

JAY INSLEE
Governor



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DIRECTIVE OF THE GOVERNOR
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January 23, 2020

To: Ross Hunter, Secretary
Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families

From: Governor Jay Inslee

Subject: Aligning and Integrating Early Learning Programs

One of my top priorities is to improve educational outcomes for all students in Washington and eliminate the educational opportunity gap. As you know, the importance of kindergarten readiness cannot be overstated. Children who arrive at kindergarten with the skills needed to engage in classroom learning and activities are far more likely to be successful in kindergarten and beyond. It is critical to support families to help their children be ready for kindergarten, a key component in our efforts to close the educational opportunity gap in Washington.

I have been briefed on the expansion of transitional kindergarten programs across Washington State's school districts, and I am inspired by the innovative efforts under way to help more of Washington's children be prepared for success in kindergarten. The recent emergence of transitional kindergarten programs highlights an opportunity for more robust cross-sector alignment and integration, as recommended by the Blue Ribbon Commission on the Delivery of Services to Children and Families. Among other things, the Commission stressed the importance of strengthening the collective impact of publicly funded services, regardless of which agency is the lead in providing them, by making sure programs are research-based, have aligned outcomes, and share data. Specifically, the Commission emphasized that the distinctions in agencies' mandates and missions should not dilute the obligation to align and integrate for the purpose of improving service delivery to children and families.

That is why I am writing to direct that, pursuant to your authority in RCW 43.216.020, you collaborate with Superintendent of Public Instruction Chris Reykdal to identify near-term administrative efficiencies and longer-term strategies to improve the alignment and integration of high-quality early-learning programs administered by both agencies. I have requested that Superintendent Reykdal work with you on these tasks.

An important goal of this work is to streamline regulatory functions across the various programs aimed at kindergarten readiness in a manner that allows for the braiding of multiple funds in school- and community-based classrooms. These cross-agency partnership efforts will boost access to inclusive, high-quality, and culturally-responsive preschool services so that more of Washington's children will be prepared for success in kindergarten and beyond.

I ask that you and Superintendent Reykdal prepare a report with recommendations to support the integration of preschool services, including recommendations regarding capital needs; data collection, sharing, and analysis; licensing and quality standards; impacts to the working connections child care subsidy program; considerations for community-based and school district settings; analysis of any legal issues; and necessary statutory changes. Invite policy experts and stakeholders to provide input into the development of your report. To inform our future actions, please provide me a report with this information no later than September 1, 2020.

Thank you for your strong leadership of the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, and for your willingness to engage in this important cross-sector alignment work with Superintendent Reykdal.