



Program
Year

2020-21

Early Learning and Family Services

Annual Report

Essential Work



Happens Here

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Department Overview and Mission

Early Learning and Family Services (ELAFS) is a department of the Opportunity Council. Our programs focus on child and family wellbeing, and enhance the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social, and other services to enrolled children and families. We engage parents in their own children's learning and help them in making progress toward their educational, literacy and employment goals.

We work with parents, families, child care providers and early childhood educators, businesses and community organizations to promote the availability of high-quality early child care and education programs in Island, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom counties.

Additionally, we help parents and families find quality child care environments for their children, and assist child care providers in supporting every child's learning and development. The following are summaries of the many programs of ELAFS.

Our Mission

The Opportunity Council (OC) helps people improve their lives through education, support, and direct assistance while advocating for just and equitable communities.

In support of the Opportunity Council's mission, the Early Learning and Family Services Department (ELAFS) ensures that all children and families have the knowledge, skills, and support for success in school and all future opportunities.

We are...

- Committed to working with families and communities to increase access to quality early learning experiences and family support.
- Strong believers in families as the best resource for children, and
- Confident that healthy, resilient, well-educated children will be successful in the changing world of the 21st Century and beyond.

Accountability

Monitoring the goals and activities of Early Learning and Family Services (ELAFS) is an ongoing process. Through the use of regular self-assessments, federal, state and local reviews, routine monitoring tools, site visits, and an annual fiscal audit, ELAFS maintains high quality programs and participates in continuous program improvements.

Audit Results

The Opportunity Council is the grantee for all Administration for Children, Youth and Families-Office of Head Start funds, the USDA/OSPI Child and Adult Food Program, and State of Washington financial support, for ECEAP, Child Care Aware/Early Achievers, Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (Part C IDEA), and more. Annually, according to the grantee's fiscal year of January to December, the Opportunity Council has a financial audit conducted by independent auditors according to OMB Circular A-133, and 2 CFR Part 200. The financial audit for the grantee's Fiscal Year 2020, which covers half of the Early Learning and Family Services Department's 2020-21 contract year with ACF-OHS and State of Washington Department of Early Learning, was "unmodified" or absent of any findings.

Monitoring Report Results

ECEAP and Child Care Aware Infant-Toddler Consultation Project (FIND)

In the first quarter of 2020, the Washington State Department Children, Youth & Families conducted a virtual fiscal monitoring review of the Opportunity Councils' ECEAP Program. This consisted of vendor and accounts payable transaction testing, payroll accuracy, procurement policies and practice, and cost allocation plan compliance. A couple practice improvement suggestions were made but there were no findings.

Quality Child Care – Early Achievers & Core Services

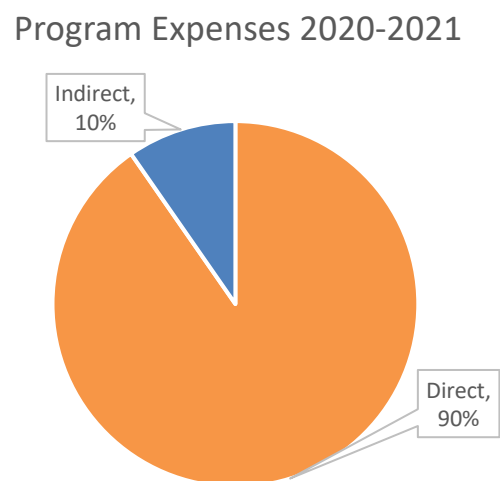
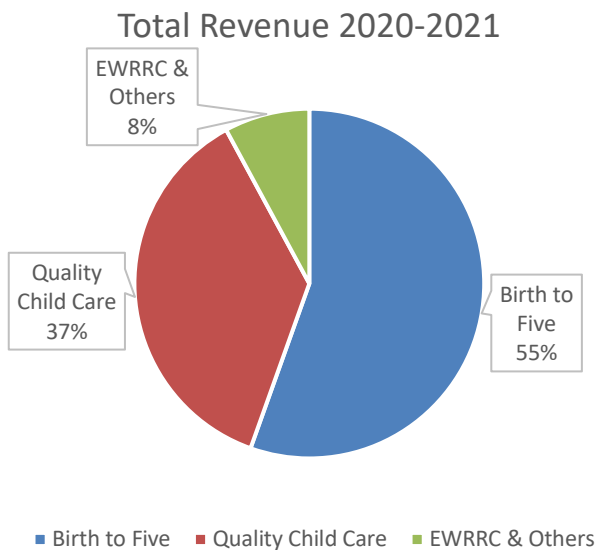
In the first quarter of 2020, Child Care Aware of Washington, due to the pandemic conducted a "desk review" of the Opportunity Councils' Child Care Aware of Northwest Washington program. This consisted of a review of data, systems, strategy, policy, community collaborations and outcomes. Results reported in Q3 of 2020 confirmed full compliance and there were no findings.

Early Support for Infants & Toddlers

During February-March 2020 the Whatcom County conducted a program and fiscal review of Opportunity Council's services to ESIT clients. By late summer of 2020, evaluative results showed the program was in full compliance.

Financials - Revenue and Expenditures

2020-21 Revenue	Amount	2020-21 Expenses	Indirect	Direct
Birth to Five	\$7,802,598	Birth to Five	\$797,603	\$7,004,995
Quality Child Care	\$5,156,603	Quality Child Care	\$515,328	\$4,641,274
EWRRRC & Other	\$1,110,058	EWRRRC & Other	\$47,148	\$1,062,910
Total	\$14,069,259	Total	\$1,360,079	\$12,709,179



Division Revenue and Expenditures

Birth to Five Services	Total	Indirect	Direct
Early Head Start	\$658,983	\$77,995	\$580,988
Early Intervention (ESIT)	\$1,336,851	\$125,305	\$1,211,546
ECEAP (Early Childhood Education)	\$2,062,740	\$213,163	\$1,849,577
Head Start	\$3,258,862	\$329,158	\$2,929,704
Head Start Donations	\$11,000	\$1,179	\$9,821
Infant Toddler Early Prevention Programs	\$0	\$0	\$0
Lynden & Meridian School Districts	\$93,712	\$10,041	\$83,671
USDA-Lunch Program	\$198,700	\$21,289	\$177,411
Whatcom County/WCEL - SEAS	\$115,630	\$12,388	\$103,242
Whatcom County Intervention Services	\$66,120	\$7,084	\$59,036
Total	\$7,802,598	\$797,602	\$7,004,996

Quality Child Care and Support Services	Total	Indirect	Direct
CACFP (Nutrition Program)	\$77,027	\$8,253	\$68,774
Child Care Resource and Referral	\$3,654,974	\$363,975	\$3,291,000
Center for Retention and Expansion of CC	\$1,085,172	\$106,848	\$978,324
Child Care Shared Services	\$38,300	\$4,104	\$34,196
Fee for Service	\$43,145	\$4,623	\$38,522
QRIS	\$213,452	\$22,870	\$190,582
Teaching Strategies Gold	\$20,107	\$2,154	\$17,952
NW WA Mobilization	\$7,347	\$787	\$6,560
United Way - Vouchers	\$9,976	\$1,069	\$8,907
United Way - WELA	\$27,209	\$2,801	\$24,408
Total	\$5,176,709	\$517,484	\$4,659,225

Other	Total
ABC Dental	\$32,098
Early Head Start Non-Federal Share	\$140,047
Events/Private Donations	\$
EWRRRC	\$379,364
Head Start Non-Federal Share	\$514,325
CARES Act Misc.	\$26,145
WECU X-it/WSDFI FLARE	\$18,079
Total	\$1,299,223.96

Director's Message:

2021, A "Rollercoaster" Year

By David Webster, Director, Early Learning and Family Services

After the unprecedented "lows" of 2020 brought on by the deepest waves of the pandemic, we had hope that 2021 would be markedly better. In the end, it was, but it also felt like a wild rollercoaster ride for most of our staff and families throughout the year. Just as things felt like they were getting better, new spikes or completely new variants knocked us back on our heels. In 2020, we more or less knew where we were.

2021 became more of a year of cyclical dashed hopes, rays of optimism followed by the let-down of different or ongoing restrictions. We did our best to resume "normal services" but the ebbs and flows of this horrible disease meant that services were in full swing one day, only to be closed down the next by someone's exposure to the virus or bouts of illness. Through it all, our home visiting, early intervention, SEAS and classroom staff, as well as the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center team were heroic in their perseverance and creativity to get the job done by whatever means necessary. Our Quality Child Care team and our Center for Retention & Expansion of Child Care kept businesses and non-profits across the region on their feet, providing much needed child care, under trying circumstances, to thousands. I can't thank them all enough. And all of those providers of direct service were backed by an amazing departmental central admin team, as well as our partner OC departments in Fiscal, Human Resources, Facilities, Information Services and executive management.

The year also brought home some important lessons for all sectors in the communities we serve. First, the pandemic made many folks re-evaluate their lives. What was important? What could they do without? Where did they envision themselves in the future? The "Great Resignation" became the news as employees – especially women – opted to construct their lives differently. Sometimes by choice and sometimes by necessity. Employers of all types became acutely aware of how much their workforces depend on a robust early learning and care sector. With us not being able to be at 100% strength, many workers had no choice but to forego work hours, if not work entirely, to stay home and care for their children. It became a "workers' market," meaning employees could make demands that their employer had to meet if full staffing was a goal. We were not immune from this workforce turbulence, despite the numerous steps in compensation and other benefits we took to try to stay competitive.

Fortunately, our State Legislature rose to the challenge with the passage of the Fair Start for Kids Act, which will make significant improvements in early learning and care over the decade to come, as well as providing some much needed resources immediately, such as a 10% increase in the per child rate ECEAP pays and significantly more help for parents and their child care providers who rely on state subsidies. The Act's resources laid out a path to make child care more affordable and the business side of it more viable, which paralleled nicely the growth in reach of our Center for Retention & Expansion of Child Care, begun in 2020.

The FSK Act also led to an expansion of Transitional Kindergarten for four-year olds in many school districts. Overall, a welcomed addition to our sector, but not one without potential

unintended consequences as well for child care especially, but also our standard preschool programs in Head Start and ECEAP. We will be working to keep our system intact in the weeks and months ahead.

Behavioral/mental health, for both children and adults, came much more acutely into focus, which is a good thing. The needs still far outstrip the available resources, mostly due to a shortage of credentialed professionals who work with children and families, but recognizing a problem is the first step toward eventually solving it.

We all hope to get off the rollercoaster in 2022, finding a “new normal.” But come what may, I am confident that I work with a team of professionals who will meet whatever challenge comes our way. We always have.

Birth to Five Services

Program Descriptions and Data

Early Head Start

This federally-funded comprehensive child development program for families of low-income with infants, toddlers, and/or pregnancies, enhances children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development; assists pregnant people in accessing comprehensive prenatal and postpartum care; supports parents' efforts to fulfill their parental roles; and helps parents move toward self-sufficiency. It also features individualized planning and case management for children and parents. Services are provided in a home-based model.

Early Head Start 2020-21

Cumulative Enrollment:	87
Number of Funded Slots:	50
Average Monthly Enrollment:	100%
Number of Home-Based Slots:	50
Percent of Children w/Health Insurance at End of Enrollment:	93%
Percent of Enrolled Children with continuous accessible health care at End of Enrollment:	91%
Percent of Children with continuous, accessible dental care provided by a dentist:	100%
Percent of Enrolled Children who are Income Eligible:	96%

Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT)

ESIT serves families with children birth to three years old who have special needs and need support to maximize each child's development for up to three years. ESIT provides early diagnosis and intervention services for infants and toddlers with developmental delays in their natural environments, and includes family resource coordination, screening and evaluation to determine eligibility, ongoing assessment, and therapy services. 2020-21 was the first year that Opportunity Council became a direct vendor with WA-DCYF instead of acting as the Local Lead Agency.

Early Support for Infants and Toddlers 2020

Average New Referrals per Month	34
Average New/Initial IFSPs per Month	8
Total New IFSPs	372
Total Children Transitioned to Part B Services in School Districts	38
Total Children Transitioned Typically Developing	42
Total Children Transitioned for any reason	95

Head Start and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)

These federally and state-funded comprehensive preschool programs provide free services and support to eligible children and their families. The programs promote school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to enrolled children and families. Our programs work systemically to assure alignment between prenatal to third grade services in our community (P-3 alignment).

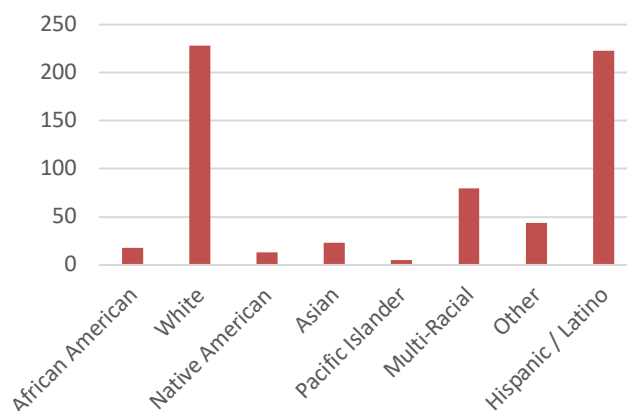
Head Start and ECEAP engage parents in their children's learning and help them in making progress toward their educational, literacy and financial/employment goals. Significant emphasis is placed on the involvement of parents in the administration of the program through the Parent Policy Council and other means. Included in parent preparation is the readiness to advocate successfully for their child in the K-12 system.

The goal of both programs is to help ensure all Washington children transition well and enter kindergarten ready to succeed. The program, which offers both part-day, full day and extended day options, includes:

- Early learning preschool
- Family support and parent involvement/leadership development
- Child health coordination and nutrition
- Linkages and referral to both other OC and community partners' services

Head Start and ECEAP 2020-21	ECEAP	Head Start
Cumulative Enrollment:	191	225
Number of Funded Slots:	174	220
Average Monthly Enrollment:	100%	100%
Number of Center Based Classrooms:	12	8
Meal Count: ¹	35,415	7413
Percentage of Enrolled Children who are Income Eligible	86%	83% ⁱ

Race and Ethnicity of Head Start/ECEAP Children 2020-2021



Project X-it

Project X-it is an 18-month financial resiliency program for Head Start/ECEAP families. Project X-it features incentivized goal plans and dual-generational financial curriculum to aid Head Start/ECEAP families develop financial literacy. Families are matched with trained volunteer mentors from the community who act as financial partners to help plan goals and celebrate success. Financial learning and goal setting continue throughout the duration of the program, with an emphasis on participant driven curriculum.

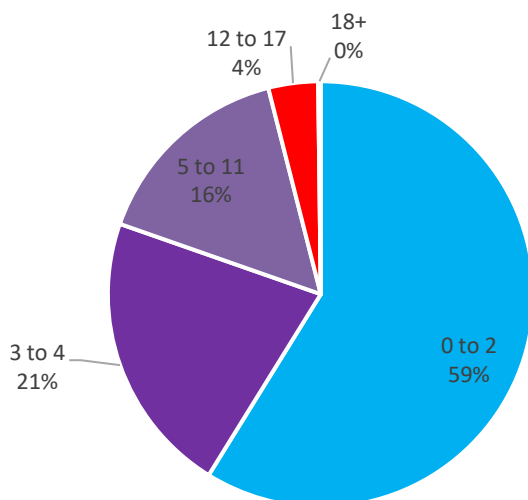
Project X-it Cohort 2	Started February 2020 - Completed June 2021
Families Completed Program	5
Number of Goals – All participants	11
Amount Earned in Incentives	\$7,450

Single-Entry Access to Services (SEAS)

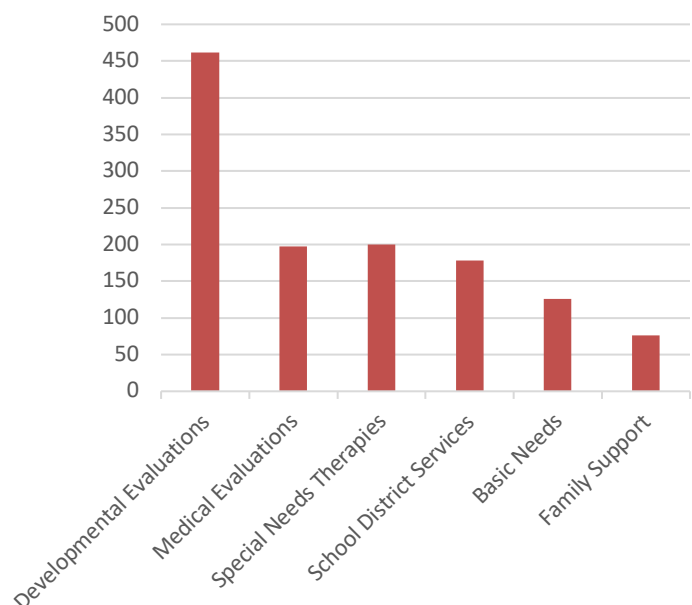
Housed at Early Learning and Family Services, this program of Whatcom Taking Action provides a centralized intake system for families and medical professionals looking for services for children and youth in Whatcom County with known or suspected special needs.

Single Entry Access to Services 2020-21	
Total Number of Referrals	1,008

Age of Children Referred to SEAS



SEAS Top Reported Needs 2020-21



Quality Child Care

Program Descriptions and Data

Child Care Aware of Northwest Washington

Child Care Aware of Northwest Washington is one of six regions across the state that works with families, educators, businesses, and community partners to advance high-quality early learning opportunities in child care settings. As part of a statewide network of child care information and referral services, Child Care Aware helps families learn about their child care options and how to locate high-quality child care that works best for their children. Child Care Aware also champions advocacy efforts to benefit children and families, increase the number of licensed child care businesses, expand access to high-quality child care, and improve supports for child care providers and early educators. In addition, Child Care Aware of Northwest Washington provides one-on-one coaching and support through Early Achievers and professional development opportunities to child care providers in Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish, Island, and San Juan Counties.

Early Achievers:

Early Achievers is a framework for improving the quality of early care in Washington. It provides a rating system for child care providers based on observable elements of quality that are optimal for kids. By participating in Early Achievers, early learning professionals show a commitment to improving quality in their programs. Early Achievers coaches provide consultation, professional development training, and technical assistance to instill excellence in child care programs.

Supporting Child Care Providers

Providers receiving personalized, one-on-one COVID-19 support	798
Providers and teachers who received Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)	432
Providers Enrolled in Early Achievers	440
Total hours providing COVID-19 support	5,952.50

Professional Development Training

Total number of training hours	343
Total number of training participants (duplicated)	1,006

Kaleidoscope Play and Learn Groups (KPL):

Kaleidoscope Play and Learn groups help families prepare their children from birth to age 5 for success in school and life. Child Care Aware of NW Washington supports expansion, advocacy, and data collection from KPL groups in its five-county region, reporting monthly to Child Care Aware of Washington and the Department of Children, Youth, and Family Services (DCYF). Child Care Aware of NW Washington is also the primary grantor for the seven Mother Mentors Playscape (KPL groups) throughout Whidbey Island.

QRIS Birth to Three Quality Initiatives

QRIS Birth to Three Quality Initiatives provides coaching and consultation services to infant and toddler programs enrolled in Early Achievers. Coaching builds on strengths, improves caregiver skills, and expands high-quality care for young children and their families. Areas of expertise include infant

and early childhood mental health, developmental screening, onsite behavioral and mental health consultation, the Filming Interactions to Nurture Development (FIND) model of intervention, the Infant and Toddlers Environmental Rating Scale (ERS), and Infant and Toddlers Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS).

Birth to Three Quality Initiatives

Total of Infant-Toddler programs served by the FIND project	18
Total of Infant-Toddler programs connected with coaching and consultation	75

Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Project

Number of Focus Children	63
Number of providers/teachers who received consultation services	81

Emergency Child Care Voucher Program

When parents cannot access child care, they cannot work. The Emergency Child Care Voucher Program provides temporary financial assistance to help families obtain or maintain high-quality, licensed child care during times of financial need. Child care vouchers prevent income loss for working families with low incomes, and help ensure children continue to receive high-quality child care when they need it most during critical developmental growing periods. In 2020-21, we also brokered financial resources from private employers who sought to support their workers.

Emergency Child Care Vouchers 2021

Unduplicated families who received assistance	50
Unduplicated children who received assistance	82
Total support given via vouchers	\$36,784

Family Child Care Nutrition Program

The Child Care Nutrition program is part of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), a USDA federally-funded program to help family home child care providers serve nutritious meals to the children in their care. Child care providers enrolled in the program receive meal reimbursements, onsite coaching/ technical assistance monitoring, and nutrition education to promote healthy eating.

Child Care Nutrition Program

Total Reimbursed Meals:	152,889
Average number of Reimbursed Meals Per Month	12,740
Average Number of Children Served Per Month	447

Center for Retention & Expansion of Child Care - Northwest

In 2020, Opportunity Council and the Bellingham Regional Chamber of Commerce joined forces to open the new Center for Retention & Expansion of Child Care NW (C-RECC NW). C-RECC NW exists to expand the region's market of child care providers by developing collaborative partnerships between

business organizations and local communities across all sectors, while providing current and would-be child care providers with technical assistance, business and planning help. Since 2020, C-RECC NW has facilitated more than \$1.2 million dollars in grants to providers, especially those highly impacted by COVID, but also has helped start-ups and those looking to expand or relocate.

East Whatcom Regional Resource Center

Program Description and Data

The East Whatcom Regional Resource Center is a Whatcom County Parks facility, managed by the Opportunity Council and located in Maple Falls. The facility opened in September 2011, and provides space for a preschool program, youth and teen programming, community meetings, neighborhood events, private events, as well as a variety of information and resources and events throughout the year for residents in Eastern Whatcom County.

Number Served	Jan-March 2021	All 2021
Total New Visitors	279	196
Total Calls	162	557
Total Visits	84	713

Kids Days of Summer 2021	
Number of youth served (unduplicated)	79
Number of partners involved	22
Number of volunteer hours	83
Meals Cooked	698
Number of teen volunteers	6

Top Five Socially Distanced Services	Number of Service Instances
Community Engagement	459
Computer/Fax/Copy/Phone	232
Clothes	157
Healthcare	213
Utility Assistance	110

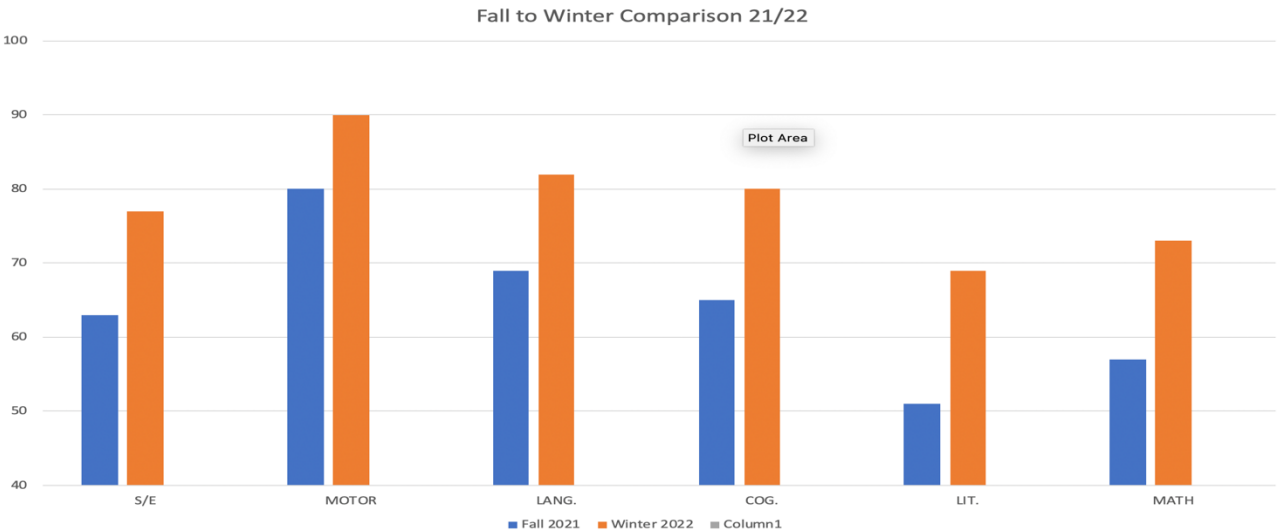
School Readiness Efforts

ELAFS school readiness goals are based on collaborative efforts with local school districts toward Preschool-3rd grade (P3) alignment efforts. The agreed upon goals include all five domains required by the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.

Head Start and Early Head Start programs are required to measure and report children’s progress based on the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. The framework was developed to guide programs in curriculum planning and ongoing assessment of children’s progress and development. It includes seven general domains, and numerous domain elements relating to children’s skills, abilities, knowledge, and behaviors. Similarly, the Washington’s Early Learning and Development Guidelines (ELDG) have early learning outcomes that direct our work. Our program uses Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG), a valid and reliable research-based assessment, as our measuring tool. TSG has been cross-walked with both the Head Start ELOF’s and Washington’s ELDG, meeting all elements of both program requirements.

As with 2019-2020, the 2020-2021 school year had its’ own share of challenges when it came to reliably measuring school readiness by TSG outcomes. Early in Covid and while offering hybrid/virtual services, we found it very challenging to get quality and an adequate quantity of usable documentation to complete TSG checkpoints. Without quality documentation, any checkpoint data we collected was viewed as unreliable. We were able to begin providing full-time in-person services at some sites in the fall of 2021. We did struggle with keeping classes open due to staffing shortages and Covid surges, however we were able to get our Fall and Winter checkpoints done and the data appears to be much more reliable, such that we believe it will provide us with good/useable data for our classroom and program planning. We are looking forward to having a full year’s worth of data on all children for the first time since Covid began

As children came back to classrooms for more regular attendance, staff observed that there were developmental impacts that kids suffered by being unable to attend a preschool program in person for so long. Nonetheless, we are seeing steady growth from fall to winter this school year. We are feeling very hopeful for the 22/23 school year --especially with the possible availability of early childhood vaccines-- that classroom consistency and attendance will be more normative. .



Virtual Learning and Family Services

Pandemic Restrictions Impact on Services

At the time of publication restrictions for children under the age of five have started to relax restrictions with regards to masks. COVID vaccines are continuing to be approved for earlier and earlier ages. We continue to monitor and update our policies in accordance with federal and state recommendations for the services we provide.

Policy Council (PC)

Policy Council the parent-led governing body that works in conjunction with Head Start, Early Head Start, and ECEAP staff, community members and the Opportunity Council Board of Directors in planning and operating our home- and center-based early learning programs. 2020 to 2021 found Policy Council continuing to meet monthly via zoom. While this method presented obstacles just as it has for staff and children in the program, PC has carried on valiantly and looks forward to being able to start meeting in-person in the near future. One silver lining to meeting virtually is that it has significantly lowered attendance barriers for families and council members. Policy Council plans to continue to offer virtual meetings as an alternate form of attendance once in-person meetings have resumed.

Every year in the spring, PC hosts a free event for all enrolled families with a theme such as fitness or STEM. This year, with an in-person event not possible due to Washington state's stay at home order, PC instead coordinated a mask decorating project that allowed for our students to have fun decorating and personalizing masks to help kids and families understand the importance of masking and allow them a chance to express creativity while doing so. Families who submitted pictures were entered into a drawing for prizes as well.





Funding Sources and Collaborations

In addition to these key funders and collaborators, ELAFS is proud to also benefit from the support of other local private and community foundations, as well as individual donors who support our work.

Child Care Aware Chuckanut Health Foundation Head Start Mount Baker Foundation



North Sound Accountable Communities of Health

United Way of Whatcom County

USDA

Washington State Dept. of Children, Youth & Families



Washington State Dept. of Commerce

Whatcom Community Foundation

Whatcom County

Whatcom Educational Credit Union



Whatcom Taking Action

