

Goal 3. Early Learning:

Improve the health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes for all children from birth through 3rd grade, so that all children, particularly those with high needs, are on track for graduating from high school college- and career-ready.

Goal Leader: Ann Whalen, Senior Advisor to the Secretary, Delegated the Authority of the Assistant Secretary, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE)

Public Benefit

Each year, about 4 million children enter kindergarten in the United States. They live in cities, suburbs, and rural areas. They speak many languages, come from diverse cultures, and have differing abilities, which may require individualized services and supports. Parents and caregivers send their children to school believing that one day their children will be able to pursue their dreams—whether that is teaching, protecting their communities as police officers, making scientific discoveries, or helping companies and organizations succeed. All parents hope their child will start school ready for success. And many parents turn that hope into action, seeking out supportive and high-quality early learning opportunities. Unfortunately, not every parent finds those opportunities, and access to high-quality early learning opportunities differs across states and communities. There are large disparities in enrollment based on geography, race, and socioeconomic levels. As a result, too many children enter kindergarten a year or more behind their classmates in academic skills and socio-emotional development.¹ For some children, starting school already behind can trap them in a cycle of continuous catch-up in their learning. As a nation, we must ensure that all children, regardless of family circumstance, immigration status, the color of their skin, disability, or their zip code, have access to high-quality early learning opportunities.

Advances in education, developmental psychology, neuroscience, medicine, and economics have helped to demonstrate the benefits of quality early education for young children and that the years from birth to age five are a critical period in children’s learning and development, providing the necessary foundation for more advanced skills.² For example, at kindergarten entry, children with bigger vocabularies at an early age have higher reading and mathematics achievement and fewer behavior challenges.³ A robust body of research shows that children who participate in high-quality preschool programs have better health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes than those who do not participate. The gains are particularly powerful for

¹ Yoshikawa, Hirokazu, Christine Weiland, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Margaret R. Burchinal, Linda M. Espinosa, William T. Gormley, Jens Ludwig, Katherine A. Magnuson, Deborah Phillips, and Martha J. Zaslow. Investing in our future: The evidence base on preschool education. Vol. 9. Society for Research in Child Development and Foundation for Child Development, 2013.

² Yoshikawa, H., Weiland, C., Brooks-Gunn, J., Burchinal, M., Espinosa, L., Gormley, W., & Zaslow, M. J. (2013). Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base for Preschool Education. Policy brief, Society for Research in Child Development and the Foundation for Child Development. Retrieved from the Foundation for Child Development website: fcd-us.org/sites/default/files/Evidence_Base_on_Preschool_Education_FINAL.pdf

³ Maczuga, S., Morgan, P., Farkas, G., Hammer, C., Hillemeier, M., & Scheffner, C. 24-Month-Old Children With Larger Oral Vocabularies Display Greater Academic and Behavioral Functioning at Kindergarten Entry. *Child Development*, Volume 86, Issue 5, pages 1351–1370, September/October 2015.

children from low-income families and those at risk for academic failure who, on average, start kindergarten 12 to 14 months behind their peers in preliteracy and language skills.⁴

Studies also reveal that participating in quality early learning can boost children’s educational attainment and earnings later in life.⁵ Children who attend high-quality preschool programs are less likely to utilize special education services or be retained in their grade, and are more likely to graduate from high school, go on to college, and succeed in their careers than those who have not attended high-quality preschool programs.⁶ Research also suggests that expanding early learning—including high-quality preschool—provides society with a return on investment of \$8.60 for every \$1 spent with half of this benefit from increased earnings and improved health outcomes for children when they grow up.⁷

The Administration began efforts to increase investments in early learning in its first term and has continued to request additional funding in each subsequent budget proposal—through Head Start, child care, home visiting, IDEA Part C, ELC, and Preschool Development Grants. States and local communities have welcomed the opportunity to partner with the federal government through these early learning programs.

From 2011 to 2013, 20 (of the 40 states that applied for ELC) were awarded grants. These grantees had committed to align, coordinate, and improve the quality of early learning programs across multiple funding streams supporting children from birth through age 5 and serve as model early learning and development systems. By December 2014, nearly 14,000 early childhood programs are ranked in the highest quality tiers of the 20 ELC states’ rating systems—a 63 percent increase since the states applied for their grants—with significantly more children enrolled in the highest quality-rated early learning programs than ever before.⁸ National technical assistance is also available to help all states in building such systems.

In 2013, the President’s Budget proposed a landmark investment to expand access to high-quality preschool, Preschool for All. The President’s overarching vision has been captured in the bipartisan *Strong Start for America’s Children Act* reintroduced in the 114th Congress. This legislation would fund voluntary, high-quality preschool for all four-year old children from families earning below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Line in a state-federal partnership, and encourage states to spend their own funds to support preschool for young children with family incomes above that income level. The legislation would also expand Early Head Start-child care partnerships to help raise the quality of services for infants and toddlers and increase IDEA funding for young children with disabilities.

In addition, Strong Start includes authorization for [Preschool Development Grants](#), which were first funded by Congress in 2014. Last year 18 states (of the 36 that applied) were awarded grants to create or expand high-quality preschool programs for 4-year-olds in over 200 high-need communities. This program builds on the achievements of ELC by expanding access to preschool programs that include the following nationally recognized standards: high staff qualifications; professional development for teachers and staff; low staff-child ratios; small class sizes; full-day programs; developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive

⁴ Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development. From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development. (2000). Jack P. Shonkoff and Deborah A. Phillips, eds. Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

⁵ See, e.g., Yoshikawa, et.al., Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool Education, 2013.

⁶ Center for Public Education. (2008). The Research on Pre-K. Alexandria, VA.

⁷ White House Council of Economic Advisors. The Economics of Early Childhood Investments, https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/early_childhood_report1.pdf

⁸ At a Glance: Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge Year 2014 Progress Update <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/2014apr/rtt-elic-2014-apr-progress.pdf>

instruction and evidence-based curricula and learning environments that are aligned with states' early learning standards; inclusive programs for children with disabilities; employee salaries that are comparable to those for K–12 teaching staff; ongoing program evaluation to ensure continuous improvement; strong family engagement; and onsite comprehensive services for children.

Providing children, including children with disabilities and those who are ELs, with quality early education experiences is essential to strengthening our nation's economy. Significant new investments to expand access to high-quality early learning, improve the early childhood workforce, and support comprehensive assessment systems are necessary to help states, local communities, and parents close the school readiness gaps between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers. Only then can we ensure that all children graduate from high school prepared to succeed in college, careers, and life.

Analysis and Next Steps

Objective 3.1: Access to High-Quality Programs and Services. Increase access to high-quality early learning programs and comprehensive services, especially for children with high needs.

Objective Leader:

Libby Doggett, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Early Learning, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE)

Explanation and Analysis of Progress:

While states and the federal government both invest in early learning, these efforts have fallen short of what is needed to ensure that all children can access a high-quality early education that will prepare them for success. Across the nation, 58 percent of 4-year-olds and 85 percent of 3-year-olds are not enrolled in publicly funded preschool programs through state preschool, Head Start, and preschool special education services.⁹ Even fewer are enrolled in the highest-quality programs.¹⁰ Overall, during 2011–13, 4.4 million 3- and 4-year-olds were not attending any preschool at all, representing more than half (54 percent) of all children in that age group.¹¹

Children's access to preschool also varies significantly by family income level and geographic region.¹² As of the 2013–14 school year, 41 states and the District of Columbia offered voluntary, state preschool programs for some children.¹³ In 2015–16, three states (Indiana, New Hampshire, and North Dakota) had small pilot programs. Hawaii now has a program reaching public school students and their Preschool Development Grant will serve children in the public charter school system. Montana's Preschool Development Grant has provided that state's first state preschool program, which by 2018 will provide high-quality preschool to over 5,000 children from low-income families in sixteen communities, eight of which are on Indian lands.

⁹ Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). *The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

¹⁰ Nores, M., & Barnett, W.S. (2014). *Access to High Quality Early Care and Education: Readiness and Opportunity Gaps in America (CEELO Policy Report)*. New Brunswick, NJ: Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes.

¹¹ Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2015). *KIDS COUNT data center*. Baltimore, MD: Author. <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2015kidscountdatabook-2015.pdf>

¹² Cascio, E.U., Whitmore Schanzenbach, D. *Expanding Preschool Access for Disadvantaged Children* http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/06/19_hamilton_policies_addressing_poverty/expand_preschool_acc_ess_cascio_schanzenbach.pdf

¹³ Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). *The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

Twenty-nine percent of America’s 4-year-olds were enrolled in a state-funded preschool program in the 2013–14 school year. While total enrollment for 4-year-olds increased by 8,535, nearly half this increase was required to recoup the loss of 4,000 seats in 2012–13. At the May release of the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) Yearbook, Secretary Duncan noted, “The current pace of change is far too incremental...We have to think about transformational change.” In fact, as NIEER researchers observed, “at the 2013–2014 growth rate it would take about 75 years for states to reach 50 percent enrollment at age 4 and 150 years to reach 70 percent enrollment.”

While states enroll a total of 1.35 million 3- and 4-year-olds in state preschool, enrollment in individual state programs significantly varies.¹⁴ For example, Florida, Oklahoma, Vermont, and the District of Columbia served more than 70 percent of their 4-year-olds in state-funded preschool, whereas 11 states with programs served fewer than 10 percent of 4-year-olds. These states are: Alabama; Alaska; Arizona; Delaware; Minnesota; Missouri; Nevada; Ohio; Oregon; Rhode Island; and Washington. Local Head Start programs serve another approximately half million 4-year-olds from the lowest-income families.¹⁵

While Latinos are the fastest growing and largest minority group in the United States, making up a quarter of 3- and 4-year-olds, Latinos demonstrate the lowest preschool participation rates of any major ethnicity or race with 63 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds not in any preschool programs.¹⁶ The rates were also low for American Indians (59 percent). More than half of African-American and non-Hispanic white 3- and 4-year-olds were not in any preschool programs, which was nearly the same for Asian and Pacific Islander children (48 percent). While most children who have access to preschool attend moderate-quality programs, African American children and children from low-income families are the most likely to attend low-quality preschool programs and the least likely to attend high-quality preschool programs.¹⁷ About one-third of children served by state preschool programs live in the two states with the lowest quality standards from the NIEER—Florida and Texas.¹⁸ Forty percent of preschoolers—more than half a million—attend programs that meet few of the quality NIEER benchmark standards.

Children with disabilities also have difficulty accessing inclusive preschool programs. In 2013, across all states, 55.6 percent of preschool children served under Part B, section 619 of IDEA participated in at least 10 hours of a general early childhood program. Fewer than half (43.5 percent) of preschool children with disabilities received special education services in their general early childhood programs.¹⁹

In coordination with the [Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance Center](#) (ELC TA) and [Preschool Development Grants Technical Assistance Center](#) (PDG TA), the Department, in coordination with HHS, is supporting efforts to expand access to high-quality early learning programs for the 20 ELC and 18 Preschool Development Grants states, as well as nongrant states, through online early learning communities, technical assistance webinars, briefs, and

¹⁴ Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

¹⁵ Head Start Program Facts Fiscal Year 2014. <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/data/factsheets/docs/hs-program-fact-sheet-2014.pdf>

¹⁶ Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2015). KIDS COUNT data center. Baltimore, MD: Author. <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2015kidscountdatabook-2015.pdf>

¹⁷ Center for American Progress. Why We Need a Federal Preschool Investment in 6 Charts. December 9, 2014.

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/news/2014/12/09/102737/why-we-need-a-federal-preschool-investment-in-6-charts/>

¹⁸ Barnett, W.S., Carolan, M.E., Squires, J.H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

¹⁹ 2013 Part B Child Count and Educational Environments Data File. Accessed on 4/17/15 at: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/osepidea/618-data/state-level-data-files/index.html>

reports. Additionally, OESE’s national comprehensive center, the [Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes](#) (CEELO) and OSEP technical assistance (TA) centers provide support for all states, including around issues of access and quality.

A critical driver of quality in all early learning and development programs has been the states’ QRIS (or Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (TQRIS) for ELC states). This reform metric helps states set progressively higher program standards and provides supports to programs so they can meet those higher standards. Once programs are enrolled in a state’s TQRIS, the state helps them improve their quality and their ranking. States provide technical assistance, professional development opportunities, and program improvement grants that allow programs to make the necessary quality improvements. Nearly half of all children who live in low-income families in the United States reside in the 20 ELC states. ELC states have increased the number of early learning and development programs participating in their TQRIS and are implementing strategies to improve the quality of those programs. The 20 ELC states’ cumulative state data show that the number of early childhood programs included in the states’ TQRIS has nearly doubled from 38,642 at the start of their grants to 72,281 programs in 2014, an increase of 87 percent.

The 20 ELC states also reported on the number of children in various types of early learning and development programs that are in top tiers of their state’s TQRIS in 2014. The report shows a 176 percent increase in the number of children with high needs enrolled in state preschool programs in the top tiers of their state’s TQRIS from the time the states received their grants. More than 200,000 children are now enrolled in these programs, an increase of more than 127,000 children. As a result of the ELC program, there is a 75 percent increase in the number of children enrolled in high-quality programs supported through the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF or child care subsidy). 228,760 children with high needs are now enrolled in CCDF-funded programs in the top tiers of their TQRIS, an increase of almost 100,000 children. 151,676 children with high needs are now enrolled in Head Start/Early Head Start programs in the top tiers of their TQRIS, an increase of more than 78,000 children.

In his 2014 State of the Union address, President Obama called upon Congress to expand access to high-quality preschool for every child in America, proposing investments that would support a continuum of early learning opportunity from birth through kindergarten entry. He challenged more Americans—elected officials, business leaders, philanthropists, and the public—to help more children access the early education they need to succeed in school and in life. On December 10, 2014, the President convened state and local policymakers, mayors, school superintendents, corporate and community leaders, and advocates for the White House Summit on Early Education, highlighting collective leadership in support of early education for America’s children. Leaders shared best practices in building the public-private partnerships that are expanding early education in communities across the country. Participants discussed effective strategies and programs that support and bring high-quality early childhood education to scale.

Leading private and philanthropic organizations made commitments to new actions to spur greater access to high-quality early learning programs. Together with federal awards, this amounts to a collective investment of over \$1 billion in the education and development of America’s youngest learners. It includes:

- Over \$340 million in new actions from corporate and philanthropic leaders to expand the reach and enhance the quality of early education for thousands of additional children.

- Up to \$750 million in new federal grant awards announced by Secretaries Duncan and Burwell, to support early learning for over 63,000 additional children across the country for Preschool Development Grants and the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships.
- The launch of [Invest in US](#), a new initiative created by the First Five Years Fund, a bipartisan nonprofit organization, in partnership with private philanthropic leaders, in response to the President’s call to action.
- New private and philanthropic resources and support for Early Learning Communities, an initiative of Invest in US. Invest in US is working to connect communities and states interested in expanding early learning programs and opportunities with 10 leading partners that have committed to helping connect leaders with resources, planning grants, technical assistance, and other support for their youngest learners.

Since the Summit, significant progress has been made, and bipartisan cooperation has led to a substantial increase in public-private investments in early education.

Congress took an important step in 2014 to address inequities in access to high-quality preschool by supporting the Preschool Development Grants program, a 4-year, federal-state partnership to expand the number of children enrolled in high-quality preschool programs in high-need communities. There was significant bipartisan interest from state governors in this program. Thirty-five states and Puerto Rico applied and the Department made grants to 18 states. During the 2015–16 school year, these states are serving approximately 33,000 4-year-olds from low- and moderate-income families in more than 200 communities in high-quality preschool programs. The diversity of the 18 states that received grants reflects the fact that increasing access to preschool is a bipartisan priority across the country. From Massachusetts and Montana to Alabama and Hawaii, Preschool Development Grants are designed to help states move forward with high-quality preschool, whether that means expanding an already successful preschool program or helping to build state-level capacity and put in place quality improvements to serve more children in high-quality settings.

While the Preschool Development Grants will not reach every child in the funded states and there remains a huge unmet need, these states will be another step closer to the goal of expanding access to high-quality early learning across the country. Over the 4-year grant period, and with continued funding from Congress, these states are expecting to enroll an additional 177,000 children in high-quality preschool programs, which will help put children on a path to success in school and in life. About 285,000 preschoolers could have been served in the 18 states that did not receive a Preschool Development Grant. For four years, the Obama administration has requested formula funding to address the enormous unmet need for high-quality preschool and provide preschool for all 4-year-olds from low- to moderate-income families. In addition, the Administration’s FY 2017 budget request includes funding for continuation grants to support current states, as well as additional dollars to expand Preschool Development Grants to more states, the Bureau of Indian Education, tribal educational agencies, territories, and the Outlying Areas.

The Department is also engaging in specific activities to ensure that infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities and their families have access to high-quality programs and services. OSEP began implementing an [RDA](#) system to hold states accountable for both improving results for children with disabilities and complying with requirements in IDEA. As part of RDA, states are being asked to develop a SSIP to focus and drive their efforts to improve results for children with disabilities. Phase 1 of the SSIP was submitted to OSEP in April 2015. States were required to submit SSIPs for both Part B and C of IDEA. The SSIPs included a

measurable child result that states will be working to achieve over the next 5 years, and the infrastructure that they will need to have in place to support local programs in delivering high-quality services to meet the state-identified child result. Another component of RDA is ensuring that determinations reflect state performance on results, as well as compliance. OSEP must annually determine if a state “Meets Requirements,” “Needs Assistance,” or “Needs Intervention.” In July 2015, OSEP used child outcome data for the first time in making determinations for Part C programs.

In addition to accountability activities, OSEP is supporting states through technical assistance. Three of OSEP’s national centers specifically focus on supporting states in enhancing their Part C and Part B, section 619 programs, as well as other early learning programs, to increase the quality of services provided to children with disabilities and their families. These centers are working with Part C and Part B, section 619 programs to develop effective and efficient infrastructures, including data and personnel systems, to deliver high-quality services to infants, toddlers, and preschool age children with disabilities and their families. The centers have developed a systems framework that states can use to assess their infrastructure and work towards improving it. In addition, the centers are working with the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) to promote the use of the recently released DEC Recommended Practices, which provide guidance to practitioners and families about the most effective ways to improve the learning outcomes and promote the development of young children, birth through age 5, who have or are at risk for developmental delays or disabilities.

The Department and HHS released two major early childhood policy statements. [*Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Practices in Early Childhood Settings*](#) was released December 10, 2014. The statement has influenced local and state efforts to assist states and their public and private local early childhood programs in preventing and severely limiting expulsions and suspensions in early learning settings. A second policy statement, [*Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs*](#), released on September 14, 2015, supports the goal that all young children with disabilities should have access to inclusive high-quality early childhood programs, where they are provided with individualized and appropriate support in meeting high expectations. In addition, the Department and HHS, in partnership with Too Small to Fail, have created the [*Talk, Read, and Sing Together Every Day*](#) tip sheets. Made specifically for families, caregivers and early educators, these resources can help enrich a child’s early language experiences by providing research-based tips for talking, reading, and singing with young children every day beginning from birth. The Departments are also collecting public input on policy statements around family engagement in early learning settings and health and wellness promotion in early childhood settings. Each of these efforts contributes to the goal of improving the quality of early learning programs.

In October 2015, the Departments held a three-day annual grantee meeting for the 20 ELC and 18 Preschool Development Grants states. In addition, nongrant states were invited to attend. In all, over 300 persons participated, and over 35 states were represented. Sessions focused on meeting the needs of states around improving quality in programs, measuring child outcomes, and supporting birth to third grade systems and other reforms.

Metrics in Goal 3 are influenced most by actions taken by states or grantees in response to state and federal policy initiatives, but they are also influenced by factors that are beyond the control of states, LEAs, or the Department of Education.

Challenges and Next Steps:

Expanding access to high-quality preschool is critically important to ensuring that every child in America has the opportunity for lifelong success. On December 10, 2015, President Obama signed the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), reauthorizing the ESEA. ESSA includes a new Preschool Development Grants program designed to improve coordination of early childhood programs and expand access to high-quality preschool. It is not certain how many additional children will have access to high-quality preschool under the new program. Also in December 2015, President Obama signed the FY 2016 spending bill, which provides funding for year 3 of the Preschool Development Grants. The Departments will be working to secure funding for the fourth and final year of the current Preschool Development Grants program in FY 2017. Pulling these funds away from states and communities would jeopardize their plans to serve over 50,000 children in high-quality preschool programs during the last year of the grants.²⁰

The President has made it a priority to expand educational opportunity for our nation's children, starting with our youngest learners, and has put forward a vision that would support the healthy development and growth of children from birth to kindergarten entry. The President's FY 2017 Budget builds on the good work underway in states and local communities, and calls for expanding support to additional grantees to improve program alignment and coordination and to expand access to services. Preschool Development Grants are a critical step toward voluntary, universal access to high-quality early learning that gives all children a strong start in school and life.

ELC states face many challenges in developing a rating and monitoring process for their TQRIS. Providers must be informed about the process, so as to make them more likely to participate. The observation and rating tool must be a true measure of different levels of quality; it must give the same rating results in many different settings, and it has to be easy to use. Validating the effectiveness of a TQRIS ensures that it is measuring and assessing program quality in ways that make sense to state policy makers, early learning and education programs, and families with young children. Both the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services are providing support so ELC states have the knowledge and best research for improving their TQRIS. This technical assistance is provided directly to the states in addition to peer learning groups on various topics of interest such as best ways to validate a TQRIS system or to ensure families understand the difference in the quality tiers. The Departments are helping ELC states to validate their systems, ensure consistency in the reporting of TQRIS ratings, and develop data system linkages between their TQRIS and other systems with data on young children and the early childhood workforce. As states begin to report on evaluations of their TQRIS, there must be a recognition that the systems are still not mature and may not yet reflect their true impact. OSEP-funded technical assistance also supports states in thinking about how to intentionally include children with disabilities across all levels of the TQRIS system, as some states only have optional indicators for children with disabilities, only include children with disabilities at some levels of the TQRIS, or do not intentionally include children with disabilities. Additionally, IES is also doing a study of the TQRIS systems and plans to make results available in 2016.

The Department committed \$5 million in Preschool Development Grants national activities funds to add to a multiyear investment by IES funding to expand the work of the network to support the work of the Preschool Development Grants states and other states advancing preschool and addressing the need for a new quality assessment tool. The Early Learning Network will

²⁰ This estimate assumes that the elimination of Preschool Development Grants in 2016 would prevent states from serving the additional children proposed in their applications for the final two years of the grant.

comprise five Research Teams that will conduct in-depth, exploratory research in states, regions, cities, or school districts that are providing preschool opportunities for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Each Research Team will conduct three complementary, prospective studies: (1) a descriptive study of systems-level policies and practices that support early learning; (2) a classroom observation study to identify teaching practices and other classroom-level malleable factors associated with children’s school readiness and achievement in preschool and early elementary school; and (3) a longitudinal study to identify malleable factors associated with early learning and school achievement over time from preschool through the early elementary school grades (e.g., kindergarten through third grade). The Research Teams will also provide support to the Early Learning Assessment Team in piloting and validating a classroom observation tool that is designed for practitioners to use.

Funding continues to be a challenge for IDEA programs. Part C programs in particular are stretched thin as data shows that the number of children receiving services under Part C over the years has been steadily increasing. However, federal funding for Part C has not increased at the same rate so there has been a decrease in federal per-child funding for Part C services. To address fiscal challenges, some states have narrowed or restricted eligibility criteria, implemented or increased family fees for services, and reduced provider reimbursements. All of these can reduce access to services for infants and toddlers who could benefit from them. OSEP-funded TA centers will provide TA to states on building their state infrastructure, which includes their financial system, to support states in using their funding as efficiently as possible. Additionally, OSEP-funded TA centers will continue to work with states to enhance the quality of services that they provide under IDEA Parts C and B, section 619.

U.S. Department of Education Indicators of Success	Baseline	2013 Actuals	2014 Actuals	2015 Actuals	2015 Current Year Target	Current Year Results	2016 Out-Year Targets	2017 Out-Year Targets
3.1.A. Number of states with Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) that meet high quality benchmarks for child care and other early childhood programs ²¹	SY: 2010 17	27	29 ²²	NA	32	NA ²³	NA	NA
New APG Metric: Percent of 4-year olds enrolled in state preschool programs ²⁴	SY: 2013– 14 29.1%	NA	SY: 2013–14 29.1%	NA	NA	NA	33.0%	35.0%
New APG Metric: Number of states with high-quality preschool program standards ²⁵	SY: 2013– 14 15	NA	SY: 2013–14 15	NA	NA	NA	19	21

NA = Not applicable.

TBD = To be determined.

Academic Year (AY) is a collegiate year spanning August–May; School Year (SY) spans August–July and is aligned with a P–12 school year; Fiscal Year (FY) corresponds to a federal fiscal year; Calendar Year (CY) spans January–December.

Data Sources and Frequency of Collection:

3.1.A. Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Report of State Plans with annual updates from states and territories (HHS/Office of Childcare); annually

²¹ Metric being removed at the end of the FY 2015 reporting period and being replaced with the metric identified as “New Metric” directly below it. If there is no corresponding “New Metric” identified, new metric TBD. Please refer to appendix B for details pertaining to the removal and addition of metrics. The proposed FY 2016 and 2017 targets for the metric being removed were 35 and 37, respectively.

²² Metric reported as TBD in the *FY 2014 Annual Performance Report and FY 2016 Annual Performance Plan*. 2014 actuals show the 2014 target was “Met.”

²³ This is an HHS metric and out of the Department's control or influence. Please refer to footnote 21 for additional information.

²⁴ Metric is aligned with an APG.

²⁵ Metric is aligned with an APG.

