



**Rhode Island
Department
of Education**



Rhode Island Department of Education Evidence Based Early Childhood Best Practices Toolkit

Guidance Document 1: An Overview of How to Use the Toolkit

Introduction

Rhode Island's [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\) state plan](#), speaks to the required federal education law, which appropriates Title Funding through State Education Agencies. Early childhood education has always been a part of the federal education law (Sec. 1111), however the law does not mandate early learning spending by state or local leaders (Sec. 1113). In the past, minimal federal education dollars have been spent on early education, and as a result, there are huge opportunities for greater investment in early education, particularly with evidence base around the impact of early education services and child outcomes. As a result, RIDE has developed its Rhode Island Department of Education Evidence Based Early Childhood Best Practices Toolkit, which includes a series of four Guidance Documents. The purpose of this Toolkit is; 1. To highlight the opportunities and rationale for greater investment in birth through five services and supports in accordance with the law; 2. To provide a listing of evidence-based interventions and resources for making funding decisions in accordance with the law (Sec. 1112); 3. To provide a document demonstrating alignment between ESSA's Head Start Performance Standards Education Section 1302, with existing state quality standards (Sec. 1112 4); 4. To provide baseline guidance on the development and implementation of practices supporting kindergarten transitions (Sec. 1114).

Definition of Early Education

Early education is broadly defined in ESSA as programs serving children starting at birth and continuing through kindergarten entry. The definition, also includes services across a wide service delivery sectors, including child care, Early Head Start, Head Start, State Pre-K, and home visiting.

Why Invest in Early Education

Investing in early childhood has been demonstrated to reduce the achievement gap, improve health outcomes, reduce crime rates, boost later earnings and provide a high rate of economic return. Quality early learning and development programs for disadvantaged children can foster valuable skills, strengthen our workforce, grow our economy and reduce social spending. Here's how:

- 1. Early education can prevent achievement gaps.* Gaps in knowledge and ability between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers open up long before kindergarten, tend to persist throughout life, and are difficult and costly to close. Taking a proactive approach to cognitive and social skill development through investments in quality early childhood programs is more effective and economically efficient than trying to close the gap later on.
- 2. Early education can improve health outcomes.* Recent research has shown dramatic long-term health effects of early interventions for disadvantaged children that incorporate early education, nutrition and health. More than 30 years later, treatment group individuals were at significantly lower risk for serious cardiovascular and metabolic diseases, such as stroke and

diabetes. These findings demonstrate the great potential of coordinated birth-to-age-five early childhood programs to prevent chronic disease, reduce healthcare costs and produce a flourishing society.

3. Early education can boost earnings. A recent study found that extremely disadvantaged children in Jamaica who took part in an early intervention similar to home visiting programs in the United States boosted their earnings in adulthood by 25%, putting their wages on par with those of their more advantaged peers.

4. Early education can save money. The rate of return for investments in quality early childhood development for disadvantaged children is 7-10% per annum through better outcomes in education, health, sociability, economic productivity and reduced crime.

Reference: Heckman, J. (2017). 4 Big Benefits of Investing in Early Childhood Development. Taken from <https://heckmanequation.org/resource/4-big-benefits-of-investing-in-early-childhood-development/>.

How to Use this Toolkit

This Toolkit is intended to serve as non-regulatory guidance for the purposes of assisting with funding decisions and demonstrating compliance with the Federal Law. The Department is not mandating or prescribing practices, models, or other activities within these documents. The Toolkit is intended to provide information on evidenced based strategies and supports, for which Title funding may be used. In alignment with the law, the Toolkit is intended to provide information about which programs and services are evidence-based as defined by ESSA's four evidence levels in Section 8101(21)(A) of ESEA. Using this guidance as a tool, can assist districts with making strong ESEA programing decisions and investments, as well as in supporting comprehensive aligned birth through 12th grade services. It is suggested that this document be viewed online, as there are numerous links, which may be accessed as part of the evidence and resources needed to include these opportunities in district plans.

Conclusion

The guidance presented within the Toolkit was gathered from a diverse group of stakeholders within the field, and is provided for the reader's convenience when making decisions about supports for children and families based on strong evidence. We understand there are often competing needs for limited resources, however, we hope that with these resources, local leaders think about a broad vision and associated strategies for supporting their learners, well before they enter kindergarten so as to best support their children's entry and kindergarten and later school and life outcomes. Using Title funds for early childhood offers an exciting opportunity for community collaborations, preventative rather than remedial services, high quality aligned classroom instruction, and long sighted vision setting when looking at school accountability. There's a growing recognition of the value of investing in quality early childhood programs, and evidence-based early childhood opportunities are a core element of the law and as a result, we hope this basic information on how and why early

education is so critical and its benefits to the k-12 system will help inform districts planning and decision making.

Resources

For additional information on early childhood and the law, please visit the below resource links.

Analysis: Early Learning Provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act
<http://ffyf.org/resources/eceinessa2015/>

EarlyEd in ESSA: Helping Every Child Succeed <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/early-elementary-education-policy/early-ed-essa-helping-every-child-succeed/>

Preparing for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): Early Learning <http://ceelo.org/essa/>

Design Team

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