

INVESTING IN EARLY LEARNING

President Obama remains committed to an early learning agenda that supports a continuum of learning beginning at birth and continuing through third grade. A robust body of research demonstrates that high-quality early learning programs and services can improve health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes, can improve school readiness across a range of domains, can close and even prevent achievement gaps, and are among the most cost-effective investments along the educational pipeline. These programs can also be an important component of school reform because they prepare children to thrive in school, putting them on the path to graduate high school and be ready to succeed in college and a career.

The President's 2012 budget request includes major investments in a number of programs that will fund grants that seek to improve the quality of and access to early learning programs and services across all settings, especially for high-need children:

- **\$350 million for the new Early Learning Challenge Fund**, President Obama's proposal to make competitive grants to challenge States to establish model systems of early learning for children, from birth to kindergarten entry, including children with disabilities and English learners. These model systems would promote high standards of quality and a focus on outcomes across all settings to ensure that more children enter school ready to succeed.
- **\$489 million for Early Intervention Programs for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities**, \$50 million more than the 2011 CR level in formula grants to help States implement statewide systems of early intervention services to assist all eligible infants and toddlers with disabilities from birth through age 2 and their families through IDEA Part C. These funds would increase the average State allocation by almost \$1 million, help States serve an estimated 360,000 infants and toddlers, and encourage States to extend early intervention services to children through age 5. Additionally, this request would allow the Department to award up to \$4.4 million for State Incentive Grants (since the request is above \$460 million) to facilitate a seamless system of services for children with disabilities from birth until kindergarten.
- **\$374 million for Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities**, in formula grants to help States make a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment available to all children with disabilities ages 3 through 5. This program provides over 730,000 young children with disabilities additional supports to help ensure that they succeed in school.
- **\$150 million for Promise Neighborhoods**, to support projects that significantly improve the educational and developmental outcomes of children and youth in our most distressed communities and to transform those communities by providing a cradle-to-career continuum of ambitious, rigorous, and comprehensive education reforms, effective community services, and strong systems of family and community support – with high-quality schools at the center. The Secretary may give priority to applicants that propose to implement a comprehensive local early learning system as part of the applicant's cradle-to-career continuum.

In addition, the Department is proposing new and continued investments in programs that can improve the school readiness of young children and lay the foundation for success for children in kindergarten

through third grade. Funds from the following programs may be spent on children who are in preschool through third grade:

- **\$14.8 billion for College- and Career-Ready Students** (formerly Title I Grants to Local Educational Agencies). Since the enactment of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965, Title I funds have been available to provide services to eligible children birth to school entry. The Administration encourages districts and schools to use this flexibility to invest Title I funds in high-quality preschool programs for eligible children, joint professional development for school staff and the early learning workforce, and coordination with early learning programs and services.
- **\$600 million for School Turnaround Grants**, which would make available formula grants to States, to support States and districts as they implement rigorous interventions in their persistently lowest-performing schools. The Administration believes that high-quality early learning programs can be an important element of school reform, and school interventions may include locally designed plans that recognize and meet a broad range of student needs from preschool through grade 12, including improving the school readiness of young children.
- **\$300 million for Investing in Innovation**, which provides competitive grants that expand the implementation of, and investment in, innovative and evidence-based practices, programs and strategies that significantly improve student achievement and close achievement gaps. These grants can support activities that develop or expand innovations for improving early learning outcomes. Improving early learning outcomes is one of several priorities under consideration for the 2012 grant competition.
- **\$900 million for Race to the Top**, which would create and drive educational improvement in States and districts by providing a financial incentive for system-wide reform and innovation. States and districts will be held to ambitious performance targets while providing them flexibility to use funds in a manner that supports their reforms. The Secretary will consider giving priority to projects that are designed to improve early learning outcomes.

Additional investments in programs that can benefit young children include:

- 21st Century Community Learning Centers (\$1.27 billion)
- Assessing Achievement (\$420 million)
- Effective Teaching and Learning for a Complete Education programs (\$835 million)
- English Learner Education (\$750 million)
- Excellent Instructional Teams programs (\$3.25 billion)
- IDEA Grants to States (\$11.7 billion)
- Indian Education - Demonstration Grants for Indian Children (\$19 million)
- Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (\$100 million)
- Successful, Safe, and Healthy Students (\$365 million)

The Department of Health and Human Services is also investing in programs that benefit young children by requesting significant increases in funding for the following programs:

- **\$8.099 billion for the Head Start program**, which provides grants to local public and private non-profit and for-profit agencies to promote school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to disadvantaged children and families. This request maintains the historic expansion in Head Start and Early Head Start under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, allowing the program to serve approximately 968,000 of our nation's most vulnerable children and families.
- **\$6.344 billion for the Child Care and Development Fund**, which provides grants to States for child care subsidies for low-income families who are working. This request would increase funding over the previous year by \$1.3 billion, allowing the Administration to continue to maintain child care for 1.7 million children, enhance health and safety standards, improve the quality of care, and support state systems that empower parents to select high-quality care.