

Recess Talking Points on Early Childhood Education

You may have the opportunity to engage in public education and the importance of early childhood education for children and their families. Below are some basic talking points to guide the conversation.

High quality child care and early education helps parents work and children learn

- High-quality child care and early education is essential to enable parents to get and keep a job and to give children a strong start toward success in school and life. This is an important investment in our nation's economic future. It improves health; reduces the need for special education, educational remediation and welfare; reduces high school dropout, juvenile justice and incarceration rates; and increases home ownership, employment and economic productivity.
- Research indicates that access to child care assistance increases the likelihood that parents are employed and that they may remain employed for longer periods of time.
- Child care assistance can not only give children greater access to high-quality environments while their parents work; by helping parents work, it can also lead to better home environments for children. When parents have the child care they need to work, they are able to earn more income, which can allow them to offer more stability, opportunities, and resources for their children.



Many low-income families are left without help paying for child care

- Many families—particularly low-income families—lack access to the high-quality child care and early education that parents need to work and children need to grow and thrive.
- Only 17 percent of the 14.3 million children eligible for federal child care assistance received it in 2011, and we have not made progress in closing this gap over the past few years.
- Families unable to receive help are often forced to use a patchwork of child care arrangements that do not provide the stability young children need and that can easily fall through, causing further disruption for children and jeopardizing parents' ability to hold onto a job.

Even families who are eligible for child care assistance may not receive it

- Eighteen states had waiting lists or turned away eligible families for assistance in 2014—and in a number of states, thousands of families are stuck waiting for help.
- Many families on waiting lists strain to pay for good-quality child care as well as other necessities. Without affordable child care, many parents also struggle to get and keep a job.

Restrictive assistance requirements can prevent parents from getting the education they need

- Many states put restrictions on child care assistance for parents who want to attend education and training. Parents may find it difficult to comply these requirements while struggling to balance competing demands of family, school, and—in some cases—work. As a result, parents may be unable to receive the education they need for more stable employment.

Low reimbursement rates can limit the availability of high-quality child care

- Only one state set its reimbursement rates for child care providers serving families receiving child care assistance at the federally recommended level as of February 2014.
- Low rates deprive child care providers of the resources necessary to hire and retain well-qualified staff, purchase toys and books, maintain facilities, and cover other costs involved in offering children a good learning experience. Low rates may discourage high-quality providers from even enrolling children receiving child care assistance.

The new Child Care and Development Block Grant law requires increased funding

- The law—passed in November 2014 with broad bipartisan support—includes important provisions that aim to improve the health and safety of care, raise the quality of care, and make it easier for families to get and keep child care assistance.
- Yet, without a significant increase in funding, we will not be able to achieve these goals and states will be forced to make tradeoffs that could have negative effects on children and families.

We have a long way to go to ensure that all children have a strong start

- Only 52 percent of three- and four-year-olds (not yet in kindergarten) are enrolled in public or private preschool programs—and children in low- and moderate-income families are less likely to be enrolled than children in higher-income families.
- A national study found that only about one-third of four-year-olds in center-based programs were receiving high-quality child care.
- Head Start, which provides comprehensive early care and education services to young children in poverty, reaches less than half of eligible preschool-age children. Early Head Start reaches less than 5 percent of eligible infants and toddlers.
- Forty states and the District of Columbia funded prekindergarten programs in the 2013-2014 school year. Yet these state prekindergarten programs reached only 29 percent of four-year-olds and 4 percent of three-year-olds. In addition, only five states funded prekindergarten programs that met all 10 of the key quality benchmarks identified by the National Institute for Early Education Research.

The time is now to increase investments in early learning

- We must continue to work for increased investments in early learning. Investments in starting children off right pay off for a lifetime, for families and for our country.
- In addition to increasing funding for early care and education programs, Congress must lift the sequester caps so that these increases do not come at the expense of other programs that provide crucial help for families.

Sample Letter to the Editor

Below is a sample Letter to the Editor. We encourage you to make it your own by using state-specific facts, or strategically adding or subtracting details depending on what's happening in your state.

It's time for America to invest in early childhood. High quality child care and early education helps parents work and children learn, yet far too many low-and moderate-income families are left without help paying for the child care they need. Only 17 percent of the 14.3 million children eligible for federal child care assistance received it in 2011, and we have not made progress in closing this gap over the past few years. To provide children with the early learning opportunities that lay a strong foundation for their success in school and life, Congress must significantly increase investments in early care and education programs. In addition, Congress must lift the sequester caps for non-defense discretionary spending so that these increases do not come at the expense of other programs that provide crucial help for families.

Early education is one of the best investments we can make. Children who attend high-quality early education are more likely to do well in school, graduate from high school, and find a stable job. High-quality child care also helps parents be productive at work with the peace of mind that their children are in safe learning environments. This investment will yield high returns for our children, families, and the nation.



Sample Social Media

Sample Tweets

- RT if you agree: It's time for Congress to #InvestInKids to ensure that all children have access to affordable, high-quality early learning
- Congress may be in recess, but we're not playing around. It's time to #InvestInKids
- Congress must lift the NDD budget caps so investments in child care don't come at the expense of other help for families. #InvestInKids
- Quality child care helps parents work and children succeed in school and throughout their lives. #InvestInKids
- Lack of affordable child care hurts job stability for working parents. #InvestInKids
- Only 17% of eligible children got federal assistance for child care in 2011. We can't leave millions of children behind. #InvestInKids
- Need child care assistance? There might be thousands of families ahead of you on state waiting lists. It's time to #InvestInKids.
- State restrictions on child care assistance can make it harder for working parents to continue their education. #InvestInKids
- When states pay low reimbursement rates to providers serving families receiving child care assistance, quality suffers. #InvestInKids
- Every child deserves a strong start, but children from low-income families are less likely to be enrolled in pre-K programs. #InvestInKids

Sample Facebook Posts

- Everyone knows that kids are our future. When we invest in affordable and high-quality child care and education we make sure no one starts school already behind. Tell Congress to invest in kids and fund early learning and child care programs!
- Children need a safe space to grow and learn. Not having to access to child care and early education puts stress on parents, kids, and families. Tell Congress to invest in kids and fund early learning and child care programs!
- Congress should increase investments in child care and early learning, but not at the expense of other important programs that help families. It's time to lift the budget caps to allow investments in health, education, and other supports that help children and families succeed!