

# Opinion and Editorial from Michelle Taylor, CEO United Way of Delaware & Leslie Newman, CEO Children and Families First

In a recent opinion piece in the New York Times ("No Rich Child Left Behind," April 27, 2013), Stanford University professor Sean Reardon described an ever-increasing gap in student achievement – it turns out that the children of the rich perform better in school, on average, than children not only from poor families, but from middle class ones as well. Reardon posits that the academic gap is widening because rich students are entering kindergarten much better prepared to succeed in school than middle class and poor students do. Unsurprisingly, wealth provides access to cognitively-stimulating brain development activities, stable home environments, and access to high-quality child care and preschool. This preparation gap persists throughout elementary and high school. And given the rapidly-changing economy, school success is more critical to economic success than ever before.

What's the solution? Reardon believes that we need to "take a lesson from the rich and invest much more heavily as a society in our children's educational opportunities from the day they are born."

Not only that, we need to improve the quality of parenting, investing in parents so they can better invest in their children. Reardon mentions programs like the Nurse-Family Partnership (an evidence-based home visiting model that is being implemented here in Delaware by Children & Families First) and Head Start (a proven early childhood education program implemented in Delaware by Wilmington Head Start, New Castle County Head Start, Telamon Head Start, the University of Delaware, and United Way of Delaware). With that as a backdrop, and with the knowledge that here in Delaware and throughout the United States, child poverty continues to grow and the gap between the rich and the poor and middle class grows ever wider, we believe that President Obama's Federal Early Learning Budget Proposal forms a critical foundation for our future success as a nation. In his budget, the President lays out a multi-pronged approach for increasing developmental and educational supports for children ages birth to five, including:

1) Increased funding for evidence-based home visiting services to new moms and babies (like those provided by the Nurse-Family Partnership). These programs are designed to provide parent education and to connect parents with the resources they need to promote their children's health, well-being, learning, and development;

2) New competitive funding to expand full-day, full-year quality for infants and toddlers through the Early Head Start model for infants and toddlers. This would double the size of Early Head Start to about 100,000 children. In addition, the President's Early Learning proposal provides a framework for partnerships between Early Head Start and child care programs;

3) New investments in providing preschool for low- and moderate-income 4-year-olds using a diverse provider delivery model which includes child care and school districts; and

4) Expanded funding for the Child Care Development Block Grant, Head Start, and

Promise Neighborhoods.

President Obama's proposal would create a new Preschool for All initiative to expand preschool opportunities for 4-year-olds, allocating \$75 billion over 10 years. This proposal consists of a state-federal partnership to provide all low- and moderate-income four-year-olds with high-quality preschool, while also providing States with incentives to expand these programs to reach additional children from middle class families and put in place full-day kindergarten policies.

The President's proposal also includes:

- \$1.4 billion to expand Early Head Start and create Early Head Start/Child Care partnerships to serve more birth-3 year-olds

- \$500 million in increased funding through the Child Care and Development Fund, which would serve an additional 100,000 children from low-income families with child care access

- \$200 million for child care quality improvement

- \$15 billion over the next 10

years to extend and expand voluntary home visiting programs

This approach is firmly grounded in quality and recognizes the incredible importance of building a strong continuum of services for children

ages birth to five that includes home visiting, child care, Head Start, and local schools. June of

2013 provides a time of opportunity by advocates throughout the entire

country to build a groundswell of support for President Obama's proposed early learning investment.

White House leaders are eager to see that early childhood advocates show their support for new national early learning investment. Large

and visible support is critical.

There are lots of ways you can

participate, and show your support. Read through the list below and help keep the momentum going!

You can contact your U.S. Congressional Representative and your U.S. Senators encouraging them to support President Obama's early learning proposal.

The more personal story you can tell of how quality early education has positively impacted your world, the more effective you will be.

Senator Tom Carper: (302) 573-6291

Senator Chris Coons: (302) 573-6345

Representative John Carney: (302) 691-7333

If you represent an organization please sign on as a supporter of the Strong Start for Children - Building America's Future campaign at <http://www.nwlc.org/action/join-strong-start-children-building-america's-future-campaign> This is about our future as a state and as a nation. Please join with us in offering your support for the President's proposal. Contact our Congressional Delegation and tell them that you strongly support expansion of early childhood education to assure that the next generation is prepared to succeed in school and in life.

Signed,

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United Way of Delaware



United Way of Delaware

