

Brave New Daycare:

government standards for your baby and you



The Governor and the Legislature have formed a Commission on Early Learning and are expanding state control over Washington's childcare services. Family, friends, and neighbors are being increasingly painted as substandard, while government-controlled daycare is being painted as preferable.

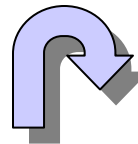
We believe parents know best how to raise their own children and can judge whether family, friends, neighbors, or formal centers are the best alternatives for childcare. All of these choices should remain available.

We encourage parents to become involved in protecting their right to raise their own children, and we encourage private childcare providers to protect their right to provide responsible services in freedom.

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1 Studies show gains from Head Start disappear after about two years of public school.¹



Proponents of formal, government-run daycare claim that since much of a child's brain development happens before age 5, government must closely regulate early learning programs. Governor Gregoire has repeated the claim, "We know children with early learning success are more likely to finish school, more likely to go to college, less likely to be unemployed and less likely to commit crimes."² However there are no studies validating any connection between state early learning programs and success in later life.³

While it is true that the first 5 years are a critical period in a child's development, it is a stretch to conclude that government-run early childcare is the answer. Where is the parent in this picture?

One major example of government-run early childcare is the Head Start program, aimed at low income families.

Although it has helped many low income families and young children in the short term, a Westinghouse Learning Corporation study of longer term effects, "showed no difference in behavior or educational achievement between Head Start kids and other underclass children."⁴

"...the federally sponsored CRS [Congressional Research Service] Synthesis Project found almost the same thing."⁴

"...despite literally hundreds of studies, the jury is still out on the question of whether participation in Head Start has any lasting beneficial effects."⁵

2 Universal early learning programs result in exorbitant costs.



Head Start is the most prominent example of large-scale, government-run early childcare. In 2002, Head Start received \$6.5 billion in federal funding to serve 915,000 children. This covered 80% of the total cost, with local communities expected to fund 20%. Thus the total needed was \$8.125 billion (or an average of \$8,880 per child.) Of these children, only 25% were full-time, full-year participants.¹

If a universal Head Start type of program is expanded for the children under five in Washington state, applying these 2002 dollar amounts to the estimate of 2,221,841 children under five in Washington today,² this program would cost \$19,729,948,000 (almost \$20 billion) per year.

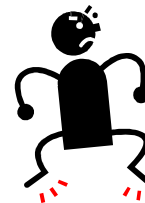
Affluent families are to pay according to a sliding scale, saving state money, but childcare providers would be offered bonuses and support services to participate in the state's system,³ raising costs.

Even if seed funding came from the Gates and other foundations, historically, start-up grants end, and costs are transferred to the taxpayers.

This doesn't include the stack of **new forms**, new reporting and hiring requirements borne by the childcare providers, and the cost of compliance inspectors. And we will **all be further burdened with the taxes** for the expanded bureaucracy. Should the taxes of stay-at-home parents go to support daycare for families with two incomes?

Head Start already claims to help the neediest groups. We don't need vast, new, experimental programs.

3 Preschool centers result in behavior problems, and do not narrow achievement gaps.



A Stanford University and University of California study of children in preschool centers shows that the benefits in cognitive development varied among the different income and racial groups. Children from extremely poor families showed the strongest gains in cognitive skills, with Hispanic children gaining the most benefit in English language skills. Keep in mind, studies show these gains are temporary for most groups.

However, since all income groups experience a positive bump from preschool, **“learning gaps between children from low income and middle income families are not likely to narrow with universal preschool.”**¹

Furthermore, this study found that **“attendance in preschool centers, even for short periods of time each week, hinders the rate at which young children develop social skills ..”**²

The study examined three behavior domains: externalizing behavior (aggression) interpersonal skills, and self control. This negative effect of preschool on behavior was true for **all** races and income groups.³

Yet the governor's Washington Learns, Early Learning Council hopes that, “..By the time children are four years old, they will be enrolled in taxpayer-supported, full-day, full-year voluntary early learning.”⁴

4 Washington State mandates Early Learning Academic Requirements for your baby.



The state Superintendent of Public Instruction published “Essential Academic Learning Requirements” (EALRs) for children from birth to 5 years, in June 2000. This is the same office which wrote the EALRs for the K-12 students---standards that were rated “F” by the Fordham Foundation.¹

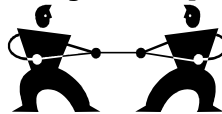
Does your baby measure up? These EALRs are said to be just “guidelines,” but that is what we were told about the K-12 EALRs which students must now meet to graduate. Are you ready for the baby WASL? Could daycare providers classify your child as “slow” based on government time-lines even if he or she is perfectly normal? In fact, a recent study stated, “**Brain development in children with the highest IQs peaked four years later than among average children....**”²

In 2005, the state issued “voluntary” Early Learning Benchmarks on how toddlers should behave from birth to entry into kindergarten. They recommend that care-givers, “Read stories with child ... including stories from diverse cultures and family structures (e.g., single parents, same sex parents).”³

Will the new standards include changing toddlers’ values as well as changing their diapers? Values formation is a parental right. No outside care-giver should imprint values upon a baby without the parents’ permission or knowledge.

Government agencies have a mixed track record in protecting children. It is dangerous for government to regulate childrens’ beliefs. Childcare centers already have to meet health and safety regulations. These new measures attempt to **regulate the child**, not just the facility.

Whose children are they—the parents’ or the state’s?



Whose values will your children learn—yours or the bureaucrats’?

Endnotes (Note: Websites may have been removed from the internet.)

- 1-1 “Hyping the Head Start Program” by Mackinac Center for Public Policy, Posted: Apr. 5, 1993
<http://www.educationreport.org/article.asp?ID=159>
- 1-2 Press release, Jan. 18, 2006, Office of the Governor, http://www.governor.wa.gov/news/newsview.asp?press_Release=232&newsType=1
- 1-3 *Evaluation of Early Intervention in Washington State: Options and Issues*, by Campbell, Cawthon, Keenan, Lyons, Schrager, of Washington DSHS, July 1998, pgs ix-x
- 1-4 “The Dead End of Head Start,” by Llewellyn H. Rockwell Jr., Nov 1992, <http://www.fff.org/freedom/1192.asp>
- 1-5 “Stalking the Wild Taboo – Does Head Start Make a Difference?” by Janet Currie and Duncan Thomas, Section I, <http://ira.nc.com/swtaboo/taboo/headst01.html>
- 2-1 “Head Start: Promoting Early Childhood Development”, US Dept. of Health & Human Services, April 16, 2002
<http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2002pres/headstart.html>
- 2-2 “State Population by Age and Sex: 2000-2030 From November 2005 Forecast,” updated 11/01/2005,
<http://www.ofm.wa.gov/pop/stfc/stfc2005/stfc2005.xls>
- 2-3 “Policy Recommendations to the Early Learning Council for the Quality Rating and Improvement System,” pg. 2,
<http://www.washingtonlearns.wa.gov/materials/QRISFINALRecommendations.pdf>
- 3-1 “How Much is Too Much? The Influence of Preschool Centers on Children’s Development Nationwide,” Stanford University & University of California, Nov 4, 2005, pg 2, http://pace.berkeley.edu/pace_stanford?berkeley.html
- 3-2 Ibid
- 3-3 Ibid, pg. 3 and the accompanying graphs at http://pace.berkeley.edu/wp.05_2graphs.ver2.screen.pdf
- 3-4 Washington Learns, “Early Learning council proposal to the steering committee, Five Big Ideas,” pg 2, http://www.washingtonlearns.wa.gov/materials/ELCBIGIdeas_000.pdf
- 4-1 “State of the State English Standards 2005,” pg. 69, Fordham Foundation, <http://www.edexcellence.net/foundation/publication/publication.cfm?id=337&p> and “State of the State Math Standards 2005,” Fordham Foundation, <http://www.edexcellence.net/foundation/publication/publication.cfm?id=338>
- 4-2 “Smart kids’ brains grow differently, study says,” by Robert Lee Hotz, Kitsap Sun, March 30, 2006 article on research by National Institutes of Mental Health and McGill University.
- 4-3 *Washington State Early Learning and Development Benchmarks*, pg 63, <http://www.k12.wa.us/EarlyLearning/pubdocs/EarlyLearningBenchmarks.pdf>