



2012 Legislative Agenda

WAEYC provides services to members and advocates for policies that enable individuals and businesses to provide high-quality early learning experiences for young children birth through eight years old. Our vision is that all early learning professionals are well-qualified, competent and highly compensated, and early learning programs are of high-quality; systems that nurture and support high-quality are in place, and financial resources for professional development and program operations are available.

1. Take a Balanced Approach to Solving Budget Challenges

Meeting basic needs has become more and more difficult and increased stress and instability threatens young children's healthy development. That's why WAEYC supports a balanced approach to the budget including new revenues. We climb out of deficits by investing in cost efficient and effective solutions that build self-sufficiency, productivity and upward mobility. Protection of these investments is crucial to the immediate and long term benefits to kids and our economy.

- Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP)
- Working Connections, Seasonal and Homeless Child Care
- Child Care Resource and Referral

2. Closing the Opportunity Gap Can't Wait

Data from the WaKIDS pilot kindergarten readiness pilot is clear and urgent: we need to raise the bar and close the readiness gap. There is no better time than in the midst of an economic crisis to seriously begin discussions around what it will take to get us out of the current mess and build the human capital and economic development needed to grow our long-term economy. **Measured implementation of high-quality Pre-Kindergarten paired with successful transitions into kindergarten and integrated support for infants and toddlers is a smart path for Washington's future.**

3. Access to Quality Matters for Development

Low- and middle-income families are burdened by the cost of care and the inability to find and identify high-quality early learning programs for their children. Well-prepared and appropriately supported teachers and caregivers are essential to improving the quality of early learning programs in our state. We need to:

- Strengthen the statutory framework for **Washington's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)**. QRIS can ensure that parents have the information they need to make the best choices for their kids and provide a framework for quality improvement. This includes **higher education and community-based early childhood education and training programs** that provide preparation and ongoing development and support to early childhood professionals and **scholarships** to increase access to education and training.
- Establish an **advisory group** as part of the Early Learning Advisory Council to provide a coordinating mechanism for an integrated professional development system and a place to develop a **plan**, including identification of potential funding sources, for aligning early learning professionals' compensation with credential and degree recommendations.

4. Continuity of Care Helps Families

The Legislature made a smart choice in 2010 by translating research into practice and increasing continuity of child care for a small group of families who also qualify for ECEAP or Head Start (HB 3141). After a year of study, it's been shown to both help families AND save money. Improvements to Working Connections Child Care, including **expanding 12-month authorization periods to all families receiving child care assistance**, is a high-priority to WAEYC members, and makes sense for children, their families, child care providers, and our state budget.