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**Highlights**

**New performance standards proposed for Head Start**

The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) unveiled its vision for the future of Head Start last week when it released new proposed performance standards. As the HHS [press release](#) notes, it is the first comprehensive revision of the standards since it was first published in 1975. The White House [blog](#) renewed its call for an additional \$1.5 billion investment in the program to expand the time children spend in the program. Groups including [New America](#) and [Bellwether](#) began to analyze the changes, and numerous press outlets covered the event. Read more [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

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**Federal Updates**

**Appropriations**

The House and Senate Committees on Appropriations' Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies subcommittees marked up the FY2016 appropriations bills. The House bill included level funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and an increase of \$192 million for Head Start, which includes a \$150 million increase for Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships, however it eliminates the Preschool Development Grants and the School Improvement Grants. The Senate bill includes increases for both CCDBG and Head Start, but also eliminates the Preschool Development Grants. Read about the House [here](#) and [here](#). Read about the Senate [here](#).

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

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell scheduled a floor debate for the Senate ESEA bill on Wednesday, July 7. Read more [here](#).

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**Child Nutrition**

US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack testified before the House Education and the Workforce Committee on school districts' compliance with the USDA's Health Hunger-Free Kids Act nutrition standards and outlined steps the department is taking to reduce improper payments. Read more [here](#).

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**Health and Safety**

The US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families

(ACF) released *Caring for Our Children Basics: Health and Safety Foundations for Early Care and Education*, a tool for states to review and align programs with what experts believe are the minimum health and safety standards for children cared for outside of home. Read more [here](#).

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## Preschool

US Department of Education Sec. Arne Duncan spoke at the National PTA Convention describing a set of educational rights for families including access to quality preschool. Read more [here](#).

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## Affordable Care Act

In a 6-3 decision, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled in *King v. Burwell* that the federal government can provide subsidized tax credits for purchasing insurance from a health insurance marketplace that is run by the federal government and not just marketplaces run by states. Read more [here](#).

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## Policy Trends and Analysis

### Alignment

Alignment: New America published a new report, "The Power of a Good Idea: How the San Francisco School District is Building a PreK-3rd Grade Bridge," that presents lessons learned from the transformation to a P-12 continuum, including the help of philanthropic and community partners. Read more [here](#).

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### Federal and State Budgets

- First Focus released *Children's Budget 2015* its annual analysis of federal spending across departments and agencies that impacts the lives of children. It finds that since 2011 investments in children have decreased 9% while overall federal spending dropped by 4%. Read more [here](#).
  - The National Association of State Budget Officers released its semi-annual report on state budgets, "The Fiscal Survey of States - Spring 2015," that focuses on governors' proposed budgets. Details about enacted budgets will be included in the fall version. Read more [here](#).
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### Child Care

- The National Women's Law Center created a new issue brief on state implementation considerations with regard to the recently reauthorized Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). "Helping Parents in Low-Wage Jobs Access Affordable Child Care," looks at provisions that give states greater flexibility for meeting the needs of parents in jobs with unpredictable schedules. Read more [here](#).
- The Institute for Child Success released two papers that analyze the economic

impact of childcare and early education and options for financing it in South Carolina. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

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### **Workforce Development**

The Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes updated the findings of its previous policy report, "How are Early Childhood Teachers Faring in State Teacher Evaluation Systems?" by producing a scan of all 50 states. Read more [here](#).

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### **Early Childhood Education**

The Economic Policy Institute's (EPI) economist Emma Garcia released "Inequalities at the Starting Gate: Cognitive and Noncognitive Skills Gaps between 2010-2011 Kindergarten Classmates," that is modeled on a 2002 study for EPI by Burkam and Lee. Using updated data, Garcia finds gaps in 'soft skills' and academics are associated with the child's socioeconomic status. Read the 2015 update here and the 2002 study [here](#).

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## **New Research**

### **Early Childhood Education**

The Economic Policy Institute's (EPI) economist Emma Garcia released "Inequalities at the Starting Gate: Cognitive and Noncognitive Skills Gaps between 2010-2011 Kindergarten Classmates," that is modeled on a 2002 study for EPI by Burkam and Lee. Using updated data, Garcia finds gaps in 'soft skills' and academics are associated with the child's socioeconomic status. Read the 2015 update here and the 2002 study [here](#).

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### **Workforce Development**

The Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA) in Bonn, Germany, issued a discussion paper about a randomized control trial that took place in Danish preschools to test an intervention of additional professional development on child social-emotional outcomes. The paper highlights results in several areas, but these successes were muted by unfavorable preschool characteristics. Read more [here](#).

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### **Child Care**

A researcher from the University of California Santa Barbara's Gevirtz Graduate School of Education published a new study in the *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* about the linkage between center-based care and its impact on reducing chronic absenteeism. Analyzing data from the "Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (Kindergarten Class of 2010-2011)" indicates an association between children attending center-based prekindergarten and lower probability of absenteeism. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

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### **Head Start**

The *Early Childhood Education Journal* published a study that examined the relationship between 31 Head Start classrooms' writing environments and children's early writing skill development. The researchers from Georgia State University and Purdue University posit there is a direct association between the environment and skill and yet find a low frequency of these writing interactions. Read more [here](#).

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## Upcoming Events

**July 21-23**

**19th Annual Virtual Birth to Three Institute (vBTT), Foundations for Learning**

[Learn More](#)>

**Aug. 4-7**

**Beginning Together: Inclusion Seminar & Module V TOT Training** in Washington, DC

[Learn More](#) >

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## News and Resources

### Early Childhood

ZERO TO THREE updated its State Baby Facts factsheets for 2015 that highlight infant and toddler data within the categories of: good health, strong families, and positive early learning experiences. Read more [here](#).

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### Home Visiting

Wisconsin's US Representative, Rep. Gwen Moore, published an op-ed in *The Huffington Post* about combating infant mortality through maternal education and her support of the recent Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program reauthorization. Read more [here](#).

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### Child Development

- KQED News interviewed and highlighted the work of University of Chicago researchers about the beneficial impacts of children using their bodies in the learning process, including math. Read more [here](#).
- New America discusses the US Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement's new grant competition on developing "skills for success." While the grant focuses on the middle years of school, New America addresses the importance of aligning preschool with the rest of the school system given that development of skills start at an early age. Read New America here and about the grant [here](#).
- Education Week's column "Ask A Scientist" interviews Rebecca Williamson, an associate professor at Georgia State University, about how children learn about concepts that are 'invisible' or abstract. Read more [here](#).
- Researchers of the recently released study about the benefits of Sesame Street wrote an article in *The New Republic* addressing certain inaccurate media representations of the study, including that Sesame Street can replace preschool.

Read more [here](#). The Brookings Institute blog provides another overview of the study. Read more [here](#).

- National pediatric researchers are creating a library of brain scans to study the development of a child's brain through the Cincinnati MR Imaging of Neurodevelopment (C-MIND) study. Read more [here](#).
- Child Care & Early Education Research Connections published a new "topic of interest" about developmental screening and assessment that includes tools, policies, and additional resources. Read more [here](#).

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## Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA)

- Kris Perry, director of First Five Year Fund, penned an op-ed in Roll Call about the growing bipartisan support of early childhood education and the need to better integrate early learning with K-12 through the reauthorization of the ESEA. Read more [here](#).
- In light of the pending reauthorization of ESEA, the Heritage Foundation calls for Congress to allow states to opt out of portions of ESEA as well as make Head Start dollars portable. Read more [here](#).

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## Preschool

- Sec. Arne Duncan and Reps. Richard Hanna and Bobby Scott published an op-ed in *The Hill* about improving access to preschool and the current proposals that would support that including the president's budget request to increase the Preschool Development Grants and the Strong Start for America's Children Act that was recently reintroduced in Congress. Read more [here](#).
- The Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) created "Resources Developed by States and Selected Cities to Support Financing Preschool Programs," a document highlighting how states support programs to calculate program costs. Read more [here](#).
- Filmmaker Evan Briggs released a trailer for "Present Perfect," a documentary that highlights a unique program in West Seattle in which a preschool and nursing home are intertwined in the same building. Read more [here](#).

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## Preschool Expulsion

ZERO TO THREE and the National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI) held a Congressional briefing, "What's Behind Preschool Expulsion?," with the support of Rep. Rosa DeLauro. Dr. Walter Gilliam spoke about his research on the topic in conjunction with policy and program specialists. Watch highlights [here](#).

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## Mental Health

- Matthew Melmed, the executive director of ZERO TO THREE, described the issue of baby mental health and infant social-emotional development in *The Huffington Post*. Read more [here](#).
- The National Center on Health within the Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services, produced a brief video called, "Breaking Through: Video and User's Guide to Understand and Address Toxic Stress." Watch [here](#).

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## Workforce Development

With the support of the Clinton Global Initiative, the American Indian College Fund is partnering with the Brazelton Touchpoints Center to train 150 early childhood teachers and providers at six tribal colleges with the goal of increasing access and quality in underserved rural Native American communities. Read more [here](#).

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## Family Engagement

- At the annual Clinton Global Initiative meeting, New America and the Joan Ganz Cooney Center unveiled a beta version of an interactive map showing locations across the country of early education programs that integrate technology in order to interact with parents and children in the development process. Read more [here](#).
- Educare Chicago and its incorporation of strong family partnerships was highlighted by the Education Writers Association blog. Read more [here](#).
- Too Small to Fail hosted a webinar on promoting early learning with faith-based partnerships, highlighting the work in a Tulsa-based Metropolitan Baptist Church and the larger 'Talking is Teaching' campaign. Learn more [here](#).

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## Child Care

- The Lumina Foundation published "Beyond Financial Aid: How colleges can strengthen the financial stability of low-income students and improve outcomes," that outlines six strategies including providing and linking students to services such as child care and provides a self-assessment tool for colleges and universities. Read more [here](#).
- The *Deseret News* discussed potential consequences of extended child care in the context of a survey from the United Kingdom that found parents plan to take advantage of the additional hours by working more. Read more [here](#).
- *The Washington Post* published an opinion piece about the struggles of child care and after child care policies and the disconnect from the needs of parents' schedules. Read more [here](#).

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## Early Childhood Investment

The Motley Fool profiled the rise of social impact bonds (SIBs) and the recent announcement to use one to finance Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) in New York. Read more [here](#).

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## Presidential Election 2016

Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton called for universal preschool and a new federal funding stream for state preschool expansion in an effort to provide high-quality access to all 4-year-olds in the next decade. Read more [here](#).

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## News From The States

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### California

- California legislators and Gov. Jerry Brown reached a \$115.4 billion budget compromise after the legislature pushed for a \$117.5 billion plan. The compromise that has since been passed by the chambers and signed by the governor includes \$265 million to fund 7,000 additional preschool slots and 6,800 child care slots, as well as a provider rate increase. Read an outline of the early childhood education adjustments from June 19 [here](#). Read the governor's press release of the initial [deal](#) and press coverage of its passage here, here and here. Special sessions have been called for outstanding issues including the state's Medicaid program, Medi-Cal. Read more [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).
- The Los Angeles Unified School District unveiled a plan to expand transitional kindergarten and overhaul the district's early education services by 2016-17. It will phase out the current School Readiness Language Development Program (SRLDP) that serves 10,000 low-income 4-year-olds. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).
- *The Fresno Bee* highlighted how early and specialized intervention programs are likely missing thousands of young children in the San Joaquin Valley. Read more [here](#).
- The co-founder of the United Farm Workers Union penned an op-ed in the *Contra Costa Times* about improvements the state could make in fighting poverty including improving access to child care. Read more [here](#).

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### Florida

The state restored the Early Steps program for babies and toddlers with developmental delays after presumed cuts, giving the program \$13 million. Read more [here](#).

- Gov. Rick Scott signed the state's budget in secret, vetoing \$461 million from what originally passed the legislature. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).
- The Department of Education Commissioner announced that Rodney MacKinnon was appointed the Executive Director of the Office of Early Learning in Florida. He has been the interim executive director since December 2014 and previously held positions in the office, including inspector general and assistance general counsel.

Read more [here](#).

- A business column in the *Tampa Bay Times* described the need for increased investment in preschoolers to drive the state's economy and highlighted the United Way Suncoast's first "Early Literacy Initiative" summit for business leaders in Tampa. Read more [here](#). Another column in *Times* focused on the Early Literacy Initiative summit's keynote speaker, retired Rear Adm. Casey W. Coane, and his talk about the connection between early childhood and the military as a member of Mission Readiness. Read more [here](#).
- *The Florida Times-Union* editorial board wrote a piece about the number of preschool and kindergarten suspensions in Duval County. Read more [here](#).

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## Illinois

Days before the end of the 2015 fiscal year, the state of Illinois still did not have a signed FY2016 budget. In June, the House and Senate passed a \$36.3 billion spending plan, which Gov. Bruce Rauner said did not have sufficient revenue to cover expenditures. Signing only part of the plan's education budget, Rauner vetoed every other part of the plan. As a result of the shutdown, payments to state workers and social service grantees are in limbo during the stalemate. Emergency changes to the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)-including freezing of intake, copayment increases, and additional background checks-took effect July 1. Read more [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

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## Louisiana

- The Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) approved Bulletin 140, the regulations on the Louisiana Early Childhood Care and Education Network, including the early childhood care and education accountability system and the new coordinated enrollment process. The approved rule includes five amendments that were supported by many early childhood stakeholders, including the Policy Institute for Children's recommendations to ban competitor evaluators wherein local school systems might evaluate child care centers. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).
- *The Advocate* discussed Louisiana's policies with regard to child care licensing in light of the tragic death of a 22-month-old at the beginning of June. Read more [here](#). The Associated Press highlighted the state's new public awareness campaign on unlicensed child care programs, which started after the incident. Read more [here](#).

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## Maine

- The state legislature overrode Gov. Paul LePage's veto of the \$6.7 billion two-year state budget right before the start of the new fiscal year. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).
- The speaker of the state House of Representatives accused Gov. Paul LePage of blackmailing a charter school. *The New York Times* and Associated Press report that allegedly LePage told a charter school it had to remove Rep. Mark Eves as president or lose \$500,000 in state funds. Read more [here](#).

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## Michigan

- *Bridge* magazine discussed the state's recent FY2016 budget deal with regard to the additional funding for early childhood programs including increased payments to high-quality child care providers, additional funding for home visiting, and a parent education pilot program. Read more [here](#).
- The W.K. Kellogg Foundation gave an \$800,000 grant to the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan to make early childhood investments in Upper Peninsula's Native American communities. Read more [here](#).
- The superintendent of Portland Public Schools wrote a piece in the *Ionia Sentinel-Standard* about the importance of investment and focus on early childhood education. Read more [here](#).

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## Nebraska

- The Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative launched the Nebraska Early Childhood Exchange site, [www.NebraskaExchange.org](http://www.NebraskaExchange.org), an online database of early education resources geared toward educators and professionals in the field. Read more [here](#).
- Members of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids published an op-ed in the *Omaha World-Herald* in support of LB 547, Nebraska's recently passed piece of legislation that dedicates approximately \$2 million in federal funding to early education. Read more [here](#).

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## Oregon

- The Jefferson Public Radio discussed Oregon's low high school graduation rate and its link to investing in early childhood education. Read more [here](#).
- *The Oregonian* described how some child care providers are nervous about HB 2015, a proposal to link quality with the state's pilot Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). The bill would also give parents access to subsidies for child care over a longer period. Read more [here](#).

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## Washington

- The Early Start Act passed with strong bipartisan majorities in both the House and Senate, making it the largest component of a \$158 million investment of new dollars for early learning for the next biennium. Among other critical changes, it establishes 12-month authorization for child care subsidies regardless of changes in family circumstances and directs investments to quality programs and services. Read more [here](#).
- Gov. Jay Inslee signed a two-year \$38.2 billion budget for Washington after the

state concluded a special session. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

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## Washington, DC

The Early Learning Quality Improvement Network (QIN) was launched in the district as a means to increase high-quality early learning and health services. Technical assistance is being offered to child care partners by three hubs and is funded through the Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program, the Child Care Development Fund and local resources. 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 Eleanore McKee ([emckee@theounce.org](mailto:emckee@theounce.org))



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33 West Monroe Street Suite 2400

Chicago, IL 60603 · 312.922.3863

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