Highlights

Voters Rate Early Childhood Education as a Top National Priority

For three years running, the First Five Years Fund's (FFYF) annual bipartisan poll shows that early childhood education is a national priority for Americans, regardless of party. Now more than ever, voters see quality early childhood education as a necessity for today's families and want the federal government to support states as they invest in new or expanded early childhood education programs. In fact, voters say the country has its education priorities reversed, and call for more investment in early education over higher education.

These results are particularly relevant to candidates seeking to connect with voters on family issues, as 84% of voters believe a candidate who supports early childhood education is looking out for working- and middle-class families. What's more, majorities of critical swing voter groups would be impressed with a candidate who calls for investments in early education-69% of Hispanics, 62% of millennials, 57% of moderates, 56% of mothers and 54% of women Independents.


Federal Updates

Early Childhood Mental Health

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF), the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) within the Department of Health and Human Services launched the National Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation to support the social-emotional and behavioral health of young children and their families. This Center of Excellence will provide technical assistance to build strong state and tribal systems of early childhood mental health consultation. Read more announcements from the [White House](http://example.com) and [ACF](http://example.com).
**Appropriations**

With the immediate threat of hitting the debt ceiling and the country defaulting November 3, Congress and the White House passed a two-year budget deal that both raises the spending caps put in place by sequestration and suspends the debt limit until 2017. Congress still has to finalize appropriation levels by the time the Continuing Resolution ends on December 11, but the additional $80 billion over the next two years that the deal secures allows for increased investments in vital government programs. The final funding levels for many early childhood care and education programs remain to be seen - including child care assistance, Early Head Start - Child Care Partnerships, Early Head Start and Head Start, in addition to the Preschool Development Grants program that was not included in previous appropriations bill drafts. Read more here and here.

**Absenteism**

The White House and the US Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development and Justice launched Every Student, Every Day: A National Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism. The new program supports the president's My Brother's Keeper initiative, as well as local communities in solving the equity issue of absenteeism. There will be a Dear Colleague letter about the need to reduce chronic absenteeism by 10% each year, a toolkit on resources and suggested action steps, fact sheets and, eventually, a virtual summit. Read more here.

**White House**

Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director Shaun Donovan released the Obama administration's final set of Agency Priority Goals in which increasing enrollment in high-quality state preschool programs is one of the Department of Education's goals. Read more here.

**Head Start**

The House Education and Workforce Committee held a hearing about the importance of the Head Start program called "Strengthening Head Start for Current and Future Generations." View the witness list and read testimonies here. Read a summary of the hearing from First Five Years Fund (FFYF) here.

**Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)**

Outgoing Education Secretary Arne Duncan, his successor, John King and Sens. Cory Booker, Chris Murphy, and Elizabeth Warren held a roundtable about ESEA reauthorization. The three senators voted against the Senate version earlier in the summer, feeling it was not strong enough on accountability. Read more here.

**Child Health**

The Center for Medicaid Services (CMS) wrote a letter to Medicaid directors informing them that states can use data from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to identify eligible and not yet enrolled Medicaid recipients. Read the letter here and more here.

**Early Care and Education Training and Technical Assistance**

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) announced the cross-sector Early Child Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) system that will bring the former T/TA system together through a network of six new national centers, in addition to several other national centers that support ongoing projects. Read more here and here.
Policy Trends and Analysis

Child Homelessness
The Institute for Children, Poverty and Homelessness (ICPH) released the "American Almanac of Family Homelessness," that analyzes key issues surrounding homelessness among families with children. For example, 41 states do not currently prioritize homeless children for federal child-care subsidies. Read more [here](#). Watch an archived webinar, "State Family Homelessness Rankings: What Do We Know, and What Can We Learn?" [here](#).

Child Care
- The National Women's Law Center (NWLC) released its annual update on state child-care policies, Building Blocks: State Child Care Assistance Policies 2015. According to the report, families in at least 32 states were better off in a key policy—greater access to child-care assistance and/or greater benefits from assistance. Read more [here](#).
- The Economic Policy Institute analyzed the cost of child care in light of state minimum wage levels in its new report, "High quality child care is out of reach for working families." Read more [here](#). Read media coverage [here](#).
- Child Care Aware released its 2015 State Fact Sheets using data from state Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies and state agencies. Read more [here](#).

Early Childhood Investment
The Century Foundation published a new report, "Together from the Start: Expanding Early Childhood Investments for Middle-Class and Low-Income Families," that challenges critics who say that there is not enough evidence to make the investment in high-quality preschool access for middle-class families in addition to low-income ones. Read more [here](#).

Social-Emotional Development
The Center for American Progress recommends the prohibition of suspensions and expulsions in early childhood settings and expanding access to in-school behavioral and social-emotional support services such as early childhood mental health consultation in its new report, "Point of Entry: The Preschool-to-Prison Pipeline." Read more [here](#). Watch the accompanying launch event [here](#).

Data Collection
The Early Childhood Research Alliance and the Regional Educational Laboratory at EDC explored the collection and use of data in early childhood programs in the northeast region of the country in its new study. Read more [here](#).

Child Health
At its Global Business Summit on Early Childhood Investments, ReadyNation released a new report, "A Healthy Bottom Line: High-quality early childhood care and education is critical to a healthy, productive workforce," which shows that improved early childhood experiences can reduce healthcare costs over a lifetime. Read more [here](#).

Back to Table of Contents ^
New Research

Tennessee Voluntary Pre-K (TN-VPK) Study
Numerous researchers and advocates have responded to the recently-released results from the TN-VPK Effectiveness Study, in which Vanderbilt's Peabody College of Education and Human Development and the Tennessee Department of Education published the results of a randomized control trial of the state's Voluntary Pre-K for Tennessee Initiative. The study found that children attending pre-k were better prepared for kindergarten compared to their peers, despite the low quality of the program. Read about the study here. Nobel Prize winner James Heckman followed up his initial response with an opinion piece in The Hechinger Report here and on his blog. Steve Barnett, director of the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), published a piece about lessons learned on the NIEER blog here and the First Five Years Fund (FFYF) and New America profiled it here.

Preschool and Adult Health Outcomes

Early Learning and Latino Children
The National Research Center on Hispanic Children and Families issued a report called "Preparing Low-Income Latino Children for Kindergarten and Beyond: How Children in Miami's Publicly-Funded Preschool Programs Fare" that found positive academic and social behavioral results for Latino children in Miami-Dade County, Florida that attended subsidized center-based child care or public preschool. Read more here and here.

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
The Institute for Child Success (ICS) published "The Effects of the Earned Income Tax Credit on Child Achievement and Long-Term Educational Attainment," which studies the direct impact of EITC on educational achievement. Building off of previous studies that focus on indirect measures of child well-being (poverty, parental labor supply, etc.), Michelle Maxfield finds positive associations between the receipt of EITC and a child's math achievement, GED attainment and college completion. Read more here.

Child Welfare
The US Children's Bureau funded a study called, "Enhancing Early Childhood Outcomes: Connecting Child Welfare and Head Start" that recommends additional support on making referrals, streamlined processes, shared case planning and more. Read more here.

Kindergarten Transitions
The US Department of Education funded the National Early Childhood Transition Center to "examine factors that promote successful transitions for young children with disabilities and their families" in Research Connections' new Topic of Interest brief. Read more here.

Inequality
American Institutes for Research (AIR) published "What Matters Most for Children: Influencing Inequality at the Start of Life," that reviews early childhood science and opportunity gaps. Read more here.

Back to Table of Contents
Upcoming Events

**November 12**


Register Here>

**November 12**

The US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families hosts "Moving Forward With the Early Head Start - Child Care Partnerships: Highlights, Lessons Learned, and Early Successes"

Register Here>

News and Resources

**Child Homelessness**

The Ounce of Prevention Fund and the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAECHY) produced two tools for utilizing the Child Care and Development Fund Plan (CCDF Plan) as a vehicle for advancing access to child care for children and families experiencing homelessness. Supporting Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness: CCDF State Guide and its companion piece, the CCDF Self-Assessment, provide useful background information on child and family homelessness as it relates to early care and education, a summary of requirements of the CCDBG Act related to homelessness, and a summary of some of the opportunities available through the state CCDF Plan to improve access to this vital support for families who experience homelessness. Access the self-assessment and guide here.

**Early Childhood Education**

- The United Nations General Assembly included access to early childhood education in its recently-passed new Sustainable Development Agenda that spans poverty, health, climate change and more. Read more here.
- John Bruer from the Brookings Institution penned an article for the organization's Evidence Speaks series about the brain science evidence behind President Obama's "Preschool for All" initiative. Read more here.
- Frank Porter Graham scientist Kathleen Gallagher delivered a sequel to her TED Talk on the power of high-quality early education called "Assembly of the Healthy Child: The Right Next Steps." Read more and watch here.
- North Carolina created a First 2000 Days Toolkit to help engage staff, families, constituents or community about the important first moments in a child's life. Access resources here.

**Early Childhood Investment**

Bill Gates delivered a speech about his work on education at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s U.S. Education Learning Forum. Watch here. Read a transcript here.

Inside Philanthropy’s Kiersten Marek published an article called ”Where is the Gates Foundation Going with Funding for Early Childhood Education?” about the foundation’s foray into early childhood education through expanding high-quality preschool. Read more here.

The Walton Foundation will invest $6.5 million over three years in research focused on the measurement of noncognitive traits in classroom settings. Read more here.

Home Visiting

Suspension/Expulsion
The US Department of Education (ED) convened a Google Hangout on the use of suspensions and expulsions in early care and education settings. Michael Yudin, Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, led the discussion #RethinkDiscipline in Early Childhood Settings with national expert Walter Gilliam and leaders from the Chicago Public Schools, the State of Connecticut and more. Watch the discussion here.

Pre-K to Third Alignment
The National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) updated its online interactive tool, ‘The Young Child Risk Calculator,’ that shows by state how many children are at serious risk for development problems. Read more here.

Family Engagement
• Responding to the difficulties in engaging parents from other cultures and non-English-speaking, the classroom communication platform, ClassDojo, launched a new service that translates classroom announcements into 30 different languages. The group plans to unveil smartphone apps in the future. Learn more here.

• The US Departments of Education and Justice refreshed guidance on what schools are obligated to translate and provide in a language parents and guardians understand. This includes information on registration and enrollment, report cards, student discipline policies and procedures, and more. Read more here.

• ZERO TO THREE celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month by highlighting its Text4baby service that provides assistance to parents and professionals in Spanish, as well as English. In 2015 it was selected as a “Bright Spot in Hispanic Education," by the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics. Read more here.

Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) Quality Standards
The National Center on Child Care Quality Improvement (NCCQI) released a brief that compiles websites of state QRIS Quality Standards. Read more here.

Online Professional Development Portal for Early Learning Leaders
The Ounce of Prevention Fund has launched the Lead Learn Excel Online Library where early learning programs can find tools and resources to strengthen instructional leadership and build lasting quality improvements in their classrooms. The new portal features resources curated in partnership with the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership. Visit the library here.

**Early Intervention**
The US Office of Special Education Programs funded a study of the state licensure/certification requirements for personnel serving infants and young children with special needs and their families. Read more here.

**Technology**
- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) announced it is reviewing its guidelines on the usage of screen time for young children given the advancements in digital innovation and increase in apps aimed at young children. Read more here.
- New America’s Lisa Guernsey and Michael Levine published an article in Slate about the multitude of “education apps” now available to parents and how these cannot entirely replace the need for social interactions, storytelling and more that parents and educations should be engaging in with young children. Read more here.
- Utah is piloting a taxpayer-funded online preschool program with support from an Obama administration grant to expand access to rural communities. Read more here and here. New America published a piece outlining the difference between Utah's UPSTART online literacy program and high-quality preschool here.

**Kindergarten Assessment**
The Center on Standards and Assessment Implementation (CSAI) created an interactive “State of the States” map about where state performance lands on standards and assessments including pre-kindergarten/kindergarten assessments. Read more here.

**Early Math**
Sesame Workshop offered a free online course in October on early math education after nearly 230,000 people signed up during the first month it was offered. Access past information about the course here.

**Poverty**
- The Center for Law and Social Policy’s (CLASP) Executive Director Olivia Golden published "A Bold Agenda for Tackling Child Poverty," in The Washington Monthly that outlines four pillars of such an agenda-building on the success of the major safety net and work support programs, addressing consequences of low-wage work, helping parents and young adults move to better jobs through career pathways, and building a strong foundation for young children. Read more here.
- Child Trends wrote "Child Poverty in the Aftermath of the Great Recession" that discusses the official and supplemental poverty measures. Read more here.

**Workforce**
The US Office of Child Care and the Child Care Services Association led a webinar on the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood National Center's Articulation Project. Watch here.

**Leadership**
The Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) created an annotated bibliography on leadership that highlights the resources used in CEELO's Leadership Academy, a program created to "strengthen leadership and management competencies of individuals with responsibilities for early childhood education programs in state departments"
of education, early learning agencies and other state early childhood education agencies.”
Read more here.

Pay for Success (PFS)

Back to Table of Contents

News From The States
AZ | CA | CO | FL | GA | IL | KS | LA | MI | NE | OR | WI |

Arizona
Arizona’s early childhood development program board, First Things First, opposes Republican legislative leaders’ plan to use its reserves from the tobacco tax revenue fund that was earmarked to support K-12 education. The state Senate President and House Speaker proposed using $275 million over the next two years of the early childhood development and health funds’ money that was established in 2006 after voter approval. Read more here. In response to the opposition, Senate President Andy Biggs has called for an audit of the fund. A board member of First Things First articulated that the surplus is necessary to continue to support children birth-to-five as tobacco revenues decrease. Read more here.

California

- Gov. Jerry Brown vetoed Assembly Bill 47, Preschool for All Act, that would have set June 2018 as the timeline for ensuring all low-income 4-year-olds in California have subsidized preschool. Brown stated that the bill “sets an arbitrary deadline” and that the FY2016 budget bill (SB 858) made the same intention clear and therefore it should remain part of the budget process. Read more here. Advocates—including Early Edge and First 5 Association of California—led a campaign supporting the bill and its more concrete deadline for the goal of high-quality subsidized preschool. Read more here and here.

- Despite the veto, advocates see the governor’s openness to continue pursuing the goal through the budget process as a call to action and the bipartisan support that drove the bill to the governor’s desk in the first place an indication of increasing support for high-quality preschool. Read more here and here.

- Educare California at Silicon Valley opened its doors for the first time on September 3, becoming the first Educare school in California. Educare California at Silicon Valley provides quality early education for 168 low-income children from birth to age 5. The school also includes a family resource center to offer resources and support for families and the greater community, as well as a professional development and research institute to provide training for early childhood professionals. Read more here.

- The Sacramento Bee reported on the recent Economic Policy Institute’s report analyzing the state’s current minimum wage and average cost of child care. In California, 63% of a minimum-wage worker’s total pay would go toward infant care costs and 44% for a 4-year-old’s care. These numbers will drop slightly when the minimum wage increases to $10 an hour and groups are campaigning to do further increases through a ballot initiative in November 2016. Read more here.
The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment at the University of California, Berkeley released "Teaching the Teachers of Our Youngest Children: The State of Early Childhood Higher Education in California," that looks at the evolution of higher education programs in California over the past decade and to emerging research and political environment. Read more here.

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health unveiled a new campaign to reduce the county’s high levels of childhood obesity by targeting and raising awareness of the dangers of sugary drinks. Read more here.

Some California districts are struggling with financing the transitional kindergarten expansion due to the rule that the state will only pay for educational services once the child turns 5 years old. The nonprofit Early Edge is creating materials to help school districts understand this budget clarification and will begin surveying areas to see what impact it is having on programs. Read more here.

Colorado
Chalkbeat reviewed the recent TN-VPK study in light of Colorado’s work on preschool expansion and improvement and profiles the Educare school Clayton Early Learning that received funding to embark on a study of the longer-term impact of preschool. Read more here.

Florida
Florida Rep. Gwen Graham sponsored the Quality Care for Moms and Babies Act that builds on the Pediatric Quality Measures Program. Read more here.

Georgia

Gov. Nathan Deal announced positive mid-way results from a multi-year evaluation of the Georgia Pre-K program by the Frank Porter Graham Childhood Development Institute at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. The progress of nearly 1,200 children who participated in Georgia Pre-K during the 2013-14 school year will be tracked through 3rd grade. So far researchers have found that children’s school readiness skills have significantly improved compared to normal development during the same timeframe. Read more here.

The governor’s Education Reform Committee is close to presenting its final recommendations which include the creation of an subcommittee devoted to improving early childhood education. Read more here.

Georgia First Lady Sandra Deal helped celebrate Pre-K week by visiting a number of visits to pre-K programs around the state. Read more here. The President and CEO of SB&T, a division of Synovus Bank, helped celebrate the fifth annual Pre-K week with a column in the Albany Herald. Read more here.

Illinois

The Ounce of Prevention Fund, Illinois Action for Children, Voices for Illinois Children, Latino Policy Forum, the Illinois Association for the Education of Young Children (IL AEYC) and Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Illinois released a statement after the release of NWWLC’s 2015 state of child care report highlighted Illinois as the state with the lowest income-eligibility for child care assistance in the country. The groups call on the Rauner administration to restore the previous eligibility. Read more here.
Illinois has entered its fifth month without an approved state budget. Fitch Ratings downgraded the state's rating and former Gov. Jim Edgar and Comptroller Leslie Munger have called for movement in the impasse. Read more here.

*Catalyst Chicago* profiles the state and local efforts in recent years to connect and promote advancing education for early childhood workers through creation of pre-candidate programs, development of articulation agreements, and incorporation of the Gateways credentialing system. Read more here.

Founding Director of Chicago's Cherry Preschool, Laurie Levy, pens a column in *Chicago Now* about the Chicago Public Schools pay-for-success program. Read more here.

**Kansas**
In line with his goal of improving elementary reading skills, Gov. Sam Brownback set up an informal taskforce to review the siloed and poorly coordinated system of public and private organizations delivering early education services to preschoolers. Read more here.

**Louisiana**
- Louisiana is celebrating the receipt of more funding from the Preschool Development Grant program but bracing for issues should the program’s absence from the proposed FY2016 federal budget persists. Read more here.
- Louisiana gubernatorial elections are going to a run-off between John Bel Edwards and US Sen. David Vitter on November 21 after neither managed to receive more than 50% of the votes. Vitter has promised to, among other priorities, focus on funding early childhood education. Read more here.

**Michigan**
- The state House of Representatives cleared House Bill 4822 that aims to improve reading skills, but full passage is up in the air. Some legislators are concerned about the bill’s requirement of schools to hold back non-proficient students in later grades. Read more here.
- A former Olympian, a retired general, the president of Michigan’s Children and others gathered to tour high-quality early learning programs and continue the momentum for early childhood development improvements in the state. Read more here.

**Nebraska**
One hundred twenty higher education faculty, state officials, and early childhood advocates gathered at the University of Nebraska’s Buffett Early Childhood Institute to discuss avenues through which to improve and expand the early childhood workforce in the state. Read more here.

**Oregon**
The *Portland Tribune* profiled recent improvements in the state to expand the access to and quality of preschool. Read more here.
Wisconsin
The state is shifting the logistics in its child-care subsidy program this year by moving from a provider- to parent-paid system in which parents will receive a debit card to pay the program. Providers are worried this will eliminate the bonus they receive for achieving high levels in the state’s QRIS system. Read more [here](#).

The Ounce national policy team partners with and supports early childhood leaders in states as they advance a comprehensive agenda for at-risk children and families. We do this by providing individualized strategy and policy consultation and resources; facilitating peer-to-peer learning and networking across states; and supporting Educare Schools and the Educare Learning Network in the development of their policy and advocacy work.

The National Policy Digest is a bi-monthly newsletter that shares up-to-date and noteworthy developments in state and federal early childhood news, policy and funding changes, research, policy trends and analyses, upcoming events, etc. culled from diverse sources in the field. To subscribe, please contact Sharrell Hibbler ([shibbler@theounce.org](mailto:shibbler@theounce.org)).

Unsubscribe | Change Your Preferences | Privacy Policy
33 West Monroe Street Suite 2400
Chicago, IL 60603 · 312.922.3863
©2015 Ounce of Prevention Fund