington school districts and schools already conducting some form of kindergarten assessment
- A summary of input gathered from a large array of stakeholders via the survey and focus groups
- Recommendations for next steps for a kindergarten readiness assessment process for Washington

DEL is leading this work in collaboration with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and Thrive by Five Washington.

Read more about this work online at www.del.wa.gov/development/kindergarten/Default.aspx.

DEL accepting applications for Seeds to Success field test

During the first week in November, DEL will be releasing an online application for child care providers who are interested in applying for the field test year of Seeds to Success, our quality rating and improvement system! Seeds to Success is designed to support child care providers in improving the quality of care they offer children and families, and give parents more information about quality care in their communities.

The five Seeds to Success field test communities have been holding public town hall meetings to share information and answer questions about Seeds to Success and the field test. The communities are: Clark County, Kitsap County, Spokane County, and the neighborhoods of East Yakima and White Center as defined by Thrive by Five Washington.

The field test runs until June 30, 2009. It is time for learning with communities about what works in the Seeds to Success model, and what might need changing. DEL will submit a status report to the Legislature in December.

Learn more about Seeds to Success online at: www.del.wa.gov/seeds.

As DEL leads Washington's efforts to design and field test a voluntary quality rating and improvement system, a new report about Colorado's Qualistar Early Learning system offers valuable information about lessons learned from the implementation there.

The report can be found online at:

www.qualistar.org/pdf/Qualistar_RAND_Lessons_Learned_10.15.08.pdf



Exceptional Caregiver Conference to take place November 15

DEL is proud to support Seattle's KCTS 9 television in hosting the Washington State Exceptional Caregiver Awards and Conference from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on November 15 in Seattle. This free event offers three hours of STARS training. The workshop topics include:

- Conflict resolution
- Helping children develop healthy television viewing habits
- Supporting healthy choices for children's growing bodies
- Creating a print-rich environment that encourages emerging literacy



DEL Director Jone Bosworth will offer the keynote address at the conference.

Learn more about the conference online at: www.kcts9.org/kids/educators/caregivers.

Reminder: Next DEL Child Care Conversation is December 6

Licensed child care providers are invited to join DEL staff at the December Quarterly Child Care Conversation in Seattle. DEL hosts these regular meetings to create better relationships and strengthen our dialogue with licensed child care providers around the state.

9:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Saturday, December 6

DEL Seattle Office—Graham Room, First Floor

3600 S. Graham

Seattle, WA 98118

A summary of the first conversation, which was held September 30 in Lacey, is now online. Read this and other information about these conversations at:

www.del.wa.gov/requirements/info/conversations.aspx



Questions or comments about this DEL Update?

E-mail: communications@del.wa.gov