



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

February 26, 2024

Dear Colleagues,

We are writing to encourage you to work with local educational agencies and early childhood partners in your states and communities to serve more of our youngest learners in high-quality preschool¹ through a mixed delivery approach. A mixed delivery approach involves a coordinated effort on the part of States and local communities to support preschool programs across a range of quality settings, building on the expertise and capacity of existing providers and leveraging existing Federal, state, and local funding.

There are several Federal funding streams available through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education highlighted in this letter that can be coordinated to expand high-quality preschool services. Improving access is particularly critical for young children impacted by the COVID-19 public health emergency and for families who continue to struggle to find affordable, high-quality preschool opportunities. In fact, only 17% of three-year-olds and 41% of four-year-olds in the United States attend a public preschool.²

Mixed delivery preschool approaches should be inclusive of the full range of high-quality early care and education settings including community-based child care providers, schools, Head Start programs, and family child care homes. A successful mixed delivery approach requires careful planning, collaborative decision-making, and state and local coordination across Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) administrators, school leaders, State educational agencies (SEAs) and local school districts, Head Start leaders, providers of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) services, early childhood providers (including family child care), early childhood professional organizations and labor unions, among others.

We encourage stakeholders across preschool-serving settings to take additional steps to coordinate their efforts, including coordinated enrollment, and identify ways a mixed delivery approach can be used to improve access to high-quality preschool experiences and meet the needs of more children and families.

¹ Weiland C, Yoshikawa H. Impacts of a prekindergarten program on children's mathematics, language, literacy, executive function, and emotional skills. *Child Dev.* 2013;84(6):2112-2130. doi:10.1111/cdev.12099

² Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett, W. S., Hodges, K. S., Garver, K. A., Weisenfeld, G., Gardiner, B. A., Jost, T. M. (2023). *The State of Preschool 2022: State Preschool Yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

By forging these partnerships, early childhood leaders have an opportunity to amplify the benefits of a mixed delivery approach, which include:

- Expanding preschool services to reach additional children and families by leveraging and maximizing Federal, State, and local funding, and using facilities and resources already available in the community;
- Improving quality in a range of early childhood programs by providing access to preschool funding and supports for meeting developmentally appropriate preschool standards, and leveraging the expertise of all early childhood providers with experience supporting developmentally appropriate practice with our youngest learners in community-based centers and homes, as well as in schools;
- Supporting parents in selecting a setting and location that best meets their child's and family's needs, such as providing a longer program day or more flexible scheduling offered in many child care programs, or allowing older and younger siblings to attend the same site;
- Improving access to early intervention and early childhood special education in inclusive early childhood settings to provide more seamless experiences for development and learning for children with disabilities;
- Creating culturally and linguistically responsive environments and services for students identified as dual language learners and/or English learners;
- Ensuring children and families have access to an array of child development, health, mental health, family support, and other comprehensive services (such as those offered by Head Start); and
- Supporting smooth transitions between preschool and kindergarten, laying a path for success in the early elementary years.

As States and communities are designing or refining their mixed delivery approaches to preschool, we encourage them to consider the diverse and comprehensive needs of children and their families and ensure that their needs are fully met regardless of the setting in which they receive preschool services. This includes ensuring children and families have access to inclusive early childhood programs with early intervention and early childhood special education services; providing supports for retaining a child's home language and building English proficiency and fluency; ensuring supports based on financial needs; and delivering other services for which they are eligible in schools, Head Start, and/or child care programs.

To bolster the supply of high-quality preschool services, it is essential that early educators are paid a wage that honors and reflects their skills, experience, and qualifications whether they are in a school, community-based child care, Head Start, family child care home, or other setting. Providing competitive, equitable wages to providers regardless of the setting in which they work is a foundational part of ensuring both equity and high-quality programming. We encourage State and local leaders to examine opportunities to leverage early care and education funding to increase compensation and improve pay equity for early educators across all settings.

Federal funds, when effectively layered and braided, can support greater access to preschool, provide full-day, full-year high-quality services to meet families' needs, provide adequate wages and benefits to staff, and improve quality across programs. The Federal programs, detailed in the appendix, generally can be used to support preschool activities, though allowability determinations may vary depending on the program.

We encourage all States and communities to consider how they can implement mixed delivery preschool or expand their mixed delivery system including engaging new partners in this work. We are grateful for all your efforts to ensure more of our youngest learners can participate in high-quality preschool.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Swati Adarkar". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Swati Adarkar
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Early Learning
U.S. Department of Education

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Hamm". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K'.

Katie Hamm
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Appendix: Additional Information on Federal Funds Available for Preschool Activities

From the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families:

- Head Start
 - Grantees: The Office of Head Start awards grants to public and private agencies on a competitive basis. Head Start grant recipients provide comprehensive early learning and development, health, and family support services to low-income families in a variety of settings including centers, family child care, school, and children's own homes as described in the Head Start Program Performance Standards and in accordance with the Head Start Act of 2007.
 - [Office of Head Start website](#) and [Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center website](#)
 - Head Start grant recipients should contact their Regional Office Program Specialist with any questions on the use of Head Start grant funds.

- Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)
 - Grantees: The Office of Child Care administers the CCDF which provides federal funding to state, territory, and tribal lead agencies for child care subsidies to increase access to child care for eligible low-income families and improve the quality of all child care. CCDF funds include mandatory, matching, and discretionary funding streams and are distributed through formula grants.
 - [Office of Child Care website](#)
 - Please contact your [Office of Child Care regional program office](#) with any questions on the use of Federal CCDF funds.

- Preschool Development Grants Birth Through Five (PDG B-5)
 - Grantees: The Office of Early Childhood Development awards PDG B-5 grants to states and territories to support early childhood services for children birth to age five. Funds support a needs assessment, strategic planning, family engagement, quality improvement, workforce compensation and supports, and direct services for young children. PDG B-5 grants support a range of activities aimed at improving collaboration and direct services within a mixed delivery system that includes child care and family child care providers, Head Start, state pre-kindergarten, and home visiting.
 - [Office of Early Childhood Development PDG B-5 website](#) and [National Technical Assistance Center for Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five \(PDG B-5 TA\) website](#)
 - PDG B-5 grantees should contact their assigned Administration for Children and Families program officer with any questions on the use of funds.

From the U.S. Department of Education:

- Title I, Part A of the ESEA – Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies (LEAs):
 - Grantees: This is a formula grant to SEAs, which in turn provide subgrants to school districts via formula to help students in high-poverty schools meet challenging State academic standards.
 - [Office of Elementary and Secondary Education \(OESE\) Office of Formula Grants Title I website](#)
 - [Contact the OESE Title I office](#)

- Title II, Part A of the ESEA – Supporting Effective Instruction:
 - Grantees: This is a formula grant to SEAs, which in turn provides subgrants to school districts via a formula to increase student achievement consistent with the challenging State academic standards; improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers, principals, and other school leaders; increase the number of teachers, principals, and other school leaders who are effective in improving student academic achievement in schools; and provide low-income and minority students greater access to effective teachers, principals, and other school leaders.
 - [OESE Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants—Title II, Part A website](#)
 - [Contact the OESE Title II office](#)

- Title III, Part A of the ESEA – English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement:
 - Grantees: This is a formula grant to SEAs, which in turn provide subgrants to school districts via a formula to help English Learner (EL) children and youth learn English and meet challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards.
 - [English Language Acquisition State Grants – Title III, Part A website](#)
 - [Contact the Title III office](#)

- Title IV, Part B of the ESEA – Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers:
 - Grantees: This is a formula grant to SEAs, which in turn provide subgrants to eligible entities on a competitive basis to support the creation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools.
 - [OESE 21st Century Community Learning Centers website](#)
 - [Contact the OESE 21st Century Community Learning Center office](#)

- Full-Service Community Schools Program:
 - Grantees: This is a competitive grant to eligible entities including LEAs, the Bureau of Indian Education and community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, or other public or private entities to provide comprehensive academic, social, and health services for students, students' family members, and community members that will result in improved educational outcomes for children.
 - [OESE Full-Service Community Schools Program website](#)
 - [Contact the OESE Full-Service Community Schools Program office](#)

- Promise Neighborhoods Program:
 - Grantees: This is a competitive grant to eligible entities, including Institutions of Higher Education, Indian or Tribal organizations and non-profit programs in formal partnership with a high-need LEAs an IHE, the office of a chief elected official or a local government, or an Indian or Tribal organization to significantly improve the academic and developmental outcomes of children living in the most distressed communities of the United States, including ensuring school readiness, high school graduation, and access to a community-based continuum of high-quality services.
 - [OESE Promise Neighborhoods Website](#)
 - [Contact the OESE Promise Neighborhoods office](#)

- IDEA Part B and Part C
 - Grantees: Formula grants to states to provide early intervention, special education and related services for infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities. Part C of the IDEA provides funds to state lead agencies to make available early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities, birth through age 2, and their families. At the State's option, IDEA Part C services may be available beyond age three to the beginning of the school year following the child's third, fourth or fifth birthday. Part B of the IDEA makes available a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment to eligible children with disabilities ages 3 through 21 by making available special education and related services to children with disabilities Discretionary grants to support research, demonstrations, technical assistance and dissemination, technology development, personnel preparation and development, and parent training and information centers.
 - [IDEA Website](#)
 - [Office of Special Education Program State Formula Grants website](#)
 - [Contact your state Office of Special Education Programs office](#)

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