

2020 Legislative Priority

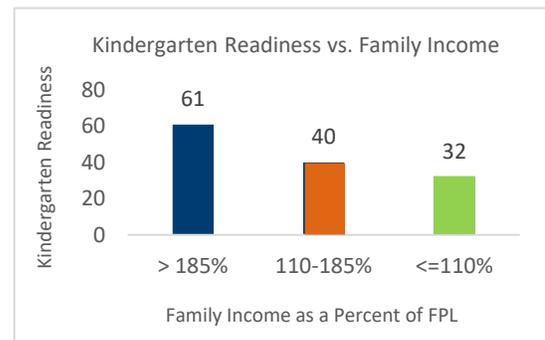
Increase Access to High-Quality Preschool

Washington state's lack of access to affordable, high-quality preschool has created a significant opportunity gap for children entering school. A plan to expand preschool to all children, regardless of income, is needed to support children in their K-12 outcomes and life.

Background

- The pivotal role of kindergarten readiness for closing the opportunity gap was emphasized in the 2006 Washington Learns Report, when Kindergarten teachers reported that less than 50% of their students entered kindergarten ready to learn.¹ In 2018, still less than 50% of incoming students are kindergarten-ready on all 6 WaKIDS domains. That number is considerably lower for students of Native American, Black, Hispanic, and Pacific Islander race/ethnicities, as well as low-income, limited English and students with disabilities.² The Department of Early Learning (DEL)'s goal is for 90% of children enter kindergarten prepared to learn, with race and family income no longer a predictor of kindergarten readiness by 2020.³ Currently, only 61% of non-low income (> 185% of Federal Poverty Level (FPL)) are kindergarten ready.⁴

| Kindergarten Readiness | Actual 2015-16 | Actual 2016-17* | Actual 2017-18 | 2017-18 Target |
|------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| All Students | 44.2 | 47.4 | 46.7 | 51.7 |
| American Indian / Alaskan Native | 35.2 | 32.1 | 30.5 | 37.9 |
| Asian | 51.5 | 58.1 | 56.9 | 61.3 |
| Black / African American | 41.2 | 41.7 | 40.0 | 46.5 |
| Hispanic / Latino | 31.1 | 32.3 | 30.9 | 38.1 |
| Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander | 33.9 | 28.0 | 29.1 | 34.2 |
| White | 50.5 | 53.3 | 52.7 | 57.0 |
| Two or More Races | 49.4 | 51.1 | 50.7 | 55.0 |
| Limited English | 27.8 | 31.1 | 30.7 | 37.0 |
| Low-Income | 33.7 | 32.6 | 31.5 | 38.3 |
| Students with a Disability | 19.8 | 19.1 | 18.5 | 26.2 |



- Enrollment of Washington children in preschool is 42%, six percentage points lower than the US average.² Expanding the number of high-quality early-learning slots available to families of all income ranges will be key to accomplishing the DEL goal. While the Washington Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) sets current eligibility level above the federal Head Start program, this still limits enrollment to children from families with income at or below 110 percent of the federal poverty level, or \$27,600 for a family of four.⁵ Washington state does not currently provide for enough state preschool slots to fund current eligibility levels.⁶ Early learning is the one publicly funded program that pays for itself—in six years for programs aimed at at-risk children, and in nine years for universal programs.⁷

Proposed Solutions

The Washington State PTA shall support legislation or policies that:

- Develop a plan to ensure all preschool-age children in Washington state have access to preschool that is:
 - High-quality
 - Local
 - Inclusive
 - Evidence-based
 - Developmentally appropriate
- The plan must address the equity gaps and improve student outcomes in the pre-K-12 public school.

For More Information

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For more information on the WSPTA advocacy program, please visit our website (www.wastatepta.org)

Citations

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