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Recommendations to Boost Program Outcomes and Efficiency

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Introduction and Summary

Across America parents are increasingly relying on early childhood programs for services far beyond simply babysitting. Most are seeking early care settings offering developmental activities that help young children build strong cognitive, motor, social, and emotional skills.

There is a mounting body of research demonstrating the impact of early learning on lifelong success. The quality of early child care is the most consistent predictor of young children's behavior, according to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Childcare Research Network.[1] Children who receive high-quality child care have better developmental outcomes in early childhood, including better cognitive and linguistic development.[2] In short, experiences early in life can have a tremendous impact on an individual's lifetime trajectory.

Participation in high-quality early learning programs packs an impressive economic punch, as well. The economic return on investment from early learning programs is higher than from remedial interventions later in life, economists find.[3] Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman writes:

> *The returns to human capital investments are greatest for the young for two reasons: a) younger persons have a longer horizon over which to recoup the fruits of their investments, and b) skill begets skills.*[4]

In the highly competitive globalized economy, American college students are already outnumbered by their Chinese and Indian counterparts.[5] In 2011 about two-thirds of eighth graders tested below proficient in both math and reading on National Assessment of Educational Progress assessments. These numbers hold steady for graduating seniors as well. Only 25 percent of the 2011 graduating class met all four ACT college readiness benchmarks, according to figures released by the college admissions testing organization.[6] Of those students who do go on to college, only about half earn a bachelor's degree within six years.[7] These poor student outcomes are most pronounced among poorer children.

The Ounce of Prevention Fund—a public-private partnership that invests in the healthy development of at-risk infants, toddlers, and preschoolers and their families—summarizes a broad field of research showing that, without high-quality early childhood intervention, an at-risk child is:

- 25 percent more likely to drop out of school
- 40 percent more likely to become a teen parent
- 50 percent more likely to be placed in special education
- 60 percent more likely to never attend college
- 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime[8]

Heckman's research finds, however, that at-risk children who participate in intensive pre-education pilot programs do better in school, are more likely to graduate from high school and attend college, and are ultimately more likely to transition to successful adult lives.[9]

Without question, the United States faces many urgent educational and economic challenges. Chief among them is the need to create a high-quality early learning system that reaches far more children than the current system permits.

In this report we describe how conflicting expectations, misaligned system requirements, and programmatic firewalls on the federal level create formidable barriers to the operation of a well-coordinated system of high-quality early childhood education for children from birth to 5 years old. This lack of coordination means that our federal investments are neither operating as efficiently nor as effectively as possible. As a result we are missing the opportunity to increase the number of young children who enter kindergarten with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for school and lifelong success.

Currently, there are four federal funding streams—Head Start, the Child Care Development Block Grant, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act—investing approximately $13 billion annually in early childhood programs focused on boosting early learning outcomes. Most of the resources from these funding streams, which we describe later in this report, are targeted to at-risk children. But despite laudable intentions, challenges naturally arise when multiple federal agencies are working relatively independently of one another in pursuit of a common goal.

The good news is that over the past 12 years progress has been made to address some of the synchronization issues among the various programs. The Obama administration's efforts to coordinate federal early childhood education investments and focus more resources on what works demonstrates that policymakers understand the need to create a well-functioning early childhood education system. The formation of an interagency board between the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services, along with the Education Department's creation of both the Office of Early Learning and the Early Learning Challenge, which is a groundbreaking joint interdepartmental effort, are examples of this much-needed cooperation.[10]

In addition, the Obama administration has made significant progress in improving the quality of all of the programs. Within the Head Start program, for example, several recent developments are all welcome and important measures to boost early childhood program quality. These include the development and release of the Head Start Early Learning Framework, which provides a description of the developmental building blocks most important for a child's school and long-term development; efforts to improve Head Start provider quality, including the recently announced requalification competition for more than 130 existing Head Start grantees; and the new Pathways and Partnerships for Child Care Excellence.[11]

President Barack Obama's efforts build on sound measures implemented by former President George W. Bush, who directed the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services to support the creation of state-level Early Learning Guidelines. The Bush administration also formed the interagency Early Childhood-Head Start Task Force to work with states to improve program quality and coordination under the Good Start, Grow Smart Initiative.[12]

This bipartisan history of actions to address early childhood program quality and child school readiness outcomes suggests that there should be widespread support for additional action from the executive branch to improve consistency and coherence among federally funded early childhood programs.

The purpose of this paper is not to exhaustively identify the problems with federally funded early childhood programs. Rather, we focus on specific challenges and propose reforms that can be implemented within the context of current law and that build on the work of the Obama and Bush administrations. To help identify these essential reforms to federal early childhood education programs, the Center

for American Progress assembled a number of highly respected experts in the early childhood education field, who are listed in the front of this report.

In this paper we set forth 10 federal reforms that we believe will significantly advance the evolution of our federally supported early childhood education system, improve child outcomes, and ensure system accountability, as well as operational consistency and greater efficiency. Specifically, we recommend that the federal government:

1. Partner with states to align early learning standards that define expectations for all early learning programs

2. Invest with states to build assessments and assessment systems that demonstrate standards are being met

3. Increase consistency, quality, and systemwide access to federally procured and federally required, locally procured technical assistance

4. Implement a more consistent, state-of-the-art approach to high-quality professional development for existing staff and help determine the optimal set of skills and knowledge that should be imparted in preparation programs for early childhood program staff

5. Improve early childhood data and harmonize reporting requirements to help increase knowledge of inputs and outcomes

6. Promote the replication of successful strategies to build continuity from early childhood programs to kindergarten and continue to remove data and other bureaucratic barriers to successful continuity systems

7. Build more federal, state, and local capacity to meet the increasing demand for culturally and linguistically appropriate services for children who are dual-language learners

8. Close the gaps in universal developmental screening across all federally supported early learning or care programs

9. Require expanded early learning program participation as a means of boosting performance of failing elementary schools

10. Establish a permanent office that creates a common infrastructure to advance system reforms for both the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education

While it is clear that federal funds provide early learning opportunities to a large number of America's poorest children, it is also clear that additional federal and state financing is needed to further expand access to high-quality early learning programs to even more children. Not only must we expand access to early learning, we must also improve the quality of the current system in order to vastly improve the overall impact of our national investment in early education.

Fortunately, the keys to boosting program quality, efficiency, and student results rest with federal officials who already have sufficient legislative authority to continue to streamline, innovate, and improve the early learning services in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Background

In 1965 the U.S. Department of Education started tracking enrollment in public and private school early childhood centers for 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds.[13] Back then only about 3.4 million American children aged 3 to 5 were enrolled in center-based child care or early learning programs. In the ensuing nearly half-century, enrollment in these programs has grown from 27 percent of America's 3-to-5-year olds in 1965 to 63 percent of these children in 2009, in addition to the 15 percent of children 2 years old and younger in these programs in 2009.[14]

We know that children from upper-middle-class and high-income families are much more likely to start school ready to learn. Unfortunately, that isn't always true for children from poor families. In 2007 less than 25 percent of poor children between the ages of 3 and 6 were able to recognize all 26 letters of the alphabet, compared to 35 percent of their peers living above the federal government's poverty threshold, which was $22,314 (total yearly income) for a family of four in 2010. Only half of poor young children were able to count to 20 or higher compared to 67 percent of young children living above poverty. In addition, slightly less than half of poor children were able to write their names compared to 64 percent of children living above the poverty line.[15]

Although federal and state funding enable thousands of lower-income children to enroll in early childhood programs, inconsistent expectations and requirements associated with preparing children for early school success are embedded in the federal funding streams supporting these programs. As a consequence, the quality and results of these programs varies considerably.

The major federal funding sources

Child care programs are funded with a combination of state and federal funds, with federal dollars comprising the lion's share of funding. Head Start is the largest federal funding stream for early learning programs, with a budget of $7.6 billion in fiscal year 2011. Head Start was created with the explicit purpose of funding early care programs that would improve the developmental skills of at-risk children under the age of 5. Head Start funding covered the cost of these services for 904,153 children in fiscal year 2009.[16]

The next-largest portion of federal funds—$5 billion in fiscal year 2011—is provided under the Child Care Development Block Grant. Created in 1996 the child care block grant program provides access to affordable child care for low-income working families and over the years has increased its focus on program quality and school readiness. Of all the federal programs, the development block grant reaches the largest number of children, offering subsidized partial- or full-day care for children up to 14 years old. In fiscal year 2010 it served just shy of 1.7 million children.[17]

In addition, federal funds provided under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act administered by the Department of Education can be used to pay for full- or partial-day early learning programs offered by or contracted for by school districts. Typically these federal funds are invested in what are known as pre-K programs

FIGURE 1

Public investments in early learning programs reached $13.4 billion

Federal and state funding for early learning programs in fiscal year 2011

Federal and state programs	FY 2011
Direct expenditures	
Head Start/Early Head Start	$7.6 billion
Child Care Development Block Grant	$5 billion
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities	$438.5 million
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: Preschool grants for children with disabilities	$373.3 million
Total direct federal expenditures	$13.4 billion
Direct state expenditures (2010)	$5.4 billion
Indirect expenditures	
Federal Tax Credits for Child and Dependent Care (2009)	$3.3 billion
State Tax Credits for Child and Dependent Care	NA

Sources: Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center, Fiscal Year 2011 Head Start Funding Guidance (Department of Health and Human Services, 2011); Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, Child Care and Development Fund, October 2011 (Department of Health and Human Services, 2011); U.S. Department of Education, Guide to U.S. Department of Education Programs, Fiscal Year 2011 (2011). National Institute for Early Education Research, "The State of Preschool 2011" (2011), available at http://nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/2011yearbook.pdf; Tax Policy Center, "Dependent Care Tax Credit: Number of Families and Amount of Credit, 1976-2009" (Washington: Urban Institute and Brookings Institution, 2011), available at http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/taxfacts/displayafact.cfm?Docid=180.

serving children in the year or two prior to entry in kindergarten. Use of these funds for early childhood education is somewhat limited, given the high need for these funds to support the educational needs of children in the K–12 system. In 2010, 40 states and the District of Columbia invested some amount of Elementary and Secondary Education Act funds in pre-K programs.[18] To augment federal funds the states spent approximately $5.4 billion in support of pre-K access in 2010.[19]

The other key early learning support funding stream is administered by the Department of Education with funds provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. This act provides funds to address the early learning needs of children under 5 years old with developmental delays through two provisions known as Part B 619 and Part C. These funds paid for early intervention for slightly more than 1 million young children in 2010.[20]

Throughout this paper, the phrase "early learning program" will refer to child care programs supported with state and federal funds, Head Start, and pre-K or other programs funded specifically for the purpose of improving school readiness skills.

In addition to public investment, parents are spending nearly $36 billion per year for private care or co-payments for subsidized early learning programs.[21] Some families receive a federal or state tax credit to relieve the burden for a portion of these costs. Federal tax credits for child and dependent care give families a credit against federal taxes owed equal to a portion of their child care expenses. About 6.6 million households had their taxes reduced due to the availability of this federal tax credit in 2008, at a cost to the U.S Treasury Department of approximately $3.5 billion. The structure of the credit and the fact that it is not refundable means 75 percent of families who benefit from the credit are those earning more than $40,000 a year. As a result, while it's extremely helpful for middle-class families, the credit has a very limited impact on improving access to early learning programs for low-income children. In addition, 28 states provide a tax break for parents incurring child care expenses that benefit an estimated 2.9 million families.[22] Among the states with this credit, 13 have refundable child care tax credits that increase the reach of the credits to lower-income families.[23]

The ground level impact of system disconnects: The Harlem Children's Zone experience

While there are many providers across the county struggling to harmonize federal and state requirements, we selected one provider—the Harlem Children's Zone in New York City—to serve as our case study to illustrate the challenges providers face when meeting the needs of young children served by different early childhood funding streams.

We chose the Harlem Children's Zone because it is one of the most promising education and community reform efforts in the nation. Even with its many successes, it too faces challenges in complying with what can be conflicting and duplicative federal and state systems. The Children's Zone experience is typical of that of many early childhood initiatives, as it serves children using more than one federal or state funding stream.

The Harlem Children's Zone, with headquarters on the corner of 125th Street and Madison Avenue, is an innovative and holistic 97-block effort that aims not only to educate thousands of children in Harlem but also to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.[24] Geoffrey Canada, president and CEO of the Children's Zone, in considering his organization's early childhood efforts points out that, "Early childhood education is not the ceiling; it's the floor of what poor children need." Expanding further on his statement, Canada notes that the Children's Zone approach is to provide children with the tools they need to succeed beginning at birth until entering college. He says the goal is to weave a tightly interlocking safety net of educational and social services supports to meet the myriad needs of children and their families.

"Why is it that you think that if you work with a kid for one year and you send them to a terrible school for 12, that that one year is going to be more important than those 12?" asks Canada. "It just doesn't make sense. I think everybody has been trying to prove that if you do this [early childhood education], you need not do all these other things, and I fundamentally don't believe that."

In its early childhood education programs, the Harlem Children's Zone grapples with a problem that is familiar to those who seek to educate preschoolers nationwide—the challenge of complying with different sets of requirements for programs receiving money from federal and state sources. Funding for the Children's Zone's early childhood education efforts comes through New York state's universal pre-K program and through the federal Head Start program.

Canada and his staff identify several areas where differences in state and federal requirements have been particularly onerous, including professional development and program financing. As Canada says, "It costs us an awful lot of money to provide two different sets of audit materials" for separate Head Start and universal pre-K programs. That's money and time that could be better spent educating children.

The many laurels heaped on the Harlem Children's Zone can obscure the magnitude of the difficulties they and their students face. When preschoolers arrive for the Harlem Gems—the prekindergarten program offered by the Children's Zone and funded by the state of New York and Head Start—around 18 percent of 4-year olds score as delayed or very delayed on the Bracken Basic Concept Scale, a rigorous, nationally normed learning assessment.

"Occasionally, some kids don't even register on the Bracken," says Kate Shoemaker, the Zone's director of policy and special projects. "That's the degree of challenge we're facing."

Because of the Children's Zone's public-private financial structure, it is able to keep as many administrative burdens as possible in the back offices at headquarters and out of their classrooms. Shana Brodnax, senior manager with the Children's Zone, is the organization's firewall between government bureaucracy and their programs. "It's my job to make sure that the programs don't feel the pressure and strain" of reporting requirements, she says. "What I refuse to do is see it impact the kids. But frankly, I have that luxury."

The Children's Zone's unique public-private financial structure enables them to keep many administrative burdens in the back offices at headquarters and out of their classrooms. But even the flexibility that comes with private and philanthropic dollars isn't always enough to work around some major bureaucratic hurdles.

Take, for instance, the Children's Zone's concurrent efforts to set up a new Head Start program and construct a new building to house their administrative offices and one of their charter schools. They began renting a three-classroom storefront on West 117th Street for the new Head Start program in spring 2001. A few months later they held a groundbreaking ceremony for land that would eventually be the site of a glistening new $43 million headquarters and charter school building.

Over the next three years, six stories of glass and concrete were designed and built in Manhattan, and the doors of the new building opened in December 2004. But just a few blocks south, the new Head Start remained mired in red tape. The Head Start space would not open until the beginning of the 2005-06 school year.

This example is not meant to suggest that the government has no role in ensuring that classrooms are well-designed and safe. But if a public school can be built from the ground up more quickly than a Head Start classroom space can be approved, there are likely opportunities for significant streamlining at the federal, state, and local levels that should be encouraged and adopted.

Improving federal efforts to boost child early learning skills

In this paper we review the key challenges that undermine the performance and efficiency of federal early childhood program investments and offer specific recommendations for how these challenges can and should be addressed. The challenges fall into eight major program areas:

- Standards
- Assessments
- Data tracking and reporting
- Program evaluation
- Professional development and technical assistance
- Services to children with special needs
- Services to dual-language learners
- Continuity and progress of the educational experience

In each of these areas, we describe the impact of these challenges on the efficiency and effectiveness of early learning programs and offer specific solutions.

Standards

Challenge: The content of what young children can and should learn is inconsistent across federal and state programs

Learning and development standards are the foundation of any education system. In the early childhood sector, two types of standards define programs—program standards and content standards. The good news is that all 50 states have both program and content standards. The bad news is that with so many different standards, it is difficult to evaluate the quality or impact of programs across states.

Program standards guide how early childhood programs operate with respect to staffing patterns and qualifications, classroom equipment requirements, assessment protocols, and other operational matters that pertain to a child's learning and development.

Content standards outline what each child can and should learn. Increasingly, across all states the breadth of content standards covers the full range of child learning, from motor and cognitive skills to social, emotional, and communication skills. Because content standards set the bar for what knowledge should be gained in early learning programs, getting these standard right is crucial to ensuring the desired outcome of federal investments in early learning programs.

Currently, federal law encourages each state to have content standards, known as early learning standards, that at a minimum define for teachers what young children (ages 0 to 5 years) in federally funded child care programs should learn.[25] Since each state and the District of Columbia sets its standards independently, there could be as many as 51 different versions of early learning standards. In addition, the Head Start program, which operates in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, has its own separate set of content standards, known as the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.

A 2005 review of the content standards in 38 states found that, "There is not only wide variation between dimensions in the number of standards items, but also vast differences among the states in the degree to which they have included the five dimensions in their standards."[26] The 2005 report also shows that even where states have covered the same domains of learning, the content within the domain and the extent to which the domain is emphasized varies widely across the states.

Five years later, there is little evidence of progress toward consistency among the states. Research released by Child Trends in 2010 found:

> *There is variation across states with respect to the specific expectations of young children's skills and abilities in each of the developmental areas. For example, some states apply equal weight to indicators of ability across developmental areas whereas other states include more indicators related to math and literacy in the Early Learning Guidelines than indicators of other developmental areas such as social-emotional development, physical health and development, and approaches to learning.*[27]

Along with the general differences in content standards, the federal government and states vary widely when it comes to standards for young children who have English as their second language.[28]

The plethora of content standards could very well mean that in some states or in some programs, the content standards are set too low and, as a result, stunt early learning. Additionally, the lack of consistency drives up program costs and undermines program effectiveness in a number of ways, including:

Lack of consistency drives up program costs and undermines program effectiveness.

- Early learning programs receiving multiple funding streams have to spend resources working with curricula specialists to align what's going in their classrooms to comply with monitoring and reporting requirements that are pegged to a disparate set of program and content standards.

- Researchers cannot readily review program quality and the impact of specific interventions because content standards are inconsistent across programs.

- Staff development and technical assistance has to be delivered in program-specific ways as dictated by their funding streams, which means that agencies have to tailor training of early learning staff by funding stream rather than offer one training and support system for all early learning program personnel.

- Child learning is interrupted and disconnected when children move or age because the standards are not aligned across the 0 to 5 years old grades and because standards differ by funding stream. As a result, children who move from one pre-K program to another may be taught redundant content or may miss critical content altogether.

- Staff cannot easily move between different early childhood settings and states because they are likely to lack familiarity with content standards in new settings, or hiring them requires additional staff development expenses to train them on the new standards.

- Parents are not able to get a clear understanding of what their young child can and should learn because there isn't a consistent programmatic understanding of where the bar should be.

Recommendation: The federal government should partner with states to align early learning and development standards that define expectations for all early learning programs.

The federal government can play a leadership role by investing a modest amount of existing technical assistance resources to help states ensure the rigor and alignment of their early learning content and program standards. This would involve partnering with states to undertake an in-depth review of the state's early learning content and program standards and an in-depth comparison of the standards to those of Head Start and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act parts B 619 and C. This review should identify best practices and suggest revisions that would encourage a common approach that could be adopted by states.

Based on this review, the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services should direct their technical assistance providers to support state-led efforts to harmonize and align both content and program standards across federal and state programs that serve children up to 5 years of age.

Moreover, given the recent adoption by 45 states of the rigorous Common Core K-12 content standards—evidence-based standards for quality math and English instruction—the federal government should seize the momentum to help states connect early childhood content standards to K–12 content standards. Doing so would ensure more children who transition from early learning programs to kindergarten are prepared. In addition, it could result in the adoption of the broader domains of development in early learning standards such as the social and emotional learning domains as part of the K–12 standards for learning through third grade.[29] We commend the U.S. Department of Education's Strategic Plan for 2011–2014 for recognizing these essential elements as part and parcel of an early learning assessment system.[30]

Assessments

Challenge: Assessments are not aligned to standards or accountability systems

The challenges in assessment mirror the standards challenge. Here, too, there are two types of assessments to consider:

- Assessments of the developmental progress of children
- Measures of overall program performance aimed at improving the quality of early childhood programs

With respect to child-level assessments, young children are not able to take a pen and pencil test to demonstrate their degree of learning or the efficacy of instruction. Even if they could, the cognitive skills that would be measured comprise only a few of the many basic building blocks of skills young children must develop. Motor skills, communication skills, social and emotional skills, and the ability to learn from trial and error are just a few examples of the essential learning domains young children must develop in order to succeed in school.

The federal Head Start bureau codified 11 learning domains through guidelines that help providers structure their programs to appropriately develop the desired skills. These domains are the backbone of the Head Start Child Development Early Learning Framework. Assessing learning across all of the domains would be difficult even if all young children's brains were identical. The groundbreaking research conducted in "From Neurons to Neighborhoods" makes it clear that children learn a basket of basic skills in their preschool years, but not all children acquire those skills in the same order or at the same age.[31]

The National Academies 2008 study, called "Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What and How," concluded that:

> *A successful system of assessments must be coherent in a variety of ways. It will be horizontally coherent when the curriculum, instruction, and assessment are all aligned with the early learning standards, target the same goals for learning, and work together to support children's developing knowledge and skill across all domains. It will be vertically coherent when there is a shared understanding at all levels of the system (classroom, center, school or program, and state) of the goals for children's learning and development that underlie the standards, as well as consensus about the purposes and uses of assessment. And it will be developmentally coherent when it takes into account what is known about how children's understanding develops over time and the content knowledge, abilities, and understanding that are needed for learning to progress at each stage of the process. Developmental coherence should extend across the boundaries between preschool and K–12 schooling, to ensure that the goals for young children's learning and development are formulated by taking into account later goals and*

expectations and with an understanding of how early accomplishments do and do not predict later achievement. … We emphasize that a system of assessment is only as good as the effectiveness—and coherence—of all of its components.[32]

With this broad guidance in mind, it's helpful to understand what is happening at the federal and state levels with respect to child and program assessments.

There are 1,600 Head Start lead agencies, which means as many as 1,600 different approaches could be employed to assess child learning.

Child assessment, federal requirements

The largest federal funding stream, Head Start, leaves the decision about how to assess student learning up to its providers.[33] While this approach respects local autonomy, the reality is that there are 1,600 Head Start lead agencies, which means as many as 1,600 different approaches could be employed to assess child learning. As such, any comparison of performance and impact across providers is all but impossible.

Even more problematic is the fact that Head Start providers are not required to collaborate or align with state efforts to assess early learning. And while federally supported special education programs serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are required by the federal government to perform child assessments, there is no requirement that these programs be aligned with any other state-based early learning program or effort.

To encourage more state-level utilization of assessment, the Department of Education's Strategic Plan for 2011–2014 has an explicit goal to expand the number of states that employ a kindergarten readiness assessment.[34] Yet a highly functioning and continuously improving early childhood education system requires a standards-aligned assessment system that evaluates children enrolled in all early childhood programs, offers parents and teachers continuous information to gauge a child's progress, and, where necessary, provides measures to boost a child's learning progress.[35] As such, focusing on only one element of assessment—kindergarten readiness, for instance—fails to offer parents of children aged 0 to 5 or the child's early learning program educators with the information they need to ensure children are prepared to succeed in school or improve program quality. Large-scale efforts aimed at the adoption of kindergarten readiness assessments must be integrated into a coherent and continuous early childhood assessment system that is carefully aligned with learning and development standards.

Child assessment, state requirements

In addition to these federal assessment efforts, numerous state-based student level assessment efforts are currently underway.

Child Trends, an independent, nonpartisan center that conducts research on children and families, finds that 30 states are conducting school readiness assessments in kindergarten for one of the following three purposes:

- To monitor statewide levels of school readiness (seven states)
- To guide instruction and practice on an individual child level (22 states)
- To screen for developmental delays (22 states)[36]

Several multistate efforts are underway to align early learning child assessments. The Council of Chief State School Officers, the national nonprofit organization of appointed and elected state education officials, is helping several states create early childhood assessment systems that employ the results of research and best practices for programs serving children along the birth-through-third-grade continuum.[37] Additionally, the National Association of State Boards of Education has just completed a three-year, six-state effort to align elements of their early learning systems, including assessments, with their K–3 content standards and assessments.

Program assessment

Increasingly states are employing multilayered, progressive program assessment and improvement systems to support and identify high-quality programs and help all programs improve their quality over time.[38]

Known as Quality Rating Improvement Systems, they are typically composed of five elements:

- Standards
- Accountability measures
- Program and practitioner outreach and support
- Financing incentives
- Parent/consumer education efforts[39]

Quality Rating Improvement Systems rate programs on each of the five elements and help programs learn what must be done to achieve a higher rating. These systems are not meant for rating alone. States manage these systems in tandem with technical assistance to help programs address necessary improvements. An added benefit of these rating systems is that the results are public. Therefore, the information builds parents' understanding of early childhood programs and, as a result, increases demand for higher quality care. This often results in a push for increased professional development among early learning providers. Further, these rating

systems offer states an opportunity to align program assessment tools and practices across their early learning providers and settings. Likewise, they can be a tool for aligning funding requirements and other components of the early and school-age care systems to allow increased accountability in improving the quality of care.

Increasing the use of observation to gauge program quality

States are increasingly employing observational tools in their rating systems. In recognition of the importance of this research, Head Start now requires its providers to use the Classroom Assessment Scoring System to evaluate program quality.[40] This observational teacher assessment tool captures the quantity and quality of teacher and student interactions as a measure of program quality. Increased deployment of this tool is based on research that finds that the quality of student and teacher interactions is one of the largest determinants of student progress and is an essential element of program quality.[41]

In general, with respect to early learning assessment, federal and state intentions in this area are good. Yet they accelerate the development of assessments in an atomized manner that is likely to result in dozens, if not more, state-designed early learning assessment tools and systems that may not always align well with learning and development standards. Moreover, this diffuse approach to assessment may well prevent public funds from being used as efficiently as possible, as each state will become its own distinct "learning laboratory."

The optimal way forward is to create a transparent, reliable, and common early learning assessment system that promotes continuous improvement at the student and program level, ensures parents have access to useful information, and aligns with learning and development standards.

Recommendation: Invest with states to build assessments and assessment systems that provide evidence that standards are being met

While states have been and should continue to take the lead role in creating assessments to continuously improve quality and to gauge the impact of early childhood programs, the federal government can play a pivotal role in helping states consider the best approach to such assessments. In addition, federal officials can encourage a common, comprehensive approach to early childhood assessments that is geared toward measuring the areas of children's learning and development set out as priorities by state and federal learning and development standards.

The federal government, without infringing on the autonomy of state agencies, should help coordinate state efforts and investments so that the full range of needs are being met, while at the same time helping to ensure that scarce public funds are not spent for redundant purposes or on ineffective assessment tools or systems.

To this end, the federal government should prompt new or should partner with existing state-led efforts to build a robust and meaningful set of early learning assessments of all domains of school readiness to be used across the full continuum of early childhood education programs, including Head Start. Such assessments should help providers increase their ability to support student-learning outcomes that demonstrate fidelity to desired state and Head Start standards. The federal government can accelerate the utilization of high-quality child-level assessments by using existing funding to pay for the development and validation of high-quality assessments that ensure progress in each element of the learning domains identified in the Early Learning Framework.

Research finds that the quality of student and teacher interactions is one of the largest determinants of student progress and is an essential element of program quality.

It may seem obvious, but federal and state efforts to require or promote the use of student assessments must be married to technical assistance measures that ensure that staff in early childhood education programs know how to interpret results and how to adjust their management and teaching practices to address learning challenges or deficits at both the individual student level and the classroom level.

Recently, the Department of Education announced efforts to accelerate the use of kindergarten readiness assessments.[42] We applaud the announcement and urge the federal agencies to build on this nascent effort and help develop state capacity to create seamless assessment systems that span programs serving children from birth through third grade. Moreover, given the fact that the pace of learning varies markedly among young children, the purpose of these assessment systems should be explicitly to improve instruction and assure progress toward a child's development of the full complement of skills needed for academic success by the end of third grade.

In addition, given the pressing need to improve program quality, the federal government should deploy evaluation resources to develop and validate assessment instruments that can be used to assess the most critical elements of program quality. This effort should include Classroom Assessment Scoring System-like observational assessments of program staff so that federal programs and those operated by states can more effectively target staff development.

Technical assistance

Challenge: Technical assistance systems need to be aligned

It is our belief that the technical assistance infrastructure supported by the major federal early childhood programs can be much more effectively organized and focused. While more resources are needed to improve program quality across the board, there is a terrific opportunity to improve the impact of existing resources by coordinating and integrating technical assistance programs and creating a meaningful framework for technical assistance across programs and funding streams.

Both the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services invest in organizations to provide technical assistance for early childhood care and education. This work is, in general, organized by funding stream. The recently established National Center on Child Care Professional Development Systems and Workforce Initiatives, however, appears to be an exception to this rule, bringing together resources and leadership from both the Head Start and Child Care Development Block Grant programs.

Fortunately, there are more opportunities to improve the effectiveness and reach of technical assistance across the full spectrum of early childhood programs. Take for example, Head Start programs that have dedicated professional development resources at their disposal. Some Head Start providers operate under the false assumption that either federal law or federal guidance prohibits them from permitting non-Head Start staff to participate in professional development or technical assistance sessions paid for with Head Start funds.

Likewise, some school districts using Title I funds for kindergarten or pre-K professional development exclude other early childhood learning program staff from their trainings because they believe the rules require them to do so.[43] Meanwhile, local providers have to navigate arcane rules that are making it hard to access quality professional development sessions. Guidance released by the Department of Education indicates that professional development for early learning program staff paid for with Title I funds may be open to staff from non-Title I early learning programs if the children in those programs are likely to attend a Title I-funded school when they enter kindergarten and if the "purpose of the professional development is to improve coordination between the non-Title I preschool and the Title I

elementary school or to facilitate children's transition from preschool into a Title I elementary school."[44] This is big step in the right direction. With a substantial push from the Department of Education and its technical assistance providers, decades of artificial walls that hindered access to quality training for early learning program staff can be broken down.

Professional development at the Harlem Children's Zone

The Harlem Children's Zone's concerted efforts to raise private and philanthropic dollars aids it in working around another critical misalignment between the state's pre-K program and Head Start in the area of teacher training. According to Shana Brodnax, the Children's Zone senior manager, "There are fantastic trainings that [she] can only send teachers from one funding stream to." Brodnax says it is often the case that she can only send lead teachers and not assistant teachers or aides to trainings, even though there are four adults in each Harlem Gems classroom—all of whom are expected to have similar knowledge.

In one instance, New York City's Head Start facilitator held a training session on emotionally responsive teaching practices. "It ended up being extremely valuable," Brodnax says. "It really helped us with children's emotional self-regulation and dramatically changed behavior and aggression in the school. But we weren't allowed to include anyone from the other [Gems] sites because they weren't Head Start." The emotionally responsive teaching training is one that the Children's Zone now offers regularly on its own using nongovernmental funds. "But if the training's happening anyway, what does it hurt to have a few more people in the room?" Brodnax asks.

While this example shines a light on local providers' and state agencies' understanding of the rules with respect to Head Start professional development resources, providers have similar experiences with training funded by other federal and state early childhood funding streams.

Recommendation: The federal government should improve the impact of and access to federal technical assistance resources

The Departments of Education and Health and Human Resources should form a common technical assistance approach that would make it easier for states and providers to take advantage of technical assistance resources, regardless of the funding stream their program falls under. Some portion of existing technical assistance funding could be pooled to create and operate such a platform. Building this platform would require a careful and collaborative interdepartmental review of the content and focus of technical assistance providers. Such an effort should be undertaken in order to promote consistency in approach and to enlarge the focus on boosting the skills of program staff.

In creating this platform the federal departments should address the gap between what technical assistance is provided and what actually works. The departments should evaluate the quality and outcomes of their technical assistance providers. Doing so could identify opportunities for focusing more resources on those technical assistance providers who offer services that have a demonstrable, positive impact on the early learning system and the skills of young children.

Lastly, the federal government should work with state and local providers to explicitly remove bureaucratic and regulatory barriers that hinder the ability of publicly supported early learning program staff to access technical programs from the full range of federally funded early learning technical assistance providers, regardless of the federal funding stream.

Staff development

Challenge: Improving childhood outcomes rests on boosting workforce skills to nurture child development

As early childhood education grows more rigorous, it is vitally important that the early childhood education workforce receives professional development and training adequate to meet those rising demands. To gain a better understanding of the staff development challenges, it is useful to look at a snapshot of the early childhood workforce—an industry that employs slightly more than 2 million adults. A careful review of the profile of these workers reveals the following:

- **Education:** In child care centers where the pay is low and hiring qualifications are often minimal, no more than 12 percent of the staff have two-year degrees and less than 25 percent have bachelor's or master's degrees.[45] At the other end of the scale, there are early childhood education centers, where as a result of state or federal requirements or because parents can afford to pay for high-quality services, staff qualifications are typically higher, with upward of 33 percent of the staff holding four-year degrees, and approximately 25 percent of the staff having a master's degree or more.[46]

- **Race:** From a racial/cultural and ethnic perspective, the early childhood program workforce is more diverse than most other sectors of public education.[47] Still, as the cultural and ethnic composition of the United States' child

population continues to become more diverse, there is significant room for improvement and the need to attract more African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and other adults from diverse backgrounds to the sector.

- **Language diversity:** While no national data or studies quantify the language diversity challenge in early childhood programs, it's reasonable to assume that an increasing number of children are entering the programs with first languages other than English. As a consequence, there is a growing need to close the gap between the percentage of non-English-speaking children enrolled and the percentage of staff who are bilingual or multilingual.

- **Pay and turnover:** With the average early childhood care staff member earning approximately $10 per hour, and an early education teacher earning about $14 per hour, it should come as no surprise that turnover rates are high. It seems safe to conclude that, in general, where pay is lowest turnover is highest. The unfortunate result for early child care programs is that the least skilled and least stable workforce serves our neediest children.[48]

State-based research indicates that early childhood learning programs serving the lowest income children often offer the lowest rates of pay, thereby attracting lower-skilled employees and suffering from the highest turnover rates.

A study of child care workers in California showed that, "Turnover was 29 percent in centers that serve infants and toddlers as well as older children and 20 percent for those centers serving only older children."[49] Turnover was highest at centers that serve children in subsidized programs. Another California study found that among providers receiving a subsidy to care for children whose mothers had just stopped receiving welfare benefits, 43 percent left in the course of a year.[50]

Workforce development has not been a top priority for policymakers, but it should be, according to Joan Lombardi, the recently departed deputy assistant secretary and interdepartmental liaison for early childhood development at the Department of Health and Human Services. "A particular challenge is the expectations we are putting on teachers in all early childhood programs without the adequate preparation, support and compensation they need. ... that is a problem particularly given the challenging working conditions of much of the workforce," says the report summarizing Lombardi's remarks at a workshop on challenges facing the early childhood workforce.[51]

Current strategies of professional development do not adequately prepare all educators for the array of responsibilities, knowledge, and skills they are expected to demonstrate in their work.

Current strategies of professional development do not adequately prepare all educators for the array of responsibilities, knowledge, and skills they are expected to demonstrate in their work with young children and their families.[52] The Committee on Early Childhood Pedagogy concluded, "There is a serious mismatch between the preparation (and compensation) of the average early childhood professional and the growing expectations of parents and policymakers."[53]

To understand this mismatch, the Department of Education commissioned a literature review, which provided a detailed analysis of what is known about professional development systems that help early childhood staff and providers improve student outcomes.[54] The review indicates that considerable work remains to be done to ensure consistency of training content and approaches so that early childhood education professionals are able to reach the development goals needed for early school success.

The sector's low pay, however, means unsubsidized enrollment in postsecondary training is not a viable option for improving staff skills.[55] While 46 states offer scholarships to help attract early childhood workers to enroll in postsecondary training, the amount of these funds is quite limited.[56] Meanwhile, emerging research indicates that teacher-student interactions and the ability to implement proven curriculums also have a significant effect on student outcomes. Yet the traditional postsecondary training content does not prepare teachers to excel in this regard.

In sum, early childhood staff have a low credential rate and often encounter barriers to accessing staff development. Further, there are limited resources to pay for staff to improve their skills. We also know that credentialing, degree, and professional development programs are not uniformly infusing their content or delivery systems with evidence-based research.

Recommendation: The federal government must implement a more consistent, state-of-the-art approach to high-quality staff development and help determine the optimal set of skills and knowledge for early childhood program staff

Federal leadership is needed to ensure that there is a dramatic increase in the degree to which the content of professional development and preparation programs integrate and emphasize appropriate content, along with teaching methods that are proven to help boost student outcomes. Federally supported research can

help identify the key elements of training, credentialing, and degree requirements that are most essential to ensuring high program quality and strong outcomes for young children. The results of this research can help states create credentialing frameworks that can boost quality.

Given the opportunity to improve quality for young children through the appropriate use of comprehensive, high-quality assessment systems that address the child, the learning environment, and teacher impact, we suggest that a special federal training initiative be undertaken to ensure that staff development is specifically focused on building early childhood staff capacity to appropriately assess and interpret the results of child-level, learning-environment, and teacher assessments.

The Department of Education should ensure that its investments and initiatives to improve teacher preparation programs also include measures to address early childhood staff in these programs. Not only do K–12 teachers, principals, and superintendents need a sound understanding of early childhood to help with a smooth and successful transition, but they must also recognize the importance of teacher certification in early learning programs. Including preparation and support strategies for early learning teachers serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers is critical. Likewise, the initial framework for workforce development that has been put into place by the Department of Health and Human Services should, as it continues to be developed and strengthened, be used as a framework across all federal efforts that address the early childhood learning workforce.[57]

Data and continuity

Challenge: A seamless high-quality data system is needed to inform policy and practice and boost school readiness

A 2008 report by the Center for Education Policy, a national independent advocate for public education, found that early learning data systems are so underdeveloped that it's hard to determine what is working and why. Their researcher Sharon Lynn Kagan notes:

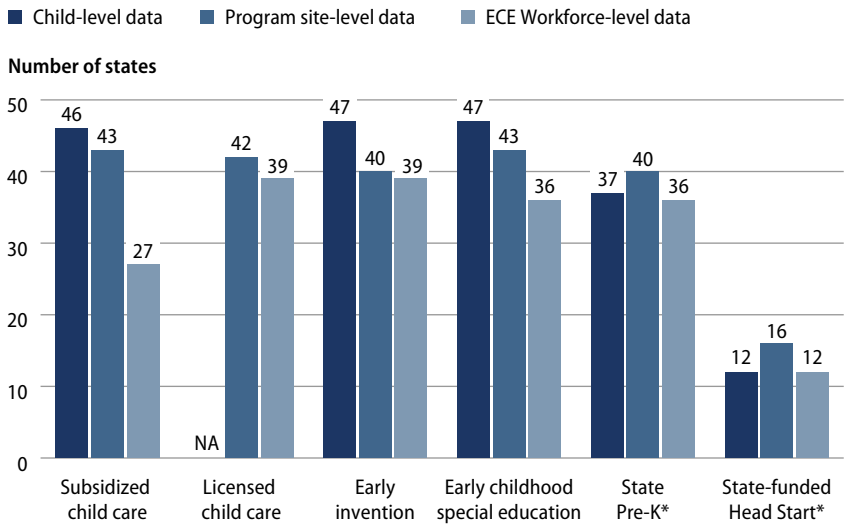
> *Important gaps persist in our knowledge regarding what programs work for whom, and under what conditions. While we have learned much since the 1960s, when the federal commitment to early education surged, we are left*

with cracks in our knowledge base, particularly related to what elements of program quality work best with children who have special needs, children from low-income families, children from diverse cultures, and children who are English language learners. We also lack an integrated, ongoing data-collection system that can tell us what early sort of childhood programs children attend, at what cost, and with what results. A policymaker might reasonably ask, "What children are attending which programs? How much does it cost? What are the results?" Yet we could answer only in general terms. … what is still needed, however, is a coordinated and ambitious effort to fill the gaps that hinder the excellence and coherence of early education efforts.[58]

The Early Childhood Data Collaborative, a national partnership to support state policymakers' efforts to use coordinated early childhood education data systems, surveyed states about their data systems. Their report finds that each of the 50 states plus the District of Columbia is making progress toward building an early childhood data collection system. Their efforts demonstrate that governors and chief state school officers understand the importance of documenting and tracking the impact of investments in early childhood programs.

FIGURE 2

States Collect Significant Early Childhood Education Data by Funding Stream



* Not every state administers state pre-K or state-funded Head Start/Early Head Start programs
Source: Early Childhood Data Collaborative, March 2011.

The good news is that states are making a concerted effort to build better early childhood data systems. But the survey findings also demonstrate that no state collects child-level data across all early learning settings, and no state has completed a comprehensive common early learning data collection system. As a result, the Early Childhood Data Collaborative found that the following very basic questions cannot be answered:

- Are children, birth to 5, on track to succeed at school entry?
- Which children have access to high-quality early care and education programs?
- Is the quality of programs improving?
- What program characteristics are associated with positive outcomes for children (age of enrolled children by hours of program offering and length of year of program, staff characteristics, staff-to-child ratios)?
- What is the cost of a high-quality program?
- What public and private funds are spent on early care and education programs?
- What policies and investments lead to a skilled and stable early care and education workforce?
- How prepared is the workforce to provide effective education and care for all children?[59]

Federal efforts are also underway at the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics to improve and standardize the early childhood data collected among the federal programs that provide funding for educating young children. Through its Common Education Data Standards project, the National Center for Education Statistics is producing a set of voluntary data standards that would standardize data definitions and formats and improve the efficiency, effectiveness, quality, and comparability of data collection, sharing, and use.[60] These standards will also begin the collection of kindergarten participation rates in a manner that enables tracking of whether children are enrolled in full- or half-day kindergarten programs.

Recommendation: The federal government should improve early childhood data collection and harmonize reporting requirements to help increase knowledge of inputs and outcomes

The key to addressing the continuity problem is to move away from collecting data by individual funding stream and toward state-level data collection and analysis that includes all of the early learning settings children attend.

Federal leadership can help states and providers spend scarce resources more wisely and avoid separately procured systems by serving as a convener of states interested in pursuing common data systems or data system design services. Moreover, the federal departments can play an essential role in helping states adopt systems that collect useful data to inform and improve overall system performance. To this end,

the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services should create a working group of lead data administrators from the nine states that are now implementing Race to the Top early learning challenge grants. States should be added to the working group as they receive Race to the Top grants in later rounds. The group should work together to solve common data problems, document best practices, and describe good data collection approaches that can be disseminated to the other 41 states and benefit their data collection efforts.

Federal leadership is also essential to ensure that new high-quality state data systems capture information from all early childhood programs and link to Head Start and state longitudinal K–12 data systems and, where possible, to school district legacy data systems. Moreover, just as the federal departments directed Head Start providers to engage in state Quality Rating Information System data collection efforts, the departments should ensure that Head Start providers know that they must provide full and complete data sets to the state longitudinal data systems.

The cross-agency efforts of the National Center for Education Statistics to define common education data standards can serve as a jumping-off point for the federal departments to not only use common data definitions and formats but also to further improve federal data collection. To help ensure these voluntary standards are put to good use, the federal departments must first bring their own early childhood data collections up to the highest standards of quality as they relate to Head Start, Child Care Development Block Grant, and any other federally funding early childhood program.

Finally, the departments should align reporting periods and parameters across agencies and programs, and streamline data collection processes by using common data definitions, integrated reporting frameworks, and employing other systemic streamlining measures to reduce burdens on states and programs.

Continuity for students

Challenge: There is limited continuity as children progress from early learning settings to kindergarten and through the early primary school grades

Successful transitions from early childhood education programs must begin well before a child starts kindergarten and must continue beyond a child's enrollment in elementary school.[61] Achieving continuity is a complex task that requires alignment

of curriculum and pedagogy, with teachers in kindergarten and first grades building on the concepts taught and strategies employed in early learning programs.

The federal government has long recognized the need to push for meaningful continuity as a child moves through ages 0 to 5 early learning programs and into their early public school years. Former President Lyndon Johnson called for and Congress enacted the national Follow Through program in 1967, which focused on creating pedagogical continuity for children through the third grade. A series of later efforts—Developmental Continuity (1974), the Head Start Transition Project (1986), the National Transition Study (1988), and the National Head Start Public School Early Childhood Transition Demonstration Study (1990)—established a focus on transition and the pre-K-to-third-grade agenda.[62]

Results of the National Head Start demonstration evaluation indicate that local efforts that ensure effective transition to kindergarten appear to combat the "fade out effect"—the erosion by third grade of the student learning gains from early learning program participation.

In November 2011 the Department of Health and Human Services released the Head Start Partnership for Sustained Learning, which offers a comprehensive roadmap for Head Start programs to create sustained learning agreements with elementary schools and demonstrated a renewed and welcome federal attention to this critical method for building on early learning skills.[63] The next step would be for the federal government to expand work on sustaining early learning gains across all its early learning programs and to help states do the same.

Among the continuity challenges, the large information gap that exists between early childhood programs and elementary schools requires attention. No state that has a fully developed system for ensuring important information from a child's early learning years follows the child once they enroll in kindergarten.[64] As a result, useful child-specific information such as a child's developmental progress over time, doesn't follow the child to kindergarten teacher and beyond. Similarly, useful and regular feedback that would help early learning providers know whether or not they are adequately preparing their children for kindergarten is not shared. Resolving these information gaps is a necessary first step to enabling continuity models to take hold across the educational system.

Additionally, until recently weak interschool infrastructure and federal law and regulations made it impossible for primary schools to share child-level data with

Successful transitions from early childhood education programs must begin well before a child starts kindergarten and must continue beyond a child's enrollment in elementary school.

early learning program providers. In essence this meant that early learning programs were not privy to information about how their students performed once entering kindergarten. The Department of Education issued new rules governing the use of student data that protects student privacy while also advancing the goal of improving research and educational continuity. In releasing the new Family Education Rights and Privacy Act rule, the department stated:

> *It is important that all students have access to a quality education. In order to achieve this goal, SEAs [state educational agencies] and LEAs [local educational agencies] must have the ability to disclose student data to evaluate the effectiveness of publicly-funded education programs—programs ranging from early childhood through adult education—to ensure that our limited public resources are invested wisely.*[65]

This rule clears one hurdle associated with continuity, and it may help solve at least one element of the challenge faced by states in building common data systems.

> *"Currently, it is common for preschool teachers to see themselves in one system and for K–3 teachers to see themselves as part of another. This hampers teacher communication across grade levels about curricula and student progress. Kindergarten teachers who want information about a child's performance in preschool, his attendance records, or what other state-funded programs served him in the past, face several barriers to accessing individual student information. Much of this information is not even collected at the student level."*[66]

Currently, it is common for preschool teachers to see themselves in one system and for K–3 teachers to see themselves as part of another. This hampers teacher communication across grade levels about curricula and student progress.

In addition, the Department of Education has taken some important steps to encourage investment in data systems as a part of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge competition, defining early childhood education data systems (building off Early Childhood Development Center fundamentals) and including a focus on early childhood education data systems as an area of focus for its fiscal year 2012 Student Longitudinal Data System grants. Unfortunately, not all of the states receiving Race to the Top money are undertaking this work.

Recommendation: The federal government should promote successful strategies to build continuity from early childhood programs to kindergarten and continue to remove data and other bureaucratic barriers to successful continuity systems

The federal departments should lead an effort to document successful models that link programs serving children before kindergarten with the elementary schools those children will attend. Furthermore, the federal government should promote their replication.

To help advance this important work, the federal departments should direct their technical assistance providers to train early childhood providers, elementary school principals, and school district leaders, as well as state education and early learning leaders, on the elements of successful early learning programs and the models of effective transition. The federal departments' technical assistance providers should use the results of case studies and longitudinal research to spotlight best practices and sustained collaborations between birth-through-five programs and school districts.

Through communication with Title I districts and Head Start providers, the federal departments can promote the use of the tools created as part of the impressive inter-departmental Partnership for Sustained Learning program, which defines the key elements of partnership agreements between Head Start and elementary schools.[67]

Social and emotional education standards have proven very effective in promoting early learning. The success of these standards presents a compelling case for better integrating early learning content standards into state efforts to improve early school success and achieve the expectations established in the new Common Core K–12 standards.[68] We commend the U.S. Department of Education's Strategic Plan for 2011–2014 for recognizing these essential elements as part and parcel of an early learning assessment system.[69] To build on this work, the departments of Education and Health and Human Services should work with external partners to consider how the full range of learning domains, especially the social and emotional learning domains, can augment the K–12 Common Core content standards set for primary school education and thus support a more holistic continuity model that can ensure learning gains are sustained and elevate the school performance of young children.

Dual-language learners

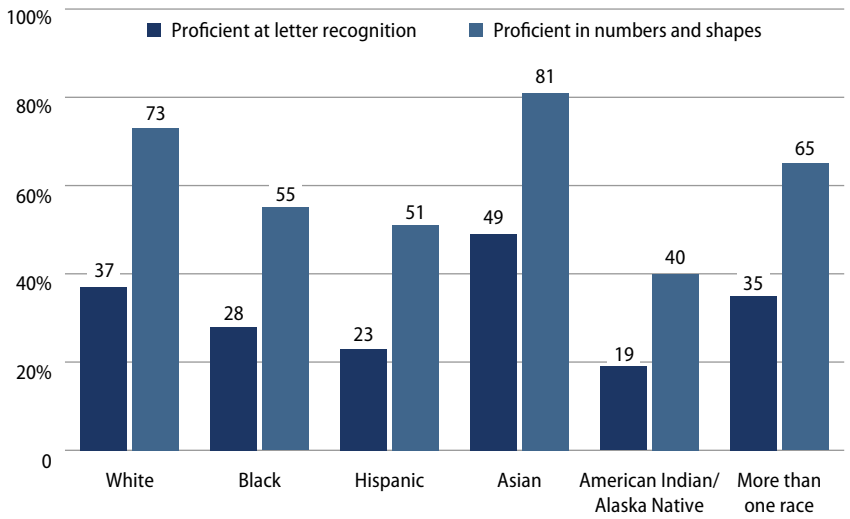
Challenge: Low-income children who are from non-English speaking households are lagging behind their peers

The Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B) 2005–06, found that 4-year-olds from Hispanic households were considerably behind their peers with respect to basic letter and number recognition skills.[70]

The number of students from Latino households reached 11 million in 2009.[71] Meanwhile, the data shows that low-income Hispanic children also scored significantly below the national average in math and reading achievement at kindergarten entry.[72] While not every Hispanic or Asian American student comes from a non-English speaking household, the National Center for Educational Statistics reports that the number of students in public school who have a first language other than English rose to 11.2 million over the past 20 years, accounting for 20 percent of the school-aged population.[73]

FIGURE 3

Percentage of children proficient in letter recognition and numbers and shapes at about 4 years old



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, The Condition of Education 2009: Indicator 3: Knowledge and Skills of Young Children (Department of Education, 2009).

Certainly, some students who come from non-English speaking households have sufficiently strong home-language or English-language skills to build the skills needed to succeed in school. But the 2011 Condition of Education survey found that 2.7 million school-age children who spoke a language other than English at home spoke English with difficulty. Of these students, about 73 percent spoke Spanish, 13 percent spoke an Asian/Pacific Islander language, 10 percent spoke an Indo-European language other than Spanish, and 4 percent spoke another language.[74]

Since a rising number of children entering early learning programs do not speak English and have significant school-readiness gaps, increased federal and state efforts are needed to help early learning program providers learn how to prepare these children for early school success. Head Start has articulated sound principles in this area and has a rationale and policy that is progressive and demonstrates strong alignment with the findings of academic research. Head Start's rationale is based on the following:

- Actively supporting a child's home language is important to the cohesiveness of the family.
- Supporting the home language is crucial for the advancement of the child's education cognitively and socioemotionally and assists in a child's English acquisition.
- Exposing children to two languages at once does not impede their ability to learn.

Head Start program performance standards include many specific regulations pertaining to culture and language and requiring programs to accommodate the increasing linguistic diversity within the target population.[75] The document, "Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs," outlines the expectations for programs and clearly states the need to support children's home languages while also introducing English. In addition, the new Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework explicitly address the various stages of English language development.[76]

As part of the revisions to the Head Start training and technical assistance system, the National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness was created in 2010. This center was established to provide the Head Start community with research-based information, practices, and strategies to ensure optimal academic and social progress for linguistically and culturally diverse children and their families.[77]

Head Start, however, does not provide explicit guidance about the standards, assessment, pedagogy, or models that work nor does the program require any substantial evidence that the aims of the policy are being achieved.

Some states are beginning to focus on program and content improvements to help dual-language learners in early learning programs. Those that are doing so are employing a variety of strategies, including:

- Ten states require the provision of dual-language learner services, although they vary in what the required services must include.

- Eight states require early education providers to prepare a written plan for dual-language learner services, but the required elements and acceptable standards for those plans vary between states.
- Seventeen states indicate that providers must screen and assess dual-language learner students. The states, however, do not prescribe what instruments should be used, and only Delaware requires that screening be conducted in the home language of the child

(See appendix for a comprehensive table of state dual-language learner standards.)

The research demonstrates that dual-language learners can be prepared for early school success, but more training and explicit guidance is needed to help programs improve the skills of these learners.[78] Moreover, while the early childhood sector is relying on state-of-the-art research to help build capacity for dual-language development, the K–12 systems may not be ready to continue the dual-language approach when a child enters kindergarten.

"A review of the state approaches indicate that there is both a lack of consistency and an apparent lack of capacity to understand and capitalize on the linguistic and cultural strengths of dual-language learner children, while also providing effective instruction and English language development," says Linda Espinosa, retired professor of early childhood education at the University of Minnesota."[79]

Recommendation: Build more federal, state, and local capacity to meet the increasing demand for culturally and linguistically appropriate services for children who are dual-language learners

To be clear, we recognize that early childhood programs must focus on English language competency to ensure school readiness. But rigorous research indicates that helping children improve their home-language skills can markedly augment and support English-language competency.[80]

The federal agencies should move expeditiously to develop and validate assessments, identify best practices and technical assistance resources that disseminate dual-language learner models, and build the dual-language teaching competency of early learning staff. Where standards, curricula, or assessments are needed, federal agencies should convene states to develop these resources or develop them

at the federal level and actively disseminate them via the extensive federal professional development and technical assistance systems.

Consistent with our other recommendations, this work must be shared across the full spectrum of early childhood education and care programs, and disseminated in ways that maximize efficiency. To this end, the existing National Center for Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness, National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, or the Early Childhood Outcomes Center may be useful platforms through which to disseminate dual-language learner early childhood best practices.

In addition, the federal departments should explore how to advance a consistent policy and pedagogical approach to ensure a smooth and effective shift to kindergarten for dual-language learners.

Developmental screening

Challenge: Early developmental screening that leads to assessment and, if needed, effective intervention is not a consistent practice across early childhood education and care programs

Universal developmental screening is the gateway to effective early intervention. Delayed or no screening means that children with developmental issues are identified months or even years later than necessary, after their conditions may have worsened. Developmental delays are often not identified until a child is in kindergarten or later—missing the critical infant-toddler window when intervention is least costly and most effective.

Meanwhile, the Centers for Disease Control reports that from 2006 to 2008, one in six children ages 3 to 17 years old were diagnosed with a developmental disability, and the incidence of these diagnoses is rising.[81] While developmental delays affect at least 10 percent of children in the United States, only 2.3 percent of children under age 3 and less than 6 percent of children from ages 3 to 5 receive early intervention services.[82]

The data also indicates that, "The majority of young children who are at risk for or have emotional and behavioral disorders are not identified prior to school entry."[83]

This is the case in spite of the fact that a number of effective means for identifying young children with behavior disorders exist.[84]

Routine screenings of all young children for developmental delays and disabilities is vital to ensure that children with special needs or developmental issues receive effective services through federal Individual with Disabilities Education Act programs, specifically Part C for infants and toddlers and Part B 619 for preschool students. Developmental screening tools that are easy to administer, reliable, valid, and accurate are currently available.[85]

We also know that there are special challenges with determining if children whose first language is not English have developmental delays. Research demonstrates the imperative to rely on home language assessments when evaluating development, both to help effectively identify students who are struggling, as well as to protect from the overidentification of a development delays among dual-language learners.[86]

Failing to screen and properly identify children with developmental delays is especially relevant to federally supported early childhood programs, as they primarily focus on children from low-income families since children in these programs have higher incident of developmental delays:

- Children from low-income families insured by Medicaid or the Child Health Insurance Program were almost twice as likely to have a disability (20.3 percent) than children who had private health insurance (11.6 percent).

- Children from families with income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level had a much higher prevalence of developmental disabilities (16.1 percent) than higher income children (12.4 percent).[87]

Both Head Start and the Individuals with Disabilities and Education Act provide resources and direction intended to increase the early identification of children with special needs. In the case of Head Start, Congress wisely included universal screening language in the 2007 reauthorization of law.

Head Start has tools for its providers, along with technical assistance, which can promote the use of accurate parental report developmental screening tools in programs. Yet with only 17 percent of all young children participating in Head Start or Early Head Start programs, this strategy must be more systematically infused in all early learning programs. For the majority of children in federally funded early

Head Start statutory requirement

Use research-based developmental screening tools that have been demonstrated to be standardized, reliable, valid, and accurate for the child being assessed, to the maximum extent practicable.

Head Start Reauthorization, 2007.[88]

education or care programs, there is neither a requirement for universal screening nor technical assistance to implement broad-based developmental screening for infants, toddlers, or preschoolers.

The importance of developmental screening is also highlighted in the guidance for the Early Learning Challenge, which includes developmental screening in its definition of comprehensive assessment. Comprehensive assessment is a required element and involves the creation of tiered Quality Rating and Improvement Systems to set high standards, expectations, and supports for all early learning and development programs serving high-needs children.

In September 2011 the Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services issued a final regulation for Early Intervention programs for infants and toddlers with disabilities and developmental delays. This regulation breaks new ground in two regards. First, it explicitly directs entities responsible for identifying young children with disabilities (these are known as the Child Find Systems) to reach out to Head Start, child care and pre-K programs. They also call for the State Interagency Coordinating Councils to include representatives from Head Start, as well as the state agencies responsible for child care and pre-K programs. The Department of Education's efforts to link outreach and services with these child care and learning settings could help narrow the screening and early intervention gap.

The regulation, however, explicitly references screening as an optional post-referral service—after a child is sent to see an early intervention provider or agency. The regulation is silent with respect to screening as a permissible and reimbursable activity as a prereferral activity. That means that providers cannot be reimbursed for the cost of conducting screenings prior to a referral to an early intervention program. As such, the new regulation creates a disincentive to the very practice that research indicates is necessary—universal developmental screening. As a result, the enormous potential to help close the screening gap is not significantly advanced by this regulation.

While pediatricians are chiefly responsible for developmental screening, fewer than half of pediatricians conduct developmental screenings even when they are the child's primary care doctor.[89] Early learning programs can play an important role in developmental screening—building off their ongoing relationships with children and parents and the availability of parent-directed, low-cost screening tools.

Recommendation: We urge federal officials to close the gaps in universal developmental screening across all federally supported early learning or care programs

The departments of Education and Health and Human Services should expand efforts to promote universal screening with the specific goal of increasing the rate of screening of children served via the Child Care and Development Block Grant and, where possible, in Elementary and Secondary Education Act-funded early learning programs. The agencies should also seek ways to increase the degree to which other federally funded programs serving young children understand and promote universal screening.

In addition, the Department of Education should issue guidance clarifying that cost of pre-referral screening done in child care programs funded by the child care block grant or in federally funded pre-K programs under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is a reimbursable expense under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part B and C programs.

The Department of Education should also work with the Early Childhood Outcomes Center, the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, and with regional training and technical assistance providers to formulate better guidance for prereferral screenings under the recently issued Individuals with Disabilities Education Act early intervention regulations, and more actively disseminate best practice strategies via the Child Find system that increase the focus on screening in early learning programs.

The federal Head Start program has issued guidance and tools, including preferred screening tools, parental and provider training materials, and technical assistance capacity to promote best screening practices. The importance of using these tools should be elevated by increasingly making screening an element of regional monitoring and program evaluation.

Finally, to ensure that young children who come from families where the first language is not English are appropriately screened, simple parent-directed screening tools must also be developed and validated in other languages and disseminated to early childhood, child welfare, and health care providers.

Failing elementary schools

Challenge: Failing elementary schools have too few students who enter prepared to learn

Federal and state efforts to boost student outcomes rely in part on the accountability provisions included in the No Child Left Behind Act, which was enacted in January 2002.[90] Under the act, states are required to increase their proficiency targets annually until schools ensure 100 percent of students are proficient in reading and math. Struggling schools have often found these state goals difficult to meet. The result is that the number of underperforming schools continues to rise, and states and districts are struggling to support these schools. Federal law requires specific interventions when a school is failing to meet No Child Left Behind standards, including school choice and supplemental tutoring. These interventions have not shown comprehensive success.

Slightly more than 8,400 elementary schools fell into the bottom 5 percent of all school buildings in the states with respect to failing to meet their No Child Left Behind reading and math targets.[91] We also know that low-income students start school with less developed language skills than students from families with incomes above the poverty level.[92]

As a result, more strenuous efforts are needed to boost student performance in failing elementary schools since these schools also have relatively high levels of concentrations of low-income students. An essential element of a strategy to boost the performance of these elementary schools is expanding enrollment in early learning programs among the students expected to enroll in the school.

Slightly more than 8,400 elementary schools fell into the bottom 5 percent of all school buildings in the states with respect to failing to meet their No Child Left Behind reading and math targets.

Recommendation: Federal officials should expand access to early childhood programs for students from birth to 5 years old, and full-day kindergarten programs are essential tools for improving elementary school performance

The Department of Education should advance efforts to require states and districts to ensure that struggling elementary schools increase the percentage of incoming kindergarten students that have participated in high-quality early childhood education programs spanning birth to 5 years, as well as the availability of full-day kindergarten for children in those schools.

Specifically, as part of a school and district turnaround strategy, where an elementary school is failing to meet federal targets the Department of Education should require that a school's improvement strategy include efforts to increase enrollment of the incoming kindergarten class in high-quality early childhood programs and full-day kindergarten. Such a strategy may require the district to make funds available to boost the quality of services available in surrounding early childhood development programs or, in some cases, to create additional high-quality early learning slots or require that existing high-quality slots focus on enrollment from the future kindergarten cohorts of the targeted elementary school. The Department of Education should define high-quality early learning programs as those that rank highest on a state's Quality Rating Improvement System or other cross-sector early learning program quality measures, so that districts are clear about what is expected and so that the desired outcomes are achieved.

As Congress debates the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, it would be shortsighted to step back from the federal mandate of accountability for schools receiving federal funds. In our comprehensive ESEA proposal, "A Way Forward," we emphasize that schools should be held accountable for all students. "The nation cannot afford to provide resources to schools without requiring serious improvement in student outcomes," write CAP education experts Jeremy Ayers, Cynthia Brown, Ulrich Boser, Raegen Miller, and Theodora Chang. "The next version of ESEA should hold all schools accountable for making measureable and significant progress in student learning."[93]

Likewise, that bill should explicitly require that if elementary schools are failing to meet their academic benchmarks, they must employ strategies to increase enrollment in early learning programs for young children expected to enroll in the school when they turn 5 or 6 years old.

No single entity in charge of early childhood education

Challenge: Establish a permanent office that spans and unites the efforts of the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education to devise and sustain early learning program improvements

The research and discussions held during the preparation of our report indicate that the absence of a formalized structure that has staying power contributes to

the lack of consistency and coherence in each of these essential areas that promote program quality. "It is actually quite difficult to calculate total state and federal spending on child care and early childhood education and impossible to know how many children are served. No unit of the federal government tracks all federal expenditures for early childhood, let alone those of the states," points out Doug Besharov, a former scholar with the American Enterprise Institute.[94]

While each of the federal early childhood programs is critical, Besharov's simple observation hasn't changed since he first made this point during testimony given more than a decade ago. Even worse, no single federal agency is responsible for ensuring consistency or quality of all early childhood programs or for ensuring continuity between early childhood programs and the early elementary grades. This doesn't mean no one is in charge, but it does mean that there isn't one single approach to improving quality or a standard approach to accountability.

Both the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Humans Services have talented professionals with decades of experience in building pieces of the early childhood learning system along with years of research and data. This means there is a strong foundation from which to build and manage a coherent and integrated early childhood learning system that ensures children enter school ready to learn, and to tie that early learning system into learning goals in kindergarten and the early elementary grades.

Our goal for building this interdepartmental office is to ensure the infrastructure necessary to tap the synergy that could be gained by aligning the existing talent and linking their efforts in a more deliberative national early childhood structure.

In addition to creating a virtual unified federal structure for an early learning system, the connection between funding and quality is paramount and must be addressed. Early childhood development programs that receive funding from Head Start and/or state pre-K programs have many more resources and are therefore better equipped to offer high-quality services than other programs, including private-market programs serving low-income families or subsidized child care providers. National leadership is needed to help states construct high-quality early learning systems and to ensure that these systems focus on boosting quality in the largest early learning programs where per-student public payments are lowest. A forward-looking federal infrastructure can help make that happen and address the many other long-term systemic challenges that currently have no stable venue for review and action.

Recommendation: Federal officials must build a permanent office that leads and sustains interdepartmental efforts to improve early learning program outcomes

To build on the Obama administration initiatives in the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services and the Interagency Board, the logical next step to improve federal early learning programs and to ensure a sustained and ongoing focus on program quality would be for the departments to form a joint and well-defined National Early Learning Team Office. This office should be led by one person, who would be accountable to both department secretaries and would have a limited number of talented staff to work with and assist federal program staff in implementing improvements such as those recommended in this report. Such an office would go a long way toward creating a seamless, high-quality system and continually improve upon its impact.

Among other goals, the office we propose would build on the good work already stimulated by the federal Early Learning Challenge Grant by identifying specific additional areas for federal-state collaboration to promote program improvement and streamline administrative burdens. We already know, for instance, that aligned federal spending rules and regulations are essential to substantial cross-program collaboration. At present, each funding silo has its own budgeting, rate-setting, and reimbursement strategies. In their Early Learning Challenge applications, several states proposed using Quality Rating Improvement System as a framework for a new approach to cost-modeling, with the goal of crafting a single budget that reflects the costs and resources needed to meet high-quality standards. The office we propose should find way sot enable this work by identifying options for increased flexibility in rate-setting among various early care and education funding streams, encouraging states to move forward with cost-modeling pilots, and offering opportunities to share findings and best practices.

In addition, the office would work with existing federal program staff on issues around standards, assessments, data tracking and reporting, program evaluation, professional development, technical assistance, services for children with special needs and dual-language learners, and the overall continuity of children's educational experience. The office should work with federal program staff to implement changes like those recommended in this report to these critical issue areas in early childhood education.

Conclusion

In 1961, when President John F. Kennedy stood before Congress and stated that the United States should set a goal of landing a man on the moon by the end of the decade, Americans were at once skeptical and inspired. In many ways, the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge is the "man on the moon" goal for our early childhood and public education systems. Stakeholders are awed by the boldness of the effort yet concerned that its aims are not achievable.

Based on the evidence of what needs to be done to improve early childhood outcomes, we are convinced that the goals and activities defined in the Early Learning Challenge embody the right challenge for the states. What's more, we believe that significantly expanding access to high-quality early childhood education systems will be enormously beneficial for the students served and for our economy at large.

Looking back on President Kennedy's challenge, we all recognize now that it was just a stepping stone in man's exploration of space. The same is true with respect to the Early Learning Challenge. We don't need to wait for decades to pass by before we recognize that it is a stepping stone that will enable some states to build a stronger and more effective early childhood learning system while other states struggle for capacity and resources. To boost program quality, efficiency, and student results, the federal government has sufficient legislative authority to continue to streamline, innovate, and improve the early learning services.

Budget rules and the Harlem Children's Zone

A final window into the Harlem Children's Zone demonstrates the urgency for more federal action as it relates to early childhood education.

In the eight years that Debbie Kim, the director of foundations and government, has worked for the Harlem Children's Zone, the organization's budget has nearly quadrupled from $24 million in 2003 to $95 million in 2011. The majority of the annual budget comes from private and philanthropic dollars with about a third derived from public funds—which may be just as well, considering that, "Managing the public funds takes more organization than the private dollars," Kim says.

With Head Start, Kim says, "There are New York regulations requiring a separate bank account and a separate audit" of the program. The separate bank account was a particularly nettlesome problem.

"We're a huge agency that has certain procedures in place, and the concept of having a separate bank account for one project is sort of ridiculous," adds Shana Brodnax. Thankfully, because the Harlem Children's Zone is a large organization and meets certain criteria, they were able to press the city administrator for a waiver to allow them to fund the Gems Head Start program from their main accounts. They received the waiver in April 2011.

But Head Start still has plenty of unique requirements, including a board of directors separate from the organization's main board and separate procedures for monitoring staff. Fortunately, with a large back-office staff and budget, the Children's Zone is able to meet the operational guidelines of what Brodnax characterizes as "this elaborate shadow structure … to satisfy Head Start requirements." Smaller agencies, however, struggle to meet the host of program-specific federal and state requirements while minimally impacting the kids they serve.

"There are folks out there who have a hard time dealing with it," Kim says. "Since Head Start has higher requirements, their Head Start programs wind up being better than their [other pre-K] programs, whereas ours are the same." The same should be true for all students.

The recommendations in this report are meant to push us all to recognize that this "man on the moon" challenge represented by the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge effort must be diffused to all 50 states and the District of Columbia. But they must also be internalized at the federal level. In fact, the federal reforms outlined here are essential to increasing the numbers of poor and at-risk children who enter school prepared to learn and positioned to achieve their full potential.

Appendix

State approach to education of young English language learners varies dramatically

No state ELL standard	13 states	Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania (Educational Accountability Block Grants), Tennessee, Vermont (Act 62 and Early Education Initiative), and Virginia
Provision of ELL services required	10 states, 11 programs	Kansas (at-risk and pre-K pilot), Maine, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey (Abbott*), Oklahoma, Pennsylvania (K–4), Texas, Washington, and the District of Columbia (PEEP*)
Home language survey required	Three states	Iowa (Shared Vision and statewide voluntary preschool program), Nevada, and Rhode Island
Systematic written plan for dealing with ELLs required	Eight states, 10 programs	Georgia, Maine, Minnesota, New Jersey (Abbott, ECPA and ELLI), Oklahoma, Pennsylvania (HSSAP*), Wisconsin (4–K), and the District of Columbia (charter)
Screening and assessment required	17 states, 19 programs in those states	Arkansas, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey (Abbott and ELLI*), New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania (HSSAP and K-4/SBPK*), Rhode Island, South Carolina (4–K and CDEPP*), Texas, Washington, Wisconsin (4–K), and the District of Columbia (PEEP*)
Professional development provided for teachers	13 states, 17 programs	Georgia, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, New Jersey (Abbott, ECPA and ELLI), New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania (HSSAP*/K–4 and pre-K counts), South Carolina (4K*), Texas, Wisconsin (4K*), and the District of Columbia (PEEP* and Charter)
Children must be screened in primary language	One state	Delaware
Information must be presented to parents in their primary language	17 states, 21 programs in those states	Arkansas, Delaware, Illinois, Kansas (at-risk and pre-k pilot), Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey (Abbott and ECPA*), New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania (HSSAP and K-4/SBPK*), South Carolina (4K and CDEPP*), Texas, Wisconsin (4K*), and the District of Columbia (PEEP*)
Translators or bilingual staff made available	14 states, 16 programs	Arkansas, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey (Abbott, ECPA and ELLI*), New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania (K4*), Texas, and Wisconsin (4K*)
Bilingual classes permitted in pre-K	28 states, 21 programs	Arkansas, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey (Abbott, ECPA and ELLI*), New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania (K–4), Texas, and Wisconsin (4K*)
Monolingual non-English classes permitted in pre-K	15 states, 21 programs	Illinois, Louisiana (8(g), LA4, and NSECD*), Maine, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey (Abbott, ECPA and ELLI*), New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania (HSSAP, K4/SBPK* and pre-K Counts), South Carolina (4K*), Texas, Washington, Wisconsin (4K*), and the District of Columbia (PEEP*)

Source: Center for American Progress, data captured from state standards websites, August 2011.

State and federal early learning standards at a glance

	State standards for 0-2s	State standards for 3-5s	State standards for kindergarten	OSEP early intervention/ preschool	Child Care & Development Fund	Head Start/ Early Head Start	ESEA-funded early childhood
Status of standards	37 states have adopted	50 states plus D.C. have adopted	43 states adopted Common Core standards	Three child outcomes (federal) One family outcome (federal) Mandated in 2005	No federal standards	No standards for 0-2s Newly revised federal Head Start child development and Early Learning Framework for 3-5s (HSCDELF*) Initial framework for 3-5s in 2000	No federal standards
Content of standards	Physical, socialemotional, language, and cognitive development well-represented; approaches toward learning underrepresented	Language and cognitive development represented in all states; physical, socialemotional, and approaches toward learning less common	Language Arts/Math (Most states have kindergarten standards in other content areas)	Socialemotional development Knowledge, skills, language, and literacy Use appropriate behaviors to meet needs		10 domains plus English language development 37 components 149 "examples"	
Implementation efforts /mandates	States have disseminated their ELGs*, provided training, support materials Some states incorporate requirements related to ELGs* in systems such as QRIS*	States have disseminated their ELGs*, provided training, support materials Some states reference ELGs* in QRIS* systems Some states have developed pre-K or kindergarten assessments that are aligned with their ELS	30+ states participate in a consortium to guide efforts to implement the Common Core K-12 standards	States report on percentage of infants, toddlers, and preschool children who demonstrate improved outcomes compared to same-aged peers. States report percentage of Part C families who report that programs have helped their family; know their rights; communicate children's needs; help children develop and learn States report percentage of 619 parents who report that schools facilitated parent involvement to improve services and results OSEP established Early Childhood Outcomes Center to help states create assessments & data systems.	States report ages addressed in ELGS, implementation activities and alignment efforts in CCDF* plans CCDF Performance Measure addresses alignment and implementation of ELGs Child Care Bureau stimulated states to develop early learning guidelines via Good Start/ Grow Smart initiative	Head Start State collaboration office to promote alignment of HSCDELF* and state ELGs* Programs are expected to align curricula and assessments to the framework, develop school-readiness goals (with reference to state ELGs), and use ongoing child assessment data to improve teaching, learning, and family engagement	

Source: CAP Early Childhood Impact Project, Catherine Scott-Little, Sharon Lynn Kagan, and Thomas Schultz, data captured from state and federal standards websites, 2011

Glossary

New Jersey Abbott—Abbott Districts are the 31 poorest school districts in New Jersey

New Jersey ELLI—Early Launch to Learning Initiative

New Jersey ECPA—Early Childhood Program Aid

District of Columbia PEEP—Pre-K Enhancement and Expansion Program

Pennsylvania HSSAP—Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program

Pennsylvania SBPK—School Based Pre-K

South Carolina 4K—4-year-old Kindergarten

South Carolina CDEPP—Child Development Education Pilot Program

Wisconsin 4K—4-year-old Kindergarten

OSEP—Office of Special Education Programs

HSCDELF—Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework

ELG—early learning guidelines

QRIS—quality rating improvement system

CCDF—Child Care and Development Fund

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