

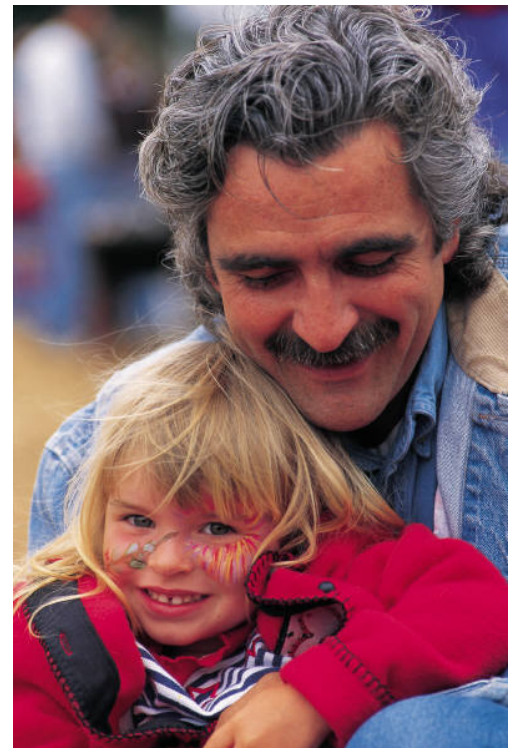


# ECEAP

An Investment in our Future

# Snohomish County

2009-2010







October 2010

Welcome to the 2009-2010 Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) Outcomes Report.

ECEAP is a free, comprehensive, family focused school-readiness program that prepares three- and four-year-old children for school, while teaching parents the tools they need to raise healthier children.

With dedicated staff, numerous volunteers and the commitment of participating families, this program creates the positive results you read about inside these pages.

We must continue preparing children and families for school so that they will be successful. This ultimately benefits themselves as well as our community.

I thank you for your interest in this report and our ECEAP Program, and I congratulate those involved for another great year. Together, we can build a better future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Aaron Reardon". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Aaron Reardon  
County Executive  
Snohomish County

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# ECEAP—An Investment in our Future

## 2009-2010 Outcomes for Snohomish County Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program

Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon has identified early childhood education as one of the most important investments we can make. He describes ECEAP as “an important service that gives children a better start in life and parents the tools they need to raise healthier children.” According to Reardon, “Children are our future. The earlier we prepare children and families for school, the more successful they will be, benefiting themselves and their community. These are our future workers, leaders and decision makers. We must be sure they are prepared.” Snohomish County ECEAP served more than 1097 children and their families at 21 sites in Snohomish and Skagit counties last year, providing a comprehensive preschool program integrating education, family support and health services.

Our program includes these curricula:

- ***Creative Curriculum*** provides high quality, emergent curriculum that is both developmentally appropriate and strength based.
- ***Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA)*** is a comprehensive, child-centered assessment that is designed to promote resiliency in young children by strengthening protective factors including attachment, initiative, and self-control, which, in turn, typically leads to a reduction in behavioral concerns.
- ***Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum*** is designed to reduce aggressive behavior and increase social competence in children.
- ***Talking About Touching Curriculum*** teaches basic rules and skills for protective action in a variety of dangerous situations (car, traffic, and fire safety lessons).



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## Cognitive and Language Skills

Snohomish County ECEAP uses *The Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum* to assess the growth and development in children. Per ECEAP Performance Standards, two assessments were completed on each of the 810 children who were present in the Fall of 2009 and Spring 2010.

*Creative curriculum offers classrooms organized in centers that include art, computers, cooking, music and movement.*

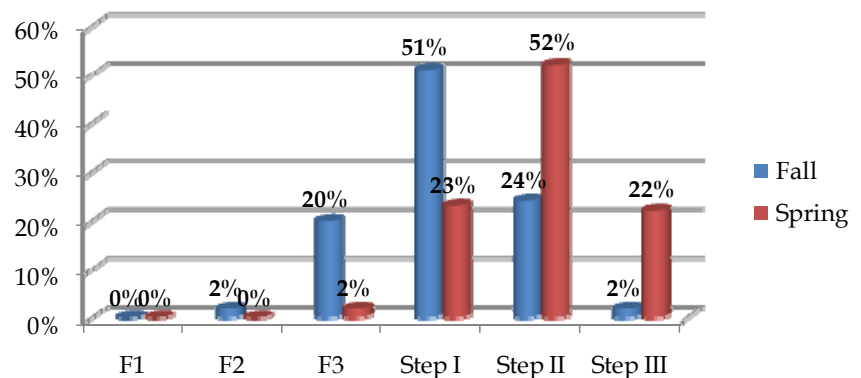
Teachers observe children as they participate in everyday activities and then assess their progress on objectives as the following:

- Forerunner levels describe children who are not yet at the initial level of typical preschool development but show beginning evidence of developing the skill;
- Step I approximates a beginning level of typical preschool development; and
- Steps II and III represent higher levels in acquiring the particular skill.<sup>1</sup>

This report shows progress on the continuum in two different areas: Cognitive Development and Language Development.



### Cognitive Development



Many children progressed in Cognitive Development objectives, with 74 percent of children falling into either the Step II or III levels in Spring 2010.

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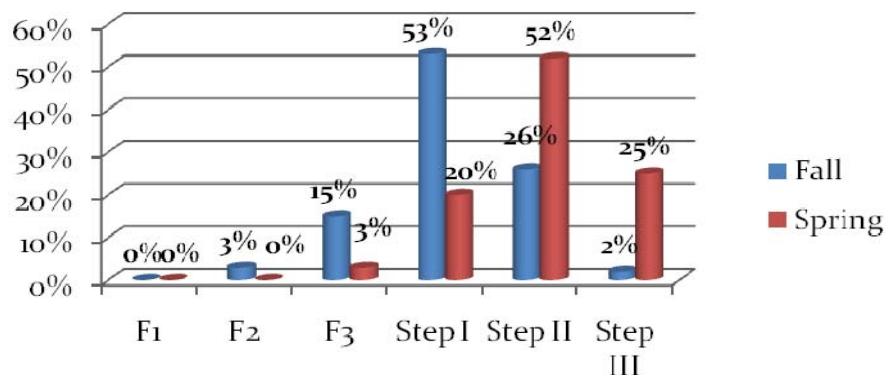
<sup>1</sup> From The Creative Curriculum Developmental Areas Report, July 2010.

Cognitive Development helps children acquire thinking skills. Children are not only learning knowledge, skills, and concepts, but also acquiring the “learning to learn” skills that are so important for future learning. <sup>2</sup>



We practice solving problems, encouraging them to ask questions and use their knowledge in new ways. We encourage logical thinking by offering children the opportunity to sort materials, classify, count and make comparisons. We invite children to use their imagination to show and represent what they have learned, and participate in pretend play. Math is more than recognizing numbers and counting. We offer children the opportunity to understand what the number “5” represents and they have many opportunities to sort and organize objects by color, size, and number, to follow steps in picture recipes and to use measuring spoons and cups during cooking activities.

### Language Development



Many children progressed in Language Development objectives, with 77 percent of children falling in either the Step II or Step III levels in Spring 2010.

A solid foundation in language development gives children the skills they need to become successful learners. Children who have rich language and literacy experiences in preschool are more likely to develop strong language and literacy skills.<sup>3</sup>

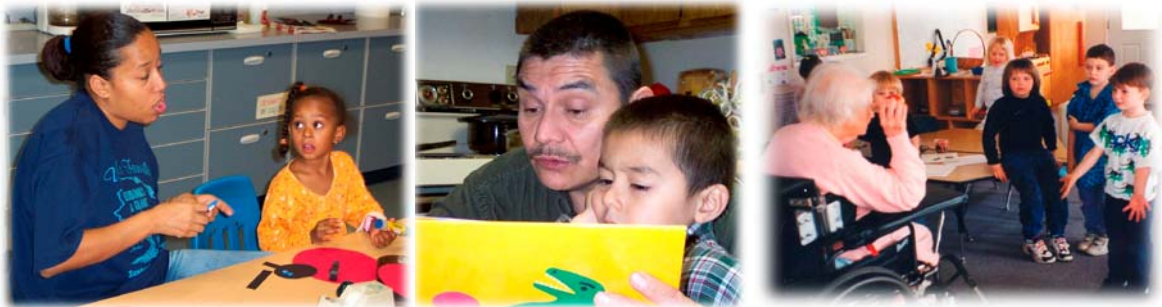
Language Development encourages children to begin to recognize letters and words and the favorite place to start with this is with their names. We read to children every day and have books available that reflect the children’s interests and what we are studying. We sing songs, recite poems and read books that play with words so that children can explore sounds and learn the meaning of new words. We help children begin to understand the meaning of print and the purpose of writing that is used to convey messages.

<sup>2</sup> Dodge, D. T., Colker, L. J., & Heroman, C. (2006). *A Teacher's Guide To Using The Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum Assessment System*. Washington DC: Teaching Strategies, Inc.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

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*Components of ECEAP include a well-trained staff, coherent curriculum, well-maintained classrooms and an age-appropriate student-teacher ratio.*

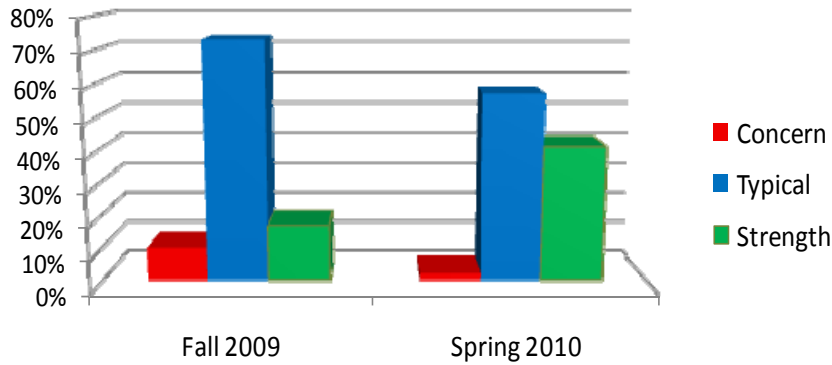


## **Social-Emotional Skills**

The DECA, a strength-based, family-inclusive, social/emotional assessment and planning tool, is also especially useful as an outcome measure related to children's social and emotional health. Based upon resilience theory, the DECA measures three within-child protective factors: **initiative** (the ability to use independent thought and action to meet his or her needs), **attachment** (the mutual, strong, and long-lasting relationship between a child and a significant adult), and **self-control** (the ability to experience a range of feelings and express them using words and actions society considers appropriate). Children with strong protective factors are more likely to adjust to and recover from misfortune or change and are better able to adapt to new challenges. By comparing changes over time for an individual child, or for an entire group of children, the DECA can evaluate the effectiveness of primary prevention and/or early intervention efforts. DECA results from the 2009-2010 school year indicate significant progress in strengthening protective factors and in reducing behavioral concerns.

*Families are the strongest influence on young children  
and when early childhood educators partner with families, children do better.*

## Percent of ECEAP Children Using Initiative



During  
the  
**2009-2010**  
School  
Year:

The number of children with typical levels of initiative decreased as many children moved from the **typical** category to the **strength** category.

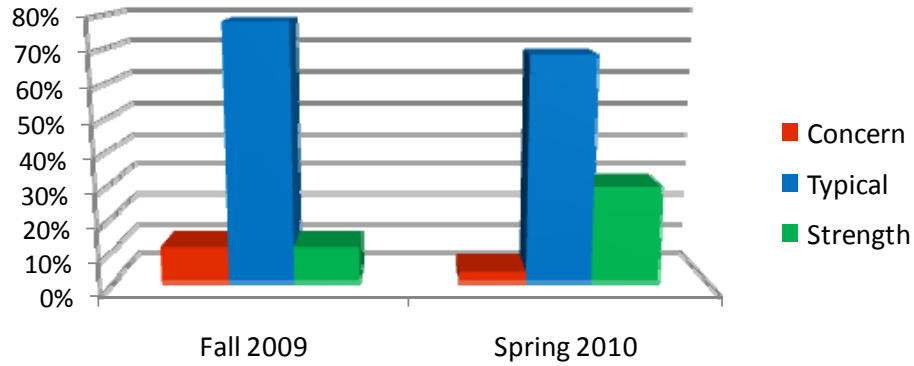
The number of children exhibiting **strength** in initiative increased from **17%** to **41%**.



The number of children with serious **concerns** in initiative decreased from **10%** of ECEAP children to **2%**.

*Learning happens  
through relationships.*

## Percent of ECEAP Children Experiencing Attachment



### During the 2009-2010 School Year:

The number of children with typical levels of attachment decreased slightly as many children moved to the strength category while many from the concerns category moved into the typical category.

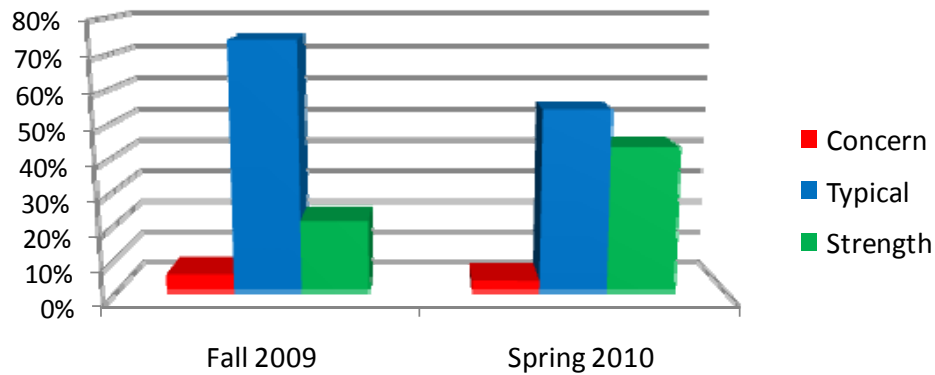
Children exhibiting **strength** in attachment **increased** from **11% to 29%**.

Serious attachment **concerns** **decreased** from **11%** of ECEAP children to **3%**.



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## Percent of ECEAP Children with Self-Control



During the  
2009-2010  
School Year:



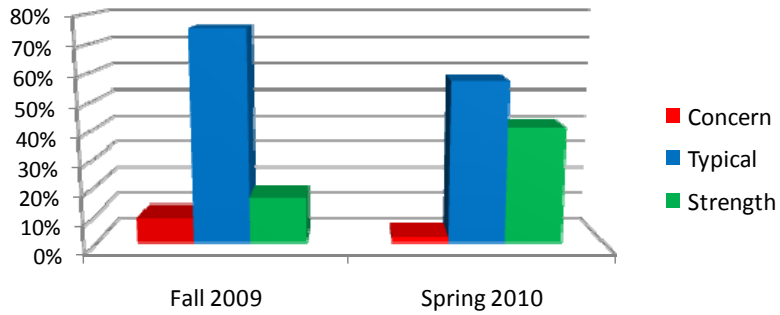
Children exhibiting  
**strength** in  
self-control  
**increased** from  
**21% to 43%.**

Serious  
**concerns** in  
self-control  
**decreased** from **5%** of  
ECEAP  
children to **3%.**

The number of children  
with **typical** levels of self-control  
**decreased** as many children  
**moved from** the **typical** category  
to the **strength** category.

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## DECA Total Protective Factors



During the 2009-2010 school year:

**Children moved** from the typical category  
Into the strength category.

The number of children whose total protective factors were rated as **concern, decreased** from **9%** of ECEAP children to **2%**.

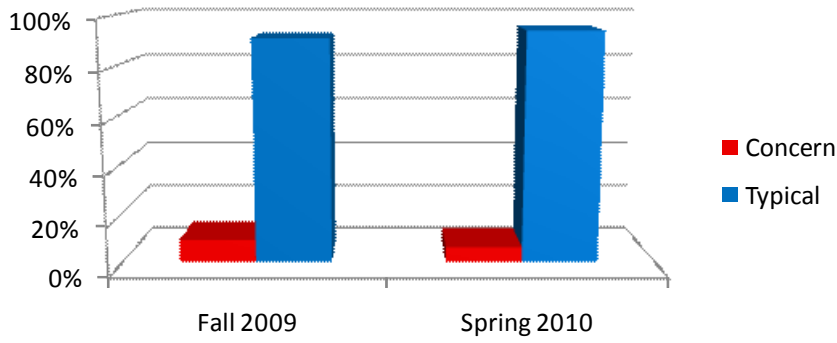


The number of children whose total protective factors were rated as **strength increased** from **16%** **→** **41%**.

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## Percent of ECEAP Children with Behavioral Concerns



During the **2009-2010** School Year:



Significant  
**behavioral  
concerns  
reduced from  
9% (83 children)  
to 6% (43  
children).**

It is important to note that changes in behavior take place gradually over time and are not as likely to increase as significantly as with the protective factor categories.

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## Health and Nutrition

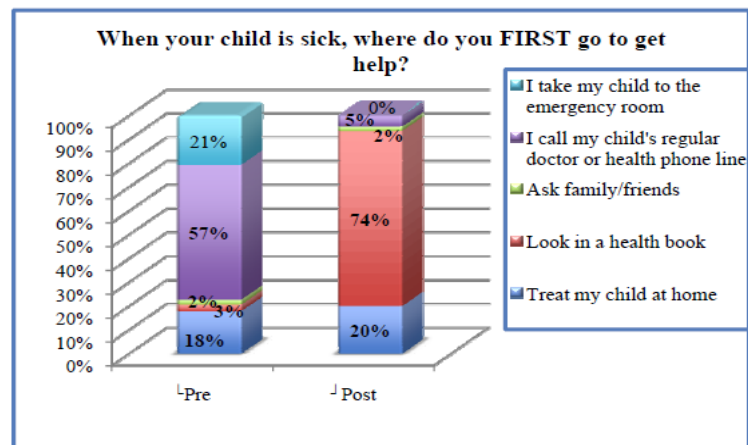
### Health Care Institute

In the 2009-2010 school year, Snohomish County ECEAP implemented the UCLA and Johnson & Johnson Health Care Institute. This project was a valuable partnership that aimed to improve the health-care knowledge of our families.

The primary goals of the project were to educate and train parents to:

- Recognize and address common health problems at home;
- Know when to call a health care provider;
- Minimize and possibly avoid costly medical bills;
- Learn how to effectively communicate with a health care provider.

305 new ECEAP families participated in 21 trainings held throughout the County and each received a health-care reference book, first-aid kit, digital thermometer, and several other incentives. In the months following the training, ECEAP family support staff followed up with families to determine how the program helped them address their child's health-care needs. Statistics reflected a dramatic decrease in doctor and emergency room visits for common childhood illnesses such as low-grade fevers and a significant increase in parent use of health books as a first resource, rather than calling a physician or visiting the emergency room, when their child became ill.



**Doctor usage decreased from 57% to 5% and ER usage decreased from 21% to 0%. In addition, referring to a health book increased from 3% to 74%.**

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## Medical/Dental Exams

Over 99 percent of all children enrolled in the program were fully immunized, or exempt from immunizations, and 98% of children received medical and dental exams while in the program.



## Family Support

Snohomish County ECEAP offers a wide array of programs and services dedicated to supporting the families of the children in the program. Family support staff work in partnership with families to identify family strengths and needs, set goals and follow-up on progress toward those goals, access resources and coordinate transitions between ECEAP and home, childcare and kindergarten. During the 2009 – 2010 school year, 10,025 professional referrals were provided to ECEAP families, helping them progress toward their goals and obtain services from appropriate community resources.



Family Events are also a vital element in providing excellent Family Support Services. Site program staff plans monthly events, focused upon connecting families with one another while enjoying fun and educational activities. In 2009-2010, over 319 Family Events were offered, including Thumbs Up Puppet Show, Dr. Seuss Literacy Nights, Heritage Nights, Snohomish County Imagine Children's Museum-On-the-Go, Multicultural Fairs, Family Night Out, Community Career Fair, Luaus, Fiestas, Box Car Derbies, Dancing with Dad's, Mother's Day, A Visit to the Reptile Man, Skate Night, Dramatic Play Repair Shop, Sing Alongs, Learning about Dinosaurs, and many more. Over 9,230 people attended Family Events in 2009 and 2010.



Parent education is another key component of ECEAP's Family Support Services. Our programs strive to offer parents educational opportunities based upon their expressed interests and needs. In 2009 – 2010 topics included: "Kid's on the Block" Puppet Shows, Free Tax Preparation, Field Trip to Operation School Bell, Child Guidance, Kindergarten Readiness, English Language Learners, Leadership and Advocacy, Communication Skills, and many more. Over 3,500 parents attended the Parent Education Activities offered by the various Snohomish County ECEAP sites.



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## **Family Outcomes Interview Questionnaire**

Family Support Staff interviewed parents/guardians of ECEAP children twice during the year, using the ECEAP Family Outcomes Interview Questionnaire. The questionnaire asked parents to report on the quality of the services provided by ECEAP and the changes in their own routines and interactions with their children as a result of their participation in the program.

Families were interviewed at the end of the program year and the results include:



## **Increased Funding for Early Education in Snohomish County**

Snohomish County has received \$2.45 million in federal stimulus funds to provide comprehensive, high-quality Early Head Start services during the next two years. The funding allows the county to provide services to infants, toddlers, and pregnant women in Marysville, Arlington, Granite Falls and Sultan prior to their likely enrollment in the county run Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). The Early Head Start grant funds services for 82 children and pregnant women. More than 1200 children in the Arlington, Granite falls, Maryville, and Sultan areas are eligible for Early Head Start services.

Much like ECEAP, the Early Head Start program provides family-centered services for low-income families and is designed to promote the development of the children while helping parents fulfill their roles and move toward self-sufficiency. The program provides families with parent education, health and dental screenings, social services, nutrition, and developmental assessments.

Research from the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project indicates that EHS makes a positive difference for children and families, including better vocabulary and improved cognition and social emotional development for children; lasting positive effects for children; and improved parenting. Children enrolled in EHS have significantly larger vocabulary and score higher on standardized measures of cognitive development than children not enrolled. EHS children behaved differently than children in the research control group including exhibiting lower levels of aggressive behavior; higher levels of sustained attention with objects in a play situation; a greater degree of engagement with their parents; and less negativity toward their parents.

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Research also indicates that EHS parents displayed a number of positive parenting techniques, including: providing greater warmth and supportiveness toward their child; spending more time in play with their child; providing more educationally stimulating home environments; providing more support for language and learning; and more likely to read to their child daily.

“Early Head Start will help us reach vulnerable children and families at an even younger age, providing comprehensive child development and family support services that enhance the physical, social and intellectual development of participating children,” Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon said. “Ensuring that infants and toddlers have good health, strong families and positive early learning experiences will lay the foundation for success throughout their lives.”

*We have a serious learning gap: only 50% of our young children are ready for kindergarten.*

## **Effect of Early Education on Children and Families**

Mari Taylor, former ECEAP teacher from Snohomish County, used her experience in the program to research the effects of early education programs on children. Her reflections and findings were shared in a presentation of her Master’s thesis project at the University of Washington in June and are summarized in her comments below:

*Many parents see great benefits to their children through participation in ECEAP; watching them strengthen social skills, develop early literacy abilities and gain a greater understanding of the world around them. The common experience may also be related to family participation in ECEAP. Long-term studies indicate families of children enrolled in quality early childhood education programs may experience such benefits as higher incomes and increased education levels for parents. <sup>4</sup>*

*Everyone has strengths and faces challenges. Different challenges (risk factors) increase our vulnerability to stress and our strengths (protective factors) buffer against those stressors. At any point in time, we are all more or less susceptible to the impacts of life stresses depending upon the balance of these factors. When we face challenges like poverty, illness, unemployment, family conflict or grief, ECE Programs and social services not only help us cope at the time of crisis, they help us learn to deal with future stress.*

*In ECEAP teachers and family support staff partner with families to build on their existing strengths and increase resiliency. Resiliency, often described as the ability to bounce back from life’s challenges, may be better understood when described as our “bouncing forward” or emerging from our difficulties stronger than we were before.<sup>5</sup> Our resiliency increases each time we succeed through a difficult challenge.*

*Throughout the 2009-2010 school year we interviewed twelve families of children enrolled in ECEAP in four public elementary schools. Their stories revealed a great*

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4 Ramey, C., Campbell, F., Burchinal, Skinner, M., Gardner, D., & Ramey, S. (2000). Persistent effects of early childhood education on high-risk children and their mothers. *Applied Developmental Science*, 4(1), 2-2.

5 Walsh, Froma. (2006). *Strengthening Family Resilience*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press

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*deal about ECEAP's effects on families. Many study participants credited their ECEAP staff and program with strengthening their child's academic and social skills as well as helping build on family strengths and increasing capacity for their own future success. These families' stories illustrate ways in which ECEAP provided opportunities to strengthen skills around:*

- 1) Maintaining a positive outlook, understanding the role of personal agency and perseverance and contextualizing challenges families are facing,*
- 2) Problem-solving skills and resourcefulness by linking families to available social and economic resources and to the larger community, including building leadership and initiative skills in parents, and*
- 3) Reinforcing and improving positive communication strategies at home and within the larger community.*

## **Donations**

In the 2009-2010 program year, Snohomish County ECEAP leveraged over \$2.1 million in community support, including funding from tribes and school districts to provide additional services, other contributions (i.e., space, administrative support, transportation costs, etc.), and volunteer and community donations.

## **Conclusion**

Snohomish County's future prosperity and security begins with the well-being of our children. We know that a child's experiences through age five lay the cognitive, social and emotional foundations for success in school and life. Data shows that a dollar invested in high-quality pre-k returns up to seven dollars to taxpayers through higher graduation rates and lifetime earnings, decreased incarceration and a reduced need for costly remedial education.

This outcomes report demonstrates that Snohomish County's ECEAP Program is producing positive results for children and families. We are providing a solid foundation for responsible citizenship, economic productivity, strong communities, sustainable democracy, and a healthy adult population. We are supporting our families, and preparing our children for kindergarten and life.

*We invest in early education with an explicit goal of improving school readiness for low income children*

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