
Expanded Learning Opportunities Quality Initiative

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Washington is building a comprehensive learning system that emphasizes quality from birth to 18 years. With \$1 million in funding from the Early Start Act, and matching funds from the Raikes Foundation, the Department of Early Learning (DEL) and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) have completed an Expanded Learning Opportunities Quality Initiative (“initiative”), piloting a high-quality, equitable system that supports providers of Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) with the training and resources needed to provide high-quality programs for youth after school and in the summer.

Fifty programs from four counties (King, Pierce, Spokane, and Walla Walla) participated in a quality assessment and improvement process, including licensed family homes and child care centers (who serve school-age children and families) already rated in Early Achievers; federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Centers; and both licensed and unlicensed ELO programs serving youth between the ages of 5-18 years.

Summary of Evaluation Findings

Conducted by the University of Washington’s Cultivate Learning, the evaluation examined ELO program quality and the impact of improvement efforts. It also examined the experiences of participating coaches and providers to hear their perspectives on improvement interventions.

Key findings include:

- Programs initially assessed as lower than average improved after training and coaching.
- Coaching with fidelity to the model was linked with improved program quality.
- Higher levels of student engagement and fewer challenging behaviors were seen as program quality improved.
- Program staff and directors found coaching and data helpful and desired more frequent observations and feedback.
- Programs experienced several systemic barriers to improving quality including unstable staffing, limited time for training and limited funding to support staff.



“I’ve really learned work ethic. I’ve learned how to manage my time, how to prioritize. These were all skills that I was very bad at before I started that internship. And I feel very confident that I can go into any job now and apply the same methods, same strategies that I did here and I’ll have no problem succeeding in the work place.”

- Youth ELO Participant

Initiative Goals

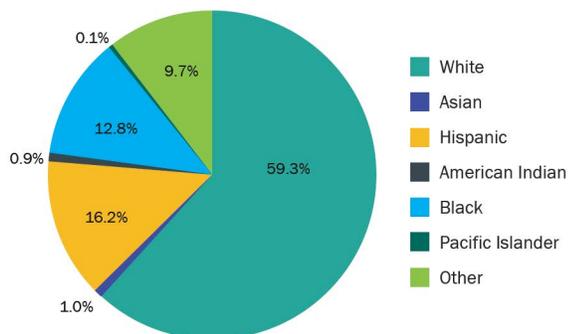
Building upon a decade of quality improvement work in Washington, the initiative launched during the 2016-2017 school year to show that, with the proper support, ELO programs can deliver the type of high-quality engagement proven to result in meaningful youth-level outcomes. The initiative also aimed to create a streamlined system of supports including coaching and training for program staff to engage children and youth with developmentally appropriate strategies across the age span. Lastly, the initiative aimed to connect “systems,” specifically the early learning and school-age systems.

Recommendations and Next Steps

The Washington State Legislature appropriated \$750,000 in the 2018 budget to continue the initiative an additional year. This state funding will continue to be matched with private funding from the Raikes Foundation. **Priorities include:**

- Continue to support original participants: current participants will be given top priority for continuing their quality improvement work, and it’s expected that some new program participants in King, Pierce, Spokane and/or Walla Walla counties will be added.
- Create a pipeline for quality improvement: with various sizes, types, and existing levels of capacity and quality, supports need to be created that foster quality improvements for all types of programs.
- Focus on coaching: coaching is critical to improving program quality and it’s important that coaches are well trained, have enough time with programs, and can coach to fidelity standards.

Youth Participant Demographics



- 55.5 percent of youth participate in the Free/Reduced Price School Lunch Program
- 10 percent of youth are English Language learners
- 12.7 percent are youth with special needs

Why Expanded Learning Opportunities

Research shows that high-quality ELO programs improve attendance and grades while building the social-emotional skills needed to succeed in school and in life. Youth outcomes include:

- Improved academics including attendance, grade point, and math/literacy scores
- Social/Emotional including increased engagement, motivation, growth mindset, and cooperation
- Career Pathway Skills/Skill Development including skill tied to program content areas

Reflecting the needs of their local communities, these youth-driven learning opportunities are particularly powerful for historically underserved populations. They engage and inspire young people to explore their passions, develop their talents and find their unique voice as future leaders.

Initiative Partners

- Department of Early Learning
- Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- School’s Out Washington
- University of Washington
- Child Care Aware of Washington (including Child Care Resources and Community Minded Enterprises)
- Raikes Foundation

Additionally, community coalitions met regularly throughout the pilot year to discuss how to best meet the needs of youth and families in their region.

Program Site Locations

