

Overview of WSIPP’s Early Achievers Evaluation Report Series

In the Early Start Act of 2015,¹ the Washington State Legislature required all child care and early learning (CC/EL) programs receiving state funds to participate in Early Achievers (EA), the state’s quality rating and improvement system. The legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to study the relationship between EA quality ratings and children’s later outcomes and to conduct a benefit-cost analysis of EA. In the Early Achievers evaluation series, we studied outcomes for children attending an EA-rated Early Childhood and Assistance Program (ECEAP), or a child care center using subsidies, from 2015-2019. This document summarizes reports in the evaluation series.

Report One (2019): Summarizes background literature, and a research plan for WSIPP’s evaluation.

- Reviews existing research on CC/EL quality, quality rating and improvement systems, and child outcomes.
- Describes EA policy and implementation from EA’s introduction in 2012 through 2019.
- Outlines WSIPP’s plan for the EA evaluation series and potential research design.

Report Two (2020): Children attending a provider that has met EA quality standards had better kindergarten outcomes, compared to children in settings that did not meet quality standards.

- Examines kindergarten outcomes for children attending a CC/EL program participating in EA.
- Finds that, on average, children attending either ECEAP or a child care center that met EA quality standards in the year before kindergarten had better outcomes than similar children attending a rated program that did not meet EA standards.

Association Between Attending a Site in the Pre-K Year Meeting EA Quality Standards and Kindergarten Outcomes

Students in:	Kindergarten readiness	Special education
“EA quality” ECEAP	10% more likely	22% less likely
“EA quality” Subsidy	10% more likely	13% less likely

Note:

Special education estimate in subsidy sample is not statistically significant.

Report Three (2021): The association between attending pre-k that meets quality standards and later kindergarten readiness was stronger in certain contexts.

- Examines group differences in the overall positive association between attending pre-k that met EA quality standards and later kindergarten readiness for children attending licensed child care using subsidies.
- Finds stronger association for children:
 - With two or more years of enrollment, compared with enrollment for up to one year
 - Attending pre-k in neighborhoods with higher community vulnerability levels, compared with sites in neighborhoods with lower community vulnerability

¹ Second Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 1491, Chapter 7, Laws of 2015.

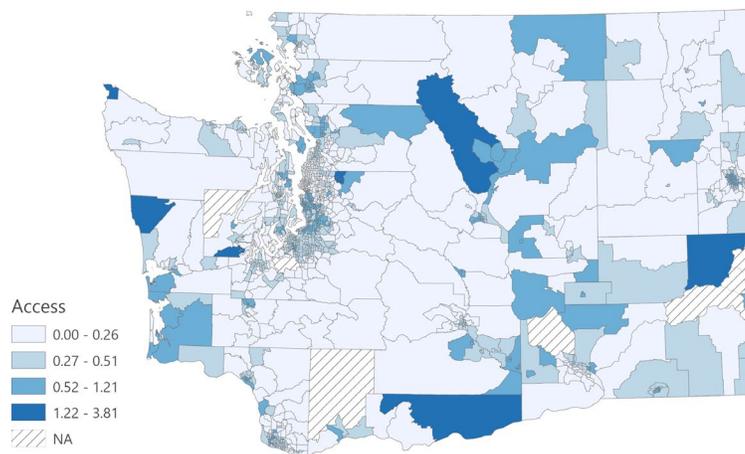
Report Four (2022): Modest long-range monetary benefits are likely to associate with attending pre-k that meets EA quality standards, compared with attending pre-k that does not meet standards.

- Estimates long-range monetary benefits associated with attending either ECEAP or a child care center that met EA quality standards, compared with attending a rated program that did not meet quality standards.
- Finds that attending a program that met quality standards is likely to return benefits in the range of \$4,300 to \$7,000, on average, per child over the course of the lifespan.
- Finds that from 2015 to 2019 the average observed per-child/per-year dollar amount spent by the state for sites that have met quality standards differed little from the amount spent on sites that initially did not meet quality standards.

Report Five (2022): In 2019, at the end of the initial EA roll-out period, low-income family access to publicly funded child care and early learning meeting EA quality rating standards varied considerably across the state.

- Examines low-income family access to publicly funded child care and early learning that met EA quality standards.
- Analyzes child care centers, family home child care providers, ECEAP, and Head Start.
- Finds average access to publicly funded EA quality care for low-income families in Washington in 2019 was one slot for every three children nearby.
- Local differences in average access did not appear to be primarily driven by select neighborhood characteristics: urban/rural, racial/ethnic population makeup, or vulnerability.

Average Access to "EA Quality" Subsidy/Public Child Care by Census Tract (2019)



Note: Access estimates indicate the average number of nearby slots per child. Darker shading indicates higher average access in a census tract.

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Washington State Institute for Public Policy

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