



ARRA Overview

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, P.L. 111-5, known also as the stimulus bill or recovery package, was signed by President Obama on February 17, 2009. The bill includes funding for several programs that benefit young children. The Administration's budget proposal later referred to these ARRA funds as a "down payment" on the President's Zero to Five plan. This is a unique opportunity for school districts and for states to improve teaching and learning, and the logical place to start is at the beginning – with pre-k.

"Collectively, we must advance ARRA's short-term economic goals by investing quickly, and we must support ARRA's long-term economic goals by investing wisely, using these funds to strengthen education, drive reforms, and improve results for students from early learning through post-secondary education." (U.S. Department of Education, ARRA Fact Sheet, 3-7-2009)

State pre-k programs are integral to building a comprehensive Zero to Five system. Some of the recovery funds provided will help states fill in gaps left by budget shortfalls. These one-time stimulus funds are especially helpful given the flexibility states have to use them strategically and in ways that can provide ongoing benefits. Depending on a state's needs, these funds can, for example, be used for workforce development, purchasing supplies, modernizing facilities, developing effective curricula and assessments, and creating pre-k-to-college data systems.

Using American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to improve the quality of pre-kindergarten programs is an example of the kind of smart strategy advocated by the Education Department (ED) because it deploys the money both quickly and effectively. High-quality and *only high-quality pre-k programs deliver lasting positive outcomes for children and communities.* Investing in quality means recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers, building appropriate facilities, developing strong curricula – actions that benefit children and local economies, now and for years to come.

"The Department encourages LEAs to use Education Stabilization funds to support early childhood programs and services that are grounded in scientifically based research." (U.S. Department of Education, State Fiscal Stabilization Fund Guidance, 1-4-2009)

Decades of research demonstrate that high-quality pre-k benefits children academically, socially and emotionally. Research also indicates that investments in pre-k yield returns ranging from 2:1 to as high as 16:1. We know what works; now, more than ever, our nation needs to invest in what works.

Resources included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) that can be used to help children enter school ready to learn and thrive:

- \$53.6 billion for state stabilization with the bulk going for elementary and secondary education "and, as applicable, early childhood education programs and services" and some funding available for modernization
- \$2.1 billion for Head Start (includes \$1.1 for Early Head Start and \$1 billion for Head Start)
- \$2 billion for the Child Care and Development Block Grant including a \$255 million set-

aside for quality improvements, of which \$93.6 million is allocated for improvements in infant and toddler care

- \$10 billion for Title I (ESEA) grants to school districts *
- \$3 billion for Title I school improvement grants
- \$11.3 billion for IDEA Part B state grants for special education
- \$500 million for IDEA Part C (infants and families)
- \$400 million for IDEA Section 619 (children before the age of school entry)
- \$100 million for teacher quality partnership grants

* The joint statement by House-Senate conferees includes this language: “the conferees expect States to use some of the funding provided for early childhood programs and activities.”

