Report Says Pre-K Saved from Drastic Cuts, in WA and Elsewhere

Local News

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Seattle, WA - Although the economic crisis has taken its toll on many state-funded services nationwide, most pre-kind
Pew Center on the States
. In Washington State, the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) has sustained only minor cut

Washington gets mixed reviews from
Pew
for its support of pre-kindergarten programs. The state funds ECEAP, its early learning program for poor children, mo

On the plus side, Washington has one of the top programs in the nation, according to *Pew*'s Pre-K Now campaign director, Marci Young.

"The quality is critical, and Washington state has done very well in protecting the quality of their program. We need to have teachers who have appropriate education and skill and training in early childhood education. We need to have a rigorous curriculum that's age-appropriate."

This year, the State Legislature created a working group to find ways to expand early learning to include more kids and to protect the funding. Gary Burris, who follows this issue as a senior policy associate for the *Economic Opportunity Institute*, says even in the current budget crisis, the ECEAP program has, for the most part, been spared.

"They also are looking at whether early childhood, pre-K, should be considered part of basic education, or be considered an entitlement. Those are very costly propositions; it wouldn't surprise me if the answer comes back 'no.' But just asking the question shows how much the legislature values early learning."

The *Pew* report says Washington is one of only 10 states that decreased funding for early learning for the coming year, although the drop was less than 1 percent. Twenty-six states managed to either protect or increase their pre-k funding, no matter which political party was in power. *Pew* calls that a clear message that early learning is seen as a valued strategy for education reform.

The report is available at www.preknow.org.