



# Seeds to Success

Improving Child Care Quality in Washington State

[www.del.wa.gov/seeds](http://www.del.wa.gov/seeds)

## FIELD TESTING SEEDS TO SUCCESS

### OVERVIEW

Experts agree that high-quality early learning experiences give young children the start they need to enter school ready for success. But today, licensed child care quality in Washington varies considerably, and the children who need high-quality care the most, often don't get it.

To ensure that every child has access to high-quality early learning, the Department of Early Learning, Thrive by Five Washington, in partnership with pilot communities and advocates all over the state designed Seeds to Success, Washington state's voluntary quality rating and improvement system. Seeds to Success incorporates best practices from similar systems in other states and recognizes what communities in Washington need and have to offer to support such a system. Seeds to Success aims to improve the quality of child care by offering support and resources to providers who commit to improving their program and the care they provide.



Seeds to Success is already showing us that it has the potential to make a difference, and the state's new early learning plan makes implementing the system statewide a priority.

In 2009, Washington state conducted one of the country's first randomized controlled trials of a quality rating improvement system.

### FIELD TEST – YEAR ONE: LISTENING AND LEARNING

More than 100 child care businesses – both center-based and family-home based – and 300 child care professionals in Clark, Kitsap and Spokane counties as well as the two Thrive Demonstration Communities of East Yakima and White Center participated in the first year of the Modified Field Test, helping to test parts of the Seeds to Success system. Funding and participation varied in each community based on local private funding, state funding and support from Thrive.

In a matter of months, we learned from all five communities that providers were committed to professional development but needed help accessing appropriate professional development opportunities. And in White Center and East Yakima, where additional private funds supported a more intensive effort as well as research, we learned that **when child care providers get one-on-one coaching and a modest amount of money to make changes to their program, the quality of their program starts to go up – and pretty quickly.**

### FIELD TEST – YEAR TWO: BUILDING ON PROGRESS

We learned a lot in Year One. We discovered that the Quality Standards – the four major areas that make up a provider's quality rating – needed adjustments. As a result, we changed the Quality Standards so that every standard is measurable, evidence-based, simple to understand and administer, and links to positive outcomes for children and families.

We also wanted more consistency among the communities participating in the field test. In Year Two, all participants will receive consistent levels of coaching, training and other professional development opportunities. At the end of the Modified Field Test in June 2011, we will have baseline information about the quality of programs in all five communities and a clear picture of how a quality rating and improvement system can work in Washington state.

### THE FUTURE

To date, funds from both the public (state and federal) and private sectors have supported the Seeds to Success Modified Field Test. DEL, Thrive and various key partners also are working with the National Governors' Association on a long-term plan to take the Seeds to Success system statewide. This plan will be completed by December 2010.