

FY11 Budget – Finally Passed – Brings Good News for Early Ed

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Published: April 19, 2011

Congress passed and President Obama signed the federal budget spending agreement that *Early Ed Watch* reported on last Tuesday. The Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act of 2011 provides funding for federal programs through September 30, 2011—the end of fiscal year 2011.

While the spending measure includes a 0.2 percent across-the-board cut to all non-defense discretionary programs, including programs in the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, some early education programs will see funding increases.

Head Start and the Child Care & Development Block Grant will receive boosts of \$340 million and \$100 million respectively on top of 2010 funding levels. According to the Center for Law and Social Policy, the increase to CCDBG includes additional funds to improve the quality of infant and toddler care and to improve quality generally, and the increase in Head Start funding should enable programs to continue serving the children who were newly enrolled in 2010 using stimulus funds made possible by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

The Department of Education programs that can expect to receive additional include:

- \$700 million for Race to the Top, which appears to add early learning as one of the “assurances” states must address in their RTTT applications. The Continuing Appropriations Act uses some of the same legislative language from the proposed Early Learning Challenge Fund. In the first two rounds of Race to the Top, states were required to respond to four assurances: effective teachers, high-quality standards and assessments, data to support instruction and plans to turnaround low-performing schools. (Early learning was included as an “invitational priority,” meaning that states could highlight what they were doing or planning to do to on the early education front. But states did not receive any points or funds for doing so.) Under this spending agreement, early education will be in the front seat – with the other priorities – as fifth assurance;
- \$30 million for Promise Neighborhoods (available through December 31, 2011); and
- \$150 million for the Investing in Innovation (i3) Fund, a competitive grant competition that awards a priority point to applicants with a focus on early learning.

Title I funding will remain at the fiscal year 2010 level of \$14.5 billion.

Among the programs that will not receive funding in 2011 are Educational Technology State Grants, Literacy through School Libraries and Even Start. And not surprisingly, Congress kept intact the education program cuts made in a previous stopgap measure earlier this year. These include a loss of \$88 million to the Smaller Learning Communities program and \$250 million to the Striving Readers program.