

Summary of Major Issues with the Preschool Development Grants in the Conference Report for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) – S. 1177

Karen R. Effrem, MD

President of Education Liberty Watch & Executive Director of the Florida Stop Common Core Coalition

1. The Preschool Development Grants in the conference report will spend another \$250 million on a 46<sup>th</sup> federal preschool program and it is wrong for the following reasons:
  - The grants require alignment to Head Start and the Child Development Block Grants that in turn require [in eleven different places in the [current Head Start statute](#), such as Section 642B(a)(2)(B)(iii)] national preschool standards. These standards are being correlated and aligned to the K-12 Common Core by [national organizations](#) and [states like California](#). They include very controversial and [subjective psychosocial standards like gender identity](#) (p. 27), creating a “Baby Common Core.” (See more details on the problematic language [HERE](#)).
  - This is even more controversial than the K-12 Race to the Top and Common Core, because it is overtly teaching and assessing extremely subjective and controversial psychosocial parameters and [combining that data](#) with medical and [even genetic data](#) (newborn screening discussed on p. 39 of this link) as is happening in Rhode Island. This is also every bit as illegal and unconstitutional as what is happening in K-12, and the supposed “prohibitions” on the Secretary of Education will be ineffective because there is no enforcement mechanism for any of these prohibitions in preschool or K-12 and this preschool program is administered by the Secretary of Health and Human Services. (See this discussion in the “standards” section of these commentaries).
  - The language prohibiting federal interference in “early learning and development guidelines, standards, or specific assessments, including the standards or measures that States use to develop, implement, or improve such guidelines, standards, or assessments” on page 968 of the [conference report](#) is useless -- programs are *already required* to adhere to Head Start, which demands federal content standards (see above). In addition, preschool programs in other sections of the bill such as Section 1006 (amending Section 1112)(c)(7) also demand adherence to Head Start’s performance standards that include these national “Baby Common Core” Standards.
  - [A research compilation](#) containing approximately 30 studies of Head Start and state preschool programs documents overwhelming evidence of ineffectiveness; fade out of beneficial effects in the early grades; or actual academic or emotional harm. The most recent study is from Tennessee, Senator Alexander’s home state, in September of this year.
  - Jointly administering this with HHS, where the disastrously ineffective and invasive Head Start program is housed, is not a conservative “win,” because two federal agencies are involved, further diminishing local control.
  - With \$19 trillion in debt, we and our children cannot afford to have another \$250 million spent on another ineffective, harmful, invasive preschool program.
2. The preschool language from the Senate bill is very similar to and in places, the exact same language in the [conference report](#), starting in Section 9212 on page 949 and going through 971.
3. The codification of national early childhood standards, assessments, and data collection when there is [new evidence](#) of extremely weak federal “protections” of sensitive student data, is not only unwise but dangerous. But that is what this bill does. Its language will impose Common Core, psychological profiling, and lifelong data and career tracking on our youngest, most vulnerable children.
4. The only way to fix this absolutely unnecessary, harmful, ineffective, and expensive program is to remove it from ESSA and remove the requirement for national preschool standards, especially social emotional standards, from the upcoming Head Start reauthorization.