

**NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND—CHALLENGES AND
OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRESCHOOL**

9:30 A.M.—10:30 A.M.

March 21, 2004

**No Child Left Behind—Challenges
and Opportunities for Preschool**

By Jana Martella

Council of Chief State School Officers

Since its enactment in 2002, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act has been perceived as both a challenge and an opportunity. What are the implications of the law for early childhood education?

NCLB has language that provides direct support to state and local education agencies for preschool programming. The specific programs are delineated by the US Department of Education in its Desktop Reference for NCLB found at: <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/nclbreference/index.html?src=rt>.

**Title I — Improving the Academic Achievement
of the Disadvantaged**

Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies (I-A) Title I, Part A, is intended to help ensure that all children have the opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach proficiency on challenging state academic standards and assessments.

<http://www.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html>

In fact, the use of Title I, Part A funding for preschool programming has been allowable for close to forty years, since inception of the Title in the precedent Elementary and Secondary Education Act. One of the most noteworthy research studies showing positive effects from preschool is found in a long-standing Title I funded project – the Chicago Child Parent Center Project. Recent non-regulatory guidance from the US Department of Education provides the rationale for using Title I dollars for preschool services, identifies the



components of a quality program, and addresses many administrative issues.

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/preschoolguidance.doc>

Reading First (I-B-1) Reading First is designed to help states, school districts, and schools address this issue and to ensure that every child can read at grade level or above by the end of third grade through the implementation of instructional programs and materials, assessments, and professional development grounded in scientifically based reading research.

<http://www.ed.gov/programs/readingfirst/index.html>

Early Reading First (I-B-2) The Early Reading First Program will prepare young children to enter kindergarten with the language, cognitive, and early reading skills necessary for reading success. The goal of the program is to prevent reading failure by providing a high-quality early education to young children, especially children from low-income families. <http://www.ed.gov/programs/earlyreading/index.html>

William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy Program (I-B-3) The Even Start Family Literacy Program provides low-income families with

integrated literacy services for parents and their young children (birth through age 7). The purpose of the program is to break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy for low-income families. The basic premise behind Even Start's family literacy approach is that the four components of adult education, early childhood education, parenting education, and interactive literacy activities for parents and their children build on each other and that families need to receive all four services in order to bring lasting change and improve children's school success.

<http://www.ed.gov/programs/evenstartfamilylit/index.html>

Early Childhood Educator Professional Development (II-A-5-2151(E))

This program aims to enhance the school readiness of young children, particularly those who are disadvantaged, and prevent them from encountering difficulties once they enter school. To achieve this, the program funds partnerships whose goal is to improve the knowledge and skills of early childhood educators who work in communities with high concentrations of children living in poverty. Research has shown that children who receive high-quality early childhood education do better in school and later life.

<http://www.ed.gov/programs/eceducator/index.html>

As the CCSSO policy statement on early childhood education reads: opportunity emanates from evidence from the fields of neuroscience, cognitive science and child development, that learning stretches from a child's first days. Research confirms what parents and teachers have long observed – that early learning creates the foundation for later achievement, and that efforts to strengthen K-12 education cannot succeed without a concerted effort to support the people and improve the programs entrusted with our youngest children.

Beyond the explicit programs within NCLB that can be directed toward early childhood education, there is significant cause to look at the basic aim of the largest federal education effort as motivator for early childhood education. We know that the achievement gap the NCLB is designed to redress exists in large part before children enter the school house door. The recent research analysis of the National Kindergarten Longitudinal Study found

Advancing Quality Preschool for All is a meeting hosted by the Council of Chief State School Officers as part of The Pew Charitable Trusts' initiative to advance high quality prekindergarten for all of the nation's three and four year olds through objective, policy-focused research; state public education campaigns and national outreach.

As part of the Trusts' early education initiative, CCSSO will educate and serve its membership to build support among chief state school officers for expansion of high quality, universal preschool opportunities for 3 and 4 year-olds.

within the Economic Policy Institute's publication *Equality at the Starting Gate* highlights that 50-60% of the achievement gap measured by high school NAEP scores can be accounted for before children enter kindergarten.

http://www.epinet.org/content.cfm/books_starting_gate#exec

As the achievement gap looms large, state and local education agencies and the schools they work with can look to quality preschool programming to narrow the distance. Preschool shows promise as a deliberate strategy to meet the requirements of NCLB, particularly those relating to demonstrating adequate yearly progress for all children, school-by-school and year-by-year. Visit the new NCLB Website found at CCSSO for additional tools and advice on the successful strategies states are enlisting to meet the requirements of the law.

<http://www.ccsso.org>.

