

Early Learning Alignment and Improvement Grants
Amendment to the Every Child Achieves Act of 2015
Offered by Ranking Member Patty Murray and Senator Johnny Isakson

All children deserve the chance to learn and build skills from an early age so they can start kindergarten on a level playing field with their peers. Research has shown that children who attend high-quality prekindergarten programs are less likely to be held back in school, require remedial education, engage in criminal activity, or use social safety net programs later in life. In fact, the rate of return for each dollar invested in high-quality early learning programs has been estimated to be \$60-\$300 over the lifetime of the child.

The Challenge

In the past few years, States have recognized the potential for returns on an investment in early learning and child care and have started to invest in expanding access to early learning opportunities for low- and moderate income families. Moreover, federal investments in programs such as Head Start, the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), and most recently, through the Preschool Development Grants (PDG) program, have helped bolster these State efforts. However, overlap across the various federal, state, and local early childhood programs has contributed to fragmentation. Unfortunately, substantial gaps in access to high-quality early learning and care remain.

The Solution

Early Learning Alignment and Improvement Grants (ELAIG) is a competitive grant program to provide funding for states that propose to improve coordination, quality, and access for early childhood education. States will apply for a three year grant and provide matching funds to support sustainable improvements and better coordination of their early learning and care systems.

ELAIG will support access to high-quality early learning opportunities in the following ways:

- Improve coordination of existing funds for early childhood education, ensuring that each federal and state dollar is used more efficiently
- Target resources to low- and moderate-income families
- Increase the quality of existing early learning and child care
- Develop a plan to expand access to early childhood programs that exhibit high program quality
- Prioritize funding for improving quality and access in rural areas
- Disseminate best practices for blending and braiding funding, as well as program quality
- Support programming for infants and toddlers, as well as preschool-age children

Investments in early childhood education have been widely recognized as valuable by a wide range of stakeholders, including business leaders, law enforcement, and researchers. Early Learning Improvement and Alignment Grants will help to maximize these investments and ensure that families have access to the high-quality early learning opportunities they deserve.