

State of Washington  
Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC)



**Department of Early Learning  
Pre-Audit  
Briefing Report 07-13**

September 26, 2007

*Upon request, this document is available  
in alternative formats for persons with disabilities.*



# DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING – PRE-AUDIT BRIEFING REPORT

---

## **Overview**

The purpose of this briefing report is to update the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) on preliminary work for a review of the Department of Early Learning (“Department or “DEL”) which is due by July 2010. This report includes a brief discussion of the background of the Department, the JLARC legislative study mandate, and the data collection plan for this study.

## **Background**

The Legislature created the Department of Early Learning in 2006 (2SHB 2964). The Department was primarily created to improve school readiness by aligning early learning programs.

Statute directs the Department to implement state early learning policy and to coordinate, consolidate, and integrate child care and early learning programs in order to administer programs and funding as efficiently as possible. A specific duty of the Department is to administer three early learning programs transferred from other state agencies:

- Washington’s program of subsidized child care called Working Connections Child Care (WCCC);
- Washington’s state preschool program called Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP); and
- The Early Reading Initiative.

The Department licenses child care facilities and monitors ECEAP programs throughout the state. In addition, statute directs the Department to participate in a nongovernmental public-private partnership, improve parent education and support, carry out quality improvement activities, standardize a variety of administrative functions, and coordinate with the K-12 system and advisory bodies.

## **Statutory Self Evaluation by Department of Early Learning**

Statute requires the Department of Early Learning to submit a report evaluating the effectiveness of its programs in improving childhood education. According to statute, the report is due two years after the implementation of the Department and every two years thereafter. The first report must include program objectives and valid performance measures for evaluating progress toward achieving the objectives. The report must also include a plan for commissioning a longitudinal study comparing outcomes of children participating in Department programs with the readiness of other children not participating in Department programs.

## **JLARC Study Mandate**

The Legislature directed JLARC to evaluate the implementation and operation of the Department in nine areas by July 2010. Per the mandate, our questions for evaluation are:

1. To what extent have services and programs that were previously administered separately been effectively integrated?
2. To what extent have reporting and monitoring activities been consolidated and made more efficient?
3. To what extent has consolidation resulted in administrative efficiencies within the Department?
4. To what extent have child care and early learning services improved?
5. To what extent is subsidized child care available?
6. To what extent is subsidized child care affordable?
7. To what extent has the Department been an effective partner in the private-public partnership?
8. To what extent has the Department put procedures in place to respect parents and legal guardians and provide them the opportunity to participate in the development of policies and program decisions affecting their children?
9. To what extent has the Department conducted parent outreach and education?

## **Data Collection Plan**

Per JLARC's request, the Department of Early Learning prepared an initial data collection plan for the Committee in advance of this evaluation. JLARC reviewed this initial plan and has also identified additional data needed for the evaluation. The following presents the overall Department of Early Learning Data Collection Plan for the 2010 JLARC performance audit.

# DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING AUDIT DATA COLLECTION PLAN

## 1. To what extent have services and programs that were previously administered separately been effectively integrated?

Measure	Method of Collection for Key Data	Data Source
1A) Administrative functions previously done by two departments, such as contracting and development of budgets, are integrated and administered by DEL.	Review procedures, policies, and organizational structure	DEL
1B) External partners and contractors report there is improved coordination and/or integration of public sector early learning programs/initiatives (such as licensed childcare, preschool, early reading initiatives).	Baseline and follow-up survey of select partners and contractors	JLARC
1C) The ECEAP performance standards and licensed child care requirements have joined together to include the same vocabulary within similar topic areas, so that the standards' intent and guidance are congruent across programs.	JLARC will collect from DEL the following documents (pre and post DEL): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ECEAP performance standards</li> <li>▪ Licensed child care requirements</li> </ul>	DEL
1D) The ECEAP performance standards are aligned with benchmarks designed to support school readiness.	JLARC will collect from DEL the following documents (pre and post DEL): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ECEAP performance standards</li> <li>▪ Licensed child care requirements</li> <li>▪ Early Learning benchmarks</li> </ul>	DEL

**2. To what extent have reporting and monitoring activities been consolidated and made more efficient?**

Measure	Method of Collection for Key Data	Data Source
2A) Percent of licensed homes and centers monitored within required timeframe as required by DEL administrative policy.	DEL Dashboards If funded, Early Learning Information System (ELIS)	DEL
2B) Reporting and monitoring requirements for providers (co-located sites, ECEAP and child care) are reduced.	JLARC will collect from DEL the following documents (pre and post DEL): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reporting and monitoring requirements for providers of co-located sites</li> </ul>	DEL
2C) Providers of ECEAP and child care participating in the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) do not have duplicative reporting requirements.	JLARC will collect from DEL the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ECEAP reporting and monitoring requirements</li> <li>▪ Licensed child care reporting requirements</li> <li>▪ QRIS reporting and monitoring requirements</li> </ul>	DEL
2D) Department staff (FTEs) and time spent to monitor all providers.	JLARC will collect from DEL the following (pre and post DEL): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number of licensing and ECEAP staff (FTEs)</li> <li>▪ Time spent to monitor providers</li> <li>▪ Number of licensed sites</li> </ul>	DEL

**3. To what extent has consolidation resulted in administrative efficiencies within the Department?**

Measure	Method of Collection for Key Data	Data Source
3A) 70% of employees understand Performance Development Plan (PDP) process and timelines.	Baseline and survey of all DEL employees; employee records	DEL
3B) Vendor invoices are paid within 30 days and all employee travel vouchers are paid within 10 days of receipt.	Random sample of transactions from one month	DEL
3C) Proportion of direct and indirect costs for programs previously administered separately in other departments.	<p>JLARC will collect the baseline direct and indirect costs for the programs transferred from other departments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Working Connection Child Care</li> <li>▪ ECEAP</li> <li>▪ Early Reading Initiative</li> </ul> <p>JLARC will collect from DEL the future costs of programs (listed above) transferred from other departments.</p>	JLARC and DEL

**4. To what extent have child care and early learning services improved?**

Measure	Method of Collection for Key Data	Data Source
4A) Increase in number of early learning providers who advance their level of education as a result of DEL investments.	Baseline established and DEL records of contract deliverables/contractor reports	DEL
4B) 80% of ECEAP programs are in compliance with DEL teacher qualification performance standards.	ECEAP records	DEL
4C) The Department has put in place measures and processes to identify the quality of ECEAP programs and child care programs that voluntarily agree to become a part of the Quality Rating Improvement System pilot implementation.	JLARC will collect from DEL: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Department’s measures for the voluntary quality rating and improvement system (QRIS)</li> <li>▪ The Department’s plan for implementing QRIS</li> <li>▪ The Department’s output data for those sites participating in the voluntary quality rating and improvement system</li> </ul>	DEL



**5. To what extent is subsidized child care available?**

Measure	Method of Collection for Key Data	Data Source
5A) Eligibility requirements for subsidized child care.	JLARC will collect the eligibility requirement for subsidized child care: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Federal Poverty Level (FPL) limit for subsidized child care in Washington and in other states</li> </ul>	JLARC
5B) Payments to providers.	JLARC will collect the following from DEL (pre and post DEL): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Payment rate to providers in Washington and other states</li> </ul> JLARC will collect the following from federal data sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Federal benchmarks regarding payment rates</li> </ul>	DEL and JLARC
5C) Proportion of eligible population of families served by Working Connections Child Care (WCCC).	JLARC will collect the following from DSHS (pre and post DEL): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number of families (average monthly) receiving a child care subsidy</li> </ul> JLARC will collect the following from OFM population data (pre and post DEL): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Total number of families at or below the eligible FPL for subsidized child care</li> </ul>	DSHS, OFM and JLARC

**6. To what extent is subsidized child care affordable?**

Measure	Method of Collection for Key Data	Data Source
6A) Parents are involved in defining affordability.	Parent needs assessment	DEL
6B) Number of policy changes made based on parent needs assessment.	Parent needs assessment	DEL
6C) Proportion of family income spent on co-pay.	JLARC will collect from DEL (pre and post DEL): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Co-payment schedule for families receiving subsidized child care</li> <li>▪ Co-pay amounts paid by families and their family income levels</li> </ul>	DEL

**7. To what extent has the Department been an effective partner in the private public partnership?**

Measure	Method of Collection for Key Data	Data Source
7A) Dollars leveraged because of DEL investments.	DEL records Thrive By Five records Contractor reports	DEL and Thrive by Five
7B) DEL investments in the two Thrive by Five demonstration communities increases number of opportunities for young children to access quality early learning.	DEL records, Thrive by Five Management information System	DEL and Thrive by Five
7C) The Department has established performance measures in contracts or other agreements and developed processes to evaluate projects with the nongovernmental private public partnership.	JLARC will collect from DEL the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Performance measures (for example: increased support for literacy) for Thrive by Five reported in contracts or other agreements</li> <li>▪ Documentation of the process used by the Department to evaluate projects</li> <li>▪ DEL reports on public sector investments and activities at each Thrive by Five Washington Board of Directors Meeting</li> </ul>	DEL

**8. To what extent have procedures been put in place to respect parent and legal guardians and provide them the opportunity to participate in the development of policies and program decisions affecting their children?**

Measure	Method of Collection for Key Data	Data Source
8A) DEL Parent Advisory Council input used by Department.	Parent Advisory Council & DEL records	DEL
8B) Number of policy changes on subsidies made based on parent needs assessment.	Parent needs assessment	DEL
8C) Percent of surveyed parents indicating their satisfaction with participation.	JLARC will collect results from the Department survey assessing parent experience in participation	DEL

**9. To what extent has the agency conducted parent outreach and education?**

Measure	Method of Collection for Key Data	Data Source
9A) Number of DEL priorities and actions based on the parent needs assessment.	Baseline and biennially thereafter – Parent needs assessment	DEL
9B) DEL pools and/or aligns funds to leverage investments in local communities.	DEL and partners records and products	DEL
9C) The Department has utilized a variety of methods to provide outreach to and educate parents.	JLARC will collect the documentation of outreach and education, which may include but not be limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Department website information to parents</li> <li>▪ Number and type of documents provided and or mailed to parents and whether they are made available in various languages</li> <li>▪ Number and type of contacts made by contractors for parent outreach and education activities</li> <li>▪ Number and type of public announcement meetings</li> </ul>	DEL



# SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

## DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING PERFORMANCE AUDIT

### SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

SEPTEMBER 26, 2007



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
JOINT LEGISLATIVE AUDIT AND  
REVIEW COMMITTEE

**STUDY TEAM**  
Sylvia Gil

**PROJECT SUPERVISOR**  
Keenan Konopaski

**LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR**  
Ruta Fanning

Joint Legislative Audit & Review  
Committee  
506 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE  
Olympia, WA 98501-2323  
(360) 786-5171  
(360) 786-5180 Fax

**Website:** [www.jlarc.leg.wa.gov](http://www.jlarc.leg.wa.gov)  
e-mail: [neff.barbara@leg.wa.gov](mailto:neff.barbara@leg.wa.gov)

## Why a JLARC Evaluation of The Department of Early Learning?

Second Substitute House Bill 2964 (2006) established the Department of Early Learning. This legislation also directs JLARC to evaluate the Department's efforts in nine areas.

## Background

The Legislature created the Department of Early Learning in 2006 (2SHB 2964). Statute directs the Department to implement state early learning policy and to coordinate, consolidate, and integrate child care and early learning programs in order to administer programs and funding as efficiently as possible.

As part of this broad mandate, the Legislature transferred the administration of three early learning programs to the new Department of Early Learning:

- The Working Connections Child Care Program, transferred from the Department of Social and Health Services. Administration of this program includes:
  - Providing child care subsidies to eligible low-income families; and
  - Licensing child care facilities throughout the state.
- The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program, transferred from the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development. Administration of this program is through contracts with regional providers for nine state preschool program; and
- The Early Reading Initiative, transferred from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. This program provides grant funds for early literacy projects.

Statute also directs the Department to participate in a nongovernmental public-private partnership, improve parent education and support, carry out quality improvement activities, standardize a variety of administrative functions, and coordinate with the K-12 system and advisory bodies.

The Department is directed in statute to submit a self-evaluation of the effectiveness of the programs every two years.

## Scope

As directed by the Legislature, JLARC will evaluate the implementation and operation of the Department of Early Learning. The review will focus on the evaluation areas provided in statute.

## Study Objectives

Per the direction from the Legislature, this study will address the following questions: To what extent

- 1) Have services and programs that were previously administered separately been effectively integrated?
- 2) Have reporting and monitoring activities been consolidated and made more efficient?
- 3) Has consolidation resulted in administrative efficiencies within the Department?
- 4) Have child care and early learning services improved?
- 5) Is subsidized child care available?
- 6) Is subsidized child care affordable?
- 7) Has the Department been an effective partner in the nongovernmental private-public partnership?
- 8) Has the Department put in place procedures to respect parents and legal guardians and provide them the opportunity to participate in the development of policies and program decisions affecting their children?
- 9) Has the Department conducted parent outreach and education?

## Data Collection

Per JLARC’s request, the Department of Early Learning prepared an initial data collection plan for the Committee in advance of this evaluation. JLARC reviewed the initial plan and has also identified additional data needed for the evaluation. The overall data collection plan is provided in the Department of Early Learning Pre-Audit Briefing Report.

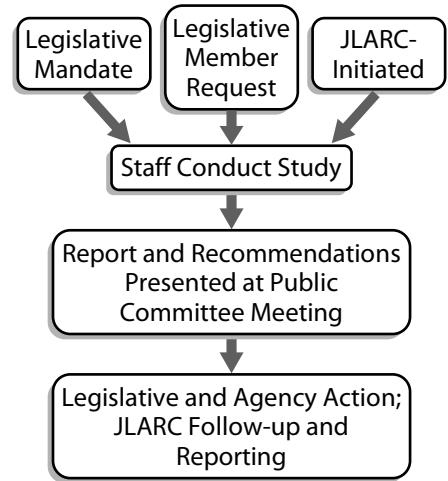
## Timeframe for the Study

Staff will present its preliminary and final reports at the JLARC meetings in July and August 2010.

## JLARC Staff Contact for the Study

Sylvia Gil (360) 786-5179 Gil.Sylvia@leg.wa.gov

### JLARC Study Process



### Criteria for Establishing JLARC Work Program Priorities

- Is study consistent with JLARC mission? Is it mandated?
- Is this an area of significant fiscal or program impact, a major policy issue facing the state, or otherwise of compelling public interest?
- Will there likely be substantive findings and recommendations?
- Is this the best use of JLARC resources? For example:
  - Is JLARC the most appropriate agency to perform the work?
  - Would the study be nonduplicating?
  - Would this study be cost-effective compared to other projects (e.g., larger, more substantive studies take longer and cost more, but might also yield more useful results)?
- Is funding available to carry out the project?



