



Program Contact:

Jennifer Jennings-Shaffer

DEL Head Start State Collaboration

Office Program Manager

360.725.4423

jennifer.jennings-shaffer@del.

wa.gov

More information about the Early Learning Guidelines:

www.del.wa.gov/development/benchmarks

What are the Early Learning Guidelines?

A strong early learning system needs a set of generally agreed-upon guidelines for child development that support families, caregivers and teachers in helping children grow and learn. Many states' guidelines are a resource to support school readiness for all children.

In Washington, these guidelines have been known as the Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks. Going forward, these will be called the Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines.

Common early learning guidelines can help Washington consistently support school readiness at the state, regional and local levels. For example, guidelines can give parents, caregivers and teachers insight into what kinds of skills and behaviors they might see as children grow and develop, and ideas about how to support that growth.

Why are they being reviewed and redesigned?

The Benchmarks were created in 2005, with the agreement that they be reviewed and updated every five years. Our state has convened a workgroup to redesign the Benchmarks based upon the 2005 agreement, the results of a broadly distributed user survey, and conversations with a variety of stakeholder groups.

Washington is demographically diverse, particularly among young children, and it is critical that our early learning guidelines reflect this diversity. DEL, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and Thrive by Five Washington (Thrive) are leading this inclusive process. The goal is to produce guidelines that: are culturally appropriate for Washington's increasingly diverse population; have been reviewed by individuals and communities around the state; provide links to the K-12 system; and reflect what we've learned about child development since 2005.

Who is involved?

DEL, OSPI and Thrive and representatives from Head Start, the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), parents, Tribes, local early learning providers, disabilities experts, K-12 staff and our state's ethnic commissions. The National Equity Project and Cedar River Group are facilitating this process to help ensure it is inclusive and thorough.

Part of the workgroup's responsibility is planning outreach so individuals and communities around the state can give input throughout the redesign. The outreach process has included intentional efforts to obtain widespread comments with an emphasis on traditionally underrepresented communities.

How is the redesign being paid for?

Through a mix of public and private funding. DEL has supported this work through its federal State Advisory Council grant and the Head Start State Collaboration Office. Thrive has contributed funding, including money from the Kellogg Foundation. OSPI also has contributed funding. Communities have offered in-kind support through meeting space.

