



## Pre-K Now Recommendations to Head Start Conferees

- Require each governor to create a State Advisory/Early Learning council with a comprehensive membership.

The Senate bill would require each governor to name a “State Advisory Council” with fairly comprehensive membership. The House would permit each state to submit a request for funding for an “Early Learning Council” with broad but less comprehensive membership. Pre-K Now recommends the Senate language to mandate the coordinating council with a comprehensive membership.

Children receive pre-k services from a diverse blend of providers. Pre-k programs produce the greatest benefits when they are integrated and coordinated with other services to young children such as health and child care. The State Advisory/Early Learning councils will monitor the delivery of pre-k and other child care services to ensure that the total needs of each child are met.

Pre-K Now’s partner organizations that work with state governments to improve pre-k services voice general support for a federally mandated coordinating committee in each state. Some states, such as Illinois, have reported tremendous success in their coordinating councils and look forward to enhancing their existing committees with new federal support. Others, such as Nebraska and Kentucky, indicate that their states would benefit from councils with broader authority and more diverse representation than the committees currently in place. The State Advisory/ Early Learning council requirement would enable states to build on the work of existing institutions to achieve these larger goals.

- Apply the 50 percent BA requirement on a state-by-state basis

The Senate bill would ensure that 50 percent of Head Start teachers in each state obtain a BA degree by September 30, 2013. The House version stipulates that 50 percent of Head Start teachers, measured nationally, have a BA degree by the same date. Pre-K Now recommends the Senate language to apply the 50 percent threshold in each state.

Research emphasizes that children learn more and perform better in classrooms that are led by teachers with bachelor’s degrees and training in early childhood education. According to the National Head Start Association, 31% of Head Start teachers have a bachelor’s degree nationwide, which indicates that this goal is attainable.

Pre-K Now joins with the NHSA in recommending that Congress increase the total proportion of pre-k teachers holding BA’s and adds that the 50 percent threshold be applied on a state-by-state basis. Under the current system of measuring teacher certification

nationally, Head Start programs in some states show a high concentration of teachers with BA degrees, while others support only a tiny fraction of the total number. Congress can help ensure that Head Start children have an equal chance of receiving a high-quality pre-k education by holding each state to the 50 percent threshold.

- ***Require* rather than *establish a goal* that 50 percent of Head Start teachers hold a BA**

The Senate bill requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to “establish staff qualification goals” while the House bill states that “The Secretary shall ensure” that the BA requirements are met. Pre-K Now recommends the House’s language to set teacher training levels as requirements rather than the Senate’s less rigorous “goal” language.

Children taught by certified instructors in Head Start programs can be expected to show more sustained progress and better overall outcomes than their peers taught by teachers without this training. Pre-K Now recommends that Congress recognize the importance of teacher preparation by implementing the teacher credentials for Head Start as requirements rather than as goals in order to ensure that they are meaningfully applied in each state. As a nationwide program, Head Start will have the greatest effect when it delivers the same high level of service to children in all regions. Legislative language that requires the states to achieve this level of preparation for Head Start teachers will lay the foundations for quality instruction in every classroom.

- **Set training requirements for Head Start teaching assistants**

The Senate bill provides training requirements for Head Start teaching assistants. The House does not. Pre-K Now recommends the Senate training requirements.

Teaching assistants play a crucial role in Head Start classrooms. In conjunction with efforts to increase the preparation of Head Start lead teachers, Congress can upgrade the credentials for teaching assistants to reflect the benefits of instruction by trained staff. Head Start classrooms led by a BA-certified teacher and an assistant holding a Child Development Associate credential or associate’s degree will provide the best education to their students.

- **Authorize \$50 M in funding for State Advisory/Early Learning councils in FY 08; \$5M annually for subsequent years**

The Senate and House differ on funding authorized for State Advisory/Early Learning councils. The Senate proposes \$100 million for FY08, the House \$5 million each year, to enable states to establish the councils. Pre-K Now recommends \$50 million in funding for the councils in FY08 and \$5 million annually in subsequent years.

The State Advisory/Early Learning councils will require significant federal investment at the outset in order to achieve their long-term potential. Adequate funding constitutes an important precondition for the councils' ability to fulfill their mission. Savings derived from the councils' activities in reducing costly duplication in services, eliminating waste, and ensuring quality will more than justify the cost of financing them in the short run. Pre-K now recommends an initial installment of \$50 million to help states start their councils and \$5 million in support for subsequent years.

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