

Brief: Education



General Description

Education is a cornerstone for success in school, work and life. It also benefits the whole community: high school graduates have higher earning potential, contribute more to their local economies, are more engaged in their communities, and are more likely to raise kids who also graduate on time.¹

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is an example of a state-wide program designed to provide early learning (Pre-K) for low-income children. Less than 1/2 of eligible children are served through the federal Head Start program, ECEAP fills this gap at the state level, with a ‘whole child,’ family-focused preschool program that provides an intensive combination of education, health and nutrition screening and assistance, parent involvement and family support.² In the 2015-2016 school year, ECEAP served 11,691 children, yet there are nearly 23,000 eligible children in Washington that remain unserved.³

Beyond government programs, local nonprofit organizations, faith-based groups, parent teacher associations, and informal support groups play a critical role in meeting the broader educational needs of the community.

Relationship to Poverty

Education and income inequality are strongly tied. Poverty is associated with a number of adverse conditions that have strong impacts on educational success including high mobility, homelessness, hunger, and food insecurity.⁴

Access: Barriers for accessing traditional educational resources may include limited English language proficiency,⁵ a lack of affordable, quality childcare,⁶ or financial literacy and resource awareness.⁷ Additionally, the cost of these resources, like child care, is not factored into official poverty measures.⁸ In particular, student parents face many significant challenges that may contribute to their relatively low rates of college completion like high childcare costs, difficulty obtaining subsidies, and scheduling challenges.⁹

Self Sufficiency: Nationally, those with less than a high school diploma earn, on average, only \$488 per week and are nearly 5 times more likely to be unemployed than those with a professional degree (earning, on average, \$1639 per week).¹⁰ Completing a high school degree reduces the risk of unemployment and increases an individual’s earnings.¹¹

Emotional and Behavioral Impacts: Adverse conditions are often referred to as “toxic stressors,” meaning they are severe, sustained and lacking in supportive relationships. Early childhood toxic stress leaves lasting impacts on learning (linguistic, cognitive and social-emotional skills), behavior, and health, and can manifest in a variety of negative attitudes and behaviors that link to school success.¹² Living in poverty during early childhood is associated with lower-than-average academic performance that begins in kindergarten and extends through elementary, high school, and beyond.¹³

Example programs that might fall under this focus area:

- Child Care
- Early Childhood Education Programs
- Afterschool Programs
- Academic Readiness
- Financial Education
- Life Skills

Snohomish County Stats:

- Population: 736,151
 - Under 18: 171,403
 - 18 to 64: 479,610
 - Over 64: 85,138
- Poverty Rate: 10.2
 - Under 18: 13.6
 - 18 to 64: 9.4
 - Over 64: 7.5

Source: U.S. Census 2015, 5-yr avg.

Effects on Youth

15.3% (over 7,000) of Snohomish County children under age 5 live in poverty, making access to early learning a barrier.¹⁴ Preschool education has significant lasting effects on cognitive abilities, school progress (like high school graduation), and social behavior.¹⁵ Lower-income children reap the most long-term benefits from preschool education.¹⁶

Parents of lower-income and minority youth are less likely than parents of higher-income and white youth to report easy access to conveniently located after-school programs.¹⁷ Participation in after-school programs shows a strong correlation to higher class attendance, lower course failures, and higher graduation rates.¹⁸

7,822 students (39.1%) in the Everett School District participated in Free/Reduced Lunch in the 2015-2016 school year.¹⁹ Children participating in this program often do not receive adequate meals at home or throughout the summer. Hunger is associated with lower grades, higher absenteeism, repeating a grade, and an inability to focus.²⁰

In Edmonds School District, the largest school district in Snohomish County with over 20,000 enrolled students, only 61.2% of 8th graders are meeting the language arts standard and only 48.9% are meeting the math standards set by Washington State.²¹

Lake Stevens School District had the highest rate of on-time graduation at 91.1% and Granite Falls School District had the lowest rate of on-time graduation at 69.2%.²²

Effects on Adults

In Snohomish County adults age 25 and over, 27,986 (5.5%) of individuals have less than a high school diploma, 123,219 (24.3%) of individuals have received their high school diploma or the equivalency, 105,751 (20.9%) of individuals have received a Bachelor's degree, and 45,983 (9.1%) of individuals have received a Graduate or professional degree.²³

Employers report that the credentials and skills individuals gain through vocational diplomas or certificates, vocational associate's degrees, and bachelor's degrees are the hardest credentials to find in workers. The lack of these certificates and degrees greatly impacts a worker's ability to take advantage of high-paying employment opportunities.²⁴

Postsecondary education completion allows workers to earn between 74 and 82% more than those with only a high school education or less, regardless of business performance or unemployment rate.²⁵

In the US, the number of student parents have increased by more than 50% from 1995-2011. Affordable, reliable childcare is a crucial support for the 4.8 million college students nationally who are raising dependent children, but is often tough to find.

Nationally, low-income families with children under 15 spend about 40% of their average monthly income on childcare.²⁶ For a minimum-wage earner, that equals \$762 a month of childcare cost.²⁷

Effects on Seniors

In Washington State, 28% of elderly abuse cases involve financial exploitation, the leading category for all types of abuse or neglect in the elderly. Financial education is an essential tool in preventing financial fraud and victimization of older adults. As baby boomers begin to retire, there is a need for enhanced financial literacy programs among older individuals.²⁸

Seniors feel that there is inadequate information available in Snohomish County on topics like health insurance, exercise, social opportunities, and long term care.²⁹

Nationally, about 3% of households headed by an adult 65 or older still carry student loan debt, which can leave some retirees below the poverty line. This number grew 6.5 times between 2005 and 2013.³⁰ Translated to Snohomish County, this would be approximately 2,427 seniors with student loan debt.

While the majority of postsecondary students are under 34, older adult educational attainment is on the rise. From 1970 to 2013, there was a 361% increase in the rate of adults 35 and older attending degree-granting postsecondary institutions; projections indicate this upward trend will continue.³¹

Older adults have cognitive losses that can make learning in later life more challenging, including speed of processing, limited cognitive flexibility, less working memory, and less focus.³²

Other Populations of Interest

Single Mothers: Women make up 71% of all student parents, and roughly 43% are single mothers.³³ As many as 30.6% of Snohomish County single female householders with children live in poverty.³⁴

Children with Disabilities: In the 2012-2013 school year, the number of children and youth ages 3–21 receiving special education services nationwide was 6.4 million, or about 13% of all public school students. 35% of students receiving special education services had specific learning disabilities.³⁵

Communities of Color: US students of color face harsher discipline, have less access to rigorous high school curricula, and are more often taught by lower-paid and less experienced teachers.³⁶ Student parents of color also have lower incomes than white counterparts: nearly 71% of black student parents and 68% of Hispanic student parents live at or below 200% of the poverty line, compared with 49% of white student parents.³⁷

Non-English Speakers: Nationally, there is a growing achievement gap for English language learners (ELL) and immigrant students in elementary school. ELL students who entered kindergarten with limited English proficiency were in the lowest performing quartile in 5th grade reading and math and 8th grade ELLs lag a sizeable 30% behind their English-proficient peers.³⁸

LGBT communities: LGBT students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds miss or drop out of school because of identity-related safety fears. In low-income youth, some research shows that being poor may make it more difficult to openly identify as LGBT in part because of economic risks associated with a further disadvantaged status.³⁹

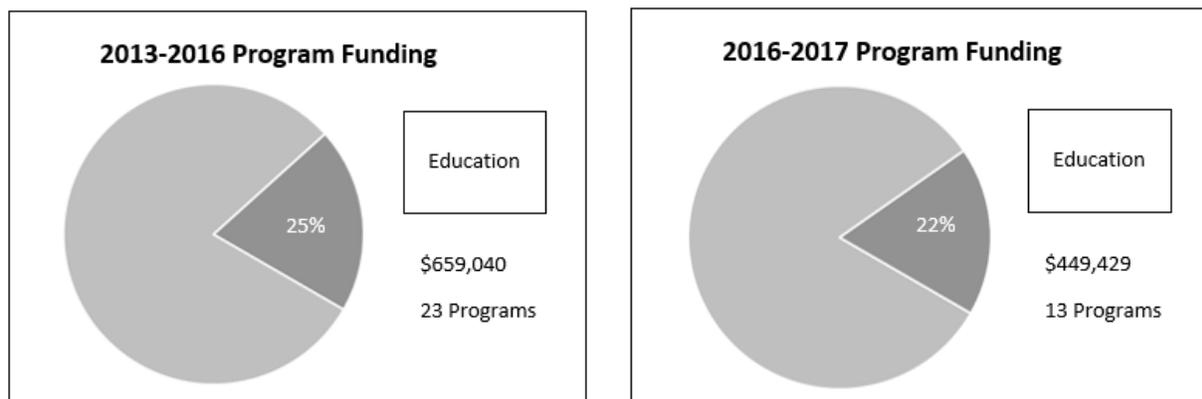
Strategies in Practice

Reducing turnover of childcare providers through increased professionalism and compensation provides consistency and stability for children in early learning settings.⁴⁰

Strong out-of-school time program strategies include teaching a range of skills and behaviors and provide a chance for children to develop relationships with non-parent adults. Examples might include: educational enhancement or subject enrichment, technology access, mentoring, and social development activities.⁴¹

Programs that promote financial management skills are a successful way to ensure low-income individuals become self-sufficient because it provides the knowledge necessary to make sound financial decisions like money management and asset accumulation. Successful programs further enable low-income individuals to achieve self-sufficiency by providing access to fair financial services and opportunities.⁴²

Past United Way Funding



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