

Public Policy Notes

Southern Early Childhood Association

The White House Summit on Early Childhood Education

"What makes America exceptional isn't just the size of our economy or our influence around the globe. [It's] the promise we make to our children; the idea that no matter who they are, what they look like, where they start, how much their parents earn, they can make it if they try. It's the essential promise of America - that where you start should not and will not determine how far you can go." President Barack Obama

On December 10, 2014, President Obama hosted a **White House Summit on Early Childhood Education**. The Summit convened "state and local policymakers, mayors, school superintendents, corporate and community leaders, and advocates" to highlight the need for early childhood education for all American children.

President Obama announced a collective investment of \$1 billion that incorporates both federal

and private investment. The total included over \$330 million in new programs from private and philanthropic sources and \$750 million in new federal grant awards. (The federal grants included previously announced grant competitions, the Preschool Development Grants Program and the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships Program.)

Additionally, the administration has proposed the following:

- 1) Establishing high-quality preschool as a core strategy for school turnaround under the

School Improvement Grants (SIG) Program.

- 2) New investments by the Corporation for National and Community Service's Social Innovation Fund (SIF) and the Institute for Child Success (ICS) to launch evidence-based interventions.
- 3) Curbing preschool suspension and expulsion as a part of the My Brother's Keeper Initiative.



President Barack Obama hosts the White House Summit on Early Education in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building South Court Auditorium, Dec. 10, 2014. (Official White House Photo by Lawrence Jackson)

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More Information on the Summit

You will find a blog post on the White House website that includes information on the private programs that are being proposed and more specifics on the administration's new and previous initiatives.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/12/10/invest-us-president-obama-convenes-white-house-summit-early-education>

Preschool Development Grants Awarded to 5 SECA States

As a part of the White House Summit on Early Childhood Education, Education Secretary Arne Duncan and HHS Secretary Sylvia Burwell announced the recipients of the Preschool Development Grants. The grants were made to 18 states (out of 36 applicants) and were divided into three categories. **Total grant funding for the Preschool Development Grants was \$226 million.**



“Expanding access to high-quality preschool is critically important to ensure the success of our children in school and beyond...The states that have received

new Preschool Development Grants will serve as models for ex-

panding preschool to all 4-year-olds from low-and-moderate income families. These states are demonstrating a strong commitment to building and enhancing early learning systems, closing equity gaps and expanding opportunity so that more children in America can fulfill their greatest potential.” Secretary Duncan

The grant program funded three categories among the applicants.

- ◆ **Development Grants** for states with no or small state-funded preschool programs. **Alabama was awarded \$17,500,000 in this category.**
- ◆ **Expansion Grants** were designed to expand the scope of an existing program and expansion into regionally diverse communities. No SECA states were

awarded grants under this category.

- ◆ **Non RTT-ELC (Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge) Grants** were awarded to states that had applied for funding but were not recipients of those grants. The following SECA states were funded under that category:

Arkansas—\$14,993,000

Louisiana—\$2,437,982

Tennessee—\$17,500,000

Virginia—\$17,500,000

It is anticipated that more than 33,000 additional children will be served in the first year of the program. *Source: Press Release, U.S. Department of Education, 12/11/2014, <https://www.ed.gov/new/press-releases>*

Invest in US: A New Initiative

The **First Five Years Fund** and its **partners** have launched an independent initiative in response to the President’s call for action on early childhood education. “It challenges public and private partners, business leaders, philanthropists, advocates, elected officials, and individuals to build a better nation by expanding high-quality early childhood education.” **Invest in us** is designed to serve “as a hub to aggregate momentum and support for early learning and provide resources to community leaders working to expand access to early childhood

education.”

Some of those initiatives announced at the White House included:

- ⇒ \$55 million in “high-quality learning apps and books to First Book and other non-profits to make print and digital tools more accessible to young learners across the country.”
- ⇒ \$5 million from the LEGO Foundation “to launch an Early Learning Initiative with New Profit, Inc. and empower children to become creative and engaged lifelong learners.”



- ⇒ \$25 million over 5 years from the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation to scale evidence-based early childhood programs, advance early learning Social Impact Bond investments, and further research on economic efficacy of government investments that transform the lives of disadvantaged young children and families.”

For more information, go to www.investinus.org or call 1-844-468-7887.

Expulsions or Suspensions in Pre-K



HHS Secretary Sylvia Burwell and Education Secretary Arne Duncan have released a joint

policy statement on expulsions or suspensions in Pre-K.

“Exclusionary discipline practices occur at high rates in early learning settings and at even higher rates for young boys of color. Part of President Obama’s My Brother’s Keeper Initiative encourages states, early childhood programs and families to partner in preventing, reducing and eventually eliminating the expulsion and suspension of young children

from early learning programs.”

“This policy statement is part of a series of Federal actions that aim to prevent, severely reduce, and ultimately eliminate expulsion and suspension in early childhood settings, and more broadly, to improve school climates and discipline across the educational spectrum. This statement follows the January 2014 release of the Department of Education’s *Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline*, which provides recommendations for reducing expulsion, suspension, and disciplinary removals in K-12 settings.... Although early childhood settings differ in context from K-12 settings, the *Guiding Principles* are applicable

to both, such that focusing on prevention, developing and communicating clear behavioral expectations, and ensuring fairness, equity, and continuous improvement, can and should be applied across settings where children learn .”

Source: *Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Policies in Early Childhood Settings*, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov>

As part of this commitment, Sec. Burwell announced that HHS will dedicate \$4 million toward early childhood mental health consultation services to help prevent this troubling practice and to help all children thrive in early learning settings.

The Economics of Early Childhood Investments

The White House Council of Economic Advisors released a report this month entitled, *The Economics of Early Childhood Investments*.

This report makes the case once again for investing early. The report “describes the economic returns to investments in childhood development and early education.” They point out that in one case, an increase in parental earnings and employment provides an immediate benefit while other benefits such as greater educational attainment and earnings are realized later when children become adults.

The report concludes that “the existing research suggests ex-

panding early learning initiatives would provide benefits to society of roughly \$8.60 for every \$1 spent, about half of which comes from increased earnings for children when they grow up.

- High quality early education for all would narrow the achievement gap....
- Early childhood education can boost children’s earnings later in life....
- Earnings gains from increased enrollment in early childhood education would provide benefits that outweigh the costs of the program....
- High-quality affordable child care can help parents balance

work and family responsibilities....

- Early childhood education can lower involvement with the criminal justice system....
- Early childhood interventions can reduce the need for remedial education....”

The Council of Economic Advisers, an agency within the Executive Office of the President, is charged with offering the President objective economic advice on the formulation of both domestic and international economic policy.

For a copy of the report, go to <http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/cea/factsheets-reports>

Southern Early Childhood Association

1123 S. University, Ste 255
Little Rock, AR 72204

Phone: 800-305-SECA

Fax: 501-227-5297

E-mail:

info@southernearlychildhood.org

www.southernearlychildhood.org

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"A Voice for Southern Children"

How to Use Public Policy Notes

If you're interested in advocacy, one of the most effective tools that you can have is access to information. This newsletter is provided as a service to locate and share information that we think will be helpful to you in your work at the state level and to keep you updated on what's happening in public policy.

You'll find information that:

- **Compares your state to other SECA states**—how you're doing, what issues you have in common, what the hot topics are in your states.
- **Brings the national scene to your fingertips** and gives you a perspective on how national events might impact you... You'll also receive information about where to find additional information.

We hope you'll find it helpful. Children need you to be their "voice" in your community and state.

This monthly newsletter is produced by Glenda Bean, SECA Executive Director.

SECA strives to provide non-partisan and non-biased information

that is of interest to early childhood educators. Sign up at

http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/policy_newsletter_sign.php

to receive notice of its availability each month.

News to Note

Washington, D.C.

Congress passed and the President will sign the first bi-partisan comprehensive budget bill in several years. The bill funds the government through September 30th of 2015 with the exception of Homeland Security which is funded only through February 2015. (This was a reaction to the President's Executive Order on immigration.) Beginning in January, work will start on the FY 2016 budget which is slated to begin in October 2015. It remains to be seen how this new Congress with its Republican majority will work with a Democratic President.



Louisiana

As expected, long-time Democratic **Senator Mary Landrieu** lost the December 6th runoff to her Republican challenger. This adds one more "win" in the Republicans' count.

Arkansas

On December 5, 2014, the Administrative Rules and Regulations Subcommittee of the Arkansas Legislative Council approved a revision of the state's child care licensing regulations. The revisions had been underway for nearly two years with significant provider and community input. Major revisions included staff/child ratios in infant/toddler/

pre-K classrooms. The regulations also amended higher education requirements for directors, required the use of helmets on certain playground equipment, and prohibit ball pits, trampolines and wading pools. Visit <http://humanservices.arkansas.gov/dcce> for a copy.

Florida and Georgia

The **Orange County (Florida)** and **Gwinnett County (Georgia)** Public Schools were named the recipients of the 2014 Broad Prize. They shared a total of \$1 million in prize money, the first time in the prize's 12 years that two recipients were named. The prize is designed to support improvement in urban school systems and long-term growth.