



Head Start, ECEAP & Early Achievers

Pilot project report and reciprocity plan



July 2013



Washington State Department of
Early Learning

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Introduction

On December 16, 2011, Washington was one of nine winners of the highly competitive \$500 million Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant. RTT-ELC grants support bold and comprehensive state plans for raising the quality of early learning programs. The state's Department of Early Learning (DEL) led Washington's application for the grant, and is now leading implementation of new services and systems. The RTT-ELC grant brings \$60 million to the state over four years (2012 to 2015) to build an integrated system of high-quality early learning programs and services in Washington.



One of the challenges included in the RTT-ELC grant application is for states to create and implement quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) that include a broad range of programs for children, including licensed child care, Head Start and state-funded preschool programs. Head Start and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) participation in Early Achievers (Washington's QRIS) is a key component of the state's RTT-ELC strategy:

- The inclusion of ECEAP/Head Start in Early Achievers is integral to ensuring all Washington's children enter kindergarten ready to be successful in school and life. ECEAP and Head Start serve some of the highest-need children in Washington. These programs are an essential part of the Washington system for promoting high-quality care around the state through Early Achievers.
- DEL recognizes that ECEAP and Head Start are leaders of quality in Washington and can share this leadership to support Early Achievers. Many of the QRIS program standards, such as family support and engagement, assessment, curriculum and individualization, are modeled after program components embedded in Head Start and ECEAP.
- Children in Washington are cared for in many different settings throughout their early years and early learning professionals often work in a variety of settings during their careers, including Head Start, ECEAP and child care. Early Achievers allows parents and staff to have a common understanding about high quality services as children and staff move between settings. Washington's QRIS includes all programs (licensed child care and ECEAP/Head Start), creating a statewide system that supports care for children along a common continuum of quality.
- By participating in Early Achievers, ECEAP and Head Start are recognized for the quality of service they provide and have an opportunity to increase their understanding of how quality is implemented in every classroom and site. Early Achievers offers ECEAP and Head Start resources and opportunities to understand and support quality in new ways.
- ECEAP and Head Start have years of experience and expertise providing high-quality services for children and families and a longstanding commitment to continuous improvement. ECEAP/Head Start providers with high ratings will have an opportunity to serve as "training resource centers," impacting the quality of care in their communities, while deepening their own quality practices through teaching and sharing with others. As resource centers, ECEAP/Head Start become a central part of creating "communities of quality practice" that support a continuum of quality. This feature is a unique component of Washington's RTT-ELC approach that has received national attention.

The Head Start, ECEAP and Early Achievers reciprocity pilot

In 2012, DEL worked with a small number of ECEAP/Head Start contractors/grantees to test policies and procedures that encourage participation in Early Achievers, and provide opportunities for ECEAP/Head Start to become “training resource centers.” The pilot began in Summer 2012 and ended in April 2013. Nine programs participated, including more than 180 sites and approximately 45 percent of the state’s children enrolled in Head Start and ECEAP.

The primary goal of the pilot was to develop “reciprocity” between ECEAP/Head Start and Early Achievers: a streamlined process for Head Start and ECEAP participation in Early Achievers which builds upon existing practices and monitoring to avoid duplication when possible. Specifically, pilot programs:

- Tested and implemented Early Achievers registration and application procedures to see how they function in ECEAP/Head Start;
- Provided feedback and input to help define the roles of both contractors/grantees and individual ECEAP/Head Start sites in Early Achievers; and
- Participated in data collection to objectively measure how Head Start and ECEAP programs are able to demonstrate quality using Early Achiever tools. The data identifies specific ECEAP/Head Start program strengths and helped to determine an Early Achiever participation pathway that builds in “reciprocity” or credit for programs’ existing quality practices and program performance standards. Pilot data also highlights opportunities for growth and specific ways Early Achievers participation can augment program’s existing resources and support for continuous quality improvement.

Profile of programs and sites

In Spring 2012, DEL invited a select group of Head Start and ECEAP programs to participate in the Early Achievers, Head Start and ECEAP Reciprocity Pilot Project (the pilot).

Since one of the primary goals of the pilot project was to develop a reciprocity plan that will encourage participation in Early Achievers, DEL wanted to be sure that the pilot participants represented the rich diversity of program characteristics seen in Head Start and ECEAP programs around the state. The programs were chosen based on:

- **Geographic location.** The pilot programs were located in urban, suburban and rural areas. Programs were chosen only from areas

Pilot participants		
Name	Counties	Children
Community Colleges of Spokane	Spokane	HS: 879 ECEAP: 70
Denise Louie Education Center	King	HS: 244 ECEAP: 0
Puget Sound ESD (ESD 121)	King, Pierce	HS: 1,960 ECEAP: 2,194
Kitsap Community Resources	Kitsap	HS: 298 ECEAP: 85
Lower Columbia Community College	Cowlitz	HS: 320 ECEAP: 178
Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe	Clallum	HS: 64 ECEAP: 0
Rural Resources Community Action Program	Pend Oreille, Stevens	HS: 154 ECEAP: 32
St. James Family Center	Wahkiakum	HS: 0 ECEAP: 24
Washington State Migrant Council	Grant, Walla Walla, Yakima	HS: 3,256 ECEAP: 831
Total		HS: 7,175 ECEAP: 4,014

Head Start includes Head Start, Early Head Start, American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Head Start, AI/AN Early Head Start and Migrant-Seasonal Head Start.

that were part of the first phase of Early Achievers expansion in 2012.

- **Population served.** The nine programs serve more than 11,000 Head Start and ECEAP children, nearly 45 percent of the state’s total Head Start and ECEAP enrollment. The selected programs also serve very diverse populations, including children with immigrant, refugee, tribal and migrant backgrounds
- **Program models.** The pilot included Head Start, ECEAP, Early Head Start. Migrant and American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start programs. Sites in the pilot operate in a variety of ways including part-day and full-day programs, programs operated in partnership with licensed child care, and migrant seasonal models.
- **Program size and configuration.** The pilot programs ranged from those that operate a single site to those that operate many (one program has more than 100 sites). The programs are nonprofit or community organizations, school districts, tribal authorities and community colleges; some directly operate services while others use subcontractors.

“We appreciated being asked to the table. (This is) important whether you have 10 kids or 500 kids.”

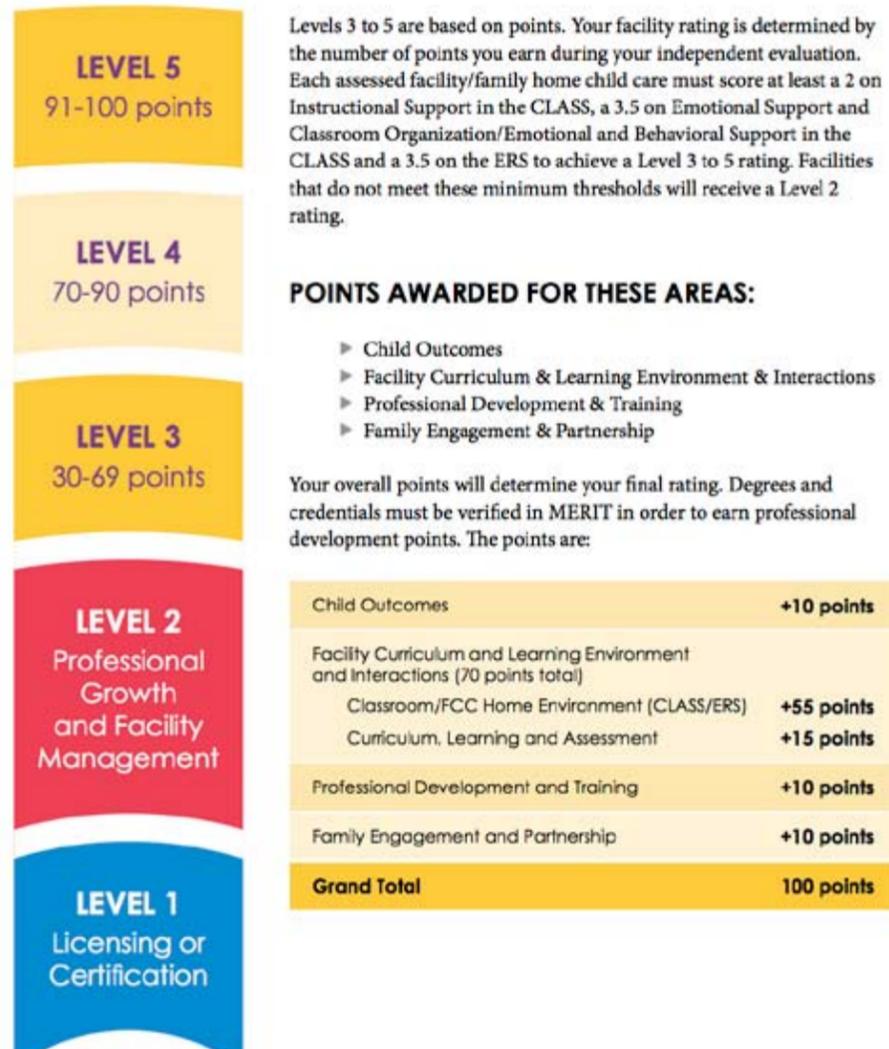
Beth Hansen, St. James Family Center

Pilot project activities

The pilot programs agreed to participate in three major activities:

- **Pilot advisory committee:** Each program became a member of an advisory committee that provided input, feedback and recommendations on reciprocity policies and procedures to encourage ECEAP/Head Start participation in Early Achievers. The committee also included representatives from Region X Head Start and the Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP. The Advisory Committee met three times in person and held monthly conference calls. These meetings provided programs with frequent opportunities to provide DEL with feedback from very specific suggestions about enrollment/registration procedures to suggestions on broader reciprocity policy questions. The advisory committee shaped and guided all the reciprocity policies and plans described in this report.
- **Early Achievers enrollment and registration activities:** Each pilot program took on the task of getting all of their sites enrolled in Early Achievers. Enrollment and registration begins with ensuring that all staff establish a professional record in the Managed Education and Registry Information Tool (MERIT). MERIT is the state’s early learning professional registry, which is designed to recognize, document, and track the professional achievements of early care and education and school-age professionals. MERIT data are used for Early Achievers, preventing the need for staff to have training and education information checked each time an individual or program applies for a quality initiative. Since the enrollment and registration process for Early Achievers is a site-based activity, pilot programs with a large number of sites had a more challenging task. The largest program in the pilot, Puget Sound Educational Service District, hired temporary staff to coordinate enrollment activities at their 113 sites. By the end of the pilot in April 2013, 161 sites had completed the Early Achievers registration process (due to the short timeline and other logistical/timing issues, some sites did not complete process or postponed enrollment to future dates).
- **Early Achievers data collection:** The University of Washington (UW) is the evaluation partner for Early Achievers and is responsible for assigning quality ratings to sites based on a data collection protocol that measures how well sites meet the Early Achievers Quality Standards. Sites can earn up to 100 points.

LEVELS 3, 4, & 5: Points Accumulation



Enrollment in Early Achievers began in 2012, and the pilot programs were the first sites in the state to participate in data collection. A majority of pilot sites (123 sites) completed the data collection process during the pilot. The process included:

- **Rating Readiness Tool:** This tool is a UW-created checklist that helps facilities and the evaluation team plan for a successful, efficient on-site evaluation visit. To learn more about how ECEAP/Head Start programs meet Early Achievers quality standards, the Rating Readiness Tool was completed at the contractor/grantee level and at each site in the pilot (normally it is completed at the site level only). The tool collects facility information including:
 - Layout of classrooms, locations of outlets, and other relevant facility details.
 - Confirmation that facility has collected consent from all families.
 - Location of documentation and files for rater review.

- **Community Liaison Visits:** To help ensure that the on-site evaluation is as efficient and unobtrusive as possible, a community liaison visits sites prior to the on-site assessment/rater visit. The pilot sites were the first sites to participate in community liaison visits. The community liaison is a member of the UW evaluation team, but serves a different purpose than the raters. Their role is to support the facility to have a successful evaluation visit by:

- Explaining the on-site visit and answering any facility questions and concerns.
- Reviewing the completed Rating Readiness Tool with the facility.
- Confirming that all facility documentation and files are ready and in place for the raters (the community liaison does not approve the content of the documentation, but rather confirms the availability and location of the materials so the raters are able to easily locate and review during visit).
- Gathering information for raters about the facility layout, including location of outlets, classroom/facility maps, and other pertinent logistical information. Upon successful completion of the visit, the community liaison notifies the UW raters that the facility is ready for the on-site evaluation visit.

- **On-site assessment/rater visit:** UW raters (trained and reliable in Early Achievers assessment tools) visit the facility to conduct the on-site evaluation. The visit is unannounced. Raters collect data through:
 - Classroom observations, including conducting assessments using the Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS) and Environmental Rating Scale (ERS).
 - Director/staff/parent interviews.
 - Review of facility records and documentation, including child files.

“When we stepped in we were worried with the size of our program: 4,000-plus kids and different organizations [including] child care. It has been beneficial to see our strengths. The level of information that we got is amazing, not only for our programs but for each classroom. Now I have the keys, the antidote. If we do not support the foundational base of the classroom then it is hard to improve instructional support.”

*Luba Bezbordnikova
Puget Sound ESD*

Condensed timeline

One of the biggest challenges for the pilot project was the short timeframe set to complete the project. In the licensed child care pathway, it is estimated that new sites joining Early Achievers may take up to a year to complete enrollment and registration activities, attend trainings, conduct self assessments, and undertake other preparation activities before undergoing the data collection/rating process.

In contrast, for the pilot, we asked programs to complete all the enrollment and rating readiness steps in a few months, and programs did not complete any training or self-assessment activities. Thus, the pilot data reflect how Head Start and ECEAP demonstrate quality using Early Achievers tools without alteration to their existing program practices and without training and preparation for Early Achiever’s specific rating process.

Communication and support activities with pilot programs

DEL provided pilot programs and their sites with a significant amount of support and technical assistance during the project:

- Group support and technical assistance including:
 - An Early Achievers orientation for all the grantee/contractors in the pilot.
 - Bi-monthly MERIT webinars to support programs through the enrollment and registration processes.
 - Webinar on the Rating Readiness Tool.
 - Technical assistance on the education verification process for MERIT.
- Technical assistance and support to individual grantee/contractors, including:
 - Monthly check-in meetings to address specific participation questions and solicit feedback on participation process.
 - Ongoing MERIT technical assistance from Early Achievers staff to help with facility registration, Early Achievers registration, and Early Achievers Level 2 application.
 - DEL acted as a liaison with UW to trouble-shoot questions or issues with evaluation.
 - Individual data review calls with each program to review overall pilot findings and grantee/contractor-level aggregate data.
- Technical assistance and support to staff at the 160-plus sites involved in the pilot, including MERIT help sessions between MERIT staff and participants.

Pilot results

The purpose of collecting ratings data in the pilot project was to provide DEL with objective information about how Head Start and ECEAP programs can demonstrate quality using Early Achievers procedures, processes and assessment tools. DEL wanted to be sure that the reciprocity plan developed for ECEAP/Head Start would be informed by the experiences of pilot programs and objective data about program quality.

Data collection visits were completed during the time period from October 2012 through March 2013. The data results are organized to show how pilot programs performed in each of the Early Achievers quality standards.

The **Classroom Environment** portion of the Facility, Curriculum and Learning Environment Quality Standard makes up a significant portion of the Early Achievers evaluation process (55 of 100 points). The Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS) and Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) are the observational assessment tools UW uses to measure this standard area. Research shows that high scores on these measures lead to positive child outcomes. A site must meet minimum “thresholds” on the CLASS and ERS measures to reach the higher levels of Early Achievers (levels 3 to 5). Sites earn 10, 15 or 20 points for CLASS scores and 5, 10 or 15 points for ERS scores that are above minimum thresholds.

Classroom/FCC Home Environment / 55 Points

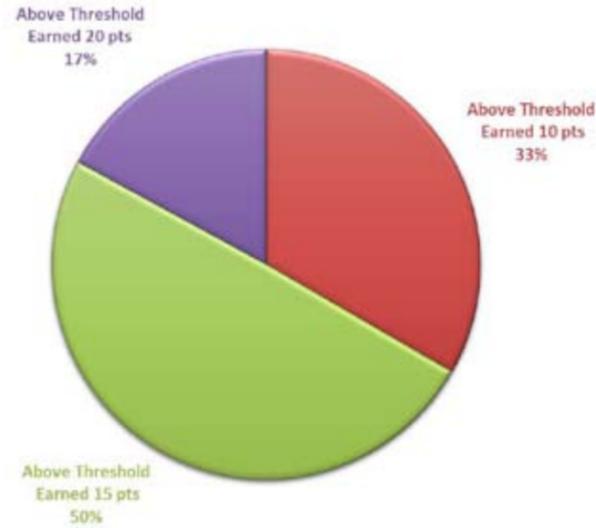
Measurements	Point range options, based on average facility score		
CLASS: Instructional Support/ Engaged Support for Learning	2 to 3.4 (10 points)	3.5 to 4.4 (15 points)	4.5 & higher (20 points)
CLASS: Emotional Support & Classroom Organization/Emotional and Behavioral Support	3.5 to 4.9 (10 points)	5.0 to 5.9 (15 points)	6.0 & higher (20 points)
ERS	3.5 (5 points)	5 (10 points)	6 (15 points)

Each assessed facility/family home child care must score at least a 2 on Instructional Support/Engaged Support for Learning in the CLASS, a 3.5 on Emotional Support and Classroom Organization/Emotional and Behavioral Support in the CLASS and a 3.5 on the ERS to achieve a Level 3 to 5 rating.

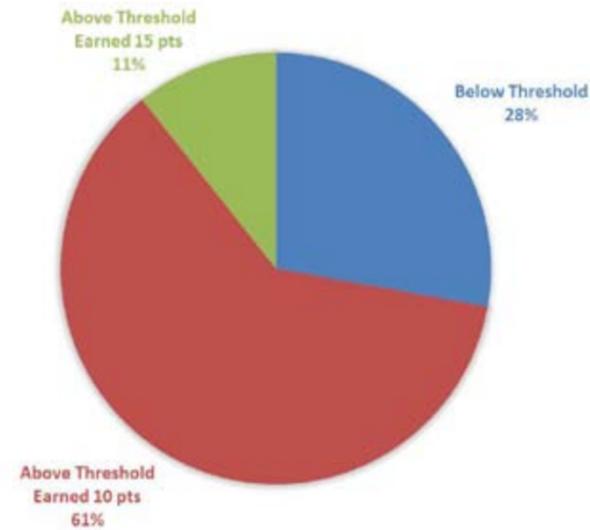
CLASS data

Pilot data shows that when assessed using the CLASS tool, ECEAP/Head Start sites demonstrated quality with CLASS scores that align with scores needed to attain the higher levels in Early Achievers (levels 3 through 5).

CLASS Emotional Support/ Classroom Organization 100% of sites scored at Early Achievers levels 3-5



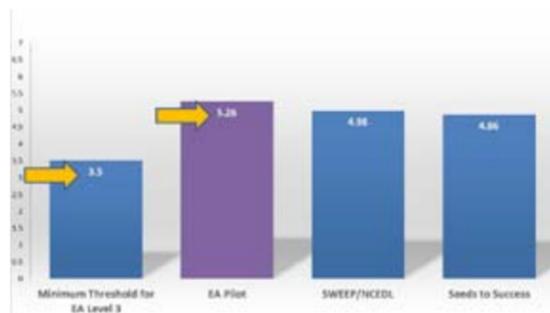
CLASS Instructional Support 72% of sites rated Early Achievers levels 3-5



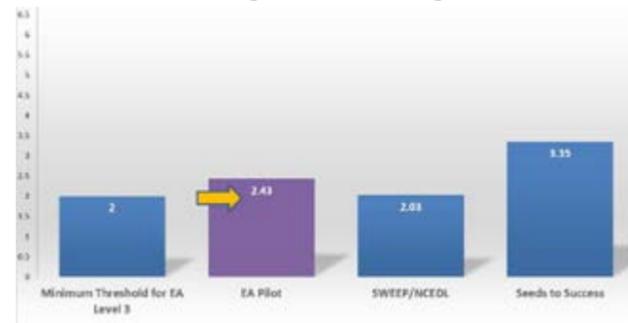
Not surprisingly, ECEAP/Head Start scores on the **Emotional Support and Classroom Organization** portions of the CLASS were higher than those in **Instructional Support**. The items in the Instructional Support portion of the CLASS tool are known to be more challenging throughout the field.

The ECEAP/Head Start Early Achievers pilot data are comparable to other data sets: the national State-Wide Early Education Programs (SWEEP/NCEDL) study of PreK programs in 11 states, and data from Washington's QRIS field test, Seeds to Success (Seeds to Success data include sites that had been participating in QRIS activities, including coaching and other professional development opportunities, for more than a year).

CLASS Emotional Support/Classroom Organization Site average 5.26, range 3.54-6.97



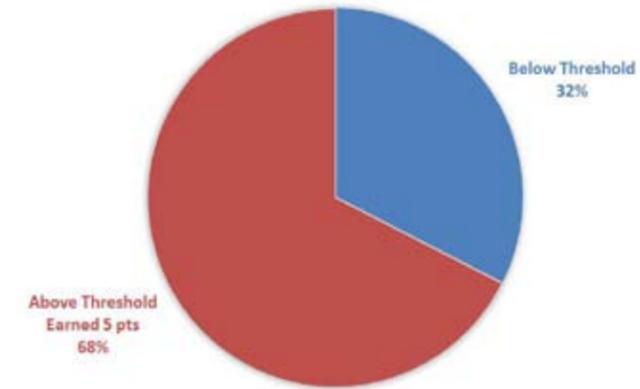
CLASS Instructional Support Site average 2.43, range 1.17-4.48



ERS data

On ERS, nearly 70 percent of ECEAP/Head Start sites in the pilot were able to demonstrate quality levels that align with Early Achievers levels 3 to 5. Sites earn 5 to 15 points for scores above the minimum threshold for levels 3 to 5.

ERS: 68% of sites rated level 3-5



Pilot ERS scores are also comparable to data from the national FACES study in Head Start (2010) and the SWEEP/NCEDL study.

Environmental Rating Scales

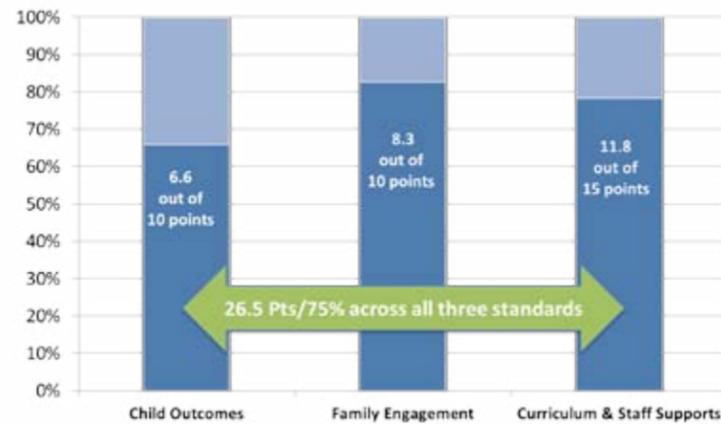


Child outcomes, curriculum & staff supports and family engagement & partnership

Programs can earn up to 35 points in these Early Achievers standard areas. On average, pilot sites earned an average of nearly 27 points. Pilot results in these Early Achievers standard areas are particularly significant because once a site meets minimum "thresholds" on the CLASS and ERS assessments, only five additional points in the Child Outcomes, Family Engagement, and Curriculum and Staff Supports areas are need to obtain a level 3.

These areas are also the Early Achiever standard areas most aligned with Head Start and ECEAP performance standards. While scores on these standards are very good, they may underestimate performance in Head Start and ECEAP due to the inclusion of sites in the pilot that have "blended enrollment" models—sites that serve children NOT enrolled in ECEAP/Head Start at the same site as ECEAP/Head Start children.

HS/ECEAP Pilot Averages: Child Outcomes, Family Engagement and Curriculum & Staff Supports



Blended enrollment sites

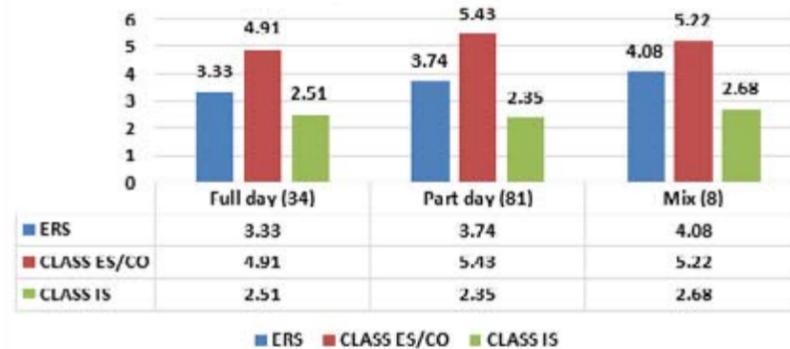
Forty (33 percent) of the pilot sites are ECEAP/Head Start sites that are also licensed child care programs. These sites serve a “blend” of Head Start, ECEAP and child care children. Sometimes children are served together in the same classrooms, sometimes they are served in separate classrooms. The blended model is an important program model in ECEAP/Head Start as it can be an effective strategy to braid or leverage funding streams and provide families with preschool services that also meet their child care needs.

The pilot project data reflect the inclusion of blended models that serve children that are not receiving (nor are they required to receive) the full complement of ECEAP/Head Start services. For example, under the Early Achievers Child Outcomes standard, sites earn points for completing developmental screenings for all children. At a blended enrollment site, children receiving services funded by ECEAP/Head Start are required to be screened by program performance standards, but children not enrolled in ECEAP/Head Start may not be screened due to lack of funding/resources. Thus, in general, the pilot results may underestimate ECEAP/Head Start’s ability to demonstrate quality using Early Achievers tools because a significant number of sites in the pilot implement a model that does not provide ECEAP/Head Start services to all classrooms, staff, children and families served at these sites.

Full-day/part-day models

Head Start and ECEAP programs operate a variety of models, including part-day, part-year and full-day, full-year models. As part of the pilot, DEL wanted to understand how models with different hours of service impact Early Achievers participation. Results from pilot data suggests that the number of hours of service has no impact on a site’s ability to demonstrate quality using Early Achievers tools. Programs operating part-day, full-day and both part-day and full-day models performed similarly on the assessment tools.

Part day, Full day and Mix Program Options



Lessons learned

ECEAP/Head Start and Early Achievers alignment

Programs participating in the pilot report that there is a high degree of alignment between Early Achievers and ECEAP/Head Start and that Early Achievers participation can be integrated into other ECEAP/Head Start quality assurance activities and goals. Pilot participants report that Early Achievers activities provided them with new and valuable information about site- and classroom-specific quality.

Contractor/grantee role in Early Achievers

While there is a high degree of alignment in the standards and goals of Early Achievers, Head Start and ECEAP, the programs and systems also have important differences. One key difference is that Early Achievers participation is focused at a site and facility level. This is because, for the most part, in licensed child care, administration, site and staff supervision, professional development, curriculum, and budget decisions all occur at the site level.

In Head Start and ECEAP, the same functions occur at the grantee/contractor level, especially for those programs that have many sites and/or subcontractors. Contractors/grantees are solely responsible for monitoring, staff training and other quality assurance activities related to their Head Start and ECEAP grants, for all of their sites. Another key difference is the way parents choose or enroll in programs. In licensed care, parents choose a provider based on personal preferences such as location or price. In ECEAP/Head Start, children are assigned to the ECEAP/Head Start program based on where they live.



DEL has learned that ECEAP/Head Start contractors/grantees have a distinct and critical role to play in Early Achievers participation. During the pilot, contractors/grantees provided their sites, site supervisors and staff with an orientation on Early Achievers and how it fits into their program, and coordinated rating readiness activities, ratings preparation, and MERIT/enrollment processes for their sites. These contractor/grantee activities are similar to the technical assistance and site activities that take place at level 2 for licensed child care programs (provided by local Child Care Aware staff).

While Early Achievers participation is a site-centered activity, the pilot project has made clear that ECEAP/Head Start sites cannot fully participate in or benefit from Early Achievers without their contractor’s/grantee’s involvement and support. The pathway for ECEAP/HS participation must include clearly defined roles for contractors/grantees and sites. Contractors and grantees should be fully engaged, using their capacity and existing role in program design and quality assurance.

Time and participation

The pilot timeline was very condensed, with multiple steps of the Early Achievers enrollment and ratings processes occurring simultaneously. In addition, the ECEAP/Head Start sites were the first sites, systemwide, to test the Early Achievers data collection protocols. The accelerated timeline and steep learning curve contributed to some confusion and miscommunication, highlighting that sites need time to understand and undertake Early Achievers participation in a positive manner. While there is a lot of alignment between Early Achievers, Head Start, and ECEAP program requirements, this does not eliminate the need and time required for programs and sites to learn about Early Achievers; understand how it can integrate with their quality

assurance activities; train, orient, and support their staff; and sufficiently prepare sites for ratings.

Streamlined participation

Pilot participants tested Early Achievers enrollment and ratings processes in their fullest form: processes designed for licensed child care programs that do not operate with ECEAP/Head Start program standards. In addition, some participants tested duplicate processes at both the contractor/grantee and site levels to help DEL analyze how the processes work and how they can be streamlined.

Pilot participants were very willing to test all the steps in the process, but they strongly encouraged DEL to create a much more streamlined process that acknowledges and provides credit for ECEAP/Head Start's "built-in" quality, and also creates adequate incentives to participate. A streamlined participation pathway for ECEAP/Head Start is critical to reach maximum participation in Early Achievers.

Programs demonstrate high levels of quality in many of the Early Achiever quality standards

Data collected during the pilot showed that ECEAP/HS programs are able to demonstrate high levels of quality through use of their existing program practices, procedures and policies. Areas of strength include programs' ability to meet the Early Achievers Child Outcome, Family Engagement and Curriculum and Staff Support Standards at the higher quality levels (levels 3 through 5). In addition, ECEAP/HS programs demonstrated quality in the Curriculum and Learning Environment area, particularly in effective teacher-child interactions with strong scores on the CLASS.

New opportunities to support reciprocal benefits

In addition to the many strengths identified and confirmed through the project, pilot data also identified areas in which Early Achievers participation can enhance and support ECEAP/Head Start quality goals. During the pilot, programs received objective site- and classroom-level quality data that they would not have had without Early Achievers. In addition, for many programs, participation highlighted areas of quality that may be more challenging for them, such as creating high-quality learning environments as measured by the ERS.

These findings have resulted in policies and procedures to help ensure that ECEAP/Head Start programs participating in Early Achievers receive resources and opportunities to strengthen and enhance quality.

The pilot project shows that integration can truly be a reciprocal in nature. ECEAP/HS clearly have a "leg up" in meeting the Early Achievers quality standards, nicely positioning them to share resources, experience and expertise to other Early Achievers participants. At the same time, Early Achievers provides ECEAP/Head Start with new information, data and resources to support their ongoing commitment to provide a consistent level of high-quality services to some of the state's highest need children. Thus, by participating in Early Achievers, the state's ECEAP/Head Start programs can contribute to increasing quality in the surrounding system as a whole, and at the same time, continue to advance quality within ECEAP/Head Start itself.

Blended programs/program configurations

The pilot project highlighted that ECEAP/Head Start programs may be implemented in partnership with



licensed child care in a myriad of configurations. Data show that sites with "blended enrollment"—those that serve ECEAP/Head Start children and children not enrolled in the programs—may face more challenges in meeting the Early Achievers quality standards because the ECEAP/Head Start performance standards and funding can only be used to provide services to ECEAP/Head Start children and families. In addition, many programs/grantees subcontract the delivery of services to a variety of organizations (including school districts, colleges, nonprofits and licensed child care programs). About half of the state's ECEAP/Head Start programs subcontract services.

During the pilot, we found Early Achievers participation is more complicated for programs that subcontract services. While contractor/grantee involvement is still key (since contractors/grantees retain quality assurance responsibility for subcontracted services), the subcontracted organization also has a key role as the employer of staff and implementer of direct services. Processes for Early Achievers participation and reciprocity should recognize and address these complex partnerships, relationships, and program configurations.

Benefits, incentives and maximizing participation

ECEAP/Head Start programs have many reasons to participate in Early Achievers. The primary motivations for pilot programs included being able to influence future Early Achievers policies and procedures, being first to participate and receive support to participate, and the desire to support creating a single statewide quality system for all children.

Some pilot programs also noted benefits from the additional resources and information/data Early Achievers provides to programs about site level quality. However, these benefits are viewed in proportion to the amount of effort and resources contractors/grantees and sites have to commit. Feedback indicates that more contractors/grantees will view Early Achievers as a benefit if processes can be streamlined to minimize extra work and duplication, and if there can be reciprocity between ECEAP/Head Start and Early Achievers program requirements. The more Early Achievers participation can "count" to meet ECEAP/HS requirements, and vice versa, the greater likelihood of perceived benefit and incentive to participate.

Given the commitment, resources and planning required to participate in Early Achievers, the pilot programs (probably among the most motivated programs in the state) support a robust package of strategies to encourage maximum statewide participation, including sufficient opportunity and incentive for ECEAP/HS programs to become training resource centers. In addition, pilot programs appreciated and cited DEL support during the pilot as key to their success. Therefore, strategies and supports to encourage participation should be included in plans to meet participation targets.

Training Resource Centers (TRCs)

TRCs continue to be one of the most exciting and well-supported components of Early Achievers participation among the pilot programs and the wider ECEAP/HS community. Pilot programs expressed a high degree of support for a general framework for TRCs that was drafted during the pilot. The framework includes opportunities for programs to share resources at varying levels of impact (local, regional and statewide) and for TRCs to be selected using a "call for resources," which would allow DEL to match ECEAP/HS resources with Early Achievers training needs/gaps.

A new and developing system

The pilot provided DEL with invaluable information about Early Achievers. The pilot programs were the first sites to complete new Early Achievers processes. The feedback and experiences of pilot participants have led to improvements in the entire system, including modifications/efficiencies in the enrollment and data collection processes, and program changes will provide additional support to all participants as they join the system, prepare to be rated for the first time, and implement quality improvements.

Reciprocity plan for ECEAP and Head Start

Based on the key lessons learned from the ECEAP/Head Start Pilot Project, we are recommending the following strategies for reciprocity:

Customized and streamlined participation pathway beginning at level 3

Design a customized and streamlined participation pathway for Head Start and ECEAP sites that begins at Level 3 to: implement reciprocity between the programs, encourage broad participation, and create a pathway that mirrors the one designed for licensed programs. Key elements of the recommended participation pathway include:



- **Grantees/contractors opt-in/ volunteer to participate in Early Achievers as a first step.** Since ECEAP/HS sites are governed by their grantee/contractor, the decision to participate should be first determined at the contractor/grantee level. Each contractor/grantee then decides whether each of its sites have a choice to participate, or if all the sites in their program are required to participate. This first step helps ensure that participation is integrated with other quality assurance activities and is integral to ECEAP/HS, rather than as a separate program or activity.
- **Contractors/grantees and sites complete entry level 3 activities (parallel to level 2 activities in the licensed child care pathway).** These activities include:
 - Contractor/grantee director or assigned staff participate in an orientation (a special orientation created for ECEAP/HS programs).
 - Contractor/grantee makes a plan to integrate Early Achievers into their program's activities; trains and orients sites and staff; creates a timeline for participation of sites, including whether participation is required or optional, how contractor/grantee staff will support participation (i.e., included in monitoring and training activities), MERIT records completion, etc. These planning steps could be completed/documentated in the same way licensed programs complete a self-assessment as part of level 2 activities.
 - Contractor/grantee assists each site in completing a facility registration and application. Contractor/grantees track the progress of these activities with their sites.
 - Sites receive and are counted as "Entry Level 3" when they complete the activities.
- **Contractors/grantees that those to participate in Early Achievers beyond "Entry Level 3" will take the steps to prepare sites for full ratings.** Contractors/grantees may plan to become training

resource centers, or they may want their sites to achieve higher ratings as part of their overall quality goals.

Key rationale to support customized/streamlined participation pathway

- Pilot data support entry participation at level 3: Data collected in the pilot shows that when assessed with Early Achievers tools (CLASS, ERS and other Early Achievers data collection), ECEAP/Head Start sites, on average, demonstrate quality at the higher levels of Early Achievers (levels 3 to 5).
- Reciprocity of program standards: Entry level participation beginning at Level 3 provides "credit" to ECEAP/Head Start programs for delivering services that are required to meet program performance standards that align with the Early Achievers quality standards. By implementing this policy, DEL is acknowledging that when ECEAP/Head Start programs meet their own program performance standards, they have all the prerequisites in place to complete the requirements of Early Achievers Level 2, and therefore can begin their Early Achievers participation at Level 3. DEL has crosswalked Early Achievers and ECEAP/Head Start standards to show and support this rationale.
- Creates a strategic incentive to encourage maximum participation: A designated entry level makes it easy for ECEAP/Head Start programs to enter the Early Achievers system, greatly increasing the likelihood of broad statewide participation. While some may not choose to participate beyond level 3, wide participation in this entry level will still greatly support statewide quality efforts and key components of the system. At this level of participation ECEAP/Head Start sites and staff will be registered in the MERIT systems, and ECEAP/Head Start quality will be accounted for and part of these systems as a statewide focus on quality grows. Full inclusion of ECEAP/Head Start and licensed care in a single statewide quality system is a significant milestone to achieve.
- Parallel participation pathways: Creating a "holding place" at entry level 3 for ECEAP/Head Start programs create a nice parallel to the pathway created for licensed programs. Licensed programs enter at level 2 and participate in activities and self-assessment to ensure they are meeting Early Achievers quality standards and are prepared for rating result focused on meeting Level 3 requirements. The recommended ECEAP/Head Start pathway creates a similar "holding place" at entry at Level 3 for HS & ECEAP sites, and builds in time for contractors/grantees to assist sites in completing all the registration and enrollment processes. For those who choose to participate beyond entry level 3, it also provides time for contractors/grantees to concentrate efforts on site-focused quality (versus program-wide quality), and prepare sites for full Early Achievers ratings. Programs may choose to participate in full ratings to meet their goals to be Training Resource Centers or to meet other quality goals. This "holding space" in the pathway is particularly important because it builds in time for programs to become familiar with assessment tools used in Early Achievers which may not be common in ECEAP/Head Start (ERS and CLASS).
- Directs external evaluation (ratings) resources toward Early Achievers Training Resource Centers (TRCs): Providing a designated entry at level 3 allows DEL to direct its Early Achievers resources on supporting maximum quality in Head Start and ECEAP, rather than on confirming the foundation of quality built-into the programs. With a designated entry level, DEL can target its rating resources and other Early Achievers supports towards helping Head Start and ECEAP reach advanced levels of quality and on supporting those high-quality programs to share resources throughout Early Achievers. This policy says Early Achievers is a state resource that can be accessed to help Head Start and ECEAP be quality leaders!
- Provides a balanced level of reciprocity: The recommended participation pathway provides an appropriate level of "credit" for ECEAP/Head Start program performance standards, and at the same time acknowledges and takes into account that there may be variability in the level of quality from site to site.

By creating an Entry Level 3 for ECEAP/Head Start, programs get credit for having program standards and systems in place to meet all the Early Achievers quality standards. However, participation beyond entry will require programs to demonstrate their implementation of high quality services at the individual site level through external evaluation/ratings. In essence, ECEAP/Head Start get credit for their long-established and highly monitored program systems and internal quality assurance (which all align with Early Achievers standards), but deeper participation (external evaluation/ratings) in Early Achievers still retain focus and fidelity on site-level quality and child outcomes.

- Supports, acknowledges and uses the leadership role and capacity of ECEAP/Head Start grantee/contractors: The recommended participation pathway puts a great deal of charge on contractors/grantees and their role and capacity as leaders of their programs, and through EA, as leaders in the statewide quality system. Successful contractors/grantees have developed highly functional program design, quality assurance, and staff development systems for their sites and staff and Early Achievers is



building upon that experience and expertise. The Early Achievers participation pathway is designed to put contractors/grantees in the lead so they can integrate Early Achievers to support and advance their current quality efforts, and also access Early Achievers resources to become training resource centers, advancing quality efforts statewide.

Definition of good standing

Only programs in good standing are eligible to participate in Early Achievers. Pilot participants/advisory committee provided feedback on how “good standing” should be defined for ECEAP/Head Start. Much like in the licensed pathway, a simple, straight forward definition is being recommended: Head Start programs in good standing are defined as those without “deficiency” as defined in the Head Start Act 1304.3 a (6); and ECEAP programs in good standing are defined as those programs that are not in “corrective action” or “probation” as defined by current DEL ECEAP policies.

Good-standing definitions relate to Head Start and ECEAP at the contractor/grantee level. ECEAP/Head Start sites will only be able to participate in Early Achievers if their contractor/grantee is in good standing and has opted-in. However, licensed sites with blended enrollment may be able to participate via the licensed pathway.

Key rationale for good standing recommendation

- A simple definition aligns with approach taken to define good standing for licensed care
- A simple definition opens participation to virtually all programs, and limits participation only for programs that are clearly struggling to meet ECEAP/Head Start program performance standards in profound manner.

ECEAP/Head Start possible items of evidence														
	Early Achievers rating readiness requirements	Available at grantee level				Available at grantee level						Available at sites		
		Policies and procedures	Forms	Service plans	Training plans and calendars	Items that may provide evidence that service/practice is being implemented program-wide						Items that may provide evidence that service/practice is being implemented at site level		
						Monitoring reports	Coordinator site visit records/reports	Staff records/data	Aggregated data	Policy council	Training records, agendas, attendance	Child and family records	Classroom records	Staff records
Child outcomes	2. Evidence of developmental screenings or CDC Milestones and Developmental Checklists and documentation related to sharing with parents are on file and accessible to QRIS rating team for current year or previous year.	✓ Dev. screening procedures, home visiting and parent conference policies and procedures	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓			✓		
	3. If an assessment other than WaKIDS is used, a copy of the completed WaKIDS Assessment Alignment Tool is available. (Check “in-place” if using WaKIDS assessment.)	✓ Child assessment and individualizing procedures	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		
Facility curriculum and learning environment	4. Copies of teacher certifications, evidence of course completion, and training documentation kept on file, related to curriculum.	✓			✓	✓ Admin. monitoring		✓ PD plans	✓		✓			✓
	5. Reflective practice peer group is established and documented.				✓		✓	✓ PD plans			✓			
	6. Program Curricular Philosophy is publically available and ready for review.	✓	✓	✓										
	7. Documentation that teachers are trained and reliable on child assessment is stored in an accessible location and ready for review.	✓		✓	✓			✓				✓		✓
	8. Documentation that teachers receive ongoing mentoring to support improvement in curriculum and teacher child interactions is available.	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓ Lesson plans, classroom planning, etc.	✓ Schedules, planning time
Family engagement and partnership	9. Completed Strengthening Families plan of action. If using CSSP Strengthening Families online data system to complete plan of action, site must print out summary as evidence of completion.	✓ Family partnership plan policies/procedures	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓ Family support and health outcomes	✓		✓		
	10. Examples of information you provide for parents and families is accessible and ready for review; e.g., parent handbook, newsletter, flyers, training materials.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓ Family support and health outcomes		✓		✓		
	11. Information provided for parents on community-based programs are available in the languages represented and ready for review.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓ Family support and health outcomes		✓		✓		

Streamlined evaluation (ratings) process

UW has primary responsibility for designing the ratings/evaluation process. Therefore, the recommendations below serve as general strategies and rationale for streamlining the evaluation process for ECEAP/Head Start. UW will remain responsible for specific evaluation/rating protocols.

Full reciprocity for select Early Achievers quality standards

One of the lessons of the pilot is that many of the items asked for during rating readiness and/or data collection are designed by the contractor/grantee and/or kept at the contractor/grantee level; and all of the items are required by ECEAP/Head Start performance standards. In fact, many of the pilot participants stated the data collection process was very similar to their state and federal program reviews.

A “crosswalk” of ECEAP/Head Start performance standards with the Early Achievers Child Outcomes, Family Engagement and Partnerships, and Curriculum and Staff Supports quality standard areas shows that programs that meet ECEAP/Head Start program performance standards will meet or exceed these Early Achievers quality standards.

As noted in the Results section, data confirm standards alignment. The pilot sites performed well in the Child Outcomes, Curriculum & Staff Supports, and Family Engagement & Partnership Early Achievers standard areas earning an average of 27 of 35 available points). The high scores were attained even though a third of programs serve children not enrolled in ECEAP/Head Start that are not eligible to receive ECEAP/Head Start services (for example, developmental screenings or family services). Based on alignment of standards between Head Start, ECEAP and Early Achievers, and pilot data results, it is recommended that under reciprocity, ECEAP/Head Start programs receive full credit for the Child Outcomes, Curriculum & Staff Supports, and Family Engagement Early Achievers Quality Standard areas.

The professional development and training quality standard

ECEAP/Head Start teaching staff qualifications exceed the Early Achievers professional development standards. Currently, nearly half of lead teachers in ECEAP/Head Start have BA degrees, far exceeding the Early Achievers criteria of 25 percent. This is due to performance standards in both programs that require lead teachers to have at least an AA (ECEAP) and BA (50 percent of teachers) in Head Start. ECEAP/Head Start does not currently collect data on center directors (site level supervisors).

CROSSWALK: HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START, ECEAP and EARLY ACHIEVERS STANDARDS			
Early Achievers Standard	Program Standard/Requirement		Notes
	Head Start	ECEAP	
Child Outcomes	Meets Standard EA Std	Meets Standard EA Std	
Developmental screening is conducted within 90 days of enrollment and results are shared with parents (1 point)	X	X	
Daily individual child experience of quality (as measured by Focal Child) (2 points)	X	X	
Ongoing assessment of children's strengths and needs to monitor progress (e.g., child portfolio/work sampling assessments) and inform instruction (2 points)	X	X	
Share individualized child data with parents (1 point)	X	X	
Evidence of family engagement, data sharing, and transition supports for individual children (as measured by Focal Child) (1 point)	X	X	
Use of WaKIDS assessment tool or demonstration/documentation of alignment to WaKIDS process (1 point)	X	X	
Individualized instruction for all children (1 point)	X	X	
Periodic review and use of child assessment data for continuous program improvement (e.g., analyze group patterns and behaviors) (1 point)	X	X	
Curriculum and Staff Supports			
Show evidence of Program Curriculum Philosophy (1 point)	X	X	
Demonstrate alignment with WA Early Learning Guidelines (2 points)	X	X	
Lead teaching staff or FCC owner trained on program curriculum philosophy (2 points)	X	X	
Lead teaching staff or FCC owner trained on WA Early Learning Guidelines (3 points)	X	X	
Ongoing mentoring of teaching staff to support improvement in curriculum and teacher child interactions (3 points)	X	X	
Dedicated time for teaching staff planning time on a weekly basis (2 points)	X	X	HS/ECEAP stds support practice but do not specify frequency of practice
Dedicated time for teaching staff to engage in reflective practice with peer group on a monthly basis (2 points)	X	X	
Family Engagement and Partnership			
Complete modified Strengthening Families Self Assessment (Director/Owner) (1 point)	X	X	HS/ECEAP stds require Family Partnership Plans that align with these EA stds
Develop a Plan of Action based on Strengthening Families Self Assessment (1 point)	X	X	
Provide evidence of continuous feedback and improvement (Plan of Action) (1 point)	X	X	
Have a parenting support and education program in place (e.g., Incredible Years, Triple P Parenting, CSEFEL Parenting Modules, Parents as Teachers, etc.) (1 point)	X	X	
Provide information about community based programs available for parents in languages represented in the facility (e.g., community mental health, food banks, Child Find, medical/dental resources, etc.) (1 point)	X	X	
Evidence of transition plans/policies in place for changes in settings as providers (3 points)	X	X	
Partner with parents to determine perception of child strengths and needs (2 points)	X	X	

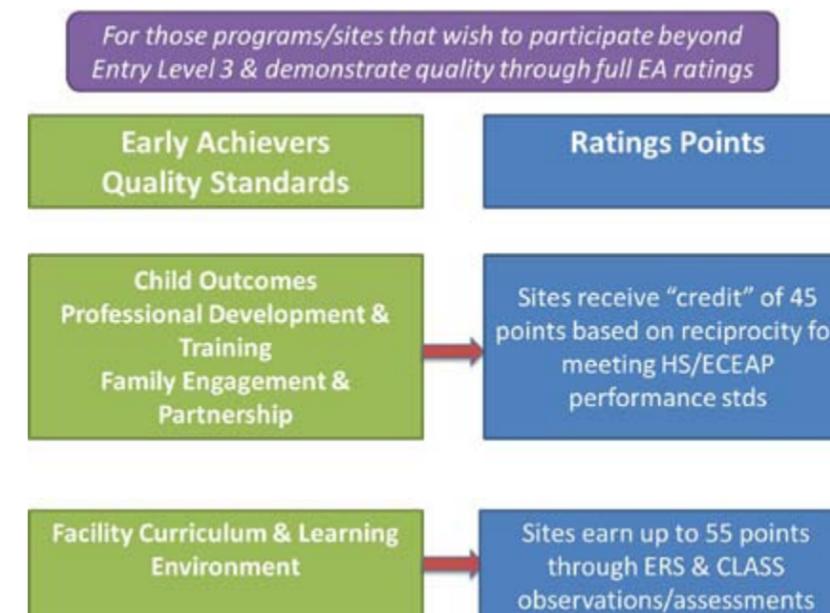
However, the Head Start Act does require Head Start education coordinators (child development education supervisory and management staff) to have at least a BA degree in early childhood education or related field. The supervisory staff categories in Early Achievers and ECEAP/Head Start are different, but data show that Head Start staff that support teachers and supervise classroom instruction are overwhelmingly (95 percent) trained and qualified in early childhood education. (ECEAP/Head Start programs also have program directors/administrators that provide additional support and management to all staff).

In addition, contractors/grantees are required to track professional development and educational attainment for all their staff in order to meet state/federal staff program standards and requirements. They verify educational degrees and training acquired by their staff (although they may use different standards and procedures compared to MERIT's verification process). It is therefore recommended that ECEAP/Head Start programs be given credit for meeting the Early Achievers professional development standards based on a contractor/grantee's staff data and verification. This gives ECEAP/Head Start credit for the tracking/supporting of professional development they are already doing.

ECEAP/Head Start and Early Achievers professional development comparison

EA Standard (all degrees in ECE or related field)	Statewide Head Start Data 2011-12	Statewide ECEAP Data 2011-12
Center Director AA – 1 pt BA – 2 pts MA – 4 pts	Child Dev. Mgmt Staff 39% adv. degree 56% BA	Not collected
Lead Teaching Staff 25% with CDA – 1 pt 25% with AA – 2 pts 25% with BA – 3 pts	49% of Lead Teachers have BA or higher	45% of Lead Teachers have BA or higher
All Other Teaching Staff 25% with CDA – 1 pt 50% with CDA – 2 pts 25% with AA – 3 pts	27% of Asst. Teachers have AA or higher	30% of Asst. Teachers have AA or higher

Streamlined rating for ECEAP/Head Start



Given the data, results and experiences of the pilot programs, and alignment with Head Start and ECEAP performance standards; a streamlined Early Achievers rating process for ECEAP/Head Start is recommended; one that focuses on the ERS and CLASS assessment tools and provides credit for the remaining Early Achievers quality standards.

Reporting of ratings

Pilot participants raised concerns about how Early Achievers ratings for ECEAP/Head Start sites will be reported and used. Unlike licensed child care programs, parents do not get to choose which ECEAP/Head Start program they attend, so posting ECEAP/Head Start ratings in a parent-accessed database did not seem useful to pilot participants. In addition, contractors/grantees feel strongly that ratings data should be reported directly to them since they are responsible for quality assurance, rather than directly to sites.

Contractors/grantees will share ratings data with sites just as they currently share other monitoring and assessment data with their sites and staff. Finally, if DEL makes ECEAP/Head Start ratings data publicly available, pilot participants recommend that some sort of aggregate or average ratings data be posted, much like the way state and federal monitoring results are publicly available.

Integrating ECEAP/Head Start participation pathway into UW protocols

During the pilot, UW data collection staff implemented a protocol designed for licensed child care programs. Sometimes this meant that data collection processes were conducted in a manner that did not recognize or account for the many policies, procedures and program standards that are embedded in ECEAP/Head Start programs. Pilot programs provided feedback that in the future, it will be important for UW to customize their protocols and procedures specifically for Head Start and ECEAP, including training and orientation of UW staff about ECEAP/Head Start, as well as a good understanding about how the evaluation protocol has been modified for the programs.

MERIT and reciprocity of professional development standards and processes

One of the goals of ECEAP/Head Start participation in Early Achievers is to also maximize ECEAP/Head Start staff participation in MERIT. While pilot participants expressed support for a single statewide registry for early learning professionals, they also expressed concern about how the current ECEAP/Head Start policies, data and systems to track professional development can be integrated to avoid duplication. In addition, some pilot participants shared concern or confusion about the individual incentives associated with MERIT. The pilot programs and advisory committee were clear that MERIT procedures as they currently exist represent a barrier to participation.

The following are recommendations for reciprocity and streamlining in this area:

1. Clarify program and individual staff responsibilities: Require contractor/grantees to ensure staff establish records in MERIT, but leave the responsibility for education verification in MERIT to the individual staff person. Sites will need to ensure staff establish MERIT record to receive their designated entry level 3, but the responsibility of completing the MERIT education verification process and maintaining individual professional MERIT records will lie with the individual. Only individuals that complete the verification process will receive their individual MERIT incentive (see below chart of individual incentives). Requiring individual staff to complete the MERIT verification process to receive their individual incentive promotes a consistent verification system within MERIT. At the same time, using grantee/contractor verification of education to meet the Early Achievers Professional Development quality standard (as recommended above for streamlined rating process) supports the current practices and capacity of ECEAP/Head Start programs.
2. Use Early Achievers participation to increase/grow support for MERIT from ECEAP/Head Start

programs: While pilot programs expressed concern about MERIT procedures and potential duplication of efforts, programs were also very supportive of a statewide professional registry that will provide reliable and accurate professional development and training information for all the state's early learning staff, including those in ECEAP/Head Start. To strengthen and validate support for MERIT, it is recommended that when ECEAP/Head Start programs sign up for Early Achievers, they also agree to make a plan to "adopt" MERIT as their program's resource for professional development and training data as the system grows and includes more functionality over time.

3. Establish ECEAP/Head Start committee to help design/build out MERIT for ECEAP/Head Start use in the future: MERIT can only be viewed as a future tool for ECEAP/Head Start if it serves their needs beyond Early Achievers requirements (for example, being able to track the variety of non-teaching staff in ECEAP/Head Start). Involving programs in the development of new components of MERIT that are tailored for ECEAP/Head Start is crucial to their support of the developing system.

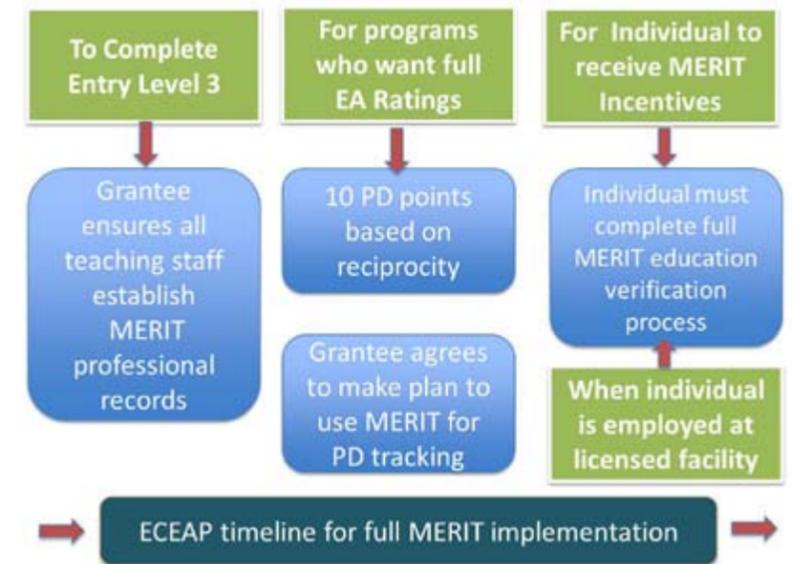
Training Resource Centers

One exciting result of the pilot is that ECEAP/Head Start programs participating in the pilot will be the first programs eligible to become Early Achievers Training Resource Centers; an opportunity to continue their leadership role in the state's quality system beyond the pilot project. Pilot programs also provided DEL with feedback about how Resource Centers will be implemented and expressed general support.

The strategy to use ECEAP/Head Start programs as a training resource for Early Achievers was included in Washington's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant. Goals of this strategy include to:

- Recognize the experience and expertise ECEAP/Head Start programs have providing quality services as a valuable resource for the state.
- Provide ECEAP/Head Start with opportunities to demonstrate leadership in the field.
- Provide ECEAP/Head Start with an incentive to participate in Early Achievers.
- Create a cross-program mechanism for sharing quality practices, creating

ECEAP/Head Start professional development reciprocity



Training resource hub concept



“communities of practice” all over Washington. -

Training Resource Centers or “hubs” are designed to be an opportunity and benefit for ECEAP/Head Start programs that participate in Early Achievers and have successfully demonstrated quality using Early Achievers tools.

During the pilot, the advisory committee discussed a general framework that includes defining training resource activities based on their potential reach and impact:

- **Local with participating Early Achievers sites.** Example: ECEAP/Head Start programs share family and parent engagement activities, and child outcomes and staff support activities with a small number of surrounding child care sites that are Early Achievers participants (between one and five sites).
- **Regional with local Child Care Aware (CCA) partners.** Example: ECEAP/Head Start programs share trainer (coach/supervisor/coordinator) activities with local CCA staff, including reflective practice and consultation, observation and coaching practices, aligned or shared screening, assessment and curriculum practices (sharing with more than five sites, serving a region or community).
- **Statewide.** In collaboration with DEL and CCA, ECEAP/Head Start programs can propose to develop or provide resources that could be used statewide.

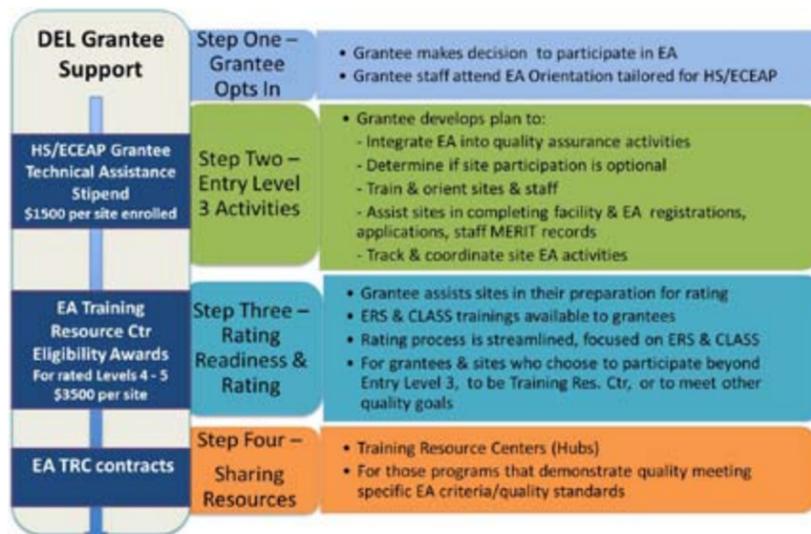
Call for Early Achiever training resources

DEL will put out a “call” for training resources that outlines the types of resources most needed to support Early Achievers standards, based on training/resource needs in the field. For example, in 2013, DEL will prioritize resources that will support licensed child care providers who are in the level 2 process. The “call” will also outline the process and timelines for becoming a training resource centers. DEL anticipates that the first of these “calls” will be put out in spring/summer 2013 after the pilot is complete. A schedule for additional cycles of the process, are yet to be determined. In the “call for resources,” DEL will define some priorities, but also leave room for innovative ideas about how ECEAP/Head Start can contribute to supporting implementation of Early Achievers.

Strategies and supports to encourage participation

The pilot programs and the pilot advisory committee recommended a package of strategies to encourage ECEAP/Head Start programs to participate in Early Achievers:

- Contractor/grantee technical assistance stipend for providing Early Achievers orientation and enrollment training and technical assistance to ECEAP/Head Start sites (\$1,500 per site, one time only).
- Training Resource Center eligibility award for ECEAP/Head Start sites that complete full UW evaluation that results in levels 4 or 5 (\$3,500 per site, one time only).
- Training Resource Center contracts from \$10,000 to \$250,000 per year depending upon scope and reach of services. These amounts may change depending upon training resource



needs and capacity of the developing Early Achievers system.

- ECEAP/Head Start staff be made eligible for scholarships and Opportunity Grants. Head Start and ECEAP, in general have decreasing resources for supporting staff development.

It is assumed distribution of stipends, awards and contracts would be done at the contractor/grantee level.

Coordination with state and federal supports and monitoring

Programs that participated in the pilot strongly support strategies to integrate and/or coordinate Early Achievers, state and federal program monitoring, training and technical assistance processes. Doing so will make participation more valuable to programs and also reinforce the importance of ECEAP and Head Start participation in Early Achievers. During the pilot, the following were identified as potential areas of further coordination and integration:

- **State ECEAP monitoring and support:** DEL recognizes that much can be shared between the Early Achievers and ECEAP systems to support common continuous quality improvement goals. DEL is exploring options to integrate Early Achievers and ECEAP, including how ratings data may be used to support monitoring and support of ECEAP programs
- **Professional development/training and technical assistance:** During the pilot project, DEL and Region X Head Start began discussions about how federal- and state-funded professional development, training and technical assistance opportunities can be coordinated to support programs. Region X Head Start fully supports programs’ participation in Early Achievers and is committed to exploring coordination of efforts as the Early Achievers system grows and expands.

Blended enrollment sites

A significant number of ECEAP/Head Start sites in the pilot are also licensed for child care, so DEL learned how participation in Early Achievers impacts these “blended enrollment” programs. Key lessons learned include:

- **Implementation of ECEAP/Head Start Performance Standards:** The pilot highlighted some of the challenges blended enrollment programs face, including their limited ability to provide the same level of services to all the children in their programs. Children enrolled in ECEAP/Head Start receive many of the services and practices included in Early Achievers quality standards “automatically” because the services and practices align closely with requirements in the ECEAP/Head Start Program Performance Standards. It is more challenging to provide the same services to children not enrolled in ECEAP/Head Start (and not receiving ECEAP/Head Start funds to support those services).
- **Blended enrollment programs may benefit from Early Achievers support not available in the reciprocity plan:** The reciprocity plan provides programs with significant “credits” for the built-in quality programs implement based on ECEAP/Head Start Program Performance Standards. The reciprocity plan also relies upon ECEAP/Head Start’s existing program resources to support sites and staff in their quality improvement efforts. ECEAP/Head Start programs are not eligible for the same level of Early Achievers training, technical assistance and coaching supports, nor the annual quality awards that non-ECEAP/Head Start participants receive as part of Early Achievers.

The pilot highlighted that the reciprocity pathway may not appropriate for blended enrollment programs because:

“I am thankful that all of [the pilot programs] gave [their] time and effort to making this work. The integration of state systems where we all fit and understand how we can improve quality is important.”

Katy Warren,
Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP

- The significant “credits” provided in the reciprocity plan should be reserved for programs that can rely on ECEAP/Head Start Performance Standards and funding to “automatically” provide services that are so closely aligned with Early Achievers quality standards.
- The reciprocity pathway will prevent blended enrollment programs from accessing Early Achievers support and resources to increase their level of quality services.

We recommend that only blended-enrollment programs with 75 percent or more of their children enrolled in ECEAP/Head Start be eligible to participate in Early Achievers under the reciprocity plan. All other blended enrollment programs can participate as licensed child care programs, which will enable them to access the full complement of Early Achievers supports.

Next steps

DEL will begin implementing the reciprocity plan by:

- **Modifying the Early Achievers online enrollment and registration processes** specifically to facilitate participation for ECEAP/Head Start programs and support the leadership role of contractors/grantees.
- **Launching the first Training Resource Centers.** The nine ECEAP/Head Start programs in the pilot are the first programs eligible for Training Resource Center contracts. DEL distributed proposal guidelines in June 2013, and the first Training Resource Centers will be funded by Fall 2013.
- **Expanding Early Achievers to all ECEAP/Head Start programs** in Summer 2013. New ECEAP/Head Start programs that sign up for Early Achievers will be able to participate under the new reciprocity plan.
- **Implementing systemwide improvements and modifications** for all Early Achievers participants. The pilot led to several improvements, efficiencies and increased levels of support for all Early Achievers participants. These changes are being operationalized in 2013.

