

High Priority:
Early Care and Education of Young
Children
Birth to Five

September 2005

Produced by the League of Women Voters of Seattle

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September Unit Agenda

1. Introductions
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Discussion Questions:

1. What experiences did you, your family, or your friends have in finding child care for children?
2. The quality of an early learning program is key to its success. There are several approaches to improving quality. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each of the following:
 - a) quality rating systems for child care programs
 - b) increased wages for child care professionals
 - c) tiered reimbursements for programs whose children are subsidized by local or state government.
3. What are the various ways that public funds can be used to support school readiness programs?
4. What are your priorities for LWVS action on early learning?

Consensus Question:

1. The League of Women Voters of Seattle's current position on early childhood programs states: *Support the use of public funds for programs designed to meet the cognitive, physical and social education, parental involvement, health and nutrition services and social services needs of children in their early years: from birth through age eight.* Do you reaffirm the current positions related to early childhood programs?

League of Women Voters of Seattle Position on Early Childhood Programs

- *Support the use of public funds for programs designed to meet the cognitive, physical and social education, parental involvement, health and nutrition services and social services needs of children in their early years-from birth through age eight. 1990*

A. The goal of early childhood education programs is to serve all children in our community who could benefit from quality programs, regardless of income, with sliding scale fees where appropriate. An interim goal is to increase funding and expand programs so as to serve more of the children in greatest need of early childhood programs and services.

B. Responsibility for meeting the developmental and educational needs of children from birth through age eight is shared between the family and society. Federal, state, local government and school districts should bear varying degrees of responsibility for ensuring the availability, accessibility and quality of early childhood programs. Municipal governments and school districts should take the lead in working together to improve coordination of programs for young children in the community.

C. The elements which are most critical in bringing about the changes needed to achieve quality early childhood programs are adequate, stable funding and parental involvement. Public education is essential; community and corporate support are desirable and should be sought.

A quality early childhood program is characterized by:

- Appropriate adult-child ratio
- Staff well trained in child development and adequately compensated
- Primary emphasis on meeting children's individual needs
- Parental support (access and hours) and involvement

I. AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

In 1990, the League of Women Voters of Seattle conducted a study on early childhood education programs in the Seattle area. The study discussed federal, state and local programs that provided preschool education to area children. It identified curriculum, training and funding as key issues in the provision of quality care and education. Though progress has been made in the last fifteen years in raising public awareness of the importance of these issues, training of child care workers and funding of child care programs are still the key issues to be resolved.

In the intervening years, early care and education of children birth to five has been identified as a hot topic in business, education and governmental arenas. In 2004, the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce looked at a whole range of issues that could improve our community, decided on early learning as a key issue, and formed the Business Partnership for Early Learning. In 2003, the national Business Roundtable put out a call to action for early childhood education stating that high quality early childhood education can close the gap that exists between high and low income children in their preparation for kindergarten. (Business Roundtable, Call to Action p. 1)

State and local governments across the country are devoting more dollars to the provision of early care and education programs. In Washington State, former Governor Locke established the Commission on Early Learning in 1998 to focus on the importance of early learning and the quality of care needed to develop young learners. In Seattle, the Families and Education Levy passed in 2004 nearly tripled the amount of funds allocated to early learning over the 1997 levy. In 2005 Governor Gregoire is overseeing a financing study of pre-kindergarten through college, and the legislature established an Early Learning Council similar to councils that exist for higher education.

What is going on? Three main things have happened since 1990: 1) more families have come to need care, 2) brain research on the learning capacity of babies and young children has shown that attention to learning should begin earlier and 3) research has shown that quality preschools provide a big return on investment in the education and development of young children.

Following discussion of these changes in section II, the study will look at what is happening in the whole system of care and education of children from birth to five, particularly in King County (section III). In section IV we identify key strategies needed to increase the quality of early learning programs. As funding is also a critical issue, in section V we outline various proposals that focus on ensuring that funding is available so that all children are ready for school. Ensuring that children are ready for kindergarten has become a very important goal for child care providers, thus in sections V and VI we include a survey of programs for parents and caregivers, and programs that focus on school readiness.

Early care and education of children is a huge topic, and our study does not cover everything. Our goal is to provide members with a basic understanding of the issues involved in the provision of early care and education and to determine the role of the League of Women Voters of Seattle in this arena.

II. CHANGES IMPACTING CHILD CARE

Child Care in a Changing Economy

“The times, they are a changing” – and since 1990 the thrust of change has been to make it ever more imperative that society provide high quality, accessible and affordable early care and education programs. The following is an overview of changes which impact the upbringing of young children.

The Changing Family: Today, 68% of children birth to five have employed parents, which means that the demand for early childhood care has grown in the last twenty years. Because this demand generally occurs before parents reach their peak earning years, affordability is a factor for most families – exacerbated by the fact that 33% of children birth to five years have a sibling in that same age range who also needs care. Of course, income level is important in determining what options for care and education are available to a given family.

Recognizing that poverty is the greatest predictor of school failure, our 1990 study gave considerable emphasis to programs serving children. Since then, the 1996 Welfare Reform Act has pushed more parents, generally mothers with limited education

and skills, into the workplace. This change increased the demand by low income families for early care and education options.

Since our 1990 study, the number of families who receive child care subsidies from DSHS has more than tripled – to about 97,800 per month in 2005. DSHS subsidizes child care for families with incomes of 200% or less of the federal poverty level. Statewide, in 2004 about 15,300 three to five year olds from low income families were enrolled in either Head Start or Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP), which are both licensed high quality programs providing comprehensive services focusing on: education, health, social services, and parent involvement. The percentage of low income children in licensed facilities is higher than that of the general population overall. (Economic Opportunity Institute; *Beyond the Mandate*, p. 38)

Since our previous study, middle and lower income families have come under pressure from stagnant wages, longer working hours, and shorter vacations. These families report feeling squeezed in many ways; one is that both parents must work outside the home to make ends meet, but the wages they bring in often cannot cover high quality child care – especially if it's needed for more than one child. The providers of early childhood care and learning themselves fall into the low to moderate income bracket. A Montessori preschool teacher about to have her second child says: "It's crazy that I can teach children and not be able to afford paying for my own children to get the same kind of education. It's an awesome program, but it's really expensive – you could probably do it with one child, but paying for two at about \$1,600 a month is way too expensive on my salary as a toddler teacher." (Rowe-Finkbeiner, p. 161)

The Changing Economy: Societies tend to produce the kinds of adults they need. It now appears, as we enter the information age and construct a global economy that the United States needs, and will continue to need, a more highly educated adult populace than ever before. The jobs we envision will require verbal, numerical, and computer literacy, and citizenship at the global level will require historical literacy, cultural sensitivity, and language proficiency. Now, and for the foreseeable future, we expect record numbers of young adults to go to college. Although extra effort can allow students to catch up at any level, the best guarantor of success at a higher level is

good preparation earlier; thus college success builds on high school prep, which builds on middle school prep, which builds on grade school prep...all the way down to kindergarten which, more and more, is seen to build on school readiness developed in the first five years of life.

Recent Brain Research Shows Learning Begins at Birth

Research in recent years has brought remarkable changes in the understanding of the growth and development of an infant's brain. A child's capacity for learning was formerly viewed as an empty box which parents and teachers filled with knowledge and skills as she/he matured. Recent studies have indicated that the child is born with 100 billion neurons (nerve cells), which is essentially the number in the adult brain. The newborn brain is about 80% of the size of the adult brain, and the five year old brain is 90% the size of the adult brain. The brain does grow after birth, but it does not add many neurons. It is the connections between the neurons that creates what we perceive as capacity for learning. The number of dendrites and synapses, or connections, and myelin (insulation between nerves) will increase exponentially under the stimulus of use.

The concept that the brain has an amazing capacity to increase its ability in response to stimulus and use, rather than a preset ability according to its genetics, has resulted in a big change in the approach to understanding its function. The brain has amazing "plasticity," as this ability has been described. Work at numbers of institutions and universities has shown that the fetal brain at birth has been programmed to respond to sound, vision, touch, and the human face, even though it has never been exposed to vision, probably only muffled sound, and has never seen a human face.

Some of the most outstanding research in brain development has been done here in Seattle at the Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences, established by Drs. Andrew Meltzoff and Pat Kuhl. Dr. Meltzoff established that within minutes after birth the child will already focus its vision preferentially on the human face, and it will mimic the actions of the observer's face even though it has never seen its own face.

Dr. Kuhl has done extensive studies of sound recognitions and language development. Within the first year a child can recognize and differentiate all the sounds that occur in human language. Tremendous learning takes place during the first year, even though the child does not have the speech to reflect it. She has well documented the importance of conversation and reading to young children and demonstrated the inadequacy of television as a source of education in the early years of childhood.

Investing in Preschool Brings Big Dividends

One study of the results of an early childhood preschool program experiment is the High/Scope Perry Preschool study (Perry program). This study identifies both the short- and long-term effects of a high quality preschool education program for young children living in poverty. It includes a cost-benefit analysis of the program. (High/Scope Perry Preschool Study, Schweinhart)

From 1962 through 1967 the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation conducted the Perry program in the Ypsilanti, Michigan school district. The program started with a sample of 123 African-American children who were assessed to be at high risk of school failure. It then randomly assigned 58 of them to a program group that received a high quality preschool program at ages three and four and 65 of them to another group that received no preschool program. Because of the random assignment strategy, these children's preschool experience is the best explanation for subsequent group differences in their performance over many years. Project staff collected data annually on both groups from ages 3 - 11 and again at ages 14, 15, 19, 27, and 40, with a missing data rate of only 6% across all measures. After each period of data collection, staff analyzed the information and wrote a comprehensive official report. The study has produced eight monographs over the years.

The Perry program included a cost-benefit analysis of its results by comparing the future performance of those in the preschool program with the performance of those who were not. The findings of program effects through age forty cover the children's experiences in the areas of education, economic performance, crime, social services, family relationships and health. This analysis showed an economic return to society due

to the Perry preschool program that was calculated to be \$258,888 per participant on an investment of \$15,166 per participant - a \$17.07 return per each dollar invested. (In constant 2000 dollars.)

III. THE EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION SYSTEM

Introduction

Early care and education refer to the care and education of children from birth to five. The settings in which this takes place encompass a wide range of options from parental care, informal care of friends, family and neighbors (FFN), part or full time licensed centers, licensed and unlicensed family day care homes, preschools, or pre-kindergarten programs. While early care and education providers have been concerned with the development of children in their care, there is a new emphasis on school readiness. This change is based on research which demonstrates that almost half of all children are not ready for kindergarten. The achievement gap has become the preparation gap, especially for low income and immigrant students. Students who fall behind in kindergarten are less likely to succeed later on in school and beyond.

Choices for Child Care

While about half of all parents take care of their children (age birth to five) at home, many parents need to depend on some type of child care provided by other people. There are numerous choices for parents. Below is a brief description of the main types of care. (Information primarily from Child Care Resources reports and web site.)

Child Care Centers: Centers provide both full-time and part-time care. Children are grouped according to their ages. Many take infants and provide care through pre-kindergarten. Because their staffs are large, centers offer a dependable type of care, seldom having to close unexpectedly. However, a major problem of centers is retaining staff, so there can be instability in care for a child.

Family Child Care Homes: In this type of care, a person provides child care in the home. Family child care homes provide services similar to those in a child care center. Children are in mixed age settings, and

the size of the group is usually smaller than at a child care center. Children deal with fewer adults than in a center, yet the down side is that if the provider is sick, the home may be closed for a day. Family homes are the most available type of care in a community and are often less expensive than child care centers.

Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) Care: This type of care is provided by relatives, friends or other unregulated caregivers in the neighborhood or community where parents live or work. Many families may use this as their primary care or use it in addition to more licensed care. FFN providers of this care tend to have less knowledge of early childhood development. As detailed later in the study, there are a number of efforts underway in King County to help FFN caregivers.

Preschool Care: There are numerous types of preschools which generally are for children ages three to five: parent cooperative preschools operated by parents with assistance of a local community college; Montessori preschools; Head Start, a federally funded program; ECEAP, a Washington State supported preschool program; licensed preschools; and playgroups - informal arrangements made by groups of families. Preschools tend to be part-time, either a few hours a day or a few days a week.

Pre-Kindergarten Programs: This type of program is usually for four and five year olds and can be part of a preschool, a child care center, or operated by a school district. ECEAP is essentially a pre-k program although it does have some three year old children enrolled.

In Home Care with a Nanny: Nannies are individuals who come to the home. Some may live with the family; others come during the day or at times when the family needs care. Families can hire people informally or can use an agency to find a nanny.

Access Issues

In some surveys, up to 11% of families cannot find care or find the type of care they want. Infant care is the hardest to find because of the limited availability of slots. The cost of care is a major issue for many families. They may not be able to afford any care or the quality of care they would like. In fact, the cost of child care is greater than tuition at the University of

Washington. Workers who need evening or weekend care face very limited availability of care. Quality of care is another major issue especially around concerns with staff ratios, staff competence, and the type of activities provided. Parents with special needs children have unique needs that are hard to meet. For non English speakers, finding caregivers that speak their language or have some sensitivity to culture issues is very hard. However, there is a program developed by Child Care Resources that helps immigrant women become child care providers.

Child Care Resources (CCR): This agency provides child care resource and referral services in King County. Across the state there are 18 programs that provide these services. CCR helps families access and choose high quality child and after school care; they work with providers to improve the quality of child care, early learning and after school programs; and they advocate for children, parents and child care providers. In 2004, CCR staff responded to 17,000 calls from people seeking information and assistance. They also provided training for providers and worked with others to advocate for quality care. CCR was a great source of information and help to the study committee.

IV. THE QUALITY OF CHILD CARE IS CRITICAL TO SUCCESS

Introduction

In the studies done on the success of early learning programs, the key phrase is *high quality*. The Seattle League's position on early childhood programs states that a quality early childhood program is characterized by an appropriate adult-child ratio, adequately compensated staff well trained in child development, developmentally appropriate curriculum and activities, primary emphasis on meeting individual needs of children, and parental support. How do parents determine if a program is high quality? What efforts are going on to raise the quality of programs? How can a program have high quality if it depends on governmental reimbursements which are not sufficient to pay staff adequately?

Four ongoing efforts to raise the quality of care are discussed below. These are: 1) help for child care centers to be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC);

2) development of a quality rating system to help parents in choosing care; 3) higher governmental reimbursements for higher quality of care (tiered reimbursements) and 4) support for child care teachers to get more education and higher wages.

Accreditation

Accreditation by a highly reputable nationally recognized organization is viewed as a mark of a program's quality. A 2002 Rand study, *Examining the Cost of Military Childcare*, found that the process of accreditation resulted in a number of positive effects for children: more child-initiated activities, higher staff morale, better equipment, improved learning centers, and more culturally diverse curricula. (Champions for Children brochure) NAEYC accredits child care centers nationwide, but only 10% of all centers are actually accredited. The program is voluntary and consists of an extensive self-study by the center's staff and parents to identify areas for improvement, a visit by the NAEYC staff to validate the program, and then a review by national experts who determine if the center should receive accreditation. Accreditation is for three years. Key criteria are staff qualifications, staff-child ratios, materials appropriate to age of children, and teachers' relationship with the children. The National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) also has an accreditation program for family home care.

In King County, Child Care Resources (CCR), helps local centers move toward accreditation. It provides basic information and support to any center that wants to work toward accreditation. Eligible centers may apply to CCR to receive enhanced support services which could include more financial support for the process. CCR staff helps the center staff determine the type and amount of support needed to complete the accreditation project. The accreditation process costs money which many centers cannot afford. CCR estimates it takes from \$5,000-8,000 per center to provide this "enhanced support," excluding the costs of CCR staff which are donated.

One of the goals of Project Lift-Off, a community initiative begun in 1998, was to use accreditation as the primary strategy for improving quality. In 2001 the Champions for Children, a public/private partnership collaboration, took on the goal to increase the number of children who are in accredited programs. At that time only 10% or 59 of the King County's licensed

child care centers were accredited. Currently 14% or 79 are accredited, with others in the process. The increased level of support needed to bring centers up to accreditation was provided primarily by private foundations and the city of Seattle.

Quality Rating Systems

A quality rating system is used to evaluate the quality of early care and education programs. It can be used by parents to compare various providers as the rating system gives a "report card" on the provider. It can also be used as a benchmark for providers in their efforts to improve the quality of their programs. Quality systems can be tied to tiered reimbursement systems to provide increased funding to higher quality programs.

Across the country, states are looking at setting up quality rating systems. Most are voluntary, a few are mandatory. The number of levels (or stars) runs from two to five. Providers who participate are evaluated annually to determine their quality level. The assessment would include a quality improvement plan to help providers get to the next step. Any system would have to include funding to help providers implement strategies to get them to a higher level, particularly if the top level is national accreditation. Currently, the King County Funders Alliance, a public/private partnership, is exploring the development of a quality rating system that could be piloted in several venues around the state.

Tiered Reimbursements

Tiered reimbursement is a strategy to reward higher quality child care centers and family homes that accept children who are publicly subsidized. States or local governments provide higher rates of reimbursement if the centers or homes go beyond the basic licensing requirements. Some reimbursement systems have just two levels, basic licensing and national accreditation. Others include steps between these two levels. The reimbursement systems can also be an aide to parents in understanding the quality of a provider. (Overview of Tiered Reimbursements, nccic.org)

The City of Seattle had a pilot reimbursement project, STEPS, in operation from October 2001 to December 2002. The purpose of the program was to determine how a tiered reimbursement system, along with financial and technical assistance, would

improve quality of care by providers who serve children subsidized by the City of Seattle. The project provided a tiered reimbursement system that had incentives for providers to make progress towards accreditation. There were four steps. Step one was basic licensing. Step two involved instituting a wage ladder and/or benefits package for staff and beginning the accreditation process. Step three included further progress in the accreditation process, and Step four was achieving accreditation and a wage ladder and benefit package. The program also provided financial and technical support to help providers meet these standards. (Steps to Quality Evaluation Report, p. 3)

The evaluation, done with the assistance of the University of Washington, showed providers made progress at improving the quality of their programs. Bonuses were used primarily for training and supplies, the implication being that the bonuses were not sufficient nor predictable enough to support raising teacher salaries to attract or retain staff. Because of the limited number of providers who participated, the evaluation stated that a wider implementation of the STEPS program is needed to significantly contribute to higher quality of care for subsidized children. Currently there is another pilot program in Spokane, funded by DSHS, which began in 2004 and will run until December 2006. It involves both family homes and child care centers. One issue that is not addressed by either pilot program is the level of existing state and local subsidies. These programs build on a basic level of reimbursement from the state, and it is clear that the current subsidy level is not sufficient to cover basic costs for providers. (See section on State subsidies.)

Career and Wage Ladder Projects

“The most essential components of quality early learning and care are the commitment, education, experience and continuity of the teacher.” (Burbank and Moon, Early Childhood Career and Wage Ladder, policy brief, p.4) The report states that in 2003 the average hourly wage for a child care worker in Washington State was \$8.56 while a parking lot attendant was paid \$9.71. Because of low wages, one fifth of child care workers in our state quit their jobs every three months (1998-2000). Constant turnover of teachers affects the quality of care and the relationships of children with caring adults.

To counteract the problem of high turnover due to low wages, the state piloted a career and wage ladder model for three years. A primary goal of the pilot was to create financial incentives for child care staff to gain greater academic and professional education. At the end of the program, staff that was in the program had higher levels of education than those who were not. Many continued their education, acquiring a CDA (Child Development Associate) or an AA in Early Childhood education. A child care worker in this program in Burlington, Washington said, “As our staff gets more education, they become better teachers and now have the financial reward associated with increased training.” (Marilyn Gibbs, Cascade Early Learning Center brief, p.1)

Another goal was to retain staff for a longer period. The evaluation of the program found that staff at centers in the program stayed longer. Tiny Tots, a child care program in South Seattle, participated in the pilot. Angie Maxie, the director, said the program was successful in that 90% of her staff got more education. However, when the pilot ended, she was unable to continue to pay the higher salaries, and many staff left for better opportunities.

While the pilot Career and Wage Ladder program demonstrated positive benefits of child care staff getting more education, the program was not funded beyond 2003. The 2005 legislature created a statutory framework and authorization for a career ladder but without funds to support it.

V. ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY GO HAND IN HAND

Introduction

Early care and education costs have risen faster than inflation. In the period 2000-02 in King County, child care center costs for infants rose 8.8% and for school age children 15.2% while the CPI (Consumer Price Index) was 6.5%. In 2004, median costs for full-time child care at a center in King County were: \$11,856 for infants, \$9,724 for toddlers, \$8,196 for preschoolers, and \$4,618 for school aged children. Family home child care generally costs less, especially for infants. Child care costs as a percent of median income ranges from 14% to 19%. For other children, the costs range from 8% to 16%, depending on whether

parents choose a center or family home. With a greater emphasis on quality, one can see that costs are going up and families' ability to pay is going down. Currently, only 25% of all child care providers' total costs are paid by subsidies. Access to good, quality care is problematic for all income classes except for upper income families.

There are state and local subsidies that help low income parents. Business may provide some help to parents with their child care costs. The State of Washington provides roughly 98,700 slots to parents who fall under 200% of the federal poverty level, about one third of all children in child care. The City of Seattle also provides subsidies to parents who fall between 200-300% of the poverty level. Bellevue and some other suburban cities also provide subsidies or scholarships to families.

Some school districts themselves are providing pre-kindergarten programs for three and four year olds. (Burbank, Strategic Pathways, p.7-8) In a survey done in 2004, The Economic Opportunity Institute found that 115 districts operated pre-kindergarten programs and 56 offered support to non-school district early learning programs such as Head Start and ECEAP. Bellevue provides preschool at half of its elementary schools, most of which are tuition funded. Other school districts use I-728 funds to provide some pre-kindergarten and full day kindergarten.

Across the country, states have been working on ways to provide more early care and education for all families. One approach is the provision of "universal preschool for three and four year olds." Preschool is either free or based on a sliding scale to all children who want it. Most of the funding comes from state governments. Another approach, proposed by the Human Services Policy Center (HSPC) at the UW, is to create a funding model similar to higher education. The state would pay a base amount, low income families would get subsidies, and others would pay according to their income. It is aimed at providing support for middle income families who do not get subsidies or do not have the income to afford quality early care and education.

Three funding mechanisms that would reduce the cost of early care and education programs for many families are described below.

State and Local Subsidy Programs

State and local subsidy programs provide subsidies to many low income families. Without these subsidies, many families couldn't afford child care and would be at greater risk of being unable to work to support their families or would have to settle for lower quality care.

City of Seattle Comprehensive Child Care Program: For over 30 years, the City of Seattle has helped families find and pay for child care in the city. Currently, the city funds the Comprehensive Child Care program (CCCCP) at \$1.8 million a year. Families with incomes from 200-300% of federal poverty level are eligible for child care subsidies. In addition to subsidies, the program works with providers to improve the quality of care. Child care consultants from Shoreline Community College work on site with providers to help them improve curricula, classroom environments and activities. Parents also have access to information and referral services of the program through Child Care Resources. Up to 660 children are assisted and there is a waiting list of close to 300 families. The number of children served represent somewhere between 25-35% of the eligible children.

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS): State subsidies for child care are used primarily by women who are in the Work First program which helps people get off welfare. Participants are required to work or be in a training program, and thus many need child care. Working families whose income is at or below 200% of federal poverty level are eligible for DSHS subsidized child care. In 2005, 97,852 children received DSHS subsidies. In 2000 the DSHS subsidies were ample enough to cover fees at 58% of child care facilities. Since then, inflation and costs for care providers have risen faster than the subsidies, so that in 2005 the fees of only 25% of centers and 31% of family homes are fully covered by the subsidies. The low subsidy rates limit the options for parents looking for care. The subsidies were raised by the 2005 legislature, but not enough to significantly raise the percentage of providers whose fees are covered by them.

Universal Preschool/Pre-Kindergarten

The Committee on Economic Development, a national business group, states that the goal for federal and state governments should be “to ensure that all children have the opportunity to enter school ready to learn” through “*universal access to free, high-quality pre-kindergarten classes*, offered by a variety of providers, for all children whose parents want them to participate.” (CED, Preschool for All, p. 1)

There are three ways that states offer pre-k programs. They allow public schools to offer pre-k, they expand Head Start or provide their own pre-k program such as ECEAP in Washington State, or they create distinct programs for children under five. In 2002, 45 states invested over \$2 billion in preschool programs. (Anne Mitchell. Pre-Kindergarten Programs, p.1)

Georgia and Oklahoma have a state funded universal pre-k that currently serves 60% of their four year olds. New York, Massachusetts, California, Illinois, and North Carolina are some of the 38 states working on developing programs state wide or for certain counties. Programs are in both public school and high quality child care centers, and the trend is to create a community wide system of early learning that efficiently uses all resources. There is also a commitment to improve the quality of care and education through use of program standards, higher staff qualifications, and national accreditation. Funding limitations due to state budget restraints is the main reason that these states cannot cover more children. (Anne Mitchell, Education Links, p.1)

In 2004, the failed Initiative 884 in Washington State would have provided increased state funding for pre- kindergarten programs for an additional 10,000 four year olds. While the initiative didn't pass, it does represent the latest effort in Washington State to expand the number of children who attend early learning programs.

Parent and Provider Assistance Package- Human Services Policy Center

The HSPC model, Parent and Provider Assistance Package, is similar to the funding structure of higher education. Federal, state or local government funding would provide subsidies to providers for up to 55% of their costs. Parents would get financial assistance

depending on their income with help going primarily to low and middle income families. The model was developed in conjunction with four states with each state modifying the model to fit its unique situation. The focus of the model was to help middle income families that currently get little help in paying for quality care for children from birth to five.

The outcome of the model is an hourly cost per child based on quality indicators. Those indicators are the child-adult ratio, the qualifications for the teachers (both experience and education), and the career ladder costs. Assistance would go to any provider who meets the quality standards. This assistance would be for centers, family homes, or the family-friend-neighbor caregiver. (HSPC, Orchestrating Access, p. 9) The choice of provider would be determined by parent choice, not costs.

With either of these choices, universal pre-k or the hybrid model from HSPC, funds from all three levels of governments would have to increase to pay for the additional costs related to quality improvements and expanded access.

VI. PROGRAMS FOR PARENTS

Introduction

In King County, children receive their care from 3 main groups: parents; family, friends and neighbors (FFN); and center or family home based care. A random household survey by the Seattle King County Health Department as part of Communities Care found that 11% of parents surveyed could not find licensed care. (Child Care Report 2002 by CCR). Close to two thirds of children are cared for by parents or FFN in a home setting. There are a number of efforts underway in King County to help both parents and FFN in the care and education of children. We have identified four programs that demonstrate the variety of ways that parents can receive information and assistance in the raising of their children; these are discussed below.

Talaris Institute and Its Programs

The goal of the Talaris Research Institute is to bring research-based information to parents and caregivers about how children develop from birth to age five. They have an informative web site

which gives a timeline of child development in the different domains of development: social/emotional, cognitive, language, sensory and motor development. Their *Parenting Counts* project is a multimedia project with public television. There are TV spots that focus on important messages to parents about child development, informational brochures, and early learning workshops for parents and caregivers. Talaris has partnered with John Gottman, a nationally recognized expert, to produce brochures on the five steps of Emotion Coaching. Talaris is an active participant in many of the early learning projects in King County such as the Getting School Ready program and the King County Action Agenda.

Parent-Child Home Program

The Parent-Child Home Program is an early literacy and parenting program serving low income families with two to three year olds. The program began in New York in 1965, but started in Seattle in November 2004 at The Atlantic Street Center which operates the program through its Rainier Beach Family Center – a multifaceted social service agency. The program serves 17 families; in the fall a second “class” of 20 families will be added. Initially the participating families were recruited through five schools in the area, but increasingly participation is generated by word-of-mouth. The program, which has an average cost of \$325.00 per family per month, is offered without charge to low income families.

The parent-child home visit format is simple: the staff make twice weekly visits to the homes of two - three year old children for ten months a year, for two years. Initially they provide the participating child with a toy box, and on the first visit of each week they give the child a new book or developmental toy (e.g. blocks, puzzles) which the child may keep. During the first weekly visit the staffer engages the child with the book or toy while the parent observes. Then the staffer talks with the parent about how to use the book or toy, and leaves a sheet of instructions about using it – for instance, if a book has been about a yellow bus, then a suggestion might be made to identify yellow objects in the house. On the second visit of the week the parent reads the book or plays with the toy with the child. The hoped for outcomes are increased parent-child verbal interaction, and thus enhanced school readiness on the part of the child.

The Parent-Child Home Visit program has other Seattle boosters. The newly formed Business Partnership for Early Learning hopes to support this program. The Early Learning Networks supported by the Seattle Families and Education Levy will also include the parent-child home visits as part of its program. Both of these projects are described later in the study.

Play and Learn Groups

Another program aimed at parents and caregivers is Play and Learn Groups. It is for children from birth to five and is based on a State of Hawaii program. It began in the Seattle area in the summer of 2004. Currently, the program is active in the south end of Seattle and at the Garfield Community Center. The program is free to participants and is funded by the SOAR Opportunity Fund and a number of private foundations and is being coordinated by Child Care Resources.

This drop-in program is aimed at the many FFN caregivers who tend to be isolated in their homes. Usually there are two facilitators, one for the children and one for the adults. It provides caregivers with information and resources for caring for their children in a friendly and non threatening way. The program is held twice a week for a couple of hours. The first hour is usually a gymnasium based physical program. The second hour is a creative program of crafts, storytelling, and music. Usual attendance is five to fifteen children and adults. This is another program supported by the Business Partnership for Early Learning.

Library Services

The Seattle Public Library conducts preschool story time (three - five years) in all of its branches, and a few have toddler (birth - three years) groups. The main library has both programs with very high enrollments. There are twelve daycares in the downtown area, seven of which regularly bring their children to the library. The combined count of adults and children at the toddler group is 60-80 people.

The library is currently inaugurating a Lap Sit Class for parents and children one year old or younger. This is essentially a parent education class. It is being developed at the main library with the expectation

it will eventually be offered at the branches. Each quarter, fifteen adults will be enrolled for four sessions on how to use books in early childhood to promote reading readiness. Material on brain research and developmental stages is part of the curriculum. Other library programs that enhance early learning include information on other parenting programs, a summer reading program for children, and a Dial-A Story number (386-4656) on which one can hear a story read. While this is primarily for older children, it can provide a model for parents on how to read a story.

VII. SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAMS IN KING COUNTY

Introduction

Much research has shown that school readiness is a significant factor in success or failure in school and in life. Children who enter kindergarten unprepared for school are more likely to fail or repeat grades, require special education classes and/or drop out. Children who are unprepared for school lag behind from the beginning and rarely catch up in school. Programs that help with school readiness are primarily for children three to five years old.

What is School Readiness?

What are the indicators of school readiness and how can they be achieved? These are the issues to be addressed by parents, child care programs, and by K-12 educators. Consensus, based upon much research, suggests that school readiness can be measured in five distinct but connected areas: physical health and motor development; social and emotional development; approaches to learning, language development and cognition; and general knowledge. Washington State has developed benchmarks covering all these areas, providing a common set of indicators to be used by parents and caregivers in their efforts to have children ready for school. The benchmarks are linked to the Washington State Essential Academic Learning Requirements.

Among the factors involved in physical health for the child are good prenatal care, high-quality health and dental care, good nutrition, and early intervention for children at greatest risk and protection from injury.

Stimulating learning environments are essential for healthy social and emotional development and for language and cognitive development. Children living in homes where reading and writing are frequent activities have greater success with reading when they start school. Children who are read to have better language development, reading achievement, and emotional development. Those who work with children and families should advise parents to read to children daily, have conversations with children and limit TV use. There is evidence that children who watch TV more than three hours a day have the lowest level of math proficiency. Parents who interact with children by talking, questioning, singing and playing are helping their children to develop their capacity to learn.

Early care and education programs that promote social, emotional and cognitive development are an essential part of any school readiness plan. Providers of child care and early education use practices and curricula that foster social, emotional and cognitive development. They engage children as active learners, providing opportunities for responsive interaction with adults, and providing a literacy rich environment.

Other school readiness factors include access of the family to services that prevent social isolation and child abuse. Living in supportive neighborhoods and a family-friendly environment also improve school readiness for children. Schools must be ready to support the learning and development of every child in the school in its community. Staff need to be aware of and supportive of the diverse cultural and language backgrounds of the children they serve.

Programs that focus on School Readiness

This section describes programs that focus on school readiness. Out of home care for these children can be at licensed family child care homes, child care centers, FFN, or preschool programs. Head Start, a national program, and ECEAP, the Washington State program for three - four year olds, provide comprehensive care for children in poverty. Neither program has the capacity to serve all the children who are eligible.

Some school districts such as Bellevue and Seattle have preschool or pre-kindergarten programs on site. Most are tuition funded, meaning that parents have

to pay the full cost unless they qualify for subsidies. Bellevue has nine sites for preschool and/or child care, most of which are tuition funded. One elementary school, Enatai, has a program for medically fragile children. Another site has a blended program with both Head Start and tuition paying students. Lake Washington District has five Head Start classes and sixteen Ready Start classes. Ready Start is for higher income families. While nearly all of Seattle School District's elementary schools have before and after school care on site, roughly a third have programs specifically for preschool children.

There are efforts going on to provide greater access to good high quality programs for children three to five and to improve the quality of all types of care. The funding for many of these programs include public/private partnerships where governments, nonprofit organizations and private foundations work together toward the common goal of improving school readiness. The four programs detailed below demonstrate the variety of community efforts aimed at getting children ready for school.

The King County Action Agenda

The King County Early Childhood and School Readiness Action Agenda was developed in 2003-2004 by the combined efforts of over 120 agencies and individuals. SOAR, a community partnership overseeing the action agenda, grew out of earlier efforts of Project Lift-Off in Seattle and United Way of King County's Children's Initiative. While SOAR and its predecessors cover children up to eighteen years, the Action Agenda focuses on children from birth to five. As the executive summary states, "The first few years of life shape a child's ability to learn, relate to others, and be successful in school. Children who are ready for kindergarten tend to do better throughout their school career. Children who are *not* ready are more likely to fail or repeat grades, need special education classes, and/or drop out." (An Early Childhood and School Readiness Action Agenda, January 2004)

The Action Agenda is a plan for community action, and as such depends heavily on the many agencies, organizations and individuals to help carry out its four goals: nurturance, early diagnosis and treatment, early care and education, and successful transitions. In addition to countywide strategies, each sub region-

North King County, South King County, East King County, and Seattle- have developed goals and actions for their individual areas. Some examples of the types of activities that are proposed to reach the goals include:

1. Nurturance: Welcome Baby, a program at Highline Hospital, is a three-year pilot project in which social workers make hospital visits and home visits to new mothers. Parents are given information on local support groups, child care options, etc.
2. Early Diagnosis and Treatment: Support for agencies that focus on birth to three with early screening for developmental delays.
3. Early Care and Education: Programs that improve quality of care for children in licensed family child care homes and child care centers, and for children cared for by family, friends or neighbors (FFN). Support for the training of staff and help child care providers who want to get national accreditation.
4. Successful Transitions: Getting School Ready transition teams in three school districts- Seattle, Kent, and Shoreline- have developed neighborhood school transition teams to help children make a better entry into kindergarten at their local schools.

The Action Agenda is a five year effort and component groups meet regularly to see how efforts measure up to the goals. A major evaluation of school readiness for kindergarten- the Early Development Instrument (EDI)-is being developed through the efforts of King County Public Health Department and United Way. The EDI is currently being piloted in the Bellevue and Shoreline School Districts. The hope is to develop a culturally relevant instrument that will provide a measure of the success of the ongoing programs and will determine the need for future efforts.

Seattle Early Reading First Program

In 2003, the City of Seattle received a three-year \$3 million federal grant to develop the Seattle Early Reading First (SERF) program. The City of Seattle, partnering with Shoreline Community College (SCC), the Seattle Public School District, and the Seattle Public Library implemented the program at five Seattle child care centers. The purpose of the program is to improve literacy among children age three to five by parent education, college classes for

child care teachers, and on-site, one-on-one training for the teachers at the child care centers. The child care centers where the program has been operating serve mostly low income children. They are Jose Marti Child Development Center, Community Day, Sea Mar Child Development Center, Toddler Tech Child Care Center, and Zion Tech Preparatory Academy.

Shoreline Community College professors and an Early Childhood Literacy Specialist from The Seattle Public Schools developed a Literacy Certificate program to prepare SERF teachers to be literacy leaders. The Shoreline Community College professors who worked in the SERF program took the program directly to the child care centers. They worked with the teachers in the school classrooms and provided college-level courses for child care staff members in the evenings at the child care centers.

Testing and observation have indicated that SERF has been a very successful program. Scores on standard tests for the preschool population indicate marked improvements since the SERF program has been in place. Observers have noted that the child care centers where the programs have been implemented have been brightened with colorful pictures on the wall. There are many more books and learning tools such as dry erase boards, chalk boards, paper, crayons and markers. Teachers interact with the children much more than before. Play centers are organized to provide more language opportunities, with smaller more well-defined spaces and dramatic play areas complete with literacy props such as telephone books, menu order pads and notepads. Each center now has a writing center and library in each classroom.

City of Seattle Early Learning Network

The City of Seattle's Families and Education Levy provides funds for an early learning network to be established in both the southwest and southeast parts of the city. The early learning networks offer comprehensive programs to support school readiness and transition to kindergarten for four year old children. The focus of the networks is on low income children as they are the ones research indicates will benefit the most from quality child care. The emphasis on quality is a critical factor in this program. Much of the quality comes from the experience and qualifications of the teacher, so helping teachers and keeping them from leaving the profession is critical to

the success of the child care program.

The program has five components:

1. Preschool for Four Year Olds: The program anticipates 700 children annually will be supported by the pre-kindergarten program through levy and other funding by 2008.
2. Kindergarten Transition Services: This school-community partnership will help parents and children transition from child care programs to school. The early learning staff will work with the Seattle School District to develop policies and procedures to assist with moving from preschool to kindergarten.
3. Parent/Child Home Visitor Program: These home visits will be for parents in the network neighborhoods with children under three years old.
4. Child Care Quality Improvement: Professional development support to providers of child care programs for children birth to five in the network neighborhoods will occur on site and will include curriculum development, mentoring, etc. This will be similar to what is being provided under the Comprehensive Child Care Program and Seattle Early Reading First.
5. Career Wage Ladder Program: Funding under this program will help teachers in child care programs that serve the highest number of low income children. The focus is to reduce teacher turnover and reward professional development.

The early learning network program is a pilot project in which, for the first time, all five of these strategies are being concentrated in a geographic area with a large immigrant population. The program is being phased in over several years and will be fully operational in the fall of 2009. With an annual cost of \$4 million, the total investment over a seven-year period is over \$28 million dollars. This is a significant increase over previous levies indicating the high priority and importance that early learning holds for both the Mayor and the City Council.

The New School Foundation Partnership with the Seattle Public Schools

The New School Foundation began in 1998 under the guidance of then Superintendent John Stanford and businessman Stuart Sloan. The goal of this public/

private partnership is to transform one school at a time and to provide a new model for private support of public education. Since 1998, the New School Foundation has contributed almost \$9 million to Seattle Public Schools. (See The New Foundation web site.)

The first effort of the Foundation was at T.T. Minor Elementary School in the Central District. This Seattle public school has a high proportion of minority and low income students. The Foundation funded a pre-kindergarten class utilizing the High/Scope curriculum, an extended school year, a before and after school program, a wellness program, and a special curriculum for grades 1-5. The Foundation resources also enabled small classes, with a maximum of twenty students. In 2003, both the fourth graders (who were the first kindergarteners to participate in the program under the Foundation resources) and the third graders (who were the first pre-kindergarten class at the school) did better in their standardized tests and significantly better than their peers the year before. (John Burbank, *Strategic Pathways*, p.10-11) The authors of this study believe the extra resources, longer year, the connection to the K-12 system, and the High/Scope pre-kindergarten model all contributed to the increase in academic success of the students.

In 2002, the Foundation developed a similar program at the New School at South Shore, a K-8 school in the making. Currently it goes from Pre-K to 2nd grade with a 3rd grade to be added in the fall of 2005. The New School is located in the Rainier Valley and serves mostly low income minority students. It also features small classes of seventeen students, a pre-kindergarten program, and an extended calendar year. Both programs have a limited commitment from the Foundation. The T.T. Minor's grant will run out in 2006, the New School's in 2012. The Foundation is planning to raise funds to continue the T.T. Minor program beyond its 2006 planned end.

VIII. OTHER FACTORS IN EARLY LEARNING

Introduction

Many organizations and foundations are involved in the arena of early care and education. Clearly, helping children succeed in school is seen as a critical issue

for our region, state and country. Some organizations fund specific programs; some are working in concert with others to develop a public education and public advocacy campaign.

State and Local Funding Sources

The Foundation for Early Learning was established as a result of the work of Governor Locke's Commission on Early Learning. The Foundation receives financial support from individuals, businesses, and foundations. It provides grants to exemplary programs in its efforts to ensure that all Washington children from birth to five have a positive early learning experience. Grants support efforts throughout the state to improve educator training, increase public awareness, and promote collaborative efforts at the community level. The Foundation has determined that a key need is to develop a coordinated and coherent system for early learning in Washington State. An important component of that is how the state organizes its programs related to early care and education. Currently, programs are in three different state agencies: DSHS, the Department of Trade and Community Development, and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

United Way of King County Community Safety Net Fund has two main focuses: homelessness and getting kids ready to succeed in school. It supports a variety of services for children and families in an effort to have children ready for school. The United Way is working with the Public Health department on development of a measure of school readiness. It is being piloted in Bellevue and Shoreline school districts. United Way also is a main supporter of the King County Action agenda and pays for much of the staff costs for the agenda.

King County Funders Alliance is another public/private partnership focusing its efforts on early learning, particularly birth to three. Currently it is supporting two projects: the development of a quality rating system for child care providers (described in Section IV) and development of more programs for FFN caregivers. For FFN caregivers, the project is working with parks and recreation centers to have more programs and activities that focus on providing support to these caregivers while having fun activities for kids. This is similar to the Play and Learn groups described earlier in the study.

The Opportunity Fund began in 2001 supporting the goals of Project Lift Off but is now under the SOAR banner. It is another partnership of local governments with private and public foundations. It has funded community based agencies to help FFN caregivers throughout the county, particularly in immigrant and low income areas. Another focus is on programs and services that help children become school ready. The Opportunity Fund also supports after school learning programs for youth up to age eighteen.

Early Care and Education Coalition

The Early Care and Education Coalition was established in 2002 to coordinate advocacy among the many organizations. It is a coalition of public and private funding organizations that want to improve quality and access to early care and education in Washington State. It promotes six strategies that are necessary to reach its goals. The strategies are:

1. Provide high quality preschool programs for age three to five through a flexible system of providers linked to K-12.
2. Assist parents and caregivers to establish and maintain nurturing relationships with children.
3. Promote children's healthy development, and early identification and referral for developmental concerns.
4. Boost early education and care program effectiveness.
5. Develop a skilled teacher and director workforce.
6. Expand access to early education and care through financial assistance.

Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce

The Chamber of Commerce has been involved in the issue of early learning since 2001. It convened the Champions for Children program, participates in the SOAR program, and was represented on the Citizen Advisory Committee for the Family and Education Levy. In October of 2003, the Chamber focused on two aspects of early childhood development: health care for children birth to five and business support for early learning. Underlying both issues is their concern for the "preparation gap"- the fact that many students, especially those in poverty, are not ready for kindergarten and are left behind as they move forward

in their educational experience. The preparation gap leads to the achievement gap.

In May 2005, the Chamber announced the result of several years of work: the Business Partnership for Early Learning. Business leaders plan to raise \$4 million dollars to fund programs they believe will help reduce the preparation gap. The specific programs they support are focused on the children age birth to three: the Parent-Child Home Program and the Play and Learn Groups for children. Both of these programs have been described earlier in this study.

In addition to supporting specific programs, the Business Partnership for Early Learning will partner with United Way and others in the Born Learning Campaign, a national public education and advocacy effort. It is a national media campaign to encourage parents and caregivers to adopt behaviors known to help young children learn. The campaign will involve broadcast and print advertisements, billboards, and educational materials for parents and caregivers.

Alliance for Education

The Alliance for Education is primarily known as an advocate and provider of funds to help promote academic achievement in the students of the Seattle School District. In 2004, the Alliance spent over \$8 million dollars on programs to transform schools, improve teaching and train leaders. Their plan for the next three years focuses on helping students become better readers, strengthening the teaching corps, and helping the most challenged schools.

One aspect of the plan to increase students' literacy is to work on better transitions to kindergarten by strengthening the linkage between early learning providers and schools. This concept is similar to that of the early learning networks funded by the Families and Education Levy. In addition, the Alliance wants to work with others to develop a culture of reading throughout the whole community. Children need families who see the value of reading, and communities need programs to help support parents develop their children's reading. The Alliance hopes to raise \$4.5 million over three years to support these efforts and other literacy efforts in the schools.

IX. SUMMARY

Key Issues

One of the overwhelming responses of the study committee to the material was amazement at the complexity and multiplicity of ongoing efforts to get students ready for school. There are so many businesses, governmental and nonprofit agencies involved that it is hard to keep track of what is happening. As stated earlier, this study does not include, by any means, all of the activity that surrounds efforts to reduce the achievement gap by reducing the preparation gap in children's readiness for school. However, in spite of all the people and materials involved, there are several key issues which stand out as critical to the future success of students in school: *the quality of the early learning programs and the ability of parents to afford quality care*. Higher quality means higher cost.

The States' Role

On the national scene it is the states which are taking the lead in both defining what quality care is and providing the funds to pay for the care. Most states pay for low income families, and some states pay for children irrespective of income. However, it is expensive and most states cannot cover all children.

In response to the insights of recent brain research and the increase in the number of parents seeking care due to the shift from welfare to work, in 2005 the Washington State Legislature passed bills which move the state forward on several child care issues. First the state raised its reimbursement rates for child care providers although it is not clear what impact this small raise will have. It also added 282 slots to the ECEAP program, a small increase given the large number of children who are eligible but not served.

This legislation created a major opportunity for Washington State through the establishment of an Early Learning Council. The purpose of the council is to "provide vision, leadership, and direction to the improvement, realignment, and expansion of early learning programs and services for children birth to five..." (HB1152). Tasks include recommendations on state governance of early learning programs, development of a quality rating system, and of a tiered reimbursement system for state subsidized child care. The Early Learning Council will also play

a large role in the comprehensive education study being chaired by Governor Gregoire which will look at education funding from early childhood programs through higher education.

Many states struggle with the question of who to fund, all children or just low income children. A Rand Corporation study of California looked at the question of who the states should fund. While targeting low income is less costly and generates more benefits per dollar spent, universal preschool has long term benefits to society in both economic development and human capital investment. A one-year, universal, high-quality preschool program in California would generate a net benefit of over \$7,000 per child for California society, or \$2.62 for every dollar expended, under the baseline assumptions of the research. Under a range of assumptions, the benefits are between \$2 and \$4 for every dollar expended. (Early Care and Education Coalition report, June 9, 2005)

Advocacy

Another overriding issue is that of public will and advocacy. The Early Care and Education Coalition was established to promote early learning as a key public good that needs support. The Seattle League's positions on early childhood education were adopted in 1990 and are still relevant today. However, now the clear focus is on getting children ready for school. With roughly 40% of children nationally not ready for kindergarten, there is a tremendous need to help these children. Students who aren't ready for kindergarten tend to fall behind as they progress through elementary school. Advocating for programs such as those described in this study is crucial so that the general public sees that public funding of programs for children age birth to five has long term benefits to society as a whole.

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 Sara Tenney-Espinosa, Manager of Community Learning, Seattle School District
 Mark Usdane, Executive Director, League of Education Voters
 Laura Wells, Director of Provider Services, Child Care Resources
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www.zerotothree.org Zero to Three

UNIT MEETINGS

Capitol Hill/Montlake	Zita Cook 206-374-0369 zcook@cablespeed.com	Sept. 12 7:15 p.m.	Zita Cook 206-374-0369 2801 1st Avenue #911
First Hill	Janet Perry 206-382-3668 hjerry@foxinternet.com	Sept. 12 9:30 a.m. 206-382-3785	Horizon House Mary M. Pruitt 900 University St., Rm. 3N
LWVS Office	Maggie Morris 206-324-3591 maggie_2327@yahoo.com	Sept. 12 5:30 p.m. 1620 18th Ave., #101	League Office 206-329-4848
Rainier Beach	Lidia Hungate 206-723-2773 lhungate@leapfroginet.com Ruth Ridder 206-723-9457 bobcrigger@yahoo.com	Sept. 12 2:00 p.m.	Rainier Beach Library 9125 Rainier Ave. South
Wallingford/University	Katie Bethell 206-650-1333 katbet@u.washington.edu	Sept. 12 7:00 p.m.	Katie Bethell 206-650-1333 3625 Wallingford Ave. N
Southend	Sam Scharff 206-933-5979 webcats@speakeasy.net	Sept. 13 7:30 p.m.	Susan Jones 206-725-2902 5804 52nd Ave S
Bellevue	Mary Wolch 425-747-1458 wolchmn@msn.com JoAnne Way waytandj@comcast.net	Sept. 13 10:00 a.m.	Bellevue Library 425-747-3031 Room 6
Kirkland/Redmond	Liv Grohn 425-828-9445 livgrohn@verizon.net	Sept. 12 7:00 p.m.	Liv Grohn-Goodman 425-8289445 338 10th Avenue, Kirkland
North End Afternoon	Jan Brucker 206-526-5342 janbrucker@aol.com	Sept. 13 12:30 p.m.	Gloria Butts 206-363-7295 12009 1st Ave NW
West Seattle Day	Jo Mahon 206-932-8586 jonoham@comcast.net	Sept. 13 12:30 p.m.	Olive Spannaus 206-935-2359 5402 49th Ave. SW
West Seattle Eve.	JoAnne McGaw 206-528-0407	Sept. 13 7:00 p.m.	Contact unit leader for location.
Mag/QA/Fremont Eve.	Mary Burki 206-935-2276 maryburki@yahoo.com	Sept. 14 7:30 p.m.	Nancy DeBast 206-2824097 2866 39th Ave W
View Ridge	Peggy Saari 206-525-0132 peggyaari@comcast.net	Sept. 14 12:45 p.m.	Gail Winberg 206-524-7801 6004 NE 60th
Issaquah	Margaret Austin 425-392-5760 barrie.austin@comcast.net Connie Reed (asst leader) reedhtop@earthlink.net	Sept. 22 10:30 a.m.	Issaquah Police & City Hall Bldg. 130 E. Sunset Way, 1st Floor 425-746-1582
Mercer Island	Martha Jordan 425-883-9143 martyvoter@seattelwv.org	Sept. 15 9:15 a.m.	Lissa Wells 206-232-2513 7651 SE 40th, MI
North Central	Janet Orlando 206-524-0936 orlanre@aol.com	Sept. 15 10:00 a.m.	Sandy Barney 206-363-2659 4523 5th Ave NE
Shoreline	Juliet Beard 206-542-3744 juliet@windermere.com	Sept. 15 7:00 p.m.	Richmond Beach Congregational NW 195 & Richmond Beach Road
Ballard/QA/Magnolia	Alice Peterson 206-783-7108 peterson-alice-jack@msn.com	Sept. 17 9:30 a.m.	Janet Anderson 206-285-2460 4560 W. Cramer call for map

UNIT MEETINGS -- Small Discussion of Big Issues

Unit meetings are the heart of the consensus process of the League. These are small group discussion meetings held in homes or community venues in different neighborhood areas. The unit system was introduced to encourage the exchange of ideas and opinions on programs and issues. The meetings “are a focal point of League activity and provide an avenue for members and the [League] board to communicate”.

In larger Leagues, such as Seattle’s, unit meetings on the same topic are usually scheduled at different times and locations for the convenience of the members. Each month, a topic of interest, based on the month’s forum, is discussed with a guided series of questions and preparation for leading the discussion. The topics for the monthly meetings is decided at the beginning of each League year.

Not all attendees at the units are fully educated on all issues and this is a great opportunity to learn or exchange ideas. If you have never attended a unit meeting, or it’s been a long time since you did, jump on in. The positions that the LWV takes on issues begin at this level and we welcome all to participate in the process.

League of Women Voters of Seattle
1620 18th Ave, Suite 101
Seattle, WA 98122

Permit #5730
Paid at Seattle

Perspectives on Early Care and Education of Young Children

Thursday, September 8
7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Seattle First Baptist Church
1111 Harvard Avenue

Panel Members:

The State Perspective: Ruth Kagi, Washington State Representative, 32nd District
A Provider's Perspective: Angie Maxie, Director, Tiny Tots Development Center
Parents' Perspective: Ruth Engle, Parent Services Coordinator, Child Care Resources
A Community Perspective: Karen Howell-Clark, Community Impact Manager, United Way of King Co.

The 29th Annual Political Party and Auction

Celebrate the Past, Present and Future

October 30th 4:00-8:30 p.m.
Seattle Red Lion Hotel

Donation Deadline is September 24th.

Solicit your friends, family and local businesses for donations!
Thank you for helping us make this event a success!