

Strategic Pathways Toward Statewide Universal Pre-Kindergarten and Full-Day Kindergarten in Washington State

1. Introduction

Our system of free universal public education for children ages five through eighteen is the cornerstone for creating opportunity and advancement for the vast majority of American children. In this new century, we must insure that the students beginning public school are prepared to learn. We must enable and support their drive for academic achievement. We must inculcate in them the will and eagerness to learn. These are the prerequisites for retaining and renewing public education as a cornerstone for a vibrant democracy.

A singular focus on the K-12 system and the students in that system misses a central component for academic achievement. That component is the readiness to learn of the child when she or he enters kindergarten. Nationwide, one-quarter to one-half of children are not prepared to learn when they start kindergarten,¹ and many of these kids never catch up. A “world-class” education system means little or nothing to them if they can’t get over the first hurdle of “readiness to learn.” The ugly specter of social stratification, limited opportunities, and the lack of hope follow these kids through the front door of the schoolhouse.

High-quality universal pre-kindergarten (UPK) is the key to enabling all children to succeed in K-12 education. We know that children who have participated in high-quality

¹ Patterson, Joan and Watson, Christopher, “Children in Their Earliest Years: Many Get a Poor Start”, Health Generations (a publication of the Maternal and Child Health Program of the School of Public Health at the University of Minnesota, Volume 4, Issue 2, October 2002) has an excellent narrative of school readiness data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study Kindergarten Cohort and the National Household Education Survey. The Head Start Policy Book excerpts on the White House website: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/earlychildhood/hspolicyook/text/02.html> also discuss the school readiness of the nation’s children. See also Kauffman Early Education Exchange, *Set for Success: Building a strong foundation for school readiness based on the social-emotional development of young children*, 1:1 (2002), The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation (http://www.emkf.org/pdf/eex_brochure.pdf).

pre-kindergarten programs do better in school, in work, in life, and as participants in our democracy than those who are excluded from these programs. But Washington state has yet to create an integrated system of pre-kindergarten programs with well-trained teachers and adequate public funding.

This brief reviews promising models in Washington state for achieving universal pre-kindergarten with high standards and professional compensation for teachers. We develop pathways for universalizing best practices for UPK. We present a continuum of education and care for children from infancy through kindergarten and a parallel continuum of professional development for their teachers and caregivers. Finally, we lay out possible routes for securing the public funding to make UPK a reality.

2. The Current Context for Early Learning

For most families in the United States, pre-kindergarten is embedded in the context of child care. As such it suffers from a culture where teachers and caregivers are poorly paid and turnover is high. There are few incentives for early childhood teachers to invest in a career, and working parents have limited resources to pay for early learning and care. Because families and policymakers tend to view early learning as a consumer “choice” that is the responsibility of individual parents, they disregard the education of young children as a societal need and collective responsibility.² Rhetoric abounds in support of early learning, but actual public outlays remain grossly inadequate.³

The current system of early learning intertwined with child care has resulted in inadequate and poor-quality education and care for too many young children. In

² *Financing Child Care in the United States: An Illustrative Catalog of Current Strategies* by Anne Mitchell, Louise Stoney and Harriet Dichter for The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts. 1997. http://www.emkf.org/youth_development/childcare/index.cfm (Based upon data reported in Stoney, L., and M. Greenberg. 1996. "The Financing of Child Care: Current and Emerging Trends." *The Future of Children*, Vol. 6, No. 2).

³ For example, Washington state's groundbreaking early childhood education career and wage ladder, funded at \$8 million for the 2001-2003 biennium, has been completely zeroed out for state funding.

Washington, only six percent of childcare centers meet the accreditation standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.⁴ The disjunction and inadequate funding of child care, private pre-school programs, Head Start, and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Programs (ECEAP) create multiple layers of standards, professionalism, compensation, and pedagogy, while leaving the majority of children out of high-quality or even adequate care.⁵ Of the teachers in Head Start, considered to have the most stringent standards for early learning teachers in Washington state, only 25% have a bachelor's degree, 22% have child development certification, and 32% have associate degrees, while 17% have no early childhood credentials.⁶

In contrast, both the public and policymakers embrace K-12 education as a public responsibility necessary for a prosperous economy and thriving democracy. Parents believe their children are entitled to a good public education from kindergarten through high school. Teachers are organized in unions that have significant institutional power and that reinforce teachers' professionalism, self-esteem, and investment in their work. This creates significant popular and political pressure to provide adequate public funding. To supplement state general funding, voters in Washington repeatedly have supported K-12 levy and bond elections, and in 2001 passed two statewide initiatives to dedicate additional state funding (1) to lower class sizes and boost student achievement, and (2) to insure that teachers' salaries keep up with the cost of living.⁷ While business organizations fight most tax increases, at the local level business

⁴ According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, 116 child care centers are currently accredited in Washington State. Nine of these are located on military bases and are, therefore, part of the U.S Military Caregiver Personnel Pay Plan system. (NAEYC Accredited Program Search, <http://www.naeyc.org/accreditation/search/state.asp?state=WA>) According to 2000 DSHS data, there were 2,004 licensed child care centers in Washington State as of December 1999. (Laura Schrager and Marna Miller, "Licensed Child Care in Washington State: 2000," Research and Data Analysis Division, Management Services Administration, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, January 2002, p. 4.)

⁵ Approximately 35% of eligible low-income children are enrolled in Head Start and ECEAP in Washington state.

⁶ Head Start, Early Head Start and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Programs in Washington State, 2001-2002 State Profile, page 26

⁷ Initiative 728 to lower class size and boost student achievement was passed by the people in Washington state in 2000 with 72% in favor. Initiative 732 to provide annual cost of living increases to teachers passed the same year with 63% of voters in favor.

communities may support public K-12 education and contribute to K-12 levy and bond campaigns.⁸

We know that the public education system is far from perfect, but it has strong institutional supports and investment to enable it to create opportunity, advancement, and learning for our state's children. The steady advance in Washington Assessment of Student Learning scores attests to the strengths and capabilities of the public K-12 system.⁹ How do we catalyze similar supports and investments for early learning? From what elements would powerful constituencies invested in early learning be built? These are key questions for constructing pathways to universal pre-kindergarten in our state and our country.

3. Lessons in Policy Success

Three models for improving quality and expanding access to pre-kindergarten programs provide lessons and possible routes to achieving high-quality early learning for all of Washington's children. They are:

- the Early Childhood Education Career and Wage Ladder (ECECWL)
- local school district efforts to combine existing programs with new sources of funding to reach more children, and
- the T.T. Minor program in Seattle.

A. The Early Childhood Education Career and Wage Ladder

⁸ For a sense of government priorities from a business perspective in Washington state, see <http://www.awb.org/politics/index.asp>. Locally, many businesses contributed to the No on I-77 campaign committee, organized to defeat a ten cent tax on espresso beverages that would have funded pre-kindergarten in the city of Seattle. These businesses funding the opposition included Starbucks, Boeing, Washington Mutual, SAFECO, Vulcan Enterprises (Paul Allen's company) and many others.

⁹ The percent of students meeting the 4th grade Washington Assessment of Student Learning standards has risen from 21% to 55% in math, 48% to 67% in reading, 43% to 54% in writing, and 62% to 66% in listening from 1996 to 2003. See <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/Reports/WASLTrend.aspx?&schoolId=1&reportLevel=State>.

In 1998, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) organized Seattle childcare workers in order to increase wages and improve working conditions. The organizers quickly discovered that the root of the problem was the systemic lack of money for child care. Parents were pushed to their limit of financial ability to pay for child care. The state set subsidies and reimbursement rates for low-income children that pulled down overall childcare revenues even further.¹⁰

SEIU worked with the Economic Opportunity Institute (EOI) and the Association of Child Care Employers to develop a wage ladder with wage increments based on education, experience, and job responsibility. The union and EOI urged the Legislature and the governor to fund this unique supply-side solution to childcare quality. The governor responded by allocating \$4 million in Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) funds in 1999 and \$8 million in 2000 for the Early Childhood Education Career and Wage Ladder.

In December 2002, 127 childcare centers participated in the career and wage ladder, about 7% of all childcare centers in the state. Teachers at these centers earned higher wages and benefits than at centers not on the ladder. Center directors found that the best teachers were no longer leaving for more lucrative careers. With financial incentives and a greater sense of investment in their careers, many teachers took classes and received certification in early childhood education. The quality of early learning and care rose. Center directors, parents, teachers, and state administrators were universal in their enthusiasm for the program.¹¹

Funding for the career and wage ladder remained vulnerable. The attachment of early learning to childcare separated it from the more powerful and embedded institutional

¹⁰ See Moon, Jennifer, "The Early Childhood Education Career and Wage Ladder: A Model for Ensuring Quality in Early Learning and Care Programs", Economic Opportunity Institute, to be published July 2004. Also, see Burbank, John, and Wiefek, Nancy, The Washington State Early Childhood Education Career Development Ladder, <http://www.eoionline.org/ELC/Proposals/ECE-PolicyBrief2001-PublicInvestments.htm>

¹¹ See Boyd, Brenda, and Wandschneider, Mary, Washington State Child Care Career and Wage Ladder Pilot Project, Phase 2 Final Evaluation Report, March 2004, and Moon, Jennifer, The Early Childhood Education Career and Wage Ladder, A Model for Ensuring Quality in Early Learning and Care Programs (to be published and web-formatted in June 2004).

players in public education. Its funding through TANF placed it in competition with social services. In 2003, when recession-related welfare caseloads rose, the governor, pinched for options, completely eliminated state support for the career and wage ladder.

In 2002 and 2003, simultaneous to the efforts to persuade the governor to maintain funding for the ECECWL, advocates in Seattle developed and rallied behind Initiative 77 to raise new money for the ECECWL and expanded pre-kindergarten programs through a citywide tax on espresso drinks. Passage of the initiative would have resulted in an expanded career and wage ladder in the city of Seattle. However, despite nearly universally expressed support for early learning programs, the initiative failed at the polls in September 2003 after a strong business-led campaign against the proposed tax.

One offshoot of the advocacy surrounding both the career and wage ladder and Initiative 77 was the organization of the Child Care Workforce Alliance under the umbrella of the Washington Federation of Teachers (WFT). This unique association for early learning advocacy includes early learning teachers and caregivers, childcare center directors, parents, and advocates. The statewide association is focusing initial efforts on grassroots advocacy for early learning and on legislative action to restore funding for the career and wage ladder.

The career and wage ladder, the union organizing that made it possible, and the teacher recognition, esteem, and political voice it catalyzed remain important elements for the future development of early learning in the state. But they must be embedded in an institutional continuum of education. Specifically, the career and wage ladder can provide a vehicle to improve the quality of early learning and nurturing, particularly for children from birth to age three, as part of a longitudinal system that would include universal pre-school and full-day kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds.

B. School district investment in early childhood education

The state of Washington has yet to develop systematic policies and support for early learning for all the state's children. Within the K-12 system, the state provides funding

only for half-day kindergarten. Since 1985, the state has provided a pre-kindergarten program to some low-income three- and four-year-olds and their families through the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). ECEAP focuses on whole child development, including education, health and nutrition, family support, and parent involvement. In 2002 ECEAP served 7,314 children and their families at a cost of \$30.7 million, or \$4,972 per child.¹² However, the state has never fully funded ECEAP to serve all eligible children.

School districts across the state are taking the initiative in providing educational services to three-, four-, and five-year-olds considerably beyond what the state and federal governments require and fund.¹³ Facing mounting pressure to increase academic achievement for all students, districts have used local levy money and cobbled together funding from ECEAP, Head Start, parent tuition, and other sources in creative ways. Many districts were able to expand early learning programs in 2001 after Washington voters approved Initiative 728. This initiative made a total of \$184 million in new funding available to school districts, allocated on a per student basis and targeted for student achievement. While the initiative focused on class size reduction, it did allow school districts to use this new money for other purposes related to enhancing educational quality. Many districts chose to devote a portion of the new money to pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten programs.

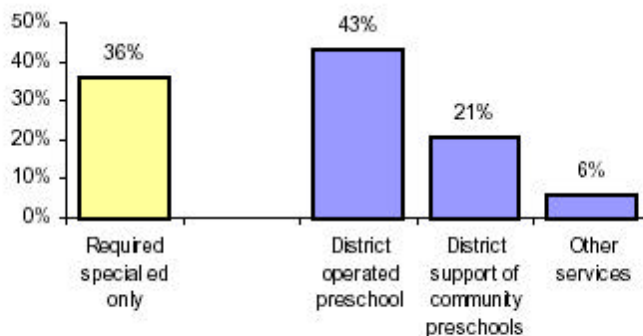
During the 2001-02 school year, 43% of school districts provided full-day kindergarten or some other extension of service to kindergarteners beyond the state-funded half-day.

¹² The program was funded for 6,169 "slots" in 2002, with some children leaving and being replaced in the program mid-year. Thirty-five contractors, including public school districts, colleges, child care centers, and other community-based operators, provide ECEAP services at 270 sites. Over half of the ECEAP contractors also provide Head Start services. A longitudinal study conducted by the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory from 1989 to 2000 found that participation in ECEAP had a positive effect on children's school achievement. Washington Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, "Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program: 2002 Washington State Pre-Kindergarten Report," April 2003.

¹³ Pressure on districts is coming both from the state and federal governments. The Washington State Education Reform Act of 1993 established new, higher academic standards for students and greater accountability for teachers and schools. The Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) was developed to measure academic achievement, and starting in 2007 (?), students will have to pass the 10th grade WASL in order to graduate from high school. The federal No Child Left Behind Act requires every state to test students in reading and math and holds schools accountable for continuing achievement gaps.

At least 27 of Washington's 296 school districts make full-day kindergarten available to all children in their districts.¹⁴ A greater number of districts have enhanced pre-kindergarten programs, with 173 districts, or 64%, offering more pre-kindergarten services than those that are required for special education students.¹⁵

Percentage of Washington school districts providing pre-kindergarten services



Note: Adds up to more than 100% because some districts provide more than one kind of pre-kindergarten service.

These pre-school programs reflect the diversity of the state's school districts and a common recognition that devoting resources to early education is one of the best possible investments of public funds. The programs funded through the school districts range from high-quality programs using High/Scope methodology and on-site professional staff,¹⁶ to part-time custodial child care with little emphasis on learning skills, to programs that are designed and mandated for special education pre-school children in which there are available slots for normally-developing children. The wide range of programs also underlines the lack of standard parameters for early learning. None of the school-district funded or sponsored programs can claim to meet current or

¹⁴ An additional 78 districts offer full-day kindergarten classes for some portion of students; 20 districts offer extended-day kindergarten classes; and 3 districts offer both a full-day kindergarten program and an extended-day program. See www.eoionline.org/ELC/Survey/about.htm. For a concise synopsis of this survey, with lessons learned, see Brown, Jen “Early Learning and Care Survey Results: School Districts find innovative ways to expand programs”, www.eoionline.org/ELC/EarlyLearning/PreKKSS.pdf.

¹⁵ 115 school districts, or 43%, operated pre-kindergarten programs, 16 districts (6%) offered services to pre-kindergarten populations, and 56 districts (21%) offered support to non-school district early learning programs, such as Head Start and ECEAP. For a district-specific description of pre-kindergarten programs for all school districts in the state, see www.eoionline.org/ELC/Survey/about.htm.

¹⁶ Bellevue’s pre-kindergarten program is such an example. Bellevue is the 5th largest city in the state, and one of the wealthiest. Only 13% of students qualify for free or reduced price lunch. Bellevue provides pre-school at half of its elementary school campuses. See Brown, Jen “Early Learning and Care Survey Results: School Districts find innovative ways to expand programs”, www.eoionline.org/ELC/EarlyLearning/PreKKSS.pdf.

potential demand for pre-kindergarten programs for all the district's children, although a few districts do come close.

For example, Lind is a small rural school district in eastern Washington. Fully 70% of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, and one-fourth are from migrant families. Despite these indicators of academic risk, Lind students perform better than the state average on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) exam.¹⁷ Lind chose to use Initiative 728 student achievement funds to create universally available preschool and full-day kindergarten programs. Half-day preschool serves most of community's three- and four-year-olds. Staffing includes a certified teacher. Greater than expected demand led to the decision to offer two classes two days per week rather than one class four days per week as was originally planned.¹⁸

Bellevue, the fifth largest city in the state and one of the wealthiest, provides another example. The Bellevue school district operates high-quality, tuition-funded preschool at half of its elementary school campuses. Each preschool class has a lead teacher and an assistant teacher who are employees of the district. The classes run two and a half hours per day for the 180-day school year, with a maximum of 20 children per class, and the option of before-and after-school daycare. The district also operates five traditional half-day Head Start classrooms and two blended tuition-based preschool/Head Start classrooms that are full-day, full-year programs. The district's preschool offerings are part of a broad set of services for children aged 0 to 5, including infant care for children of high school students, toddler child care, and a new childcare program for medically fragile children.

Because a majority of school districts have decided to fund some iteration of pre-kindergarten, the effect of these individual policy decisions provides a possible basis for universalizing pre-kindergarten in ways that are suited to the state's diverse communities and that maximize existing resources and infrastructure. What is lacking

¹⁷ The WASL is taken by all 4th, 7th, and 10th graders in Washington.

¹⁸ See Brown, Jen "Early Learning and Care Survey Results: School Districts find innovative ways to expand programs", www.eoionline.org/ELC/EarlyLearning/PreKKSS.pdf.

are clear standards and a new, robust, and dedicated funding source to dramatically expand these programs.

C. T.T. Minor – A Pre-Kindergarten wrapped into the public K-12 system:

T.T. Minor is the public elementary school that has the highest proportion of low-income children in the city of Seattle. In 1999 Stuart Sloan, former CEO for QFC food stores, adopted T.T. Minor as an investment in children and education. He created the New School at T.T. Minor Foundation to funnel money, resources, and new practices into the school. One of the systemic problems soon identified in this project was that entering kindergartners lacked the social skills and educational building blocks they needed to succeed in school. The foundation decided to fund a robust pre-kindergarten program.

This year-round program incorporates the High/Scope pedagogy, and is housed within the T.T. Minor elementary school building.¹⁹ Core hours coincide with the public school hours. The program also provides before and after-school care, as well as summer and vacation child care. This enables the parents of these pre-kindergartners to work without the disruption of intermittent child care, short school hours, and the annual school cycle that has vacation gaps of weeks and months. It provides these parents with consistency. More importantly, for the education of their children it provides these young kids with consistency of place, care, and early learning. It integrates them into the K-12 school system even before they begin kindergarten. It gives them a true head start in learning.

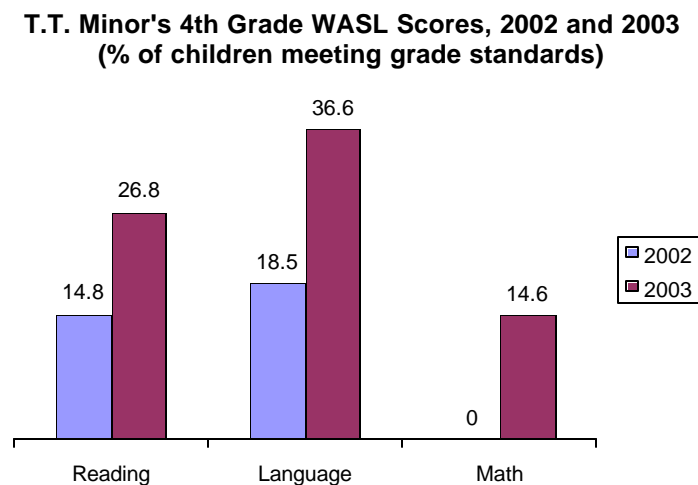
Each pre-kindergarten class has twenty children with a certificated teacher and classified teacher's aide. All four-year-olds who live in the geographical catchment for the T.T. Minor School are eligible to attend regardless of income.²⁰ Teachers and aides are part of the Seattle School District's K-12 collective bargaining units and are certified in the High/Scope teaching method for pre-kindergarten. T. T. Minor also offers full-day

¹⁹ See High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, <http://www.highscope.org>

²⁰ In this way and many others, there is a strong correspondence between the TT Minor program and the French Ecole Maternelle system set up in low-income areas in France (ZEPs). See Economic Opportunity Institute, "Focus on Early Learning: Lessons from the French Ecoles Maternelles" January 2004, <http://www.eoionline.org/ELC/Proposals/EcolesMaternelles.pdf>

kindergarten with enhanced supports, including classroom aides, teacher home visits, extended days, and an academic year that is lengthened four weeks into the summer.

In this continuum of education, the students at T.T. Minor are showing significant gains in academic achievement. In 2003, the first class to start kindergarten with the enhanced resources of the New School program reached fourth grade, and T.T. Minor's first pre-kindergarten class reached third grade. Each of these classes has shown dramatic improvement over the previous year's class in standardized test scores. T.T. Minor's fourth graders in 2003 showed remarkable gains over the 2002 class on the 4th grade WASL exam, although they still lagged behind the statewide average of students reaching grade standards.²¹



Source: T.T. Minor Elementary School 2003 Annual Report

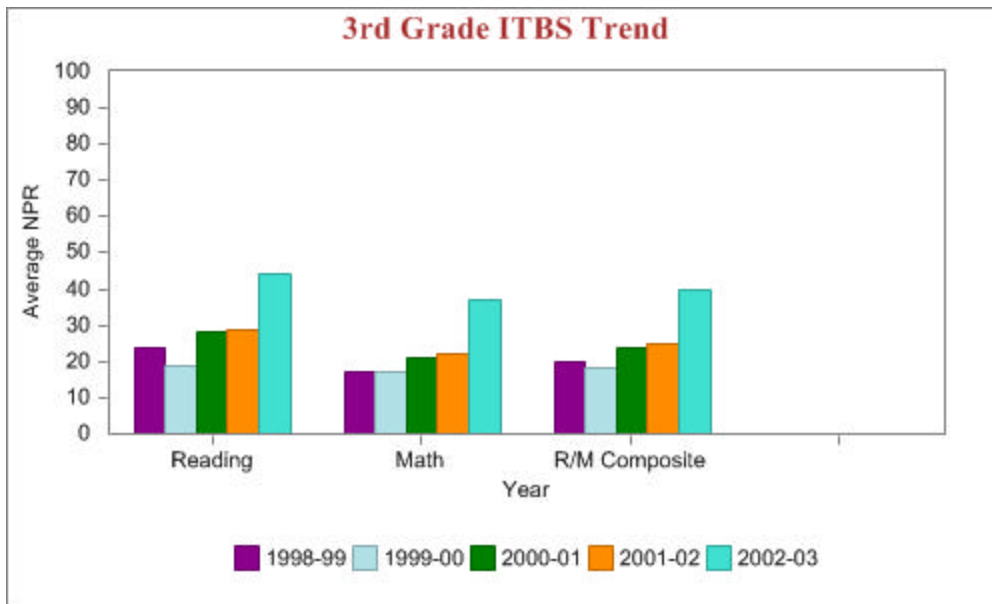
The first children participating in the pre-kindergarten program at T.T. Minor, third graders in the 2002-2003 school year, have taken a further big step up in test scores. Their Iowa Tests of Basic Skills National Percentile Rank (ITBS NPR) scores rose by 15 percentile placements above those of the 2001-2002 third graders.²²

²¹ WASL scores reflect the percentage of children meeting standards for that grade. TT Minor Elementary School 2003 Annual Report, <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/siso/reports/anrep/elem/254.pdf>.

²² See Washington State School Report Card, Office of the Superintendent for Public Instruction, <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/Reports/ITBSTrend.aspx?schoolId=1078&reportLevel=School>

T.T. Minor's 3rd Grade ITBS Trend

School Year	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Reading	24	19	28	29	44
Math	17	17	21	22	37
R/M Composite	20	18	24	25	40



Scoring in the top two quartiles for ITBS in the nation were 41% of 3rd graders in reading, 40% in language, and 33% in math. This represents a shift upward of 14, 20, and 12 percentile points respectively for reading, language, and math over the 2001-2002 third grade class.²³ The gains in test scores at T.T. Minor also exceeded those of comparison schools and the district as a whole.²⁴

The New School at T.T. Minor School indicates a pathway for advancing school readiness. What are the lessons from the T.T. Minor success?

²³ Draft TT Minor 2002-2003 Report, October 2, 2003, page 4.

²⁴ In comparison schools with similar demographic characteristics, student scores remained at the same placement, decreased slightly, or increased on average less than three placements. Draft TT Minor 2002-2003 Report, October 2, 2003, pages 4-5.

First of all, it takes money. It costs approximately \$10,000 per child for the year-round pre-kindergarten program, compared to the \$6,113 average per pupil expenditure for elementary school children across the state.²⁵ With an approximate four-year-old population in Seattle of 5,000 children, universalizing this program in the city would cost about \$36 million a year (assuming a 75% take-up rate and not including any current public and private pre-kindergarten, Head Start, Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program, or public childcare subsidies or expenditures).

Secondly, the program is tied into the public school system, so that there is a direct continuum of learning for the students into the K-12 system. Teachers and teacher's aides are part of the public school professional workforce. They assume the academic qualifications and expected professionalism of public school teachers, and they receive the public and personal esteem that is earned and enjoyed by K-12 educators. They participate in ongoing training and professional development. Through their collegial interactions with elementary teachers, they help to create a smooth transition into school for young children.

Third, the program is based on the High/Scope model, a creative and child-oriented pedagogy that enables these young children to be ready to learn when they start kindergarten. The training and certification that all of T.T. Minor's pre-kindergarten teachers receive require the investment of resources and training outside the normal K-12 educational certification.²⁶ The success of High/Scope at TT Minor has K-5 teachers at that school requesting similar training. It is the basis for the pre-kindergarten and

²⁵ Average per pupil elementary school cost includes state and local district funds, as calculated by the Rainier Institute, in "What Will It Take? Defining a quality education in Washington and a new vision of adequacy for school funding," March 2003. www.rainierinstitute.com.

²⁶ The same training and approach is being used for the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs launched in 2003 at the New School at South Shore. The New School at South Shore is a new Seattle public school that is also being partially funded through the New School Foundation and has adopted the pre-kindergarten system pioneered at TT Minor.

kindergarten programs launched in 2003 at another Seattle school, the New School at South Shore.²⁷

Fourth, the program has high-quality wrap-around before and after-school care, as well as vacation and summertime care.

Fifth, high-quality pre-kindergarten for four-year-olds is followed by full-day kindergarten for five-year-olds. Efforts for UPK must be intertwined with full-day kindergarten to insure a true continuum of education for young children.

4. Three projects leading toward universal pre-kindergarten

The career and wage ladder, school district efforts, and the public/private partnership of the T.T. Minor universal pre-kindergarten program present three models for raising quality and increasing capacity of early learning and pre-kindergarten programs in Washington.

The career and wage ladder makes use of the existing infrastructure of community-based child care. By infusing new public money tied to teacher education and retention, children benefit from the improved quality of teaching and care and the professionalism of their teachers. Re-instituting and greatly expanding the career and wage ladder to include 50% of the childcare centers in our state, while simultaneously refining and upgrading the standards and mandates for teacher education, would be a foundation for early learning for preschoolers. The cost would be approximately \$25 million for each biennium.²⁸

²⁷ The New School at South Shore is a new Seattle public school that is also being partially funded through the New School Foundation and has adopted the pre-kindergarten model pioneered at TT Minor.

²⁸ See Individual State Agency Fiscal Note for HB 2360, considered by the Washington State House of Representatives Appropriations Committee in the 2004 legislative session.

A second approach of providing school districts with substantial new resources targeted to pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten would enable each community to design programs tailored to its needs. This approach also allows communities the option of working through existing community early learning resources, creating new school-based programs, weaving together Head Start and ECEAP programs with additional school funding, or a combination of several different options. We've seen the potential for this approach with the infusion of I-728 money leading to a scattered proliferation of pre-kindergarten programs funded through school districts. New money for this approach must be accompanied by state standards for professional teacher certification and evidenced-based child-centered curricula for these pre-kindergarten programs.

The third approach, the T.T. Minor model of high-quality preschool integrated into an elementary school along with wrap-around child care has resulted in the best documented statistically significant leaps in academic achievement.²⁹ This is also the most expensive intervention for education, costing approximately \$10,000 per child per year.

5. The Need for Full-Day Kindergarten

UPK may be a lost investment if students enter kindergarten and find themselves with only two hours and twenty minutes of schooling a day, and after that they are on their own. But that is the case for the current state funding of and programming for kindergarten.³⁰ Funding UPK without providing full-day kindergarten (FDK) creates cliffs for learning and gaps in education. Failure to provide FDK jeopardizes the advances in learning that children would have gained in high-quality pre-kindergarten programs.

²⁹ These results are reinforced by the recent evaluation of the Oklahoma universal pre-kindergarten system, which is also tied into the public school system. Pre-K teachers in the Oklahoma system are compensated on a par with K-12 teachers. They must have, minimally, a bachelor degree in early childhood education. See Gormley, William Jr. and Gayer, Ted, "Promoting School Readiness in Oklahoma: An Evaluation of Tulsa's Pre-K Program", October 2003 (Crocus Working Paper #1) and Gormley, William Jr. and Phillips, Deborah, "The Effects of Universal Pre-K in Oklahoma: Research Highlights and Policy Implications", October 2003 (Crocus Working Paper #2). Both available at www.nieer.org/docs/index.php?DocID=85. Also see "The Oklahoma Project: State's Public Pre-K Helps Kids Get Ready for School", *Preschool Matters*, a Publication of the National Institute for Early Education Research, December 2003 Volume 1, No. 3, page 9.

³⁰ The time, care, and learning gaps will also confound parents trying to balance work and family responsibilities.

Efforts for UPK must therefore be intertwined with full state funding for FDK. In this way we can insure a true continuum of education for young children.

6. Finding the Money for Universal Pre-Kindergarten and All-Day Kindergarten

Funding for full-day kindergarten in the state's allocations to school districts would cost an additional \$130 million per year, or \$260 million per biennium on top of current state funding for half-day kindergarten. This does not include funding for wrap-around child care that would enable a kindergartner to participate in a full-day learning and care program. However, since many districts already offer full-day kindergarten classes, new state funding would free up some local district funding for other programs and services. In addition to operating money, districts would also need capital funds to expand full-day kindergarten. In many schools, two half-day classes share the same classroom. Those schools would need additional facilities to house full-day programs.

About 80,000 four-year-olds live in Washington state.³¹ Full funding for 50% of four-year olds for pre-kindergarten at the level of T.T. Minor's program would cost approximately \$800 million per biennium. Accessing current funding streams for four-year olds from Head Start, ECEAP, and low-income childcare subsidies could capture anywhere between \$100 and \$150 million a year.³² Current school district funding for pre-kindergarten, if continued, would help to reduce the need for new money. Parental contributions through sliding scale tuition are also a possibility. However, a funding gap of a minimum of \$300 million a biennium will remain.

Possibilities for enhanced funding include:

³¹ Washington Office of Financial Management, "Population Estimate by Age and Sex, 1980-2003, Washington State," <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/pop/coagemf/state.pdf>.

³² Author's calculations. Head Start for four-year olds totaled \$62 million in FY 2003. ECEAP totaled \$30.5 million. See Governor's Head Start-State Collaboration Office of Washington State, "Head Start and ECEAP State Profile 2001-2002," p. 12, 22. An estimate of subsidies going for child care for low income four-year olds ranges from \$40 to \$60 million a year. See Laura Schrager and Marna Miller, "Licensed Child Care in Washington State: 2000," Research and Data Analysis Division, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, January 2002, p. iii, 30, 65.

A. The Education Trust Fund: A 2004 Initiative to the People

In the fall of 2003, the League of Education Voters, an advocacy organization for public education in Washington state, developed a “P-16” funding initiative, which will likely appear on the November 2004 ballot as Initiative 884. “P-16” provides for a continuum of funding for pre-kindergarten, K-12, and public higher education in Washington. The funding would come from a one cent increase in the sales tax.³³ The initiative would raise about \$1 billion every two years. Of this, \$500 million would go to K-12, \$400 million to higher education, and \$100 million to pre-kindergarten.

If Initiative 884 passes, pre-kindergarten resources will be used to expand “access to high-quality early childhood education programs, particularly for low-income students.”³⁴ While I-728 money flowed directly to individual school districts, the I-884 proposal designates educational service districts as the local intermediaries for preschool funding. The initiative sponsors project the new money will fund 10,000 low-income children per year in high-quality preschool, and increase the quality of the state-funded ECEAP that currently serves 6,000 low-income children. There are 160,000 three- and four-year-olds in our state, so I-884 by itself would provide pre-kindergarten for 6.25% of the total potential pre-kindergarten population and increase quality for another 3.75% of the total potential pre-kindergarten population.³⁵ While initiative provides a good start to increased funding for pre-kindergarten, this funding is insufficient to meet even 25% of the need to insure young children’s readiness to learn.

B. An income tax on the Well-To-Do

³³ This would push the sales tax up to almost ten cents per dollar in some areas of our state and increase the regressivity of Washington's already regressive tax structure. Washington's tax structure has been rated the most regressive state tax system in the country by the Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy. See, "Who Pays: A Distributional Analysis of the Tax Systems in All 50 States," 2003, <http://www.ctj.org/itep/index.htm>.

³⁴ Section 2a, Initiative 884

³⁵ This may be an overestimate of potential services. A fully-funded pre-kindergarten program costs about \$10,000 per child. The initiative specifically funds pre-kindergarten for low-income children and parent contributions are not mandated. \$100 million could pay for 10,000 new high quality full-day full-year pre-kindergarten slots. But this would leave no funding to enhance ECEAP quality.

Washington is one of only seven states without any form of personal income tax and has the most regressive tax system of any state in the country. Low-income and middle-class families pay much higher percentages of their incomes in state and local taxes than do high-income families. Public goods and services are funded through property taxes, sales taxes, and a gross receipts tax on businesses, with local levies and bond issues adding to funding for fire districts, library districts, public housing, and schools.

While the people voted for an income tax in 1932, this was never implemented due to an adverse state Supreme Court decision in 1933. Since then, income tax proposals have been repeatedly turned down by the Legislature and by the public. The most recent rejection of a personal income tax was in 1973.³⁶

Recent polling, the recommendations of the legislatively commissioned State Tax Structure Study Committee, and Washington's looming structural deficit together indicate that the time may be ripe to revisit an income tax, particularly one limited to the highest incomes.³⁷ The popular support for such a tax would increase if it is wed to UPK or another public good that holds political traction and the tax is presented and developed as a dedicated and non-supplanting funding source.

A tax on family incomes in excess of \$1 million would be paid by approximately 6,000 families, or 0.2% of the families in our state. A tax rate of 5% would raise an estimated \$1.5 billion per biennium, which could be divided among reductions in sales or property tax and funding for early learning programs and children's health care.³⁸ This would enhance the movement toward a less regressive tax system and sustain increased support, especially from older voters, while providing \$500 million in new money to be dedicated to FDK and UPK and \$500 million for children's health care. Both of these

³⁶ Spitzer, Hugh, "A Washington State Income Tax – Again?", *University of Puget Sound Law Review*, Volume 16, Number 2, p. 515-570; Smith, Jason, "A Concise History of Washington's Tax Structure", Economic Opportunity Institute, 2002, <http://www.eoionline.org/Taxes/WATaxHistory.pdf>.

³⁷ For additional background, see Marilyn Watkins, "It's Not Just the Recession: The Budget Crisis and Washington State's Structural Deficit," Economic Opportunity Institute, July 2003, <http://www.eoionline.org/Taxes/StructuralDeficit.pdf>.

³⁸ Gardner, Mark, "", (draft) Economic Opportunity Institute, 2004

programs also sustain strong voter support. Whether passed by the Legislature or through an Initiative to the People, any form of income tax in Washington would likely be challenged and reviewed by the Supreme Court before it could be implemented.³⁹

C. A Law Suit for Basic Education

The Washington State Constitution embeds the requirement that “(i)t is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders, without distinction or preference on account of race, color, caste, or sex.”⁴⁰

The constitution also states that “(t)he legislature shall provide for a general and uniform system of public schools.”⁴¹

These mandates may provide legal arguments for the provision of full-day kindergarten and universal pre-kindergarten. In the Washington Constitution, “children” is not defined or bounded by age. The Economic Opportunity Institute’s research into the variability of pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs across the state lends credence to the charge that the state remains in violation of the directive for “a general and uniform system of public schools.”⁴² Further, as the current provision by the state for education is resulting in significant student failure, as identified by WASL scores,⁴³ then a legal argument can be made that the provision is not “ample.”

³⁹ The possibility of consideration and passage of such a proposal by the Legislature, whether controlled by the Republicans or Democrats, is slight. Even a non-controversial measure, increasing the cigarette tax by 60 cents to fund expansion of health coverage through the Basic Health Plan, was not considered by the Legislature. Instead, it required an Initiative to the People. An income tax initiative would require the collection of a minimum of 250,000 signatures within a six-month window (January through June), plus a full-scale electoral campaign leading up to a vote in the November elections. Minimal costs for such an effort would be \$2.5 million. If such an income tax was indeed dedicated to funding FDK and UPK and children’s health, politically powerful organizations with significant financial resources could become the institutional funders and “owners” of this effort. The embedding of initiative responsibility with these organizations is the only way to insure that the initiative is adequately funded and perceived as a “mainstream” effort, with strong stakeholder support that increases the likelihood of passage.

⁴⁰ Washington State Constitution, Article 9, Section 1 Preamble

⁴¹ Washington State Constitution, Article 9, Section 2 Public School System

⁴² See Brown, Jen “Early Learning and Care Survey Results: School Districts find innovative ways to expand programs”, www.eoionline.org/ELC/EarlyLearning/PreKKSS.pdf.

⁴³ In the 2002-2003 school year 45% of 4th grade students failed the math test and 46% failed the writing test. See Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, “WASL Trend, Washington State”, October 17, 2003 <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/Reports/WASLTrend.aspx?&schoolId=1&reportLevel=State>

The failure of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children was the basis for the state Supreme Court affirmation of Superior Court Judge Robert Doran's decision in 1977. This decision agreed that students have a constitutional right to a "sufficiently" funded education. The state must define and fund "basic education" to meet its constitutional obligation.⁴⁴ In 1983 Judge Doran expanded his 1977 decision with a ruling that Washington's constitutional duty to fund basic education included special education programs for disabled children, bilingual education, and remediation. Judge Doran revisited this decision in 1988 when he found the state's funding formula for special education insufficient.

School districts are allowed to supplement state K-12 funding with local levies.⁴⁵ These are limited by state law to 24% of total education funding, except that 91 of the 296 school districts may collect levies up to 31% of total education funding. Levies take 60% voter support for approval. As a result of the varying levy limits, property valuations, and voter dispositions, revenues from local levies throughout the state are very unequal.

The constitution, the high proportion of students who fail the WASL tests, the previous court decisions, and the unevenness of funding and programs all point to the possibility of a court challenge to the current lack of state funding for full-day kindergarten and universal pre-kindergarten. If these are building blocks for basic education and basic education doesn't work without these building blocks, then FDK and UPK benefit from an implied constitutional mandate and should be funded by the state. However, even a favorable court decision would stumble into the financial reality of inadequate funds for current agreed-upon educational needs, not to mention additional expenditures for UPK and FDK.

⁴⁴ See Washington Research Council, "How We Fund Our Schools"
<http://www.researchcouncil.org/K12Funding/HowWeFundOurSchools.htm>

⁴⁵ In its simplest form, the current formula for state funding of K-12 basic education is derived from mandated student/teacher and student/administrator ratios and a statewide staff salary matrix. The state defines the subjects to be taught in basic education and the yearly hours to be spent in basic education. Each school district gets its allocation of state basic education funding primarily through a formula based on the number of students in that district.

While a legal strategy could be developed, a popular funding strategy, such as the tax on high incomes discussed above, should be foremost in meeting the need for the provision of UPK and FDK. A caveat to this is that a legal decision endorsing state funding of UPK and FDK, preceding or closely following the imposition of a tax on high incomes, could help insure that the new revenues remained dedicated to UPK and FDK.

7. Conclusion

High quality, universally accessible preschool is essential to achieving the goal of educational opportunity and high academic achievement for all children. Policymakers, educators, and the general public in Washington state have demonstrated their understanding of the importance of early learning by supporting the Early Childhood Education Career and Wage Ladder, implementing preschool and full-day kindergarten programs in school districts across the state, and passing local levies and statewide initiatives that support early education efforts.⁴⁶

These initial efforts have shown us possible pathways toward statewide universal pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten for Washington's children. It is now time for legislators, policymakers, administrators, school districts, teachers, parents, and Washington's diverse communities to come together around a plan for a continuum of early learning programs and services, the establishment of high standards for teacher education and compensation, and new, appropriate, and robust funding. Washington's next governor has the opportunity to go beyond the first tentative steps we have taken in the past decade. With leadership and political will, we can, by the end of this decade, realize the goal of high quality learning programs for all four- and five-year-olds in our state.

⁴⁶ However, in the past three years the federal government has continued to underfund early learning and Head Start. The ballooning deficit provides the federal government with an excuse to further diminish its investment in education. Such an action would make efforts to build systems for UPK and FDK much more difficult.

Appendix 1: Defining Elements for High-Quality Pre-Kindergarten

It is essential that any effort for universal pre-kindergarten embrace rigorous standards for pedagogy, professional accreditation, and pay. If UPK is to become a state-funded part of basic education, it must be tied into the public school system. This presents a great opportunity to have the teachers and teacher's aides for pre-kindergarten incorporated into the standards and professionalism of the K-12 certificated and classified staff. To this may be added the need or requirement that pre-kindergarten (and kindergarten teachers) gain additional credentialing in a child-focused pedagogy such as High/Scope.⁴⁷

Oklahoma has a statewide UPK system, in which pre-kindergarten is either housed in or networked into public elementary schools. The pre-kindergarten teachers in this system are paid at the same compensation levels as K-12 teachers. A recent rigorous evaluation has shown differential gains in children's learning that are statistically significant. Their academic success is a casual product of the UPK program.⁴⁸

The New School at T.T. Minor School presents a similar model that insures that new revenues for pre-kindergarten are cost-effective in enabling children to learn. The elements that frame pre-kindergarten at T.T. Minor include:

- A maximum teacher/student ratio of one certificated teacher and one classified teacher's aide for a class of twenty students
- Teachers and teacher's aides credentialed in the High/Scope methodology and curriculum

⁴⁷ See High/Scope Education Research Foundation, "Preschool Curriculum course – A Prospectus" <http://www.highscope.org/TrainingConferences/CertificationPrograms/ltp.htm>

⁴⁸ See Gormley, William Jr. and Gayer, Ted, "Promoting School Readiness in Oklahoma: An Evaluation of Tulsa's Pre-K Program", October 2003 (Crocus Working Paper #1) and Gormley, William Jr. and Phillips, Deborah, "The Effects of Universal Pre-K in Oklahoma: Research Highlights and Policy Implications", October 2003 (Crocus Working Paper #2). Both available at www.nieer.org/docs/index.php?DocID=85. Also see "The Oklahoma Project: State's Public Pre-K Helps Kids Get Ready for School", *Preschool Matters*, a Publication of the National Institute for Early Education Research, December 2003 Volume 1, No. 3, page 9.

- Teachers and teacher's aides also integrated into the K-12 public school workforce, with professional credentialing and compensation at the same level as other K-12 staff
- A template for teaching based on High/Scope pedagogy
- Wrap-around, year-round, and high-quality child care before- and after-school and during school vacations
- A physical site continuum into kindergarten (both pre-kindergarten and kindergarten are housed in the T.T. Minor School)
- A learning continuum into a full-day kindergarten setting.

These elements create the context for young children's success in early learning, academic achievement and socialization.

Appendix 2: Creating a pathway for life, early learning, and opportunity

The integration of pre-kindergarten, the early childhood education career and wage ladder, and family leave

Simultaneous efforts are being pursued in Washington state to meet the growing need for early learning, child care, and overall child development. Three of these efforts can be designed to form a continuum of learning and care for young children, as well as a career continuum for early learning teachers and caregivers.

When a child is an infant, parental care is best. In our state, we are working to put into place a family leave insurance program that would enable a working parent to care for a newborn child and receive family leave insurance, with weekly compensation of about \$250 for five weeks.⁴⁹ While this is a minimal amount of time and compensation, it does open the door to the gradual increase in paid family leave. A realistic goal over ten years is a mandate for six months of paid family leave.

Most workers, through economic necessity, return to work after initial leave for caring for newborns. Child care for infants and toddlers kicks in. At this stage the early childhood education career and wage ladder makes particular sense in fostering the professionalism of care and early learning. Not only is the child growing and learning, the teacher is encouraged through wage incentives to gain professional and education credentials at the community college level and higher.

The focus of getting kids ready to learn for kindergarten leads to the imperative for high quality and universal pre-kindergarten. Successful iterations of pre-kindergarten (that focus on children being ready to learn) will tie pre-kindergartens into the public K-12 system, either in on-site classrooms or through offsite networks. At the T.T. Minor School in Seattle pre-kindergarten teachers and aides are part of the K-12 workforce

⁴⁹ See “A Proposal for Family Leave Insurance for Washington Workers”, Economic Opportunity Institute, <http://www.eoionline.org/FamilyLeave/PFL-2004ProposalInBrief.pdf>

and have the same credentialing requirements and compensation as other teachers, while being immersed in a specific High/Scope pedagogy for pre-kindergarten.

These three components create a pathway for advancement for young children, from parental care to high-quality child care with professional caregivers to pre-kindergarten with a well-compensated staff that is part of the K-12 system, and into kindergarten. For workers, these components also create a pathway. A childcare teacher could begin work with few credentials and be both encouraged and mandated by regulation to gain more credentials and thereby realize greater compensation.⁵⁰ The career and wage ladder creates such a pathway to a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. The teacher can then be qualified to be part of the K-12 workforce as a teacher's aide, for both pre-kindergarten as well as other elementary school classes. As an aide, the economic catalyst is present to gain the credentialing to become a certificated teacher, either in pre-kindergarten or in the K-12 system.

The development and funding of pre-kindergarten attached to or associated with the K-12 public school system will have the effect of siphoning four-year-olds away from traditional childcare settings. This in turn could result in financial difficulty for childcare centers, as the tuition for the care and teaching of four-year-olds creates a cross-subsidization for the care of infants and, to some degree, toddlers. The cost for infants and toddlers is much higher because state-mandated child/caregiver ratios are much lower for younger children. In this context, the early childhood education career and wage ladder is best targeted to those teachers and caregivers focused on infant and toddler care. It may provide both an economic incentive to these caregivers and supplant lost income for childcare centers as four-year-olds migrate to pre-kindergarten settings associated with the public schools.

⁵⁰ The best example of such an up-or-out approach is in the United States Military Child Care system.