

## Update from the Department of Early Learning November 2009

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### DIRECTOR'S NOTE

As you know, many people and groups around the state have been working to create a statewide early learning plan, and first-phase recommendations to deliver to Gov. Chris Gregoire on December 1. The draft vision, principles, outcomes and strategies are now on the Department of Early Learning (DEL) Web site for public comment, and leaders from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, DEL and Thrive by Five Washington are hitting the road to talk with communities about them.



The two main questions we're asking are:

- What do you see that speaks to you and/or your community?
- Is there anything that's missing or off-focus/target for your children or community?

A high-level summary of each meeting is being posted on the Early Learning Plan Web page at [www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/elac/elp.aspx](http://www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/elac/elp.aspx). You can also find:

- The draft vision, principles, outcomes and strategies document and accompanying survey
- The PowerPoint presentation we're using at community meetings
- A list of community meetings (updated as more meetings are scheduled)

So far, we've visited Seattle, Tacoma and Silverdale. Up next: **Bellingham, Kirkland, Spokane** and a **statewide meeting** using the K-20 network technology at all educational service district buildings. Please, if you haven't had an opportunity to weigh in on the draft information, do so via the online survey or a community meeting. A special thanks to League of Education Voters, MomsRising.org, the Foundation for Early Learning and the Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP for hosting several meetings, and to the other community groups who have offered to host a meeting.



Finally, the Dec. 1 deadline is an important one, but it is not the last time communities will get to provide input to the early learning plan. What we're delivering to the Governor is very much a draft. There will be more community meetings and outreach between Dec. 1 and the end of February. A special Community Engagement Work Group is now working to get the word out to as many people as possible about the early learning plan. We need to hear from everyone who will be impacted by this plan: parents and families, communities of color, faith-based communities, child care providers, preschool educators, K-12 educators, health providers and others with ideas or input to ensure all children in Washington start school ready to succeed.

—Bette Hyde, Director

## DEL seeks to enhance communication with child care providers

Because not all licensed child care providers have e-mail, when DEL needs to reach all providers, we send notification by mail. This is costly and time-consuming, and doesn't reach our provider community in an efficient way.

DEL is exploring the option of using an automated telephone message system to occasionally deliver important messages to licensed child care providers. This would mean providers would get a phone call with a pre-recorded message containing important information, and would be directed to the DEL Web site or their licensor for more information.

What do you think of this approach? Concerns or ideas? Please e-mail [communications@del.wa.gov](mailto:communications@del.wa.gov) or talk with your DEL licensor.

### Reminder: Take the Benchmarks survey before November 15!

DEL is seeking public input as it prepares to update our state's early learning guidelines.

An online survey is available in English and Spanish until Nov. 15 at: [www.del.wa.gov/development/benchmarks](http://www.del.wa.gov/development/benchmarks). Already, nearly 300 individuals have responded with their thoughts and input.

Developed in 2005 by early learning experts and stakeholders, the *Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks* is a resource document offering a common understanding about what young children should know and be able to do at different stages in their lives. Statewide, the Benchmarks are used as a resource document for those who care for and teach young children. The document includes a recommendation that it be reviewed and updated every five years.

"Our state needs to be clear on the skills and knowledge we want our youngest learners to have to be school-ready," said DEL Director Bette Hyde. "It's time to review and update our Benchmarks to make sure they include reasonable expectations for children and reflect the rich diversity of our state."

The survey offers an opportunity for parents, caregivers, educators, and others to share information about whether and how they currently use the Benchmarks, and what would make them more useful.

Many other states have developed similar early learning guidelines. For more information on Washington's Benchmarks and links to other states' guidelines, visit [www.del.wa.gov/development/benchmarks](http://www.del.wa.gov/development/benchmarks).



## Flu season information available

With several confirmed cases of H1N1 flu in child care settings around the state, now is a good time to review information and resources available to help plan for flu season. Visit

[www.del.wa.gov/development/health/flu.aspx](http://www.del.wa.gov/development/health/flu.aspx) to:

- Read a joint letter from DEL Director Bette Hyde and Department of Health Secretary Mary Selecky;
- Find flu guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for child care and early childhood programs; and
- Find downloadable informational materials in several languages

## Upcoming early learning events...

November 4—Early Learning Plan Community Meeting, Bellingham

[www.del.wa.gov/resources/calendar.aspx](http://www.del.wa.gov/resources/calendar.aspx)

November 5—DEL Early Learning Advisory Council meeting

[www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/elac/Default.aspx](http://www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/elac/Default.aspx)

November 5—Early Learning Plan Community Meeting, Kirkland

[www.del.wa.gov/resources/calendar.aspx](http://www.del.wa.gov/resources/calendar.aspx)

November 7—KCTS 9 Exceptional Caregiver Awards and Conference  
(DEL Director Bette Hyde delivering keynote address)

[www.kcts9.org/kids/educators/caregivers](http://www.kcts9.org/kids/educators/caregivers)

November 10—Statewide Early Learning Plan Community Meeting, ESDs

[www.del.wa.gov/resources/calendar.aspx](http://www.del.wa.gov/resources/calendar.aspx)

November 12—Early Learning Plan Community Meeting, Spokane

[www.del.wa.gov/resources/calendar.aspx](http://www.del.wa.gov/resources/calendar.aspx)

