

A photograph of a woman with dark hair, wearing a light grey cardigan, smiling warmly at two young children. The children, a boy on the left and a girl on the right, are sitting at a wooden table. The boy is wearing a red shirt and the girl is wearing a blue and white striped shirt. They are surrounded by colorful toys, including blocks and a paper with colored circles. The background shows a well-lit room with wooden shelves holding various items.

# Preschool for All: A Strong Start for Washington State's Children



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## A 10-Year Strategic Pathway for High-Quality Universal Preschool Access

### Authors

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**Christina Weiland**  
University of Michigan

**Tim Burgess**  
Former City Council  
President & Interim Mayor  
of Seattle, Washington

**Ajay Chaudry**  
New York University

**Ruth Kagi**  
Former Member,  
Washington House  
of Representatives

**Anna Shapiro**  
University of Virginia

**Casey Moran**  
New York University

### Policy Issue

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Washington State has an early childhood crisis roiling almost invisibly across the state, with many children not receiving the strong and fair start in life they need and deserve. This crisis has life-long implications for children because early childhood — prenatal-to-five — is when the brain develops most rapidly, and the stage is set for all future growth, development, and learning.

Preschool education for three- and four-year-old children is one component of a comprehensive approach to child development that also includes high-quality, accessible, and affordable child care for infants and toddlers, paid family leave, and early support for families. A system that comprehensively addresses the prenatal-to-five years of life with these essential elements is crucial to the strong start children need.

This policy brief presents recommendations that address one part of this crisis: the failure to provide high-quality universal preschool for all three- and four-year-old children in Washington. The visionary policy recommendations presented here are rooted in a multi-year engagement between leaders and practitioners in Washington and the Cradle to Kindergarten: A New Plan to Combat Inequality<sup>1</sup> team.

Correspondence regarding this brief should be sent to Christina Weiland at [weilandc@umich.edu](mailto:weilandc@umich.edu).

# Findings & Recommendations

- 1 High-quality preschool helps prepare three- and four-year-old children for success in kindergarten and beyond. Yet, only 30% of the state's children are enrolled in public preschool classrooms; the national enrollment rate is 36%.
- 2 In Washington state, children from families with the highest incomes access preschool — public and private<sup>2</sup> — at high levels.
- 3 Children from Washington families with middle to low incomes access preschool at much lower levels. The state's current approach particularly leaves out children from families with middle to moderately low incomes because their household income disqualifies them for most *public* programs, and their parents can't afford private programs. As a result, Washington ranks 38th among all states in *public* preschool enrollment for four-year-olds and 17th for three-year-olds.
- 4 Washington's *public* preschool program predominantly provides only half-day services, a significant barrier for working families who need extended day services.
- 5 Due to opportunity gaps before kindergarten entry, almost one-half of Washington's children enter kindergarten already behind their peers on six age-specific measures of learning preparedness: social-emotional, cognitive, language, literacy, mathematics, physical.
- 6 Implementation of universal preschool as proposed here must be carefully planned to not cause harm to the network of child care providers who serve infants and toddlers. Ideally, Washington would develop and implement a fully integrated early learning system, including all the essential prenatal-to-five services, for the state's children and families. This intentional and strategic system does not exist today in Washington.<sup>3</sup>
- 7 High-quality preschool benefits all children and narrows opportunity gaps and inequities for children of color, dual language learners, and children from families with low incomes.
- 8 The **Washington Preschool for All** program envisions statewide, universal, voluntary, high-quality preschool delivered through a mix of public and private community-based nonprofit service providers, phased in over 10 years.<sup>4</sup>



# Background

Preschool programs are an essential means to support learning for all children and boost skill levels. Decades of research evidence dating to the 1960s has demonstrated that high-quality preschool enhances a child's cognitive and social-emotional skills and improves their readiness for kindergarten and beyond.<sup>5</sup> More recent research has documented the life-long benefits of high-quality preschool, including better health, increased educational attainment, higher earning power as adults, lower criminal legal system involvement, and a sharp decrease in intergenerational poverty.<sup>6</sup>



High-quality preschool programs will narrow the significant and consequential gaps in early reading, math abilities, and social-emotional skills at kindergarten entry between Washington children from less advantaged homes and their peers. If these gaps are not addressed, they will persist through elementary, middle, high school, and beyond.<sup>7</sup> According to the 2019-2020 [Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills](#) (WaKIDS) assessment, due to opportunity gaps before kindergarten entry, almost one-half of Washington's five-year-old children begin kindergarten already behind their peers on six age-specific measures of learning preparedness: social-emotional, cognitive, language, literacy, mathematics, and physical. For children of color and children from families with low incomes, close to 60% start behind in these vital skill areas.<sup>8</sup>

Today — as well as before the coronavirus pandemic — there are significant disparities by family income in both preschool access and preschool quality. Nationally, preschool children from families with middle and low incomes are *less likely* than their peers from families with higher incomes to attend any form of preschool and even *less likely* to participate in high-quality programs that will best prepare them for kindergarten and beyond.<sup>9</sup> As our analysis in the next section shows, these same trends are evident in Washington State. Without significant public investment that follows the science of early childhood brain development and the evidence of what works best to give children a strong start, many of Washington's children will continue to lag behind their peers.<sup>10</sup>

New public investments are especially needed in the wake of the historic COVID-19 global crisis.<sup>11</sup> The pandemic profoundly affected young children, families, and the early childhood programs that serve them. Even for those who have not contracted the virus, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought considerable family financial and psychological strain, particularly in families with lower incomes and families of color.<sup>12</sup> It has led many women to quit the workforce,<sup>13</sup> and there have been considerable setbacks in children's access to preschool nationally<sup>14</sup> and young children's learning. Early childhood education programs have struggled with increased costs, lower enrollment, and uneven public support.<sup>15</sup>

**“High-quality preschool programs will narrow the significant and consequential gaps in early reading, math abilities, and social-emotional skills at kindergarten entry...”**

The Washington State Legislature recognized these challenges when it passed the [Fair Start For Kids Act](#) in May 2021, expanding child care and preschool access and providing support to the early learning workforce. However, these investments fall far short of ensuring universal access to preschool.<sup>16</sup>

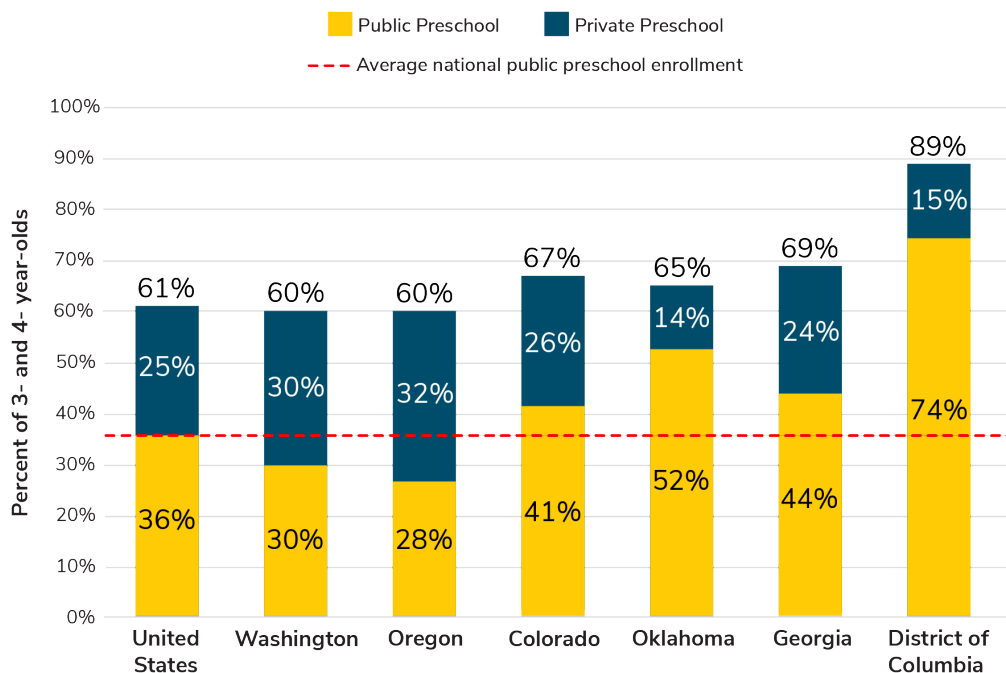
Our **Washington Preschool for All** plan aims to establish greater opportunities for all young children and position them to succeed in school and beyond.

# The Current Preschool Landscape in Washington

**Total preschool enrollment in Washington is close to the national average.** According to American Community Survey (ACS) data, 114,000 children attended center-based public and private preschool programs in 2018 across Washington — approximately 60% of the state's 184,000 three- and four-year-old children. As shown in Figure 1, Washington's preschool enrollment rate was close to the national average of 61%, though lower than states with universal public preschool programs such as Georgia (69%) and Oklahoma (65%), and substantially less than the District of Columbia (89%), the only locality in the U.S. with universal full-day public preschool for both three- and four-year-old children.

However, *public* preschool enrollment in Washington is lower than the national average. According to the ACS survey data from 2018, an estimated 57,000 Washington children — 30% of the total children ages three and four — were enrolled in *public* preschool; the national average was 36%. Other states, such as Colorado, Georgia, and Oklahoma, as shown in Figure 1, had relatively higher rates of *public* preschool enrollment. In Washington, D.C., the rate of *public* preschool enrollment was 74%.

**Figure 1: Percent of 3- and 4-year-olds Attending Public and Private Preschool in 2018**



**Source:** Data for states from the 2018 American Community Survey (ACS). Percentages reflect public and private preschool enrollment as a percentage of all three- and four-year-old children.

**Washington's current publicly funded preschool programs and tuition assistance are available only to families with the lowest incomes and children with special needs.** Washington children can currently access *publicly* funded preschool through the following primary means:

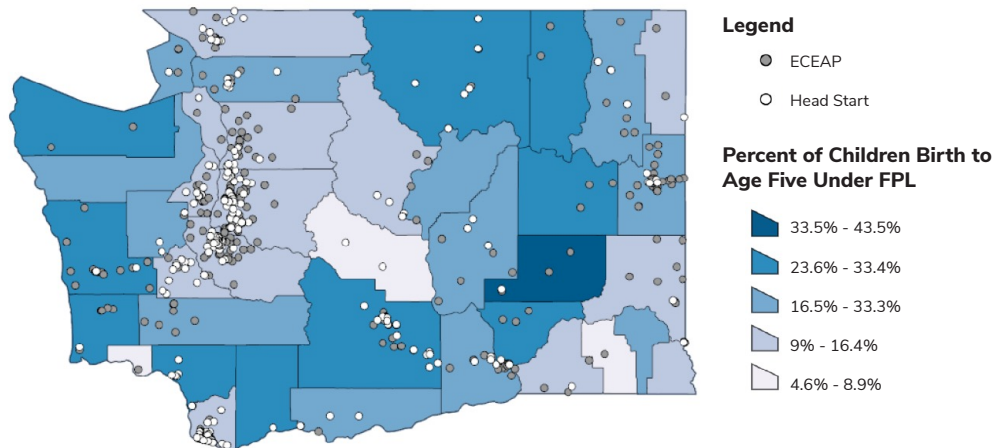
- **Head Start** is the federally funded comprehensive child development program that primarily serves preschool-age children in families at or below the Federal Poverty Level<sup>17</sup> (FPL), with up to 10% of children from “over-income” families permitted. Head Start prioritizes enrolling children beyond income, such as children with special needs.

In Washington, the Head Start program funded enrollment for 12,846 children in the fiscal year 2019<sup>18</sup> with a mix of part-day, full-day (6 or more hours), and extended day (approximately 10 hours to meet the full working day needs of children with employed parents).

- Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)** is a state-funded preschool program modeled on Head Start to serve more families at or below 140% of the FPL, or \$37,100 for a family of four. Over time, it has increased investment and enrollment with a legislative mandate to serve all eligible families by 2026.<sup>19</sup> In 2022, ECEAP is funded to serve 15,046 children — 8.2% of the state’s total estimated children of preschool age — based on an enrollment criteria system prioritizing children from families with the lowest incomes, children experiencing homelessness or in foster or kinship care; children with disabilities; children receiving Child Protective Services, Indian Child Welfare, Family Assessment Response; or children with multiple risk factors and eligible for kindergarten the following year.<sup>20</sup> Some program service sites include both Head Start and ECEAP enrollment.

For the 2019-2020 school year, Washington reported that the vast majority of ECEAP slots provided only part-day services — 10,387 part-day slots (74% out of 14,000 available that year), 3,046 school-day (22%), and 567 extended day (4%).<sup>21</sup> Not providing extended day preschool services creates a significant access barrier for employed parents, most of whom need full-day services.

**Figure 2: Location of ECEAP and Head Start Programs in Washington State and Percent of Children Under the Federal Poverty Level**



**Sources:** Child poverty levels derived from ACS 2013-2018 5-year census estimates. ECEAP center locations are plotted as of 2017-2018. Head Start locations were collected through the federal Head Start Program Locator (<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/center-locator>).

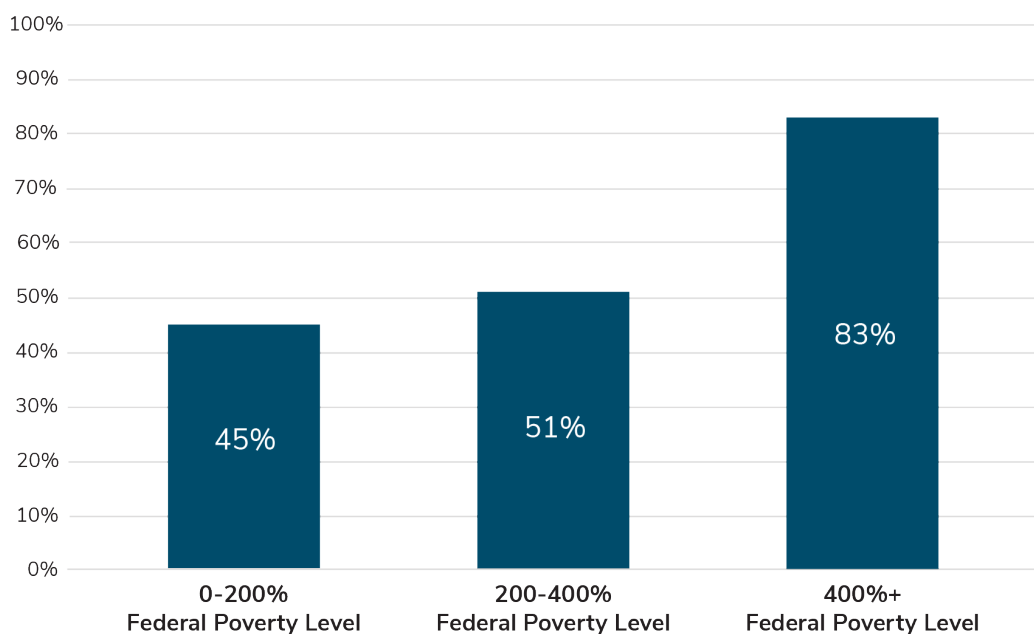
Washington families eligible for child care subsidies may also access preschool services by using their subsidy to enroll their children in private preschool classrooms. Children with a special education designation or other special needs may also enroll in ECEAP, regardless of household income, or enroll in their local public school district’s preschool service.<sup>22</sup> In the 2018-2019 school year, 11,298 additional children were enrolled in local school district preschool classrooms due to their special education status.

Most of these classrooms are part day. Despite these various preschool access paths, Washington does not currently meet the early education needs of all its families with children, resulting in the state ranking low among all states on preschool access. According to the [2020 State of Preschool](#) report from the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), Washington ranks 38th among all states in public preschool enrollment for four-year-olds and 17th for three-year-olds.

**There are large gaps in preschool access by family income in Washington.** Just 45% of Washington children from families with low incomes (incomes at or below 200% of the FPL — \$53,000 for a family of four in 2021) are enrolled in either public or private preschool programs (Figure 3). Preschool enrollment for children from families with middle and moderately low incomes (incomes 2-4 times the FPL, or \$53,000 to \$106,000 for a family of four) is slightly higher than that of families with lower incomes. However, eight out of 10 (83%) children from families with incomes four times and higher than the federal poverty level are enrolled in a public or private preschool.

**Figure 3: Washington State Public and Private Preschool Enrollment of Children Ages 3 to Kindergarten Entry**

By Family Income Levels (2018)



**Source:** Data from 2018 American Community Survey, 1-year estimates.

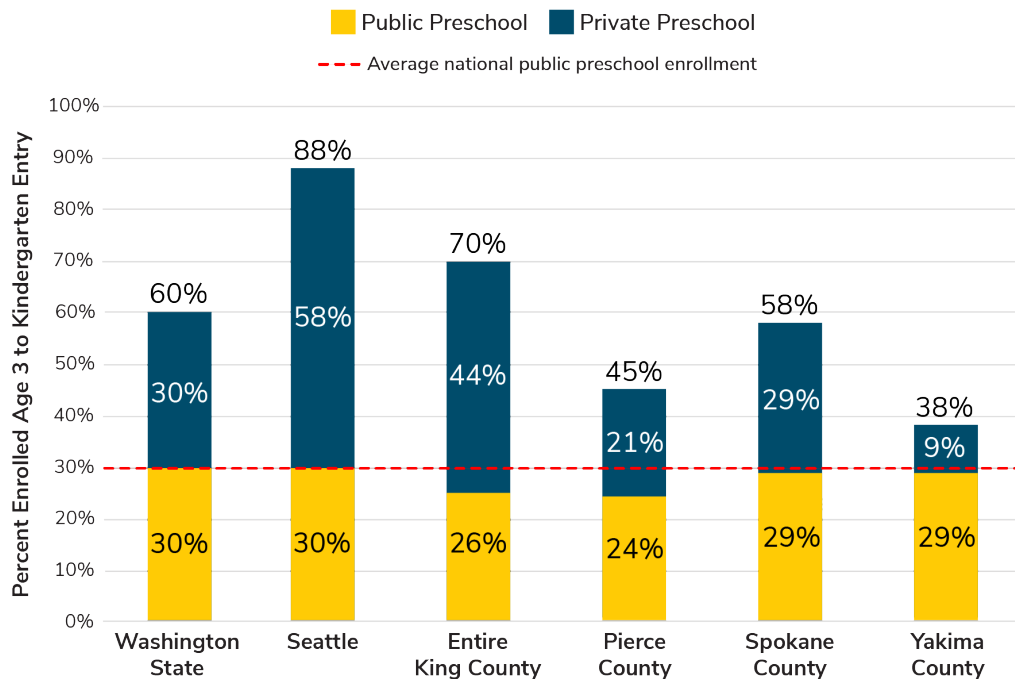
Notably, the major public preschool services currently available in Washington are primarily designed to serve families with the lowest incomes.<sup>23</sup> Program enrollment criteria for Head Start mainly serves children in families earning less than \$29,150 per year and ECEAP families earning less than \$37,100 per year. There is very little public funding for children in families earning more.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to leaving many families out, income-targeted preschool programs nationally contribute to a troubling pattern of greater racial/ethnic segregation than in K-12 classrooms. An analysis by the Urban Institute found that early childhood programs are twice as likely

to be nearly 100% Black or Latino and less likely to be somewhat integrated (i.e., defined as a 10-20% Black or Latino enrollment share).<sup>25</sup> The effects of attending more racially mixed versus segregated preschools, to our knowledge, have not been studied. However, research shows that children can distinguish between racial groups by three months, show favorable attitudes toward their own racial group by nine months, and employ racial stereotypes by six years.<sup>26</sup> For both equity of opportunity and developmental reasons, tracking and reducing racial/ethnic segregation in preschool is an essential goal for public policy.

**Preschool enrollment varies significantly across Washington due to geographic differences in the number of families who can pay preschool tuition.** Figure 4 shows that the percentage of children who attend public preschool in selected communities is consistent with the statewide average of 30%, except for King and Pierce counties. However, the number of families who can pay their children’s tuition varies tremendously based on the number of families with higher incomes in a community. Total public and private preschool enrollment in Yakima County is just 38% of children ages three and four, and three-fourths of these children are enrolled in public preschools. In King County, the rate of total preschool enrollment is 70%, with 44% of preschoolers attending private programs. In Seattle, a city with an even larger concentration of higher-income families, 88% of children attend preschool, with the majority in private preschool programs.

**Figure 4: Children Attending Public and Private Preschool By Selected Areas of Washington State (2018)**



**Source:** Analysis of ACS (2013-17) data.

**The program models for public preschool in Washington require adjustments to ensure high quality consistent with the science of early childhood education.**

Investments in quality are needed to move the needle on children’s readiness for kindergarten. ECEAP offers a sound blueprint for building a solid universal prekindergarten system with provisions for serving children with disabilities, universal developmental and health screenings, Child Development Associate (CDA) certification for assistant teachers, class size capped at 20, and a staff-child ratio of 1:10 or less.



However, the model requires enhancement to deliver the full potential of preschool for more of Washington’s children. Pay equity with public school teachers is not required in Washington’s ECEAP, contributing to high educator turnover.<sup>27</sup> Teachers in Washington ECEAP classrooms average \$36,000 in annual pay in public schools and \$34,000 in community-based organizations, compared to \$59,000 for a public school kindergarten teacher.<sup>28</sup> In addition, three-fourths of ECEAP and Head Start programs



in Washington are half-day and thus of limited utility to working families. Recent evidence shows that preschoolers in full-day classrooms make more significant learning gains than their counterparts in half-day classrooms.<sup>29</sup> Some of the teaching and learning elements of the ECEAP program are also out of step with the science of early childhood education, most significantly in the lack of use of evidence-based curricula and the lack of support for teachers with in-classrooms coaching directly tied to curricula.<sup>30</sup>

This policy brief lays out a strategic pathway designed to make universal, high-quality, voluntary public preschool available to all three- and four-year-old children in Washington within 10 years. It is a pathway leading to a child-focused, research-based **Washington Preschool for All** program designed to give all the state’s children a strong and fair start to their education.

The program policy and practice parameters of the **Washington Preschool for All** program are listed below, followed by a detailed description of each and an estimate of costs.



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## Washington Preschool for All Policy and Practice Parameters

<p><b>Eligibility</b></p>	<p>Available to all children in Washington who turn three or four years of age by August 31 of their year of entry, per the state's kindergarten cutoff date.</p>
<p><b>Cost to Families</b></p>	<p>Two cost options are presented for consideration</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Free for All:</b> Free to all families regardless of income, just like the state's K-12 education system.</li> <li><b>2. Free and Sliding Scale:</b> Free for families with household income up to 300% of the FPL (\$79,500 for a family of four in 2021). Families with household income above 300% of the FPL would pay a sliding-scale tuition fee capped at 7% of their household income.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Structural Quality Elements (e.g., ratios, qualifications, etc.)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed-delivery through qualified public schools and nonprofit, community-based organizations</li> <li>• Compensation and benefits on par with public K-12 educators for lead teachers with a B.A. degree and training in early childhood education</li> <li>• Full school day of at least 6.5 hours, plus before and aftercare for families needing it (service fees may apply for before and aftercare)</li> <li>• Avoidance of mixed-age classrooms</li> <li>• Expulsions prohibited</li> <li>• Built upon current ECEAP strengths, including classroom inclusion of children with disabilities, support for dual language learners, universal developmental and health screenings, CDA certification for assistant teachers, class size capped at 20 children, behavioral health supports, and a staff-child ratio of 1:10 or less</li> </ul>
<p><b>Teaching Quality Elements (e.g., teaching and learning, curricula, teacher-child interactions)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play-based, evidence-based curricula with a clear scope and sequence</li> <li>• In-classroom coaching for teachers tied directly to the curricula</li> <li>• Direct assessments to inform instruction</li> <li>• Alignment with the child's anticipated K-3 experience</li> </ul>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p>	<p>Rigorous evaluation of teaching, child development and learning outcomes, ongoing professional development for educators, and racial/ethnic and income-based program equity.</p>

**Eligibility and Cost to Families.** All three- and four-year-old children in Washington would be eligible in the year that they turn the requisite age by the August 31 age cutoff date, consistent with the state’s kindergarten entry requirement. To provide universal opportunity, **Washington Preschool for All** should be free to all families in the state.

Alternatively, **Washington Preschool for All** could be free to families with income at or below 300% of the FPL (\$79,500 for a family of four in 2021). Families earning more than 300% of the FPL would pay a sliding-scale tuition fee based on their household income, capped at 7% of annual household income.



**Teacher Compensation and Credentials.** Turnover rates among preschool teachers are significantly higher than among K-12 teachers<sup>31</sup> — a “leaky bucket” problem with professional development investments lost when turnover is high. High turnover among preschool teachers is, in part, salary related; in much of Washington, preschool teachers earn considerably less than K-12 teachers and thus are incentivized to leave for K-12 teaching positions once they acquire the necessary credentials. Building a solid system requires equal pay for equally qualified and experienced teachers performing the same critical roles as other educators. The most successful public preschool programs — including Boston, Seattle, and Tulsa— have the same teacher qualification requirements and pay scale for preschool as they do for K-12 teachers. Recently, preschool programs in New York City and elsewhere have made pay parity a high priority. The **Washington Preschool for All** program should provide pay equity for preschool educators with credentials matching K-12 educators.

Existing preschool teachers without the requisite credentials can be grandfathered in and provided with the time and scholarship support necessary to help them meet the requirements (e.g., within 5 to 7 years).<sup>32</sup> Head Start shows that significant progress towards higher credential requirements is possible in a relatively short amount of time while maintaining the racial/ethnic diversity of the workforce.<sup>33</sup>

Notably, the diversity of the early childhood workforce (particularly relative to the K-12 workforce) is a strength that should be maintained and further enhanced. For children of color, research shows that having a same-race teacher positively affects student achievement and family engagement, with particularly marked effects for Latino families and children in the preschool years.<sup>34</sup> Recognizing the importance of workforce diversity, consideration should be given to the development, piloting, and rigorous evaluation of what could become research-based alternative pathways to professional credentialing. Allowances should also be made in areas that demonstrate difficulty recruiting such teachers, for example, in very rural areas.

**Service Delivery.** The state should fund a mixed-delivery system of *public* and community-based nonprofit *private* preschools to scale up **Washington Preschool for All**. Nationally, all but one state with a state-funded preschool program (Hawaii) uses a mix of public and private sector preschool service providers. Roughly 55% of children across the United States in state-funded public preschool programs attend a public-school program, and 45% attend a community-based organization program.<sup>35</sup> Mixed-delivery systems offer practical advantages, including:

- **Maximum parental choice.** Parents may prefer one setting type or pedagogic philosophy over another, or community-based centers may be more conveniently located for families, provide continuity from infant-toddler program services in which children may have been enrolled, or provide hours of service that better match parents' work schedules, or reflect the racial or cultural preferences of the family.
- **Increased capacity.** As in Seattle, public school districts may face facility capacity constraints that limit their ability to meet the demand for preschool classroom space. A mixed-delivery system would increase capacity to serve more children.
- **Child care service retention.** In some cases, the expansion of public preschool has diminished the availability and quality of birth-to-three child care services.<sup>36</sup> A mixed-delivery approach helps to mitigate this problem.

The same high-quality standards, including compensation and teacher qualifications, should apply to all delivery types. Experts have warned that absent a consistent and equal approach, a two-tiered system will continue.<sup>37</sup> Nationally, public school preschool teachers make approximately \$14,000 more per year than their community-based organization counterparts.<sup>38</sup> These pay differences destabilize staffing in community-based organizations by fueling high turnover. Higher pay in public school settings incentivizes teachers to leave community-based organizations in favor of public-school jobs.<sup>39</sup> Unequal treatment by delivery setting also fuels mistrust, hindering the creation of an equitable, high-quality mixed delivery system. Community-based organizations may view public preschool programs, particularly those that are public school-based, as unwelcome competition that may evoke disagreements over required programmatic elements and standards.<sup>40</sup> In turn, public schools sometimes view community-based organizations as less rigorous or less professional. These potential conflicts can be mitigated by applying the same high standards across all delivery types, holding joint conferences and trainings across providers, creating joint governance councils,<sup>41</sup> and developing detailed operational standards.

**Full School Day.** The **Washington Preschool for All** program should provide learning opportunities for a minimum of 6.5 hours per day, the same full-day requirement for kindergarten to 3rd-grade children, plus before and aftercare. This recommendation is backed by solid research, including evidence from a recent randomized trial in Colorado that shows preschoolers in full-day classrooms achieve greater learning gains than their counterparts in half-day classrooms.<sup>42</sup> Currently, three-fourths of ECEAP classrooms are half-day, creating a substantial barrier for working families.<sup>43</sup>



**Avoidance of Mixed-Age Classrooms.** Evidence suggests that four-year-old children learn less in mixed-aged classrooms of three- and four-year-olds than in four-year-old-only classrooms.<sup>44</sup> Preschool classrooms should be separated by age, with exceptions for geographic areas where the number of children makes separation impractical.

**Prohibit Expulsions.** Nationally, the expulsion of three- and four-year-old children from preschool substantially outpaces the rates of K-12 expulsions, and these expulsions fall disproportionately on children of color, particularly Black boys.<sup>45</sup> Accordingly, expulsion should be prohibited in **Washington Preschool for All** classrooms consistent with existing ECEAP standards.



**Build from ECEAP Strengths.** The **Washington Preschool for All** program should match the many structural strengths of ECEAP. For example, ECEAP includes specific provisions for serving children with disabilities and dual language learners, universal developmental and health screenings, a Child Development Associate certification for assistant teachers, a class size capped at 20, behavioral health supports, and a staff-child ratio of 1:10 or less. These parameters build a structurally sound program that prepares all children for success in kindergarten and beyond.

**Teaching Quality Elements.** Two essential elements of preschool process quality are (1) curricula and (2) teacher professional development. Most of Washington’s publicly funded preschool classrooms currently use one of two curricula — *HighScope* or *Creative Curriculum*. These are more general, “whole child” curricula that do not follow a specified scope or sequence. The state permits other curricula under the new curriculum review process, but few programs have chosen alternatives to date.

Other curricula — play-based, domain-specific curricula that follow children’s developmental trajectories and have clear scope and sequence — outperform “whole child” curricula in improving targeted developmental outcomes. This evidence comes from randomized trials around the U.S., as well as from rigorous meta-analyses across trials.<sup>46</sup> Effective play-based, domain-specific curricula provide a higher “floor” of process quality; children with teachers who follow these curricula with at least moderate fidelity receive learning opportunities based on the best science of early childhood education. The **Washington Preschool for All** program should use proven play-based, domain-specific curricula to achieve the best possible child outcomes.

ECEAP performance standards require continuous quality improvement for teachers’ professional development, including ongoing support from coaches. Research shows that regular in-classroom coaching by a trusted mentor is the most effective strategy to improve a preschool teacher’s competence.<sup>47</sup> Coaching works because it facilitates taking the information learned in training and transferring it effectively to real-world classroom conditions.<sup>48</sup> Adults learn best when given opportunities to discuss and reflect with others, applying new ideas and skills in practice while receiving feedback from an expert, and having effective practices modeled for them.<sup>49</sup> Coaching linked to a *proven curriculum* is more beneficial to students in preschool settings than coaching on *general classroom practices*.<sup>50</sup>

**Washington Preschool for All** should develop a shortlist of proven curricula and explicitly tie coaching to these curricula. Because there are no proven curricula that target all domains, the state should support the combination of proven curricula that target at least two of the three most critical kindergarten readiness domains — language and literacy, math, and social-emotional skills. For mathematics, *Building Blocks* and *Pre-K Mathematics* are rated by the [What Works Clearinghouse](#) as having positive effects on children’s mathematics skills (*Building Blocks* has also been shown to boost children’s executive function and oral language skills<sup>51</sup>). For language and literacy, several choices are rated as having positive effects in the What Works Clearinghouse.<sup>52</sup> State funding could be used for experts to “bundle” curricula together for teachers so that they are not overwhelmed, (i.e., provide detailed planning guides that explicitly show how to combine curricula across the school day). Limiting curricula to proven options and bundling would streamline resources and increase focus on supporting teachers.<sup>53</sup> As part of this process too, curricula should be reviewed for potential racial or cultural bias and adjusted to be culturally responsive. Ideally, all preschool teachers would have ongoing, approximately every-other-week in-



classroom coaching from an expert coach (currently, ECEAP leaves coaching frequency and duration decisions to its contractors).<sup>54</sup> Coaches should be trained in specific curricula bundles and should primarily be assigned to support that bundle. Coaches should also be competent in helping teachers improve the learning environment (e.g., how the classroom layout is impeding learning or aggravating behavior problems), in strategies for addressing challenging child behaviors, in how to build trusting relationships with teachers, and in classroom management strategies (limiting transition times, keeping children on task in centers, keeping whole group time short, etc.). These are crucial pieces that, if not in place, can seriously undermine the quality of instruction. Coach-teacher ratios should be 1:10 or less to facilitate adequate attention to individual teacher and classroom needs.

There is almost no research on optimal characteristics to guide localities in hiring coaches. Practically, localities tend to value teaching experience and excellent social skills. Good coaches understand that their role is to support teachers, to have them be honest about their struggles so that the coach and teacher can collaboratively identify how to address challenges while being sensitive to racial and cultural differences. This requires knowing a great deal about teaching and having the skills to put others at ease as trust is built.

**Require the use of direct assessments to inform instruction.** Assessments of children's learning are important for informing instruction and for meeting each child where they are. Teaching Strategies Gold is the dominant assessment tool used nationally.<sup>55</sup> Teachers generally spend considerable time completing this measure for each child in the classroom. Yet, there is no rigorous evidence that it accurately and reliably captures children's gains nor that it productively informs teacher practice.<sup>56</sup> As part of **Washington Preschool for All**, the state should systematically review and pilot different student assessment systems, particularly those that incorporate direct assessments.<sup>57</sup>

**Alignment with K-3 classrooms is crucial.** Aligning children's curriculum experiences so that they do not repeat in kindergarten what they have already learned is critical to maintaining the preschool boost.<sup>58</sup> Joint professional development between preschool and kindergarten teachers; training kindergarten educators to use children's kindergarten readiness score data to differentiate instruction for individual students; explaining the preschool curriculum to kindergarten teachers; and adopting aligned curricula<sup>59</sup> are all strategies for better aligning children's early learning environments.

**Evaluation.** Improving quality and measuring what works requires ongoing, rigorous evaluation. There is a strong consensus based on decades of evidence that preschool "works."<sup>60</sup> What is needed now is for the field and evaluation work to "pivot to the how" to focus energies on which preschool models produce larger, more lasting learning gains for students.<sup>61</sup> As **Washington Preschool for All** scales up, evaluation work should compare specific choices for which there is not already a solid evidence base. This would include implementation studies and research that can identify the causal impacts of one approach versus another. Curricula for age three and age four should be sequenced, so children do not simply repeat what they have already learned. Curriculum models that build both English language and home language skills for emergent bilingual children need improvement. Although preschool programs and curricula tend to have larger effects on dual language learners, there is little evidence of the impact of these programs on home language development. The best approaches for ensuring curricula and classrooms are culturally responsive are also understudied. Evidence on scaling up coaching in rural areas and evidence on optimal coach characteristics is minimal. In addition, as mentioned earlier, preschool settings are more segregated nationally than K-12 settings, but little research has

tracked this segregation nor examined its effects. Evaluation and analysis on critical issues like these should be prioritized from the beginning. The state should consider a research-practice partnership model in which a set of researchers is identified and works closely with the implementation team to answer the state’s questions about the program’s effectiveness and how best to improve it.

Beyond “what works” questions, the state should be tasked with building on its continuous quality improvement system. Washington’s Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), Early Achievers, is intended to play this role. However, QRIS systems nationally are not predictive of gains in child outcomes.<sup>62</sup> Likewise, observational quality tools do not consistently predict improvements in child outcomes either.<sup>63</sup> Washington has an opportunity to be a leader and an innovator as **Washington Preschool for All** is implemented. For example, one possibility would be to incorporate curriculum fidelity measures tied to gains in crucial child outcomes into Early Achievers so that the focus on the specific teaching and learning model is increased in the points system.



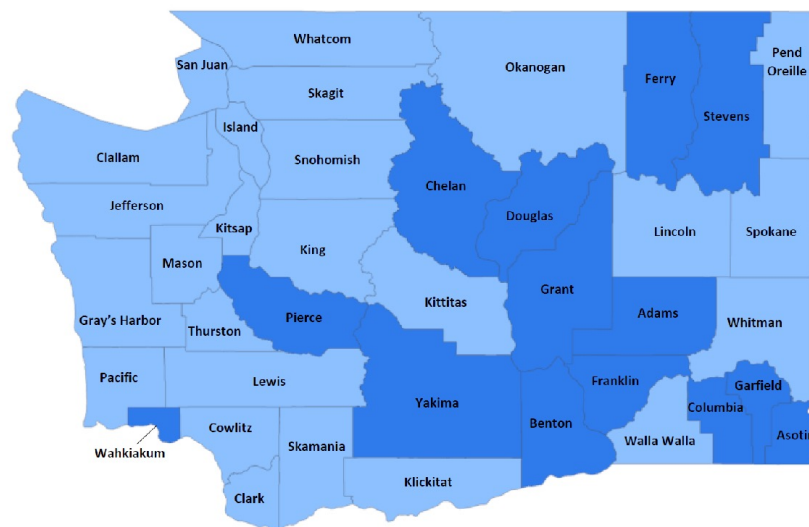
**Phase-In Considerations.** During the first five years, **Washington Preschool for All** should be prioritized in communities and counties with higher concentrations of low-income families and less than 50% of children ages three and four enrolled in either public or private preschool. In the 14 Washington counties listed in Table 1, on average, 55% of children five and younger are part of families below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (range of 28%-72%).

**Table 1: Washington Preschool Enrollment Percent of Children 5 and Younger in Families <200% FPL, Ranked by Children Not Enrolled**

Washington Country	Estimated Total Children 3 & 4 Years Old	Percent Enrolled Public Preschool	Percent Enrolled Private Preschool	Percent Not Enrolled in Prechool	Percent <200% FPL Age 0-5
Columbia	41	0%	0%	<b>100%</b>	69%
Wahkiakum	108	17%	0%	<b>83%</b>	28%
Asotin	426	17%	19%	<b>64%</b>	49%
Adams	856	38%	0%	<b>62%</b>	73%
Yakima	8,683	30%	12%	<b>58%</b>	66%
Douglas	1,047	33%	11%	<b>56%</b>	56%
Chelan	2,068	23%	21%	<b>56%</b>	44%
Ferry	118	46%	0%	<b>54%</b>	72%
Benton	5,805	19%	27%	<b>54%</b>	46%
Franklin	3,231	28%	20%	<b>53%</b>	54%
Stevens	886	33%	15%	<b>52%</b>	64%
Garfield	69	39%	9%	<b>52%</b>	45%
Pierce	23,534	26%	23%	<b>51%</b>	40%
Grant	3,037	42%	8%	<b>50%</b>	58%

**Source:** American Community Survey, 2013-2017.

**Figure 5: Washington Counties with Concentrated Child Poverty and Fewer than 50% of Children Aged 3 or 4 Enrolled in Preschool**



## Cost Estimates and Options

What will it cost to implement our proposal for **Washington Preschool for All**?

President Biden has proposed universal preschool for the nation's three- and four-year-old children, legislation the Congress is considering as this policy brief is being published. If adopted, the Biden plan will provide states that wish to participate federal funding for up to 10 years, giving states the ability to launch their own preschool programs.

If the Biden plan is not adopted by Congress, Washington could implement the **Washington Preschool for All** program on its own as recommended here. The following section of our brief lays out estimated costs for the **Washington Preschool for All** program at the 10 year mark when full implementation is achieved

Our cost estimates are based on Kabay, Weiland, and Yoshikawa (2019)<sup>64</sup> which used detailed data from the Boston Public Prekindergarten Program to calculate nationally representative costs for that program's model. Their work indicates what share of total costs are attributable to classroom staffing, curriculum, coaching, and other key elements of the Boston program, many of which shape our recommendations for Washington. This calculation results in an estimated cost of \$14,383 per child.<sup>65</sup>

For a comparative check of our cost per child, we used the [National Institute for Early Education Research's](#) (NIEER) modeling tool — the [Cost of Preschool Quality & Revenue Calculator](#) — which yielded a per-child cost estimate of \$14,671, remarkably close to the Boston-based nationally representative estimate.

For further context, Head Start in Washington is spending approximately \$14,374 per child each year, Washington's ECEAP program costs approximately \$9,443 per child each year, and the Seattle Preschool Program, not including Head Start and other blended funds, costs approximately \$14,900 per child.<sup>66</sup> The Seattle program matches most of the quality standards recommended for the **Washington Preschool for All** program.

Recognizing the value of high-quality preschool for children, their families, and society overall, **Washington Preschool for All** should be free to all families just as K-12 education is today in Washington. The benefits of high-quality preschool programs are well documented; past research has shown that the return-on-investment justifies the costs.<sup>67</sup>

Two cost approaches are presented here:

- 1. Free and Sliding Scale.** Free for families with income at or below 300% of the FPL (\$79,500 in 2021 for a family of four, or about 77% of state median income) and a sliding-scale tuition fee for families earning more, capped at 7% of their household income.
- 2. Free for All.** Free for all families regardless of household income.

**Number of children eligible.** There were an estimated 183,663 three- and four-year-old children in Washington in 2017. Of these, about half are in families with income less than 300% of the FPL, about 29% are in families between 300-600% of the FPL, and about 20% have income above 600% of the FPL. At approximately 600% of the FPL, with sliding-scale tuition capped at 7% of income, families would pay close to the full cost of preschool services. Thus, in total, approximately 147,849 children would be eligible to receive some tuition assistance in **Washington Preschool for All** classrooms under the Free and Sliding Scale model.<sup>68</sup>

For our projections, we have assumed that Head Start and special education funding and enrollment would continue at their current levels — approximately 10,836 children enrolled in Head Start and about 10,000 receiving special education funding. Thus, as summarized in Table 2 below, we estimate that about 127,013 children would be eligible for state public preschool funding under the Free and Sliding Scale option. And under the Free for All option, 162,827 children would be eligible for state public preschool funding.<sup>69</sup>

**Table 2: Estimate of Children Eligible for Washington Preschool Under the Free and Sliding Scale Option**

	Age 3	Age 4	Age 3 & 4
Total Number of Children	91,705	91,958	183,663
Subtract 600%+ FPL	17,907	17,907	35,814
Left (Below 600% FPL)	73,798	74,051	147,849
0 to 300% FPL	47,798	47,798	95,597
300 to 600% FPL	26,126	26,126	52,252
Less Head Start of Enrollment			10,836
Less Special Need Enrollment			10,000
<b>Total Eligible Children</b>			<b>127,013</b>

Of course, not all families will enroll their children in public preschool. Table 3 projects child enrollment, or participation rates, at different family income levels, for those not receiving Head Start or special education funding. Here, we do not show participation rates for children from families earning 600% or more of the FPL because if a sliding scale were used,

as with our Free and Sliding Scale option, their participation would be cost neutral as their families would pay the cost to enroll.

**Table 3: Calculation of Children Enrolling for Washington Preschool for All Under the Free and Sliding Scale Option**

	Estimated Number Children Eligible	Participation Rate Low End Estimate	Participation Rate High End Estimate	Number Children Enrolling Low End Estimate	Number Children Enrolling High End Estimate	Midpoint
<b>Age 3</b>						
0% to 300% FPL	38,897	55%	75%	21,394	29,173	25,284
300% to 600% FPL	26,126	30%	40%	7,838	10,450	9,144
More than 600% FPL	17,907					
<b>Age 4</b>						
0% to 300% FPL	35,863	70%	85%	25,104	30,484	27,794
300% to 600% FPL	26,126	35%	45%	9,144	11,757	10,451
More than 600% FPL	17,907					
<b>Total Children Age 3 to Kindergarten Entry</b>	<b>162,826</b>			<b>63,480</b>	<b>81,864</b>	<b>72,673</b>

Table 4 summarizes costs for the Free and Sliding Scale option and the Free for All option. At the midpoint, the Free and Sliding Scale option would cost an estimated \$795 million in new annual spending, assuming the participation rate estimates are correct and the program has reached full implementation. The \$795 million in new expenditures for the Free and Sliding Scale option at full implementation represents about 2.7% of Washington's annual state-funded operating budget of \$29.5 billion as of 2022.

In calculating the Free for All costs, we made the same high and low participation rate assumptions for all income groups as we did for the 0-300% FPL group shown in Table 3 (i.e., 55% and 75% for 3's and 70% and 85% for 4's). The Free for All option would cost an estimated \$1.53 billion in new annual spending, assuming the participation estimates are correct and the program has reached full implementation.<sup>70</sup> The Free for All estimated cost of \$1.53 billion is approximately 5.2% of the state's annual operating budget as of 2022.

**Table 4: Calculation of Children Eligible and Costs for Washington Preschool for All**

	Estimated Participants Low End Estimate	Estimated Participants High End Estimate	Total New Costs for Washington Preschool for All at Midpoint Enrollment Less Current ECEAP Investments
Free and Sliding Scale Option	63,480	81,864	\$795 million
Free for All Option	101,558	130,122	\$1.53 billion



# Summary

Washington state has an opportunity to follow nearly 60 years of research and implement a statewide, universal, yet voluntary, affordable, play-based, high-quality preschool system that can lead to life-changing outcomes for its three- and four-year-old children. Done correctly, with a keen focus on the quality of the classroom experience, the **Washington Preschool for All** program would provide children with a strong and fair start to their formal education.



Based on the evidence of success from other jurisdictions, the potential benefits of the **Washington Preschool for All** program are significant for the state's children, including higher education attainment, strengthened social-emotional skill development, reduced racial inequities in education, better health, higher earning power as adults, and reductions in intergenerational poverty.

There are other crucial reasons to launch the **Washington Preschool for All** program. While every child certainly deserves a strong and fair start, we also must address the persistent racial and economic inequity fostered by our present systems and policies related to education and child care. Perhaps more so than at any time in our country's history, we are more keenly aware of the injustices perpetuated by these systems and policies, inequities primarily impacting people of color and those living in poverty. Curing these injustices is a public good for families and children; it is also a public good for a more robust economic recovery and future growth and, vitally, for preserving our democracy.

This policy paper recommends the phase-in of the **Washington Preschool for All** program over 10 years free for all families, just like the state's current K-12 education system. Alternatively, the program could be tuition-free for children in families with income at or below 300% of the federal poverty level (\$79,500 for a family of four in 2021) and a sliding-scale tuition fee for families with income above 300% of the FPL capped at 7% of their household income. Either of these tuition options would help resolve the disparities currently existing in the state's preschool environment where families with middle and moderately low incomes either cannot access or cannot afford preschool services.

**"... the potential benefits of the Washington Preschool for All program are significant for the state's children, including higher education attainment, strengthened social-emotional skill development, reduced racial inequities in education, better health, higher earning power as adults, and reductions in intergenerational poverty."**

The 10-year ramp up allows for careful implementation of the **Washington Preschool for All** program, a necessity due to the current statewide lack of adequate preschool facilities, the need to strengthen and expand the early childhood education workforce, the economic investments needed to build the system to capacity, and the importance of addressing the geographic challenges of providing the program in rural areas of the state. Especially in the wake of the historic COVID-19 pandemic, **Washington Preschool for All** is essential for closing widened opportunity gaps and giving all children the strong and fair start they need and certainly deserve.

# About the Authors

**Christina Weiland** is an Associate Professor at the School of Education at the University of Michigan and the Ford School of Public Policy (by courtesy). She co-directs the Education Policy Initiative. Her research focuses on the effects of early childhood interventions and public policies on children's development, especially on children from families with low incomes. She is the lead architect of a longstanding research-practice partnership with the Boston Public Schools Department of Early Childhood and a co-author of *Cradle to Kindergarten: A New Plan to Combat Inequality*. She served as a consultant on the development of the Seattle Preschool Program.

**Tim Burgess** is a former president of the Seattle City Council and served briefly as the city's 55th mayor, fulfilling the term of the previous mayor who had resigned. In his ten years in elected office, Tim focused his work on the needs of children. He was the lead architect of the Seattle Preschool Program for the city's three- and four-year-old children, one of only three municipal government-facilitated preschool programs in the United States to meet all ten quality standards set by the National Institute for Early Education Research. Tim also led the effort to establish school-based health clinics in all Seattle public middle and high schools and fully fund the Nurse Family Partnership, an evidence-based home visitation program.

**Ajay Chaudry** is a Research Professor at New York University's Institute for Human Development and Social Change and Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. He is a co-author of *Cradle to Kindergarten: A New Plan to Combat Inequality*. From 2012 to 2015, Chaudry was a political appointee in the Obama administration, serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Services Policy at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. He also previously served as Deputy Commissioner for Early Childhood Programs at the NYC Administration for Children Services and Director of the Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population at the Urban Institute.

**Ruth Kagi** served in the Washington State House of Representatives for twenty years. During her sixteen years chairing the Early Learning and Human Services Committee, her legislative colleagues were regularly briefed on the latest science and research on early learning, a leadership approach that created strong bipartisan support for high-quality early learning. Under her leadership, the legislature passed Early Start that set quality standards for child care and preschool with strong coaching, education supports, and incentives for providers, expanded access to child care and preschool, and prioritized children involved in child welfare.

**Anna Shapiro** is a Research Scientist at the University of Virginia. Her research focuses on the effects of early childhood programs and policies on young children. She focuses primarily on the impact of early childhood programs on children with or at risk for developing disabilities and the role that early intervention can play in mitigating persistent academic and developmental delays for young children. She has also conducted work studying barriers to access to early education for marginalized families. She received her Ph.D. in Educational Policy, Leadership and Innovation at the University of Michigan, her AM in Urban Education Policy from Brown University, and her B.A. in French and Educational Studies from Emory University.

**Casey Moran** holds a master's degree in Human Development and Social Intervention from NYU Steinhardt. She has worked with the Cradle to Kindergarten team since January 2020 on projects in Washington State and Colorado. In addition to research and policy development around early childhood care and education, her focus includes program evaluation and college access interventions.

## Citations

<sup>1</sup> Chaudry, A., Morrissey, T., Weiland, C., & Yoshikawa, H. (2021). *Cradle to Kindergarten: A New Plan to Combat Inequality Second Edition*. New York, NY: Russell Sage

<sup>2</sup> Public preschool services are those administered and subsidized by the government, such as the federal Head Start program, Washington's Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), and the Seattle Preschool Program. Private preschool services are those provided by community-based nonprofit organizations and for-profit commercial companies.

<sup>3</sup> A fully integrated early learning system designed to provide children with the strong and fair start they need, including support for parents, is described in the book *Cradle to Kindergarten: A New Plan to Combat Inequality Second Edition*.

<sup>4</sup> President Joe Biden has proposed a national preschool program for the country's three- and four-year-old children as part of his [American Families Plan](#). This proposal for a Washington Preschool for All program is consistent with the Biden proposal and, if implemented, would establish the framework for expansion when federal funding becomes available.

<sup>5</sup> Phillips, D., Lipsey, M., Dodge, K.A., Haskins, R., Bassok, D., Burchinal, M.R., Duncan, G.J., Dynarski, M., Magnuson, K.A., & Weiland, C. (2017). *Puzzling it out: The current state of scientific knowledge on pre-kindergarten effects*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution. [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/consensus-statement\\_final.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/consensus-statement_final.pdf); Yoshikawa, H., Weiland, C., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2016). When does preschool matter? *The Future of Children*, 26(2), 21-35.; Yoshikawa, H., Weiland, C., Brooks-Gunn, J., Burchinal, M. R., Espinosa, L. M., Gormley, W., & Zaslow, M. J. (2013). *Investing in our future: The evidence base on preschool education*. New York, NY: Foundation for Child Development, Society for Research in Child Development.

<sup>6</sup> Heckman, J., & Karapakula, G. (2019). *Intergenerational and intragenerational externalities of the Perry Preschool Project*. Cambridge, MA: NBER Working Paper. <https://www.nber.org/papers/w25889>; Gray-Lobe, G., Pathak, P., & Walters, C. (2021). *The long-term effects of universal preschool in Boston*. Cambridge, MA: NBER Working Paper. <https://www.nber.org/papers/w28756>

<sup>7</sup> Bassok, D., & Latham, S. (2016). *Kids today: Changes in school readiness in an early childhood era*. Charlottesville, VA: EdPolicyWorks, University of Virginia Working Paper Series No. 35.; Chaudry, A., Morrissey, T., Weiland, C., & Yoshikawa, H. (2021). *Cradle to Kindergarten: A New Plan to Combat Inequality Second Edition*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.; Gormley, W. T., Gayer, T., Phillips, D., Dawson, B. (2005). The effects of universal pre-k on cognitive development. *Developmental Psychology*, 41(6), 872-884.; Reardon, S. F., Portilla, X.A. (2016). Recent trends in socioeconomic and racial school readiness gaps at kindergarten entry. *AERA Open*, 2, 1-18.; Weiland, C., & Yoshikawa, H. (2013) Impacts of a prekindergarten program on children's mathematics, language, literacy, executive function, and emotional skills. *Child Development*, 84(6), 2112-2030.

<sup>8</sup> Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills: <https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/103300>

<sup>9</sup> Chaudry, A., Morrissey, T., Weiland, C., & Yoshikawa, H. (2021). *Cradle to Kindergarten: A New Plan to Combat Inequality Second Edition*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

<sup>10</sup> The problem of children falling behind before they enter kindergarten is not limited to Washington. It is prevalent across the United States compared to our peer countries as documented in *Too Many Children Left Behind: The U. S. Achievement Gap in Comparative Perspective* by Bradbury, Corak, Waldfogel and Washbrook (2015). The authors write: "The challenge is clear. (Socioeconomic status) gaps in achievement exist in all four of our countries (Australia, Canada, Great Britain, and the United States) but are most pronounced in the United States. Moreover, these gaps begin in early childhood and act as a bottleneck on children's development, limiting future opportunities."

<sup>11</sup> Effective August 23, 2021, Washington became the first state to require all public and private educators, including early learning teachers and staff, to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

<sup>12</sup> Chen, J. T., & Krieger, N. (2021). Revealing the unequal burden of COVID-19 by income, race/ethnicity, and household crowding: US county versus zip code analyses. *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*, 27, S43-S56.; Gassman-Pines, A., Ananat, E. O., & Fitz-Henley, J. (2020). COVID-19 and parent-child psychological well-being. *Pediatrics*, 146(4).

<sup>13</sup> Bateman, N., & Ross, M. (2020). *Why has COVID-19 been especially harmful for working women?* Washington, DC: Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/essay/why-has-covid-19-been-especially-harmful-for-working-women/>

<sup>14</sup> Barnett, W.S., Grafwallner, R., & Weisenfeld, G. (2021). Corona pandemic in the United States shapes new normal for young children and their families. *European Early Childhood Research Journal*, 29, 109-124.

<sup>15</sup> Weiland, C., Greenberg, E., Bassok, D., Markowitz, A., Guerrero Rosada, P. .... & Snow, C. (2021). *Historic crisis, historic opportunity: Using evidence to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on young children and early care and education programs*. Ann Arbor, MI and Washington DC: University of Michigan Education Policy Initiative and Urban Institute. <https://edpolicy.umich.edu/files/EPI-UI-Covid%20Synthesis%20Brief%20June%202021.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> The Fair Start for Kids Act, signed by Governor Jay Inslee in May 2021, reduced parent copays for state subsidized child care, broadened ECEAP eligibility criteria, expanded mental health consultations, and provided increased funding for capital investments to build and expand facilities. Eligibility thresholds for ECEAP were also changed, increasing to approximately 140% of the FPL and to approximately 190% of the FPL by 2030. For its efforts, Washington was recently recognized by the Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center at the University

of Texas at Austin as one of eight states that have implemented four of the five policies the Center considers most effective. See <https://medium.com/wagovernor/inslee-signs-fair-start-for-kids-act-to-expand-access-to-child-care-f794470055c0>

<sup>17</sup> The FPL for 2021 for a family of four is \$26,500. See <https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines> for detailed family size poverty level statistics.

<sup>18</sup> The DHHS Office of Head Start funded enrollment in Washington in Fiscal Year 2019 for 11,360 children, plus 1,486 in American Indian/Alaskan Native Head Start, with funding of \$173.9 million and \$26.9 million respectively. See: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/about-us/article/head-start-program-facts-fiscal-year-2019>

<sup>19</sup> In 2010, the Washington Legislature established a statutory entitlement for all eligible children, not funded by Head Start, to be served by ECEAP by the 2018-2019 school year. This entitlement deadline has been extended multiple times and is now set to take effect in 2026, eight years after the original date.

<sup>20</sup> See [https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Washington\\_YB2020.pdf](https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Washington_YB2020.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families. (n.d.). General ECEAP Slides. <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/eceap/ECEAP-SlideDeck.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> Washington provided child care subsidies for 14,279 preschool-age children in 2020 — 9,652 in centers and 4,627 in family child care homes. Washington's [Department of Children, Youth and Families](#) administers the child care subsidy program which is available to families with household income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, or \$53,000 for a family of four in 2021. In 2021, there were 10,100 preschool students in Washington with an Individualized Education Plan, of which about 2,100 were served in an inclusive early childhood program (G. Stokes, Personal Communication, August 10, 2021).

<sup>23</sup> An exception is the Seattle Preschool Program which is free to all families with income at or below 300% of the FPL (\$79,500 for a family of four). Families earning more pay a sliding-scale tuition fee based on their household income.

<sup>24</sup> As mentioned in an earlier footnote, the Washington Legislature increased eligibility thresholds for ECEAP during the 2021 legislative session to approximately 140% of the FPL. The threshold will increase again in 2030 to approximately 190% of the FPL.

<sup>25</sup> Greenberg, E., & Monarrez, T. (2019). Segregated from the start: Comparing segregation in early childhood and K-12 education. <https://www.urban.org/features/segregated-start>

<sup>26</sup> Kelly, D. J., Quinn, P. C., Slater, A. M., Lee, K., Gibson, A., Smith, M., ... & Pascalis, O. (2005). Three-month-olds, but not newborns, prefer their own-race faces. *Developmental Science*, 8(6), F31-F36. Lee, K., Quinn, P. C., & Pascalis, O. (2017). Face race processing and racial

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<sup>27</sup> Clark, S. (2018). Washington State early learning hiring and retention survey. <http://www.opportunityinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2018-EOL-Compensation-Survey-Report.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Friedman-Kraus, A., & Kasmin, R. (2018). NIEER Pre-K data snapshot – Lead teacher workforce: Qualifications, pay and parity. [http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Yearbook-Data-Snapshot-Workforce\\_5.29.18.pdf](http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Yearbook-Data-Snapshot-Workforce_5.29.18.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Atteberry, A., Bassok, D., & Wong, V. C. (2019). The effects of full-day prekindergarten: Experimental evidence of impacts on children's school readiness. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 41(4), 537-562.; Yoshikawa, H., Weiland, C., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2016). When does preschool matter? *The Future of Children*, 26(2), 21-35.

<sup>30</sup> Yoshikawa, H., Weiland, C., Brooks-Gunn, J., Burchinal, M. R., Espinosa, L. M., Gormley, W., & Zaslow, M. J. (2013). *Investing in our future: The evidence base on preschool education*. New York, NY: Foundation for Child Development, Society for Research in Child Development.

<sup>31</sup> Whitebrook, M. (2003). *Early education quality: Higher teacher qualifications for better learning environments—a review of the literature*. Report for the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment.

<sup>32</sup> All existing teachers could also receive a pay bump at the outset to demonstrate support for their continuation as valued teachers and encouragement to work towards a BA with salaries nearing parity over time and reaching full parity once they earn a BA. At some point in the 10-year phase-in period, all new hires should be required to have a BA credential (with specialization in early childhood), though the state may want to allow some time to make initial pipeline investments that help to maintain a diverse workforce, even as it grows.

<sup>33</sup> The 2007 Head Start reauthorization required that 50% of Head Start teachers obtain BAs within 5 years and was characterized widely as an unfunded mandate. Nevertheless, nationally, by 2012, 62% had obtained them and by 2017, 70% had. (Head Start exceeds the requirement that half of teachers earn a BA in early childhood. (2013, May 08). <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/early-elementary-education-policy/early-ed-watch/head-start-exceeds-requirement-that-half-of-teachers-earn-ba-in-early-childhood>. <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/head-start>). Research on how the Head Start workforce changed in terms of racial/ethnic demographics is limited but suggests diversity of the workforce was largely maintained as teachers became more qualified (i.e., in 2007, 23.4 of Head Start staff were Black and 19.7 were Hispanic. In 2011, the percentages were 22.6 and 20.1, respectively). (Bassok, D. (2013). Raising teacher education levels in Head Start: Exploring programmatic changes between 1999 and 2011. *Early Childhood*



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<sup>52</sup> Notably, What Works Clearinghouse is somewhat out of date for early childhood curricula and should not be the only source consulted regarding the preschool curriculum evidence base.

<sup>53</sup> Curricula not on the list that districts, providers, and "the Washington Department of Early Learning consider promising could be allowed, if rigorous evaluation is tied to their implementation (i.e., a trial of their efficacy, versus other approaches used in the state).

<sup>54</sup> Washington State Department of Early Learning. (n.d.) Coaching in ECEAP: Frequently asked questions. [https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/eceap/Coaching\\_in\\_ECEAP\\_FAQ.pdf](https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/eceap/Coaching_in_ECEAP_FAQ.pdf)

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<sup>56</sup> Russo, J. M., Williford, A. P., Markowitz, A. J., Vitiello, V. E., & Bassok, D. (2019). Examining the validity of a widely used school readiness assessment: Implications for teachers and early childhood programs. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 48, 14-25.

<sup>57</sup> The state of Virginia has partnered with the University of Virginia on a particularly interesting direct assessment that covers multiple domains (<http://vkrponline.org/>). It is also possible to select direct assessments across different child development domains, though this would take state investment to coordinate (i.e., different assessments for language and literacy, math, and socio-emotional, etc).

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<sup>61</sup> Weiland, C. (2018). Commentary: Pivoting to the "how": Moving preschool policy, practice, and research forward. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 45, 188-192.

<sup>62</sup> Tout, K., Magnuson, K. Lipscomb, S., Karoly, L, Starr, R., Quick H., ...& Wenner, J. (2017). *Validation of the Quality Ratings Used in Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS): A synthesis of state studies*. OPRE Report #2017-92. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<sup>63</sup> Guerrero-Rosada, P., Weiland, C., McCormick, M., Hsueh, J., Sachs, J., Snow, C., & Maier, M. (2021). Null relations between CLASS scores and gains in children's language, math, and executive function skills: A replication and extension study. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 54, 1-12; Weiland, C., Ulvestad, K., Sachs, J., & Yoshikawa, H. (2013). Associations between classroom quality and children's vocabulary and executive function skills in an urban public prekindergarten program. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 28(2), 199-209.

<sup>64</sup> Kabay, S., Weiland, C., & Yoshikawa, H. (2020). Costs of the Boston Public Prekindergarten Program. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 13(4), 574-600.

<sup>65</sup> The authors of the Boston paper calculated both costs to initiate and maintain the program. We used the higher cost of initiate estimates, given that there is uncertainty about average teacher salaries in Washington in future years due to the McCleary Act. Choosing a higher “cost to initiate” figure is meant to help adjust for this potential uncertainty. The per child costs are in 2019 dollars, consistent with the Boston study timeframe.

<sup>66</sup> The Head Start and ECEAP costs were obtained from NEIER’s 2020 State of Preschool report for Washington. See [https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Washington\\_YB2020.pdf](https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Washington_YB2020.pdf). The Seattle Preschool Program costs were obtained from the City of Seattle. The Seattle program offers other financial supports beyond the basic per student costs; for example, tuition support to teachers pursuing their BA degree in early education, some family support assistance, and capital funding for remodeling and construction of new classrooms.

<sup>67</sup> Heckman, J. (n.d.) Invest in early childhood development: Reduce deficits, strengthen the economy. [https://heckmanequation.org/www/assets/2013/07/F\\_HeckmanDeficitPieceCUSTOM-GeneriC\\_052714-3-1.pdf](https://heckmanequation.org/www/assets/2013/07/F_HeckmanDeficitPieceCUSTOM-GeneriC_052714-3-1.pdf)

<sup>68</sup> Our model uses the described costs per child and the number of children eligible for enrollment. These estimates will need to be updated when more precise financial planning for implementation is undertaken. Another key consideration relates to the phase-in of Washington Preschool for All which will be constricted in the early years because of the lack of preschool facilities and a qualified workforce. In determining costs, we estimated that a family earning 450% FPL – the midpoint of the 300-600% range – would pay 7% of their household income, or \$6,000 of the total cost. Families over 600% would pay the full cost.

<sup>69</sup> To calculate the total children enrolled in the Free for All option, the children from families earning more than 600% of the FPL were added back.

<sup>70</sup> The Washington Legislature passed Senate Bill 5096 in the spring of 2021 that imposes a 7% tax on the capital gains of sales of certain assets, such as stocks and bonds, with a value above \$250,000. This new capital gains tax exempts assets like retirement accounts, sales of real estate, livestock, timber, and some other agricultural properties. It also exempts the sales of sole proprietor businesses with gross revenues below \$6 million. The tax becomes effective in 2021 and the first proceeds will be collected in 2022. It is estimated that the tax will raise approximately \$445 million per year. The tax proceeds are dedicated to the state’s Education Legacy Trust Account to be used for child care and early learning programs.