



Autumn Quarterly Newsletter

October-December 2026



What's New in Early Achievers?

By BrightSpark's Early Learning Services Department Director, Janine Meyers

There are several important updates and opportunities coming for Early Achievers providers!

More Time for ECE Education Requirements

DCYF has extended the deadline for providers to complete an **ECE Initial Certificate or approved equivalent** from August 1, 2026 to **August 1, 2030**. This gives providers additional time to plan for and complete education requirements while continuing to focus on children, families, and program quality.

New Attendance-Based Payment Rules Begin in October

Beginning with the **October 2026 month of service**, center providers will claim subsidy payments using the new attendance-based payment rules:

- **1–8 days attended:** up to 11 days or the full authorization, whichever is fewer
- **9–15 days attended:** up to 15 days or the full authorization, whichever is fewer
- **16+ days attended:** the full authorization may be claimed

Be sure to watch for additional information and guidance from DCYF.

Save the Date: December 8–10

A new **Mini-Professional Development Institute** is coming December 8–10! The focus will be on **Social Emotional Literacy**, including practical strategies for supporting children while also caring for ourselves as early learning professionals. More information will come soon!

Improved Support for Newly Enrolled Providers

Newly enrolled Early Achievers providers will also see **new and improved ways to access support**, helping providers connect sooner with coaching services, resources, learning opportunities, and guidance as they begin their Early Achievers journey.

There's a lot happening and we're excited to continue supporting providers as they strengthen quality, build skills, and care for the children and families in their communities.



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Fall 2026 Professional Development Opportunities

The Fall quarter is packed full of amazing Professional Development opportunities, including:

TRAINING TOPIC	STARS	DATE(S)	TIME	LOCATION	LANGUAGE	COST
The Growing Brain: Communication & Language Development	3	10/07/2026	5:30-8:30 PM	Zoom	English	\$30
Classroom Management	2	10/15/2026	6-8 PM	Zoom	English	\$20
Cultivando la Naturaleza Indígena del Niño, Reconociendo la Sociedad Colonizada en la que Vivimos	3	10/24/2026	9:30 AM - 12:30 PM	In-person BrightSpark Office in Renton	Spanish	\$30
Family Connections	2	11/03/2026	6:30-8:30 PM	Zoom	English	\$20
Building Classroom Community	2	11/07/2026	9-11 AM	Zoom	English	\$20
Anti-bias Education and Holidays	2	11/24/2026	6-8 PM	Zoom	English	\$20
The Power of Play	2	12/03/2026	1-3 PM	Zoom	English	\$20
Coping with Stress	2.5	12/08/2026	6:00-8:30 PM	Zoom	English	\$25

⚠ Sales Tax Update ⚠

Due to a change in the WA State tax code, BrightSpark is now required to charge a sales tax on all trainings and handbooks.

See our full list of classes and sign up using the QR code to the right!



Reminder - you must have a BrightSpark account to sign up for classes!

If you don't have an account, register using the QR code to the right.



Group Learning Experiences (GLE) for NEWLY Enrolled Providers

Group Learning Experiences support the progress of your Early Achievers timeline requirements. These GLE's will provide you with information about EA, technical supports, and topics on children's needs that will guide your quality improvement journey.

We are offering a consistent schedule and multiple times each week to hopefully fit with your schedule. Take a look at what's coming up this quarter and connect with your Early Learning Coach to sign up!

Save this zoom link and join any of the sessions listed below: <https://bit.ly/48M45Br>

October-December

Name	Date	Time
EA Orientation	Thursday – October 01, 2026	6:30 – 8:00pm
Chat with a coach/Coaching Services	Thursday – October 08, 2026	6:30 – 8:00pm
Environments/ Learning through Play	Thursday – October 15, 2026	6:30 – 8:00pm
WAC Reviews	Thursday – October 22, 2026	6:30 – 8:00pm
EA Orientation	Thursday – November 05, 2026	6:30 – 8:00pm
Chat with a coach/Coaching Services	Thursday – November 12, 2026	6:30 – 8:00pm
CECI/Program Profile	Thursday – November 19, 2026	6:30 – 8:00pm
EA Orientation	Thursday – December 03, 2026	6:30 – 8:00pm
Professional Development/Required Trainings	Thursday – December 10, 2026	6:30 – 8:00pm
Self Care/Preventing Burnout	Thursday – December 17, 2026	6:30 – 8:00pm

"The beautiful thing about learning is nobody can take it away from you." ~ B. B. King

Professional Learning Communities

BrightSpark invites you to increase your early learning knowledge by joining our Professional Learning Communities (PLC)! These PLC's will also provide you with an opportunity to connect with other early learning professionals. Collaborate, ask questions, and get resources! Historically these communities have been led in person, but the past few years they have been led virtually. We have raffle prizes at the end of each PLC - so make sure you attend!



These communities are exclusively for Early Achievers participants!

Which includes family Child Care providers, Child Care Center teachers, staff members, co-teachers, and teaching assistants.



Please note that these learning communities do not provide STARS hours

Keep an eye out for our monthly PLC emails. They detail all of the PLC's happening each month, along with their dates, times, topics, and Zoom links.

BrightSpark YouTube Channel & Monthly Tidbits

Have you seen our YouTube channel yet? BrightSpark's YouTube channel features short, practical videos to help child care providers enhance quality, strengthen family engagement, and support early learning best practices.

Scan the QR code to the right to start watching today!

Also, we have a monthly tidbit newsletter where our coaches put together pieces of information on various topics.

These topics include things like: science activities, art activities, equity and inclusion, social emotional skills, challenging behavior and much more!

Check out our latest tidbit below!



Back to School

<https://conta.cc/45IJrjD>

Summer Activities

<https://conta.cc/4xOdWgy>

Early Achievers Updates

<https://conta.cc/4svvKy1>

Comprehensive Services



HOLDING HOPE
Infant-Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation
Provided by Child Care Aware of Washington

Fall Transitions, Big Feelings & Strong Connections Supporting Infant & Toddler Mental Health This Season

Fall often brings change to early learning programs, new children, new routines, changing classrooms, and separation from familiar caregivers. For infants and toddlers, these transitions can bring big feelings, even when they do not yet have the words to express them.

Transitions Are Emotional Experiences

Children may show stress differently. An infant may become clingy, cry more, or have changes in sleeping or eating. A toddler may protest separation, have more tantrums, become quiet, or struggle with routines.

These behaviors are not simply “misbehavior”, they may be a child’s way of communicating:

“I need help feeling safe.”	“I miss my person.”
“Something feels different.”	“I have big feelings and don’t know what to do with them yet.”

Building Safety Through Connection

You can help children feel secure during transitions by:

- ◆ Creating predictable, gentle routines
- ◆ Offering comfort and a calm, consistent presence
- ✦ Naming feelings, even before children can use words themselves
- Giving slow-to-warm children time to observe and adjust
- Partnering with families to learn what helps their child feel safe
- ✦ Using play, books, and storytelling to explore emotions and fears

Emotional Literacy Starts Before Language

Infants and toddlers learn about emotions through the adults around them. Try putting words to what you notice:

“You’re sad Mommy said goodbye. I’m here with you.”
“That was frustrating when the tower fell down.”
“You’re feeling unsure. You can stay close until you’re ready.”
“That sound was scary. Let’s listen together.”

When we respond to children’s emotions with connection rather than correction, we help build the foundation for emotional regulation.

Fall Reflection

When a child is having a difficult moment, what might they be trying to communicate, and how can I help them feel safe, seen, and supported?

THRIVE Calendar

Get personalized support by joining a Group Learning Experience (GLE), meeting with a coach or attend a Office Hours focused on key topics—just use the Zoom URLs to join any of the offerings below.

Oct-Dec

Thrive Group	Topic	Date	Time	Meeting Link
Emergent Coaching	Connect with a Coach	Tue, Oct 13	1:30 – 2:30pm	https://bit.ly/emergent-gle
Business Coaching Supports	Connect with a Coach	Tue, Oct 13	6:00 – 7:30pm	https://bit.ly/bc-connect-with-a-coach
*SEL/EPP Coaching	Connect with a Coach	Wed, Oct 14	1:00 – 2:30pm	https://bit.ly/sel-epp
Rapid Response	**GLE	Wed, Oct 14	6:30 – 8:00pm	https://bit.ly/rrc-gle
Behavior Support Coaching	GLE	Thu, Oct 15	1:30 – 2:30pm	https://bit.ly/bsc-gle
Business Coaching Supports	GLE	Tue, Oct 27	6:00 – 7:30pm	https://bit.ly/bc-gle
Expulsion Prevention	GLE	Wed, Oct 28	1:00 – 2:30pm	https://bit.ly/ep-gle
Emergent Coaching	GLE	Tue, Nov 10	1:30 – 2:30pm	https://bit.ly/emergent-gle
Business Coaching Supports	Connect with a Coach	Tue, Nov 10	6:00 – 7:30pm	https://bit.ly/bc-connect-with-a-coach
Rapid Response	GLE	Wed, Nov 11	6:30 – 8:00pm	https://bit.ly/rrc-gle
Social Emotional Learning	GLE	Tue, Nov 17	1:00 – 2:30pm	https://bit.ly/sel-gle
Behavior Support Coaching	Connect with a Coach	Thu, Nov 19	1:30 – 2:30pm	https://bit.ly/bsc-gle
Emergent Coaching	Connect with a Coach	Tue, Dec 8	1:30 – 2:30pm	https://bit.ly/emergent-gle
Business Coaching Supports	Connect with a Coach	Tue, Dec 8	6:00 – 7:30pm	https://bit.ly/bc-connect-with-a-coach
Expulsion Prevention	GLE	Wed, Dec 9	1:00 – 2:30pm	https://bit.ly/3TIFVZK
Rapid Response	GLE	Wed, Dec 9	6:30 – 8:00pm	https://bit.ly/rrc-gle
Behavior Support Coaching	GLE	Thu, Dec 17	1:30 – 2:30pm	https://bit.ly/bsc-gle

*Social Emotional Learning & Expulsion Prevention Partnership

**Group Learning Experience

Provider Resources



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

Early Achievers Policy Updates

New policy changes are here! Updates to Component Appeals and Extension Requests are designed to make the process clearer and easier to navigate.

Starting Sept. 1, 2026

- Component Appeals: You'll have 45 days to request a review after a component is finalized.
- Quality Level Reviews: You'll have 14 days to request a review after a Quality Level is finalized.

Starting Dec. 1, 2026

- Programs need to have submitted a Request for Quality Recognition (ReQR) application in MERIT at least 12 months prior and completed Program Profile to show **active** participation, and
- Programs will have 60 calendar days prior to a program's due date to request an extension.

Look for updated policy documents and instructions on the Early Achievers webpages in the coming weeks.

If you have any questions, contact QRIS@dcyf.wa.gov

To view this newsletter online in English, Spanish or Somali, use the link below or scan the QR code.

Para ver este boletín en línea en inglés, español o somalí, use el siguiente enlace o escanee el código QR.

Si aad u aragto waraaqdaan warar oo ku baxaysa ama Soomaali, adeegso lifaaqa hoose ama iskaanka mari koodhka QR.



bit.ly/4srWM9c

Stay tuned for our Winter Newsletter!

"To appreciate the beauty of a snowflake, it is necessary to stand out in the cold" - Unknown

