Increasing the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Existing Public Investments in Early Childhood Education: Recommendations to Boost Program Outcomes and Efficiency

**Introduction:**

Research demonstrates the impact of early learning on lifelong success. The quality of early child care is the most consistent predictor of young children’s behavior. Experiences early in life can have a large impact on an individual’s lifetime trajectory. The report discusses how conflicting expectations, misaligned system requirements, and programmatic obstacles on the federal level create barriers to well-coordinated systems of high-quality early childhood education.

Currently, there are four federal funding streams- Head Start, the Child Care Development Block Grant, The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act-Investing $13 billion annually. The purpose of this paper is to help identify essential reforms to federal childhood education programs.

**Recommendations:**

The Center for American Progress set for 10 reforms they believe will advance the federally supported education system, improve child outcomes, and ensure system accountability.

1. Partner with states with align early learning standards that define expectations for all learning programs.
2. Invest with states to build assessments and assessment systems that demonstrate standards are being met
3. Increase consistency, quality, and system-wide access to federally procured and federally required, locally, procured technical assistance
4. Implement a more consistent, state-of-the-art approach to high-quality professional development for existing staff and help determine the optimal set of skills and knowledge that should be imparted in preparation programs for early childhood program staff
5. Improve early childhood data and harmonize reporting requirements to help increase knowledge and inputs and outcomes
6. Promote the replication of successful strategies to build continuity from early childhood programs to kindergarten and continue to remove data and other bureaucratic barriers to successful continuity systems
7. Build more federal, state, and local capacity to meet the increasing demand for culturally and linguistically appropriate services for children who are dual-language learners
8. Close the gaps in universal developmental screening across all federally supported early learning or care programs
9. Require expanded early learning programs participation as a means of boosting performance of failing elementary schools
10. Establish a permanent office that creates a common infrastructure to advance system reforms for both the Development of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education

**Conclusions:**

Federal funds provide early learning opportunities to a large number of America’s poorest children, but it is clear that additional federal funding and state funding is needed to further expand the assess to of high-quality early learning program to more children.

Cooper, D. & Costa, K. ( 2012, June). Increasing the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Existing Public Investments in Early Childhood Education: Recommendations to Boost Program Outcomes and Efficiency. Retrieved from Center for American Progress Website: <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2012/06/pdf/earlychildhood.pdf/>