

Early Learning Action Alliance

Who We Are

The Early Learning Action Alliance is a coalition of more than 40 organizations representing a diverse array of Washington nonprofits, professional associations, businesses and industries. We are united by the belief that all children in Washington state deserve to have the opportunities and support they need in their first five years of life to be prepared for school and a bright future.

The Problem

All children deserve the chance to succeed in life. Yet more than half of the children in Washington state enter kindergarten without the basic skills they need to succeed in school. Children who begin school without these basic skills—such as recognizing colors or knowing how to share with others—feel frustrated and often develop negative attitudes toward school. They are also at greater risk than their peers of staying behind and eventually dropping out of school.

We also know that quality child care, preschool and family care choices remain out of reach for hundreds of thousands of middle- and low-income families. Too many Washington parents do not have access to quality care that they can afford.

Why Early Learning

Children are born learning. The more exposure children have in their earliest years to new experiences, the stronger their social, emotional and intellectual foundations become. We also know that children learn best when they have consistent, positive attention from the people who love them most, whether at home with a parent, with a child care provider or in preschool with a teacher.

Yet despite all the research indicating the substantial economic and social returns of early learning, Washington lags behind other states that have made smart early learning investments for their future.

Our Long-Term Priorities

We need researched, market-driven policies that will give all young children the social, emotional and intellectual foundations they need to start school ready to succeed. These policies should support parents as their children's first and most important teachers and provide a range of culturally relevant support services to families who need them. A greater range of top quality child care, family care and preschool choices needs to be available to all families. We also need to recognize the importance of expanding professional development opportunities to the thousands of child care professionals across the state. Together, we can help make Washington state a place where all families and young children have the opportunities they need to thrive.

Who Benefits

When we close the kindergarten readiness gap, we'll narrow the school achievement gap, which will result in higher employment levels later on in life. Communities that prioritize early learning see substantial social and economic returns. Smart investments in early learning yield positive returns for families and communities across Washington state.