



ESSA

A PEATC
Do You Know
Factsheet for Virginia's Parents

Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA)

- Signed into law on December 15, 2015
- Amends the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)
- Replaces the most recent ESEA amendment, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)
- "...to ensure every child achieves"
- The Department's strategic goal for early learning is to improve the health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes for all children from birth through third grade. This will ensure that all children, particularly those with high needs, are on track to graduate from high school college and career ready.

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Do You Know

Non-Regulatory Guidance Early Learning in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Expanding Opportunities to Support our Youngest Learners

On October 20, 2016, the Office of Special Education (OSEP), released the guidance that is intended to remind State and local decision-makers about the importance of investing in early learning, highlight the strength of early education, and provide examples of how States and local communities may support young children's success in school.

Benefits of High Quality Early Learning

Studies and research show that high-quality early learning starting at birth and continuing through third grade, can promote healthy social-emotional development, assist with English language acquisition and help build strong academic foundation.

Achievement gaps between children from low-income families from their more affluent peers are detectable as early as nine months of age.

Just attending a preschool program is not enough. Preschool programs must be of high quality to have a significant effect on children's learning and development. Teachers must be qualified and effective for children to get the most benefit.

A high quality preschool program must have the components of:

- high qualifications for teachers and staff with ongoing practice-based professional learning (or professional development) in early childhood development
- small class sizes with low staff-child ratios in a full-day, full-year program;
- developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and assessments, as well as research-based curricula, that are aligned with State early learning and development standards;
- individualized accommodations and supports for children, including English learners (ELs) and inclusion of children with disabilities;
- onsite comprehensive services for children to address health, including mental health, and overall well-being;
- high-quality family engagement and involvement;
- health and safety standards; and
- lead teacher compensation set at or very near K-3 teacher compensation in a teacher's respective State.

Expanding Access to High-Quality Early Learning

Many state and local communities struggle to provide adequate preschool programs to meet the needs. Many have engaged in public and private resources to establish or expand preschool programs; however, there have not been enough funds to meet all the demands of all young children and their families. An LEA may consider using federal education programs to fund early education services consistent with applicable program requirements. LEAs may do so in public schools or in preschool centers operated by the LEA, as well as in

community-based preschool programs. If a LEA chooses to use allowable ESEA funds to provide early learning services for children in a community-based preschool program may only do so if certain conditions are met (See OSEP guidance). Some of these funding options are:

1. **Title 1 Preschool**: Title I preschool programs are intended to assist children most at risk of failing to meet the State’s challenging academic standards based on multiple, educationally related, objective criteria. Some children are “automatically eligible” to participate in a Title I preschool program including children who participated in Head Start or meet the criteria of special populations (listed below)
2. **Charter Schools**: The DOE encourages the growth of new charter schools, expanding high-quality charter schools, and disseminating best practices
3. **Preschool development grants**: The ESSA includes a new discretionary grant program for States to expand access to and improve the coordination and quality of early childhood education programs for children from birth to age 5 These consists of initial grants to assess overall needs regarding availability of early learning programs in state and number of children served as well as renewal grants which support improving or expanding existing early learning programs.
4. **Programs for Special Populations**: Certain students need a high-quality early learning program to assist them in decreasing the opportunity gaps between them and their peers. These students include those who are homeless, in foster care, are migratory in nature, English learners, immigrant children, and American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. Children with disabilities are excluded as they are funded under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Ensuring Alignment, Collaboration, and Coordination

Alignment and collaboration between early childhood education programs and the K–12 system is a recurring theme throughout the ESEA for continuity in the learning experience from preschool to elementary grades. States and LEAs are encouraged to consider both the horizontal and vertical alignment of programs.

Horizontal alignment: The consistency or connectedness of program and professional standards across programs and settings that serve a particular age or grade.

Vertical alignment: The progressive development of standards from birth through third grade that provide a continuum for children’s knowledge and skills.

Additionally, under the ESEA, through State plans for Title I, SEAs are required to coordinate with other programs that provide services for young children, including programs administered by HHS (i.e., under the CCDBG and Head Start Act) as well as IDEA (ESEA section 1111(a)(1)(B)). It is essential that schools, other programs and early childhood programs coordinate their outreach efforts to families, so that they are aware of enrollment options and processes for their children for family engagement. The DOE encourages horizontal and vertical alignments when addressing the comprehensive needs of all young children, including children with disabilities or a special population group listed above. SEAs may find it helpful to coordinate with their State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care (SACs), as applicable.

More information can be found at: http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-releases-guidance-supporting-early-learning-through-every-student-succeeds-act?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=



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