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WELCOME!

North Snohomish County Early Head Start (NSC EHS) is a child-development program for income-eligible families with children ages birth to three or pregnant mothers. We work with you to promote the growth and development of your child by supporting you as your child’s first and best teacher. NSC EHS is funded by the Office of Head Start.

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) is a comprehensive pre-kindergarten program designed to serve income-eligible children ages four to five years and their families. ECEAP provides education, family support, and health screenings for children. ECEAP is funded by the Washington State Department of Early Learning.

We invite you to read our Mission, Vision and Values Statements below...

### Mission

We engage in respectful partnerships with family members and community groups to nurture the development, education and overall well-being of young children. We provide educational experiences that cultivate the potential of the whole child. We provide family support, parent involvement and parent education that values diversity and builds on the strengths of each child and family.

### Vision

Young children and their families are healthy and thriving as part of a diverse and unified learning community that is committed to their well-being. Parents advocate for systems that benefit their children. Families and community develop greater resilience, demonstrate compassion for others, and value life-long learning.

### Values

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Have you heard about “STEM?” STEM means “Science, Engineering, Technology and Math.” In comparison with other countries, the United States comes out as an average performer in reading and science but below average in math. So our schools are searching for ways to improve math and science.

In addition, we know that arts are really important for early learners. Involvement in artistic and cultural activities “enriches our experiences, expands our sensibilities, and enhances our understanding” (Vassan’s Institute for Innovation in Social Policy). In addition, researchers have found a positive association between arts participation and a number of desirable academic and social outcomes, such as school grades, test scores, enrollment in post-secondary education, attainment of a bachelor’s degree, and higher levels of literary and civic engagement. So we are moving from STEM to “STEAM” so that the whole brain is fully developed. Creativity and ingenuity are important to our progress.

This Spring issue of the Early Learning Newsletter includes stories from our Early Head Start and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Programs about how we support and challenge children using STEAM activities and projects.

An ECEAP dad inspects the artwork displayed at the Tulalip Tribes ECEAP. Cultural art is an important expression of families’ identities and their children’s development.

ECEAP Policy Council Vice-Chair Rudy Madrigal and his son Brutal celebrate the completion of a homemade tribal drum. See the story on this special family night on page 8 of this issue.
The families in the Marysville EHS program are busy every day, exploring their world through fun activities that include the whole family. Through weekly home visits we have the opportunity to explore art, cooking projects, toys, blocks and books. And our parents learn about child development, community opportunities, and how to build strong healthy families. Twice a month we gather for socializations where we make new friends, explore a classroom environment and learn social rules that will help us be successful in school. As a group, we get to visit fun places such as the Pumpkin Patch, Jump Rattle and Roll, the Imagine Children’s Museum, and have picnics in the park. We are even planning a trip to the roller-skating rink for this spring. We are having lots of fun, and learning important things every day!

Marysville EHS held socialization at the Marysville-Pilchuck swimming pool. There was a wading pool for little ones, and a deeper pool for more advanced swimmers. The families who participated reported that this was a great way to spend a chilly January afternoon.
Finding Unexpected Answers!
By Kathy Burke, EHS Infant-Toddler Specialist

Children are natural-born scientists. It is their job to explore, try new things, engage with curiosity and discover. Adults are the catalysts. They set up the scenarios for the little ones to investigate and experience.

In Early Head Start, we believe parents are the child’s first and most important teacher. Therefore, we provide information about child development through hands-on activities that will create an environment of questioning. A child learns much about science, technology, engineering, arts and math from the parent’s modeling and willingness to let their child try out new things and find unexpected answers.

In the Marysville EHS, the children and their parents discover new outcomes when playing with ice, or build amazing structures with triangles and rectangles, use magnifying glasses and pumpkins for scientific exploration, and play with mathematical puzzles. Each of these children is well on their way to being the one to discover, build and communicate the next life-changing technology for their generation!
What is an EHS “Socialization?”
Group Socialization in Granite Falls
By Lisa Scott, EHS Infant-Toddler Specialist

Socialization provides a unique opportunity for early learners to problem-solve, learn and practice language, make connections, move their bodies, and develop friendships. Socialization gives parents a chance to play and interact with their children and others, connect with other parents, learn about community resources and events, and build a safe community for their children and themselves. The classroom is designed to meet the developmental needs of babies and children up to age three, and activities are chosen to support the working goal of each child and to enhance their learning and development in all areas.

An ECEAP Tour Around the World
By Kim Parker, Mukilteo SD ECEAP

(Kim Parker, the program manager at our Mukilteo School District ECEAP in Lynnwood, tells how staff and parents at her ECEAP site share their cultures and discover new worlds.)

On Feb. 13, we held our Tour Around the World event. 140 people attended and participated in arts and craft activities from the Imagine Children’s Museum, family pictures and storytelling. Many families brought food and family artifacts to share with everyone.
The wonderful thing about science in the preschool classroom is that it can be simple, simple, simple. Children are eager to investigate, experiment and point out cause and effect with hands-on activities that encourage predictions, questioning to learn more, and those lovely “ah-ha” moments that teachers love to see.

In our classroom, we try to plan a specific science activity every week and often the children’s interest and questioning will extend the experiment or branch out to cover related ideas.

**Exploring Crystals**

A simple crystal experiment lasted the week (from start to viewing completed crystals), and children’s comments included “It looks like Chinese food,” “It looks like broken glass,” or “How come there’s still water in this one?”

**Exploring Rainbows With Prisms**

Often though, more important than the planned science activities are those moments that occur through children’s curiosity. It is those moments when students see something that sparks their interest and want to explore it further. For example, we have four small prisms in our classroom that sit on a window sill facing the sun (when it’s out). Children now look for “rainbows” on a daily basis. They see them on the floor, on the ceiling, on each other’s bodies. They ask how rainbows are formed, what impact sun or no sun has, and learn how the sun moves across the sky during the day. They experiment with holding prisms different ways to create different effects and try to “catch” each other’s rainbows.

**Converting Kinetic Energy Into Potential Energy**

Our class recently experimented with static electricity and explored how earthquakes happen. We defied gravity, converted kinetic energy into potential energy, and explored potential energy/mass/gravity with some very simple activities. Children saw how differently buildings reacted when they were on the surface or when they had a solid foundation down into the sand.

Potential energy, mass and gravity experiments were extended to car play.

You can create science experiments with materials you have on hand. The internet is a great source of ideas, and the website “Science for Preschoolers” offers some easy and fun activities.
On February 12, 2013, Tulalip Tribes ECEAP children and families united together with ancient sights and sounds from the past to learn the art of “drum-making.” Tribal members Tony Hatch, Skyler Hatch and Thomas Williams brought drum frames from wooden hoops and real deer rawhide to make the drums. Children and families learned about the significance of the drum, as well as Native American history, singing, weaving, teamwork and more. In the process they gained confidence, self esteem, and learned more about their heritage. A musician drummer also performed a song with a deep, joyful rhythm, opening children’s hearts and minds to their rich cultural tradition. Many thanks to all who were present for making this a multisensory experience and deepening our connections.
This year, Snohomish County ECEAP is piloting a new program to build financial assets with ECEAP families called “Family Financial Fitness.” The program is being developed with direct parent input, from last year’s focus groups with families to this year’s individual evaluations before and after each workshop. Parents asked for workshops to: be in small groups; include the children and family; and include a system of accountability. Parents also asked for specific topics: communication, goal-setting, spending plans and credit/debt management. Each session is held once a month with a family meal, a one-hour workshop and a 20-minute family activity at the end to share and apply their learning experiences. The child session includes a lesson plan that complements what their parents are learning in the adult session.

Two sites, Mukilteo and Josephine Sunset ECEAP, are participating in this year’s pilot program. There are 10-12 parents with 20-30 children who are participating at each site. Children will receive a Math Backpack, a new book each week related to the topic and bring take home projects, such as Moonjars to “save,” “spend,” and “share” their own money. Parents and caregivers will receive a Parent Guide to map out a plan of action, a $25 gift card for attending all four sessions and an opportunity to apply for an IDA (Individual Development Account) to receive $2 matching funds for every $1 saved. Next year, we hope to roll this out to more sites so more families can take advantage and get on a path toward financial freedom.

McGill University in New York has been studying animals to see what techniques they use to raise healthy babies. Researchers watched mother rats and their babies interact and found some interesting results. Some rat moms were very warm and nurturing with their rat babies—they licked them often to keep them clean and groomed. Other rat moms were not so cuddly. The long-term results of this variation were very significant. Rat babies who had been licked and groomed were more sociable and curious, better able to control stress responses, and even lived longer than babies who had not been cuddled. And, they were much better at finding their way through mazes!

Long-term studies in humans show that children receiving supportive parenting in their earliest years do better in school and life. Poverty brings stress and burdens to families on limited income, and researchers are seeing how poverty can negatively impact a child’s healthy upbringing. It is especially crucial for parents to be as loving and supportive as possible as the whole family moves through hardships. Early learning programs can promote strong family bonds for the low-income families they serve.
Newsbites: The Early Learning Movement
By Laurie Bain-Smith, MS

Obama’s Plan for Early Education

President Obama is calling on Congress to expand access to all children in America. To do this, he proposes investing resources into early learning, which for every dollar spent, returns $8-10 by increasing children’s chances of success in life, education and health. The plan includes early learning and childcare partnerships, and enhancing home visiting programs.

President Obama is committed to a new focus on early childhood education and development in the United States. Read the Fact Sheet to learn more about his proposals at www.whitehouse.gov.

Georgia Pre-K Program Study Shows Great Outcomes for Children

The state of Georgia participated in a research study done by the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina. The study was done on pre-K children in Georgia during the 2011-2012 school year and focused on learning, classroom observations and teacher surveys to assess classroom quality. The study showed that children who went through the program did better in every area (math, science, literacy, etc.) than their peers who did not attend. Bleak forecasts for the Georgia economy had led to cuts in their pre-k programs; but the research is being presented to the legislature to restore 180 class days per year. See the full article in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution: www.ajc.com.

Massachusetts Governor Proposes Universal Access to Early Education

Gov. Deval Patrick of Massachusetts has a plan: He wants to invest almost $350 million in early education during the next four years.

The early learning proposal is part of the Governor’s bigger plan to enhance education systems from preschool to higher education. Gov. Patrick believes that opportunity and economic growth depend on investing in young children to ready them for success in school and life, positively impacting the future of Massachusetts and beyond.

Many experts in the educational and economic fields are supporting Gov. Patrick’s proposal, including Nobel-Prize-winning economist James Heckman. Heckman says America’s best economic-stimulus package is early learning. Read more about the progressive stance of Massachusetts to lead the way to stronger education and economic systems, and a stronger community, on the Massachusetts state website www.mass.gov.
In a previous issue, we told you about our new program initiative, “Strong Voices for Strong Families.” Snohomish County ECEAP has always been a strong supporter of the parent’s voice. ECEAP and NSC EHS are building on their solid foundation of parent leadership by developing projects that will coach and encourage parents to get involved in advocating for their children.

In the area of legislative or community advocacy, we coordinated our annual ECEAP Advocacy Day in Olympia on March 13. Parents who had attended this event in past years told us they wanted more preparation to meet with their legislators. So we designed a special training for our site staff to coach parents to speak with legislators, and a PowerPoint presentation about Advocacy Day for parents to watch. Parents were provided information they needed and a worksheet, Talking With Your Legislator, which they could use to write down their messages to share at the meetings in Olympia.

ECEAP parents were also telling us they would like training in personal advocacy—to help them communicate more effectively with professionals like teachers, family support workers and health-care staff who work with their children. We designed worksheets for parents to help them think about what they want to say and feel better prepared for meetings with these professionals: Talking With Your ECEAP Teacher, Talking With Your Family Support Specialist and Talking With Your Health Care Provider.

EHS is also working on strategies to help parents get more involved in community advocacy. EHS parents were provided a handout that links them to a website where they may write a message to President Obama and Congress. In addition, parents were given the worksheet, Talking With Your Health Care Provider.

The Early Learning Division continues to develop training and coaching tools that will help parents communicate more effectively with the people who partner with them to build a better future for children.
Parent Leaders: Speaking Up for Children

On the previous page, we gave you an update about our new initiative, Strong Voices for Strong Families. Parents who advocate for their families and for others in need lead by example. In her letter to lawmakers, ECEAP parent and Washington State Association of Head Start and ECEAP (WSA) Parent Ambassador Charity Edwards shares how ECEAP has impacted her family and asks legislators for support...

My name is Charity Edwards, and I am a single mother from Everett, Washington. I have come to you today with a heart full of gratitude to testify why we must continue to support and increase our state’s ECEAP program.

Through working with ECEAP, not only have I grown as a mother by gaining invaluable parenting skills, I have grown as a woman. With self-confidence that I never dreamed I would have ever regained. I once again am a woman with a dream. Not only do my children know what they want to be when they grow up. I do, too!

Five years ago, I was a shy mother who was scared of what was to become of her family. Now I sit here in front of you today, fiercely taking one more step toward my amazing future. I am no longer that scared mother. I am a brave parent. Because of ECEAP, doors have opened for me. I remember when I was not sure I would ever be able to support my family let alone myself and honestly, I really did not think that I could. Arlington ECEAP of Snohomish County never accepted those notions; nor does Hawthorne ECEAP of Snohomish County, where my youngest currently attends.

ECEAP has not just encouraged me to do better — they expect it. As part of the ECEAP program, we work on goals. Not only goals for my child’s education, the whole family sets goals. We choose these goals as a family. We work on these goals as a family. We reap the rewards of carrying these goals out.

ECEAP is an invaluable program. The support that parents receive through the ECEAP staff empowers them to become stronger leaders, parents and families. As I watch, my daughters grow in their development of educational and social skills as well as health. I cannot help seeing that wonderful blessing we have received because of ECEAP. My younger daughter has a serious speech delay, and despite my efforts, our pediatrician would not refer her to a specialist. When we enrolled in ECEAP, they wouldn’t take no for an answer. We were referred to Children’s Hospital, and within a month were able to have surgery putting tubes in her ears, which completely cured her hearing problems. Her speech is now progressing at such a fast rate that we’ve had to rewrite her Individual Education Plan, and if she continues to improve at this rate we expect her to test out of services in K-12.

As you can see in just my family alone, ECEAP is a proven program that prepares kids for school, and helps families to support their children and ensure that they are healthy and ready for success.

It is now my turn to carry the torch and make our lawmakers see that it is now the time to see ECEAP grow into its full potential. There are 32,000 children in Washington who are eligible for ECEAP but not being served. We must make sure that these children receive services. We the parents of the present owe it, not only to parents past but those of the future to make sure that ECEAP will be available to all children that need it, at a level that ensures high quality and great outcomes for kids.

High expectations for success are always a part of ECEAP; we must expect no less out of our state. The outcomes we want are nothing short of an expectation that all Washington State’s children are ready for school by age five.

I entrust that you our lawmakers as well as parents will provide a way today to ensure that our state will be full of well-educated children. Please support HB1723, which will provide the services our children need to succeed in school and life.
More About Early Learning Division Services

North Snohomish County Early Head Start Services
for income-eligible children ages birth to three and pregnant mothers.

We offer...

Weekly Home Visits
Activities to strengthen the parent-child relationship
Developmental screenings / assessments
Family goal-planning

Socialization Groups
Fun learning activities for children and families
Opportunities for families to meet and support each other

Resource and Referrals
Health, nutrition and mental health
Parenting classes

For NSC EHS enrollment information, call 425-388-6439.

Snohomish County Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program Services
for income-eligible children ages four to five.

We offer...

Education
Language and literacy
Early science and math
Problem-solving
Social-emotional development

Family Support
Home visits and conferences
Parenting classes
Resource and referrals
Leadership and volunteer opportunities

Health and Nutrition
Developmental screenings
Well-balanced meals and snacks
Personal safety curriculum
Family health-care classes

For ECEAP enrollment information, call 425-388-7010.
A NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS

The Snohomish County Early Learning Newsletter is published three times a year by the Snohomish County Human Services Department. If you would like to suggest a topic of interest, submit an article, or share photographs of NSC EHS or ECEAP activities, contact Joe Varano at joe.varano@snoco.org.

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