

# Early Learning

Birth to Age Five

GOVERNOR'S  
COMMISSION



ON EARLY  
LEARNING

Final Report  
May 2000

*T*here was a child went forth every day,

*And the first object he looked upon,  
that object he became,*

*And that object became a part of him for the day  
or a certain part of the day,*

*Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.*

—Walt Whitman  
*There Was a Child Went Forth*

# Early Learning

Birth to Age Five

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## Table of Contents

To the People of Washington State.....	5
A Baby Comes into this World Learning .....	6
Commission Summary .....	7
Early Learning and Brain Development .....	10
Parent Forums .....	15
Children’s Bill of Rights.....	16
Survey of Parents and Child Care Providers .....	17
Washington Early Learning Foundation .....	20
T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Washington College Scholarship Program .....	21
Parent Education .....	22
Early Learning Public Engagement Campaign .....	23
Recommendations to Governor Locke .....	25
Commission Members .....	26
References and Resources .....	34



To the People of Washington State:



Over the last two years, we have studied early learning with a remarkable panel of Washington State Legislators, community leaders, and early childhood experts. This diverse group brought together knowledge in child care, medicine, education, legislation, business, social services, and nonprofit foundations. All of us are dedicated to helping children become happy kindergartners who are eager to learn and ready to succeed in school.

Early learning encourages the dramatic brain development that naturally occurs from birth to age three. This brain building period is the best time to expand a child's mind and build confidence. However, early learning is not about math flashcards for babies. Early learning is cooing at an infant, or praising a toddler playing with mud. Many of these responses are instinctive and automatic. Add reading, singing and stimulating environments and you will build strong, curious minds ready to develop stable relationships and eager to learn.

We want parents, grandparents, caregivers—anyone who is close to young children—to know that encouraging children to explore and experiment builds brain power. All children are born learning. Make them feel safe, loved and appreciated, and they will grow into school children that are curious and care about people.

We have seen the magic of early learning in our own infants and toddlers. It is critically important to nurture children's confidence and encourage them to explore and learn. As you read this report and learn more about early learning, we hope you will share our enthusiasm.

Sincerely,

First Lady Mona Lee Locke  
Co-Chair

Melinda French Gates  
Co-Chair

# A baby comes into this world learning.

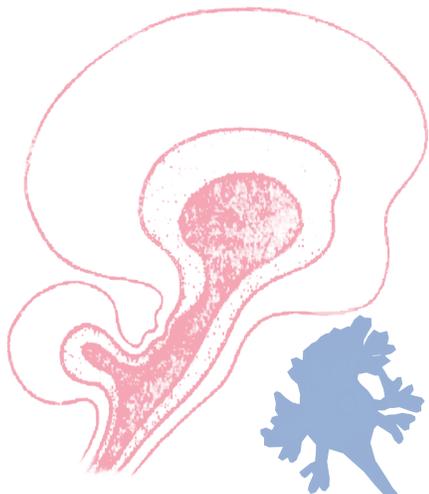


**B**efore birth, a baby knows the smell and sound of its mother. This is early learning. After the baby is born, it learns to breathe and cry. Waving its arms, the newborn turns toward the sound of the mother's voice and grips her finger with a tiny hand.

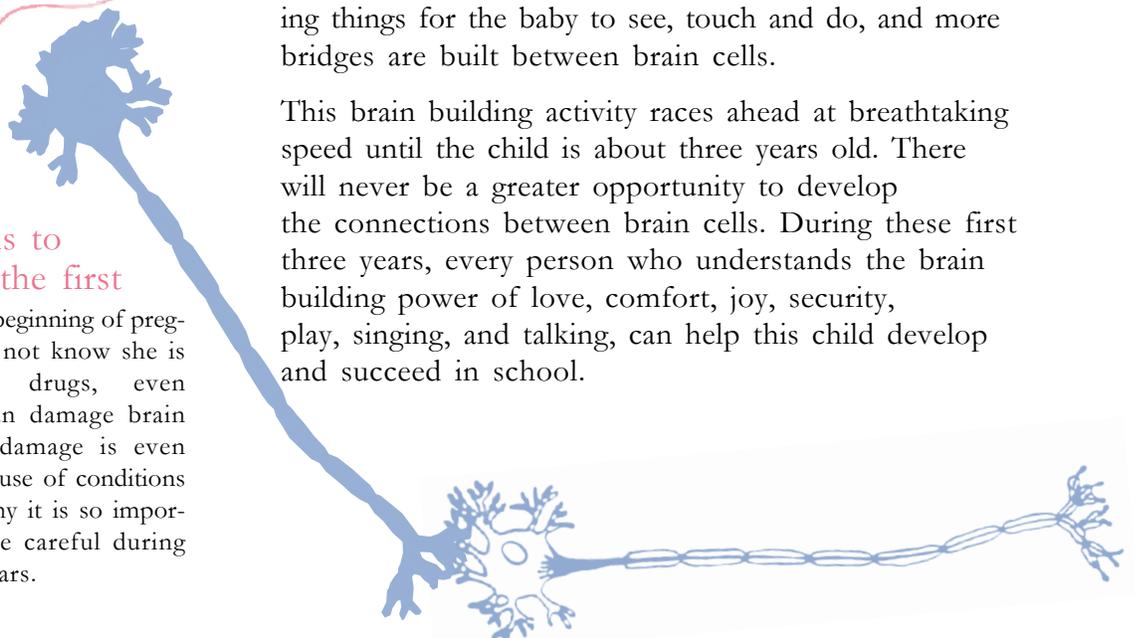
The parents count the toes, speak lovingly, and kiss the baby's head. This joy and attention are exactly what every baby needs to become a healthy happy child.

The newborn's peaceful face hides intense activity going on inside her head. Brain cells are responding to love, security, comfort, and good care by building bridges from cell to cell. Everything the baby sees, hears, and feels, sets off this activity in her brain. Add interesting things for the baby to see, touch and do, and more bridges are built between brain cells.

This brain building activity races ahead at breathtaking speed until the child is about three years old. There will never be a greater opportunity to develop the connections between brain cells. During these first three years, every person who understands the brain building power of love, comfort, joy, security, play, singing, and talking, can help this child develop and succeed in school.



**The brain begins to develop during the first few weeks.** At the beginning of pregnancy, a woman may not know she is pregnant. Alcohol, drugs, even viruses and stress can damage brain development. Early damage is even suspected to be the cause of conditions like autism. That is why it is so important for women to be careful during their reproductive years.



# During the first three years, babies and young children are naturally curious and learning is fun.

**C**ommission Summary—In the spring of 1998, Governor Gary Locke announced formation of the Commission on Early Learning. At that time, nearly 400,000 Washington State children were under the age of five. Nearly 230,000 children under age six came from families with two parents who work or a single parent who works.

Many of these babies and children spent their days at child care facilities. Not only was there a growing need for child care but, the quality of care was crucial to nurturing these early learners. Governor Locke believed that the sooner parents and caregivers understood early learning, the sooner babies and young children would benefit.

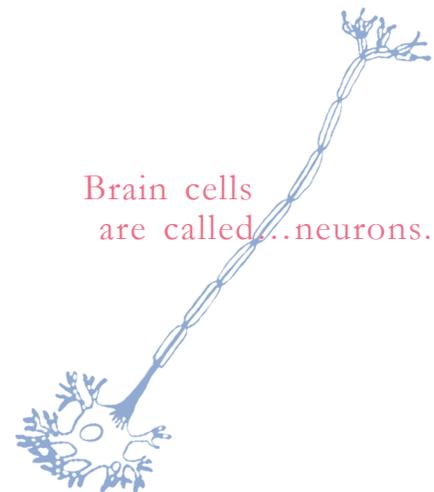
Appointing the Commission was partly a response to the rising need for child care. However, there was an even more important issue. New research about babies and young children showed that intense learning begins when a baby is born and continues through the first three years. This period of early learning is the best opportunity to help children develop their minds.

At the first Commission meeting, Governor Locke asked the members to help caregivers and parents discover what they can do to get young children ready for school. In his remarks, the Governor delivered a new version of a favorite theme: “A life of learning begins at the very earliest stages.”

Commission meetings included presentations and discussions on early childhood research and education. Commission Member and University of Washington Professor Kathryn Barnard spoke at the first meeting on the development of a young child’s mind. She had worked on *Starting Points, Meeting the Needs of our*

During certain parts of pregnancy, the brain can grow 250,000 cells per minute.

- A baby is born with over 100 billion brain cells.
- At birth only 25% of the brain is developed.
- By age three 90% of the brain is developed.



Brain cells are called...neurons.

# Talk to babies. Tell them what you are doing. Copy their sounds.

## Neurons begin to work when they connect to other neurons.

Before birth only a few neurons are connected to control breathing, heartbeat and other systems necessary for life. After a baby is born, the brain lights up with neurons connecting as the baby reacts to a new world. The rest wait for the baby to experience something new.

*Youngest Children*, a 1994 study that focused nationwide attention on early childhood. The illustrations and information in the outer margins are based on her presentation.

Other presenters included Rob Reiner, who created the I Am Your Child Foundation and representatives of innovative early childhood programs from across the country. Commission meetings always closed with comments from the audience.

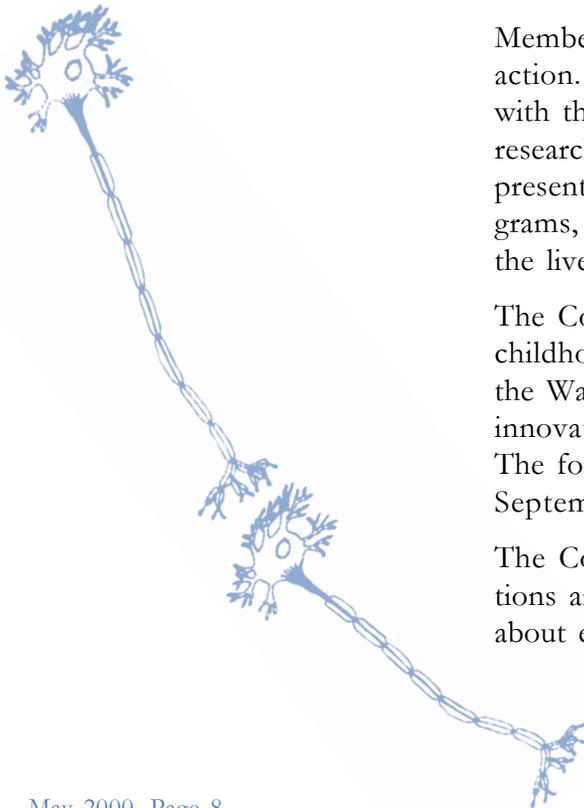
## One thing was very clear. Everyone at the meetings cared deeply about children.

Commission Members represented many fields. They all wanted to promote the health and happiness of children. Sometimes they disagreed on the best approach, yet they achieved consensus on goals and recommendations.

Members of the audience often applauded Commission action. Some people in the audience disagreed with the work of the Commission and believed the brain research is not accurate. Even though all proposals presented to the Commission were for voluntary programs, this group feared government was intruding into the lives of families who did not want or need assistance.

The Commission spent two years studying early childhood education and care. The Commission created the Washington Early Learning Foundation to support innovations in quality child care and parent education. The foundation will be in full operation by September 2000.

The Commission accomplishments and recommendations are listed on the facing page. More information about each begins on page 15.



# Babies will be fascinated and you will expand their sounds.

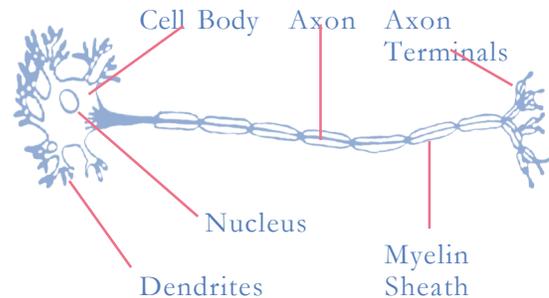
## Commission Accomplishments

1. Parent Forums  
Fall 1998 and Winter 1999
2. Children's Bill of Rights  
June 1999
3. Survey of Parents & Child Care Providers  
January 2000
4. Washington Early Learning Foundation  
April 2000
5. T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Washington  
(Teacher Education and Compensation Helps)  
College Scholarship Program  
September 2000
6. Parent Education
7. Early Learning Public Engagement Campaign  
June 2000 to May 2001

## Recommendations to Governor Locke:

1. Change the assumption that education begins with kindergarten.
2. State should demonstrate a policy commitment to early learning
3. Examine and reform the financing structure for child care and early learning.

## The Parts of a Neuron



**Neuron**—a nerve cell.

**Cell Body**—area that stores and receives information.

**Axon**—sends signals away from the cell body.

**Axon Terminals**—send signals to dendrites of other neurons.

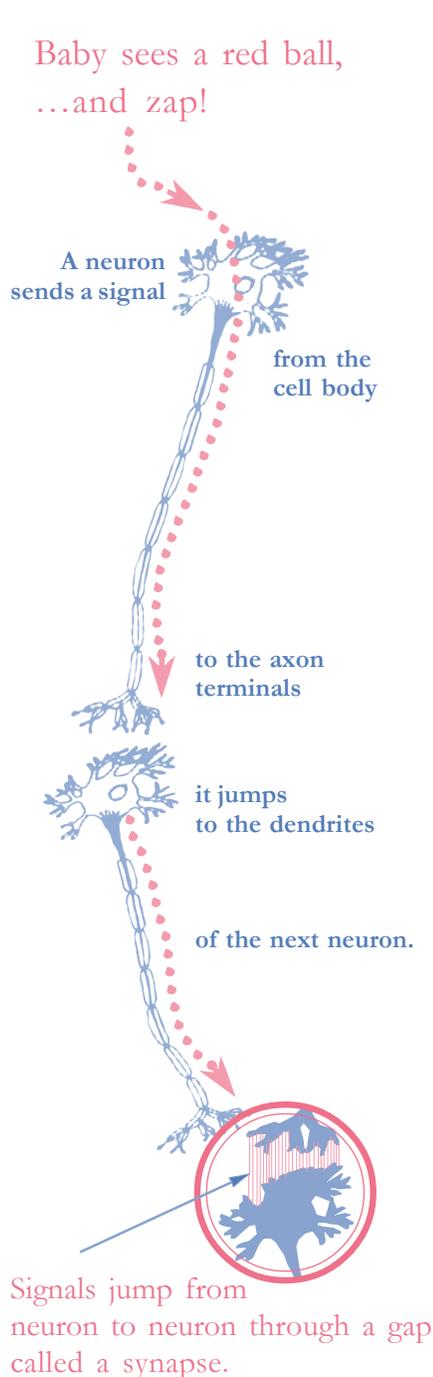
**Nucleus**—control center of the cell body.

**Myelin Sheath**—outer layer that protects and insulates the axon, and speeds up signals.

**Dendrites**—receive signals from axon terminals of other neurons.



# All parents should know if their newborn can see, hear and learn.



Children's attitudes—about learning and other people are shaped in early childhood. Babies and young children are naturally curious and eager to learn. Everything is new. In a few months they learn to recognize faces. In a little over a year, they learn a foreign language—the language their parents speak. In just three years, they learn to play with other children and hold a pencil. If early childhood experiences encourage children to keep on exploring, they will go to kindergarten loving to learn.

Windows of opportunity are times when the brain is ready to learn certain things.

There are windows of opportunity for everything from learning to tie shoe laces to learning to speak Nepali. Both of these tasks can be learned later, but they are easier to learn during the window of opportunity for that skill. Some windows stay open longer than others. Some, like the window for learning to see, close quickly.

It may seem odd to think of vision as something to learn, but infants who don't learn to see from birth to four months old, will never see. During the first few months of life, newborns are programmed to spend every waking moment developing the synapses and paths for sight. That is why it is important to test a newborn's vision early to correct problems like infant cataracts before this window of opportunity closes.

At birth, a newborn cradled in its father's arms, can clearly see his face. Everything else is out of focus. Over the next four months, the infant practices seeing by gazing into faces and staring at things close by. Adults and children instinctively put their faces close to an infant. They may not know it, but this reaction helps the baby learn to see. Babies love to look at faces.

# This makes a big difference in how they relate to the baby.

Helping a baby learn to see is early learning.

Getting close to the baby, and looking into its eyes, encourages early learning. So does making silly faces. Knowing about the window of opportunity for vision helps parents understand that newborns need to stare. So, they put interesting objects nearby and hang the mobile over the crib within the newborn's range of focus.

Understanding windows of opportunity explains why learning to tie shoelaces frustrates a toddler. The window of opportunity for tying a bow has not opened. It also explains why babies can learn more than one language at a time, while a teenager struggles to pass French. The window of opportunity for the baby is open to any language, and it closed long ago for the teenager.

This does not mean teenagers cannot learn a new language, but it will take a lot of hard work. It would be much easier if they began learning a second language before age five. Working with windows of opportunity, like the one for language, would increase success in school and create happier students.

Windows of opportunity, synapses, and neurons build strong minds and bodies.

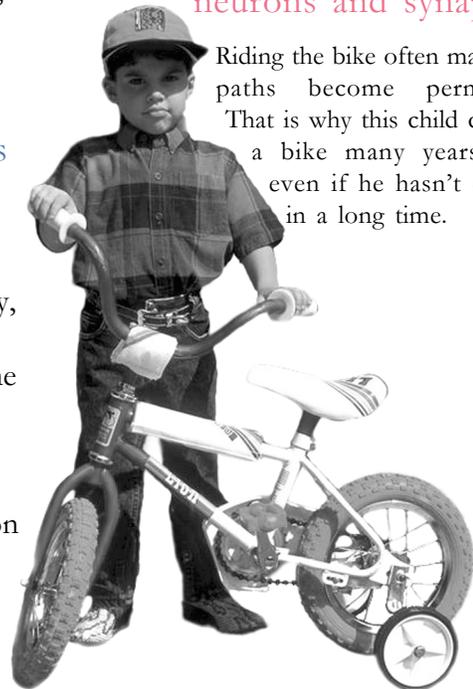
Windows of opportunity make it easy for the brain to build paths for skills like seeing. Loving care, security, and joy release hormones that nourish those paths. When a signal from the brain flows from the axon of one neuron to the dendrites of the next, it crosses the synapse, a one millionth of an inch space. These hormones help the signal reach the next neuron. The more the path is used, the more receptors are formed on the dendrites, allowing larger amounts of information to cross from neuron to neuron.

When the baby sees the red ball, neurons react like a string of lighted firecrackers.

The reaction to the red ball jumps the one millionth of an inch space between the neurons creating a synapse. Each time the baby looks away and looks back at the red ball, the path gets stronger. If the baby sees the mother get excited by its reaction to the red ball, the path of neurons and synapses grows larger and more complex. It can link together as many as 15,000 neurons. The more the red ball path of neurons and synapses is used, the stronger it becomes.

A child learns to ride a bike by forming paths of neurons and synapses

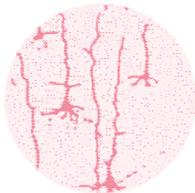
Riding the bike often makes the paths become permanent. That is why this child can ride a bike many years later, even if he hasn't done it in a long time.



# Toddlers have tantrums when the brain is overloaded.

Look at the connections below to see how intense a young child's mind can be.

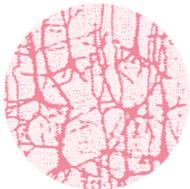
At Birth—25% of the brain is connected.



At Three—90% of the brain is connected.



At Eleven—brain organizes itself and prunes weak connections.



The brain also has a built in system for reacting to danger...the fight or flight response. Anger, aggression, stress, and fear are tools that alert the body to danger and prepare it to respond. Children that live in an atmosphere of aggression, stress and fear, spend their energy on fight or flight instead of building healthy synapses.

The stress hormones produced by fight or flight are necessary for survival. But when the system is overloaded with them, it begins to destroy brain building hormones in the synapses. It can change or eliminate synapses and paths of neurons. In extreme cases it creates confused or inappropriate paths that lead to violent behavior and mental illness. The environment and care young children are exposed to can make a difference in the adults they become.

In 1994, experts studying the care of American children under three, warned of a crisis.

*Starting Points* [Carnegie Corporation of N.Y., 1994] linked rapid brain development from birth to age three to the quality of early care. The study described a crisis in the emotional, physical and mental development of young children. It also pointed out that this stage of brain development is more rapid and more crucial to social skills and the ability to learn than at any other time in life. The study recommended ways to improve early childhood care and education to avoid the social costs of doing nothing.

The public began to pay attention when scientists showed brain scans of intense early brain activity in infants and toddlers.

Scientists knew brain activity from birth to age three was intense. Suddenly new brain scan technology let them see it. But, they were surprised to see that so much learning was happening so early. It showed that

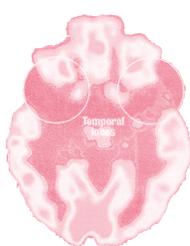
# They need help to stop. Give them quiet, calm containment.

early experience had a much stronger effect on brain development than previously believed. Brain scan technology also showed what could happen when early experience is negative or minimal.

Brain activity of Romanian orphans shows the effect of constant neglect and misery.

The conditions young children endured in Romanian orphanages were shocking. Children lived in rooms filled with cribs of other babies and children. There was constant crying. The only contact with adults was during feeding and diapering. Care was minimal. There were no toys, nothing to touch, and nothing to look at. The children had been deprived of everything they needed for brain growth, including human touch.

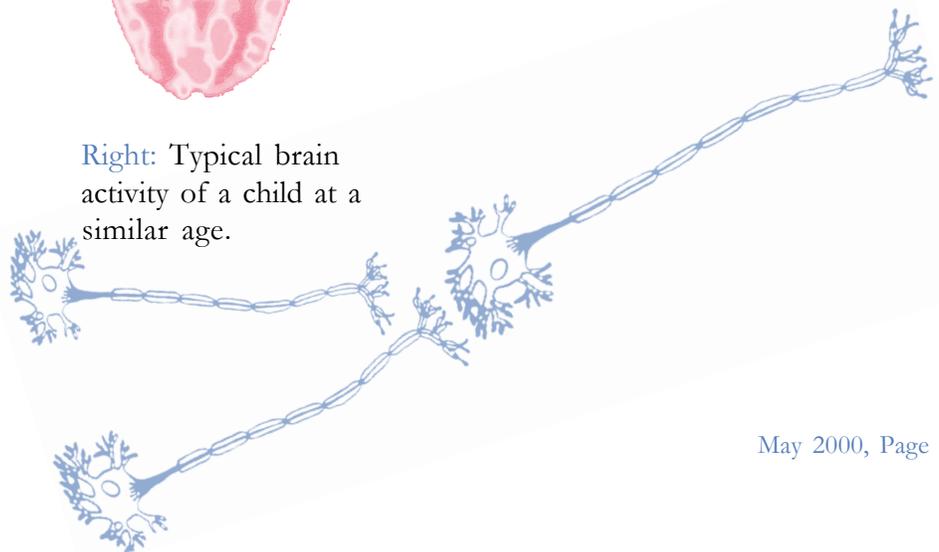
Brain scans of these children showed areas of the brain where activity was well below normal. In the two scans below, the scan on the left is from one of these orphans. The scan on the right represents normal development for a child of about the same age. The large dark areas in the scan of the orphan show the results of extreme stress, fear, neglect and isolation from adults.



Left: Brain activity of a neglected child from a Romanian orphanage.



Right: Typical brain activity of a child at a similar age.



From birth to age three, the brain makes over 1,000 trillion connections.

That is twice the number of adult brain connections. Some of these connections will last a lifetime, like knowing how to ride a bike, and some will not. If a baby sees a red ball only once, eventually the brain will get rid of that path of neurons. This is called pruning. Fruit trees are pruned to get rid of weak branches, strengthen the tree and produce larger fruit. The brain prunes itself to get rid of weak paths, make room for more, strengthen others, and organize brain structure.

# Early Learning keeps the sense of wonder alive.

## Creating a place for early learning.

### Help babies feel secure, because everything is new.

**0 to 6 months**—Babies do better if they know what is going to happen to them. Hold them close to your body. Give them regular times to sleep and eat. Babies cry when they need attention. Teach them someone will help when they are tired or hungry. You can never spoil a baby.

### Talk, talk, talk from the beginning.

**6 to 18 months**—Gesture, be expressive, imitate, be silly. Babies need attention and response. Recognize emotions. Around the end of the first year it's time for toys. Give babies color, texture, sound and variety.

### Encourage Play.

**19 to 36 months**—Play with objects. Play with others. Play with your face. Socialize with other children. Read every day twice a day. Play in the bathtub. Play in the garden. Talk about feelings: "You looked really sad when we left the zoo," and a child will learn how to deal with them.

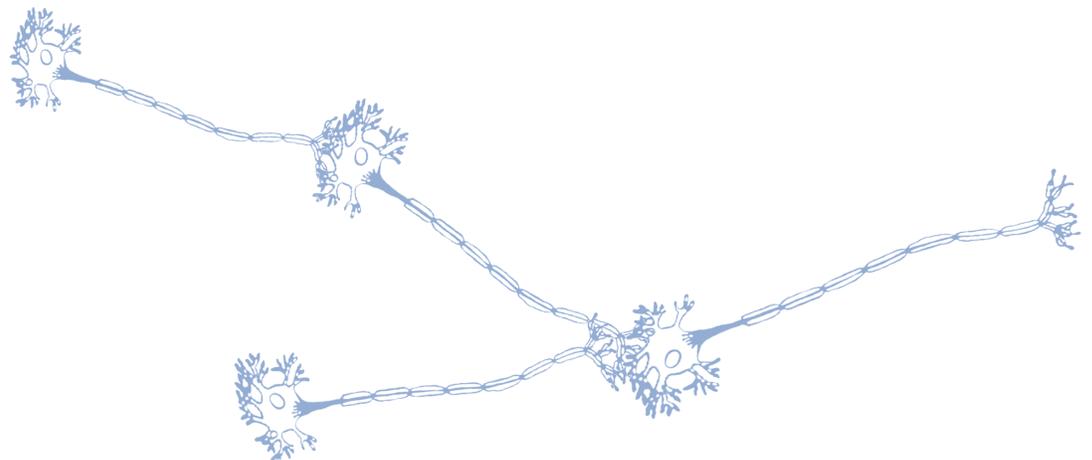
Children thrive on love, care, and attention in a safe place to explore. For newborns, that place is in the arms of parents. As children grow, it expands to the outdoors and into play with other children.

Whether a child's place for early learning is at home or in a child care center, there should be interesting things to see and do. To become good at learning, children need confidence, curiosity, persistence, self-control, a sense of belonging, and plenty of praise. They must be free to do the child's work of play.

Parents and child care staff who know about brain growth and early learning windows of opportunity, see early childhood as the gateway to a lifelong love of learning. Encouraging early learning opens that gate.

Anyone can create a place for early learning, but it helps to know how young children learn. Beginning in June, the Commission on Early Learning will offer a booklet, *Ten Simple Ways to Encourage Your Child's Brain*, to anyone who asks for it.

In the meantime, talk to infants. Read to them. Be expressive. Praise toddlers. Sing with them. Be loving and responsive. Pay attention to them, and surround them with sights, sounds and textures that are curious and exciting. Encourage early learning, because it is what young children need to grow into eager students and fulfilled adults.



# What do parents need? Do they know about early learning?

## Parent Forums

During fall 1998 and winter 1999, Co-Chairs Mona Lee Locke and Melinda French Gates, and Commission members, hosted parent meetings in Bellingham, Yakima, Tri-cities, and Spokane. Nearly 800 parents attended. The following five issues came up in every city.

### Child Development

At every meeting, parents said they wished they had more information about child development and how to help their children get a good start in school. They would like an easily accessible resource or reference guide, and support groups or classes on parenting.

### Stable Affordable Child Care

Parents cannot afford to pay more for child care, but they also said the low quality of care was linked to low wages and lack of professional education of child care workers. They said children developed better with a stable care giver, and care for infants and toddlers was very difficult to find.

### Health Care

Parents believed that health and learning problems were related. In Spokane, parents wanted newborns to be screened for hearing. In Yakima, parents wanted the visiting nurse program to run through age three. In Bellingham, parents talked about gaps in services for children with special needs.

### Support from Employers

Parents wanted flexible work hours to participate in parent/child programs. They wanted policies for family leave, time to spend in child care, and guarantees that they can leave on time to pick up their kids. They would also like drop-in/sick child options.

### Early Learning

Parents were aware that the early years were important and they wanted to know more about early learning. They wanted an information phone line. They believed a public awareness campaign would increase discussion and boost support for early learning.

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You mean  
you read to infants?

We get that question  
all of the time.

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—Martha Eisler  
United Way  
Early Childhood Initiative  
Allegheny County,  
Pennsylvania

Guest Speaker  
May 18, 1998

The Governor's Commission on Early Learning encourages parents and caregivers of young children to voluntarily embrace the following:

# Children's Bill of Rights

## Preamble

It is important for our very youngest children to be provided with a safe, nurturing, and healthy environment. Scientific studies have shown that the ages 0 to 3 years are critical to the brain development of children. A child's current and future ability is linked to this brain growth, which occurs in the context of nurturing relationships and experience.

What we do will forever shape their future and leave an imprimatur for all of society. We should effect systematic changes in societal values and elevate the importance and commitment for parenting infants and toddlers. We should establish a new resolve in all parts of society to embrace the importance of establishing an early learning environment from which children emerge actively engaged and continually developing skills conducive to lifelong learning.

## Bill of Rights:

We hold these truths to be self evident, that all children are born with inalienable rights, among these are a safe home, caring parents, access to health care, an educable mind, and an optimistic outlook on life.

As the most helpless being of all humanity and the most under represented citizens we have, it is a fundamental obligation that all children be raised in a safe haven, free from physical and psychological mistreatment. Children should be protected from violence and abuse, be provided proper nutrition, given unlimited love, and be encouraged to pursue life in as ambitious a way possible.

Children deserve to have the consistent and loving attention of their parents. Parents have children and should accept all the responsibilities entailed. Parents should be actively engaged in parenting during a part of each and every day, providing encouragement, support, discipline, and love.

Quality child care should be provided when the parents are unavailable. Parents should fashion a quality environment by relying on an appropriate mix of personal, family, community, and government agency support.

A healthy child grows and develops with greater ease. Our children have a right to comprehensive health care that includes prevention, early detection, and intervention. No child should be denied access to physical and mental health services for any reasons.

Every child has a right to learn a socially acceptable value system and obtain a developmentally age appropriate quality education. As our children's first teachers, parents need to become educated on how to parent and how to teach the basic rudiments for lifelong learning.

To safeguard these Rights, we solemnly publish and pledge to support the *Bill of Rights for Children*, so that all children can experience joy, happiness, hope, and become responsible citizens.

# What do parents and child care workers know about brain development?

## Survey of Parents and Child Care Providers.

This study of 400 parents and child care workers was conducted January 4 and 5, 2000. It was designed to measure public knowledge about early learning and brain development. The study compared beliefs and attitudes about caring for babies and children under age five. The results were used to develop a public engagement campaign on early learning.

## Parents Surveyed

The survey group included parents who were expecting a child within six months, single parents, mothers who worked full time and part time, families with two parents working, and families with one parent staying at home. Forty-two percent of these parents had a child in child care twelve or more hours per week. A family member, such as a grandmother, cared for 36 percent of these children. Thirty percent went to a child care center. Nineteen percent stayed home with a nanny, au pair, or baby-sitter.

## Child Care Providers Surveyed

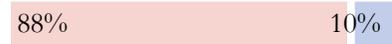
The survey group included 16 licensed child care providers and 46 non-licensed relatives, friends and baby-sitters. Sixty percent were age 41 or older, 15 percent were male, 86 percent were female, and 51 percent had some college or a college degree.

Compared to parents, caregivers tended to believe:

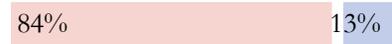
- Everything would take care of itself, if basic health and safety needs were met.
- Intelligence is determined at birth.
- Responding to a baby every time it cries would spoil the baby.
- More caregivers were better for a child's development than a few.

## Beliefs about brain development

Development depends on early childhood experiences.



Most development occurs from birth to age 3.



Brain is fully developed by age 10.



Brain is fully developed at birth.



A child's emotional well being is not related to brain development.



The level of intelligence is determined at birth.



A child's memory doesn't develop until at least age 3.



A child cannot understand what you are saying until the child can talk.



Agree No Answer Disagree

# What do parents and child care providers know about early learning?

## Beliefs about care for young children:

The more a parent is involved with a child's care, the better the child will do in school.



Choosing a child care provider with formal child development training is important.



You can never give a baby too much attention.



More people caring for a child is better for a child's development.



You can spoil a newborn if you respond every time the baby cries.



A child's memory doesn't develop until at least age 3.



If a baby's basic health and safety needs are met, everything else will take care of itself.



Until age 1, a child only needs basic health and safety care.



Agree No Answer Disagree

## Survey Results of All Participants

Compared to caregivers, parents were more likely to recognize early learning milestones, which include:

- Smiling socially
- Recognizing familiar faces
- Understanding language
- Expressing most emotions

## Brain Development

- 68% knew the brain is not fully developed at birth.
- 88% knew early experience plays an important role in brain development.
- 38% knew the brain is fully developed by age 10.

## Beliefs About Care

- 95% felt a child should have routines and parents should be involved in care.
- 83% felt choosing a child care provider with formal child development training was important.
- 76% said a baby could never get too much attention.
- 53% believed more people caring for a child was better for the child.

# Parents and child care providers are ready and willing to learn more.

## Beliefs About Learning

- 91% agreed early relationships affect brain development.
- 82% agreed holding a baby could affect brain development.
- 98% were certain it was never too early to read to a baby.
- 96% said repetitive activities were essential to early learning.
- 60% agreed a child learned just as much from playing peek-a-boo as using flash cards.

## Where Parents and Child Care Providers Go for Help

*(listed in order of importance)*

- Health Care Provider
- Relative
- Another Parent
- Books
- Friends
- Child Care Provider
- Community Resources
- Media

## Interest in More Early Learning Information

Nearly all participants said if information was easily available, they would take the time to learn more:

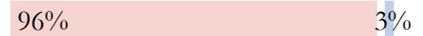
- 98% would make the effort to learn about brain development.
- 93% would make the effort to learn how to nurture brain development.
- 91% would make the effort to learn parenting and care giving methods.

## Beliefs about young children learning:

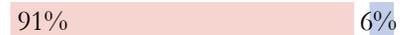
It's never too early to read to a baby.



Young children learn through repetitive activities.



Early relationships affect brain development.



Just holding a baby affects brain development.



“Baby talk” makes it more difficult for a baby to learn language skills.



When you can't be there, television stimulates language development.



A child learns more using flash cards than playing peek-a-boo.

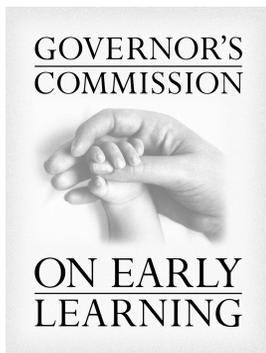


Learning is acquiring facts. Play is just for fun.



Agree   
  No Answer   
  Disagree

# Continuing the work of the Commission on Early Learning.



## Washington Early Learning Foundation

Commission members believe early learning should continue to be developed. In April 2000, they created the Washington Early Learning Foundation, a nonprofit corporation, to help every child in Washington State go to school eager to learn and ready to succeed. The Foundation will focus on improving the quality of child care, increasing the accessibility and quality of parent education, and providing resources and information on brain development of children from birth to age five.

## Early Learning Foundation Goals

The Foundation will provide licensed child care providers with resources for education. It will educate parents on behavior, development and health of children from birth to age five. It will develop public awareness of the importance of early learning on children's success in school. The Foundation will raise funds to support these efforts.

## Early Learning Foundation Programs and Grants

- Scholarships to help child care workers earn credentialed degrees in early learning.
- Education classes for parents, grandparents, neighbors, baby-sitters, and others on how to encourage brain development in children from birth to three.
- Public engagement campaign about early learning.

The Foundation will be funded by gifts from individuals, private foundations, corporations, governments, and other public charities.

# Helping early childhood teachers stay on the job through education and better pay.

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood®  
Washington College Scholarship Program

Babies and children who spend their days at a child care facility need the same person to be there day after day to feel safe and loved. Parents need reliable care that makes their children happy. The demand for quality care is high, yet taking care of young children offers few career rewards for such an important job.

In our state, there is a 40 percent turnover rate in early childhood education and child care. Good teachers leave because the pay is low and others are trapped by lack of education. The Commission is working to improve the quality of care and wages through an innovative program called T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Washington (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps).

This national program awards scholarships for child care workers to earn college degrees. Child care workers are paid for books, tuition, travel time, and time off to attend college classes or study. To participate, caregivers commit to staying with their employer for a specific period of time. In return, their employers will give them a raise when the course work is completed.

Everyone wins. Child care workers are paid for pursuing their education and improving the quality of child care. Children, babies and working parents benefit from better teachers who stay on the job. Child care employers have a better educated staff and fewer turnovers.

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Washington began with a pilot project in Seattle in April 2000. The program will be available statewide in September. At first, scholarships will be awarded for:

- Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential
- Early Childhood Associate Degree

The program will expand over time to include scholarships for BAs and other degrees.

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Compensation  
is the only way to keep  
educated teachers.

*T.E.A.C.H. links education and increased compensation. Sixty percent have said wages encouraged them to go back to school, because they have seen that 'the more education I have, the more money I'll make.'*

Turnover rates  
dropped dramatically,  
36% to 10%  
in Orange County,  
North Carolina.

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—Sue Russell

*Executive Director,  
Day Care Services Association  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina*

*Guest Speaker  
October 19, 1999*

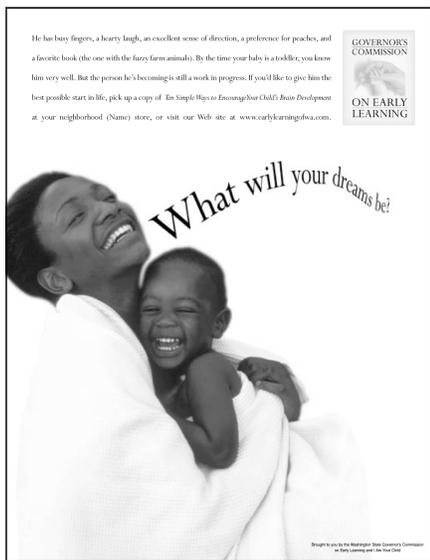
# Sharing the lessons of early learning with parents and caregivers.

## Early Learning Public Engagement Campaign

With support from Governor Locke and the Washington State Legislature, the Commission developed a public engagement campaign to get early learning materials into the hands of anyone who spends time with babies and young children. It is based on a question that parents often ask: “*What will you become?*”

The campaign gives glimpses into early learning moments between children and adults, but doesn’t include detailed explanations. These tender scenes are followed with the suggestion: “...pick up a copy of *Ten Simple Ways to Encourage Your Child’s Brain.*”

The campaign will collaborate with the I am Your Child Foundation, by using its materials and linking to its web site. In return, *I am Your Child* will be recognized as a partner with the Washington State Governor’s Commission on Early Learning in all of its advertising.



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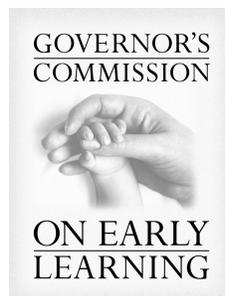
Parent education  
is the glue  
to all of this.

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—Rob Reiner

*I Am Your Child  
Campaign  
California*

*Guest Speaker  
August 18, 1998*



Television, radio, and print advertising will begin running in June 2000. Materials will be distributed through corporate sponsors, the medical community, libraries, and other community service organizations.

# Parent Education

The Commission developed the following guidelines for the parent education efforts of the Washington Early Learning Foundation:

## 1. Support the training of parent educators.

Thirty percent of the money the foundation makes available for parent education shall be used for professional development of existing trainers and training of new parent educators. The goal is to maintain and build the supply of quality parent educators in our community.

The training program should be research based and cover the core competencies. The curriculum should include learning in each of the following areas: the development of families, development of the parent/child relationship, child development, and adult learning.

## 2. Increase accessibility of parent education.

Seventy percent of the funds the foundation makes available for parent education should go to parent education efforts. These programs could be either an expansion of an existing program or development of a new service. Any program must include an evaluation component. Special consideration will be given to proposals that reflect collaborative, community based planning.

When awarding parent education grants the foundation should consider at least the following criteria:

- The applicant's willingness to work with other community services programs, e.g. Community and Technical colleges, PEPS, Head Start/ECEAP programs and other nonprofit organizations providing parent education.
- The applicant's current collaborative partners and evidence of that collaboration.
- The applicant's experience in delivering parent education.
- The knowledge and skills of the potential trainers.
- Written evidence of broad community support for the application.
- The applicant's respect for the diversity of the community.
- The applicant's assessment of the community and data to support need for the services.
- The applicant's ability to evaluate their outcomes.

# Recommendations to Governor Locke

**Vision**—Formal education begins with kindergarten at age four or five. This leads many parents and caregivers to believe there is no need to worry about education until then. However, we know that brain development begins at birth and continues rapidly through the first three years of life. This is the peak time to develop skills for success in school. This early opportunity for growth should be encouraged and supported through public and private programs.

## 1. Change the assumption that education begins with kindergarten.

The Commission on Early Learning found that early childhood education from birth to age five, increases a young child's ability to learn and succeed in school. It also found that many parents and caregivers assume education begins when a child starts school in kindergarten.

**Recommendation**— The Governor should continue to work to change the public perception that education begins with kindergarten, by supporting early learning opportunities from the time of birth.

## 2. State should demonstrate a policy commitment to early learning.

The Commission on Early Learning found that public programs for children are spread across a number of state agencies. Each has different governing rules, regulations, and applications. No single agency is mandated to look at all services, information and support available to families. This complicates delivery of services and bewilders families and service providers.

Services for children should focus on the well-being of children and their families. All publicly funded programs for early learning, child care, family support, parent education, parent support, and children with special needs should be coordinated and integrated to provide better access to these services.

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Intensity of  
experience the year  
before a child  
goes to school.

That's what  
makes a difference.

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—*Martha Eisler*

*United Way  
Early Childhood Initiative  
Allegheny County,  
Pennsylvania*

*Guest Speaker  
May 18, 1999*

# Changing the perception that learning begins in kindergarten.

**Recommendation**— The Governor should lead the effort to integrate and streamline governing rules and regulations of all publicly funded programs for early learning, child care, family support, parent education, parent support, and children with special needs.

### 3. Examine and reform the financing structure for child care and early learning .

The Commission on Early Learning found that early childhood education and care develop the ability to learn and succeed in school and later in life. The Commission believes early learning, kindergarten through high school and higher education are all lifetime investments in future Washington citizens. Higher education receives both public and private investments, but the bulk of the cost of child care is borne by families.

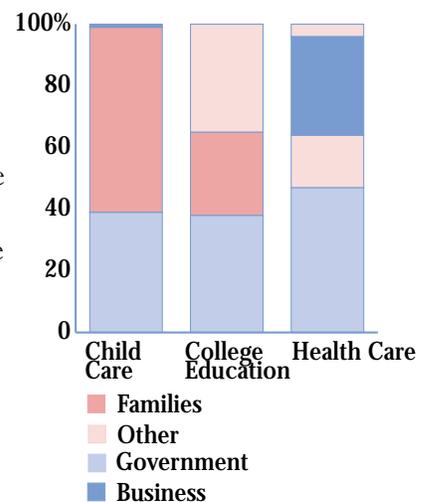
In Seattle, for example, the average cost of child care for a child from birth to age four is \$33,600. The cost of four years at the University of Washington is \$13,980. The University cost is subsidized by public and private gifts to institutions, scholarships and low interest loans. Yet, child care receives very little financial support from government or private entities.

Currently the cost and quality of child care, preschool and other early learning programs is limited by the amount parents can afford to pay. This results in an average wage of \$7.00 per hour paid to child care providers. Low wages cause high turnover rates, undermine the quality of care, and increase hiring and training costs.

Young children need stable care providers and high quality early learning opportunities. The Commission is convinced that the best way to achieve this is to make high quality care available and affordable.

**Recommendation**— The Governor should lead an effort to develop a method for financing child care and early learning that makes high quality care affordable to all families in the state.

Families bear the financial burden for child care:



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The greatest time of risk and opportunity is when the least is spent on education.

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—Rob Reiner

*I am Your Child Campaign  
California*

*Guest Speaker  
August 18, 1998*

# Commission Members

## **Mona Lee Locke**, Commission Co-Chair

First Lady of the State of Washington  
Olympia, Washington

Mrs. Locke is the spokesperson for Washington State Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) Foundation; honorary chair of the Washington SAFEKIDS Coalition; advisory board member of Mothers Against Violence in America (MAVIA); and honorary co-chair of Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies. Mrs. Locke graduated from the University of California in English literature and earned a master's degree from the Northwestern University Medill School of Journalism. She has worked as a television news reporter in Washington DC; Green Bay, Wisconsin; and Seattle, Washington. Mrs. Locke and Governor Gary Locke have two young children.

*"I'd like to thank my daughter Emily for drawing my attention to early learning; and making me realize that giving a child that early start in life is not only vital for the success of an individual, but vital for the success of our state."*

—Commission Meeting, June 26, 1998

## **Melinda French Gates**, Commission Co-Chair

Co-Founder Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation  
Seattle, Washington

Mrs. Gates and her husband, Bill, founded the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The goal of the foundation is to support innovations in education, technology, and world health. Mrs. Gates graduated from Duke University in computer science and economics, and earned a master's degree from the Duke University Fuqua School of Business. She developed a variety of multimedia products for Microsoft. Mrs. Gates retired in 1996 to care for her two young children.

*"When Mona called me up about this Commission...it was our passion for the topic and our passion for our own children that drove us to want to do something in Washington State. ...We have the shared goal, making sure that children are prepared to succeed."*

—Commission Meeting, June 26, 1998

**Dr. Kathryn E. Barnard, R.N. Ph.D.**

Professor of Nursing and Adjunct Professor of Psychology, Affiliate,  
Center for Human Development and Disability, University of Washington  
Seattle, Washington

Dr. Barnard has conducted research in child health assessment, early intervention with at-risk infants and families, and parent-child interaction. She worked on the 1994 study of care for young children in the United States: *Starting Points, Meeting the Needs of our Youngest Children* [Carnegie Corporation of New York]. She helps mothers and families in poverty or emotional trauma learn parenting skills.

*“I want to help parents understand the importance of infancy in development of the brain and behavior. We bear an enormous responsibility to ensure that care is optimal for children”*

—Commission Meeting, August 18, 1998

**Senator Lisa J. Brown, 3rd District**

Ph.D. Economics, Eastern Washington University  
Spokane, Washington

Senator Brown has served two terms in the House of Representatives and one term in the Washington State Senate. She is interested in the changes our economy has gone through and the impact this has had on families and children. Senator Brown has one son in elementary school.

*“It has long been my belief that equality of opportunity is one of the key values of our society. But equality of children is limited, if children come into the school system at the age of five with widely varying resources and opportunities.”*

—Commission Meeting, June 26, 1998

**Don C. Brunell**

President, Association of Washington Businesses  
Olympia, Washington

Mr. Brunell’s organization represents about 3,700 businesses around the state, and he has been president since 1988. He also serves on the Executive Committee for the Foundation for Private Enterprise, the Washington Roundtable Economic Climate Committee, the Governor’s School-to-Work Task Force, and the Board of Directors of the National Association of Manufacturers. Mr. Brunell has six children and three grandchildren.

*“Most of our folks gave us a lot of love and we owe it to our kids to do the same. So whatever we can do to help... educate our kids better, so that we have caring concerned business leaders in the future, is really what we are here about.”*

— Commission Meeting, August 18, 1998

**Craig W. Cole**

President and Chief Executive Officer, Brown and Cole Stores  
Bellingham, Washington

Mr. Cole's retail grocery firm employs about 2,500 people throughout Washington and is a leader in family friendly business practices. Mr. Cole is a former local elected official, university trustee, and has been on many boards and commissions related to youth and families.

*"My main interest is how we can support parents. I am very sympathetic with those who find it difficult to figure out how to best raise children. It is not an easy task. In fact, it is the hardest job I have ever had."*

— Commission Meeting, August 18, 1998

**Kim Cook**

Regional Director District 925, Service Employees International Union  
Seattle, Washington

Ms. Cook's organization represents professional, technical and office support staff, including librarians, accountants, social service providers, and other professions. She is working with child care providers and teachers to form a union to reduce turnover through fair wages.

*"We work with parents to help them find good care, to figure out what quality care is and how to afford it. There is a 40 percent turnover rate in this field. We need to find a way...to train and keep good teachers."*

—Commission Meeting, June 26, 1998

**Senator Alex Deccio, 14th District**

Ranking Republican, Chair Senate Health and Long Term Care Committees  
Yakima, Washington

Senator Deccio has served three terms in the State House of Representatives, and four terms in the Washington State Senate. He has been a Yakima County Commissioner, and served on the Yakima Chamber of Commerce and Yakima Community College Board of Trustees. Prior to public service, he was in the insurance industry.

*"My wife and I raised eight children and have 14 grandchildren, and one great grandchild; there are two teachers and four nurses in our family. So our family is very involved in early childhood."*

—Commission Meeting, June 26, 1998

**Robbin Dunn**

Program Director, Educational Service District 113 Head Start/Early Childhood  
Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP)  
Olympia, Washington

Ms. Dunn works to improve programs for young children and strengthen the ability of families to care for their children. She has helped with developing statewide program regulations, standards, and procedures. In 1998, she served as President of the Washington Association of Head Start and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program.

*"We work with over 20,000 of our state's most vulnerable families. I hope the Commission will build on what works well and take a leadership role in helping us invest where we can make the greatest difference and spend our resources wisely."*

—Commission Meeting, June 26, 1998

**Sheri Flies**

Attorney at Law, Corporate Council, Costco Wholesale  
Issaquah, Washington

Ms. Flies is the Costco coordinator of the private/public collaborative partnership with Bellevue Community College to build the Early Learning and Child Care and Family Center. Ms. Flies is the mother of two children.

*“Public/private partnerships which include business, parents, education, and government are one of the best ways that we can improve child care and strengthen families.”*

—*Conversation with Executive Director, April 28, 2000*

**Peter A. Jackson**

President and Chief Executive Officer, Foundation Northwest  
Spokane, Washington.

Mr. Jackson has extensive experience in nonprofit funding, reviewing grant applications, and grant management. His organization creates opportunity and self-sufficiency through education, and supports human services in east Washington State.

*“Creating economic opportunity and self-sufficiency is one of our goals. Even if we had a billion dollars to give away, it would never be enough to solve these problems.”*

— *Commission Meeting, August 18, 1998*

**Martha W. (Marty) Jacobs**

Executive Director, Washington Association for the Education of Young Children  
Seattle, Washington

Ms. Jacobs has worked in clinical services, research, and child care training for care givers and families. Ms. Jacobs' organization is the professional association for early child care educators. It supports children's issues through advocacy, training, and interaction with other organizations.

*“I have a 12 year-old who was in a very good, high quality, child care program in Seattle. There are many things he does now...that I can attribute to that program. So, I have seen in my own life what a child care program can do.”*

—*Commission Meeting, June 26, 1998*

**Representative Lynn Kessler, 24th District**

House Democrat Leader

Hoquiam, Washington

Representative Kessler is serving her fourth term in the Washington State Legislature. She hopes to be a link to the Legislature for developing policy and funding. She has been Director of United Way of Grays Harbor, and is Chair of the Grays Harbor Board of Trustees, and Grays Harbor Economic Development Council. Representative Kessler is a member of the Rules, Executive Rules and Appropriations Committees in the House of Representatives. She and her husband, Keith, have three sons and one daughter.

*"I hope we can start thinking of children as children; and not poor children, middle class children, and rich children. In this materialistic society...I think that is an important conclusion to come to."*

— Commission Meeting, August 18, 1998

**Mary Ellen O'Keeffe**

Dean, Health and Human Services, Edmonds Community College

Seattle, Washington

Dean O'Keeffe has developed parent/child programs, family support systems, and family friendly policy for employees. She currently chairs Family Support Washington and the King County Children and Families Commission. Ms. O'Keeffe also serves on the boards of the Children's Trust Foundation and the Children's Campaign Fund.

*"I was the mother of a newborn and a two year-old. I must say that studying child development wasn't nearly as helpful as having a lab to go to once a week and get support as a parent. I have worked...to create environments that support very young parents and their children in the very beginning years from birth to three."*

—Commission Meeting, June 26, 1998

**Scott D. Oki**

Chief Volunteer, the Oki Foundation

Chairman and CEO, Oki Developments Inc.

Bellevue, Washington

In 1986, Mr. Oki and his wife established the Oki Foundation to support welfare and education of children. He also established Oki Developments, a multifaceted investment company. Mr. Oki retired from Microsoft, where he founded the International Division and was Senior Vice President, Sales, Marketing, and Service. He is a past president and member of the University of Washington Board of Regents and serves on dozens of nonprofit boards. Mr. Oki has three children.

*"To marry my passion for things entrepreneurial with things philanthropic in ways that encourage others to do the same."*

— Personal Mission Statement

**Dee Ann Perea**

Parent Education Instructor, Bellevue Community College  
Issaquah, Washington

Mrs. Perea teaches Parent Education classes for families with one, two and three year old children. The program serves approximately 1400 families and is dedicated to understanding children of all ages. She is a member of the Eastern and Western Washington chapters of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Ms. Perea and her husband have a student in high school and one in college.

*"I was an elementary school teacher and I was asked to teach a class on...parent conferences. That led me to see how much I enjoy working with parents."*

—Commission Meeting, June 26, 1998

**Jim Sinegal**

President, Chief Executive Officer, and Director, Costco Wholesale  
Issaquah, Washington

Mr. Sinegal has extensive experience in retail administration, merchandising and operations in mass merchandising. He is working with local universities, community colleges, other businesses, and the city of Issaquah to develop a community day care center. Mr. Sinegal has three grown children and seven grandchildren.

*"Our employees tell us they spend from \$500 to \$700 a month for day care, and end up driving 40 to 60 miles one-way just to deliver their child to day care. Our idea is to see if we can provide a high quality day care center for our employees and members of our community."*

—Commission Meeting, June 26, 1998

**Representative Gigi Talcott, 28th District**

Co-Chair House Education Committee; Lifelong Classroom Teacher  
University Place, Washington

Representative Talcott has served in the Washington State Legislature since 1992. She is dedicated to helping prepare children for success in school. She has taught preschool, kindergarten, elementary school, high school, and adult classes. She is active in Habitat for Humanity, Safe Schools, the United Methodist Church, and the Red Cross. Representative Talcott and her husband, Ron, have two sons and three grandchildren.

*"I have been a kindergarten and first grade teacher. I would like to focus on parental involvement. We know that the most important element in any child's success is to involve their parents."*

— Commission Meeting, August 18, 1998

**Yolanda Cortinas Trout**

Owner and Director, Yolanda's ABC-123 Child Day-care  
Walla Walla, Washington

Ms. Cortinas Trout runs a licensed family home child care facility with children from five months to six years old. She grew up in a large family and developed a love of children at a very early age. Ms. Cortinas Trout is a member of the Washington Association for the Education of Young Children.

*"I was (the ninth child) in a family of 18 children. In our family, we never had child care. We each took care of our own."*

— Commission Meeting, August 18, 1998

**Yvonne Ullas**

Elementary School Teacher, Naches School District  
Yakima, Washington

Ms. Ullas has worked in parent education programs throughout the Yakima Valley. In 1998, she was the Washington State Teacher of the Year. She is a member of the National Education Association, the Washington Education Association, and the Professional Education Advisory Board at Heritage College.

*“My Career) began as a (parent educator) with project Follow Through. I weekly met with parents in their home and taught them ways to teach their children. I have never met a parent who doesn’t want the best for their children. Our job is to get information out to those parents.”*

*—Commission Meeting, June 26, 1998*

**Delores (Dee) West**

Director, Early Childhood Opportunities  
Bellingham, Washington

Ms. West has been a teacher, parent educator and staff trainer, and now is in program administration. She has worked with the Washington State Head Start Staff Association, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the Washington Association for the Education of Young Children, and the Northwest Association for the Education of Young Children. Ms. West has a grown son and a granddaughter.

*“The focus of my work has been...demystifying education. Many of our parents come with the notion that there is something they can’t grasp without education. There are ways ...parents can understand how they can work with their children. They really want the very best for their children and want them to be successful.”*

*—Commission Meeting, June 26, 1998*

**Lawrence White**

Sales Manager, US West Communications  
Tacoma, Washington

Mr. White manages sales consultants in residential settings for US West Communications. He has worked with the Tacoma Black Collective, the Pierce County Boys and Girls Club, the National Urban League, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Mr. White has three children and 52 nieces and nephews.

*“I know that stimulating environments and opportunities to explore have really made a difference in my children’s lives. All children should have access to these opportunities.”*

*— Commission Meeting, August 18, 1998*

**Gayle Womack**

Director Benton-Franklin Developmental Center  
Kennewick, Washington

Ms. Womack's organization contracts with seven school districts, to provide special education, therapy, and family services to developmentally delayed and disabled children between the ages of birth to three. Ms. Womack also serves on the State Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities and their Families.

*"We have had parents of typically developing children...ask us for help with their children. I would like to see the benefits our disabled children receive granted to parents of typically developing children."*

— Commission Meeting, August 18, 1998

**Kyle E. Yasuda, M.D.**

Head, Section of Pediatrics, Virginia Mason Medical Center  
Seattle, Washington

Dr. Yasuda has been a practicing pediatrician for 17 years. He is a clinical professor in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Washington School of Medicine, Past President of the Washington Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics, and is a member of the Washington State Council for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect.

*"I firmly believe...our kids...have a right to be raised in a loving, caring environment. They have a right to health care and optimal learning experiences"*

— Commission Meeting, August 18, 1998

**Diana T. Yu, M.D.**

Health Officer, Thurston County Public Health and Social Services,  
Health Officer, Lewis County  
Olympia, Washington

Dr. Yu is a pediatrician who became public health professional. She has worked with school nurses, immunization programs, Head Start programs, tobacco-free coalitions, and dental groups. She has also worked on tuberculosis, drinking water, and food safety issues. Her interests include drug labs and the affect of drug use on families. Dr. Yu has served on numerous medical and health associations and committees.

*"The most important thing we can give our children is not buying them things, or taking them someplace. It is to give them our time. I really like the fact that we will focus on all of the children. Not just the poor, because a lot of times we do forget that every child deserves to have that opportunity."*

—Commission Meeting, August 18, 1998

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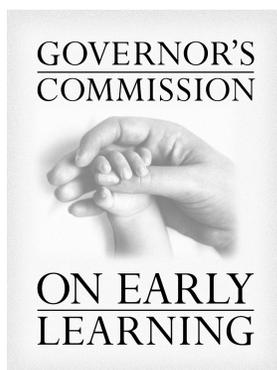
# The Washington Early Learning Foundation will make the Commission's work become reality.

This report marks completion of the initial work of the Commission on Early Learning. It is also the beginning of turning these wonderful ideas and projects into reality.

## Want to help?

For more information on the foundation and its programs, please write to:

## Washington Early Learning Foundation



c/o Preston, Gates and Ellis LLP  
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Or visit the foundation web site:  
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