

REPORT OF THE "0 TO THREE" STUDY
for the LWV-KITSAP

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INTRODUCTION

There have been three previous reports on early childhood education by the League of Women Voters in Washington State. The first was a report in 1984 by LWV-Washington that focused on licensing child care facilities. The second was a local study made in 2005 by the LWV-Seattle focusing on early care and education of young children. These two studies led to the 2008 comprehensive study authorized at the state convention entitled "Early Care and Education of Young Children."

Included in the 2008 comprehensive report were five big ideas proposed and examined by the state created (2005) Early Learning Council. They were:

Support parents as their child's first and best teachers.

Refocus and change public perceptions about education for children birth through ten.

Provide fair, sufficient and stable funding for early education.

Support early educator professional development, compensation and competency.

Build community-level capacity in support of the "Learning to Learn" years.

This "0 to Three" Committee study presents a snapshot of early childhood programs available in Kitsap County 13 years later with a special emphasis on families at the poverty level or just above the poverty level that qualify for a federal or state aid. It also speaks to the above big five ideas. Unfortunately though, this snapshot has been somewhat skewed by the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is reassuring to know that Washington State measures above the national average in many categories that indicate progress in developing robust childcare policies. The state's Department of Children, Youth and Families has and is developing guide lines to insure that childcare providers and teachers are properly trained. This all important training also applies to private providers.

As the committee interviewed the many providers, it was impressed by the dedicated administrators, nurses, teachers and personnel that work for the Nurse Family Partnership, the Olympic Educational Service District, Kitsap Community Resources and other programs devoted to early learning. The work is important and necessary requiring specialized training while at the same time its practitioners are being paid well below the average for elementary school teachers.

Although Washington State has a strong interest in helping poverty level parents negotiate the first few years of parenthood, there are factors that prevent its full implementation. Among the factors are funding and income cut-off for services that prevent low income families from availing themselves of high quality childcare services.

There is also no denying that poverty, homelessness and abuse create stress and are therefore a constant threat to the development of children caught in this cycle. This can often lead to neglect which has a lasting affect on a child's education but also on the community in general. Every child starts out with potential. Unfortunately potential can be squandered and quite often this happens during the earliest years of life.

Although Washington State does lead in many indicators of child well-being, this does not mean that it can claim complete success. There are still too many children falling through the cracks. Some of the factors such as State and Federal funding that rises and falls with political considerations; a child's success in school being dependent on the welfare of the family; the

general lack of understanding of the importance of the 0 to three years among disadvantaged families: all limit what can be done to promote a child's success in school and in life.

The Nurse Family Partnership takes the most comprehensive approach towards early learning by interacting with the family before the child is born and becoming a life coach to the family as well. It has had a good deal of success, but lacks the funds to expand. Early Head Start programs have also been successful and some have had contacts with the family before birth. Here the program is limited by its restricted poverty cut-offs. The lack of child raising knowledge by the general public is also a real problem.

How can LWV - Kitsap be of help in promoting early childhood education to disadvantaged families and those families that lack knowledge of child development? There are many possibilities. Among them are:

- Being alert to the funding problems.

- Promoting knowledge of early childhood learning (PR) through whatever means possible - county and/or state wide promotion or teaching in schools.

- Promoting the work of the different agencies and programs.

- Supporting parental leave and support services.

During these early years, 0 to three, the child's brain grows to 80% of its eventual adult size, and the nerve cells grow and make connections while organizing into patterns that support higher functions such as speech, thinking, movement, and emotions. These facts make the 0 to three years the most critical in a persons life, and they cannot be lived over. This is the period when supportive nurturing is all important and helps to create a productive human being. There is only one chance in life for each of us and getting off to a good start is dependent solely on the adults that surround us.

The above not only has an effect on a personal level but seen in the totality of the country, it also effects educational progress, mental health, and general productivity of the country's population.

Following is the committee report gathered from interviews with childcare providers and including statistics gleaned from the data base of Kitsap and national and state agencies . Each section records our interaction with a particular agency.

GOAL OF THE STUDY

Our goal was to study the brain science underlying infant development, check to see how this knowledge is communicated to teachers, parents and the general public and map the infrastructure of early childhood care providers in Kitsap County.

The ultimate goal is to present the LWV-Kitsap with a description of the state of infant and early childhood care here in Kitsap County so that the league would promote the understanding and crucial importance of infant development as an educational priority.

HOW THE STUDY WAS CARRIED OUT

Visits, interviews and discussions were made in person and virtually with the following organizations:

University of Washington, Institute for learning & Brain Sciences

Olympic College, Early Childhood Education Department

Kitsap Public Health, nurse Family Partnership

OESD, Early Head Start and Head Start Programs

Kitsap County Resources

Holly Ridge, early childhood programs for parents with disabled children

Kitsap Regional Library, early learning programs

Child Aware

Department of Children Youth and Families, includes information about tribal programs

Data relating to the availability of early childhood programs versus the need.

Kitsap Interagency Coordinating Council 2020 Community Assessment Update

Zero to Three National Organization on the state of children including Washington

Statistic gleaned from various interviews

Statistics provided by the Nurse Family Partnership, National Organization

Why include Head Start in “0 to Three” Study

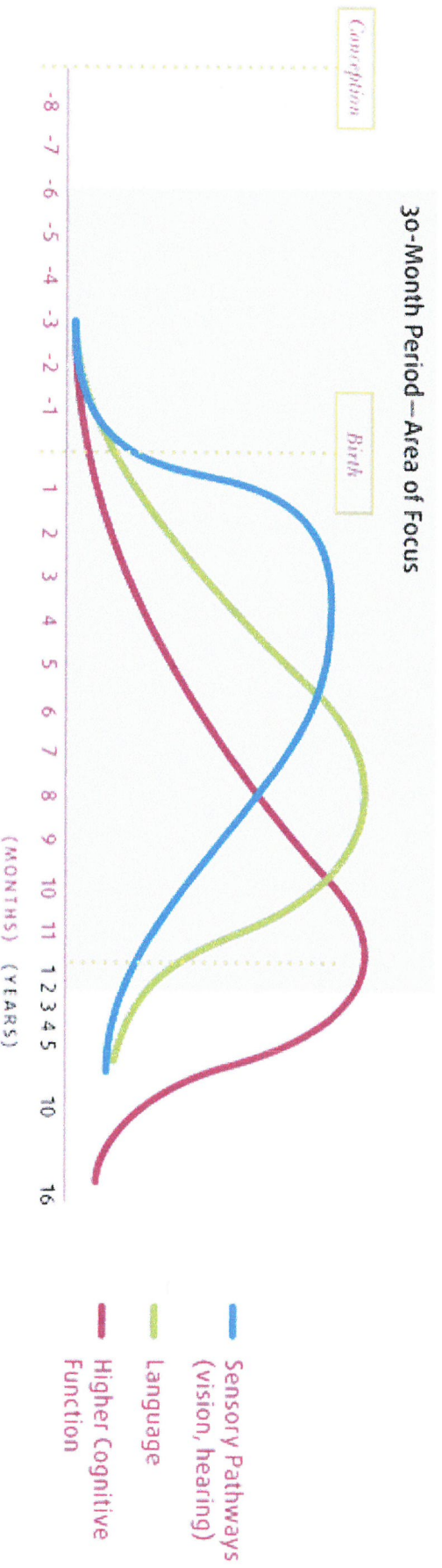
Although the “0 to Three” study group is mainly concerned with the earliest childhood years, it is hard to tease out information for just that group. There is a continuous flow from zero to five in the approach of many government agencies and statistics are grouped together. Therefore the committee is providing information on both groups although our main concern still remains with the youngest cohort.

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BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

Synapse formation dependent on early experiences



Source: Nelson, C.A., *From Neurons to Neighborhoods* (2000).
Shonkoff, J. & Phillips, D. (Eds.)

University of Washington Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences

The University of Washington's Institute for Learning & Brain sciences (I-LABS) has been studying brain development in early childhood for numerous years and during those years has obtained funding from various government and outside sources. Presently, Patricia Kuhl, the co-director holds the Bezos Chair in the department.

The following, a quote from the I-LABS Mission Statement, sets out not only its purpose but also illustrates why its science is so important to understanding early childhood development.

The institute for Learning & Brain Sciences is an interdisciplinary center dedicated to discovering the fundamental principles of human learning that will enable all children to achieve their full potential. Our goal is to become the world's foremost research *generator on early learning and development*. We will translate and disseminate cutting-edge research discoveries to global constituents in order to help unify the science of learning and the practice of learning.

Dr. Sarah Lytle, who met with the committee, described how I-LABS worked with babies and children. Quite often with a simple cap placed on the baby's head, brain measurements can *unobtrusively be taken*. She went on to explain how one experiment - *parent coaching* - was studied at 6 months and then again at 10, 14, and 18 months and how this coaching effected various parts of the child's brain and in turn its feeling of wellbeing or lack there of.

Through its research I-LABS has found that a child's brain development can very much be effected by the parents' status. If the family's basic needs are met, if the relationships are *secure and if the parents' stress levels are low, babies are much more apt to flourish*. This fact could lead to difficulties for insecure and/or indigent parents.

I-LABS is also working hard to develop ways to make its scientific research known to the public and various constituencies - parents, professionals and policy makers - who are concerned with early childhood development. Videos called Training Modules can be *accessed for free on the computer*. Each twenty minute long module covers an aspect of development and covers such topics as brain development, learning, distinguishing sounds and the importance of parent/child interactions.

Much of I-LABS research has proven, without a doubt, the crucial importance of this early period of physical and cognitive development to the future life of a child. Much of what *happens during this early period is very consequential*. At three years old the brain of a child has reached 80% of its eventual growth and, hard to believe, has developed and then lost its unusual but fleeting ability to distinguish a myriad of sounds.

The committee was very impressed with the work being done at the University of Washington I-LABS. The modules are very strong and convincing teaching tools. The big problem is how to have them seen by a wide audience including decisions makers, professionals, parents and the general public. The scientific knowledge is there; now it has to be used.

Olympic College - Early Childhood Education

Olympic College here in Kitsap County offers child care services and a preschool that is tied into its early childhood educational programs. Gayle Julian, with whom we met, is on the educational staff of the college and is coordinator of the early childhood program. She reviewed with the committee the educational opportunities and the hands-on learning activities that are provided by the college.

The college provides a ladder form of educational opportunities that is tied into the Washington State STAR Program. The initial certificate of 12 credits is followed by a short certificate of 20 credits, and an ECE certificate/state credentialed certificate of 47 credits. These are entry level certificates that can be followed up by further work that can lead to an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education. The college also runs parenting online courses.

It is gratifying to know that Olympic College provides training for entry level work right up to a college degree. The state also provides through its STAR program, core competencies for each level that must be met. The question remains, how many people are working the field with just the initial verification or no certification? This would apply particularly to home care groups - under 4 hours - that do not need licensing by the state.

At the beginning of our meeting Gayle had immediately told the committee about the need for parent education. In fact she said that the Supreme Court of Kitsap County had been in touch with her and had indicated that from what the court had witnessed, there is a crying need for classes for parents to foster the development of parenting skills. The court is actually looking for parenting classes. This need illustrates how important early learning and parent/child positive interactions are to the community at large.

Kitsap Public Health/Nurse Family Partnership

The Kitsap County Nurse Family Partnership was founded in 2012 with the assistance of the already established program in Jefferson County. The Mission statement of NFP as related by Mathew Richardson who supports the program in Washington State as a Government Affairs Manager is to positively transform the lives of vulnerable babies, mothers, and families. NFP'S goals are to provide evidenced-based services to improve pregnancy outcomes, improve child health and development, and improve the economic self-sufficiency of the family. Registered nurses work with first time low-income families the beginning during pregnancy prior to the third trimester until the child is 2 years old - or roughly the first 1,000 days.

Nancy Acosta, Supervisor of Parent Childhood Programs, informed the committee that there are 2 1/2 registered nurses who have been specially trained locally and with the national organization to work with families. Each nurse handles 25 clients starting before birth on a weekly basis or an every other-week basis. Upon the birth of the child, the family is visited weekly and then eventually every other week. At this time, there can be a total of 62 families being serviced by NFP at one time.

There are approximately 2,000 births each year in Kitsap County almost half of which are lower income families. Outreach is an extremely important part of the program. Yaneisy Griego of KPH/NFP told the committee how providers and clients are brought together. She reaches out to various organizations such as WIC, OBGYN clinics and other community partners to find the families who fit the profile under the NFP charter (prenatal prior to 29 weeks gestation, low income and willing to work with the nurses). Yaneisy also does media marketing and as she is bilingual, reaches out to the hispanic community.

Since the NFP began in 2012, 550 families have entered into the program. Of those families, 187 have worked with the program for an appreciable amount of time and 62 have graduated. Even if the families do not complete the program, there are still significant gains. The 2019 NFP across all of Washington State shows that 89% of babies were born full term, 96% of mothers initiated breastfeeding, 97% of babies received all immunizations by 24 months and 57% of clients 18 and older were employed at 24 months after delivery. There has also been significant improvement in many other measurements such as a reduction in child abuse, ER visits, and language delays in children age 21 months. Even if parents move from the area, they may rejoin the program in another county or state.

The question was raised concerning the NFP's work with OBGYN organizations. Yaneisy outreaches to local clinics by contacting them when there is a need. She also reaches out and stays in contact with many organizations, not only finding clients eligible for NFP, but also ascertaining which organization can best help the particular family. When a family is not eligible for NFP, there are multiple other organizations such as Early Head Start through Kitsap Community Resources and and Olympic Educational Service District and other home visiting programs such as Parents as Teachers. Nancy Acosta reported that the Kitsap organizations serving the birth to 5 community are trying to go beyond partnering to establishment of a centralized access system where the organizations could work smoothly together to help families find the best program for their needs.

Mathew Richardson was asked how the organization is funded. He told us that there are numerous funding streams starting with the federal and state governments. In Washington the federal and state funds are put in one Home Visiting Service Account and competitively awarded. There is also funding from the NFP national organization and various non profits. The Kitsap NFP program is funded from Washington's Home Visiting Account: the Maternal

Mental Health, Chemical Dependency, and Therapeutic Courts Grant (1/10 of 1%; reallocation is done every year); additional county funding through the Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery; and support from Healthy Start Kitsap, a local non-profit established to support this program.

The ethos behind the work of NFP is nicely stated in a quote from its founder David Olds. “there is a magic window during pregnancy...it’s a time when the desire to be a good mother and raise a healthy happy child creates motivation to overcome incredible obstacles including poverty, instability or abuse with the help of a well trained nurse.”

The Nurse Family Partnership published that, at least in one of the trials of the program, it was found that there was appreciably improved outcomes for babies and their families. They are as follows:

Reduction in child abuse and neglect	48%
Reduction in ER visits for accidents and poisonings	56%
Reduction in language delays of child age 21 months	50%
Less behavioral/intellectual problems at age 6	67%
Reduction in preterm delivery for women who smoke	79%
Fewer subsequent pregnancies	32%
Increase in months employed	82%

NFP claims that Every \$1 invested in NFP saves \$5 in future costs for the highest-risk families served.

Olympic Educational Service District (OESD 114)
ECEAP - Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program

The Olympic Educational Service District (OESD 114) Early Head Start and Head Start Programs are federally funded. Both programs have strict eligibility requirements. Families must fall within a point system that generally includes those that are the most vulnerable. This means that families taking part in the program must be below the poverty level, or be foster care families or have children with physical and/or mental disabilities.

There is a comprehensive application process to be completed before a family is accepted into the program. Although OESD makes every effort to move quickly, sometimes within 24 hours it can be a lengthy process. Special rules like those of Nurse Family Partnership - only accepting participants in the prenatal stage - do not apply.

Candy Lester who oversees infant/toddler work at OESD told the committee how Head Start and clients are brought together. She said it was particularly hard during the pandemic, but she and her staff were working virtually and mentioned two successful events. In general her staff reaches out by being present at community events, being connected with immigration groups, and using the media. OESD also receives referrals from doctors clinics and other organizations with which OESD is in partnership and also from foster care organizations.

It was also said that every effort is made to work with families by holding monthly parent workshops to help with job searches and to connect families with food banks.

Some of the organizations that OESD works in partnership with and/or exchanges information with are:

- South Puget Sound inter-Tribal Planning Agency (SPIPA)
- ANSWERS - Counseling, Consultation & Case Management (home visiting)
- ECEAP - Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (state run)
- Holly Ridge - Special needs
- Kitsap Public Health
- School districts
- Indigenous groups
- Baby Court Kitsap
- Libraries
- Churches in the area

How many slots are filled in the Early Head Start and Head Start Programs?

- 164 - in Early Head Start (which might begin with prenatal home visits)
- 123 - Head Start - 3 to 5 years
- 188 - ECEAP - 4 and 5 year-old preschoolers

Most are half day programs.

Funding:

- Head Start and Early Head Start are funded federally
- ECEAP is funded by the state.

The funding guidelines from the federal government and state government are very strictly observed. At this point in ECEAP is most at risk of losing adequate funding. Although there is some outside funding which helps with recruitment.*

Early Achievers Program:

The Early Achievers Program is a quality and rating program run by the state that is being used to improve the quality of childcare. Laddered training is required for all childcare providers that accept state subsidies. There is, however, the unfortunate and undeniable fact that childcare workers are paid very little.

Values Gap:

Ms Lester mentioned that there still is, unfortunately, a “values gap” caused by poverty and the lack of being consistently read to and interacted with. Despite the early educational effort, quite often children fall back in the third grade.

*The State Legislature has recently passed the Fair Start Act and increased the slot rate in ECEAP by 10% during its recent 2021 session. These are huge wins for families and children and the OESD and the ECEAP are heartened, appreciative and thankful.

Kitsap Community Resources Early Learning and Family Services

Kitsap Community Resources, Learning and Family Services (ELFS), and OESD run the Early Head Start and Head Start programs here in Kitsap County. Both programs are federally funded and adhere to the same criteria of working with families at 130% or less of the poverty level. Each organization serves a separate district within the county. Two tribes also receive federal funding. Interestingly WIC recipients receive aid at 180% of the poverty level - well above EHS and HS level.

The "0 to Three" Committee met with Connie Mueller the Division Director and Jill Brenner the Deputy Director to discuss various facets of running the program, first of which was training. Training standards are set by the Office of head Start and the Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF). There are training programs at the college and community college level for those who wish it, but KCR also does its own training in house.

The Early Head Start Program can be prenatal to three years; there is no cost to the family. The home visitation has 50 slots and the center based program has 22 - 72 in all. There are 5 fully trained (college and above degrees) home visitors who work with families teaching parents about age appropriate interactions with their child. The home visitors also screen the child for vision and hearing problems and other development problems. There is at present an infant toddler wait list.

EHS and HS enrollees are assessed regularly (3 times a year) for various skill level attainments. The first assessment, by law, must be done within 45 days to determine if there are development problems. If there is a problem the child's family is referred to the appropriate agency. The center works closely with parents and makes two home visits a year. There is also nursing help available.

Family income level at 130% of poverty is an income cut off that prevents families just above this level from enrolling in HS and EHS. These families are still quite poor but are not eligible for EHS and HS. They must find other means of childcare that might not be licensed - family for neighbor's care.

Data collection is very important to KCR but has been difficult this year due to Covid-19. At this time only 10 children per class are allowed in the center, other families are worked with virtually. Unfortunately, this skews the numbers.

The salaries of EHS and HS teachers are, in the main, well below similarly trained elementary school teachers. Many are college educated and some have advanced degrees. The median income for a teacher after 10 years experience is \$54,000. It was pointed out that EHS enrollees are given comprehensive services and the teachers, therefore, are required to have specialized skills. It was also pointed out that salaries are 75% of the cost of running the program.

A number of times during the committee's interviews with the various organizations, a service was mentioned of being of great benefit to lower income families. This service, the Eastside Baby Corner, is a non-profit where HS and EHS families can obtain clothes, diapers and other baby necessities for free. It collects used baby clothing and caters to poor and disadvantaged families.

Holly Ridge

The committee met with Dedra Miller, the executive director who first told us a little bit about the history of Holly Ridge. The organization has been providing early intervention service for infants and toddlers since 1963. At that time, the years zero to three were singled out as being *the most critical period in a child's life and the best time for intervention for those infant/toddlers experiencing developmental delays*. After three years, the child moves into a preschool setting but can still obtain intervention services through the school district.

On the other end for the spectrum, Holly Ridge also works with older children and young adults to help them find paying employment and to ease their way into the work force.

The overall mission of Holly Ridge is to enable children and adults with differing abilities to reach their fullest potential creating a positive and lasting impact on the community. Unfortunately, covid-19 has stressed the system preventing the personnel from making the very important home visits; instead, they have been working virtually with their families except in emergencies when a family can come to the center under strict health protocols.

Holly Ridge draws from a very large geographical area which includes all of Kitsap and North Mason Counties. A home visitor often must travel many miles in the course of her work. Intervention services are provided at home and in the center for four hundred children a month at all income levels and well over a 1,000 children and families a year.

Referrals for intervention services come from many sources: pediatricians (40 a month), families themselves, day care providers, speech therapists, foster care families and also military families. When members of military families need intervention services, often the armed services will try to station families where it can be obtained. Holly Ridge is one of the 10 places in the country where the service is readily available.

How services are provided:

Holly Ridge does 20 evaluations a week. The family resource coordinators focus on the whole family and most of the evaluations including the original one is done in the home. Two evaluators go to the home and check for developmental problems which could be slow to talk, eating problems, emotional problems and much more. When it is determined that the problems need to be mitigated and that Holly Ridge can help, the intake will begin.

Some of the many services provided are: speech therapy, help for feeding problems including support for breast feeding, support for hearing problems, play groups (socialization), nutrition guidance, occupational therapy, help with neurological problems and basic slow development problems such as talking, feeding and walking.

Holly Ridge also works with children who have Downes Syndrome and children with autism.

Funding:

Funds come from Washington State's Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF). Federal funds are funneled through the department. Services are also paid by individual insurance policies and medicaid. Holly Ridge may also receive grants and help for special needs from philanthropic organizations such as United Way.

In service:

Every Friday there are case conferences where a team of professionals from different disciplines discuss case by case a child's progress report. This allows for a comprehensive view of each child. Each family has an individual plan with set goals but also with flexibility built in.

At intake there is a timeline established which requires that an evaluation be completed within 45 days. The best environment for evaluation is in the home where the whole family is involved.

Personnel:

Education of personnel at Holly Ridge is ongoing, keeping everyone up to date on developments in the field. Inservice education has proved to be of great benefit. The personnel in general are highly trained. Physical therapists with Ph'd's work with the children and many evaluators and teachers have master degrees or are certified special education teachers. There are also teachers who have matriculated through early childhood teaching courses at Olympic College or other community colleges. Many have worked at Holly Ridge for 10, 20 and even 30 years.

Questions raised:

Dedra was asked if families suffered from denial especially when it involves a diagnosis of autism. Her answer was yes; there is denial and also grieving when families face this problem. Once the family comes to terms, there is also a recognition of potential.

Does Holly Ridge work with outside agencies? The answer was also yes particularly with OESD. Some of the philanthropic agencies such as United Way (\$8,000 for virtual equipment) and Kitsap Great Give have also been a source of funding. There have also been individual donors.

Questions about funding concerns:

There was great concern about the effect of covid-19 on state budgeted funds for developmental problems. It was feared that the budget might be cut by as much as %15. during this legislative session.

Another concern was the sub minimum wage bill; sub minimum wage is what is paid people with disabilities. Legislation is watched very closely because so many agencies such as Holly Ridge depend on government funding.

Kitsap Regional Library
Youth Librarian, Port Orchard

Early Childhood Programs at Kitsap Regional Library:

The “Babies Storytime” program is a parent/baby program taught once a week for eight weeks. Play, movement, singing, rhythm and some social interaction are part of each of the sessions. Young families are also guided in preliminary skills like talking to their babies and how to use language. In some cases families have cultural differences or have not themselves experienced or seen this type of communication in their life times. Sometimes stories that are usually seen most often as appropriate are seen by many parents as having little cultural relevance. Therefore care has to be taken in the selection of material. At the end of the 8 week sessions, the classes may have been introduced to nearly 120 songs. There are as many as 30 to 60 attendees in the program.

Another program run by an outside organization that the library supports called “South Kitsap ready! For Kindergarten” entitled “0 to 5” is taught 3 times a year. It stresses parent/child interaction, socialization, language math and reasoning. There are 4 meetings in each of the sessions.

Anji Play, a new conceptual program for preschoolers of guided but creative and child directed play is being considered as a library program. (It is a trademarked Chinese Company as well as a preschool philosophy out of China)

Baby Band, a program that uses music, rhythm, instruments and movement is a very popular program for parents and children.

Outreach:

The library does outreach through Facebook and social media, preschools, day care, word of mouth and also through its own publications. Youth librarians present storytimes at preschools and also host preschools for storytimes at its own facilities. KRL also reaches out with baby bonding programs stressing the importance of social and emotional interactions. Since both Port Orchard and Bremerton have a racially diverse group of children, storytimes has to take this very much into account.

Library facilities are sometimes used by outside child connected groups such as home school groups and in the case of Bremerton Library, “Grupo de Mamas”. All branches have been stressing racially diverse and responsive programs to match diverse communities.

Trends:

KRL, along with many libraries, is not just doing the traditional business of lending, but is also working to promote reading and active learning for people of all ages starting with the very young.

KRL youth librarians have leeway in developing programs that fit their demographic environment. They hold classes for babies and their parents but also supplement the work of Early Head Start, Head Start and other preschools while at the same time being sensitive to cultural differences. The library is becoming a true learning center.

It also should be noted that libraries are funded by the county.

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)
Washington State Program

Although we did not interview at ECEAP, the committee would be remiss in not including this program. Quoting from the Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP (an organization that promotes early childhood education) the following is a description of the program.

“Because less than half of eligible children are served through the federal Head Start program, in 1985 the State of Washington created the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), a comprehensive “whole child”, family-focused preschool program designed to help-low income and at-risk children and families succeed in school and life. The program was modeled after Head Start, and served over 10,00 children in 2014.”

“ECEAP and Head Start provide an intensive combination of education, health and nutrition screening and assistance, parent involvement and family support. Three and four-year-olds attend high-quality pre-school classes, are screened and immunized for possible health problems that could hinder learning.....”

Child Care
Aware of
Washington

Childcare Aware of Washington (CCA of WA) is a nonprofit organization that receives funding from Washington State's Department of Children Youth and Families (DCYF) as well as gifts from philanthropy. It provides data and services in support of child care providers and families.

As stated in its published material:

"Childcare Aware of Washington provides thorough and independent information in support:

For families seeking quality childcare
For child care programs seeking to improve quality
For effective policy making"

Most childcare (80%) is privately paid for by fees collected from parents. Fees depend on the type of care and the education of the providers at licensed centers or licensed family day care, or the services offered.

Subsidies are available to eligible families through Washington State's Working Connections Childcare (WCCC). Eligibility is based on the size of the family and income. For example, a family of four is eligible if their household income is less than \$52,000 per year.

In the state of Washington there are 6 Child Care Aware regions - Child Care Aware of Olympic Peninsula (Child Care Action Council) serves Clallam, Jefferson, Grays Harbor, Thurston and Kitsap Counties. Within the district there are 316 child care providers. In Kitsap the number of childcare providers has dropped from 155 with a capacity for 4,947 children in 2015 to 138 providers with a capacity for 5,189 children in June 2020.

The monthly median cost of childcare in Kitsap County is as follows:

Infants \$1,062
Toddler \$949
Preschool \$750
School age \$535
Fifty one percent of children used financial aid.

CCA of WA provides services to providers on behalf of the states' Early Achievers Program. Quoting from information given to the Committee:

"Early Achievers is Washington's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) which gives training, technical assistance, coaching, awards, scholarships and benefits to child care providers to improve the quality of their care." "Approximately 57% of licensed childcare providers in Kitsap County are enrolled in Early Achievers. Early Achievers provides families with valuable child care program quality information so they can make informed child care choices"

Stars ID system is part of the Merit Work Force Registry.

This is a valuable program developed by Washington State and adhered to by Child Care Aware of Washington that develops a professional profile. The Merit Work Force Registry includes such things as identification, background checks, health and safety

information, educational verification, ECEAP staff qualification verifications, awards, training, etc. that details personal experience and work experience.

CCA on WA through its regional partner, provides customizes training to each region based on need of the providers in the region and any issues that might arise. The local agency in Kitsap County is called Child Care Action Council. Classes being offered to personnel are currently being done virtually. A child care center can also hire the CCA regional office to do a customized training for all of their staff on a topic of their choosing.,

Even with all the safeguards in place, there are still children that fall through the cracks. Deeann Puffert, the CEO of Child Care Aware of Washington reminded the committee that there are often children who are not accessing child care or finding care that meets their needs. Also, the current eligibility level of \$52,000 for a family of four causes those who only earn a little more than that to struggle with obtaining reliable and good child care at a cost they can actually afford due to the market price of child care. There are also great differentials in the cost of living among Washington's communities. .

Pertinent facts pertaining to child care in Washington and also some facts particular to Kitsap County:

- 61% of WA's children under 6 live in homes where all adults work,
- Child care for infants in Kitsap county is \$1,062 (more than a year's tuition in college)
- 90% of a child's brain develops in the first 5 years.
- The median income in Kitsap County is \$74,000
- Childcare workers in Kitsap County make low wages - center based \$29,292, home program directors \$37,032, Center director \$43,874 without medical benefits. (Family child care provider gross earnings are \$27,372)
- 50% of child care workers are black
- Child care small businesses have experienced at least 50% decrease due to the pandemic.

Washington State Department of Children Youth and Families (DCYF)

The DCYF, a cabinet-level agency, was created on July 6 2017. Quoting from the departments's published material, "It overseas several services previously offered by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and the Department of Early Learning." Included among these several services are early childhood welfare and early childhood education.

Quoting further, "DCYF is the lead agency for state funded services that support children and families to build resilience and health, and to improve educational outcomes. We accomplish this by partnering with state and local agencies, tribes and other organizations in communities across the state of Washington. Our focus is to support children and families at their most vulnerable points, giving them the tools they need to succeed."

DCYF works through agencies like Childcare Aware to provide parents with information about the availability and quality (based on a point system) of child care in their local areas. It also provides guidance to and supervises the licensing of child care centers and family child care and sets standards and oversees the education and professional development of the child care workforce.

Tribal Relations

The DCYF has a special director devoted to tribal relations who works with the 29 federal recognized tribes in Washington with the goal "to assist the collective needs of tribal governments and the Recognized American Indian Organizations (RAIO's) to assure quality and comprehensive program service delivery in the areas of child welfare and early learning."

Tribal Consultation Policy

This policy is a "government to government relationship in seeking consultation and participation by representatives of tribal governments in policy development and service program activities....."

A special curriculum has been developed in cooperation with the tribes entitled "Since time Immemorial Early Learning Curriculum" which recognizes the the tribe's heritage, culture and history.

CHILDCARE STATISTICS

WASHINGTON STATE AND KITSAP COUNTY

The pandemic has interfered with the gathering of childcare statistics in Kitsap County; some are not as recent as the committee would like. One source updated to 2020 is the, Zero to Three - a national organization, which gives a statewide report; many of its statistics could also apply to Kitsap County. The other most recent statistical resource is the Kitsap Interagency Coordinating Council - Head Start/ ECEAP Partnership 2020 Assessment that includes 2018 - 2019 statistics.

ZERO TO THREE REPORT

The good news about Washington State, according to the Zero to Three report, is that in most categories measured, it is above the national average. The organization reports six indicators of good health such as (1) Infant mortality (below average), (2) preterm babies (below average), (3) babies with low birth rate (below average), (4) ever breastfed (above average), (5) late or no prenatal care (below average), (6) uninsured low-income/toddlers (below average - the sole bad indicator).

Other indicators of good health policy in Washington is that it is a Medicaid expansion state which means that the state has a policy for (1) dealing with maternal depression for well-child visits and also plans for the following, (2) a plan for social-emotional screening for young children, (3) a plan covering Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) services at home, (4) a plan covering IECMH services at pediatric/family medicine practices, and (5) a plan covering IECMH services in early childhood education settings.

Zero to Three also reports on indicators of strong families such as family resilience which is well above average - a good thing, but on the down-side Washington is below the national average in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits, and above the national average in crowded housing and two or more adverse childhood experiences. The infant/toddler maltreatment rate and time in out-of-home placement is thankfully below average.

In the domain of positive early learning experiences, it is above average in the categories below:

- Parents reading to babies - 47% well above average
- Percentage of income-eligible infants/toddlers with Early Head Start access.
- Low/moderate income infants/toddlers in Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) funded care (helps families with low incomes get TANF funds).
- Unfortunately, the state is lagging in certain indicators such as:
 - The cost of care - above average
 - Developmental screening received.
- Percentage of infant/toddlers receiving Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) part C service - which is a federal program for infants/toddlers with disabilities that assists states with early intervention services.

There are certain technical criteria that Washington State was lacking in, but for the most part it seemed to be functioning ahead of other states.

FAMILY PAID LEAVE

One of the most significant bills promoting strong families was passed by the state legislature in 2017. This bill was to go into effect in 2020. Quoting from Zero to Three the bill is explained below:

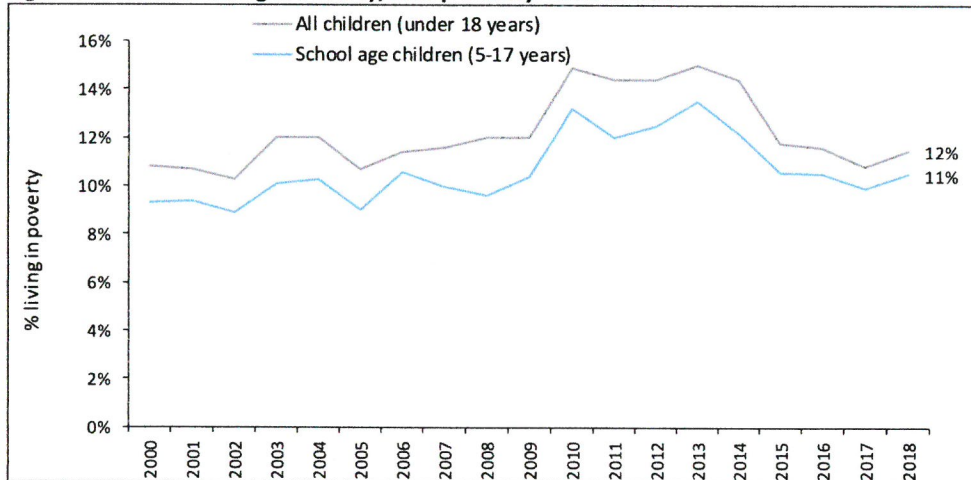
The bill, “set to go into effect in 2020, provides eligible workers with up to 12 weeks of paid time off for the birth, fostering, or adoption of a child or to care for their own or a family members’ serious medical condition. Workers can take a combination of up to 16 weeks of paid leave in a year, plus another two for complicated pregnancies.”

KICC FEDERALLY FUNDED PROGRAMS

The following information and graphs are excerpted from the Kitsap Interagency Coordinating Council’s (KICC) Assessment. The graphs are presented with additional information quoted from the report which has the most up-to-date information about demographics, poverty rates, childcare facilities and other pertinent information bearing on early childhood care and education, especially as it has to do with Early Head Start and Head Start programs. Please note that specific Reference notations in the graphs and charts are available in the KICC 2020 Report, pages 140-144.

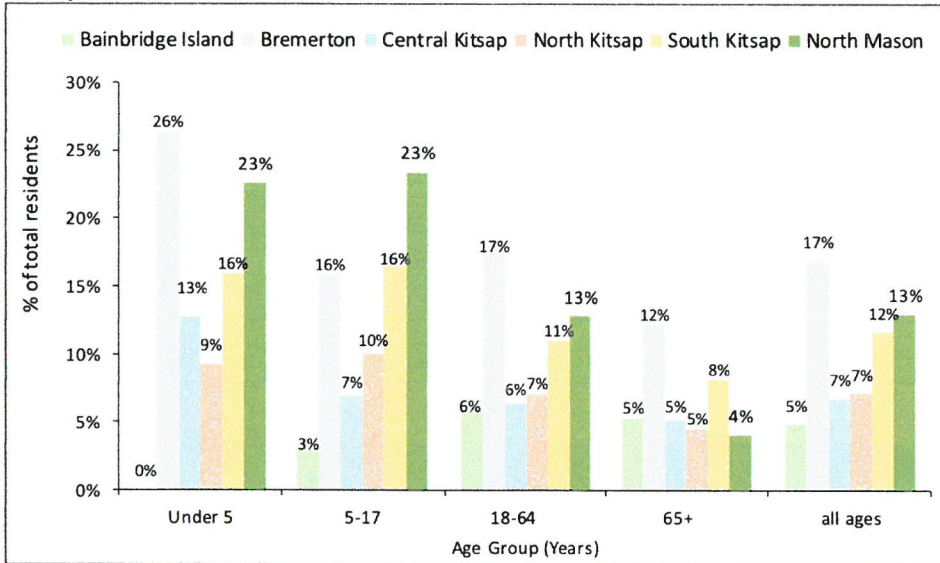
The first graph concerns children living in poverty in Kitsap County. In 2019, the federal poverty level is defined as a household income of \$12,490 for one person and \$25,750 for a family of four. (KICC 2020 report, Figure 17)

Figure 17. Children Living in Poverty, Kitsap County: 2000 to 2018¹⁰



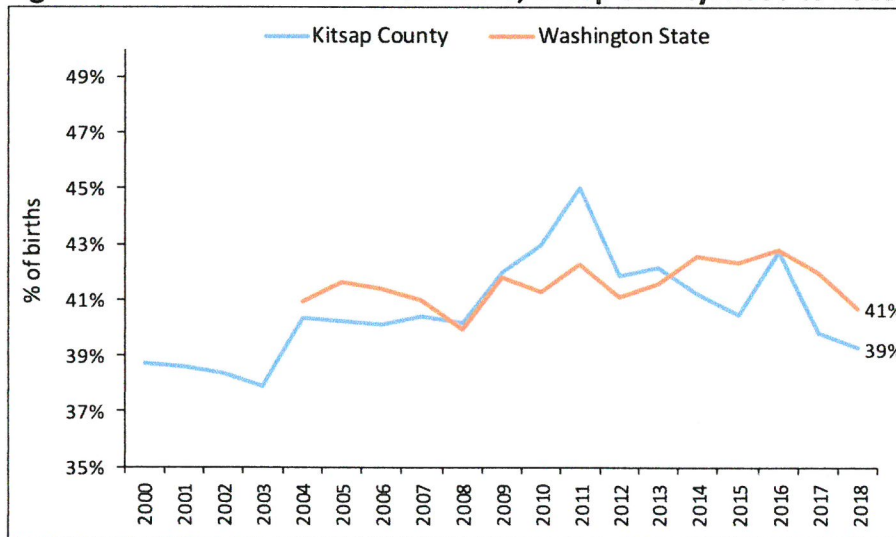
In Kitsap County and Washington State, young children and women tend to have disproportionately higher rates of poverty. (KICC 2020 report, Figure 18)

Figure 18. Percentage of Total Residents Living in Poverty by Age Group and Region, Kitsap County and North Mason: 2014-18⁵



Another important measure of poverty in a community is the proportion of pregnant women who qualify for and receive Medicaid funding to cover their maternity care. Medicaid pays for maternity care for those who have an income at or below 185% of the federal poverty level. (KICC 2020 report, Figure 20)

Figure 20. Medicaid-Paid Civilian Births, Kitsap County: 2000 to 2018³

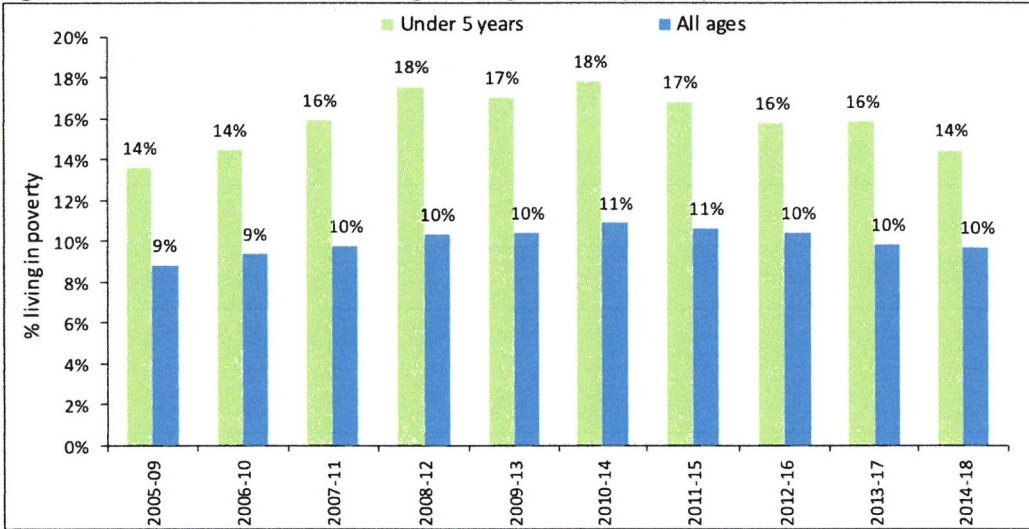


HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START IN KITSAP COUNTY

According to the KICC Assessment, the profile of eligible Head Start/ Early Head Start children, along with family demographics, follows with a few words of explanation.

The 0 - 4-year-old population was estimated to be 14,739 from 2014 to 2018, with approximately 14% living in poverty. The poverty rate for these young children is consistently higher than the rate of all ages combined. (KICC 2020 Report, Figure 22)

Figure 22. Children Under 5 and All Ages Living in Poverty, Kitsap County: 2005-09 to 2014-18⁵



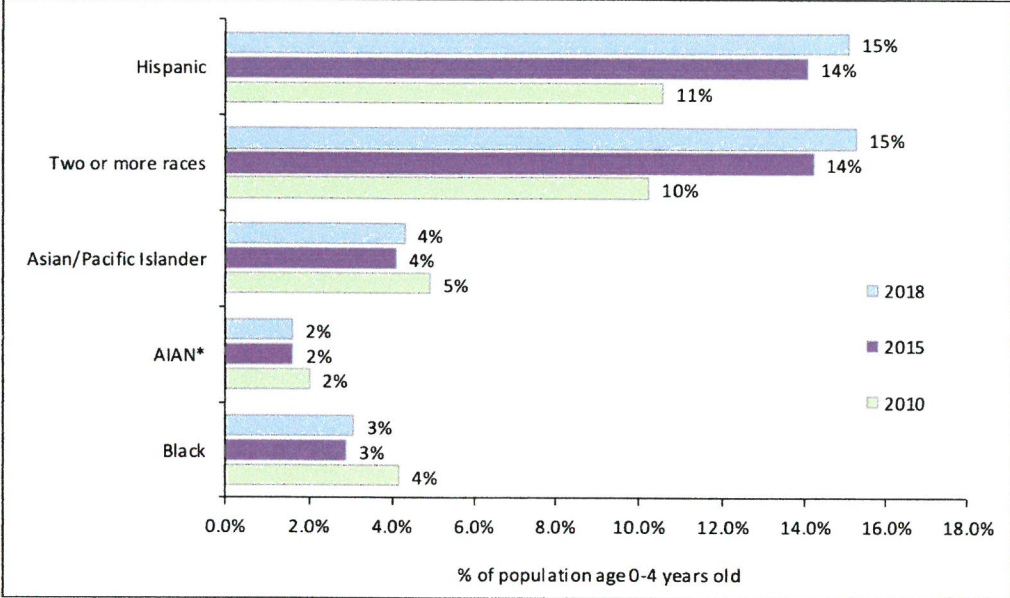
About one-third (32%) of the county's children under age 5 living in poverty reside in the Bremerton region from 2014 to 2018. (KICC 2020 report, Table 16)

Table 16. Percentage of Children Under 6 Years Living at Various Levels of Poverty by Region, Kitsap County and North Mason County: 2014-18⁵

	Bainbridge Island		Central Kitsap	North Kitsap	South Kitsap	North Mason
Population under age 6	1,477	3,213	5,934	2,559	4,773	857
< 50% of poverty	0%	10%	6%	6%	9%	0%
50% to 99% of poverty	0%	13%	5%	2%	7%	17%
100% to 124% of poverty	0%	7%	3%	5%	5%	9%
125% to 149% of poverty	2%	7%	6%	5%	2%	18%
150% to 184% of poverty	0%	9%	3%	10%	8%	11%
185% to 199% of poverty	1%	3%	5%	2%	3%	0%
≥ 200% of poverty	97%	51%	73%	70%	68%	46%

Minority Race and ethnicity (KICC 2020 Report, Figure 23)

Figure 23. Minority Race/Ethnicity of Child (Age 0 to 4) Population, Kitsap County: 2010, 2015 and 2018¹



*AIAN = American Indian and Alaska Native

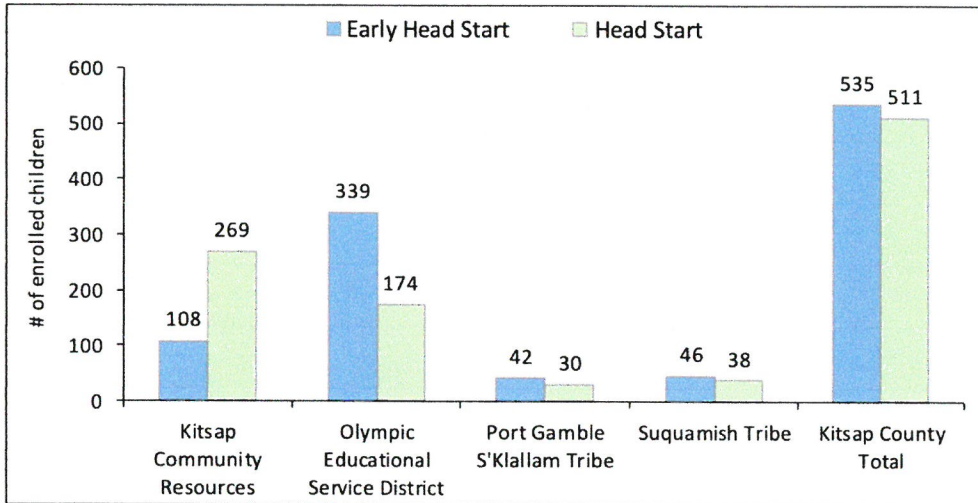
Number of enrollees by program:

County total cumulative enrollment has been increasing in Early Head Start and slightly decreasing in Head Start since the 2009-10 school year. During the 2018-19 school year, there were a total of 1,046 people enrolled within Kitsap County programs. This included 1,007 children and 39 pregnant women. This year overall, more enrollees were in Early Head Start (51%) than in Head Start programs (49%). (KICC 2020 Report page, 48) (Table 19) (Figure 24)

Table 19. Cumulative Enrollment in Kitsap County Head Start and Early Head Start Programs: 2009-10 to 2018-19¹¹

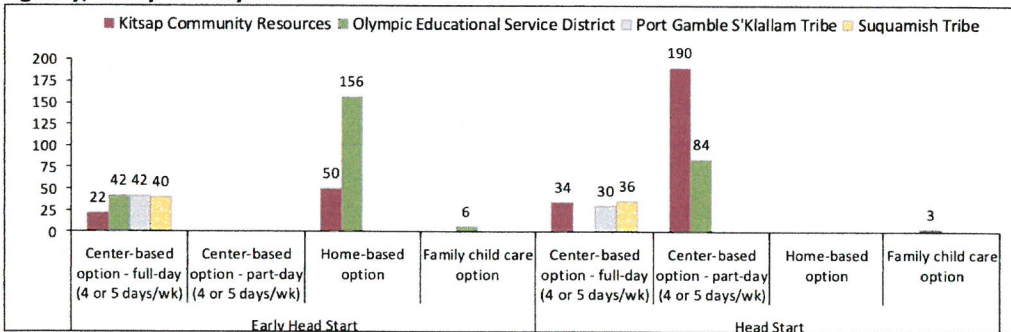
	Early Head Start									
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Kitsap Community Resources	112	119	105	102	98	108	107	102	118	108
Olympic Educational Service District	158	229	229	221	225	237	289	353	354	339
Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe	34	35	37	33	34	32	42	42	43	42
Suquamish Tribe	41	40	48	45	44	42	44	42	40	46
Kitsap County Total	345	423	419	401	401	419	482	539	555	535
	Head Start									
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Kitsap Community Resources	336	346	305	314	268	303	318	311	277	269
Olympic Educational Service District	262	303	272	292	262	239	235	204	182	174
Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe	34	37	37	37	28	29	35	33	33	30
Suquamish Tribe	37	38	40	37	36	39	36	36	37	38
Kitsap County Total	669	724	654	680	594	610	624	584	529	511

Figure 24. Enrollment Head Start/Early Head Start by Program and Agency, Kitsap County: 2018-19¹¹



The following graph shows the funded enrollment by program option in each agency during the 2018-19 school year. (does not include pregnant women) (KICC 2020 Report page, 50) (Figure 25)

Figure 25. Early Head Start and Head Start Funded Enrollment by Program Option and by Agency, Kitsap County: 2018-19¹¹



RACIAL AND ETHNIC COMPOSITION IN PROGRAMS

- White 51%
- Multi-racial 20%
- American Indian and Alaskan native 14%
- Black 6%
- Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander 3%
- Asian 1%
- Other or unknown race 4%

(Among the total enrollment population across all programs, 22% identified as Hispanic.) (KICC 2020 Report page, 51) (Table 20)

Table 20. Race and Ethnicity of Early Head Start and Head Start Enrollees by Program and by Agency, Kitsap County: 2018-19¹¹

	Kitsap Community Resources		Olympic Educational Service District		Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe		Suquamish Tribe	
	EHS	HS	EHS	HS	EHS	HS	EHS	HS
RACE, ANY ETHNICITY								
White	58%	42%	82%	51%	5%	9%	16%	17%
Black	7%	7%	7%	4%	0%	0%	0%	6%
American Indian/Alaska Native	2%	4%	4%	1%	90%	77%	75%	72%
Asian	0%	2%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	7%	3%	4%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Multi-racial	27%	26%	22%	13%	5%	0%	9%	8%
Unknown/Other	0%	0%	15%	1%	0%	0%	5%	3%
ETHNICITY								
Hispanic	20%	26%	29%	17%	5%	0%	7%	13%
Non-Hispanic	80%	74%	71%	83%	95%	100%	93%	87%

“Collectively across all programs, the vast majority of enrollees (90%) speak English as their primary language at home. The second most common language spoken at home this year was the Native Central American, South American and Mexican languages (6%), while Spanish was the number 3 most spoken at home languages (2%).”

Childcare Programs: The number of family childcare providers has been declining over the past decade, while the number of childcare centers has remained relatively stable except for a slight drop in 2013. (Figure 27) (Figure 28)

Figure 27. Childcare Facilities by Type, Kitsap County: 2007 to 2018¹⁶

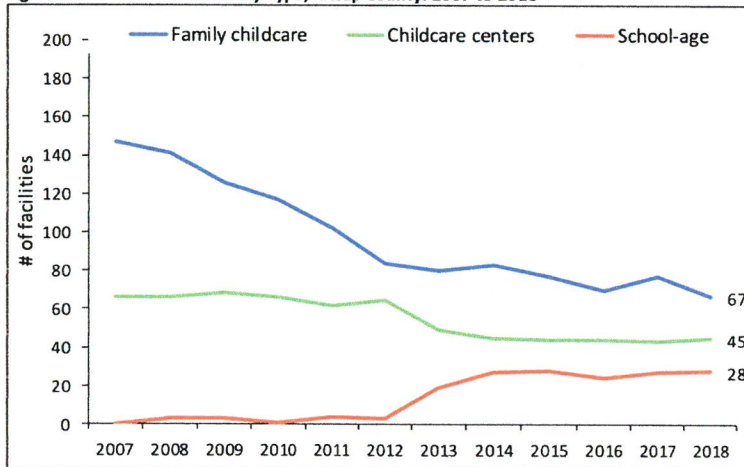
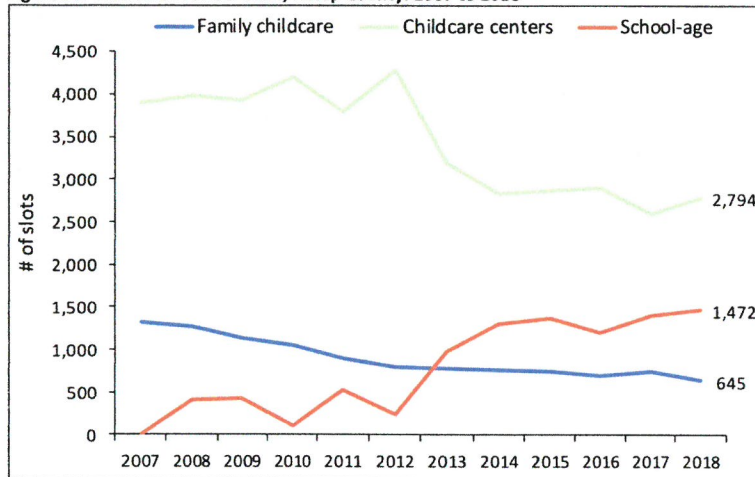


Figure 28. Childcare Provider Slots, Kitsap County: 2007 to 2018¹⁶



The above report with graphs is either excerpted word for word or very closely paraphrased from the KICC Assessment. In this portion of the “0 to Three” we will mention that there are many other forms of childcare that are difficult to nail down, among them are exempted care (does not need to be licensed), programs that operate less than 4 hours a day and private and church run programs. Some are used by HS/EHS eligible families. These may be family, friend or neighbor or even other licensed center or family home based care.

Another child development and childcare program serving Head Start eligible children is the Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP). This is a state financed program. Quoting from the KICC Report, “The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is Washington’s state-funded program to provide preschool to low-income families ECEAP and Head Start are very similar in that they both provide comprehensive preschool programs that provide free services and support to eligible children and their families.

Take away ideas supported by the Committee

Early childhood specialists have been explaining the work they do over and over again with some good results, but the committee thinks that is not enough. Until information about the crucial importance of the first three years is actually internalized by most people, there won't be a true shift in thinking and true understanding by the general public of this extremely important time of a persons life that cannot be walked back.

The Committee believes that there should be a general recognition that by the age of three a child has reached a defining stage upon which the rest of his/her life is created. For this reason and the above reasons the committee would like to propose some initiatives. They are as follows:

- 1) Most STUDENTS IN HIGH SCHOOL will at some point in their lives become parents. For this reason, reaching children of high school age and teaching them, particularly, about early brain development and brain science in general would be extremely helpful. The subject matter not only is of great interest, but it also demonstrates how important the first years of life are. Raising a baby is a responsibility that can't be taken lightly and this must be internalized by teenagers long before they become parents.
- 2) Our communication with our LOCAL HOSPITAL here in Kitsap has shown that little is done at birth to introduce the new mother and father to what the joys and responsibilities of parenthood will entail. We think more can be done at this pivotal point. A baby development video could be shown before the parents leave the hospital, and a baby welcoming box with low cost but appropriate gifts such as baby's first book, baby's first toy and a parent's guide to the first few months of baby's life (gifts that might be donated through outside funding) can be considered.
- 3) CHILDCARE WORKERS are entrusted with the health, safety and development of our babies, yet they are too often undervalued and underpaid. Every effort should be made to pay child care professionals commensurate with their responsibility and their specialized educational attainments. Child care workers' educational achievements should be recognized and rewarded even if this means support from the state and federal governments. Dedicated and educated workers are the heart and soul of child care services.

4) Continued support for PARENTAL LEAVE is crucial. Parental leave has most often been seen through the lens of the parents, but it's even more crucial for the baby. The time has come to realize that supporting parents in their child raising efforts is not only good for the parents and the baby, but it also good for society and our country as a whole.

5) Although there are a number of organizations both nationally, and locally that PROMOTE CHILDCARE and early learning, they seem to only be able to reach a narrow audience. It is about time that the state and local governments work to promote knowledge about the importance of the early years (0 to Three), not only to children's educational and emotional development, but to betterment and welfare of society and the country itself.

The State of Washington has moved in the right direction since the first Washington State LWV's Study and much has been accomplished, but it is an ongoing struggle. Funding for the various child welfare organizations at the federal and state level is often inadequate and unstable, as much of the funding rely on grants. There's more to be done. It's up to us and other interested organizations to keep our legislators on task so that there is greater and more consistent funding.