



**EARLY ACHIEVERS: GOOD FOR FAMILIES, CHILD CARE PROVIDERS, AND WASHINGTON STATE** Quality early learning helps children succeed in school and beyond. Early Achievers is a new program that connects families to child care and early learning programs with the help of an easy-to-understand rating system. Early Achievers also offers coaching and resources for child care providers to support each child's learning and development. Research shows that this kind of assistance helps providers improve the quality of their programs. And when more young children are ready for school, we all benefit.

Early Achievers is a key strategy in Washington's Statewide Early Learning Plan to improve the quality of child care and early learning programs. The information from Early Achievers will allow DEL to make the most of its programs and services—such as preschool, licensing, and professional development—by targeting investments in training and technical assistance.

In partnership with the Washington State Child Care Resource and Referral Network and the University of Washington, DEL is working to expand the number of providers participating in Early Achievers across the state. Beginning in 2012, ratings for participating programs will be available through DEL's website.

*“We are now providing a higher-quality learning environment for our children.”*

**—CLARK COUNTY QRIS PARTICIPANT**

#### **WHAT IS A QUALITY CHILD CARE PROGRAM?**

Choosing child care is an important decision. Families deserve to know that their children are in quality care environments that foster a love of learning, promote each child's unique skills and cultures, and support the development of the whole child. Early Achievers helps identify programs that have:

- ⊙ Nurturing and supportive relationships between adults and children
- ⊙ Care and education that meets each student's individual needs
- ⊙ Facilities that are safe, well-organized, and have age-appropriate resources
- ⊙ Programs that support the development of the whole child
- ⊙ Open communication and genuine engagement with families
- ⊙ Meaningful efforts to embrace diversity

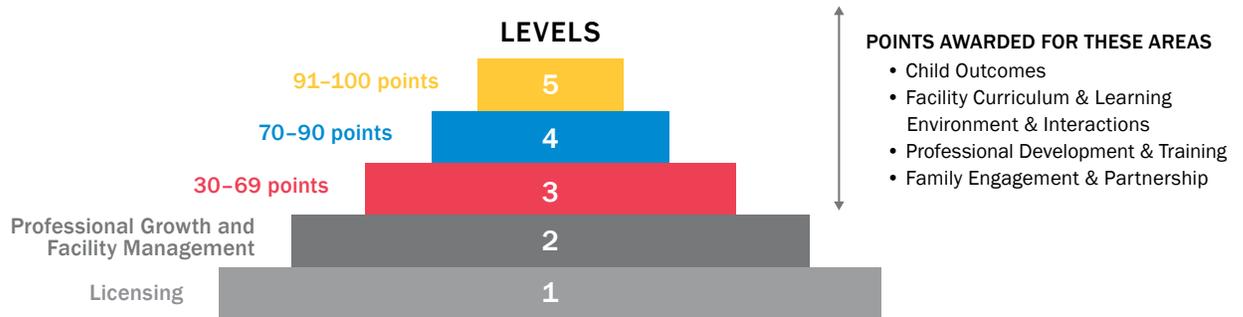
#### **HOW EARLY ACHIEVERS WORKS**

Many states have quality rating and improvement systems, but Washington is one of the first to combine the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) and Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)—along with an evaluation of curriculum, assessment, and staff training—to measure quality in a comprehensive way.

Programs are rated on a scale of one to five. At a minimum all Early Achievers must meet Washington's requirements for health and safety or have recognized certification. All licensed child care programs are eligible to enroll in Early Achievers and can voluntarily decide whether they want to participate and achieve higher ratings.

To achieve a level two rating, providers complete a self-assessment, attend no-cost trainings, and become a part of DEL's statewide professional development registry. Programs with higher ratings—levels three through five—have demonstrated a commitment to strong instruction, training for staff, and family engagement to support student outcomes.

As they move up the rating scale, child care and early learning providers receive additional coaching, professional development, and incentives to help them continue to improve the quality of their programs.



**BASED ON RESEARCH, DEVELOPED IN COLLABORATION WITH PROVIDERS**

Early Achievers was developed in collaboration with child care providers across the state. For two years, the Department of Early Learning and Thrive by Five Washington worked with approximately 90 providers in five communities to develop the program.

An independent evaluation of the pilot program found that when child care providers receive one-on-one coaching and a modest amount of money to make changes to their program, the quality of the care they give children starts to quickly increase.

Learn more about Early Achievers at [www.del.wa.gov/care/qris](http://www.del.wa.gov/care/qris).

**INCENTIVES FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS**

- ⊙ **Quality improvement awards** — Programs receive increasing awards for attaining higher rating levels. Awards are used to carry out their Quality Improvement Plans designed in collaboration with a coach.
- ⊙ **Tiered subsidy reimbursement** — Programs that attain higher Early Achievers ratings may receive higher reimbursements in the future.
- ⊙ **Professional development incentives and awards** — Early learning staff will receive individual incentives for achieving training and education. Child care programs can increase their ratings by having more highly qualified staff.