

18.45 High-Quality Preschool to Third Grade Early Learning

Resolution passed 2023; amended 2024

Whereas, preschool to third grade (P-3) early learning refers to the period from birth to 8 years old, the developmental period when much foundational growth and development happens in the brain, when we have a great opportunity to impact positive developmental gains; and

Whereas, quality early learning supports the whole child and includes the six areas of development and learning: social-emotional, physical, cognitive, language, literacy, and mathematics; and

Whereas, when parents, informal community programs, and professionally staffed early childhood services pay attention to young children’s emotional and social needs, as well as to their mastery of literacy and cognitive skills, it has maximum impact on the development of sturdy brain architecture and preparation for success in school; and

Whereas, the legislature found that high-quality childcare and early learning are critical to a child’s success in school and life and recognized that high-quality, inclusive classroom settings are shown to reduce the opportunity gap for low-income children, children with disabilities, children of color, and other at-risk children while consistently improving outcomes for all children both inside and outside of the classroom; and

Whereas, the American Academy of Pediatrics states that high-quality early learning experiences and childcare for young children improves physical and cognitive outcomes and can result in enhanced kindergarten readiness, especially for at-risk children. Preschool education can be viewed as an investment and studies show a positive return on that investment; and

Whereas, investments in high-quality early learning programs can contribute to a stronger economy, increased caregiver job stability, and a reduction in the cost for special education, healthcare, and criminal justice spending later in life; and

Whereas, early learning is an opportunity for early disability identification and intervention services with the goal of enabling young children with disabilities to be active and successful participants during their early childhood years and in the future. Research shows the earlier a disability is identified, the greater impact the intervention has; and

Whereas, students and families have a variety of needs requiring a continuum of programs and services. How a family chooses early childhood education and care is influenced by family values, affordability, and availability; and

Whereas, many children and families in Washington do not have access to high-quality early learning opportunities. As a result, many children arrive at kindergarten less prepared with respect to both social and academic skills that are important for school success, with higher percentages of low-income and at-risk children starting behind. These gaps persist as children continue their education. Data from the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) and Smarter Balanced Assessments

(SBA) indicate a correlation between kindergarten-readiness and meeting 3rd-grade math and English Language Arts (ELA) standards; and

Whereas, Washington State’s children of color, children in some tribal communities, children with disabilities, and children who speak a language other than English as their first language continue to experience inequitable educational opportunities and outcomes. There are also pronounced gaps in access to high-quality early learning programs for children in migrant families and families who are experiencing homelessness, and there are geographic regions within the state that have significant shortages of services and supports for families — particularly in rural and remote communities. These disparities are compounded when children have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and/or do not meet income eligibility thresholds for early learning programs or childcare programs.

Therefore, be it


Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils will advocate that the legislature, executive branch, including OSPI and the Department of Children, Youth & Families, and school districts and Educational Service Districts focus on P-3 early learning to improve student outcomes; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils will advocate for a continuum of accessible and high-quality preschool and pre-Kindergarten early learning models, services, and interventions to meet the varied needs of all students and families, including students with disabilities, highly capable students, multi-lingual learners, and students from all socioeconomic groups, including but not limited to:

- Head Start
- Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)
- Public school preschool
- Early childhood special education programs
- Transition to Kindergarten programs
- Community and non-profit based programs
- Co-op preschool
- Licensed childcare
- Faith-based early learning and childcare
- Tribal nations early learning programs
- Drop-in programs
- Play and Learn programs; and be it further

Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils will advocate to increase the number of effective and diverse P-3 early learning staff including:

- Expanding access and removing barriers to higher learning early childhood education, child development, and apprenticeship programs
- Encouraging all programs to ensure high-quality instructional and/or experienced staff are leading early learning programs
- Advocating for professional development and continuing education, mentorship, collaboration, and support for early learning educators; and be it further



Resolved, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils will advocate for expanded state and federal funding for high-quality early learning so that all school districts can provide a continuum of services to meet the needs of their communities including:

- Regionalizing or increasing income eligibility for public early learning programs
- P-3 early learning models, programs, and services to meet the varied needs of their students and families, prioritizing investments in areas with the lowest levels of accessibility and offerings
- Collaboration with other programs in the community
- Effective and diverse educators, instructors, and support staff that represent the school communities they serve for all public-school programs - large and small, urban and rural - in all parts of the state
- Required compliance and regulatory frameworks to ensure high-quality standards for early learning programs.