



## **April 2016 Early Achievers Rating Release**

### **FAQ for Participants that provide ECEAP Services**

The Early Start Act (ESA) required existing Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program providers to rate a Level 4 in Early Achievers by March 1, 2016. The Department of Early Learning (DEL) worked with partners at the University of Washington and Child Care Aware of Washington to ensure all existing ECEAP providers met the ESA timelines. This meant extending the time period for data collection by creating an ECEAP Rating Cohort. This cohort included 148 ECEAP facilities across Washington. DEL wanted to ensure that each classroom providing ECEAP services meets the quality levels required in the ESA. In order to demonstrate the quality level of ECEAP classrooms, DEL developed ECEAP classroom certification. Classrooms that meet the thresholds in the environment rating scales (ERS) and the classroom assessment scoring system assessment (CLASS) are considered “certified”. All Licensed Pathway sites participated in the classroom certification process. This process was implemented in the middle of the ECEAP rating cohort, so some sites had additional days of data collection after their initial rating visit.

The classroom certification results have informed policy decisions at DEL. Facilities where all ECEAP classrooms are certified must reach a Level 4 rating when they renew their rating in 3 years. Because the ECEAP classrooms are performing at the ESA milestone levels, these facilities do not need to participate in remedial activities, but instead will work on focused coaching until requesting their re-rate/renewal rating.

#### **Definitions:**

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS): The Early Achievers Quality Framework includes quality standards for early learning environments and interactions. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) assesses the adult-child interactions within the learning environment. Toddler CLASS is used in toddler classrooms in child care centers and Pre-K CLASS is used in preschool classrooms in child care centers. Combined CLASS is used in family home child care settings. Infant CLASS is used when the facility only serves infants.

Classroom Certification: Classrooms in Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) facilities that met the thresholds in the ERS and CLASS are considered certified.

Early Achievers: Early Achievers is Washington State’s quality framework. This system of standards and supports help early learning providers make continuous quality improvements in their early learning settings. Early Achievers participants receive tailored consultation to help them implement the Early Achievers Quality Standards and prepare for a facility rating. After a facility is rated, participants receive customized coaching support to help them set goals and continue to make improvements to their early learning services so that children enter kindergarten ready to succeed.



Early Achievers Pathways:

- **HS/ECEAP pathway** facilities have at least 75% slots (children birth to five) reserved for HS/ECEAP children, and are rated *only* in CLASS and ERS.
- **Licensed-pathway** facilities where less than 75% of their slots are reserved for HS/ECEAP children. If these facilities provide ECEAP services, they must earn a cumulative total of 70 points in CLASS, ERS, and the Early Achievers Quality Standards in order to achieve a Level 4 rating.

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP): ECEAP is Washington State funded preschool. ECEAP includes high quality early learning services, family support and parent involvement and child health coordination and nutrition supports.

Early Start Act (ESA): The Early Start Act (ESA) is a comprehensive early learning bill passed by the Legislature in July of 2015. Some of the key elements of the Early Start Act (ESA) are:

- 12-month authorizations for Working Connections Child Care Subsidies (WCCC)
- Enrollment and rating milestones for providers receiving state subsidy
- Enrollment and rating milestones for facilities that provide Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) services
- Moving the Department of Early Learning to a single set of licensing standards that govern child care licensing and ECEAP using the Early Achievers quality framework.

Environment Rating Scale (ERS): The Early Achievers Quality Framework includes quality standards for early learning environments and interactions. The environment rating scales (ERS) are internationally recognized tools used to assess early learning environments. The ERS has versions for infant, toddler, preschool and family child care environments. The ERS used in each Early Achievers rating is based on the age of the children or the format of the environment. All family home child care participants will receive a Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale Revised Edition (FCCERS-R) assessment. Infant and Toddler Classrooms in child care centers will receive an Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale Revised Edition (ITERS-R) assessment. Preschool classrooms in child care centers will receive an Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Revised Edition (ECERS-R) assessment.

Rating Cycle: The rating cycle is the three year period that an Early Achievers rating is valid. Early Achievers participants must continue to renew their ratings in order to continue accessing Early Achievers incentives and to maintain their eligibility for Working Connections Child Care Subsidies and/or Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) funding. For more information about renewal ratings, see the Renewal Rating Policy.

Web-based Early Learning System (WELS): This data system is a data repository where Early Achievers ratings and accompanied rating reports are housed. Coaches, ECEAP Contractors and licensed child care directors also access this system to create quality improvement plans and track classroom assessment data.



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### Frequently Asked Questions

- We've gone through Early Achievers rating and received a Level 3. I was also told all of my ECEAP classrooms are certified. What does this mean?
  - Licensed pathway sites received additional data collection in ECEAP classrooms. This was an effort to certify that these classrooms met the ERS and CLASS thresholds and overall ESA milestones. Classrooms are "certified" when they meet the ERS and CLASS thresholds.
  - Facilities that rated a Level 3 and all ECEAP classrooms are certified do not need to participate in remedial activities. Your facility must reach a Level 4 when you renew your rating at the end of the three-year rating cycle.
  
- I've gone through rating and at least one of my ECEAP classrooms was not certified. What does this mean?
  - Licensed pathway sites received additional data collection in ECEAP classrooms. This was an effort to certify that these classrooms met the ERS and CLASS thresholds and overall ESA milestones. Classrooms that did not meet a threshold in ERS and/or CLASS are not certified.
  - **If your site rated a Level 3 and one or more ECEAP classrooms were not certified**, then those ECEAP classrooms will need to participate in intense professional development in the area of need and the classroom must be certified during the six-month remedial activities time period (outlined in the remedial activities policy). Once all the ECEAP classrooms are certified, the site can maintain their Level 3 rating until their renewal rating, at which time they must reach a Level 4.
  - **If your site rated a Level 2 and one or more ECEAP classrooms were not certified**, the facility must go through a partial re-rate to meet at least a Level 3 as a facility and all ECEAP classrooms must be certified. The re-rate and ECEAP classroom certification must happen within the six-month remedial activities time period (outlined in the remedial activities policy). Once ECEAP classrooms are certified and the facility reaches Level 3, the site can maintain their Level 3 until their renewal rating, at which time they must rate a Level 4.
  
- We are ready to begin coaching. What should we focus on first?
  - After reviewing your facility's Early Achievers Rating Report, the next step is to work with your coach to create a [Quality Improvement Plan](#). Your Quality Improvement Plan is the set of goals and actions you and your staff will work on to continue to improve your facility. This plan is maintained in the WELS database and functions as a



tool to help coaches and early learning professionals track goals and monitor progress. It may be helpful to use the [Early Achievers Initial Rating Interpretation and Planning Guide](#) as a reference and determine which areas to focus on first.

- My facility will participate in remedial activities. What can I expect?
  - Sites that do not meet their ESA rating mandate need to participate in remedial activities. The [Remedial Activities Policy](#) outlines the steps and the timeline for remedial activities. The [Tools and Resources to Support Remedial Activities](#) document includes a list of tools and resources to support sites working on remedial activities. There is also a [Coach Collaboration Guidance](#) document as a reference for coaches that provide support to the same sites.
  
- Remedial Activities Expectations for Early Achievers Participants that provide ECEAP services:
  - Level 3, all ECEAP classrooms certified: no remedial activities
  - Level 3, one or more ECEAP classrooms not certified: these sites must participate in intense professional development and all ECEAP classrooms must become certified through ERS and/or CLASS re-rating. Once all the ECEAP classrooms are certified, the site can maintain their Level 3 rating until their renewal rating, at which time they must reach a Level 4.
  - Level 2, regardless of ECEAP classroom certification: the facility must go through a partial re-rate to meet at least a Level 3 as a facility and all ECEAP classrooms must be certified. This facility re-rating and ECEAP classroom certification must happen within the six-month remedial activities time period (outlined in the remedial activities policy). Once all ECEAP classrooms are certified and the facility reaches Level 3, the site can maintain their Level 3 until their renewal rating, at which time they must rate a Level 4.
  
- My facility rated Level 4. What should I focus on first?
  - Congratulations on achieving a Quality Level of Excellence! This is a great opportunity to review your facility's Early Achievers Rating Report, and see if you've been recognized for best practice in any one of the following areas of specialization:
    - Interactions and Environment
    - Curriculum and Staff Supports
    - Professionalism
    - Family Engagement and Partnerships
    - Child Outcomes
  - You can share your rating success with families. You can even customize a letter that highlights your facility's strengths and [areas of specialization](#).



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- My facility will participate in remedial activities. What should I tell families?
  - Several resources can be found on our [Early Achievers – Outreach Toolkit for Participants](#) web page. After reviewing your Early Achievers Rating Report, it may be helpful to start with the “[Template for a Q and A when the facility gets rated](#)” document and tailor to specific information regarding your facility’s Early Achievers rating. Keep in mind that Early Achieves helps parents and families evaluate how early learning programs are preparing children to succeed, and by simply participating in Early Achievers, you have demonstrated a commitment to improving quality.
- This is my first time reading the Early Achievers Rating Report. How do I interpret the data?
  - The downloadable Early Achievers Rating Report provides data in each area of the quality standards. Details are organized by each of the quality standard areas. In addition, the ERS Summary Report is also available in WELS, and it provides more details about your ERS observation. This document is organized by each indicator and contains information only in the areas that scored a 3 or lower. The CLASS Assessment tool can also be found in WELS, and this document outlines the scores your facility earned in each domain: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization and Instructional Support. In addition, you will find individual scores for the CLASS dimensions, such as Positive Climate.
- I am working on my Quality Improvement Plan. Where can I find a sample action plan?
  - Action plans are part of your site’s overall Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). Sample goals and action plans can be found [here](#) on University of Washington’s Childcare Quality and Early Learning (CQEL) web site. These samples provide clarity on how to create specific action plans to meet the smaller objectives within your QIP.
- In addition to providing ECEAP, my facility is also licensed and I am currently accepting Working Connections Child Care subsidy. Now that I’ve been rated, what can I expect?
  - In September 2013, the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 43.215.545 allocated a 2% increase to the Working Connections Child Care subsidy base rate for providers enrolled in Early Achievers who advance to a rated Level of 3 or higher within 30 months of enrolling in Early Achievers. For more information about tiered reimbursement, please refer to Section VII., *Other Supports and Incentives*, of the [Early Achievers Operating Guidelines](#).



- To qualify for a quality improvement award, licensed and active Early Achievers participants must have a rating of Level 3 or higher and serve an enrollment population of which at least 5% of total licensed capacity are non-school-age children currently receiving state subsidy. Licensed family home child care providers who are a rated Level 2 or higher and meet these requirements may also qualify for a quality improvement award.
  
- Who can I contact if I have questions about my rating?
  - For sites on the HS/ECEAP pathway you can contact your Head Start Grantee or ECEAP Contractor to connect with your coach.
  - For sites on the Licensed Pathway, contact your coach through your local Child Care Aware of Washington agency.
  
- Who can I contact if I need technical assistance in WELS, or if I have additional questions about my rating?
  - You can send an e-mail with your specific questions to: [QRIS@del.wa.gov](mailto:QRIS@del.wa.gov).
  
- My facility completed remedial activities and went through re-rating but did not meet the ESA milestone for providing ECEAP services. What happens now?
  - You will be able to complete your current ECEAP contract, but may not have your ECEAP contract renewed. If you no longer receive a contract to provide ECEAP services and you still receive Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) subsidies, then you will be required to meet the ESA rating milestones for WCCC payments. This means you must rate at a Level 3 by December 31, 2019.