

# Aligning and Supporting Early Childhood Education

## What to Learn from Your State's ESSA Plan

ESSA offers new flexibility to support early childhood programs for the use of federal funds under Title I, Title II and Title IV, as well as IDEA parts B and C. Each state will have determined whether and how early childhood program access will be developed, expanded, and/or implemented using state and federal funds, and how these decisions will affect districts.

## Guidance for School Improvement

LEAs should consider how early education strategies might contribute to an aligned system of supports for children and families across the early years and grades, including: expanded access to early learning, improved transitions into kindergarten, enhanced quality of service, engagement of families, expanded curricular activities, and supporting English learners and children with disabilities.

High-quality intervention and education that begins in the first five years and is maintained through the early elementary years can combat achievement gaps that might otherwise begin before children enter kindergarten and sustain as they move throughout K-12.<sup>10</sup> Many school districts provide early learning directly, and all districts can partner with local early learning providers to share information on children and families, align standards and expectations, coordinate professional development and supports, and implement systems that support the transition into kindergarten.

Title I funds can be used to add early education classrooms that comply with the federal Head Start Performance Standards.<sup>11</sup> Title II funds can be used to support professional opportunities for preschool and early learning educators.

LEAs should look to support joint professional development that:

1. increases the ability of school leaders to support early childhood and elementary educators in meeting the needs of students from birth-age 8, and (2) increases teacher capacity in the early grades, including building educators' knowledge base regarding instruction and strategies to measure how young children are progressing.
2. Title III funds can be used to support early learning professional development to build opportunities for English learners. Title IV funds can be used to provide services like school-based comprehensive educational and family support services for families with preschool age children (e.g. through Child-Parent Centers), expanded program hours through Community School partnerships, "pipeline services" (e.g. support for a child's transition to elementary school), and improved coordination (e.g. using data from the administration of the Early Development Instrument to develop community-wide strategies that support children's health and development across multiple domains).

10. Regenstein, E., Romero-Jurado, R., Cohen, J., and Segal, A. (2014). "Changing the Metrics of Turnaround to Encourage Early Learning Strategies." 4. Ounce of Prevention Fund and Mass Insight Education. <http://www.theounce.org/what-we-do/policy/policy-conversations>; Loeb, S., and Bassok, D. (2007). "Early Childhood and the Achievement Gap." In H.F. Ladd and E.B. Fiske, eds. Handbook of Research in Education Finance and Policy.

11. First Five Years Fund. (January 2017). "What Early Learning in ESSA Can Look Like for States and Districts."

## Find Support for this Strategy in ESSA

TITLE I, PART A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies  
TITLE I, PART C: Education of Migratory Children  
TITLE II, PART A: Supporting Effective Instruction  
TITLE III, PART A: English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act  
TITLE IV, PART A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants  
TITLE IV, PART B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers

## Essential Stakeholders

- ✓ Parents and families of young children, including those of differing income levels and/or high-quality learning opportunities.
- ✓ Early learning providers, including 0-3 programs, and center- and home-based childcare providers, including those in English learner and low-income communities, and communities of color
- ✓ Family resource centers and healthcare providers, including pediatricians
- ✓ Local early childhood collaboratives and advocates, including child development experts
- ✓ Home visiting programs
- ✓ Title I, Part C providers for Migrant Youth
- ✓ Kindergarten Readiness and assessment experts
- ✓ Charter Management Organizations (CMO) and charter school leaders

## Ask the Experts

- ✓ [What Early Learning in ESSA Can Look Like for States and Districts \(First Five Years Fund\)](#)
- ✓ [Resources on Early Learning & ESSA \(Ounce of Prevention\)](#)
- ✓ [Equity Starts Early: Addressing Racial Inequities in Child Care and Early Education Policy \(CLASP\)](#)
- ✓ [Policy Brief: The State of Early Learning in ESSA: Plans and Opportunities for Implementation \(CCSSO\)](#)