

## Office of Early Learning February Newsletter 2016



# EARLY LEARNING AT ED

Working to improve outcomes for all children from birth through third grade

Subscribe to our monthly *Early Learning at ED* newsletter [here](#).

### Message from the Deputy Assistant Secretary Libby Doggett



#### Off and Running!

President Obama's early learning team at ED and HHS now has less than a year left. We are determined not to waste even one day and wanted to share some of what is planned for 2016.

With the growing research base on the connections between the arts and learning, we piggy backed on a K-12 [Turnaround Arts](#) program, sponsored by the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities. Now musicians, artists, actors, dancers, puppeteers and other arts professionals are providing specialized support and resources to Head Start, preschools, kindergartens, and early elementary classrooms in California, Minneapolis, Des Moines, and Washington, D.C. The Wolf Trap Foundation is helping as well. You can imagine how the joy and learning brought to these classrooms through this project.

In partnership with the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) we have funded a [new research network](#) to develop reliable information and useful tools to improve early childhood education across the country. These five centers will look at school transitions, classroom factors associated with school readiness, and longitudinal studies of achievement. In addition, an assessment team will use technology, three existing observation tools, and new data to develop an observation system to use in preschool and elementary school classrooms.

In late spring ED will release new Civil Rights Data Collection reports showing the progress made in reducing [suspensions](#) in preschool and the state of [chronic absenteeism](#) beginning in kindergarten. We will work with HHS and the field to continue to provide teachers the supports and children the developmentally appropriate settings needed to assure no young child is expelled or suspended.

Last year's seminal report on the [Transforming the Workforce](#) from the [Institute of Medicine \(IOM\)](#), a division of the [National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine](#), will be followed by two consensus studies released later this year: [Supporting the Parents of Young Children](#) and [Fostering School Success for English Learners](#). This year we'll also release a report on the early childhood career ladder; case studies on sustaining the effects of preschool through the early grades; and case studies on how Kindergarten Entry

Assessments (KEA) are being used in a few states and communities. We will also publish two new joint ED/HHS policy statements: one on [family engagement](#) and another on health promotion. And finally we'll provide families with a new Parent Toolkit to help identify quality in early learning programs.

We are also working with some key early learning groups to include early learning teachers in ED's highly successful [Teach to Lead](#) summits. We will be reaching out to all of you to help find early childhood teachers to participate.

And we have left the most important work to the end: we will be advancing through multiple means the amazing accomplishments of our 38 [ELC](#) and [PDG](#) grantees who are improving and expanding early learning for our most vulnerable children. It is going to be a busy year!

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## Voices From the Field

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### Voices from the Field: Albert Wat

"More so than ever before, early childhood educators, program directors, and policy leaders should be able to see themselves in our nation's most significant public education law, moving us closer to a P-12 system."

Interview with Albert Wat, Senior Policy Director

Alliance for Early Success

by Senior Policy Advisor Steven Hicks



Albert Wat is a part of the Leadership Team at Alliance for Early Success, leading a portfolio of state and national partnerships and investments focused on pre-K and the education continuum birth through grade three. Previously, he served as a Senior Policy Analyst in the Education Division of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Research Manager at Pre-K Now. In 2014, Albert served on the committee of the Institute of Medicine's study, [Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation](#). Read Albert's Interview [here](#).

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## Preschool Development Grants



[Nevada](#)'s priority through the Preschool Development-Expansion Grant is to enhance state capacity to implement and sustain high-quality Pre-K programs. The State's current quality half-day day Pre-K program is a project-ready system prepared to expand into full-day high-quality Pre-K and as the first step in building a continued Pre-K infrastructure, Nevada proposed to increase high-quality Pre-K slots by 58% within four years and serve approximately 15% of the state's four-year-old population living in poverty. With an overall goal of sustainability- from workforce, to infrastructure, to post-grant P-3 investment- the opportunity of Nevada's Preschool Expansion Grant allows the State to develop these important areas. Read about Nevada and the other Preschool Development Grant states [here](#).

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## RTT-ELC: Program Spotlight

At the end of the first year of its RTT-ELC grant, Georgia noted significant progress:

- The Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) assisted with paying for 889 early childhood education credential and degrees.
- DECAL printed 20,000 Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards Teacher Toolboxes.
- 451 new child care programs became Quality Rated.
- 11,214 children who receive child care subsidy were served in Quality Rated programs receiving tiered subsidy reimbursement based on star level.
- A child care center-based home visiting program was established in each of Georgia's four Early Education Empowerment Zones. Read more [here](#).



## Technical Assistance



### Annual Report

The CEELO annual [report](#) for the third operating year has been submitted. The report includes the extensive list of presentations, reports, FastFacts, newsletters, webinars, and other resources developed this year, with links to most. An Executive Summary will be available soon.

### Licensing Exemptions Guide

[Early Childhood Program Licensing Exemptions](#) is a brief document offering responses from state contacts on the NAECS-SDE listserv, who were asked about exemptions from licensing requirements for early childhood programs in their state. Responses indicate that licensing exemptions may apply to any center that provides preschool education. All states have certain legal exemptions from licensing and—depending on the type of early childhood program—these licensing exemptions may vary.



### Only in America: Four years into life, poor kids are already an entire year behind

Wealthy parents aren't just able to send their kids to top pre-schools – they can also purchase the latest learning technology and ensure their children experience as many museums, concerts and other cultural experiences as possible. Low-income parents, on the other hand, don't have that opportunity. Instead, they're often left to face the reality of sending their kids to schools without having had the chance to provide an edifying experience at home. As a result, low-income children enter school already a year behind the kids of wealthier parents. That deficit is among the largest in the developed world, and it can be extraordinarily difficult to narrow later in life. Read more [here](#).

PDG TA  
Welcome to the  
Preschool Development  
and Expansion Grant Technical  
Assistance Program Website!



## Early Learning at ED



## 2015 ED Games Expo

On December 9, 2015 government officials joined parents, kids, gaming enthusiasts and developers for the 2015 ED Games Expo. The event, co-hosted by [1776](#) and the Entertainment Software Association, featured 45 developers who demo'd the latest versions of games designed to engage students across a variety of topics and subject matters including science, coding, math, history, social and behavioral skills.

Two-thirds of the games on display at the Expo are supported by the [Institute of Education Sciences Small Business Innovation Research \(ED/IES SBIR\) program](#), which provides awards to companies to improve the use of technology in education. A few of the SBIR games shown during the event included "[Happy Atoms](#)" by Schell Games, "[Eco](#)" by Strange Loop Games, and Second Avenue Learning's "[Voter's Ed](#)". You can learn more about the night [here](#) or at [Inside IES Research](#).

## Calling All Early Childhood Education Teachers!



Do you have a GREAT idea that you need help developing?

Join us at the Teach to Lead Summit, April 9-10, 2016 in New Orleans, LA to collaborate with other teacher leaders and supporter organizations. Submit your idea [here](#) by Feb. 8th to be chosen as a participant. To [learn more](#) and be inspired, go [www.teachtolead.org](http://www.teachtolead.org).

## International News



### The benefits and costs of investing in early childhood education

In October the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published a new report, [Starting Strong IV: Monitoring Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care](#), that considers how countries can develop and use monitoring systems to ensure quality and accountability in early childhood education. This new publication includes reviews of instruments used to monitor the quality of staff and programs. Additionally it offers an international perspective and concrete examples to help policy makers, monitoring experts and practitioners in the field develop their own monitoring policies and practices.

## Federal Agencies at Work

The Departments of Education and Health and Human Services invite you to join them via Google Hangout on February 11th at 3:00 EST for a discussion about [inclusion in early childhood programs](#) and why it matters to States, early childhood programs, families, and young children with and without disabilities. On February 18th at 3:00 EST, Phil Strain from the University of Colorado Denver will host a webinar on the research supporting early childhood inclusion.

The discussion kicks off a series of webinars on the research, practice, and public awareness of inclusion in early childhood programs, to be held over the next several months. You can find information about the Google Hangout and webinar series at [www.ed.gov/early-learning.gov](http://www.ed.gov/early-learning.gov)



### Early Childhood Homelessness in the United States: 50-State Profile

ACF is releasing [Early Childhood Homelessness in the United States: 50-State Profile](#). It provides a "snapshot" of early childhood data available for children who are experiencing homelessness in each state and is a tool for communities in planning to meet the needs of vulnerable children. Read more [here](#).

## Research and Reports

Research is increasingly demonstrating that investments in education provide significant benefits to children, families, and society as a whole, accelerating economic growth and promoting opportunity over time. This study describes and analyzes the benefits and costs of investing in a public, voluntary, high-quality universal prekindergarten program made available to all 3- and 4-year-olds across the United States. Read more [here](#).



### Preschool children's participation in representational and non-representational activities

This study examined representational and non-representational activities in which children in a Head Start classroom participated. This was an investigation from the perspective of cultural-historical activity theory of how components (e.g. artifacts and division of labour) of classroom activities vary across and within types of activities. Participants included a class of 21 ethnically diverse 4- and 5-year-olds and two teachers. Read more [here](#).

### A Blueprint for Early Care and Education Quality Improvement Initiatives

Looking to improve early care and education? So were other readers in 2015. Join them in reading this report, featuring recommended foundational elements, implementation efforts, and improvement activities for quality improvement initiatives. These recommendations are based on existing research and input from national experts. Read more [here](#).



### Early Learning in the News



#### K-12 Still Struggling for Traction as Campaign Issue

School policy could be further marginalized in the 2016 presidential race now that ESSA resolves big questions over federal power in areas like testing and teacher evaluation. Read more [here](#).

#### Education Department Begins to Assess ESSA-Era Role

The new K-12 law contains checks on the U.S. secretary's authority, but the agency still has policy tools in its shed, especially in the areas of civil rights and data resources. Read more [here](#).

#### Law Adds to Pre-K's Stature as Federal-State Priority

The Every Student Succeeds Act locks into law a \$250 million grant program to support states as they develop preschool programs and directs money to state early-childhood literacy efforts. Read more [here](#).

#### Senator Proposes Tax Credits for Early Childhood Programs

A Nebraska senator is proposing a series of state tax credits to address the high cost of child care and to increase access to early childhood programs. Sen. Heath Mello of Omaha introduced legislation Monday that he says would focus on the state's youngest children, particularly those who are at risk of falling in

school. Read more [here](#)

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### Public preschools attempt to accommodate diverse languages of students



While Spanish is by far the most common language other than English in California's publicly funded pre-kindergarten programs, they enroll children who speak a variety of languages, reflecting the pockets of ethnic communities dotting California. In Los Angeles County alone, 224 languages and dialects are spoken by children in [Head Start](#) and the [California State Preschool Program](#).

Preschool programs are playing a key role in helping children who speak languages other than English get ready for kindergarten. More than half of students in those two programs – the largest ones statewide – speak a language other than English at home. Read more [here](#).

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### Encouraging Stories in Early Learning



#### A Different Way of Doing Business

States and districts across the country are making an effort to align policy and practice from pre-kindergarten to third grade, with the hope of closing achievement

gaps and ensuring success for all children. Read more [here](#)

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### Developing a High-Quality Early Learning Continuum

As the 18-month grace period for formal monitoring of Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships comes to an end, it is important to consider next steps that will allow them to continue to effectively collaborate and coordinate programs. Read more [here](#).

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### Creating Effective Transitions

As the need for program alignment between preschool and kindergarten becomes more of a priority, federal, state, and local policymakers can look to Head Start's current transition partnerships as a guide. Read more [here](#).

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### Examining Quality Across the Preschool-to-Third-Grade Continuum

For the past several decades, U.S. policymakers at every level have highlighted the need to close the educational achievement gaps between racial and socioeconomic groups. One much-needed improvement is better alignment across the preschool-to-third-grade continuum. This report describes access to quality early education programs and examines whether current teaching practices provide regular exposure to the skills identified within state standards at each grade level. Read more [here](#).

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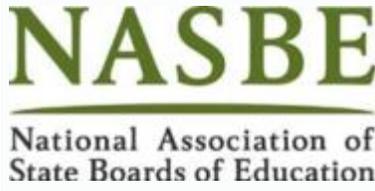
### Hawaii Reading Scores Improved After "Preschool to Third Grade" Initiative

Hawaii's "preschool to third-grade" initiative significantly improved third-grade reading scores. The P-3 approach is a promising education reform that should be considered by those seeking to improve early education performance. Read more [here](#).



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### Resources You Can Use



## ESSA and Early Learning: Policy Opportunities for States

Join NASBE February 4, 2016, from 3pm to 4pm EDT, for a webinar on key ESSA provisions that support quality in early childhood education and their implications for state policymaking in early learning. The new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) puts a greater focus on supporting children in their earliest years. Read more [here](#)

In pursuit of their mission to strengthen the culture of data and continuous improvement in Head Start, [The National Head Start Association \(NHTA\)](#) partnered to publish a report that offers recommendations for how policymakers and practitioners can better use data and evidence to continually improve Head Start and maximize outcomes for Head Start children and families. The report, "[Moneyball for Head Start: Using Data, Evidence, and Evaluation to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families.](#)" authored by Sara Mead and Ashley LiBetti Mitchell, was jointly published last month by NHTA, Results for America, Bellwether Education Partners, and the Volcker Alliance.



## Child Care & Early Education RESEARCH CONNECTIONS

**Race, isolation, and exclusion: What early childhood teacher educators need to know about the experience of pre-service teachers of color.**

Historically, in the United States, early childhood teacher education has been a discursive space dominated by White, English-monolingual, middle class perspectives. By and large, this space has remained unexamined even as the field acknowledges the need for more early childhood teachers of color. This study seeks to gain insights into the perspectives of pre-service teachers of color as they navigate this Eurocentric space. Read more [here](#).

In late 2015, New America released the report, [From Crawling to Walking: Ranking States on Birth-3rd Grade Policies that Support Strong Readers](#), which found that most states are not taking a comprehensive approach to children's early literacy learning. In January, New America hosted an event with leaders in the early and elementary education field to discuss what the report's big takeaways mean for the 2016 elections and what policymakers should prioritize this year when it comes to our youngest learners. Watch the full event, [here](#).



Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

## Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs

The CASEL Guide provides a systematic framework for evaluating the quality of social and emotional programs and applies this framework to identify and rate well-designed, evidence-based SEL programs with potential for broad dissemination to schools across the United States. The Guide also shares best-practice guidelines for district and school teams on how to select and implement SEL programs. You can find the Preschool and Elementary Edition or the Middle and High School Edition of the CASEL Guide [here](#).

## Monthly Multimedia



### The Roots of Early Learning

Caring relationships with adults provide the essential support for all areas of a child's development. They nurture the roots of language, literacy, and STEM, like rich soil nourishes a plant. When family members and early educators like you provide infants and toddlers with dependable relationships, love, back-and-forth play, and learning opportunities, they grow and thrive. Read more [here](#).

### Meet Acting Secretary John King

#### Education Department's Acting Chief Turns Up Volume

The newly minted Every Student Succeeds Act aims to clip the wings of future education secretaries when it comes to accountability, testing, and more—but it doesn't say anything about use of the bully pulpit. And acting U.S. Secretary of Education John B. King Jr. has made it clear over the first few weeks of his tenure that he will keep up the rhetorical drumbeat on the importance of educational equity for all students, no matter how the complicated process of regulating ESSA turns out. And he urged states to rethink educator-evaluation systems if they're not actually helping teachers improve their practice. Read more [here](#).



If you have questions or comments regarding the newsletter please contact: [EarlyLearning@ed.gov](mailto:EarlyLearning@ed.gov)

Office of Early Learning

Newsletter Editor: Sheila Proctor

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