

Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge

Fast Facts

The Challenge

In December 2011, Washington was one of nine states to win a competitive federal grant designed to support states' efforts to improve early learning and development programs for young children. Washington will receive \$60 million over four years to build upon its existing early learning efforts to make sure that all children are ready for success in school and life.

Building a system

Washington is focused on building a "system" for young children. This means making sure all of our programs work together to support strong outcomes for kids from birth through elementary school. Creating a system will ensure that programs are relevant to families, build upon the skills that children develop over time, align with our public and private sector partners' work, are efficient and maximize every dollar.



What Washington will do

Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) is a kindergarten process that:

- Welcomes families into the Washington K-12 system as partners in their child's education.
- Gives kindergarten teachers information about the development of children in their classroom to help them teach every child—data about social/emotional, cognitive, language/literacy and physical development.



More information

www.del.wa.gov/government/racetotop/default.aspx

Facts at a glance:

- Award was given in December 2011
- \$60 million over four years
- Washington was one of nine states to win grant
- Award will build an early learning system in Washington state
- Programs include:
 - WaKIDS
 - QRIS
 - Professional Development
 - IT systems to collect strong, reliable data



Washington State Department of
Early Learning

- Aligns practices of early learning professionals and kindergarten teachers to support smooth transitions for children.
- Offers a statewide snapshot of where children in Washington are in their development at the start of kindergarten to help inform state-level decisions about policy and investments.



With support from Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC), the Washington State Legislature, and private funding, WaKIDS will reach all kids by the 2014-15 school year.

Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) connects families to quality child care and early learning programs with the help of an easy-to-understand, one-to-five rating system. Parents can find information and select the program that's right for their family. Providers receive the support, coaching, and awards to help them improve the quality of care they offer.

When children participate in high-quality early learning and child care programs, they have access to individualized attention; daily learning activities; a safe, friendly, and respectful environment; well-trained staff; parent involvement; and an environment conducive to feeling good about themselves. These components will help children succeed in school and beyond. By participating in QRIS, providers—including child care centers and family homes—are eligible for technical assistance, coaching and quality improvement awards. A QRIS rating also demonstrates a commitment to quality improvement and offers a powerful marketing tool for providers.



Professional development opportunities and awards will be available to those who work with and care for young children to improve their training and education. Washington is implementing an Early Care and Education Career Lattice that supports early learning teachers at all stages of their career toward quality training and degree attainment. Awards will be available to encourage participation in MERIT, Washington's professional development data system, as well as for achieving levels of mastery. Scholarships will also be available to support professionals who are pursuing degrees.

Data and IT systems will be strengthened to ensure we know what is working for kids. RTT-ELC funding will be used to support the development of supportive infrastructure that can inform the state over time on the progress and outcomes of the early learning programs.

Impact

As a result of RTT-ELC funding, Washington expects to improve the quality and availability of early learning programs for children. In other words, more programs will provide higher-quality services to more children.

Over time, DEL will look at school readiness rates as a measure of success in Washington's early learning system.

