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**Redefining ESEA:
The Critical Role of Pre-K and the Early Grades in
School Reform Efforts**

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Agenda

- Why Early Education in ESEA
- The Federal Context
- Implications for Early Education
- Policy Options for Redefining ESEA (Discussion)
- Conclusion



Why Early Education in ESEA?

- Research behind pre-k and lessons learned from pre-k to third alignment tells us early education is the first step to school reform.
- Early education fits the mission behind ESEA.
- Transform from a K-12 to Pre-K to 12 education system.



Changing Federal Landscape

- Early Learning Challenge Fund
 - Administration's major effort
 - Reconciliation, health care...and student loans?
- Race to the Top and Invest in Innovation Fund
 - Applications now available for both
 - Additional funding requested in budget
- President's Budget Proposals
 - Flat funding for Title I and IDEA
 - Increases for CCDBG and Head Start
 - Favors competitive over formula grants
 - Proposes "additional \$1 billion" if ESEA is reauthorized



Administration's ESEA Blueprint

- What's missing? Pre-k!
- Glimmers of hope
 - **Building state capacity** – includes “coordinating with early learning programs to improve school readiness” as an activity
 - **Literacy** – mentions preK-12 alignment.
 - **Investing in Innovation** – “improving early learning outcomes” cited as a pressing need.
- But big political issues dominate the landscape:
 - Funding – competitive grants, formula issues, Title I “strings”
 - Accountability – standards, assessments, “AYP” deadlines
 - “Reward” and “Challenge” designations for schools and LEAs
 - Teacher effectiveness – evaluations, incentives, development



ESEA Politics and Process

- Authorizing Committees
 - House Education and Labor
 - Reps. Miller, Kline, Kildee and Castle – launched bi-partisan effort to re-write the law
 - Senate HELP
 - Sen. Harkin and Sen. Enzi – build on what works, fix what does not
 - Sen. Alexander – envisions “tweaks” not an overhaul
- Both committees have held several hearings, including hearings today on the Administration’s Blueprint.

Road Map

- Key Principles from CCSSO Early Childhood Task Force
- ESEA T.F. recommendations:
 - Standards, Assessments, Accountability
 - Data Systems
 - Educator Development
 - “Next Generation Learners”
- Implication for Early Childhood Advocates



Early Childhood Policy Priorities

- Build coherent early childhood systems
- Ensure quality programs
- Align & integrate ECE & K-3rd grade
(Standards, curricula, assessments, data, professional development, family engagement..)
- Craft a new state-federal partnership



ESEA Recommendations: Standards, Assessments/Accountability

- Maintain strong accountability
- Shift metrics/incentives to student progress towards college/career standards
- Flexibility for states in assessments, reporting, and improving failing schools

Data Systems

- Fund enhanced P-20 data systems to track student growth & support teaching, school improvement, professional development.
- Simplify federal data requirements/reports.
- Common standards for state data efforts



Educator Development

- Improve teachers/principal evaluations based on multiple measures (including student achievement).
- Continue to improve access to highly effective teachers.



Next Generation Learners

- Fund school improvement, extended learning time, & birth – grade 12 literacy programs.
- New early childhood funding stream to expand access to high quality, standards-based programs for infants, toddlers, preschools.



Implications for Early Childhood

- Chiefs view early education as integral to school reform; grasp vision of 0-8 continuum; high quality; collaboration
- Conceptual/political challenge is how to use ESEA to expand funding for high quality early education & foster exemplary ECE-Grade 3 practices/partnerships.

Implications for Early Childhood

- **Accountability** is here to stay but methods will evolve. Shift from NCLB's prescriptive mandates could open space for innovative PK-3 efforts.
- **Data systems** should incorporate/link to data on young children, early care and ed. programs & the e.c. workforce

Implications for Early Childhood

- **Educator Development** efforts should improve evaluation methods & professional development for teachers of young children.
- **Funding:** New early education funding stream would support high quality early education as strategy for preventing/minimizing achievement gaps/shortfalls for disadvantaged students.

Rethinking ESEA policies

The current law and the Blueprint give us at least 5 buckets...

- Funding
- Assessment and accountability
- Professional development
- Data collection
- Expanded learning time

The hardest nuts to crack?

- Funding
- Assessment and accountability

Low-hanging fruit?

- Ensure that early childhood professionals are included in **professional development programs**
 - Be explicit about their applicability to school-based and community-based pre-K programs
- Ensure that longitudinal **data systems** include children before age 5
 - Better yet, integrate them with birth-to-five systems
 - Note that in the “Blueprint,” there is no mention of collecting data on children’s experiences before school entry, though there is support for using data “to identify local needs and improve student outcomes.”
- Ensure that “**extended learning time**” (a catchphrase in the “Blueprint”) can mean pre-K or other early childhood programs that are not part of the traditional school paradigm



The Tough Questions

(And there are surely many more)

- Funding
 - How do you provide the most stability and protection from future cuts?
 - To what extent will greater investments for early childhood, preschool, pre-K and preK-3rd programs lead districts to feel that they have to borrow from already existent programs?
 - What if districts need to roll-out full-day kindergarten first

The Tough Questions

(And there are surely many more)

- Accountability and assessments
 - You want more funding? Be ready for more accountability.
 - How do you measure progress in a 4- or 5-year-old? What tools are developmentally appropriate?
 - How can assessment tools be used to *support teachers and improve instruction*?
 - What are the best ways to acquire useful, valid and reliable data?
 - How do you account for children’s different levels of “readiness” when they arrive at school?

Funding

Should ESEA include...

- A **new Title** with an early learning funding stream?
- A **Title I set-aside** for early childhood programs or, more explicitly, 4-year-olds?
- An **incentive fund to states**, enabling them to extend grants that support planning and development efforts for PreK-3rd programs?

Funding (cont.)

Should ESEA include...

- Expansion of early learning programs as a **priority in School Improvement Grants** under current Title I (or for Challenge schools, districts or states as labeled under “Blueprint”)?
- Explicit mention of funds for early learning investments in grants that would go to the “**Reward**” **schools, districts or states**, per Obama’s “Blueprint”?
- Expansion of **funding formulae** to include populations starting at age 3?

Pros & Cons

- A new Title with an early learning funding stream?
 - PRO: Not competing for a slice of an already divided pie
 - CON: More segregation between ECE and K12?
- A Title I set-aside?
 - PRO: A dedicated funding stream
 - CON: Forcing cuts elsewhere?
- An incentive fund to states?
 - PRO: Supports state efforts already in progress and spurs new ones
 - CON: Where would the money come from? How would states' progress be measured?

Pros & Cons, cont.

- Make early learning a priority in school improvement grants
 - PRO: A way to signal the importance of these programs
 - CON: Only “schools in need of improvement” are funded

- Include early learning investments in grants for “Reward” schools, districts or states
 - PRO: A way to signal the importance of these programs
 - CON: Only Reward sites are funded.

- Expansion of funding formulae
 - PRO: Recognizes that 3- and 4-year-olds are already in public education systems
 - CON: Would it have any impact on actual funding or practice?



Assessments & Accountability

More to untangle before policy options become clear

- Assessments of program quality AND student outcomes? Starting at what age? Multiple measures and broader domains?
- How will these tie into proposal for “effective teacher” provisions in ESEA?
- Should the law reward states that develop plans for assessing young children that adhere to developmentally appropriate principles?
- Should the law reward schools and districts that use assessments to help teachers improve their practice and adopt interventions?
- Should the law allow for research grants that address questions surrounding assessment tools and their validity?
- Should the law include funding for evaluation of whether various assessment systems are working? E.g., how do we test the tests?

Assessments & Accountability in the PreK-3rd framework

- The use of valid and reliable data on **program quality and children's progress** is a vital piece of the preK-3rd approach when used to
 - Support teachers by indicating areas of student growth
 - Provide guidance for instruction
 - Make visible the need for early interventions
 - Bring teachers together across grades for professional development and instructional planning
 - Spur the alignment of standards and curricula across the grades

Conclusion

- Early education reflects the priorities of the Obama Administration
 - Investing in what works based on evidence
 - Getting away from “business as usual”
 - Getting out of the “catch up business”
- Early education community needs to take the lead in the conversation.



Next Steps in ESEA

- Learn more about the ESEA Blueprint:
<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint/index.html>.
- Send comments to the House Education and Labor Committee at eseacomments@mail.house.gov by March 26, 2010.
- Share your ESEA thoughts with the Department of Education here: esea.comment@ed.gov



Resources

Statements from:

CCSSO - <http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/A%20Quiet%20Crisis-PolicyStatement%20final.pdf>

Children's Defense Fund - <http://www.childrensdefense.org/helping-americas-children/early-childhood-education-child-care/>

CLASP - http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/ESEA_comments.pdf

Early Care and Education Consortium –
http://www.ececonsortium.org/ECEC_ELstakeholders_29Jan2010.pdf

NAECS-SDE - <http://www.naecs-sde.org/policy>

NAEYC -
<http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/policy/federal/ESEAreauthorizationrecommendations.pdf>

New America Foundation -
http://earlyed.newamerica.net/publications/resources/2010/remarks_to_the_department_of_education_on_january_29_2010

Pre-K Now –
http://www.preknow.org/documents/PKNStatement_StakeholderMeetingatED_1-29-10.pdf



Contact Information

- Call or e-mail us to discuss your insights and ideas in more detail
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We would also welcome receiving a copy of your comments.



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