

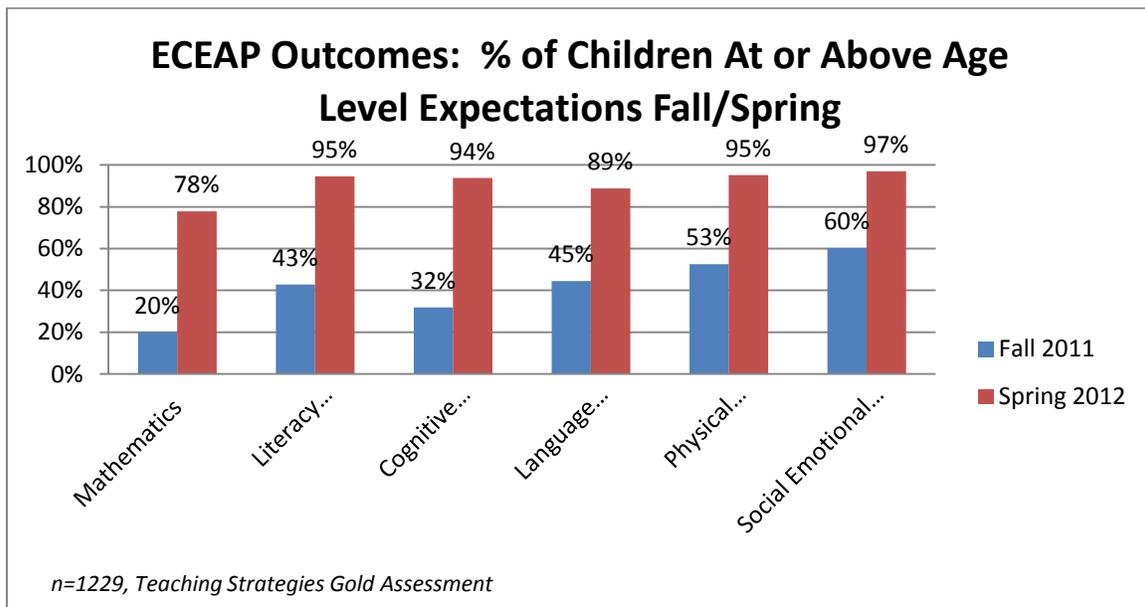


Early Learning Investment – The Key to Better Educational Outcomes

Early learning investments save the state money in both the short and long term, and should be a key element of our state’s education reform policies. **High quality early learning programs, in study after study, have been shown to be the single most cost-effective way to close the achievement gap and improve outcomes for children in K-12 and beyond.** Investments in high quality early learning reduce the need for costly school interventions such as special education and remedial services, while making it more likely children will graduate from high school and even college.

ECEAP is one of the top pre-k programs in the country and gets children ready for kindergarten, and yet more than 32,000 at-risk three and four year old children are eligible, but unable to enroll. In programs serving children birth to 3, fewer than 10% of eligible children are served in Washington. To ensure our state’s future educational and economic success, Washington’s policymakers should:

- **Expand ECEAP by 1,500 children in the upcoming biennium, increase the per child-rate to ensure high quality, and work toward the legislature’s commitment of full implementation by 2018 (11,500 new ECEAP children)**
- **Make a simultaneous investment in targeted, voluntary, comprehensive programs for infants and toddlers at greatest risk of academic failure.**



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Pre-K Research Shows Savings in K-12

- ✓ **There are immediate savings from reduced special education programs in K-12.** Studies have shown that quality pre-k programs like Head Start and ECEAP can reduce the number of children in Special Education up to 48%. An evaluation of the Abbott preschool program point to an even higher reduction (64%) in special education referrals in their full day program, and a Montgomery County, MD Study from 2010 found that Head Start children averaged less than half the hours of special education services per week in kindergarten (3.7 vs. 9.8 hours). In Washington, a non special-education student costs the state an estimated \$65,000 to educate, while a student in special education costs nearly twice that, \$125,000. This does not include remedial services for students who are behind, but do not meet the criteria for “special education” services.

Bottom Line: A 40% reduction in special education referrals from a fully enrolled ECEAP program would save \$4.8 million per year just in the first year. Each additional year a child would have been in special education would reap an additional \$4611 savings per child per year.

- ✓ **Grade Retention is greatly reduced in children with high-quality pre-k.** The recent Abbott Schools follow-up analysis found a huge reduction in the number of children who were held back in K-12. 19% of children in Abbott (low income) districts were held back a grade (through 3rd grade), while only 11% of children who did attend were held back. Similar results have been reported from other quality state pre-k programs, model programs, and Head Start.

Bottom Line: Each year a child is held back costs Washington State more than \$5000 per child. A fully enrolled ECEAP program would reduce the number of children being retained and save the state money right away.

- ✓ **High School Completion Rates are higher for graduates of high-quality pre-k programs.** Research has shown that children who do not receive quality early childhood education are 25% more likely to drop out. Incarceration rates are 63 times higher for high school dropouts ages 16-24, and more than 30% those dropouts are living in poverty. Estimates for the cost to the taxpayer of a single high school dropout, in public services, lost tax revenue, and criminal justice costs, ranges between \$200,000 and \$292,000 over a lifetime. They can expect to earn less than 2/3 the average annual salary of a high school graduate, and only 36% of a college graduate.

Bottom Line: Attending ECEAP could increase those children’s high school completion rate by more than 5%. Serving an additional 11,500 ECEAP children could save the state well over \$115 million.