

Washington's preschool program supports high qualifications for teachers and has always encouraged and supported programs to hire, retain and compensate qualified teachers. Currently, 44% of ECEAP teachers have BA and MA degrees in early childhood education (ECE). As expansion will more than double the number of preschool slots over the next four years, the demand for highly qualified BA-level lead preschool teachers will also increase.

To meet this demand, Washington must address the following identified barriers in the system:

<b>Identified Barriers to Increasing BA Degrees in Early Childhood in Washington</b>			
<b>Limited Access</b>	<b>Non-Traditional Options</b>	<b>Aligned Credentials</b>	<b>Tuition Support and Compensation</b>
Limited number of four-year colleges offer a BA in ECE. The state needs additional BA options across the state.	Teachers report that traditional four-year university route may not work for them. Many work full time, have families, and need access to flexible options. Several four-year universities offer strong online programs, however many students also want additional in-person options.	Many AA degrees are "terminal" degrees - degrees that do not easily articulate with BA degree programs available at four-year colleges and universities. The state has committed funding for advising at the community and technical colleges to guide professionals to the right programs of study for attainment of long-term educational goals.	Compensation is low and college tuition is expensive and increasing. More early learning professionals will complete professional education programs with tuition support and qualifications that lead to higher compensation.

Washington is working to create the systemic environment and conditions to make it possible for all preschool teachers to attain a BA degree. While BA degrees are not a required element of preschool, research shows that children benefit from teachers with BA degrees.

Pathways to encourage teachers to pursue their BA degrees include:

**1. Partnering with community and technical colleges to create new Applied BA degrees**

DEL has been working with community college representatives to develop an Applied BA degree in Early Childhood Education. Community colleges have been an important pathway for ECE teachers to attain credentials, particularly for bilingual teachers as the colleges have additional supports for students that are English Language Learners. The Applied BA degree would also build off of the successful continuum that has been established with the stackable certificates and AA degree through Early Achievers Opportunity Grants.

**2. Establishing a one-year early childhood endorsement certificate for teachers with BA degrees in non-early childhood fields**

Many early learning professionals have Bachelor's or Master's degree in other fields that could benefit from a one-year early childhood endorsement. In addition, a one-year post-baccalaureate program may attract more people to an early childhood education teaching career, especially those who already have BA degrees in other fields. DEL is partnering with Washington's four-year colleges and universities to explore alternate routes for certification for teachers with BA degrees in a non-ECE field to receive an early learning endorsement in one year.

### **3. Increasing access to tuition supports for preschool teachers**

Through Early Achievers funding for scholarships, colleges have experienced an increase in student enrollment, have hired additional faculty to meet demand, and have prioritized retention through student support. Additional scholarships for preschool teachers to obtain BA degrees will be prioritized as well as supports for student advising and retention.

### **4. Promote and support the use of shared early childhood baccalaureate “core coursework” among colleges across the state**

In 2014, The University of Washington created the Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood and Family Studies, an online degree completion program featuring a rigorous course of study that combines the latest academic theory and research-based findings with practical training in the field. Core courses for the program are adapted from latest research from the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning (NCQTL) and the Haring Center, which are Head Start–funded efforts directed by the UW College of Education. The core coursework is designed to promote research-based teaching practices and aligns with Early Achiever standards.

Because the core courses were developed with public funding and with national early learning workforce development in mind, UW is sharing the core coursework with Washington’s community and technical colleges and with four-year universities free of charge. The colleges have the option of using the UW online resources in a manner that fits well with the need to create courses and degree requirements that meet individual institution standards. Community colleges can use the coursework to build Applied BA degrees, while four-year colleges can choose to integrate the coursework into new or existing BA degree programs for students working in the field as well as full-time students not currently working. Several community colleges and universities have expressed interest in using core coursework to increase BA opportunities across the state. The shared resource could greatly reduce course and degree development costs for colleges, promote common quality practices among early childhood teachers across the state and allow colleges to respond to the state’s need for highly trained and educated preschool teachers in their local communities.

### **5. Establishing a Washington Early Learning Professional Salary Scale**

Washington has incentives for quality programs that can be used to support compensation for highly qualified teachers. For example, Early Achievers participants would earn more points toward higher ratings when they have staff with high qualifications, leading to higher quality awards. In addition, Washington supports tiered reimbursement payments to programs demonstrating high quality, allowing the hiring and retaining of qualified staff by using tiered reimbursement funding to contribute to professional salaries. DEL funding for ECEAP slots supports a living wage and to take these efforts even further, Washington is planning to adopt an Early Learning Professional Salary Scale and pilot the use of the scale in preschool programs.

Initial steps in the process will include:

- Establishing a baseline wage level for teachers with BA degrees comparable to the entry level for BA school teachers on the state’s School District Salary Allocation Schedule.
- Drafting new policies and procedures to address required wages for lead teachers with a BA degree in ECE and required education attainment and wages
- Requiring preschool contractors to report wage levels in MERIT (state’s education registry)
- Revisiting baseline wage levels after at least one year of implementation, and analyzing the data on actual preschool program costs for new components (full day and professional wages) to adjust the wage scale and funding of program components as necessary