



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



SERIES: 2008-2009

Circular Letter: C-16

TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Mark K. McQuillan *Mark K. McQuillan*
Commissioner of Education

DATE: June 2, 2009

SUBJECT: ARRA Early Childhood Education Opportunities

This letter is being sent to provide districts further information regarding the use of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) funds for early childhood education opportunities.

On May 7, 2009, President Obama released his detailed Fiscal Year 2010 budget. Building on strong investments in the ARRA, the President's proposed budget creates incentives and supports for states to build comprehensive, coordinated, high-quality early childhood "Zero to Five" systems. The budget will provide opportunities to create new programs that ensure students are prepared to enter school. Specifically, the budget includes \$500 million in Title I Early Childhood Grants, which will encourage districts to spend money under the ARRA to start or expand preschool programs. In addition, there is \$300 million in the FY 2010 proposed budget for the Early Learning Challenge Fund, which will help states create or refine systems for rating and improving the quality of preschool education.

Decades of rigorous research demonstrates that high-quality early childhood education programs help children be better prepared with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in school and throughout their lives. The State Department of Education strongly encourages districts to utilize a portion of their ARRA funding for early childhood education initiatives. By doing so, districts may then qualify for additional federal funding in order to sustain these ARRA early childhood investments in future years.

For strategies on how ARRA funds might be used for early childhood initiatives, please visit the State Department of Education's Recovery website at http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/word_docs/arra/copy_of_white_paper_4_1_09.doc.

In addition, significant system planning is ongoing in a broad number of communities, funded by the Early Childhood Education Cabinet in partnership with the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund. The birth through nine plans developed by 23 Connecticut communities will shortly be available. The model and priorities established in these plans can assist other local education agencies and communities in their strategic thinking on priorities for use of ARRA funds for early childhood program planning, implementation, and expansion in their communities. For information about the community plans, please contact Joyce Staples, Office of the Cabinet (joyce.staples@ct.gov).

If you have questions or need additional information, feel free to contact Harriet Feldlaufer, Bureau Chief, Early Childhood Education (harriet.feldlaufer@ct.gov).

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