Washington State Department of
# Early Learning

# Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge

## November 2012 update from the Department of Early Learning

Dear Early Learning Leaders,

October was an incredibly busy month for everyone involved in RTT-ELC work. WaKIDS data collection was completed, the University of Washington began onsite data collection, and Child Care Aware exceeded its monthly Early Achievers enrollment targets across the state. The rubber has officially hit the road. So before moving on to the details, let's collectively take a deep breath and acknowledge the incredibly hard work that has been taking place across the state, at every level ... OK, let's get back to it!

### Stackable ECE Certificate

RTT-ELC has increased the demand for clear pathways for advancement on the career lattice and ECE courses throughout our state education system. Since Early Achievers points are granted for professional development credentials of staff members, demand for higher education is expected, and new opportunities for scholarships and financial incentives supporting upward movement on the career lattice are currently being made available.

In response, 11 college systems in Washington have worked collaboratively to develop a **common ECE Certificate program** that includes:

- Statewide ECE initial certificates (12 credits, level 5 on the Career Lattice); ECE certificates of specialization (20 credits, level 6 on the Career Lattice); and an ECE state certificate (47 credits, level 7 on the Career Lattice).

- Common course templates for the 14 courses identified as requirements in the certificates – course skeletons providing course titles, simple descriptions, basic student outcomes, and suggested resources.

- Identified specific Core Competencies taught and assessed through listed course student outcomes, articulating higher education's capacity to develop required core competencies.

- Common course numbers for the 14 courses

Adoption of these common courses and certificates is voluntary. In order to meet the needs of students in various settings throughout the state, individualization of courses will be carried out by the faculty members' instruction through utilizing unique teaching techniques, assignments, and assessment methods. There are advantages for members of the workforce navigating a professional development system which clearly identifies means for advancement via certificates made up of common courses, consistently offered statewide.

### Head Start/ECEAP Pilot

One of the most exciting parts of Early Achievers is that it defines quality environments for children regardless of where they spend their time—this includes state and federally funded Pre-K programs. Head Start and ECEAP programs represent some of the highest quality programs in the state, and Early Achievers expects to leverage this quality through the creation of Head Start/ECEAP training centers that will allow child care providers to access additional training through partnerships with local Head Start and ECEAP sites. ECEAP and Head Start providers will benefit as well with a streamlined process for participating in Early Achievers, access to additional onsite data, and additional supports.

Last summer, nine Head Start & ECEAP grantees/contractors across the state agreed to participate in a **pilot project** to help DEL test and refine what Head Start/ECEAP participation in Early Achievers will look like. Altogether, the nine grantees/contractors representing approximately 180 sites have been actively involved in pilot activities, including being the first sites in the state to participate in the Early Achievers rating process. (Wow, talk about volunteering to be guinea pigs in this work!)

This pilot has proven to be extremely beneficial in identifying some challenges in the data collection process and this pilot ensures that the road will be much smoother for all of the programs that come after. Thanks to all of the Head Start and ECEAP pilot programs for demonstrating their leadership and commitment to children!

### MERIT, oh boy.

If just seeing the word "**MERIT**" makes you break out in hives, you are not alone. Creating a data system to track the Early Learning workforce in Washington is an essential part of our early learning system and we cannot successfully improve the quality of care without it. Has it gone smoothly? Have there been issues with roll out? Have people been prone to attached expletives when talking about MERIT? Um, well, I think you know the answers.

Since MERIT rolled out in July, several important supports have been introduced to make it easier for providers to access MERIT and input their data:

- 80 "super users" have been trained across the state. They have the ability to unlock accounts, change passwords and troubleshoot with providers so that issues can be resolved on site.

- We've hired four temporary staff to provide technical assistance to the field.

- Response times for email and phone inquiries is dropping at a fast rate in response to the additional field capacity.

While MERIT has a learning curve for new users, we are seeing use increase at a dramatic rate. Each month, DEL sends out about 20,000 confirmation emails for things like submitted applications in MERIT.

DEL will continue to work with partners to make MERIT as user friendly and accessible as possible.

Thanks for all you do to support young kids in Washington!

## Learn more!
### www.del.wa.gov/government/racetotop

## Washington's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Performance Tracker

### Early Achievers: Levels 2 to 5

| | As of Sept. 30, 2012 | 2012 Targets | Progress to date | 2012 target met? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Total Programs** | **551** | **802** | **69%** | |
| Head Start and ECEAP Sites | 181 | 152 | 119% | ✓ |
| Licensed Child Care Programs | 370 | 650 | 57% | |
| **Total Children Served** | **22,854** | **20,265** | **113%** | ✓ |
| Licensed Child Care Programs | 11,665 | 14,928 | 78% | |
| Head Start sites | 7,175 | 3,401 | 211% | ✓ |
| ECEAP sites | 4,014 | 1,936 | 207% | ✓ |

### WaKIDS: 2012-13 school year

| | Projected 2012-13 school year | 2012-13 school year targets | Progress to date | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Districts | 105 | N/A | N/A | |
| Schools | 307 | N/A | N/A | |
| Teachers | 1,036 | 1,138 | 91% | |
| Students | 22,710 | 25,714 | 88% | |