

There is no path to high-quality early childhood education without high-quality early childhood educators. The reauthorization of the Higher Education Act offers an opportunity to support current and future educators by investing in their professional preparation and development, as well as their access to affordable, quality higher education.

Participation in high-quality early childhood education saves taxpayer dollars, makes working families more economically secure, and prepares children to succeed in school, earn higher wages, and live healthier lives. Based on the “high level of complex knowledge and competencies indicated by the science of child development,” research has concluded that “higher teacher qualifications are significantly positively correlated with higher quality in early childhood education and care.”^{1,2}

Therefore, to help build a stronger early childhood education profession that will set our nation’s young children on a path to success, Congress should prioritize these recommendations in a reauthorization of the Higher Education Act:

Principle 1: Support students enrolled in early childhood education preparation programs

- *Maintain and expand loan forgiveness and cancellation programs* (including Public Service Loan Forgiveness and Perkins Loan cancellation) for early childhood educators working in all settings.

Principle 2: Improve programs that prepare early childhood educators and leaders

- *Maintain Title II*, and particularly the Teacher Quality Partnership (TQP) grants
 - Clarify that participants in TQP-funded programs may be placed in licensed, regulated child care and Head Start programs to carry out their clinical experiences and service obligations.
 - Add a priority within TQP to support community colleges and baccalaureate programs in creating seamless, articulated teacher preparation pathways.

In addition, under the scope of these two principles, HEA reauthorization should:

- *Increase the authorization level for CCAMPIS* to \$250 million to provide support to students who are also parents by helping them afford child care while they complete their degrees and credentials.
- *Maintain and improve TEACH Grants and make them more accessible to early childhood educators*
 - Add early childhood education to the federal list of high-need fields.
 - Include a provision explicitly allowing TEACH Grants to be used, for up to three academic years, to earn an Associate degree in early childhood education or related field; and, to ensure that the service requirement can be completed in a licensed early learning setting (public or private) located within a high-need LEA.
 - Amend the TEACH Grants to make the payback requirement proportional.
 - Could be graduated proportionality, as in Perkins; proportionality relative to the number of years the grant was received; or proportionality relative to the years of teaching service completed.
- *Explicitly and intentionally include teacher preparation and early childhood education in the design of any new apprenticeship program*, including campus work-study programs.

¹ Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. 2015. Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/19401>.

² Manning M, Garvis S, Fleming C, Wong T. W. G. The relationship between teacher qualification and the quality of the early childhood care and learning environment. Campbell Systematic Reviews 2017:1 DOI: 10.4073/csr.2017.1

Principle 3: Support fair accountability for institutions that prepare early childhood educators

- In order to account for programs that prepare students for careers in which earnings do not reflect the value of their high-demand, highly-skilled work, ensure that required or suggested metrics on program or institutional quality, such as debt-to-income ratios or other employment and earnings metrics, consider both costs to students and post-college labor market outcomes.
- Ensure that provisions related to accreditation and accrediting bodies respect the distinct purposes of accrediting agencies (regional, national, and programmatic); focus on student learning; and support the academic quality of higher education institutions, as well the infrastructure needed to support that quality.

To care about the children in our country is to care about the adults who love, support, and educate them. A reauthorization of the Higher Education Act is an opportunity to strengthen early childhood education and its workforce, which provides critically important benefits to children, families, and our nation's economy.