

***“It will be the goal of this administration to ensure that every child has access to a complete and competitive education from the day they are born to the day they begin a career ... we know that the most formative learning comes in those first years of life.”***

**—President Barack Obama**

## **Supporting Early Learning**

### ***Reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act***

The years prior to kindergarten are critical in shaping a child’s foundation for later school success. Research demonstrates that learning begins at birth and that high-quality early learning programs help children arrive in kindergarten ready to succeed in school and in life. The Department of Education is committed to an early learning agenda beginning at birth and continuing through third grade, with seamless transitions between preschool and elementary school. The Department’s proposal for reauthorizing the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* supports a continuum of learning that will close the achievement gap and ensure that every student graduates from high school ready to succeed in college and a career.

*Our proposal supports high-quality early learning approaches.*

- **Continued Title I Support of Preschool.** Districts may continue to use Title I funds to support high-quality preschool programs for eligible children, beginning at birth.
- **A Birth-Through-College-to-Career Agenda.** The Promise Neighborhoods program will provide competitive grants to high-need communities so that they can provide a combination of effective community services, strong family supports, and comprehensive education reform to improve the educational and life outcomes for children from birth through college and to career.
- **Comprehensive Education Reforms.** The Race to the Top program encourages states and districts to undertake ambitious, comprehensive reforms of their education systems that will dramatically improve student outcomes, including for young children.
- **Encouragement for Innovation in Early Learning.** The Investing in Innovation (i3) program supports promising and proven educational practices, including early learning programs that improve the outcomes for young children.

*Our proposal supports early learning professionals.*

- **Joint Professional Development.** Programs supporting professional development (including the College- and Career-Ready Students and the Effective Teachers and Leaders programs) would include joint professional development activities for school staff and early childhood educators. The programs could address such issues as school readiness across all the major domains of early learning and the transition to elementary school.

- **Expanded Administrators' Knowledge of Early Learning.** The Effective Teachers and Leaders program would support activities that expand the knowledge of elementary school principals about appropriate and effective instructional strategies, interventions, and programs for young children.
- **Support for Teachers of Young Children.** Our proposal recognizes the importance of a great teacher in every classroom by promoting successful and innovative pathways into teaching and bold approaches to recruiting, developing, retaining, and rewarding effective teachers in high-need schools, including teachers of young children.

*Our proposal expands learning opportunities for young children.*

- **Seamless Transitions and Improved Coordination.** To provide a continuity of services, we must improve coordination between our public schools and early learning programs (including community-based programs such as Head Start) and services (supported through the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*) for young children. Our proposal would continue to require districts to coordinate with early learning programs and services to improve school readiness and would allow them to use Title I funds to do so.
- **Strengthened Literacy and STEM P-12 Plans.** The proposal supports state efforts to develop and strengthen evidence-based comprehensive pre-kindergarten through grade 12 literacy and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) plans.
- **Increased Learning Time for Young Children.** High-quality in-school and out-of-school strategies that provide young children and, where appropriate, teachers and family members, with additional learning time and resources would support success. These options include expanding the school day or year, providing full-service community schools, or offering services before school, after school, or during the summer.
- **Comprehensive Early Learning Assessment Systems.** Support for states and districts to develop and implement developmentally appropriate comprehensive early learning assessment systems would ensure programs are moving toward continuous improvement and preparing children to be successful in school and in life.

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