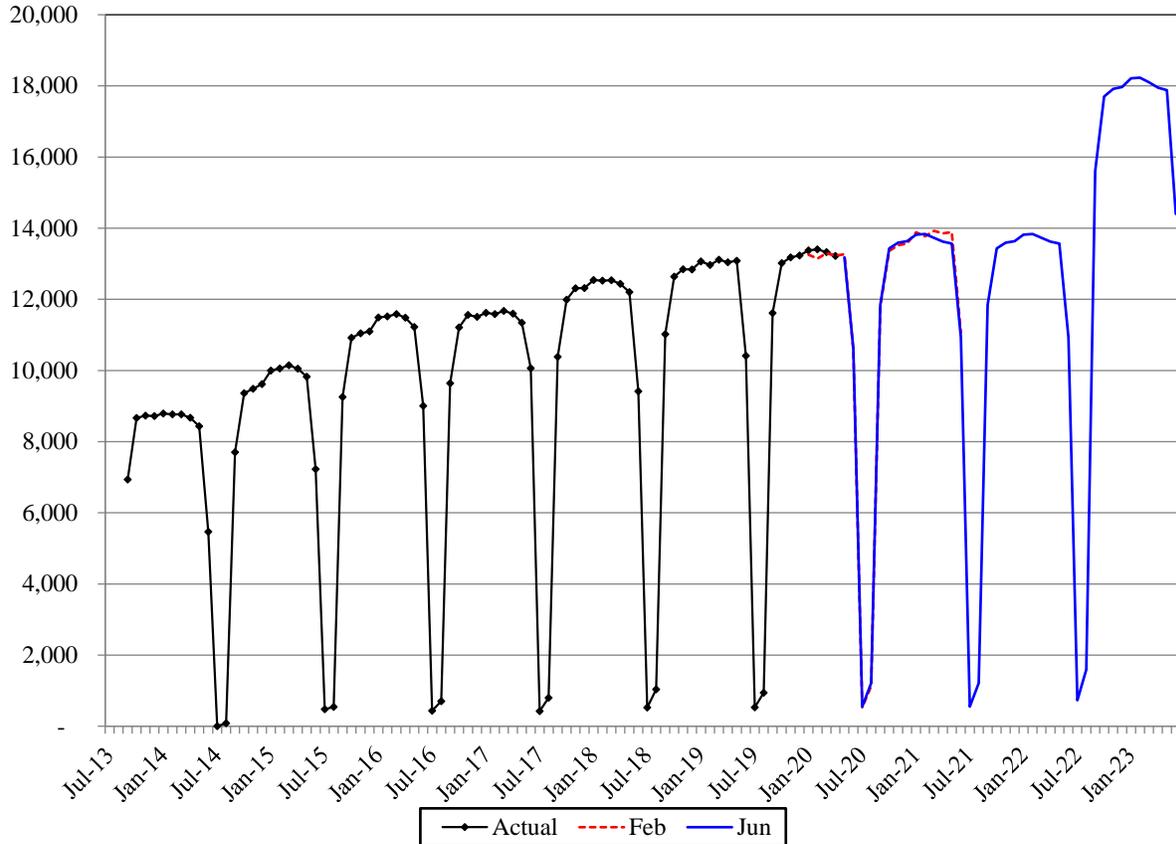


Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (Academic Year Enrollment)



The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) provides comprehensive nutrition, health, education, and family support services to eligible children between the ages of three and five years old who are not eligible for Kindergarten to enhance their opportunity for success in the common school system. ECEAP enrollment is forecast as total annual enrollment calculated as a ten-month average to more accurately reflect that the majority of enrollment occurs during the standard school year. Per statute, children who participate in Head Start are not eligible for ECEAP and, as a result, are not included in the forecast.

Forecast Comparisons (Academic Year Averages)

Fiscal Year	Feb-20 Forecast	Jun-20 Forecast	Feb to Jun Difference	Percent Difference
2020	12,928	12,964	36	0.3%
2021	13,430	13,376	-54	-0.4%
2022		13,376		
2023		17,628		

While ECEAP is scheduled to become an entitlement program during the 2022-23 school year, currently the level of enrollment is determined by the number of slots available through legislative appropriations. The number of funded slots has been rising steadily since the 2013-14 school year.

There are three types of ECEAP slots available to participants:

- **Partial Day:** A minimum of 2.5 hours per day over a nine-month period of time;
- **Full School Day:** 5.5 to 6.5 hours per day through the regular school year; and
- **Extended Day:** at least 10 hours per day for five days per week throughout a calendar year.

Tracking the Current Forecast

	Feb-20 Forecast	Actual	Variance	Percent Variance
Jan-20	13,256	13,375	119	0.9%
Feb-20	13,149	13,405	256	1.9%
Mar-20	13,295	13,330	35	0.3%
Apr-20	13,296	13,221	-75	-0.6%

Because the ECEAP caseload won't become an entitlement caseload until the 2022-23 school year, the increase of enrollment since the inception of this program has been driven by the number of slots funded through legislative appropriations. During the 2019 session, the legislature increased the total number of slots by 509 and 662 for FY 2020 and 2021, respectively.

ECEAP eligibility is primarily based on a child's age and family income. Prior to July 2018, children may also be eligible under rules adopted by the DEL (now DCYF) if the number of such children is no more than 10 percent of enrollment in the program. SSB 6419 of 2018 expanded the 10 percent limit to 25 percent. However, these additional children are not considered part of the state-funded entitlement caseload. Since September 2018, DCYF has been serving an average of about 340 such kids per month during the school year (September to June). These children are not counted in the ECEAP forecast.

The February 2020 forecast has been tracking well, so there is only limited update in the June 2020 forecast. However, the forecast horizon is extended to from June 2021 to June 2023. Because the ECEAP caseload is on schedule to become an entitlement caseload in July 2022, the ECEAP forecast has to make a transition from forecasting a capped caseload to forecasting an entitlement caseload starting in the same month.

We forecast the ECEAP caseload, after the program becomes an entitlement program, in the following steps:

1. Based on state age 3 and 4 population, and expected poverty rate, we estimate potential eligible 3- and 4-year-olds in the state.

2. We estimate the percentage of eligible kids who will participate in the ECEAP program through literature review. Combine this percentage and the number of potential eligible kids, we forecast the total number of ECEAP caseload after it becomes an entitlement program.
3. Projected number of kids who participate in Head Start program is removed from the forecasted caseload as Head Start program participants are not eligible for the ECEAP program.

The fact that ECEAP will become an entitlement program in FY 2023 leads to a noticeably higher forecast of caseloads during that fiscal year.

Academic Year Caseload Change				
	Academic Year	Caseload	Change from Prior Year	Percent Change
<i>Actual</i>	2014-15	9,356		
	2015-16	10,965	1,609	17.2%
	2016-17	11,294	329	3.0%
	2017-18	11,989	695	6.2%
	2018-19	12,660	671	5.6%
<i>Forecast</i>	2019-20	12,964	305	2.4%
	2020-21	13,376	412	3.2%
	2021-22	13,376	0	0.0%
	2022-23	17,628	4,252	31.8%

Eligible ECEAP Participants by Academic Year

Academic Year	2019-20	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Age 3 & 4 Population	188,405	189,239	186,039	181,707
Estimated ECEAP Eligible Population	31,357	31,630	31,284	30,653
Estimated ECEAP Eligible Participants	18,364	18,678	18,588	18,231
Eligibles as % of Age 3 & 4 Population	17%	17%	17%	17%
Participants as % of Eligible Population	59%	59%	59%	59%

During both the 2019-21 and the 2021-23 Biennium, it is anticipated that approximately 17 percent of the population aged 3 and 4 are eligible to participate in ECEAP. Of those who are eligible, it is estimated that roughly 59 percent will choose to participate.

The effect of rising state minimum wage is accounted for in the forecast. Per literature review, it is assumed that a 10% increase in minimum wage will result in a 1.5% reduction of the population eligible for the ECEAP program.

Risks to the Forecast

Risks to the ECEAP forecast are relatively low for FY 2021 and FY 2022, because total enrollment is limited to the number of slots available. The COVID-19 situation has not impacted ECEAP caseload much, nor is it expect to in the future. There are a couple of reasons: 1) ECEAP class size tends to be small, and 2) When necessary, most providers are able to utilize alternative delivery methods to service the eligible kids.

However, risks to the ECEAP forecast are high once the program becomes an entitlement in July 2022. The actual caseload will be sensitive to the patterns of participation and the number of those who are income eligible. The percentage of income eligible kids was estimated according to American Community Survey when the economy was performing well and unemployment rate was low. If in FY 2023, the economy is still depressed due to COVID-19, then the number of eligible kids could be correspondingly higher than anticipated in the forecast. Finally, the participation rate was estimated through literature review of other state's experience. Washington State's actual participation rate will likely to be different.