

PACIFIC MOUNTAIN REGION
STATE OF THE CHILDREN
 EARLY CARE & EDUCATION



Grays Harbor, Mason, Thurston,
 Lewis, and Pacific (north)
 Counties

33,954

CHILDREN UNDER SIX IN THE REGION



11,950 (35%) OF CHILDREN UNDER SIX
 IN LOW-INCOME* HOUSEHOLDS

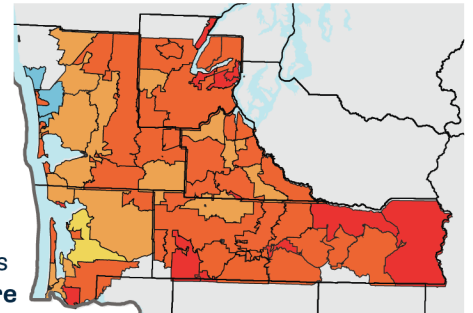
**Spanish, German or
 other Western Germanic languages**
 MOST COMMON LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT
 HOME OTHER THAN ENGLISH

45% (15,215)
 CHILDREN OF COLOR

**CHILD CARE ACCESS AND
 AFFORDABILITY AFFECTS US ALL**

Lack of access to child care **costs employers an estimated \$168M** due to employee absenteeism, turnover, and lost productivity. Meanwhile, **82% of children do not have access to licensed child care.** For those that do, the average cost of child care for two children is \$28,520, **22% of the average family's income.**

**PERCENT OF CHILD CARE
 DEMAND MET****



ECEAP AND HEAD START

Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and Head Start (HS) preschool programs specialize in inclusive and high-quality care for low-income families and children with disabilities. **While there are funded slots for 53% of the 4,181 children in our region who qualify for them,** many of these slots go unfilled due to a lack of staffing. More must be done to recruit and retain educators for this critical programing.

53% OF CHILDREN WHO NEED
 ECEAP/HS HAVE A SPACE
 AVAILABLE TO THEM
 (2,198)

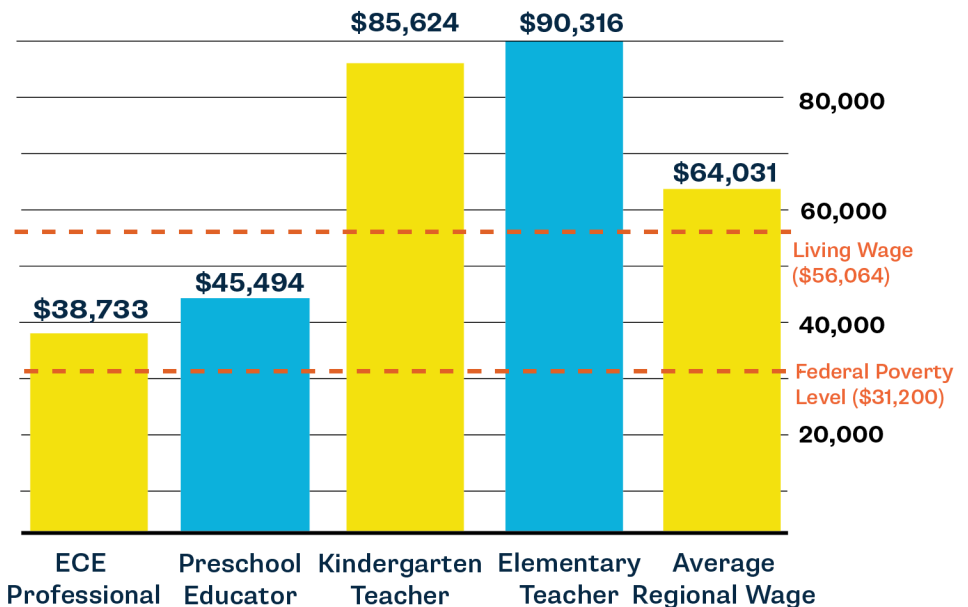
**EARLY CARE AND
 EDUCATION WORKFORCE**

Our early care and education (ECE) system currently depends on **864 ECE professionals** in the Pacific Mountain region, of whom **48% are people of color** and **96% are women.** While providing an essential service, most ECE professionals make significantly less than the regional living wage and **73% with one dependent would qualify for some form of government assistance.**

*We define low-income as 200 percent of the federal poverty line, which is \$62,400 for a family of four.

**Visual of 2024 data. Capacity includes licensed child care, ECEAP, HS, and Family Friend and Neighbor Care.

ECE VS. K-12 WAGES



GROWING LEARNERS TRANSITIONAL PRESCHOOL: INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

South Sound Parent to Parent (SSP2P) is the regional provider agency for the Early Supports for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) program. SSP2P supports families caring for an infant and/or toddler with a developmental delay and/or disability residing in Thurston, South Mason, and Grays Harbor counties. The program offers parents and caregivers information, skills, and resources to ensure they are supported as the most critical influence on their child's early learning and development, as well as provides direct services tailored to the individual needs of the child. Gaps in knowledge and ability between children with and without developmental delays can be observed long before kindergarten.



To address an identified need for services in the community, in 2021 SSP2P launched a transitional preschool in Thurston County, *Growing Learners*. This early learning program is for children ages 3-5, who have graduated from the ESIT program but do not qualify for ongoing special education through the school districts at age 3. *Growing Learners* focuses on children who would benefit from continued early learning supports taught by special education and general education certified teachers, and classrooms that have access to and are supported by therapeutic specialists, behavior specialists, and those with autism expertise. To learn more about SSP2P and *Growing Learners*, click [HERE](#).

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Washington state has passed legislation to increase the child care quality and access, leading to 702 more children served in our region. Unfortunately, these investments have not funded the true cost of providing high-quality* care, and many ECE professionals make far less than a living wage. In partnership with the Child Care for Washington campaign, we are advocating for the following:

- Maintain the promise of the Fair Start for Kids Act by increasing Working Connections Child Care eligibility** and expanding ECEAP.
- Ensure that Working Connections Child Care rates reflect the true cost for providing high-quality child care.
- Increase capacity for child care by investing in the Early Learning Facilities (ELF) Fund.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO GET INVOLVED

For Washington state, time is of the essence. Children, families, and educators need and deserve a fully funded system that supports them. Please join us in advocating with them by:

- Contacting your Early Learning Coalition Lead: Sheila Kavanaugh, Visions For Early Learning, kav.consulting231@gmail.com.
- Contacting your STEM Network Director: Lorie Thompson, Capital STEM Alliance, lthompson@esd113.org.
- Learning more on the Washington STEM website using the QR code or the link: https://washingtonstem.org/focus_area/early-stem/.
- Talking to your local representatives.

**High-quality ECE is defined here as participation in the Washington Early Achievers Quality Rating and Improvement System; the cost is defined by the 2022 Department of Commerce Cost of Quality Report.*

***Learn more about the Working Connections Child Care subsidy program at www.dcyf.wa.gov.*

