

## Summary of the Early Learning Provisions in the ESEA Reauthorization

The Elementary and Secondary Reauthorization Act of 2011 approved by the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee includes a number of provisions related to early learning. It authorizes several programs, including Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge, Promise Neighborhoods, and Investing in Innovation (i3), that had been funded through the FY 2011 Appropriations bill but not formally authorized. Highlights include:

### Title V

- Authorizes Race to the Top as a permanent program and includes the Early Learning Challenge as one of seven priorities that the Secretary of Education could choose for a competition. If the Secretary does so, in order to administer the RTT-Early Learning Challenge, the Secretary of Education must establish an interagency agreement with the Secretary of Health and Human Services.
  - The goals of the RTT-Early Learning Challenge would be to:
    - Increase the number and percentage of children from low-income families, in each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, who are enrolled in high-quality early childhood education and care programs.
    - Design and implement an integrated system of high-quality early childhood education and care programs and services that strengthens the coordination and collaboration among federal, state, and local early childhood education and care programs.
  - Grant funds to improve early childhood education could not be used for:
    - Assessments that provide rewards or sanctions for individual children or teachers.
    - A single assessment that is used as the primary or sole method for assessing program effectiveness.
    - Evaluating children, other than for the purposes of improving instruction, classroom environment, professional development, parent and family engagement, or program improvement.
  - States that provided a full-day kindergarten program to all kindergarten students or to all kindergarten students from low-income families would receive priority for the funds.
- Requires Investing in Innovation (i3) (a competitive grant program for local education agencies (LEAs) and non-profit organizations working in collaboration with LEA(s), or a consortium of schools, designed to improve K-12 achievement and close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates and improve teacher and school leader effectiveness) to include early learning as a priority.

### Title I

- Requires local educational agencies to have a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Head Start agencies in their communities. The language complements language included in the

2007 Head Start reauthorization that required Head Start grantees to have an MOU with local education agencies.

- Requires states to describe how the state educational agency has coordinated with the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education in developing the Title I plan, as appropriate.
- Requires local education agency plans to be developed in consultation with representatives of early childhood education and care programs in the geographic area served by the LEA, as appropriate.
- Allows school districts to use Title I dollars to pay for programs for children starting at birth (which they are currently allowed to do) before making allocations to high schools.
- Enables states to provide grants for comprehensive literacy activities for children from birth through high school in birth-to-five community early childhood programs. Schools would also be able to receive funds to support early literacy strategies and instruction. The state's plan would be developed in consultation with the State Advisory Council on Early Care and Education.
- Authorizes Promise Neighborhoods and includes a significant early childhood component as one of the key "pipeline" services that support children before birth through college. This initiative is designed to improve the educational and developmental outcomes of children in distressed communities by providing an entire neighborhood not only access to high-quality schools but also strong systems of family and community support beginning before birth.
- Allows states that have already developed, improved, and administered assessments and standards for K-12 that meet certain federal requirements to use grant funds to develop, enhance, or administer early learning assessments.
- Allows school improvement funds under a school closure strategy (when the local education agency closes a school and enrolls the students in other schools that are higher-achieving) to be used in the new school for high-quality prekindergarten programs and services.
- Requires coordination with early childhood providers in implementing school improvement strategies. If school readiness is identified in a needs analysis as an area in need of improvement, districts can develop a plan to improve or expand early childhood options, and use school improvement funds to do so. They can also develop a plan to coordinate with early childhood programs to align instruction to better prepare students for elementary school.

## Title II

- Requires states to describe how activities to support teachers and principals "will be coordinated with the state agency responsible for early childhood education and care programs and the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care."
- Allows funds to be used by school districts for joint professional development for teachers, principals, and other school staff with early childhood education and care program staff and for professional development of principals around early learning.
- Allows districts to use funds to reduce class size for prekindergarten through third grade.