

September 2003

Report on 2001-2003 Biennium Child Care Grants

This report on the 2001-2003 biennium child care grants is for the Board's information only. State law (RCW 28B.135) directed the Higher Education Coordinating Board to establish reporting requirements for the institutions that received child care grants. The goal of these requirements was two-fold: 1) Document and understand the activities supported by the grant, and 2) Identify lessons learned that other institutions can apply to improve their child care programs.

Background

The Legislature created the child care grant program to promote high-quality, accessible and affordable child care for students attending Washington's public four-year colleges and universities. Lawmakers earmarked \$150,000 in the 2001-2003 biennium for child care grants and directed the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) to distribute the funds through a competitive grant process. The Legislature provided a separate pool of funds for the state community and technical colleges.

The HECB established a review committee, comprised of HECB staff and representatives of the Washington Association for the Education of Young Children, the Child Care Coordinating Committee, and the Child Care Resource and Referral Network. The HECB adopted the committee's recommendations and awarded 2001-2003 grants to the following institutions:

- \$69,000 to Central Washington University
- \$42,065 to The Evergreen State College
- \$39,564 to Washington State University/Pullman

A total of \$75,000 was available for each fiscal year and no institution could receive more than half of the appropriated funds. State law (RCW 28B.135) directed the HECB to establish reporting requirements for the institutions that received grants. Following are summaries of each institution's final report and a list of lessons learned.

2001-2003 Biennium Child Care Grants: Activities and Lessons Learned

Central Washington University -- \$69,000

The Board authorized \$69,000 in grant funds (\$34,500 in FY 2002 and \$34,500 in FY 2003) to support the Central Washington University (CWU) proposal.

Goal 1: Implement an evening and weekend child care program

Central Washington University wanted to expand the services of the Early Childhood Learning Center to include evenings and weekends to better meet the needs of students. As a result of the grant, CWU began offering evening child care services from 5:15 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. This evening program, which began on January 3, 2002, included a meal at 6 p.m. and a snack at 8 p.m.

Participation in the evening program (Monday through Thursday) increased over the biennium.

- January through March 2002: 108 children from 14 families participated, with an average of 8.3 children per night.
- March 2003: 124 children from 26 families participated, with an average of 10.3 children per night.

Clearly, demand for evening services on Monday through Thursday was high. However, the demand for Friday evening and weekend hours did not materialize and services were not offered at these times.

Goal 2: Continue and improve the infant and toddler care program

CWU also wanted to continue and improve the infant and toddler program that it had initiated in June 2000. In fall 2002, this program was filled to capacity with 32 children. The grant allowed the infant and toddler program to continue and become programmatically and fiscally stable on a long-term basis. It also enabled the infant and toddler program to remain open during the summers of 2002 and 2003, allowing students to continue their studies during the summer term. It is important to note that very few child care alternatives are available in the Ellensburg area.

Goal 3: Provide these services at an affordable rate for student parents

CWU's final goal was to provide services at a rate that student parents could afford. The new evening program offered child care to parents at a cost of \$1 per hour, with a free dinner and snack to participating children. But for some financially needy families, \$1 per hour was still too expensive. As a result, the program provided a full waiver of child care charges to seven families, all single mothers, in the daytime infant and toddler care program and eight families in the new evening program.

Lessons Learned

CWU reported the following lessons learned:

1. Ensuring an accurate count for the evening meal was difficult. Parents did not always observe the 3 p.m. notification deadline, and sometimes did not show up after signing up.
2. Student workers in the evening seemed to be unavailable with short notice very frequently. Last minute studying and labs required the use of a long list of backup employees that could be called in at the last minute.
3. When the evening lead teacher is ill it creates quite a hardship since the limited number of other employees with the requisite training and experience have already worked a full day shift.
4. The use of theme weeks was entertaining and exciting for the children.
5. Smaller numbers of children in the evening opened up opportunities for many activities that cannot be done with larger groups (pajama parties, baking, cooking, etc.).
6. Contacts between child care center staff and other organizations like Head Start and campus committees help to develop acceptance and support of child care programs throughout the community.
7. Improving the physical appearance of the center and the playground can be helpful to leveraging community and campus support.
8. Having a clear understanding with parents about the procedure if there are serious problems is important. Parents signed a contract that stated DSHS and the Campus Police would be informed if parents were physically or emotionally unable to pick up a child. This situation did not occur, and the clear understanding of the process may have been a factor.
9. Based on overwhelming student response through surveys and comments, campus child care does make a tremendous difference in the lives of students. It allows students to focus on their educational goals, knowing that their children are safe and well cared for at the campus child care center.

The Evergreen State College -- \$42,065

The Board authorized \$42,065 in grant funds (\$31,522 in FY 2002 and \$10,543 in FY 2003) to support The Evergreen State College (TESC) proposal.

Goal 1: Enhance student teacher aide training

TESC's first goal was to enhance student teacher aide training by adding 11 hours of instruction for each employee. At TESC, there is no Early Childhood Education program so student teacher aides need some individualized instruction to prepare them for their work with children. As a result of the grant, TESC provided this training and reported improvement in communication and job performance by the student teacher aides.

Goal 2: Provide furnishings and equipment for a new child development center

TESC also wanted to buy essential furnishings and equipment for their expanded child care center, which is scheduled to open in fall 2003 and will double program capacity. TESC staff used the grant funds to buy outdoor play equipment and furnishings for the toddler and pre-school rooms and will move this equipment and furnishings to the new center.

Goal 3: Provide furnishings, equipment and educational materials for a parent support area

The third goal of the grant was to buy furnishings, books, videos, educational materials and other items for a parent training area. TESC staff believes that providing parent education is an integral function of the child care center and will promote healthy families for those parents who take advantage of the opportunity. Staff used the grant funds to buy furniture, supplies and educational materials and will move these items to the new center.

Lessons Learned

TESC staff reported that they learned the following lessons:

1. Parent accountability is important with loaned materials. A careful watch over educational materials that are checked out is important to ensure that they are returned. Program staff worked with the Students Account Office to send bills to some students to remind them to return overdue materials.
2. Training for student teacher aides is very important and beneficial. This is particularly true for Evergreen since there is no supply of students enrolled in early childhood education.
3. A college child care center, which provides some parent education, has a beneficial impact on families. Eighty percent of student parents are young, first-time parents and need a lot of information. Many of these parents have limited incomes and are trying to balance school, parenting and often jobs. Some parents are single, which adds additional pressures and challenges. When the child care center offers support and information, the students and their children benefit. National studies reveal that children who are enrolled in high-quality campus child development programs earn higher grades in school, are more likely to complete their education, are less likely to be kept back in school, and have a significantly lower need for special education and costly social services. They also have significantly higher earnings at age 27 and are more skillful in social situations.

Washington State University/Pullman – \$39,564

The Board authorized \$39,564 in grant funds (\$9,607 in FY 2002 and \$29,957 in FY 2003) to support the Washington State University (WSU) proposal.

Goal 1: Expand and enhance evening child care services

Washington State University's first goal was to expand and enhance the on-campus evening child care program, which allows parents to attend evening labs, classes and study groups. WSU's drop-in evening program is the only one available in the community. WSU charges \$4 per evening or \$1 per hour, which includes an evening snack.

As a result of the grant, WSU was able to serve more children of student parents, from a daily average of 10.4 in the spring 2002 semester to a daily average of 15.8 during the spring semester of 2003. WSU also modified the hours of its evening program to better meet the needs of students, opening at 5:30 p.m. instead of 6 p.m. Since the daytime program closed at 5:30 p.m., the new hours allowed children to transition directly into evening care without a visit from the parents. In special cases, children could stay until 10 p.m. with advance notification.

Goal 2: Continue the parent co-operative program

WSU also wanted to continue the parent cooperative program initiated in fiscal year 2001, which allows student parents to work at the Children's Center in exchange for reduced child care costs. Parents benefit financially and receive training and experience in a supervised child care setting. Over the course of the grant, 16 parents earned a total of \$8,578 toward their child care costs. .

Lessons Learned

WSU staff reported that they learned the following lessons:

1. Having the evening supervisor meet with parents individually at the beginning of each night built a level of trust and communication that was quite beneficial.. The parents often consulted with the evening supervisor on a wide variety of issues regarding their children.
2. If more than six or seven children attended the evening session, it helped to break them up into age groups. Caring for more than seven children, from infants to 12 year olds, is difficult.
3. Since evening care often uses the same space as daytime care, but with different teachers, it is important to pay attention to cleaning up at the end of the evening and putting away toys and equipment where the daytime teacher expects them to be.
4. Special events and visits from special people in the evening enhanced the program and improved attendance. University campuses have many special people to invite, including sports figures.
5. A simple dry erase board in the hallway is effective to notify parents and teachers of events and activities.
6. Security is a more important consideration in the evening with reduced numbers of staff on site. Restricted entry, a welcoming desk, hallway mirrors, increased lighting and the use of walkie-talkies have been effective.

7. Billing and collecting overdue charges is sometimes an issue because the cost is so low it takes some time before the university is willing to step in and help collect (arrears must exceed \$50).
8. Classified ads are not an effective advertising medium. Larger newspaper ads work but are expensive.
9. Having a qualified supervisor in the evening (other than the daytime supervisor) is important. This supervisor sometimes can be hired on an hourly basis.
10. The parent cooperative program seemed to be a better idea in concept than in reality. Many parents found that the demands of school and studying (and sometimes other work) did not leave enough time to participate. However, for those students who could participate, the earnings and the learning about children were quite beneficial.

Next Steps: 2003-2005 Biennium Child Care Grants

The Legislature appropriated another \$150,000 to the HECB for distribution during the 2003-2005 biennium. HECB staff sent a Request for Proposals to institutions on August 1, 2003 with a due date for proposals of October 17, 2003. HECB staff established these dates in consultation with the institutions. Institution staff wanted to have the RFP available as soon as possible so they could begin preparing the required documents before the beginning of the school year.

However, RCW 28B.135 requires that the receiving institution and student government association form a partnership and contribute an equal match to any proposed grant. Since some of the institutions do not start classes until late September, a due date of mid-October was necessary to allow time for consultation between the institutions and their respective student government associations.

A review committee will rank the proposals and make recommendations for the 2003-2005 biennium grants in late October. HECB staff will present these recommendations to the HECB for approval at its October 29 meeting.

Following Board approval, staff will prepare interagency agreements with the grantee institutions and then disburse funds. Institutions will be required to provide progress reports after each fiscal year of the biennium, which HECB staff will summarize and present to the Board.