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## 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.

Read more about FFYF's annual bipartisan poll [here](#). Read some of the media and blog coverage at [Education Week](#), [The Atlantic](#), [National Journal](#), [Huffington Post](#) Live, [PBS NewsHour](#), [The Hechinger Report](#), New America's [EdCentral](#), and Marguerite Casey Foundations' [Equal Voice](#).

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## 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](#) and [ACF](#).

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## 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](#).

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## Absenteeism

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](#).

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## 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](#).

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## 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](#).

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## 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](#).

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## 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](#).

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## 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](#).

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### 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](#).

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### 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](#).
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### 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](#).

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### 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](#).

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### 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](#).

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### 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](#).

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## 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](#) and the First Five Years Fund ([FFYF](#)) and New America profiled it [here](#).

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### Preschool and Adult Health Outcomes

Economist James Heckman co-authored a new National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) report looking at the Frank Porter Graham's (FPG) Abecedarian Project and the Perry Preschool Project and the impacts on health in adulthood decades later. Read more [here](#).

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### 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](#).

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### 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](#).

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### 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](#).

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### 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](#).

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### 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](#).

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## Upcoming Events

### November 12

The US Department of Education, Attendance Works, Everybody Graduates and United Way Worldwide hosts **"Every Student, Every Day: A Virtual Summit on Addressing and Eliminating Chronic Absence"**

[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 (NAEHCY) 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](#).
- Jane Waldfogel published a new book called *Too Many Children Left Behind* and published a complementary op-ed in *The Huffington Post* about the importance of stronger early childhood policies. Read more [here](#). Eduardo Porter of *The New York Times* wrote about the growing education gap between the rich and poor, reviewing Professor Waldfogel's new book. Read more [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

- The Pritzker Children's Initiative and the Bridgespan Group published "Achieving Kindergarten Readiness for All Our Children: A Funders Guide to Early Childhood Development from Birth to Five," that outlines the benefits of investing in early childhood interventions. Read the report [here](#) and [here](#). Read media coverage from Bloomberg Business [here](#).
- 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**

The Pew Charitable Trusts published, "Using Data to Measure Performance of Home Visiting: A framework for assessing effectiveness." Read more [here](#). Pew also published "Family Support and Coaching Programs: Crafting the message for diverse stakeholders." Read more [here](#).

### **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 educators 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)

Utah's US Sen. Orrin Hatch and Chairman of the Gardner Company Kem Gardner published an op-ed in The Salt Lake Tribune about the success of Utah's PFS model and Senator Hatch's amendment to the Early Child Achieves Act-the Senate's version of ESEA reauthorization-allowing states to implement PFS models. Read more [here](#). *The New York Times'* DealBook column and Vox' Early Childhood Education section both profiled the payout Goldman Sachs received in light of positive results from the Utah PFS model during the early stages. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

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## News From The States

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### 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](#).

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## 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](#).

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## 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](#).

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## 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 a 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](#).

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## 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 NWLC'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](#).
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## 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](#).

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## 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](#).
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## 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](#).
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## 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](#).

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## Oregon

The *Portland Tribune* profiled recent improvements in the state to expand the access to and quality of preschool. Read more [here](#).

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## 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](#).

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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))



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