

Early Childhood (Birth to Three)

Both under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and federal health reform, the 111th Congress provided additional funding to states for child care, Head Start and Early Head Start, and evidenced-based home visiting. Further, Congress directed states to establish Early Childhood Advisory Councils to strengthen early childhood systems. Research has shown that up to half of all subsequent school difficulties and student dropout is evident at the time of school entry and major gaps exist at age three by socio-economic status. While Head Start has been the largest single investment Congress has made to address disparities in child development by income, it still serves a minority of those it could benefit and is projected, if fully funded, to be able to narrow kindergarten gaps by only about one-fifth.

As U.S. Senator, what do you believe should be the federal government's role in ensuring that children start school healthy and prepared for success?



GRASSLEY: The first years of a child's life are a crucial time in their development and it is important that all children have access to enriching and nurturing experiences in their early years, but each child's needs are unique and each family's situation is different. Federal, state, and local early childhood policies should be flexible to ensure that parents have sufficient options and choices to fit their circumstances and meet their child's needs.



CONLIN: I favor universal early childhood education. Head Start was designed to give under-privileged kids a "head start" on learning skills by teaching those tasks they would not learn at home. It is imperative that programs such as Head Start are available for all children who lack the opportunity, but have the ability and the desire. We must invest to prepare our children for a worldwide economy, especially in the areas of math and science education. It's the right thing to do for our children, and for our economic future.