



## **WSA URGES LEGISLATURE TO MAINTAIN ECEAP FUNDING WAIT LISTS DOUBLE IN SINGLE YEAR**

**Kent, Washington // March 12, 2009 //** Joel Ryan, Executive Director of the Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP, called on legislators to continue their strong support for the Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP) in the 2009-2011 Budget in light of the economic downturn and doubling of wait lists for services.

### **About ECEAP**

ECEAP is a comprehensive "whole child", family-focused preschool program designed to help low-income and at-risk children and families succeed in school and life. The program was established in 1985, and was modeled after the successful federal Head Start program. ECEAP provides an intensive combination of education, health and nutrition screening and assistance, parent involvement and family support to the neediest of Washington's children. The program is available to families who earn less than 110% of the Federal Poverty Level (\$23,320/year for a family of four). In 2008 the Washington State Department of Early Learning contracted with 40 schools, child care centers, and community and faith-based facilities to provide ECEAP services to more than 8200 children and families. Studies have shown that at-risk children without high quality preschool were 70% more likely to commit violent crimes, have lower graduation rates and higher drug use. In a 12-year longitudinal study of ECEAP (1988-2000), researchers found that ECEAP children made significantly greater academic gains, displayed more positive behaviors, enjoyed school more, and had fewer health problems than non-ECEAP children.

### **Joel Ryan, Executive Director of WSA, said the following:**

"The economic downturn has meant that there is more poverty and more and more families are in need of services. This has translated into an overflow of families seeking to enroll their children in ECEAP. In fact, ECEAP is now experiencing a record number of children on their active wait lists. According to the latest data available from the Department of Early Learning, in January 2009 there were 2,610 children on active wait lists for ECEAP programs across our state, compared to 1,346 children in January 2008. **This is nearly double the number of children on wait lists from the previous year, despite the addition of over 1,200 new slots.**

We're very thankful to the Governor and legislators who support funding for ECEAP even in very tough budget times. ECEAP provides high quality early learning, social and health services to the poorest children in our state, and works with parents to help them find employment within their communities."

### **About WSA**

The Washington State Association of Head Start/ECEAP is a statewide organization composed of representatives from Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant Head Start, Native American Head Start and ECEAP. The association has been in existence since the late 1960's, and was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1986. The organization advocates for Head Start and for ECEAP in Olympia and in Washington DC. You can visit our web site at [www.wsaheadstarteceap.com](http://www.wsaheadstarteceap.com).

**CONTACT:** Joel Ryan or Katy Warren, (253) 373-9100 or via e-mail at [Joel@wsaheadstarteceap.com](mailto:Joel@wsaheadstarteceap.com)