

## Just for Parents Newsletter

April 2014

### Big Increase for Head Start

Congress has agreed to provide a \$1 billion increase for Head Start. This means that more families will be able to enroll this fall and staff will get small increases. There is also some funding to support an expansion of Early Head Start which serves pregnant moms, infants, and toddlers, through a new partnership with child care centers and family homes. Finally, \$250 million is available nationally for President Obama's universal preschool initiative. We are hopeful that the state of Washington will be successful in writing a grant for some of these dollars so we can expand ECEAP among other efforts.

### Early Learning Makes Modest Progress in Legislative Session

The legislative session saw only a few small victories for parents of young children. The biggest "win" included an increase in the reimbursement rate for child care. This means that if you are using a child subsidy to pay for child care your provider will receive more money. In addition, House Bill 2519 passed, which will make it easier for children in the child welfare system to enroll in ECEAP and other high quality early learning programs. WSA spent time this session advocating for a guaranteed 12 month authorization for families utilizing child care subsidies which did not pass. But we're still working on it!

Parent Ambassadors Julianna Johnson and Grace Ssebugwawo (right) helped our advocacy efforts by testifying in Olympia, but you can help in other ways, like inviting your elected officials to your program. Check out page 2 to see what you can do to make sure we're even more successful in Olympia next year.



### President Seeks Even More Money for Early Learning

In February President Obama put out his budget proposal for the next budget year. He is calling for major increases for Head Start, Early Head Start, and preschool. He also expressed interest in improving the quality of Head Start by expanding the number of teachers with a BA degree and increasing the number of hours. President Obama hopes to convince Congress to support his budget request. Decisions will probably not be made until after the 2014 election this coming November.

### Bedtime Math

Most of us read to our kids at bedtime, but what about helping them develop their math skills too? Bedtimemath.com will send you a daily word problem that will work for all different ages of kids. Here's an example: The tops of mountains get lots of sunlight, but if you're in a town low down between two mountains, it's hard for the sun to reach you since you're in shadow. A town in Norway solved this problem with mirrors. They built 3 giant mirrors on a nearby mountaintop, and the sun bounces off those mirrors down into the valley. Because the earth rotates, the mirrors have to change their angle to keep bouncing the sun towards the town. Questions for your **Wee ones**: How many mirrors do you have in your house? Can you count them? To learn more visit [www.bedtimemath.org](http://www.bedtimemath.org)

## Parent Leadership Institute 2014



Parents and support staff from around Washington gathered at the Rainbow Lodge in North Bend in March to learn leadership skills and share experiences about parent engagement. This two day training was full of peer to peer collaboration, great guest speakers and sharing of family engagement experiences.

Parents and staff competed in a Parent Engagement planning activity. Participants were given a budget and asked to plan an event. Each team came up with great activities that would not only be fun but would encourage and engage parents in their early learning community.

Some proposals were: A family dig night: Families would come and learn about clam digging and tribal traditions. Lessons that would be taught would be around the tide, harvesting and taking only what you need. Another event was a Passport of Fun with a Health and Literacy focus. Each person would be given a passport, after completing each activity related to health or literacy you receive a stamp in your passport. Once your passport is filled you turn it in for a kitchen related prize and a healthy meal.

### How can you help?

There are many ways that you can help advocate for early learning and other issues important to low income families! Here are a few:

- **Invite your elected officials to your program** (find them at [leg.wa.gov/districtfinder](http://leg.wa.gov/districtfinder))
- **Contact your members of Congress** and ask them to support Head Start and Early Head Start, [house.gov](http://house.gov) or [senate.gov](http://senate.gov), or phone #s here: [bit.ly/1itBcKz](http://bit.ly/1itBcKz)
- **Call your state elected officials** and tell them about the importance of ECEAP and quality child care, 1-800-562-6000.
- **Register to vote!** <http://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/myvote/olvr.html>
- **Write a letter to the editor** about the importance of early learning for your family.



### 2014 Advocacy Day

More than 350 Parents, children, families and staff joined us on the Capitol Steps to rally for Early Learning. Governor Jay Inslee came and spoke with us about how much he supports early learning and how important it is for our community.

**You made a difference!**