



## Year 2 Policy Changes for Early Achievers Department of Early Learning

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The Department of Early Learning (DEL) is using a federal Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant to support the statewide implementation of Early Achievers, a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) intended to support quality improvements at all levels in Washington’s child care system. As a new program, DEL is committed to learning, gathering feedback, and using data to make adjustments to Early Achievers that ensure that providers are supported to offer the highest quality services to children and families.

Based on the results of the first year of implementation, including feedback from DEL’s primary implementing partner Child Care Aware of Washington and Early Achiever’s participants, DEL will be implementing the following policy changes to Early Achievers. These policy changes are intended to encourage and support broader participation in Early Achievers and to help providers move more quickly through the quality levels. Additional policy changes are expected as more data and implementation feedback are received.

**Rating Readiness Consultation:** Recognizing that programs want to receive the highest rating possible when going through the rating process, DEL and CCA will be supporting rating readiness consultation prior to rating for providers that have completed all of their level 2 requirements. Consultation will be tailored to the individual needs of the program, will be provided by the most appropriate Technical Assistance Specialist or Coach, and will focus on preparing programs for the ERS and CLASS observational assessments. This additional level 2 support is intended to build confidence in providers, encourage providers to move forward toward rating, and ensure each provider receives the highest possible rating.

**Coaching:** Not all rated programs have the same coaching needs, and coaching resources need to be directed where they can have the greatest impact. Therefore, DEL and CCA will be developing a tiered coaching framework for sites that are rated at levels 3-5. This will ensure that programs receive the appropriate amount of coaching to achieve their individual quality improvement goals. In addition, DEL and its partners at CCA and the University of Washington are exploring the use of online coaching tools to help support some participants and make coaching more sustainable beyond the RTT-ELC grant.

**Public release of rated levels:** DEL has received feedback that the rating process feels too “high stakes” to participants. Recognizing that Early Achievers is still in development, DEL and CCA will not make the rated level publicly available. Rather, participants that are rated at levels 3-5 will be publicly recognized as having achieved a “Quality Level of Excellence.” Participants that are completing level 2 requirements

or have been rated at a level 2 will be publicly recognized as “Participating in Quality Improvement.” This information will be available on [Child Care Check](#) and through the CCA Family Center by the end of 2013.

The rating process, points system, and quality improvement awards will remain the same and are an essential part of Early Achievers. Participants and their coaches will have access to the full rating information to inform ongoing quality improvement efforts. Programs will be encouraged to share their own data and rating levels as they choose. Additionally, ratings are subject to public disclosure under the Washington Public Records Act. DEL will reexamine this policy over time based on field input and parent need.

**Areas of Specialization:** To provide additional recognition of high quality, and to provide more substantive information to families, programs that receive a high number of points in each of the Early Achievers Quality Standard areas will be awarded an “Area of Specialization” in that quality standard. Areas of Specialization will be released by DEL and CCA in addition to indicating whether the program has achieved a “Quality Level of Excellence” (e.g. levels 3-5) or is “Participating in Quality Improvement Efforts” (e.g. Level 2). Areas of Specialization are:

- Child Outcomes: providers that receive 8 of a possible 10 points
- Interactions and Environment (ERS/CLASS): providers that receive 35 of a possible 55 points
- Curriculum and Staff Supports: providers that receive 12 of a possible 15 points
- Professionalism (Professional Development): providers that receive 7 of a possible 10 points
- Family Engagement and Partnerships: providers that receive 8 of a possible 10 points

**Re-rating:** Programs that are ready to be rated by December 31, 2013 will have the option to be re-rated within one year of the initial rating. Onsite evaluations must be approved for re-rating by December 31, 2014. This policy will be reexamined to determine financial sustainability.

- **Rated Level 2:** facilities that do not meet the level 3 threshold on ERS and/or CLASS during their initial rating will have one opportunity to re-rate after one year. The cost of re-rating will be fully covered, and the facility will be publicly listed as “Participating in Quality Improvement” prior to re-rating. In this circumstance, the 3 year rating cycle will begin upon receiving the second rating.

Facilities that rate at a Level 3 or 4 can request to be re-rated at any point in the 3 year rating cycle, at their own expense. Facilities will not pay for their rating in year 3 of the rating cycle. The rating cycle will not change; facilities will still be re-rated 3 years after receiving the **first** rating regardless of when the second rating occurs.