

Early Learning Standards and Curriculum in the United States

8th Meeting of the OECD Network
on Early Childhood Education and Care:
Standards, Curriculum, and Pedagogy

Paris, France
December 7, 2010

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“It will be the goal of this administration to ensure that every child has access to a complete and competitive education from the day they are born to the day they begin a career ... we know that the most formative learning comes in those first years of life.”

President Barack Obama

February 24, 2009



The Early Learning Goal

... improving the health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes for all children, especially high-need children, from birth through 3rd grade.



A Focus across Multiple Domains

- Physical health and well-being
- Social-emotional development
- Approaches to learning
- Language and literacy
- Cognitive skills



From Cradle to College and Career



Goal: All kindergarten students arrive ready to succeed and remain on track to 4th grade.

Goal: All students enter middle school with foundational skills to tackle advanced subjects.

Goal: All students graduate high school on time prepared for at least one year of post-secondary.

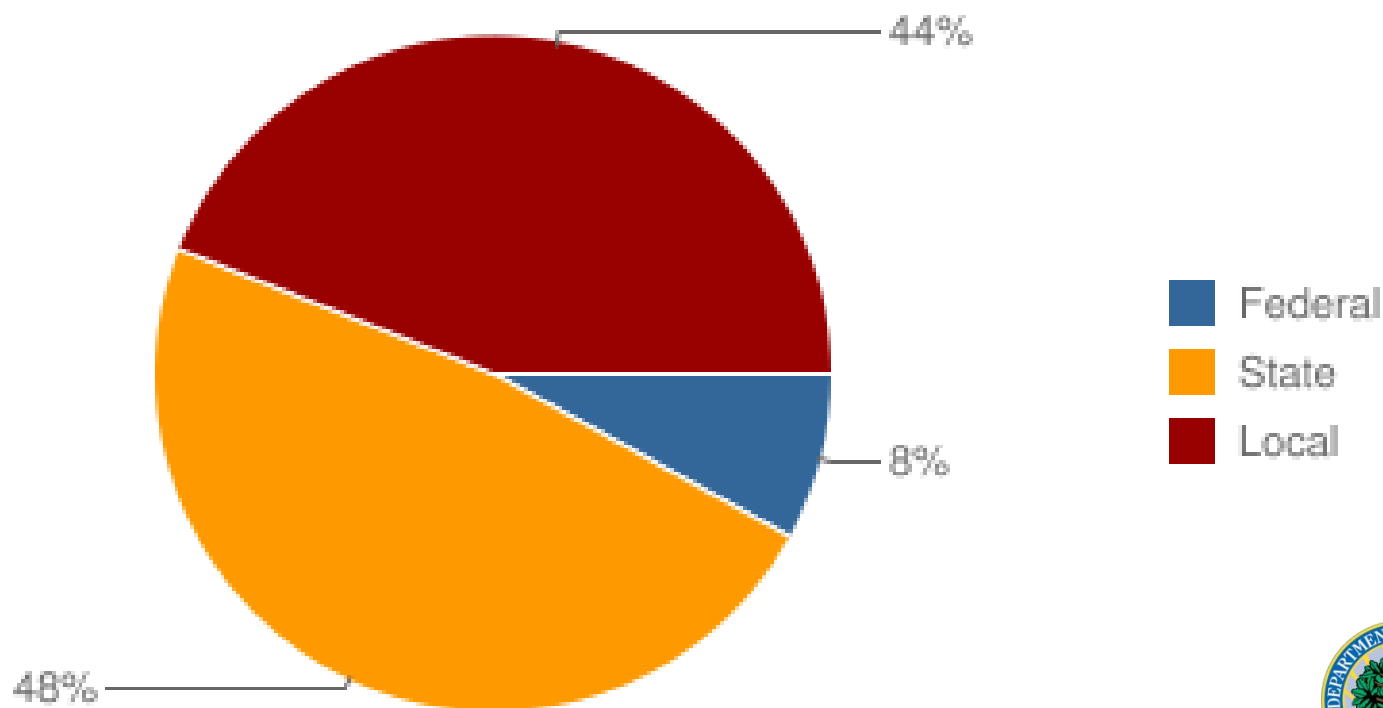
Goal: All graduates have opportunities for success in the 21st century economy.



Federal vs. State and Local Education Funding

Elementary and Secondary Education Funding

Fiscal Year 2008

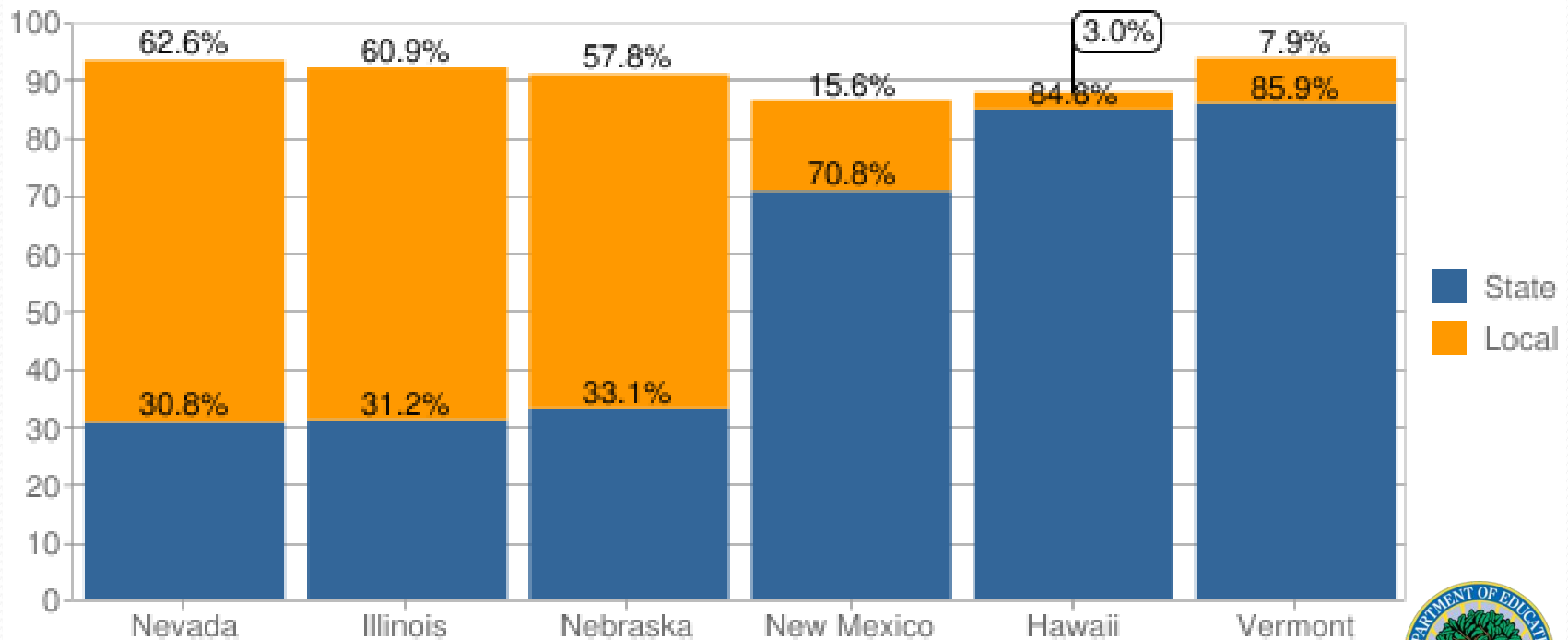


Source: National Center for Education Statistics; New America Foundation



Variability in State and Local Funding

State and Local Share of
Elementary and Secondary Education Funding
Lowest and Highest State Share (FY 2008)



Source: National Center for Education Statistics; New America Foundation



Early Learning Standards

No national Birth - 5 standards

Preschool early learning standards:

- All 50 states and the District of Columbia

Infant/toddler early learning guidelines:

- 26 states



Incentives

- Race to the Top (\$4.3B)
- i3 (\$650M)
- Promise Neighborhoods (\$10)

Race to the Top (\$4B)

9 of the 12 winners specifically addressed the invitational Priority for early learning:

- Improve educational outcomes for high-need children preschool through third grade
- Enhance the quality of preschool programs:
 - improve school readiness - social, emotional, and cognitive domains
 - improve the transition between preschool and kindergarten



i3: Investing in Innovation (\$650M)

- Competitive priority for activities to improve outcomes for high-need young children birth through 3rd grade
- 13 of the 49 highest-rated applicants (27%) addressed the Competitive Priority (\$229M)
- \$109 million of all proposals focused exclusively on the early learning years



Promise Neighborhoods (\$10M)

- 339 Applications
- 21 planning grants
- Comprehensive education reform to high-need communities
- Improved educational and life outcomes for children from birth through college and to career



Common Core K-12 Standards

National Governors' Association

Council of Chief State School Officers

- Mathematics
- English/Language Arts
- Adopted by 40 States

Major Federal Early Childhood Funding Streams

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- Early Head Start
- Head Start
- Child Care

U.S. Department of Education

- Special Education
- Elementary and Secondary Education Act



Interagency Policy Board

- Increase coordination, effectiveness and outcomes for children among the major federally funded early learning programs
- Composed of Federal Agency Officials from ED, HHS, DPC, and OMB
- Oversee other interagency collaborations, including identifying opportunities for policy coordination



Standards Challenges

- Teacher training and professional development
- Family Engagement
- Use in curricula and assessment decisions
- Use in accountability or program evaluation



Curriculum

No National Early Learning Curriculum

- *Tight on Goals, Loose on Means*

Head Start Program Curricula Options:

- Self-developed
- Local or state developed
- Adopted or adapted model developed by an educational publisher

States and the District of Columbia often provide options



Curriculum Challenges

- Fidelity of Implementation
- Teacher training and professional development
- Alignment with standards and assessments



Standards and Curriculum: Broad Federal Recommendations to the States

- Address multiple domains
- Align with K-12 system
- Evidence-based



- Inclusive
- Engage a broad range of stakeholders
- Regularly reviewed and revised



Assessment Questions

- Are children meeting the standards?
- Is the curriculum effective?



Assessment Challenges

- Philosophical differences on assessment
- Inadequate instruments for the variety of English learners
- History of inappropriate use of assessment results

