

FINAL BILL REPORT

2SHB 3168

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Regarding the creation of the Washington head start program.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Goodman, Kagi, Walsh, Haler, Roberts, Pettigrew, Hinkle, Sullivan, Kessler, Green, Hudgins, Darneille, McIntire, Lias, Kelley, Kenney, Hankins, Nelson, Santos and Ormsby).

House Committee on Early Learning & Children's Services

House Committee on Appropriations

Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background:

In 2006 the Legislature created the Department of Early Learning (DEL) as an executive branch agency. The primary duties of the DEL are to implement early learning policy and to coordinate, consolidate, and integrate child care and early learning programs in order to administer programs and funds effectively.

Washington offers two free early learning programs to preschoolers – Head Start and the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). Head Start is a federally-funded program serving about 18,000 children ages 3 to 5 years from low-income families. Funding for Head Start is 80 percent federal with a 20 percent local match. The ECEAP is a state-funded preschool program serving about 6,000 children per year. Public and private organizations receive direct funding from the state through a grant process and may then contract with organizations to offer services. The ECEAP-funded programs are offered in settings such as public schools, child care centers, community organizations, and Head Start agencies.

The ECEAP is composed of four interactive components: education, health and nutrition, parent involvement, and family support. It is a community-based, family-focused, comprehensive, pre-kindergarten program designed to help children and families who are in poverty. The program focuses on helping 3- and 4-year-olds prepare for and succeed in school while helping their parents progress toward self-sufficiency.

The ECEAP serves primarily 4-year-olds. Three-year-olds may be served after all eligible 4-year-old applicants have been enrolled. Eligible families for the ECEAP are those at or below 110 percent of the federal poverty level, although up to 10 percent of program slots may be offered to over-income families with developmental or environmental risk factors. Space is also reserved to meet the needs of preschool children of migrant workers or Native Americans.

Summary:

The Legislature finds that the ECEAP has served an important role, but its performance standards should be aligned with the Federal Head Start Program. The DEL must develop a plan to implement a statewide Washington Head Start Program by 2010. In doing so, the DEL must identify:

- federal Head Start guidelines, performance standards and measures;
- additional resources needed to meet federal guidelines and standards;
- changes to Washington ECEAP statutes necessary to implement a Washington Head Start Program; and
- current ECEAP programs in Washington offering full-day, year-round children's services, and what steps must be taken to transition these programs into a Washington Head Start Program.

If funding is provided, DEL must identify and report on the implementation of state-supported pilot programs modeled on the Federal Early Head Start Program. The DEL's recommendations must include a timeline, strategy, and funding needs to implement a statewide, state-supported Early Head Start program as a component of the Washington Head Start program.

The DEL is encouraged to work with the Head Start Bureau to get approval for any exceptions needed to provide flexibility and maintain high quality standards in administering a Washington Head Start program. The DEL must seek training and assistance from the state regional office administering Federal Head Start when developing its recommendations.

The DEL is required to consult with: the state ECEAP providers on Indian reservations and across the state; tribal governments operating head start programs and early head start programs; and providers operating migrant and seasonal head start programs, when it is developing recommendations.

The DEL must make recommendations for periodic review of standards and guidelines of the Washington Head Start program so as to incorporate the latest developments in early childhood education.

The DEL must submit a report to the Governor and Legislature by December 1, 2008, with recommendations for implementing a state-supported pilot program modeled on the Federal Head Start Program.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	96	0	
Senate	49	0	(Senate amended)
House	95	0	(House concurred)

Effective: June 12, 2008