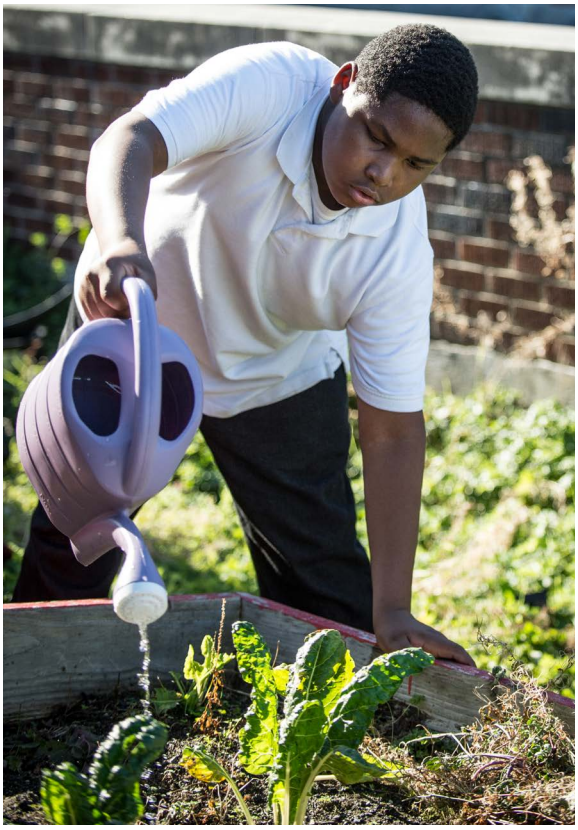

Expanded Learning Opportunities Quality Initiative

Report to the Legislature | September 30, 2017

Submitted by:

Washington State Department of Early Learning

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

Washington State Department of Early Learning

OSPI | Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

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Acknowledgements

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- **The Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Quality Initiative Steering Committee** provided valuable recommendations, feedback and troubleshooting support throughout this initiative;
- **School's Out Washington (SOWA)** provided leadership and direction on all aspects of this initiative including training, professional development, and site and coach recruitment;
- **Child Care Aware of Washington (including Child Care Resources and Community Minded Enterprises)** recruited licensed child care center and family child care homes for participation in the initiative. In addition, they recruited and supervised coaches and provided valuable insight into the alignment between Early Achievers and the ELO quality initiative;
- **The Raikes Foundation** provided essential matching funds enabling a deeper evaluation and the development of complementary systems supports;
- **University of Washington, Cultivate Learning**, developed and implemented a unique evaluation design that both captured learning and allowed for immediate feedback to programs throughout the initiative;
- **The Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality** provided the tools as well as feedback and consultation throughout the initiative; and
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Advent Lutheran Child Center
Alchemy Indoor Skatepark
Assumption Early Learning Center
Auburn Family YMCA: Fairwood Elementary
Boys & Girls Clubs of South Puget Sound: Gonyea Branch
Boys & Girls Clubs of Spokane County: Northtown
Boys & Girls Clubs of South Puget Sound: Al Davies Branch
Boys & Girls Clubs of King County: Ballard
Boys & Girls Clubs of Bellevue
Boys & Girls Clubs of King County: Olympic Hills
Boys & Girls Clubs of King County: Wallingford
Communities in Schools of Spokane County: Rogers High School
CISC: Chinese Information & Service Center
Cheney School District: Betz Elementary: 21st CCLC
Cheney School District – Sunset Elementary: 21st CCLC
City of Seattle: Parks & Recreation – Washington Middle School: 21st CCLC
City of Seattle – Parks & Recreation: Northgate Elementary – 21st CCLC
Crayon College Inc.
Crystal Morrison: Happy, Healthy, & Loved
East Central Community Center
Ethel Bell: Child's Play
Fauntleroy Children's Center
Gonzaga University: CCASL – Campus Kids
Jessica Holland: Holland Family Daycare
Kids Co. at Cascadia Kids Co. at South Shore
Kristi Crumpton: Sissy's Little Angels
Launch at Maple Elementary
Learning Way School & Day Care
Lil Hawks
Mary Curry: Pathways Enrichment Academy
Metro Parks Tacoma
Pacific Ballroom Dance
Prime Time Extended Learning
Puget Sound ESD: Star Lake Elementary – 21st CCLC
Puget Sound ESD: Lister Elementary – 21st CCLC
Spokane Public Schools: Express – Finch Elementary
Spokane Public Schools: Express – Longfellow Elementary
Spokane YMCA: North Central High School
Spokane YMCA: Continuous Curriculum School
Tacoma Community Boat Builders
The Ark Day School
Walla Walla Public Schools (WWPS): Walla Walla High School – 21st CCLC
WWPS: Blue Ridge Elementary 21st CCLC
WWPS: Garrison Middle School – 21st CCLC
WWPS: Pioneer Middle School – 21st CCLC
WWPS: Lincoln High School – 21st CCLC
YMCA of Greater Seattle – Cascade Middle School – 21st CCLC
YMCA of Pierce–Kitsap Counties: Lowell Elementary

Youth Participants

Special thanks to the youth participants in Washington's ELO programs, particularly those that shared their experiences, insights, and perspectives with the program and evaluation teams including:

Brian
Dekota
Heru
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Zia
Zuheera

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Tilman Smith, Child Care Resources
Tiffany Stutesman, Child Care Aware of Washington
Deanna Sunby, Department of Early Learning
Juliet Taylor, Raikes Foundation
Lee Williams, Community Minded Enterprises

Letter from Director Moss and Superintendent Reykdal

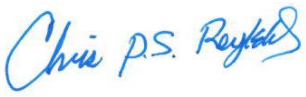
We share a passion for improving outcomes for youth in Washington state, and we know that, over time, we are serving the same children and families. Yet we work in systems that are often directed by artificial constraints such as ages, funding streams, and eligibility criteria. That means that we need to be vigilant about aligning our resources, finding efficiencies, and ensuring that Washington continues to build an equitable system for children, youth, and families that embraces the whole child.

For example, 36 percent of children utilizing Working Connections Child Care Subsidy (more than 19,000 children) are school–aged. These children participate in many systems, including K–12, licensed before and after school child care, 21st Century Community Learning Centers and/or youth development programs. All of these programs play an important role in supporting Washington's youth to become engaged citizens, active learners, and productive community members.

Research clearly demonstrates that youth outcomes are tied to the quality of the programs in which they participate. Washington's Legislature understands this—they've provided funding for K–12, Early Achievers, and expanded learning opportunities programs to support high–quality services for children and youth. As state agencies, we continue to learn a lot about the most effective ways to support quality improvement efforts.

The Expanded Learning Opportunities Quality Initiative is a great example of state agencies, community partners, non–profits, funders, schools, researchers and direct service organizations working together to learn more about how to improve quality and support the youth in our state, and we are pleased to co–present this report on the results. ELO programs often serve as the "glue" for children and families, complementing school experiences, supporting working families, and engaging children and youth to discover their potential. We look forward to continuing to work together to ensure that these programs offer the highest quality to the youth in our state.

Sincerely,



Heather Moss
Director
Department of Early Learning

Chris Reykdal
Superindendent of Public Instruction
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

Executive Summary

Expanded Learning Opportunities Quality Initiative

Washington is building a comprehensive learning system that emphasizes quality from birth to 18 years. With $1 million in funding from the Early Start Act, and matching funds from the Raikes Foundation, the Department of Early Learning (DEL) and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) have completed an Expanded Learning Opportunities Quality Initiative ("initiative"), piloting a high–quality, equitable system that supports providers of Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) with the training and resources needed to provide high–quality programs for youth after school and in the summer.

Fifty programs from four counties (King, Pierce, Spokane, and Walla Walla) participated in a quality assessment and improvement process, including licensed family homes and child care centers (who serve school–age children and families) already rated in Early Achievers; federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Centers; and both licensed and unlicensed ELO programs serving youth between the ages of 5–18 years.

Summary of Evaluation Findings

Conducted by the University of Washington's Cultivate Learning, the evaluation examined ELO program quality and the impact of improvement efforts. It also examined the experiences of participating coaches and providers to hear their perspectives on improvement interventions.

Key findings include:

- Programs initially assessed as lower than average improved after training and coaching.
- Coaching with fidelity to the model was linked with improved program quality.
- Higher levels of student engagement and fewer challenging behaviors were seen as program quality improved.
- Program staff and directors found coaching and data helpful and desired more frequent observations and feedback.
- Programs experienced several systemic barriers to improving quality including unstable staffing, limited time for training and limited funding to support staff.

"I've really learned work ethic. I've learned how to manage my time, how to prioritize. These were all skills that I was very bad at before I started that internship. And I feel very confident that I can go into any job now and apply the same methods, same strategies that I did here and I'll have no problem succeeding in the work place."

– Youth ELO Participant

Initiative Goals

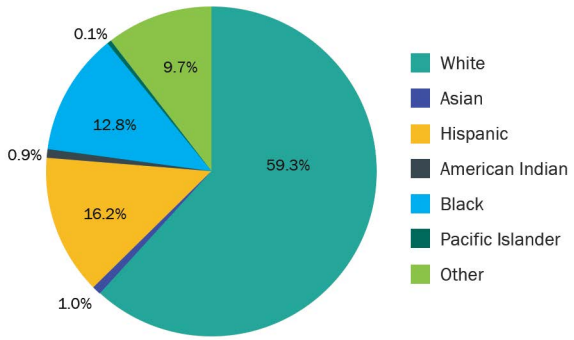
Building upon a decade of quality improvement work in Washington, the initiative launched during the 2016–17 school year to show that, with the proper support, ELO programs can deliver the type of high–quality engagement proven to result in meaningful youth–level outcomes. The initiative also aimed to create a streamlined system of supports including coaching and training for program staff to engage children and youth with developmentally appropriate strategies across the age span. Lastly, the initiative aimed to connect "systems," specifically the early learning and school–age systems.

Recommendations and Next Steps

The Washington State Legislature appropriated $750,000 in the 2018 budget to continue the initiative an additional year. This state funding will continue to be matched with private funding from the Raikes Foundation. **Priorities include:**

- Continue to support original participants: current participants will be given top priority for continuing their quality improvement work, and it's expected that some new program participants in King, Pierce, Spokane and/or Walla Walla counties will be added.
- Create a pipeline for quality improvement: with various sizes, types, and existing levels of capacity and quality, supports need to be created that foster quality improvements for all types of programs.
- Focus on coaching: coaching is critical to improving program quality and it's important coaches are well trained, have enough time with programs, and can coach to fidelity standards.

Youth Participant Demographics



- 55.5 percent of youth participate in the Free/ Reduced Price School Lunch Program
- 10 percent of youth are English Language learners
- 12.7 percent are youth with special needs

Why Expanded Learning Opportunities

Research shows that high–quality ELO programs improve attendance and grades while building the social–emotional skills needed to succeed in school and in life. Youth outcomes include:

- Improved academics including attendance, grade point, and math/literacy scores
- Social/Emotional including increased engagement, motivation, growth mindset, and cooperation
- Career Pathway Skills/Skill Development including skill tied to program content areas

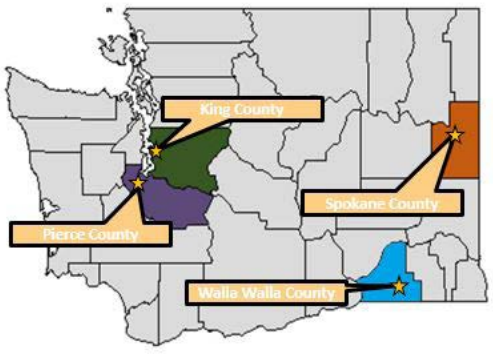
Reflecting the needs of their local communities, these youth–driven learning opportunities are particularly powerful for historically underserved populations. They engage and inspire young people to explore their passions, develop their talents and find their unique voice as future leaders.

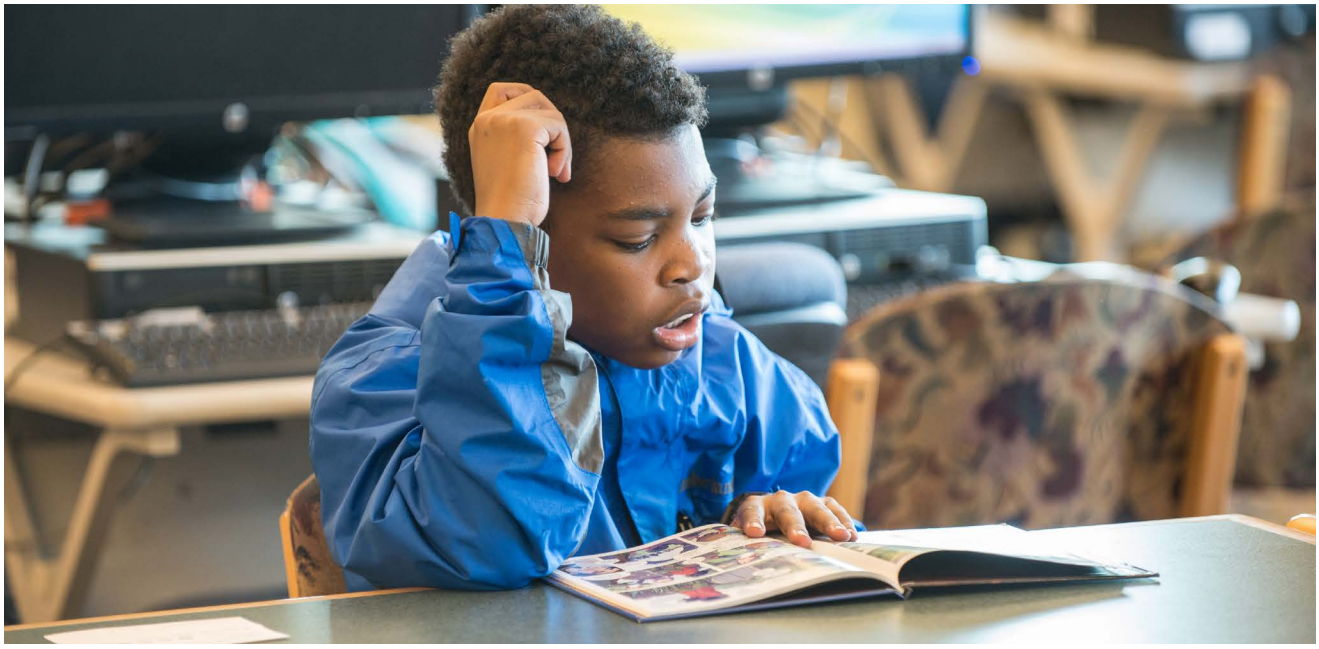
Initiative Partners

- Department of Early Learning
- Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- School's Out Washington
- University of Washington
- Child Care Aware of Washington (including Child Care Resources and Community Minded Enterprises)
- Raikes Foundation

Additionally, community coalitions met regularly throughout the pilot year to discuss how to best meet the needs of youth and families in their region.

Program Site Locations





Overview of the Initiative

Washington is building a comprehensive learning system that emphasizes quality from birth to 18 years. A statewide quality early learning system has been scaled with support of the historic 2015 Early Start Act. The Early Start Act expands upon early learning to include piloting a high–quality, equitable system for school-age children to explore how best the state can support providers of Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) with the training and resources needed to encourage high–quality programs. Including afterschool and summer programs, high–quality ELO programs have been shown to improve youth outcomes, including academic improvements, social/emotional gains, and skill building.

Launched as the Expanded Learning Opportunities Quality Initiative ("initiative"), the Department of Early Learning and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction convened a Steering Committee made up of providers, funders, and experts to provide direction on the design, implementation, and evaluation of the initiative. Building upon a decade of quality improvement work in Washington, the Expanded Learning Opportunities Quality Initiative launched during the 2016–17 school year in youth development programs with a commitment to equity and reaching underserved populations.

Initiative Goals

The goal of this initiative was to show that, with the proper support, ELO programs can deliver the type of high–quality engagement proven to result in meaningful youth–level outcomes. The initiative also aimed to create a streamlined system of supports including coaching and training for program staff to engage children and youth with developmentally appropriate strategies across the age span. Lastly, the initiative aimed to connect "systems," specifically the early learning and school–age systems. By leveraging resources across these two systems (for example, coaching and training), Washington can improve the quality of both systems and provide more seamless services to children, youth, and families. With the 2017 creation of the new Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), creating efficient systems for supporting children and youth across the age spectrum is increasingly vital. Lessons learned throughout the initiative are providing information about ways to connect the systems and supports that promote quality from birth through age 18.

Initiative Overview

The initiative was designed as a learning pilot, building on current quality improvement efforts, and informing

how the state will support ELO in the future. In the spring of 2016, the Department of Early Learning (DEL) and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) worked with School's Out Washington, a non–profit statewide intermediary, to recruit qualified programs to volunteer for the initiative. Once selected, programs received training, coaching and assessment using the best national research on promoting positive youth outcomes. During this period, the University of Washington conducted a rigorous evaluation to assess the progress toward meeting the initiative goals. In addition, staff, families and youth were interviewed for perspective on their respective ELO programs. The results of this initiative are captured in this report.
Fifty programs from four counties (King, Pierce, Spokane, and Walla Walla) were chosen to participate in a quality assessment and improvement process. Participating programs included licensed family homes and child care centers (who serve school–age children and families) already rated in Early Achievers; federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Centers and both licensed and unlicensed ELO programs serving youth between the ages of 5–18 years. The initiative aimed to reach children and youth where they were already being served in a mix of program types in order to learn as much as possible about supporting quality improvement efforts in ELO programs.

Steering Committee

Department of Early Learning (DEL): oversight of the state's Quality Rating & Improvement System (QRIS), Early Achievers, and co–leader of the Expanded Learning Opportunities Quality Initiative.

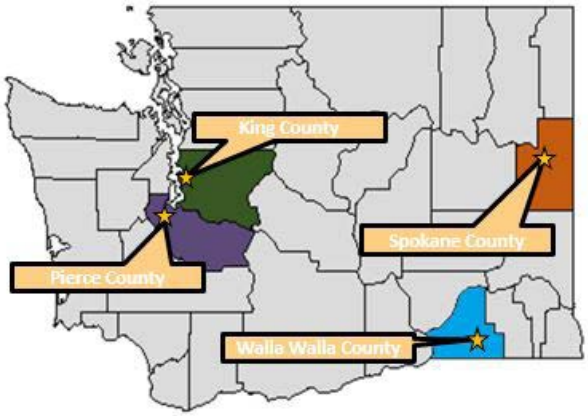
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI): agency that has oversight of 21st Century Community Learning Centers and co–leader of the Expanded Learning Opportunities Quality Initiative.

School's Out Washington: statewide intermediary leading and coordinating the quality initiative supports and services for ELO programs across the state.

University of Washington (UW): evaluators of the initiative and developers of the statewide coaching framework, professional development and online coaching platform.

Child Care Aware: coaching partner for initiative sites that are also participating in Early Achievers.

Raikes Foundation: philanthropic partner that has funded quality improvement in ELO since 2009.



A Learning Initiative

The ELO initiative was designed to include a rigorous evaluation component to serve two overarching purposes:

1) To understand quality in a sample of ELO sites and to explore a quality improvement intervention; and
2) To understand the experience of coaches and providers in the pilot and hear their perspectives on improvement interventions.

Each purpose was comprised of multiple research questions and required a unique study design and methodology. In the following section, there is an overview of the evaluation including the timeline, participant recruitment and selection, measures, and a description of the evidence-based coaching model as well as a description of each of the studies.

Funding

The Washington Legislature appropriated $1M to support the Expanded Learning Opportunities Quality Initiative for planning and one year of implementation. In order to support a more robust evaluation, deeper community outreach, and the development of systems supports such as data, the Raikes Foundation provided a private match to the state investment for the initiative.

Why Expanded Learning Opportunities

Access to quality ELO programs complements classroom instruction. Research shows that quality ELO programs improve attendance and grades while building the social–emotional skills needed to succeed

in school and in life. Reflecting the needs of their local communities, these youth–driven learning opportunities are particularly powerful for historically underserved populations. They engage and inspire young people to explore their passions, develop their talents and find their unique voice as future leaders. Based on a national body of research, the framework of this initiative assumes that high–quality programs lead to the following youth outcomes:

Academic Benefits:

- Decreases in absences during the school day
- Decreases in challenging behavior (misconduct, aggression, etc.)
- For academically based programs, increases in math and literacy scores
- Increases in grade point average

Social Emotional Learning Benefits:

- Increases student engagement, intrinsic motivation, concentrated effort and growth mindset
- Increases emotional regulation and cooperative skills

Career Pathway Skills/Skill Development

- Specific skill development tied to program content (e.g., Arts, Media, STEM related skill building)
- Increases in initiation and leadership abilities

In addition to these outcomes, other associated benefits of ELO programs include providing a safe space for adolescents (and its associated decreases in juvenile delinquency) as well as a support for working families.

Background on Expanded Learning Opportunities in Washington

Washington is working to support youth across the state access to high–quality learning opportunities beyond the classroom, and is leading the nation in supporting high–quality early learning and sustaining those gains into elementary and beyond. The ELO Quality Initiative builds on Washington's work to promote quality in youth development programs using the David P. Weikart's Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI) to support and assess quality in partnership with School's Out Washington. This has led to large scale adoption of a continuous quality improvement intervention in the state with over 500 programs participating in the quality intervention statewide. The initiative built upon this prior work, incorporating valuable lessons learned about scaling high–quality practices to ELO programs across the state.

Early Start Act Enabling Language

"By July 1, 2017, the department [of early learning] and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction shall jointly design a plan to incorporate school–age childcare providers into the early achievers program or other appropriate quality improvement system. To test implementation of the early achievers system for school–age childcare providers the department and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction shall implement a pilot program."

High–quality ELO Programs are:

- Staffed by well–trained, caring adults who promote positive relationships with and between the young people they support;
- Engaging and inspiring young people to explore their passions, develop their talents, and find their unique voice as future leaders;
- Developing lifelong skills and behaviors that are equally important in the classroom as they are in adulthood;
- Grounded in the strengths and needs of the communities they serve.

Recently, the Sparkwind Movement launched in Washington, a campaign aimed at ensuring all young people have equitable access to high–quality ELO programs. The movement is intended to build on current efforts and garner collective impact by building a high–quality system of ELO programs for youth. The Sparkwind Movement is intended to connect all of the existing work underway in Washington to promote high–quality ELO programs for youth under one umbrella.

The Sparkwind Movement is currently led by School's Out Washington and has been informed by a broad sector of stakeholders in the afterschool and youth development field, including: youth serving organizations; public sector partners; and youth who participated in focus groups to help develop the core values and language to define the movement. The Sparkwind Movement name was inspired by the stories and voices of youth in Washington.

Results and Lessons Learned: Evaluation

Overview of the Intervention

Fifty programs from four counties (King, Pierce, Spokane and Walla Walla) participated in the initiative including licensed family homes and child care centers (who serve school–age children and families) already rated in Early Achievers; federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Centers and both licensed and unlicensed ELO programs serving youth between the ages of 5–18 years. These programs received training, professional development opportunities and weekly on–site practice–based coaching. The evaluation conducted ongoing data collection throughout the intervention to assess the impact of the intervention on program quality.

Program Selection and Recruitment

The Expanded Learning Opportunities Quality Initiative Steering Committee established selection criteria for types of programs to participate in the study including the length of time in operation, licensing standing, prior engagement in quality improvement efforts, leadership support and number of youth participating in the program. All program types (licensed family homes and childcare centers, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, and school–age and youth development

Overview of Participants

Location
King County: 16
Walla Walla County: 7
Pierce County: 13
Spokane County: 14

Program Type
21st Century CLCs: 12
Licensed Family Homes (FCC): 5
Licensed Centers: 7
Youth Development Programs: 11
Licensed School–Age Child Care: 15

programs) that fit the established criteria and were within the specified regions were recruited to participate in the evaluation. Organizations that met the criteria were proactively contacted to assess their interest in participating. The final selection of sites included a review by the evaluation team to ensure that the sites represented enough regional and programmatic diversity to support the study design.

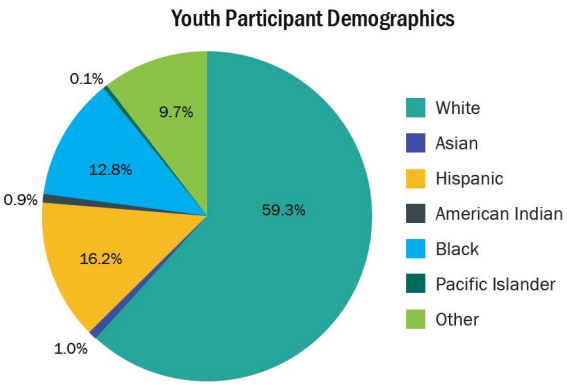
Programs were offered incentives to participate including 20 to 30 hours of training and professional development tied to the School–Age and/or Youth Program Quality Assessment (SAPQA or YPQA, referred to collectively as the PQA) valued at $7,250, and stipends that ranged from $1,500 to $3,000 depending on the size of the program. Once applications were submitted, programs were also awarded a signing bonus of $300.

Youth Participants

Approximately 1,100 youth participated in the initiative, and through the evaluation process, many youth program participants were able to be matched in the Educational Research and Data Center (ERDC) data system. With parent consent, and using first and last name, grade, and name of school approximately 70 percent of youth participating in initiative sites were able to be matched in the ERDC data system. This has provided information on the youth currently engaged in pilot programs.

- 55.5 percent of youth participate in the Free/ Reduced Price School Lunch Program
- 10 percent of youth are English Language learners
- 12.7 percent are youth with special needs

Coaching



School's Out Washington (SOWA) and Child Care Aware of Washington (CCA) were responsible for the recruitment and supervision of coaches. The majority of the fourteen coaches were selected from an existing pool of coaches with 5–25 years of experience in coaching, education, and/or youth development. The licensed childcare centers and family child care homes selected to participate in the initiative were involved with Early Achievers, and were assigned the same coach for consistency.

> **"Through action–planning and observations, I watched these teachers grow more confident and independent as their skills and strategies developed with a new sense of accountability for quality–improvement."**
>
> – Monika Egland, Early Achievers/ELO Coach

Coaches were expected to meet with their programs weekly for the duration of the study, conducting in–person coaching sessions every other week, and online coaching sessions via Coaching Companion (an online coaching platform) on alternating weeks. All in–person and online coaching was modeled after the evidenced based Practice–based Coaching framework, in which coaches worked with programs to create an action plan with set goals, conducted focused observations aligned to those goals, and provided feedback and reflection opportunities based on the observed practice. An overview of Practice-based Coaching can be found in the appendix.

Overview of the Evaluation Methodology

Conducted by the University of Washington's Cultivate Learning, the overarching goal of the initiative evaluation was to examine ELO site quality and impact of improvement efforts, such as practice–based coaching, in ELO programs. The evaluation was approved by the

University of Washington Human Subjects Institutional Review Board in July 2016.

The evaluation spanned 34 weeks and included a pre–assessment, an ongoing improvement intervention led by SOWA and CCA of WA coaches and trainers, and a post–assessment. The improvement intervention was started in a staggered fashion across five cohorts. Each program received five weeks of baseline quality data collection, followed by the intervention for the remaining 29 weeks, until the post assessment. Each week all sites videotaped one hour of programming, and submitted their videos to Cultivate Learning for coding and analysis. When trends were identified they were shared with SOWA, along with suggested improvements, for coaches to use in the intervention.

Focus groups were also conducted with participating programs and with coaches. The focus groups were facilitated to learn from coaches, program staff and leadership about their experiences in the initiative. Individual interviews were conducted with youth participants to capture their feedback as well.

Purpose of the Evaluation

The evaluation was designed to serve two overarching purposes:

1) To understand quality in a sample of ELO sites and to explore a quality improvement intervention;
2) To understand the experience of coaches and providers in the pilot and hear their perspectives on improvement interventions.

Each purpose was comprised of multiple research questions and required a unique study design and methodology. In the following section, there is an overview of the two studies conducted by the University of Washington. The full evaluation report can be found in the appendix.

Coaching Companion

The Coaching Companion is an online tool that helps teachers, coaches and education managers collaborate to develop individualized coaching plans that support quality teaching and positive outcomes for children.

The Coaching Companion helps coaches and teachers or peer–coaching teams work together, even between coach visits or at a distance. Teachers and coaches use the Coaching Companion to share video and track progress through the three major components of Practice–based Coaching (PBC): Shared Goals and Action Planning, Focused Observation, and Reflection and Feedback. PBC is cyclical and supports use of effective teaching practices that lead to positive outcomes for children.

Multiple Baseline Approach

This evaluation required a study design that would allow for continuous quality improvement throughout the initiative. A multiple baseline approach was chosen to allow for data to be collected and analyzed frequently, identify program elements that support or undermine improvement efforts, and allow for responsive changes to be made that improve effectiveness. In other words, this method made it possible to adjust and revise the intervention in response to what is and is not working. This design attempts to control for the effect of extraneous events by showing that specific changes are associated with the onset of the intervention.

Study #1: Program Quality and Practice–based Coaching

Purpose: to understand quality in a sample of ELO sites and to explore a quality improvement intervention.

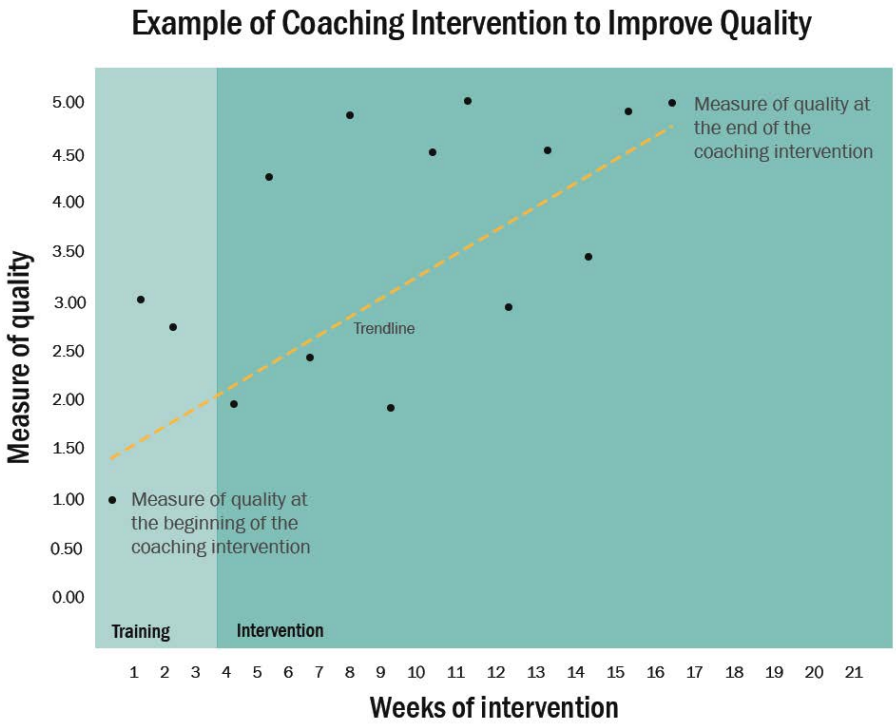
Research Questions

- What is the baseline quality of programs included in the sample?
- How does Practice–based Coaching work across multiple settings, and what refinements are necessary to improve practice?
- How do programs change over the course of the initiative?
- How is the intervention effect mediated by coaching hours and fidelity?

Summary of Findings

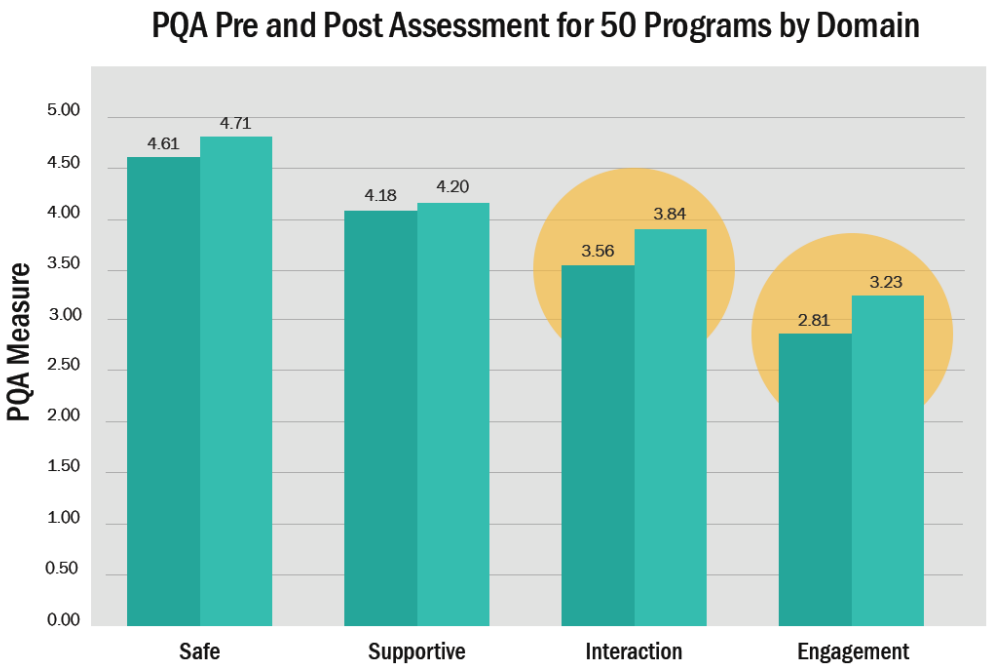
- Programs that were assessed as having lower than average quality scores before coaching improved in some domains of quality after training and Practice–based Coaching.
- Coaches need ongoing support and incentives to implement practice–based coaching in person and online.
- Fidelity to the coaching model and the number of coaching hours are related to program improvement.
- Coaching with fidelity to the Practice–based Coaching framework showed improvement on program quality.
- Higher levels of student engagement and fewer challenging behaviors were seen as program quality improved.

In the chart on the right, quality levels are tracked during three phases 1) baseline data collection, 2) during staff training, and 3) during the period of the coaching intervention. The level of quality may vary each week, but the data show that the trend is for quality to improve after training occurs and it continues to increase throughout the intervention with practice–based coaching.



Increases in Quality Scores throughout the Intervention

Using the School–Age and/or Youth Program Quality Assessment (PQA), participating programs showed improvement in program quality over the course of the intervention. The intervention was focused on improvements in Interaction and Engagement, the domains most connected to youth outcomes. These two domains demonstrated the strongest growth through the intervention. Most programs entered the intervention already strong on safe and supportive environments.



Study #2: Stakeholder Experiences

Purpose: to understand the experience of coaches and providers in the pilot and hear their perspectives on improvement interventions.

Research Questions

- What were the experiences of site staff, leadership and coaches that participated in the initiative?
- What are the perspectives of site staff, leadership, and coaches regarding coaching, professional development, and overall improvement efforts that could contribute to a more effective intervention design?

Summary of Findings

- PQA training helped program staff to define and "see" quality.
- Program staff and directors found coaching and data helpful, and desired more frequent observations and feedback.
- When coaches were able to include program leadership, sites were able to collaborate more and resolve issues as they arose.
- Online coaching was regarded by program staff and coaches as having potential but more support is required for coaches and program staff to use the Coaching Companion.
- Programs experienced several systemic barriers to improving quality including unstable staffing, limited time for training and limited funding to support staff.

Additional Research and Evaluation

Conducted by American Institute for Research (AIR), an additional evaluation is underway to assess the impacts of Washington's 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC). There are 141 21st CCLC in Washington, and 11 of these programs also participated in the initiative. In order to assess the manner in which youth may have changed during their enrollment in 21st CCLC–funded programs during the span of the 2016–17 school year, the Youth Motivation, Engagement, and Beliefs Survey was used on a pre–post basis to collect data on a variety of youth development–related outcomes, including academic identity, positive mindsets, self–regulation, and interpersonal skills. A total of 346 youth in grades 4 through 9 from the 11 21st CCLC–funded sites took the pre–survey between early October and mid December 2016, while post–survey data was collected from 282 of these same youth between late April and early June 2017.

Early results show that youth entering programs with lower baseline scores showed significant growth across each of the four survey constructs – academic identity, positive mindsets, self–management, and interpersonal skills. In particular, gains were especially pronounced among youth with higher levels of 21st CCLC participation (60–day or more attendance) for the academic identity, positive mindsets, and self–management constructs. Centers with higher scores on the Youth Program Quality Assessment have higher levels of youth–reported engagement on average.

A full evaluation report on the 21st CCLC is expected in October 2017.

What is a Quality Seal

Programs in Washington have been using the PQA to assess ELO program quality levels for youth services that are safe, supportive, interactive, and engaging. The Quality Seal is an indication that programs have attained a threshold of quality in similar areas and are offering a level of quality that is commensurate with youth outcomes. Developing and validating a Quality Seal was a goal of the initiative. When finalized, Washington will be the first state in the country to have valid tools for certifying quality in ELO programs across all settings. For more information on the Quality Seal, see the appendix.

Results and Lessons Learned: Implementation

In addition to the evaluation results on program quality improvement, much was learned during the ELO Quality Initiative pilot about implementing future efforts to improve the quality and access of ELO programs. As a pilot, the implementation was built to garner as much learning as possible to allow for streamlined implementation in the future. Highlights of these implementation lessons learned include:

High Program Demand: there was strong interest from a diverse group of ELO providers to participate in the ELO pilot. Recruitment was successful across all program types and there was very low turn–over during the pilot year.

Importance of Strong Partnerships: the Steering Committee demonstrated flexibility and a willingness to work together in support of the pilot. Representing 21st Century programs, School Age Centers, Youth Development Programs, and Licensed Child Care Centers and Family Homes, the functionality of the Steering Committee allowed for quick and collaborative decision making.

Benefit of Private, Complementary Funding: private funding was available to support several additional elements of the pilot that proved essential including:

- Expanded evaluation allowed for a process and impact study, enabling a deeper evaluation that allowed for "real time" quality improvements.
- Additional training for pilot sites.
- Development of the Youth Program Registry (see side bar on page 18).

Balance Between Evaluation Requirements and Program Needs: developing and maintaining fidelity to an evaluation can be both supportive and challenging to implementation. The evaluation data collection allowed for quick identification of problems and enabled immediate troubleshooting. Information could be shared quickly with coaches to mitigate potential issues. However, programs often struggled to ramp up new program requirements while simultaneously meeting the evaluation requirements, such as weekly videotaping. The staggered timeline was challenging for participants that started later in the project and did not receive support services until late in the year.

Start–Up Challenges: like any new initiative, the ELO pilot struggled with several start up issues, stemming in large part from a truncated timeline. While these problems could be frustrating for partners and participants alike, they were neither unexpected nor unique to this pilot. More upfront planning timing would have been welcome, particularly in developing clear communications strategies between partners and participants. While these issues often were at the forefront of implementing the pilot, most of these issues were solved through implementation.

Important Connection Between ELO and Early Learning: the pilot was designed using lessons learned from the implementation of Early Achievers, and provided a unique opportunity to create an intentional bridge between early learning programs and ELO programs. In fact, many programs already serve youth of both age groups. The licensed child care centers and family homes in the pilot were Early Achievers sites and participation gave them the opportunity to integrate quality improvements across all ages. In addition, several coaches worked across Early Achievers and the ELO pilot. The experiences using Practice–based Coaching in Early Achievers provided valuable insight to inform this initiative; and lessons learned from this initiative are currently informing Early Achievers. The initiative highlighted the benefit to both systems of working in alignment.

Engagement Needed at Site Level and Administrative Level: larger organizations with multiple sites required unique approaches to engage both the organizational leaders and the site level leaders. For example:

- Organizational level leadership needs to be supportive and to demonstrate buy–in through "sponsorship from the top," and Director support was important.
- Engagement at the administrative/supervisor level was critical for site level success However, follow–through and commitment was strongest when recruitment was done at the site level, rather than through the administrative level.
- Site level staff turnover was a challenge throughout.

Different Participant Types have Unique Needs: program participants in the pilot were very diverse and included large and small youth–serving organizations, school based programs, licensed child care centers and family homes. Each of these program types had different support needs and required tailored approaches to service delivery. For example:

- Family Homes need alternate scheduling options for training (e.g. evening and weekends).
- Organizations with multiple sites need different communications channels to reach both site level leaders and organizational level leaders.

Washington Youth Program Registry

Included in the pilot was the development of a new Youth Program Registry, a free tool and comprehensive database to support ELO programs, youth development professionals, and quality information for Washington state. Built with private funding, this is the first registry of its kind and the data collected will provide valuable information to programs, state agencies, and eventually parents about how to best serve Washington's youth. Lesson learned in developing the registry include:

- Having the field help design the registry was critical. It provided quality assurance to the design, recognized the importance of the end user, and encouraged participation after launch. Creating a unified database has had universal support.
- Reports help programs track organization, site, and/or program level data, enabling better decision making. It is particularly helpful for smaller programs by providing essential infrastructure support.
- The Registry provides state level aggregate data that advances the field and prepares for the future quality expansion efforts.
- Building new tech platforms is challenging and a lot of planning is needed before moving to build out.
- User testing is critical and planning for multiple rounds of user testing before launch is essential.

More information on the Youth Program Registry can be found in the appendix.

Value of Coaching Model: coaching is essential to quality improvements and there are ways to ensure that coaching is deployed effectively. For example:

- Full–time coaches are able to best support programs as they need to learn and master the coaching model and have time for consistent work with sites.
- A minimum amount of coaching per site needs to be dedicated and planned for at the program level.
- Cross training with Early Achiever coaches and ELO coaches was effective. Early Achievers coaches have expertise in practice–based coaching and ELO coaches have expertise in the Youth Program Quality intervention and serving ELO programs.
- Coaching should include working with site and organization leaders as well as deep work with observation, reflection and modeling with adults working with youth directly.

Community Feedback on System Needs

Engaging participating communities has been an essential part of the ELO pilot. In addition to having a "Community Hub" to help support local implementation of the pilot, participating communities received funding from the Raikes Foundation to create "Community Coalitions," locally facilitated groups of ELO programs, participating youth, and community leaders. These groups met regularly throughout the pilot year to discuss how to best meet the needs of youth and families in their region.

Community Coalitions facilitated community focus groups to learn more about the needs of youth and families to inform this report and make recommendations about how to build an ELO system that supports strong outcomes for youth and aligns with local priorities. Focus groups were conducted in King, Pierce, and Spokane counties and included a series of quantitative and qualitative questions that are summarized below. Additional interviews were conducted with programs, staff, coaches, and youth in all four counties. Full focus group reports for the three communities are provided in the appendix.

> "I'm better at listening to people. I think that before when people talked to me, even a family member, I just kind of listened to the parts I wanted to hear and besides that I just didn't care for the rest. But now I'm listening to everything and I understand better."
>
> – ELO Youth Participant

Demand for ELO Services

Focus groups all agreed that there is a high demand for ELO services in their community and not enough programs to meet the demand. In addition, focus group members highlighted that youth–serving programs want access to quality improvement supports like training and technical assistance.

Current Barriers for Youth and Families

- **Transportation:** many children and youth lack access to reliable transportation, creating barriers to regular attendance in ELO programs.
- **Cost:** fee–based programs are cost prohibitive for families and there are not enough tuition–free programs to meet the demand.
- **Language and cultural responsiveness:** programs need to be accessible to families, target outreach appropriately, and have resources available in families' home languages.

Challenges for Youth–Serving Programs

- **Staffing:** attracting and retaining highly qualified staff remains a challenge for ELO programs. Low wages coupled with a lack of full–time employment (most ELO positions are part–time, serving children and families before and after–school or in the summer) pose challenges to creating and maintaining a diverse and qualified workforce.
- **Need for capacity building:** smaller organizations are important to serving diverse communities and often need additional organizational and/or financial support.
- **Supports for quality improvements:** programs want access to quality improvement supports that are flexible, affordable, and meet the specific needs of their program.
- **Sustainability:** ongoing funding to support high–quality ELO programs is a struggle for many programs.
- **Connection with schools:** partnerships between schools and ELO programs leverage additional resources (e.g. space) and allows for aligned goals and supports to improve student outcomes and data sharing to track those outcomes.

Importance of Youth–Serving Programs in Communities

Focus group participants highlighted the need for year–round, financially accessible programs for youth in their communities. These programs need to:

- Focus on diversity and equity.
- Support social–emotional growth.
- Support a well–qualified, diverse and appropriately compensated staff.
- Utilize best practices through training, technical assistance and use of data.

Focus groups spoke to the important role that high–quality ELO programs have in their communities to support youth and their families.

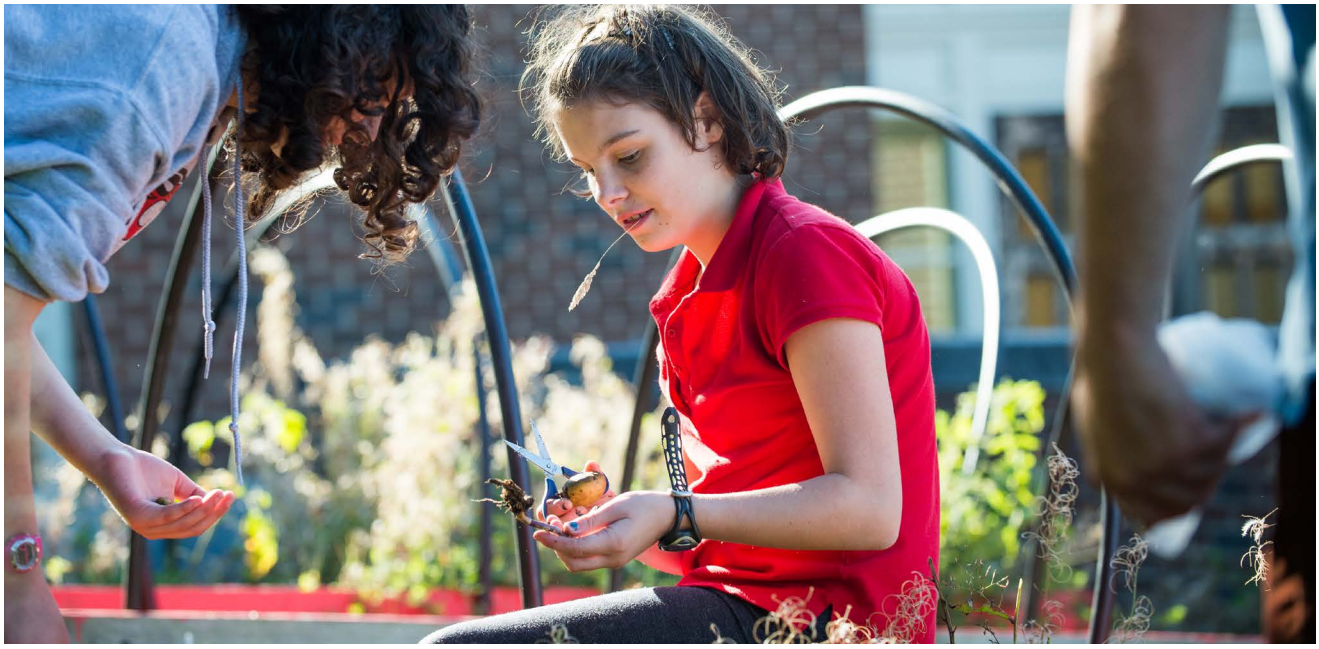
94% of Coalition members agree or strongly agree that there is family demand for youth programs in their community.

90% of Coalition members agree or strongly agree that with additional funding, youth–serving programs in their community would be interested in participating in quality improvement efforts like training and technical assistance.

75% of focus group participants disagree or strongly disagree that there are enough youth serving programs in their community to meet the demand.

"This program makes me feel welcome and safe because no matter how I'm feeling, what's going on at home, what trouble I might have got into, I can come here… I know when I come here no one's going to attack me based on my past, what I've done wrong, what's not gone so well in my life."

– Youth ELO Participant



Youth Feedback

A part of the ELO Quality Initiative evaluation was hearing from youth participants to get their perspective on ELO programs and what makes them engaging, interesting, and worthwhile to attend. Nineteen youth from eight participating programs were interviewed as a part of the University of Washington's evaluation. Below is a summary of their perspectives.

Skill building: several youth participants shared that they felt their program improved their social skills and grew their self–confidence. For example, one youth said, "I've really learned work ethic. I've learned how to manage my time, how to prioritize. These were all skills that I was very bad at before I started....I feel very confident that I can go into any job now and apply the same methods, same strategies that I did here, and I'll have no problem succeeding in the work place."

Idle hands: youth described how the program provided a positive alternative activity for them. If they were not attending an ELO program they would be home alone, watching TV, doing nothing or doing nothing but homework alone. Youth regarded their programs as keeping them engaged in positive social activity. One youth stated, "This program has saved me from a life of crime and doing things that I would not be proud of. Doing things I would not want my family to see. And this program means so much to me because I would be a totally different person without it and I would not be as successful today as I am without it."

> "Our program facilitator is helping me to get into a technical college so I can learn a trade craft. I'm studying electrical construction and I chose that because it's a good, practical application that everyone here can help teach me about...I'm getting all kinds of educational help, different opportunities that I wouldn't have had otherwise."
>
> – ELO Youth Participant

Welcome and safe: youth described how their programs made them feel welcomed and safe. They felt supported, heard and mentored. For example, one youth offered, "This program makes me feel welcome and safe because no matter how I'm feeling, what's going on at home, what trouble I might have got into, I can come here. I can talk to my youth mentors and I can share what's going on and get very valuable insight on how to handle certain things that I may not be good at handling on my own."

Recommendations

Based on the results of the evaluation and implementation lessons learned, the Steering Committee of the Expanded Learning Opportunities Quality Initiative submits the following recommendations for consideration with future ELO Quality initiatives to ensure the highest system efficiency and strongest youth program outcomes.

Scalable Quality Systems

- **Create a pipeline for quality improvement:** ELO programs operate in various sizes, types, and existing levels of capacity and quality. Supports need to be created that foster quality improvements for all types of programs, which meet programs where they are and offer meaningful quality improvement paths.
- **State level infrastructure:** state level capacity is needed to support scalable, statewide quality improvement efforts. The ELO field has benefitted from the engagement of multiple state agencies and organizations and a clear governance structure would further promote the field.
- **Connect early learning, K–12 and ELO:** children and youth are best served when there are seamless transitions at critical developmental milestones. Continuing to align the ELO professional development and quality improvement system with the K–12 and early learning systems best meets the needs of children and leverages state and local resources.
- **Community level engagement:** ELO programs are uniquely suited to meet the local priorities of communities, families, and youth. State level efforts need to continue to engage with and build resources that fit community needs and honor local efforts.

Coaching and Intervention Model

- **Coaching is essential:** coaching is critical to improving program quality and it is important that coaches are well trained, have enough time with programs, and can coach to fidelity standards. In coordination with Early Achievers, a designated coach is critical to engage the program staff and leadership in regularly scheduled trainings and coaching on program assessment, evidence-based goal setting, focused observation, and feedback, as well as trainings on research-based best practices in the ELO field. Frequent monitoring and feedback of coaching fidelity should be put in place to increase the likelihood of coaching impact on program quality.

- **Link training and coaching:** creating synergy between training and coaching maximizes the benefits of both and programs that received more access to coaching and training improved their quality overall. Ongoing access to professional development and training opportunities while the program is operating reduces the amount of outside training needed. Staff participating in training and professional development outside of program hours should be compensated for their time.
- **Coaching and training should be offered program wide:** coaching should include all of the staff within the program, as well as the director. Disconnection between staff, coaches and leadership can interfere with improvement efforts. Conversely, when leadership and staff collaborate in coaching sessions, program interferences in improvement efforts could be resolved by the leadership. Allowing coaching to be inclusive across the program can help to align goals, and mitigate programs in quality improvement efforts.
- **Adequate time and intensity:** improvement based interventions should have an adequate amount of time to ensure trainings and coaching is ongoing and producing quality improvements.

Resources for Coaches and Programs

- **Coaching Companion:** coaches and program staff and leadership can better utilize Coaching Companion, an online coaching tool that allows deeper coaching support to programs to complement in–person coaching. Accommodating for difficult scheduling times, Coaching Companion enables online reviews of performance by allowing program staff to capture and share practice for feedback. However, adequate training, technical improvements, and support need to be provided to coaches and staff for Coaching Companion to be successful. The costs and resources associated with supporting the use of Coaching Companion are far outweighed by the benefits of using the tool as it uses fewer resources than in person coach visits and allows for specific program practices to be reviewed with intentional focus.
- **Resource Library:** ELO programs benefit from having access to a resource library of videos, articles, and other resources that support the improvement effort. This allows program staff to learn and develop outside of program hours, and enables multiple staff and leadership to access the same materials and build consensus around aspects of quality and goals for improvement.

> "Participating in this initiative allowed me to guide my Early Achievers Family Homes to evaluate and improve their care of school aged children. It validated that these sites were already offering high quality programming for their before and after school programs (in large part because of the work they have been doing with EA Quality Standards) and the goals they set for the pilot wound up also improving their Instructional Support practices."
>
> – Andee, Early Achievers/ELO Coach

Future Research and Evaluation

- **More research:** more research is necessary to determine an adequate amount of evidence-based coaching and research–based trainings that leads to program improvement. In addition, continue to explore the relationship between quality, youth engagement, and youth outcomes.
- **Development of assessment tools:** continued refinement and development of the evaluation and assessment tools will be necessary prior to broad statewide adoption. This includes the tools for measuring multiple aspects of ELO programs such as program quality, youth engagement, etc.

Next Steps

The Washington State Legislature appropriated $750,000 in the 2018 budget to continue the Expanded Learning Opportunities Quality Initiative. This state funding will continue to be matched with private funding from the Raikes Foundation. While there are fewer resources available than in the initial pilot, there are several key priorities for continuing to support quality improvements in Washington ELO programs including:

- **Continue to support original participants:** as quality improvement work typically takes more time than was possible in the original pilot, current participants will be given top priority for continuing their quality improvement work with targeted resources based on the pilot information. Due to some attrition, it's expected that some new program participants in King, Pierce, Spokane and/or Walla Walla counties will be added.
- **Coaching is key:** coaching has been shown to be an essential element of quality improvement. In the upcoming year, there will be a continued effort to strengthen and expand practice–based coaching.
- **Refined evaluation:** in the prior initiative, learning from the evaluation about the efficacy of the program model was essential. Now, the evaluation will shift to learning about the varied needs of programs to reach high thresholds of quality as well as the level and modality of coaching that is most effective. This means that there will be less need for participating programs to collect data, specifically videotaping, on site, making it easier for program participants.
- **Continued learning:** there is a lot to learn about how to support quality improvement efforts in a variety of program types. ELO programs are diverse and there is not one single way to engage in quality improvement efforts. Rather, supports will need to be tailored to meet the needs of youth serving organizations, particularly programs with limited capacity. Working in alignment with other local initiatives will help to better understand how to provide comprehensive supports for programs with operational needs in addition to quality supports.
- **Youth Program Registry:** having access to program and youth level data is critical to making informed decisions at the state, community and program levels. The Youth Program Registry is already starting to have an impact, and additional build–out of the registry will allow for greater understanding of ELO strengths and needs.
- **The Sparkwind Movement:** ELO programs across the state continue to engage in efforts to improve the quality of services available to youth under the Sparkwind Umbrella. The Sparkwind Movement builds on current efforts and garners collective impact by building a high–quality system of ELO programs for youth. The continuation of the pilot is aligned with this work to promote equitable access to high–quality ELO programs for youth.
- **Continue to engage youth:** getting feedback directly from youth about ELO programs is essential. The Steering Committee will continue to explore ways to engage youth directly in program development.

> "Because I'm a kind of person that, if I don't do something right, then it's just failure altogether. The project showed me progress that I've made and things are sometimes like, you start somewhere and you finish somewhere, it's continuous, and you just have to keep trying at it."
>
> – ELO Youth Participant

Appendix

You can find the appendix referenced throughout this report at https://www.sparkwindmovement.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/2017-ELO-Quality-Initiative-Report-Appendix.pdf.