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Focus: *Early Learning*

We are testing a new WSSDA product to share up-to-date education research every two months. This edition's subject is Early Learning. Below is a summary of an early learning breakout session held at WSSDA's 2012 Annual Conference, followed by four articles dealing with early learning at the state, national and global levels. We hope you enjoy!

Presentation at WSSDA's recent 2012 Annual Conference in Spokane

OSPI Assistant Superintendent of Early Learning Bob Butts led a session on *Supporting Early Learning: A Wise Educational Investment*. He argued that research clearly shows the returns on early learning make it an exceptional investment. He was joined by Susan Phillips, Director of the Edmonds School District, and Dr. Greg Baker, Superintendent of Bellingham School District.

The presentation focused on the value and future of state-funded full-day kindergarten as part of basic education. Audience members were invited to check out the Washington State Early Learning and Development [Guidelines](#), and the three main components of WaKIDS were touched on.

Baker said his district has been able to move from part-time kindergarten to full-time kindergarten through patient and deliberative levy measures. He described how the district addressed systemic inequalities. Phillips said that pre-kindergarten education needs additional focus. She called for instructional alignment in grades 1 through 3 to help schools preserve the gains from full-day kindergarten.

In the spirit of this discussion, we identified four recent studies in the field of early learning.

- The first is a summary analysis of community research collected by the Washington Early Learning State and Local Coordination Project. This analysis helps us better understand the key barriers and opportunities to a strong early learning system.
- The second study looks at early learning as a key to reducing future crime. Data was collected from Washington and other states.

- The third piece of research is the newest State of Preschool report from The National Institute for Early Education Research. This report presents data on state-funded pre-kindergarten over the last decade from every state in the country.
- The final study in this edition was written about in a recent Education Week article by Lesli A. Maxwell, which describes some of the data from a recent OECD report that found the U.S. trailing globally in terms of early-childhood education.

Barriers to a strong early learning system and opportunities for improving it

Washington Early Learning State and Local Coordination Project

Between June 21 and August 3, 2012, the Early Learning State and Local Coordination Project conducted an online survey on the barriers to a strong early learning system and opportunities for improving it. The research included interviews and focus groups across the state, and a review of promising practices in other states. The project posted a summary of this research on the Department of Early Learning (DEL) website. The agencies sponsoring the project encouraged people to offer their own comments using an online survey form. Below you will find a link to the summary analysis of the responses, followed by a link to more extensive information.

http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/partnerships/docs/SLC_outreach%20survey_summary.pdf

http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/partnerships/docs/SLC_Outreach_Survey_results.pdf

High-quality early learning: A key to reducing future crime in Washington

By Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Washington

This report looks at how greater investments in early education can reduce crime and corrections costs. According to the report:

- Washington spends \$1.072 billion per year to house, feed and provide 24-hour supervision for its state criminals. In contrast, Washington spent only a fraction as much – \$139 million – on early education.
- Washington has a high-quality publicly funded early learning program, but approximately 50 percent of children in low-income families eligible for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) or Head Start are being reached by those programs.
- Other studies have found that children in lower-quality care were more likely to display behavior problems. Children displaying serious problem behaviors early

in life have a greater likelihood of delinquency, with an increased risk of crime as adults.

<http://www.fightcrime.org/wp-content/uploads/WA-ECE-quality-report.pdf>

The State of Preschool 2011

National Institute for Early Education Research

The *2011 State Preschool Yearbook* is an annual profile of state-funded pre-kindergarten programs in the United States. This latest *Yearbook* presents data on state-funded pre-kindergarten during the 2010-2011 school year and documents a decade of progress since the first *Yearbook* collected data. Tracking these trends is important. It could help ensure states prioritize early childhood education and influences how successfully future generations will compete in a global knowledge economy. Below you will find a link to an article with an overview of the latest data, as well as a link to the data itself.

Pre-K spending per child drops to levels of nearly a decade ago.

<http://nieer.org/news-events/news-releases/pre-k-spending-child-drops-levels-nearly-decade-ago>

<http://nieer.org/yearbook>

Global study finds U.S. trailing in early-childhood education

By Lesli A. Maxwell

The September 19, 2012 edition of *Education Week* provided an overview of the early education results from an Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report. The report compared the U.S. with other G-20 nations, ranking countries on things such as enrollment in pre-primary education programs and public investment in early childhood programs. A link to the article by Lesli A. Maxwell is provided below, followed by a link to the OECD report and data that are discussed in her article.

Partial public availability of article at Education Week -

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/09/19/04oecd-2.h32.html>

OECD reports and information - <http://www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012.htm>