

# **Good Start, Grow Smart**



**A Guide to  
Good Start,  
Grow Smart  
and Other  
Federal Early  
Learning  
Initiatives**



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families







*Good Start, Grow Smart (GSGS)* is the President's Early Childhood Initiative aimed at helping States and local communities strengthen early learning for young children. The goal of *GSGS* is to ensure that children enter kindergarten with the skills they need to succeed by partnering with States to improve early childhood education; strengthening Head Start (HS); and providing research-based information to teachers, caregivers, and parents. Federal agencies encourage and support States to develop voluntary early learning guidelines that align with K to 12 standards, address professional development needs, and coordinate early childhood programs (e.g., Child Care and Development Fund [CCDF], Head Start, public school programs, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF]).

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# *Good Start, Grow Smart Goals*



- **Strengthening Head Start**—Head Start developed an accountability system, known as the National Reporting System, to ensure that every Head Start program assesses student learning in language, early literacy, and premathematics skills. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) implemented a national training program using a train-the-trainer and mentoring approach to reach all Head Start teachers with techniques to promote prereading skills for Head Start students.
- **Partnering With States To Improve Early Learning**—The Child Care Bureau (CCB) partnered with States to improve early learning through the following:
  - **Early Learning Guidelines (ELGs)**—The development of voluntary State early reading and premathematics guidelines on what children should know and learn at different ages. These guidelines are adaptable to various child care settings and align with State K to 12 standards so that young children are learning skills that will prepare them for school.
  - **Professional Development**—The development of a State plan that aligns its early learning guidelines with its teacher and caregiver training and education system. Through these professional development activities, teachers and caregivers learn teaching practices that reflect the early learning guidelines developed and implemented by the State or local community.
  - **Program Coordination**—The development of a State plan for an integrated system of early learning programs for children and families by coordinating at least four early childhood programs, which may include the CCDF program, Head Start, public prekindergarten programs, and the TANF program.

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# *Good Start, Grow Smart Goals*



- **Providing Information to Teachers, Caregivers, and Parents—**  
To close the gap between the best research and current practices in early childhood education, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) initiated a broad public awareness campaign for parents, early childhood educators, child care providers, and the public. In summer 2002, the First Lady and ED officials hosted Early Learning Summits and Early Childhood Educator Academies. New publications were released for parents and caregivers. (See the Resources section.) In addition, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, and Administration for Children and Families in HHS and offices in ED collaborated on a 5-year, multimillion dollar research agenda to identify effective curricula and teaching strategies.

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# *Good Start, Grow Smart Interagency Workgroup*



The *Good Start, Grow Smart* Interagency Workgroup is the collaborative Federal effort to coordinate programs supporting children's early learning. Its goal is to develop a common early childhood message across Federal agencies and programs and to identify strategies for collaborating and coordinating resources to support the development of high-quality, coordinated State and local early care and education systems.

To achieve this goal, the workgroup meets regularly to exchange information about new research evidence on effective approaches to fostering children's school readiness, coordinate research agendas, and share technical assistance resources and professional development opportunities. It has sponsored two roundtables of selected States demonstrating collaborative approaches to working across their child care, Head Start, and early education programs and professional development and research briefings to increase cross-agency understanding of programs. Members of the workgroup also have presented jointly at professional meetings and conferences.

## Overview of Selected Federal Early Learning Programs

Program	Federal Agency	Who Is Eligible for Services	Number of Children Served	Annual Budget <sup>1</sup>	Type of Program
Child Care and Development Fund	Child Care Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, HHS	Children younger than age 13 whose parents are leaving welfare or low-income working families	1.7 million children (of these, 1.1 million children are younger than age 6)	\$8.9 billion total from a variety of sources (of this, \$4.8 billion is part of the Federal CCDF) <sup>2</sup>	States receive a block grant and have policy flexibility. Most families receive a voucher to use in the regular child care market.
Head Start and Early Head Start (EHS)	Head Start Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, HHS	Children younger than age 5 living in poverty (EHS serves those ages 0 to 3; HS serves those ages 3 to 5)	906,000 children (of these, 62,000 are younger than age 3)	\$6.8 billion	Federal grants directly to local agencies that agree to meet Federal Head Start standards.
Title I Preschool	Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, ED	Preschool children in school districts or schools with a high percentage of low-income children	400,000 preschool children	\$274 million	Federal assistance through State educational agencies to local school districts and public schools. Schools decide how to allocate the money.
Special Education Grants for Infants, Toddlers, and Families (Part C of IDEA)	Office of Special Education Programs, ED	Children from birth to age 3 with disabilities and developmental delays	272,000	\$441 million	Federal assistance to the States, which pass along most of the money to local early intervention agencies.
Special Education Preschool Grants (Part B, Section 619 of IDEA)	Office of Special Education Programs, ED	Children ages 3 to 5 with disabilities and developmental delays	680,000	\$385 million	Federal assistance to the States, which pass along most of the money to local school districts.

<sup>1</sup> All funding reflects FY 2005 unless noted below.

<sup>2</sup> Includes CCDF mandatory and discretionary spending, TANF transfers, and State matching and maintenance-of-effort funds for FY 2004 for children from birth through age 12.

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# Accomplishments to Date



GSGS has been a catalyst for broad coordination across early learning programs through activities that respond directly to and complement GSGS goals. Looking across Federal early learning programs, the following accomplishments have been achieved as of October 2005.

## **Strengthening Head Start**

- Implemented the Head Start National Reporting System, including a training-of-trainers model for Head Start programs.
- Provided eight Innovation and Implementation grants to organizations for designing and implementing innovative programs to strengthen the early education experiences of Head Start children before they enter kindergarten.
- Developed the Head Start Mentor-Coach Instruction design, which consists of multimedia strategies for early literacy mentor coaches to use to work with classroom teams and home visitors.

## **Partnering With States To Improve Early Learning**

- All 50 States; Washington, D.C.; and the Territories are actively engaged in developing or implementing ELGs applicable to all early care and education programs within their borders.
- More than 27 States are implementing their guidelines through dissemination, training, and/or the embedding of the guidelines in their professional development systems. (See the *Child Care and Development Fund: Report of State Plans FY 2004-2005* for further highlights of State accomplishments in meeting their GSGS goals and early literacy objectives; the report is available on the Web at <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/stateplan/>.)



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# *Accomplishments to Date*



- All 50 States; Washington, D.C.; and the Territories have partnerships with at least four key early care and education programs within their borders and are coordinating with these stakeholders to establish their professional development systems.

## **Providing Information to Teachers, Caregivers, and Parents**

- Provided publications for parents and caregivers on child development. (See pages 10 to 12 of this booklet for a resource list.)
- Conducted research on effective early childhood interventions, professional development, and coordination among early childhood programs.
- Brought research-based information to teachers through Early Childhood Educator Academies.
- Launched the Head Start Parent-Mentor training program, in which Head Start parents learn to help their own children with language and literacy skills and to mentor other parents on early literacy techniques.

## **Interagency Program Coordination**

- Exchanged information among agencies on state-of-the-art research methods and on new evidence concerning effective approaches to foster young children's school readiness.
- Coordinated agency research agendas.
- Through the Interagency School Readiness Consortium, jointly funded eight research projects to examine interventions that promote school readiness.
- Shared technical assistance tools and professional development opportunities.

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# Early Learning Program and Research Offices



## **Federal Contacts**

### **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

- Child Care Bureau  
*<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccb/>*
- Head Start Bureau  
*<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb/>*
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development  
*<http://www.nichd.nih.gov>*
- Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation  
*<http://www.aspe.hhs.gov>*; click on “Early Childhood and School Readiness”
- Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation at the Administration for Children and Families  
*<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/index.html>*

### **U.S. Department of Education**

- Institute for Education Sciences  
*<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ies/index.html>*
- Office of Elementary and Secondary Education  
*<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/index.html>*

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# Early Learning Program and Research Offices



- Office of Special Education Programs  
<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/index.html>
- National Institute for Literacy  
<http://www.nifl.gov>

## **State Contacts**

- State Child Care and Development Fund Contacts  
<http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/statedata/dirs/devfund.html>
- Head Start State Collaboration Offices  
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb/contacts/index.htm>
- National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education  
<http://naecs.crc.uiuc.edu/>
- State Early Childhood Special Education Contacts  
<http://www.nectac.org/contact/contact.asp>
- State Early Care and Education Professional Development Web Sites  
<http://nccic.org/pubs/goodstart/state-ece.html>

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# *Resources and Information Related to Early Learning*



## **Resources Especially for Families**

- *Healthy Start, Grow Smart: Newborn–12 months* (English and Spanish)
- *A Child Becomes a Reader*
- *7 Super Things Parents and Caregivers Can Do: 7 Cosas Geniales Que Los Padres Y Los Cuidadores Pueden Hacer* (English/Spanish Bookmark)

Order from ED Pubs at <http://www.edpubs.org/webstore/Content/search.asp>  
or call (877) 4ED-PUBS

- *Learning To Read & Write Begins at Birth: A Guide to Early Literacy in Child Care* (English/Spanish)
- *Making the Transition From Child Care to Kindergarten: Working Together for Kindergarten Success* (English/Spanish)

Available at <http://www.childcareaware.org/en/tools/pubs/>

- *Transitions From Infant Toddler Services to Preschool Education*
- *Assuring the Family's Role on the Early Intervention Team: Explaining Rights and Safeguards*

Available at <http://www.nectac.org/pubs/pubs.asp>

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# *Resources and Information Related to Early Learning*



## **Resources Especially for Practitioners**

- *Teaching Our Youngest: A Guide for Preschool Teachers and Child Care and Family Providers*

Available at <http://www.edpubs.org/webstore/Content/search.asp>

- *What Works Brief 3: Helping Children Understand Routines and Classroom Schedules*
- *Training Module 1: Classroom Preventive Practices—Promoting Children’s Success*

Available at <http://www.csefel.uiuc.edu>

- *Emerging Literacy: Linking Social Competence to Learning*
- *Linguistic Diversity and Early Literacy: Serving Culturally Diverse Families in Early Head Start*

Available at <http://www.headstartinfo.org/publications/catalog/index.cfm>

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# *Resources and Information Related to Early Learning*



## **Resources Especially for Policymakers and Administrators**

- *Good Start, Grow Smart: The Bush Administration's Early Childhood Initiative* (announcement from April 2002)  
Available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/earlychildhood/toc.html>
- *Good Start, Grow Smart: Training and Technical Assistance Materials*  
Available at <http://nccic.org/pubs/goodstart/index.html>
- *Status of State Efforts To Develop and Implement Early Learning Guidelines*  
Available at <http://nccic.org/pubs/goodstart/elg-efforts.html>
- *Report of Child Care and Development Fund State Plans for FY 2004–2005*  
Available at <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/stateplan/>
- *A Tribal Guide to the Good Start, Grow Smart Early Learning Initiative*  
Available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccb/ta/gsgs1.htm>
- *Selected Resources on Financing Early Childhood Systems To Support Inclusive Options for Young Children With Disabilities*  
Available at <http://www.nectac.org/pubs/pubs.asp>

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# *Frequently Asked Questions*

## **What are the Early Learning Guidelines?**

ELGs, or content standards, describe what children need to know, understand, and be able to do at certain ages or developmental stages. Selected State ELG documents are available on the Web at [http://nccic.org/pubs/good\\_start/elgwebsites.html](http://nccic.org/pubs/good_start/elgwebsites.html).

## **How can I find out what my State is doing related to early learning programs?**

Each State and Territory submitted a Biennial Child Care and Development Fund State Plan in July 2005 that described what they were doing or planned to do in the three priority areas of GSGS for the next 2 years. Many of these State plans are available on State child care agency Web sites, and a 50-State summary will be available in 2006 from CCB. A summary of the CCDF State plans for FY 2004–2005 is available on the Web at <http://nccic.org/pubs/stateplan/index.html>.

## **Do ELGs only address early literacy and early mathematics concepts?**

GSGS asks States and Territories to specifically address early literacy and early mathematics concepts of children ages 3 to 5, but almost all States have developed guidelines that address other domains of development, such as social-emotional development and physical development. Some States also have developed guidelines for children from birth to 5 years of age.

## **Are ELGs voluntary?**

All States and Territories have been asked to develop ELGs for children ages 3 to 5, but the use of ELGs at the program level is voluntary, unless required by a State or Territory.

## **What is the definition of a professional development plan?**

Professional development plans are defined as systems of training and instruction developed for the purpose of improving the preparation and ongoing development of early care and education providers. States and Territories are encouraged to develop systems of professional development that are aligned with ELGs. Information on State early care and education professional development Web sites is available at [http://nccic.org/pubs/good\\_start/state-ece.html](http://nccic.org/pubs/good_start/state-ece.html).

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