
HOUSE BILL 1450

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Representatives Santos, Rude, Schmidt, Wylie, Parshley, Ortiz-Self, Nance, Pollet, and Tharinger

Read first time 01/21/25. Referred to Committee on Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to transition to kindergarten programs; amending
2 RCW 28A.225.160, 43.216.085, and 43.216.655; adding new sections to
3 chapter 28A.300 RCW; adding new sections to chapter 43.216 RCW;
4 creating new sections; and providing an expiration date.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that high
7 quality early learning is the best way to ensure children have the
8 social-emotional skills and other skills they need to enter
9 kindergarten ready to learn. Unfortunately, too many children across
10 the state do not have access to high quality early learning.

11 (2) The legislature recognizes that the early childhood education
12 and assistance program, the state's preschool program, is expanding
13 and will become an entitlement for eligible children in the year
14 2026. The fair start for kids act, enacted in 2021, is helping to
15 expand access to more affordable, high quality child care; and early
16 learning and federal early learning programs serve thousands of
17 families across the state.

18 (3) However, the legislature finds that these early learning
19 programs do not yet reach all families in need. As a result, there
20 are children about to enter kindergarten who need an opportunity for
21 high quality preschool in order to be successful kindergarten

1 students in the following school year. The legislature recognizes
2 that school districts, especially those in communities with early
3 learning deserts, can and do reach children who need these
4 opportunities. Some school districts and charter schools have
5 attempted to address this gap by creating programs referred to as
6 transitional kindergarten using allocations appropriated for the
7 state's program of basic education. These extrastatutory programs are
8 established by school districts and charter schools on an ad hoc
9 basis and not all of the programs referred to as transitional
10 kindergarten meet the high quality age-appropriate early learning
11 standards that other state-funded early learning programs are
12 required to meet.

13 (4) Therefore, the legislature intends to establish a transition
14 to kindergarten program that meets early learning standards in lieu
15 of transitional kindergarten programs and to help fill in gaps in
16 access to high quality early learning for eligible children,
17 especially in early learning deserts. School district transitional
18 kindergarten programs in operation in 2025 will be converted to
19 school district transition to kindergarten programs for eligible
20 students by August 31, 2026, provided that the standards set forth in
21 this act are met. The legislature intends to provide state funding,
22 which is separate from and in addition to the state basic education
23 allocation, for the transition to kindergarten program so that it can
24 be offered at no charge to eligible students, and to prohibit the use
25 of state basic education allocations for this program. The
26 legislature further intends to clarify that these transition to
27 kindergarten programs, which are offered at the school district's
28 option, are not part of the state's required minimum instructional
29 program of basic education and do not constitute enrollments for
30 purposes of generating state basic education funding allocations. The
31 legislature also intends to: Require that the early learning
32 ecosystem work together; promote coordinated systems of comprehensive
33 early learning services; maximize efficient use of state, federal,
34 and local resources; and ensure that children and families get the
35 early learning services they need in the most appropriate setting.

36 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.300
37 RCW to read as follows:

38 (1) **Establishment.**

1 (a) The transition to kindergarten program is established to
2 assist eligible children in need of additional preparation to be
3 successful kindergarten students in the following school year. The
4 transition to kindergarten program is not part of the state's
5 instructional program of basic education under RCW 28A.150.220.

6 (b) The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall
7 administer the transition to kindergarten program as required by this
8 section.

9 (2) **Authorizations and approvals.** The office of the
10 superintendent of public instruction may authorize school districts
11 to offer a transition to kindergarten program, approve transition to
12 kindergarten program sites at one or more of an authorized school
13 district's schools, and cap eligible child enrollment for each
14 authorized school district as required by this subsection (2). The
15 office of the superintendent of public instruction must authorize any
16 school district offering a program referred to as transitional
17 kindergarten during the 2025-26 school year that is converting to a
18 transition to kindergarten program under the conversion plan adopted
19 by the office of the superintendent of public instruction under
20 section 3 of this act, provided the school district meets the
21 requirements of subsection (3) of this section by September 1, 2026,
22 or earlier if required by the office.

23 (a) By December 31, 2025, the office of the superintendent of
24 public instruction must develop and begin implementing a process for
25 school districts to apply to operate or expand a transition to
26 kindergarten program. At a minimum, the application must:

27 (i) Specify the number of transition to kindergarten program
28 sites the school district is applying for and the intended number of
29 eligible children to be enrolled at each site;

30 (ii) Describe the screening process or other instruments that the
31 school district will use to individually determine whether an
32 eligible child has a developmental delay or otherwise needs
33 additional preparation to be successful in kindergarten in the
34 following school year. Eligible children who are on the waitlist for
35 early childhood education and assistance program sites are not
36 required to be screened; and

37 (iii) Outline the school district's plan for coordinated
38 recruitment and enrollment with other early learning program
39 providers, including its proposed memoranda of understanding.

1 (b)(i) In order to distribute high quality early learning
2 programs across communities in an equitable and effective manner, the
3 following activities must be coordinated with the department of
4 children, youth, and families, in consideration of the items listed
5 in (b)(ii) of this subsection (2): Authorization of school districts
6 to offer a transition to kindergarten program; approval of transition
7 to kindergarten program sites at one or more of an authorized school
8 district's schools; and capping eligible child enrollment. In
9 addition, the office of the superintendent of public instruction must
10 limit the number of authorized school districts, approved transition
11 to kindergarten program sites, and enrolled eligible children as
12 required by the omnibus operating appropriations act.

13 (ii) The activities listed in (b)(i) of this subsection (2) must
14 be conducted in consideration of: The existing availability of the
15 early childhood education and assistance programs, head start
16 programs, and licensed child care providers; planned expansion of
17 early childhood education and assistance program sites and
18 eligibility criteria; and the state-funded early childhood education
19 and assistance program entitlement required in RCW 43.216.556.

20 (3) **Operations.** Authorized school districts operating a
21 transition to kindergarten program must meet the requirements in this
22 subsection (3).

23 (a) Except for school districts offering a program referred to as
24 transitional kindergarten during the 2025-26 school year that are
25 converting to a transition to kindergarten program under the
26 conversion plan adopted by the office of the superintendent of public
27 instruction under section 3 of this act, authorized school districts
28 must engage in a planning year before operating a transition to
29 kindergarten program site, during which it must prepare for
30 compliance with applicable rules.

31 (b) Authorized school districts may not charge tuition or other
32 fees to state-funded eligible children for enrollment in a transition
33 to kindergarten program.

34 (c) Authorized school districts must avoid adversely impacting
35 enrollment in other high quality early learning programs by using a
36 coordinated recruitment and enrollment plan to prioritize eligible
37 children for enrollment in the transition to kindergarten program in
38 the following order:

1 (i) Eligible children on the waitlist for, but not scheduled for
2 enrollment in, an early childhood education and assistance program
3 site; then

4 (ii) Eligible children who have been individually determined
5 through a screening process or other instruments to have a
6 developmental delay or otherwise need additional preparation to be
7 successful in kindergarten in the following school year with priority
8 to the eldest children and the children with the lowest household
9 incomes.

10 (d) Authorized school districts must participate in the early
11 achievers program established under RCW 43.216.085.

12 (e) Authorized school districts must require that transition to
13 kindergarten program sites use developmentally appropriate curricula
14 and implement the following elements in alignment with early
15 childhood education and assistance program performance standards:
16 Classroom environment; pedagogical approach; and safety measures.

17 (f) Each transition to kindergarten program classroom must be
18 staffed with a teacher who holds a valid Washington teacher
19 certificate and who either:

20 (i) Holds an early childhood education endorsement or an early
21 childhood special education endorsement; or

22 (ii) Holds an elementary education endorsement and, within five
23 years of initial assignment to the transition to kindergarten
24 program, completes at least 24 college credits, or 60 clock hours,
25 related to the state early childhood education core competencies
26 established by the department of children, youth, and families.

27 (g) Authorized school districts are prohibited from establishing
28 a policy of excluding an eligible child due only to the presence of a
29 disability.

30 (h) Authorized school districts must work in collaboration with
31 early learning partners to promote coordinated systems of
32 comprehensive early childhood services.

33 (i) Nothing in this section prohibits authorized school districts
34 from blending or colocating early learning programs, such as the
35 transition to kindergarten program, the early childhood education and
36 assistance program, the federal head start program, or private pay
37 programs.

38 (4) **Funding.**

39 (a) The office of the superintendent of public instruction must
40 distribute to authorized school districts an amount per eligible

1 child enrolled in a transition to kindergarten program that is
2 equivalent to the amount per child enrolled in a school day class of
3 an early childhood education and assistance program, divided by
4 1.091, and multiplied by the school district's regionalization factor
5 under RCW 28A.150.412 identified in the omnibus appropriations act,
6 excluding the experience factor. The distributed amount must be
7 prorated to account for enrollment in a transition to kindergarten
8 program that is less than a full school day or a full school year.

9 (b) The office of the superintendent of public instruction must
10 submit to the legislature by each December 1st a report that includes
11 the following data: (i) The number of state-funded eligible children
12 enrolled in transition to kindergarten programs operated by
13 authorized school districts in the current school year; and (ii) the
14 estimated number of eligible children that authorized school
15 districts intend to enroll in the following school year.

16 (5) **Reapprovals and reauthorizations.** The office of the
17 superintendent of public instruction must establish processes to
18 reapprove transition to kindergarten program sites and reauthorize
19 school districts, periodically and, at a minimum, as required in the
20 omnibus operating appropriations act. If an authorized school
21 district or approved transition to kindergarten program site will be
22 discontinued or otherwise not provided with state funding, the office
23 of the superintendent of public instruction must provide the
24 authorized school district with at least one year of notice. If an
25 authorized school district is required to complete remedial
26 activities under section 9 of this act, the initiation of the
27 remedial period serves as the one year of notice that the authorized
28 school district or approved transition to kindergarten program site
29 will be discontinued or otherwise not provided with state funding.

30 (6) **Resources.** The office of the superintendent of public
31 instruction must collaborate with the department of children, youth,
32 and families to develop, and make publicly available, a model
33 memorandum of understanding between authorized school districts and
34 other early learning program providers. The model language must
35 include a process for resolving local concerns between early learning
36 program providers, including school districts.

37 (7) **Rules.** The office of the superintendent of public instruction
38 shall adopt rules under chapter 34.05 RCW for the authorization of,
39 the administration of, and the allocation of state funding for the
40 transition to kindergarten program. Where applicable, the office of

1 the superintendent of public instruction shall collaborate with the
2 department of children, youth, and families in the development of the
3 rules.

4 (8) **Definitions.** The definitions in this subsection apply
5 throughout this section unless the context clearly requires
6 otherwise.

7 (a) "Approved school district" means a school district approved
8 by the office of the superintendent of public instruction to operate
9 a program under this section.

10 (b) "Common school" has the same meaning as in RCW 28A.150.020.

11 (c) "Eligible child" means a child who turns five years old
12 between September 1st of the year of admission to the transition to
13 kindergarten program and the following August 31st, who does not have
14 access to enroll in a federal or state program providing high quality
15 early learning services, who does not have access to, or has been
16 referred by, a licensed early learning program provider, and who
17 either:

18 (i) Is on the waitlist for, but not scheduled for enrollment in,
19 an early childhood education and assistance program; or

20 (ii) Has been individually determined through a screening process
21 or other instruments to have a developmental delay or otherwise needs
22 additional preparation to be successful in kindergarten in the
23 following school year.

24 (d) "Program site" means a school in an authorized school
25 district that is approved by the office of the superintendent of
26 public instruction to operate a program.

27 (e) "Transitional kindergarten" has the same meaning as in
28 section 3 of this act.

29 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.300
30 RCW to read as follows:

31 (1) By October 1, 2025, school districts and charter schools that
32 offered a program referred to as transitional kindergarten during the
33 2024-25 school year must submit a report to the office of the
34 superintendent of public instruction describing the screening process
35 or other instruments used to determine children's eligibility for the
36 program.

37 (2) By December 31, 2025, the office of the superintendent of
38 public instruction shall adopt and begin implementing a conversion
39 plan to assist school districts that offered a program referred to as

1 transitional kindergarten during the 2024-25 school year to be
2 authorized, under section 2 of this act, to begin offering a
3 transition to kindergarten program no later than September 1, 2026.
4 The conversion plan must include a process for coordinating approval
5 of future sites and slots for the transition to kindergarten program
6 and the early childhood education and assistance program. The goal of
7 the process is to distribute future sites and slots across
8 communities in an equitable and effective manner.

9 (3) By August 31, 2026, school districts and charter schools must
10 cease operation of programs referred to as transitional kindergarten
11 and may no longer report transitional kindergarten students as
12 kindergarten students for purposes of receiving basic education
13 allocations under RCW 28A.150.250.

14 (4) As used in this section, "transitional kindergarten" means an
15 extrastatutory instructional program, based on kindergarten standards
16 rather than on developmentally appropriate early learning standards,
17 established on an ad hoc basis for children below the age of five who
18 do not have access to high quality early learning experiences prior
19 to kindergarten, and who have been deemed by a school district or
20 charter school, through a screening process or other instrument, to
21 be in need of additional preparation to be successful in kindergarten
22 the following year.

23 **Sec. 4.** RCW 28A.225.160 and 2023 c 420 s 2 are each amended to
24 read as follows:

25 (1) Except as provided in subsection (3) of this section and
26 otherwise provided by law, it is the general policy of the state that
27 the common schools shall be open to the admission of all persons who
28 are five years of age and less than 21 years residing in that school
29 district. Except as otherwise provided by law or rules adopted by the
30 superintendent of public instruction, districts may establish uniform
31 entry qualifications, including but not limited to birthdate
32 requirements, for admission to kindergarten and first grade programs
33 of the common schools. Such rules may provide for individualized
34 exceptions based upon the ability, or the need, or both, of an
35 individual student. Nothing in this section authorizes school
36 districts, public schools, or the superintendent of public
37 instruction to create state-funded programs based on entry
38 qualification exceptions except as otherwise expressly provided by
39 law.

1 (2) For the purpose of complying with any rule adopted by the
2 superintendent of public instruction that authorizes a preadmission
3 screening process as a prerequisite to granting individualized
4 exceptions to the uniform entry qualifications, a school district may
5 collect fees to cover expenses incurred in the administration of any
6 preadmission screening process: PROVIDED, That in so establishing
7 such fee or fees, the district shall adopt rules for waiving and
8 reducing such fees in the cases of those persons whose families, by
9 reason of their low income, would have difficulty in paying the
10 entire amount of such fees. Beginning with the 2026-27 school year,
11 rules providing for exceptions to the uniform entry qualifications
12 for kindergarten must limit early kindergarten admission to children
13 deemed by the local educational service district, using multiple
14 objective criteria, to be "likely to be successful in kindergarten."

15 (3) A student who meets the definition of a child of a military
16 family in transition under Article II of RCW 28A.705.010 shall be
17 permitted to continue enrollment at the grade level in the common
18 schools commensurate with the grade level of the student when
19 attending school in the sending state as defined in Article II of RCW
20 28A.705.010, regardless of age or birthdate requirements.

21 NEW SECTION. Sec. 5. A new section is added to chapter 43.216
22 RCW to read as follows:

23 (1) The department of children, youth, and families shall:

24 (a) Partner with the office of the superintendent of public
25 instruction to coordinate distribution of high quality early learning
26 programs across communities as described in section 2(2)(b) of this
27 act;

28 (b) Identify developmentally appropriate curricula for use in
29 transition to kindergarten programs and publish the list on the
30 department website; and

31 (c) Direct early learning providers to work in collaboration with
32 school districts authorized to offer a transition to kindergarten
33 program to promote coordinated systems of comprehensive early
34 childhood services.

35 (2) As used in this section, "transition to kindergarten program"
36 means the program established under section 2 of this act.

37 NEW SECTION. Sec. 6. A new section is added to chapter 43.216
38 RCW to read as follows:

1 The department must implement, in partnership with the office of
2 the superintendent of public instruction, a data system that uses a
3 single student identifier across all state-funded early learning,
4 elementary, and secondary education programs. The state-funded early
5 learning programs must be required to collect and submit to the data
6 system race and ethnicity data as described in RCW 28A.300.042(1).

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.300
8 RCW to read as follows:

9 The office of the superintendent of public instruction must
10 partner with the department of children, youth, and families to
11 implement the data system as required under section 6 of this act.

12 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** (1) The department of children, youth, and
13 families must make administrative changes to better align early
14 childhood education and assistance program implementation with school
15 district offered state-funded early learning programs serving three
16 through five-year-old children and must submit a report, in
17 compliance with RCW 43.01.036, of the changes to the appropriate
18 committees of the legislature by July 1, 2026.

19 (2) This section expires August 30, 2027.

20 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 9.** A new section is added to chapter 43.216
21 RCW to read as follows:

22 (1) A school district offering a transition to kindergarten
23 program under section 2 of this act must complete the following
24 activities to be eligible for state funding under section 2 of this
25 act:

26 (a) Enroll in the early achievers program within 30 days of being
27 authorized by the office of the superintendent of public instruction
28 to offer a transition to kindergarten program;

29 (b) Complete level 2 activities in the early achievers program
30 within 12 months of enrollment; and

31 (c) Rate or request to be rated at a level 3 or higher in the
32 early achievers program within 30 months of enrollment. If a school
33 district offering a transition to kindergarten program under section
34 2 of this act does not rate or request to be rated at a level 3
35 within 30 months from enrollment into the early achievers program,
36 the school district must complete remedial activities with the

1 department, and rate or request to be rated at a level 3 or higher
2 within 12 months of beginning remedial activities.

3 (2) If a school district offering a transition to kindergarten
4 program under section 2 of this act does not rate or request to be
5 rated at a level 3 or higher following the remedial period, the
6 school district is no longer eligible for state funding under section
7 2 of this act. If a school district offering a transition to
8 kindergarten program under section 2 of this act does not rate at a
9 level 3 or higher when the rating is released following the remedial
10 period, the school district is no longer eligible for state funding
11 under section 2 of this act. The initiation of the remedial period
12 serves as the one year of notice required under section 2 of this act
13 that the school district authorization to operate a transition to
14 kindergarten program will be discontinued or otherwise not provided
15 with state funding.

16 (3) If a school district offering a transition to kindergarten
17 program under section 2 of this act and receiving state funding under
18 section 2 of this act has successfully completed all level 2
19 activities and is waiting to be rated by the deadline provided in
20 this section, the school district may continue to receive state
21 funding under section 2 of this act pending the successful completion
22 of the level 3 rating activity.

23 **Sec. 10.** RCW 43.216.085 and 2021 c 304 s 6 are each amended to
24 read as follows:

25 (1) The department, in collaboration with tribal governments and
26 community and statewide partners, shall implement a quality rating
27 and improvement system, called the early achievers program. The early
28 achievers program provides a foundation of quality for the early care
29 and education system. The early achievers program is applicable to
30 licensed or certified child care centers, family home child care,
31 outdoor nature-based child care, and early learning programs such as
32 working connections child care (~~and~~), early childhood education and
33 assistance programs, and transition to kindergarten programs
34 established under section 2 of this act.

35 (2) The objectives of the early achievers program are to:

36 (a) Improve short-term and long-term educational outcomes for
37 children as measured by assessments including, but not limited to,
38 the Washington kindergarten inventory of developing skills in RCW
39 28A.655.080;

1 (b) Give parents clear and easily accessible information about
2 the quality of child care and early education programs;

3 (c) Support improvement in early learning and child care programs
4 throughout the state;

5 (d) Increase the readiness of children for school;

6 (e) Close the disparities in access to quality care;

7 (f) Provide professional development and coaching opportunities
8 to early child care and education providers; and

9 (g) Establish a common set of expectations and standards that
10 define, measure, and improve the quality of early learning and child
11 care settings.

12 (3)(a) Licensed or certified child care centers, family home
13 child care, and outdoor nature-based child care, serving nonschool-
14 age children and receiving state subsidy payments, must participate
15 in the early achievers program by the required deadlines established
16 in RCW 43.216.135.

17 (b) Approved early childhood education and assistance program
18 providers receiving state-funded support must participate in the
19 early achievers program by the required deadlines established in RCW
20 43.216.515.

21 (c) School districts authorized to provide a transition to
22 kindergarten program under section 2 of this act must participate in
23 the early achievers program by the required deadlines established in
24 section 9 of this act.

25 (d) Participation in the early achievers program is voluntary
26 for:

27 (i) Licensed or certified child care centers, family home child
28 care, and outdoor nature-based child care, not receiving state
29 subsidy payments; and

30 (ii) Early learning programs not receiving state funds.

31 (~~(d)~~) (e) School-age child care providers are exempt from
32 participating in the early achievers program. By July 1, 2017, the
33 department and the office of the superintendent of public instruction
34 shall jointly design a plan to incorporate school-age child care
35 providers into the early achievers program or other appropriate
36 quality improvement system. To test implementation of the early
37 achievers system for school-age child care providers the department
38 and the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall
39 implement a pilot program.

1 (4) (a) There are five primary levels in the early achievers
2 program.

3 (b) In addition to the primary levels, the department must
4 establish an intermediate level that is between level 3 and level 4
5 and serves to assist participants in transitioning to level 4.

6 (c) Participants are expected to actively engage and continually
7 advance within the program.

8 (5) The department has the authority to determine the rating
9 cycle for the early achievers program. The department shall
10 streamline and eliminate duplication between early achievers
11 standards and state child care rules in order to reduce costs
12 associated with the early achievers rating cycle and child care
13 licensing.

14 (a) Early achievers program participants may request to be rated
15 at any time after the completion of all level 2 activities.

16 (b) The department shall provide an early achievers program
17 participant an update on the participant's progress toward completing
18 level 2 activities after the participant has been enrolled in the
19 early achievers program for fifteen months.

20 (c) The first rating is free for early achievers program
21 participants.

22 (d) Each subsequent rating within the established rating cycle is
23 free for early achievers program participants.

24 (6) (a) Early achievers program participants may request to be
25 rerated outside the established rating cycle. A rerating shall reset
26 the rating cycle timeline for participants.

27 (b) The department may charge a fee for optional rerating
28 requests made by program participants that are outside the
29 established rating cycle.

30 (c) Fees charged are based on, but may not exceed, the cost to
31 the department for activities associated with the early achievers
32 program.

33 (7) (a) The department must create a single source of information
34 for parents and caregivers to access details on a provider's early
35 achievers program rating level, licensing history, and other
36 indicators of quality and safety that will help parents and
37 caregivers make informed choices. The licensing history that the
38 department must provide for parents and caregivers pursuant to this
39 subsection shall only include license suspension, surrender,
40 revocation, denial, stayed suspension, or reinstatement. No unfounded

1 child abuse or neglect reports may be provided to parents and
2 caregivers pursuant to this subsection.

3 (b) The department shall publish to the department's website, or
4 offer a link on its website to, the following information:

5 (i) Early achievers program rating levels 1 through 5 for all
6 child care programs that receive state subsidy, early childhood
7 education and assistance programs, transition to kindergarten
8 programs established under section 2 of this act, and federal head
9 start programs in Washington; and

10 (ii) New early achievers program ratings within thirty days after
11 a program becomes licensed or certified, or receives a rating.

12 (c) The early achievers program rating levels shall be published
13 in a manner that is easily accessible to parents and caregivers and
14 takes into account the linguistic needs of parents and caregivers.

15 (d) The department must publish early achievers program rating
16 levels for child care programs that do not receive state subsidy but
17 have voluntarily joined the early achievers program.

18 (e) Early achievers program participants who have published
19 rating levels on the department's website or on a link on the
20 department's website may include a brief description of their
21 program, contingent upon the review and approval by the department,
22 as determined by established marketing standards.

23 (8)(a) The department shall create a professional development
24 pathway for early achievers program participants to obtain a high
25 school diploma or equivalency or higher education credential in early
26 childhood education, early childhood studies, child development, or
27 an academic field related to early care and education.

28 (b) The professional development pathway must include
29 opportunities for scholarships and grants to assist early achievers
30 program participants with the costs associated with obtaining an
31 educational degree.

32 (c) The department shall address cultural and linguistic
33 diversity when developing the professional development pathway.

34 (9) The early achievers quality improvement awards shall be
35 reserved for participants offering programs to an enrollment
36 population consisting of at least five percent of children receiving
37 a state subsidy.

38 (10) In collaboration with tribal governments, community and
39 statewide partners, and the early achievers review subcommittee
40 created in RCW 43.216.075, the department shall develop a protocol

1 for granting early achievers program participants an extension in
2 meeting rating level requirement timelines outlined for the working
3 connections child care program and the early childhood education and
4 assistance program.

5 (a) The department may grant extensions only under exceptional
6 circumstances, such as when early achievers program participants
7 experience an unexpected life circumstance.

8 (b) Extensions shall not exceed six months, and early achievers
9 program participants are only eligible for one extension in meeting
10 rating level requirement timelines.

11 (c) Extensions may only be granted to early achievers program
12 participants who have demonstrated engagement in the early achievers
13 program.

14 (11)(a) The department shall accept national accreditation that
15 meets the requirements of this subsection (11) as a qualification for
16 the early achievers program ratings.

17 (b) Each national accreditation agency will be allowed to submit
18 its most current standards of accreditation to establish potential
19 credit earned in the early achievers program. The department shall
20 grant credit to accreditation bodies that can demonstrate that their
21 standards meet or exceed the current early achievers program
22 standards. By December 1, 2019, and subject to the availability of
23 amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the department must
24 submit a detailed plan to the governor and the legislature to
25 implement a robust cross-accreditation process with multiple pathways
26 that allows a provider to earn equivalent early achievers credit
27 resulting from accreditation by high quality national organizations.

28 (c) Licensed child care centers, child care home providers, and
29 outdoor nature-based child care must meet national accreditation
30 standards approved by the department for the early achievers program
31 in order to be granted credit for the early achievers program
32 standards. Eligibility for the early achievers program is not subject
33 to bargaining, mediation, or interest arbitration under RCW
34 41.56.028, consistent with the legislative reservation of rights
35 under RCW 41.56.028(4)(d).

36 (12) The department shall explore the use of alternative quality
37 assessment tools that meet the culturally specific needs of the
38 federally recognized tribes in the state of Washington.

39 (13) A child care or early learning program that is operated by a
40 federally recognized tribe and receives state funds shall participate

1 in the early achievers program. The tribe may choose to participate
2 through an interlocal agreement between the tribe and the department.
3 The interlocal agreement must reflect the government-to-government
4 relationship between the state and the tribe, including recognition
5 of tribal sovereignty. The interlocal agreement must provide that:

6 (a) Tribal child care facilities and early learning programs may
7 volunteer, but are not required, to be licensed by the department;

8 (b) Tribal child care facilities and early learning programs are
9 not required to have their early achievers program rating level
10 published to the department's website or through a link on the
11 department's website; and

12 (c) Tribal child care facilities and early learning programs must
13 provide notification to parents or guardians who apply for or have
14 been admitted into their program that early achievers program rating
15 level information is available and provide the parents or guardians
16 with the program's early achievers program rating level upon request.

17 (14) The department shall consult with the early achievers review
18 subcommittee on all substantial policy changes to the early achievers
19 program.

20 (15) Nothing in this section changes the department's
21 responsibility to collectively bargain over mandatory subjects or
22 limits the legislature's authority to make programmatic modifications
23 to licensed child care and early learning programs under RCW
24 41.56.028(4)(d).

25 **Sec. 11.** RCW 43.216.655 and 2019 c 369 s 7 are each amended to
26 read as follows:

27 (1) The education data center established in RCW 43.41.400 must
28 collect longitudinal, student-level data on all children attending an
29 early childhood education and assistance program. Upon completion of
30 an electronic time and attendance record system, the education data
31 center must collect longitudinal, student-level data on all children
32 attending a working connections child care program. Beginning
33 September 1, 2026, the education data center must collect
34 longitudinal, student-level data on all children attending a
35 transition to kindergarten program under section 2 of this act. Data
36 collected should capture at a minimum the following characteristics:

37 (a) Daily program attendance;

38 (b) Identification of classroom and teacher;

39 (c) Early achievers program quality level rating;

1 (d) Program hours;
2 (e) Program duration;
3 (f) Developmental results from the Washington kindergarten
4 inventory of developing skills in RCW 28A.655.080; and
5 (g) To the extent data is available, the distinct ethnic
6 categories within racial subgroups of children and providers that
7 align with categories recognized by the education data center.

8 (2) The department shall provide early learning providers
9 student-level data collected pursuant to this section that are
10 specific to the early learning provider's program. Upon completion of
11 an electronic time and attendance record system identified in
12 subsection (1) of this section, the department shall provide child
13 care providers student-level data that are specific to the child care
14 provider's program.

15 (3) The department shall review available research and best
16 practices literature on cultural competency in early learning
17 settings. The department shall review the K-12 components for
18 cultural competency developed by the professional educator standards
19 board and identify components appropriate for early learning
20 professional development.

21 (4)(a) The Washington state institute for public policy shall
22 conduct a longitudinal analysis examining relationships between the
23 early achievers program quality ratings levels and outcomes for
24 children participating in subsidized early care and education
25 programs.

26 (b) The institute shall submit the first report to the
27 appropriate committees of the legislature and the early learning
28 advisory council by December 31, 2019. The institute shall submit
29 subsequent reports annually to the appropriate committees of the
30 legislature and the early learning advisory council by December 31st,
31 with the final report due December 31, 2022. The final report shall
32 include a cost-benefit analysis.

33 (5) By December 31, 2021, and subject to the availability of
34 amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the Washington state
35 institute for public policy shall update the outcome evaluation of
36 the early childhood education and assistance program required by
37 chapter 16, Laws of 2013 and report to the governor and the
38 legislature on the outcomes of program participants. The evaluation
39 must include the demographics of program participants including race,
40 ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. The evaluation must examine

1 short and long-term impacts on program participants, including high
2 school graduation rates for up to two cohorts. When conducting the
3 evaluation, the institute must consider, to the extent that data is
4 available, the education levels and demographics, including race,
5 ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, of early childhood education and
6 assistance program staff and the effects of full-day programming and
7 half-day programming on outcomes.

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 12.** If specific funding for the purposes of
9 this act, referencing this act by bill or chapter number, is not
10 provided by June 30, 2025, in the omnibus appropriations act, this
11 act is null and void.

--- END ---