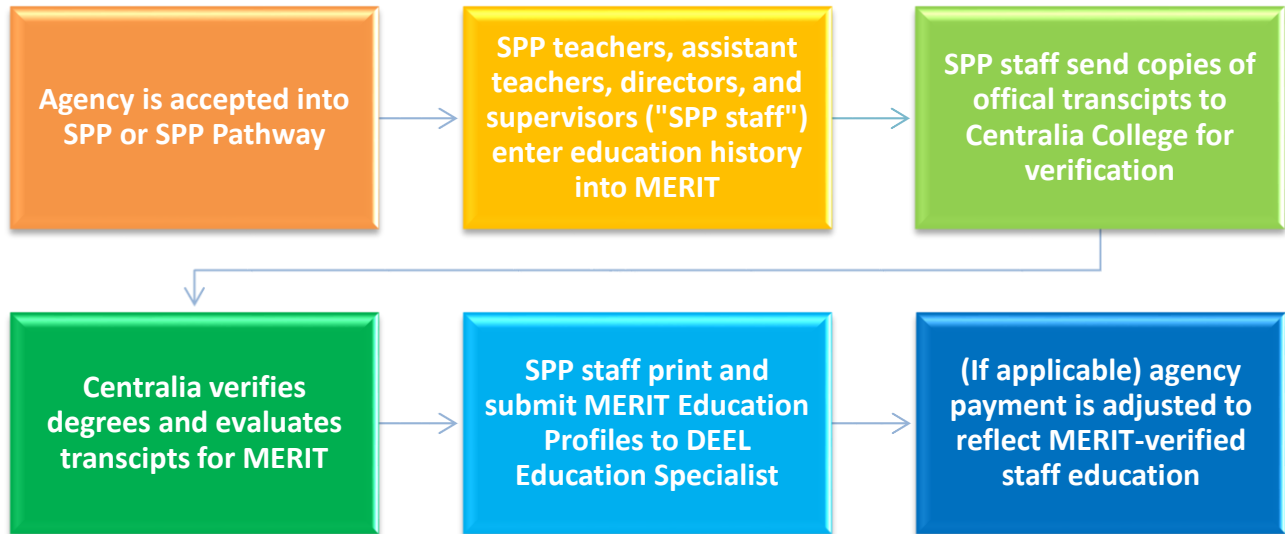




## SPP Agency Staff Education Verification

Criteria for Meeting SPP Education Standards

### Process Overview



MERIT education verification can take between 3 to 4 weeks once all documents are submitted to Centralia College. We advise that staff who have not yet entered their education into the MERIT system collect all the necessary transcripts and proof of education documentation prior to starting the process of entering their education information into the MERIT registry system. Once education information is entered, copies of the front and back of all education documents should be submitted immediately to Centralia College.



## Background

The Seattle Preschool Program (SPP) Action Plan requires all SPP staff members hired to work in an SPP classroom after an SPP provider agency's contract start date meet the following education standards:

- **Director and/or program supervisor:** Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education or a bachelor's degree with college-level coursework in Early Childhood Education. Expertise or coursework in educational leadership and business management is also required.
- **Lead teachers:** Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education or a bachelor's degree plus a Washington State Teaching Credential with a Preschool through Grade 3 (P-3) Endorsement.
- **Assistant teachers:** Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Education or two years of coursework in early childhood education that meets Washington State Core Competencies for Early Care and Educational Professionals.

The verification and determination of SPP staff education levels directly impact the amount of money preschool providers receive for their SPP classrooms.

## Purpose of this Document

The purpose of this document is:

1. To clarify what it means to "meet" or "exceed" SPP education standards.
2. To explain how SPP staff members get their education verified through the Washington State Department of Early Learning's MERIT system.
3. To specify the documentation required for agencies to receive credit for having staff who meet or exceed SPP education standards.



## Meeting SPP Education Standards

“MEETING” SPP Education Standards Table 1.

Position	Qualified Degree Major	Degrees Accepted Other than ECE Degree
SPP Director <b>or</b> SPP Program Supervisor	Bachelor’s degree or higher verified as “approved” in MERIT in: - Early childhood education - Early childhood and family studies	A bachelor’s degree or higher from an accredited college verified as “approved” in MERIT. <b>AND</b>
SPP Lead Teacher	- Human development with specialization in ECE - Children’s studies/childhood education	30 or more approved quarter credits in ECE verified through MERIT. Up to 10 may classified as ECE-School Age hybrid (“E/S”) credits.
Assistant Teacher	Associate’s degree or higher verified as “approved” in MERIT in: - Early childhood education - Early childhood and family studies - Human development with specialization in ECE - Children’s studies/childhood education	An associate’s degrees or higher from an accredited college verified as “approved” in MERIT. <b>AND</b> 20 or more approved quarter credits in ECE verified through MERIT. Up to 10 may be classified as ECE-School Age hybrid (“E/S”) credits.

## Exceeding Education Standards

Lead teachers who have a current Washington State Teaching Credential with endorsements in early childhood education, early childhood special education, P-3, or P-3 special education are classified as “exceeding” education standards.

- For more information on becoming a certified teacher in Washington State, please see: <http://www.k12.wa.us/certification/TeacherMain.aspx>.
- For information on adding an endorsement to your Washington State Teaching Certificate, please see: <http://www.k12.wa.us/certification/teacher/Endorsement.aspx>.



## Not Meeting SPP Education Standards

All SPP agencies must provide documentation of staff's education. By default, all staff will be classified as **"not meeting"** education standards until official documentation, as described in this policy, is received. SPP teachers who are classified as "not meeting" education standards are eligible for the SPP Scholars Tuition Support Program, which may provide up to \$10,000 per year for qualifying education costs. Please contact DEEL for more information on the **SPP Scholars Tuition Support Program**.

Staff hired prior to a program's SPP contract start date have four years from the classroom's contract start date to meet SPP standards. To support staff in meeting the DEEL education standards, DEEL provides higher education tuition assistance and professional development

SPP provider agencies are encouraged to contact their assigned DEEL Education Specialist with questions about hiring SPP staff after an agency's contract start date.

**Note:** SPP staff will remain classified as **"Not Meeting"** education requirements until the verification status in MERIT shows degrees and necessary ECE credits as "Approved" on the MERIT education application. If the verification status shows one of the following, staff will need to remedy their application status before DEEL will reclassify them as "Meeting" or "Exceeding" SPP education requirements.

**Not Submitted** – Go back to the MERIT Education Application page and make sure that you have clicked the "submit" button.

**Awaiting Documents** – Education Application is incomplete and you must submit the supporting education documents.

**Partial Documentation Received** – Not all of the documents required for verification were received. Submit missing documents to Centralia College to complete verification.

**\*Application Under Review** – Application is complete and will be processed. Contact MERIT if this status has been showing on the education record for more than 3-4 weeks.

**Denied** – Your application was not approved and you should have received an email explaining why the application was denied. Retain a copy of this email to submit to your SPP Education Specialist and SPP Coach for your professional development file.

**Withdrawn** – Documentation was not received within 90 days and Education Application is withdrawn. Resubmit your application and supporting documents. Retain a copy of this email and submit to your SPP Education Specialist and SPP Coach for your professional development file.



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\*DEEL will increase the agency's SPP payment if staff meet or exceed SPP education standards. Agencies are eligible for retroactive pay if they submit evidence after the staff member's application is approved that shows the date all documents were submitted to Centralia and the staff member's application came "Under Review."

Please contact your DEEL Education Specialist with any questions.

## Documenting Education Levels

**Beginning in the 2016-17 school year, the only documentation that will be accepted as evidence of staff education level is a printout of the staff member's approved MERIT education verification status.** DEEL reviews this evidence to determine the education status of each SPP staff member (see Table 1). All SPP staff are expected to go through the MERIT verification process as soon their employing agencies are approved as SPP sites. It is important to begin the education verification process as soon as possible to avoid any delays in contracting, or reductions in payments.

### Notes:

- If your ECE degree major is not listed in Table 1 above, MERIT education verifiers will review your transcripts in more detail to determine whether your major aligns with Washington State Core Competencies and ECE Credential Standards.
- For more information about the review of degrees, diplomas, and education earned outside of the United States, including how to find organizations that provide degree evaluation and translation services, see: <http://www.del.wa.gov/Professional/merit.aspx>.
- The "ECE Certificate" that is a part of the State's Stackable Certificate program is not the same as a Teaching Credential with P-3 endorsement. Teaching certificates and endorsements are granted by the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and are required for teaching in K-12 public schools.
- If your college transcripts were evaluated before 2015, they may need to be re-evaluated to categorize your education credits. If you have additional questions or concerns *after* your transcript has been evaluated in MERIT, please contact your DEEL Education Specialist.

## How to Get Education Verified Through MERIT

Early learning staff self-enter their credentials through MERIT's "My Education Profile." Centralia College, under contract with DEL, reviews and formally verifies and approves the submitted credentials. The average timeline for Centralia College to verify education is three to four weeks from the day that the college receives the application and copies of the supporting education documents.



Please follow Steps 1 – 4 below to verify education through MERIT.

### Step 1:

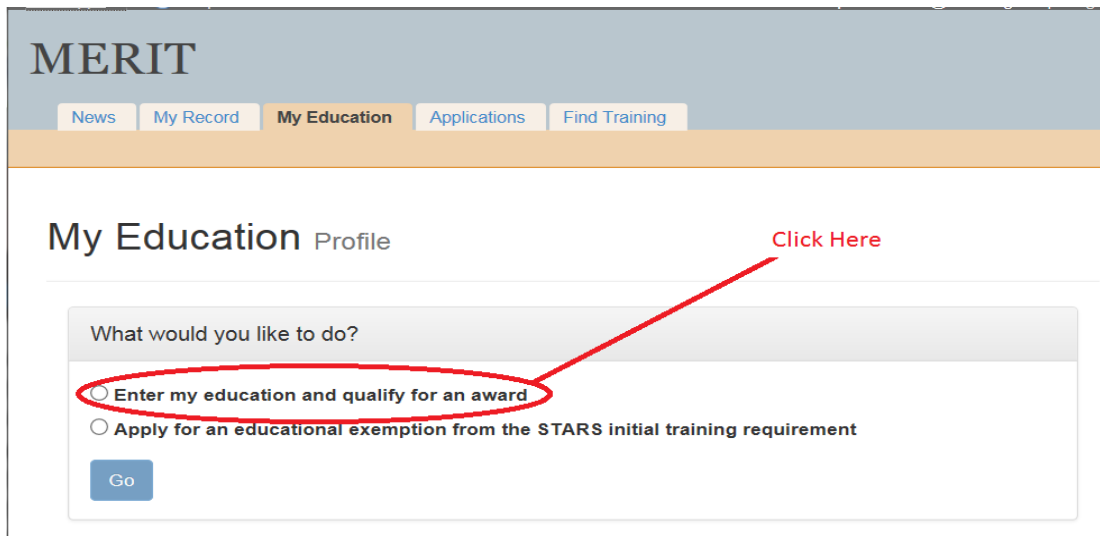
- Log in to MERIT, Washington’s Professional Development Registry, at:  
<http://www.del.wa.gov/Professional/merit.aspx>.
- If you do not have an account, sign up for one; your identification number (known as your “STARS” number) will be emailed to you.



### Step 2:

- Select the My Education tab and click on the button labeled “Enter my education and qualify for an award.”
- Enter all education for which you have documentation. You will submit this documentation to Centralia College for review and verification in Step 3.

**Note:** Be sure to check all the boxes and hit the submit button on the Education Application page. Failure to click Submit will cause a delay in submitting your electronic record for verification.





### Step 3:

- Download “Five Easy Steps to Completing Your Education Application” and follow steps 2-5: <http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/PD/docs/FiveEasyStepsEnglish.pdf>
- Have all official college or university transcripts mailed to you at your home.
- Copy your **official** transcripts—front and back. (*DEL accepts copies of official transcripts—you keep the originals.*)
- Write your STARS ID on the top of the copied official transcript(s), certificates, or diplomas, and on the outside of the envelope (next to your name).
- Place the copies of your transcripts and certificates into one envelope and mail it to:  
  
Centralia College CFS  
Attn: MERIT  
600 Centralia College Blvd.  
Centralia, WA 98531-4035



### Five Easy Steps to Completing Your Education Application

If you are an ECEAP Lead Teacher, ECEAP Assistant Teacher or ECEAP Family Support Staff, skip this page and use the next page.

**Step 1:** Fill out an education application in MERIT:

- Log into your MERIT account.
- Under the My Education tab, select *Enter my education and qualify for an award*, then fill out the education application.
- Follow steps 2–5 below to submit your supporting documents.

**Step 2:** Copy your transcripts. (We now accept copies of official transcripts—you keep the originals.)

- Have all college or university transcripts mailed to you at your home.
- Copy the **front and back** sides of the transcripts.
- If you earned your degree outside of the United States, you will need to submit a letter or statement of equivalency for your education to be verified.  
For more information about processing degrees, diplomas, and education earned outside of the United States, including how to find organizations that provide degree evaluation and translation services, [click here](#).

**Step 3:** Copy your certificates and high school diploma.

**Step 4:** Write your STARS ID on the top of the copied official transcript(s) and certificates or diplomas and also on the outside of the envelope (next to your name).

**Step 5:** Place the copies of your transcripts and certificates into one envelope and mail it to:

Centralia College CFS  
Attn: MERIT  
600 Centralia College Blvd.  
Centralia, WA 98531-4035

#### What does *status* mean?

You can check the progress of your education application and supporting documents in MERIT: Simply click on the My Education tab and look at the **Verification Status** column. This is what each status means:

**Not Submitted:** You have started an application in MERIT, but you have not submitted it.

**Awaiting Documents:** Your education application is not yet complete. Please submit supporting documents (official transcripts, copy of your high school diploma, etc.).

**Partial Documentation Received:** We have received some, but not all, of your certificates or transcripts for the education you entered in your MERIT application.

**Application under Review:** Your education application is complete and will be processed.

**Approved:** Your education application has been processed and approved.

**Denied:** Your education application was not approved. You will receive an email explaining why your education application was denied.

**Withdrawn:** Your education application was withdrawn, because we didn't receive your documents within 90 days of submission.

For more information, please contact MERIT Support Services:  
[merit@del.wa.gov](mailto:merit@del.wa.gov)  
1-866-482-4325



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**Note:** When completing your application, please confirm that you have checked all relevant boxes in the application form. A missed checkbox may stall the verification process.

## STEP 4:

- Log in to the “My Education” page in MERIT to check the verification status column. Status should be listed as “Approved.” If another status is listed, further action is needed.
- Print two copies of the My Education Profile, Education Application, and Summary of Education and Award.
- Keep a copy for your own records and submit one copy to your **DEEL Education Specialist**.

**Note:** If more than a month has passed since you mailed your transcripts to Centralia College and your verification status in MERIT has not changed, please contact Suzette Espinoza-Cruz at [Suzette.Espinoza-Cruz@seattle.gov](mailto:Suzette.Espinoza-Cruz@seattle.gov).

My Education Profile

What would you like to do?

Enter my education and qualify for an award

Apply for an educational exemption from the STARS initial training requirement

You have already fulfilled the initial training requirement. You have an education exemption status of completed.

Go

For more information about education in MERIT, please review the Education FAQs (<http://www.deel.wa.gov/publications/PDFdocs/Education%20verification%20-%20Education%20FAQ>).

My Diplomas, Degrees, Colleges Attended

School Name	Degree or Diploma Major	Month Received	Year Received	ECE Credits	School-Age Credits	ECE / School-Age Credits	Verification Status
Shoreline Community College	I'm not working on a degree			15	0	0	Approved
Edmonds Community College	I'm not working on a degree			29	0	0	Approved
Rainier Beach High School	High School Diploma		1995	0	0	0	Approved
Seattle Central Community College	I'm not working on a degree			9	0	0	Approved

Find Verification Status here

Education Application

Managed Education and Registry Information Tool (MERIT)  
 MERIT PO Box 40870-Olympia, WA 98504  
 MERIT Support: merit@deel.wa.gov or (360) 482-4335  
 Si desea información en Español, llame al (360) 482-4323

Washington State Department of Early Learning

Application

Personal Information

Name:  
 Primary Language:  
 Secondary Language:  
 ECE/SA STARS ID:

Education Information

Diplomas, Degrees, Colleges Attended

School Name	Degree or Diploma	Major	Minor	Year Received	Verification Status
Shoreline Community College	I'm not working on a degree	Education			Approved
Edmonds Community College	I'm not working on a degree	Early Childhood Education			Approved
Rainier Beach High School	High School Diploma			1995	Approved
Seattle Central Community College	I'm not working on a degree	Other			Approved
North Seattle College	Associate's	General Studies			Approved

College Credits for ECE/SA Staff Qualifications

School Name	Course Code	Semester/Quarter	Year Received	Verification Status
Edmonds Community College	LCL 115	Winter	2016	Approved
Edmonds Community College	ECE 134	Spring	2016	Approved
Edmonds Community College	ECE 143	Spring	2016	Approved
Edmonds Community College	ECE 238	Spring	2016	Approved
Edmonds Community College	ECE 218	Fall	2016	Approved
Edmonds Community College	ece 208	Fall	2016	Approved
Edmonds Community College	ECE 216	Fall	2016	Approved





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## Resources:

- Washington Department of Early Learning Managed Education Registry Tool (MERIT):  
<http://www.del.wa.gov/Professional/merit.aspx>
- WA DEL: About Verification:  
<http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/PD/docs/Education%20verification%20-%20About%20Education%20Verification.pdf>
- ECEAP 2014-2015 Performance Standards, Section C:  
[http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/eceap/docs/ECEAP\\_PerformanceStandards.pdf](http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/eceap/docs/ECEAP_PerformanceStandards.pdf)
- Seattle Preschool Program Plan: Demonstration Phase 2015-2018:  
<http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/OFE/AboutTheLevy/EarlyLearning/SPP%20Program%20Plan%202015-16%20Final.corrected.pdf>
- Washington State Career Lattice: <http://www.del.wa.gov/Professional/Default.aspx>
- Washington State Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals:  
<http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/partnerships/docs/CoreCompetencies.pdf>
- Washington State Related Degree and Approved ECE Credit Description:  
[http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/PD/docs/ECE\\_SA\\_related\\_degrees.pdf](http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/PD/docs/ECE_SA_related_degrees.pdf)