

## THE EARLY CHILDHOOD ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT

The Project will design an accountability strategy to improve the quality, effectiveness and credibility of state-funded early education programs serving 3- and 4-year-old children. The need for new accountability models for state early childhood programs comes from the following trends and priorities:

- An increasing focus on reducing gaps in educational achievement.
- Growing accountability efforts in public education and other federal and state programs.
- Increasing state investment in pre-kindergarten and other early childhood programs.
- New state efforts to create early learning standards and manage large-scale assessments of young children.

A National Task Force of experts and state policy leaders will develop recommendations to guide state accountability planning, development and implementation efforts. The Task Force report, due to be completed by early 2007, will include guidance for states in adapting, augmenting and linking three aspects of early childhood policy and management systems:

- **Setting Standards** - States will be encouraged to review standards for early childhood programs, teachers and children to ensure that they are research-based, reflective of diversity of young children, and aligned appropriately with standards and assessments in use in kindergarten-grade 2 programs.
- **Assessing Programs and Children** – Based on the above standards, recommendations will include guidance on selecting measures and assessment tools, managing large-scale data collection efforts and analyzing new and existing data on:
  - Conditions & characteristics of children and families.
  - Program quality, classroom environments and teaching practices.
  - Children's progress & levels of accomplishment.
  - Levels of public investment and support for quality early childhood services.
- **Reporting and Using Accountability Data** – Recommendations will guide states in reporting child and program performance information to a variety of audiences:
  - Reporting to local program leaders to help them improve curriculum, teaching, program services and linkages with kindergarten through grade 2 schooling.
  - Reporting to state program managers as they clarify and fine-tune standards, design technical assistance and professional development efforts and target program funding.
  - Reporting to state policymakers to contribute to their oversight and funding of early childhood programs.
  - Reporting to the public on trends in early childhood program outcomes, levels of state investment and conditions of young children.

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