



TRANSATLANTIC FORUM ON INCLUSIVE EARLY YEARS

INVESTING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN FROM MIGRANT AND LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

Family Engagement in Early Childhood Development and School Readiness:

A U.S. Policy and Program Overview

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OVERVIEW

A significant body of evidence from the early childhood and brain development fields demonstrates the critical importance of healthy socio-emotional and cognitive development in young children ages 0-8 in order to prevent the onset of education achievement gaps across student sub-populations – gaps that have been shown to persist and grow as these students progress through the education pipeline. Other convincing evidence points to the critical role of parents in determining their children’s readiness for and future success in school. As a result, the Obama Administration and many states have recognized the importance of expanding public investments in early learning efforts, as well as parenting skill and parent engagement initiatives, in hopes of closing achievement gaps and improving U.S. education outcomes.

Parenting skills and parent engagement in their children’s education are now recognized across the U.S. as being important to children’s success in the early years; programming in these areas is encouraged though generally not well-resourced through home visiting, early learning, pre-K and elementary school programs. However, research and practice in the parent engagement arena are still evolving, program funding and accountability measures remain weak, and many of the nation’s low-educated, low-income, and/or immigrant and refugee parents and families cannot be engaged in or achieve the goals of these initiatives due to language barriers and the lack of efforts tailored to address gaps in cultural knowledge and understanding of the U.S. education system. Immigrants and refugees with low levels of literacy face particularly high barriers to engagement given the literacy expectations of most programs, whether in English or other languages commonly spoken by newcomers. Attempts to address the English language and literacy skill needs of immigrant and refugee parents are hobbled by the extremely low capacity of adult education and training services and the past record of difficulty in demonstrating the effectiveness of dual-generation parent and child literacy program models.

Nevertheless, as trends in demographic change, ECEC system growth, and understanding of effective parent skill, engagement and education practices converge, many opportunities are on the horizon in 2014 and coming years to improve the coherence and quality of family engagement efforts, better align them with other system reform efforts, and improve their effectiveness in meeting the needs of diverse families.

I. RECOGNITION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION TO YOUNG CHILDREN’S DEVELOPMENT

The idea of the importance of parent engagement in education grew out of a broader war on poverty in the US in the 1960s, with the inception of the Head Start early childhood program in 1965. As part of the Head Start program, for the first time, parent participation in planning and decision-making in public programming was emphasized in order to make services delivered to low-income populations more relevant and responsive to their needs, and to empower these communities as a means of promoting stability and quieting growing unrest.¹ In the years that followed, provisions for parent engagement were



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also written into Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and by 1968, language in Title I required that parents be involved in the planning and evaluation of Title I programs and encouraged the creation of Parent Advisory Councils in school districts.

Though Head Start continues to serve roughly half of its eligible population of low-income 3- and 4-year olds, and most states have instituted public pre-kindergarten programs, federal regulation of early childhood services is highly limited in the U.S., and parent engagement activities in the early years are largely conducted on an ad hoc and non-systemic basis. Reaching parents in their children's early years, however, may be especially beneficial in promoting patterns of engagement that will continue through later years and is particularly important given the rapid development of cognitive, social-emotional and physical skills that occurs in this critical period in children's lives.

A growing body of research has made apparent the importance of the early years in building the foundation for all children's healthy development and later academic success. Studies using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort (ECLS-B), for instance, find that disparities in cognitive tests between American infant groups are apparent at as early as nine months of age.ⁱⁱ Longitudinal data also demonstrate an achievement gap between many immigrant groups and their native peers that begins even prior to kindergarten enrollment, with a 2007 study demonstrating that at the start of kindergarten, 73% of third-generation white children demonstrated basic reading proficiency and 34% demonstrated an ability to understand the beginning sounds of words compared to only 42% of first-generation Mexican-American children who could recognize letters, and only 14% who demonstrated an ability to understand the beginning sounds of words.ⁱⁱⁱ

Emerging research also clearly supports the positive impact of strong partnerships between families and early childhood education programs, which lead to future academic success and increased socio-emotional skills for all young children.^{iv} And while it has also been established that participation in high-quality ECEC programming significantly improves school readiness skills for all children, preschool alone is not sufficient to narrow school readiness and later achievement gaps for children from traditionally under-performing groups.^v Children's home environments play a critical role in determining their healthy cognitive and socio-emotional development, and the educational attainment of mothers continues to be one of the most predictive indicators of a child's academic success, with those children from families with less educated parents performing at the lowest levels in school. These children are, moreover, less likely to complete school at all in future years or to secure high-paying jobs.^{vi} Research indicates that family involvement in school has the greatest impact for children at greatest risk, with the literacy achievement of children from low-income and low-educated families showing the highest achievement rewards from high levels of family involvement.^{vii}

The socio-demographic characteristics of immigrant parents with young children indicate that many will need to build functional and cultural literacy, language proficiency, and systems knowledge and navigation skills in order to support their children's ability to meet U.S. kindergarten readiness expectations and their future academic success. Moreover, building these skills during a period in parents' lives when they are perhaps most likely to be seeking out services and training opportunities has the potential to put low-educated parents on a path to greater education and workforce success, and in turn improve the family's economic mobility.^{viii} Equally important, parents from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds are an important resource for early learning programs that stand to benefit from their knowledge and language skills.

Yet, evidence shows that several immigrant groups demonstrate lower levels of engagement and involvement in schools compared to native groups, according to ECLS-B data.^{ix} Several known barriers likely contribute to disparities in parent engagement behaviors among immigrant and native-born parents, many of which are linked to socioeconomic status, and some of which are specific to immigrant families. These include economic constraints such as transportation costs and irregular work schedules, as



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well as language and literacy barriers and cultural differences that may lead to little or poor communication between immigrant parents and ECEC programs or staff, thus preventing the engagement of immigrant families with ECEC services or a lack of effective relationships and partnerships with program staff.^x

II. IMMIGRANT FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN: A RAPIDLY GROWING DEMOGRAPHIC

Children of immigrants now comprise over 25 percent of the total US young child population aged 5 and under, and the expansion of this group has driven net growth of the young child population nationally since 1990. Most of these children (over 90 percent) are US citizens. Possibly as a result of positive selection factors associated with migration, immigrant parents tend to have very high levels of commitment to educational opportunities for their children, which may act as a protective factor in their early learning and future school success.^{xi} Additionally, as compared with their native counterparts, immigrant parents have higher rates of marriage and employment as well as lower rates of maternal depression.^{xii} However, many of these children also have several risk factors known to be associated with lower levels of future educational attainment and academic achievement. These include:

- They are more likely to live in low-income households than children of native parents, with 57 percent of young children of immigrants aged 5 and under currently living in low-income households, compared to 45 percent of young children with native-born parents;^{xiii}
- Their parents are more likely to have less than a high school diploma: 37 percent of young children of immigrants have parents with a less than high school degree, compared with 12 percent of children of natives,^{xiv} and
- Their parents are more likely to have limited proficiency in English: 56 percent of young children of immigrants have at least one limited English proficient (LEP) parent, and 31 percent of young children of immigrants live in a linguistically isolated household.^{xv}

Meanwhile, the multitude of national origins and languages spoken among immigrants as well as their unprecedented dispersion across traditional and new destination states presents a new demographic reality and new challenges for systems that may be unprepared to meet the needs of these populations. Six states experienced more than 100% growth in the share of their young child population from immigrant families in 2000-2011,^{xvi} and as of 2011, 13 states had a 25 percent or higher share of children of immigrants in their young child population.^{xvii}

III. US POLICY AND PROGRAM FRAMEWORKS FOR PARENT SKILL, ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

At the federal level, parent engagement provisions for children aged birth through five in the U.S. are currently offered primarily under the Department of Health and Human Services through the Home Visiting program as well as the Head Start program. These are both targeted programs serving low-income families and take a holistic approach toward aiding parents and families in supporting their young children's health, socio-emotional, and cognitive development.

The Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program is targeted toward at-risk families as determined by each state, and aims to: improve maternal and newborn health; prevent child abuse and maltreatment; improve school readiness; reduce crime and domestic violence; improve economic self-sufficiency; and improve the coordination of related resources and supports for families. Voluntary home visiting services are provided to pregnant women, mothers, fathers, caregivers, and their children from birth through five years of age, and most families participate in the program for one to three years. The federal government provides grants directly to states to administer this program, requiring that at least



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75 percent of funds be spent on evidence-based home visiting models chosen by federal government criteria. The remaining 25 percent may be spent on new, promising models that must then be evaluated. Currently, the Department of Health and Human Services has designated thirteen home visiting models that are approved as eligible evidence-based programs.^{xviii}

The Head Start and Early Head Start programs, also funded by the Department of Health and Human Services, are early learning programs serving young children in low-income families; they include a Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework that is designed to build positive relationships with families by supporting family well-being, strong relationships between parents and children, and encouraging learning and development for parents as well as their children. Parent engagement guidelines for Head Start are extensive, and are carefully designed to be linguistically and culturally appropriate. The multicultural principles for Head Start state that the cultural groups represented in the communities and families of each Head Start program should be the primary sources for culturally relevant programming, and culturally relevant programming must require staff who both reflect and are responsive to the community and families served.^{xx} However, these guidelines are not supported with direct funding, and programs are left on their own to attempt to meet the suggested standards, with little accountability to reach all parents effectively.

In addition to these principal provisions associated with early childhood programs, the Department of Education also provides support for parent engagement activities through Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which is a program meant to benefit school districts with a high share of children from low-income families through formula funding. The law currently requires that 1 percent of all Title I funds must be spent on parental involvement activities. While this program is largely focused on students in primary and secondary schools, these funds can also be spent to support district-run early childhood programming. Although some non-regulatory guidance is provided in the language of the law,^{xx} these funds can be spent on almost any activity that broadly qualifies as relating to parental involvement, and no accountability measures are currently in place to ensure that high-need parents and families are benefiting from these resources.

Family Literacy, Adult Education, and Dual Generation Strategies

Based on pioneering work done in poor regions of Appalachia in the 1980s to engage parents and children in a dual-generation strategy to break cycles of poverty and illiteracy,^{xxi} family literacy programs became a feature of policy and practice across the U.S. in recent decades. Such programs serve parents with young children, providing literacy development programming for young children, parent literacy and education services, as well as interactive literacy activities that simultaneously engage parents and their children. Family literacy programs are incorporated as an allowable activity under several federal funding streams, most importantly the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, which provides nearly \$564 million to states per year on a formula basis to improve basic education and literacy skills of all adults (native and foreign-born) who lack a high school diploma. Performance measures for these funds are rigorous as is competition for them at the state and local levels, given that only about three percent of adults without a high school diploma nationwide are served by the system in a given year.^{xxii}

Until recently, significant and targeted parent engagement and parent literacy support were also provided by the Department of Education through a program called Even Start, a family literacy program that served America's most disadvantaged families. Funded at its height at a level of \$250 million annually,^{xxiii} the program was designed to develop literacy in parents with low levels of educational attainment while also encouraging them to be full partners in their young children's education. Due in part to effective targeting of services to immigrant parents, ease of enrollment relative to more formal adult education programs, and provision of child care, nearly half of its beneficiaries were Hispanic parents.^{xxiv}

The program's elimination in 2011 has left a significant gap in services for many of the country's poorest families, particularly for immigrant and refugee parents. The Even Start program was defunded largely



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due to negative national evaluations of the model which found that the program did not effectively meet its goals of improving child and adult learning through its four core components of adult education, parenting education, parent-child activities, and early childhood education.^{xxv} Proponents of the program argued that these evaluations were significantly flawed,^{xxvi} and others asserted that the program benefited such a drastically underserved population that it should continue to receive funding in spite of mixed evaluation results. Ultimately, however, the program lacked adequate political support and is not likely to be reinstated.

Family literacy programs similar to Even Start that also braid together adult education and training, parenting education, parent-child activities and early learning services continue to access some funding through federal AEFLA as well as state and foundation support, and state funding for family literacy activities may be increasing in response to the elimination of Even Start.^{xxvii} Washington State, for instance, includes State Family Literacy funds as part of its adult education strategy.^{xxviii}

The Promise Neighborhoods program, administered by the U.S. Department of Education and based on the successful Harlem Children's Zone model,^{xxix} also takes a dual generation approach to poverty reduction through the creation of a neighborhood-based system of education and "cradle-to-career" social services for children of low-income families living in concentrated areas. This program places an emphasis on the power of family and community supports in addition to strong schools as critical components to academic success for children, and is funded through eligible non-profit organizations and institutions of higher education through a competitive grant process. While the original Harlem Children's Zone model includes significant supports for early childhood, including a full-day pre-kindergarten program and a parent engagement initiative called Baby College, which is a nine-week parenting workshop for parents of children up to 3 years of age, each Promise Neighborhoods grant recipient may put variable emphasis on the early childhood years and on parent engagement in particular.

Beyond these specific models, dual generation strategies have become an increasingly popular focus of efforts by several major private foundations in the U.S which seek to emphasize the importance of parent skill and family economic stability for children's future success. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Foundation for Child Development, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation have all been leaders in exploring such models. However, as the experience with the Even Start program showed, due to the difficulties and expense inherent in designing program models that incorporate services from several disparate fields, as well as the need to prove significant, linked effects for both parents and children, obtaining or maintaining substantial new federal support for such initiatives will likely prove difficult.

Support for adult education, particularly for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) services, has also declined despite growing need. Adult English instruction services have fared particularly badly during the recession, with roughly a third of the system's instructional capacity eliminated in recent years.^{xxx} State adult education policymakers and local program managers face difficult choices in dividing the system's limited resources amongst priority populations, which include millions of adult workers displaced by the recession, disconnected youth, former prisoners seeking to re-enter the workforce, and immigrants seeking to learn English or obtain a high school diploma. Immigrant and refugee parents with young children who are low-literate or LEP have historically found it difficult to succeed in traditional adult education settings (the Even Start program was an attempt to better meet their particular needs). The elimination of Even Start and decline in adult ESOL system capacity more generally make it substantially more difficult for immigrant and refugee parents to find programs that can assist them in improving their English and underlying education and skills.

In sum, while several major programs make provisions and provide guidelines for early childhood parent programming, program accountability measures for quality of programming and relevance to the needs of immigrants and other subgroups are weak, and funding to support these parent-focused initiatives is largely lacking. Meanwhile, the lack of education and other programming opportunities for parents who



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have low levels of literacy, education, and/or English proficiency leaves early childhood programs without partners that are essential to helping parents build skills required to access many existing parent-facing services or achieve broader social integration and economic mobility for their families.

IV. POLICY AND PROGRAM GAPS FOR IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE FAMILIES

While effective parent engagement has become a national priority in the United States in recent years, it remains an under-researched and under-supported effort with little commitment to monitoring and evaluation of effective practices. As noted above, the Federal government has invested significantly in early childhood initiatives that seek to provide high-quality early learning opportunities, with the expectation that these programs will reach out to parents and engage them as full partners in their children's academic careers and support them to be effective "first teachers" in the home. However, few lessons regarding best or promising practices in family engagement strategies have been derived from current programming, and much of current parent engagement practice relies on random acts rather than systemic action.^{xxxii} Furthermore, the current assemblage of services for children aged 0-8 and their families is disjointed, with no alignment among programs and systems that would allow immigrant and refugee parents or other low-educated adults to access a continuum of skill-building opportunities that addresses their unique parenting skill, literacy and/or cultural knowledge needs from one program to the next.

In order to improve understanding of barriers immigrant and refugee parents face in engaging with existing programs that seek to engage parents in their young children's school readiness and educational success, the Migration Policy Institute's National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy has conducted field research in several large, immigrant-receiving states over the past year. This work has involved interviews with state and city level administrators and program managers as well as focus groups with immigrant parents representing a diverse range of communities and socio-demographic profiles. Through these efforts we have sought to identify successful practices and approaches that meet the needs of immigrant populations, as well as point to critical gaps in services that remain to be addressed under current policy and program approaches.

Key preliminary findings based on background research, demographic analysis and information gathered from site visits, expert interviews, and parent focus groups include the following:

A. English proficiency and basic levels of functional literacy are needed in order for parents to be meaningfully included in most parent engagement activities; these present almost insurmountable barriers to many immigrant and refugee parents' participation in ECEC programs generally and their parent engagement efforts in particular.

Gaps in parents' English proficiency and functional literacy that are evident in socio-demographic analyses are also widely cited by community leaders, program directors and newcomer parents themselves as critical and persistent barriers to the effective engagement of immigrant and refugee parents in early childhood programs and parent engagement efforts. For example, according to focus group participants, many ECEC programs, including Head Start and state pre-K programs, are providing only basic translation and interpretation services at best, due either to resource and funding constraints or to a false assumption that these provisions are sufficient to reach all parents. Even when translated documents are provided, the level of literacy and cultural and systems knowledge required in order to decipher their meaning often makes them incomprehensible to many parents.

With regard to ECEC, kindergarten and elementary school programming more generally, the majority of parents express that they are unable to communicate their questions and needs effectively to untrained, monolingual, and often unresponsive and hostile staff. Meanwhile, though several programs provide adult English classes or basic education support on-site or have referrals available to adult education



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programming, long waiting lists and inconvenient hours as well as lack of child care make these opportunities inaccessible to the majority of parents, despite a strong and nearly universal desire to enroll in such programs.

B. No public funding opportunities are currently offered to explicitly support language or cultural access or other needs specific to immigrant families in parent engagement programming.

Those programs, including exemplary Head Start programs and privately funded community-based organizations, that are effectively engaging diverse immigrant, low-literate and LEP parents, report that their strategies to do so require significant program and administrative staff time, support for which must be patched together from private funding sources. Many program directors also expressed that their ability to scale up effective practices is limited in most cases due to a lack of resources, space, and staff capacity.

C. A lack of alignment between early childhood parent engagement programming and continuing efforts in the K-12 system causes parents to be alienated from their children's schooling, particularly those who are low-literate and/or LEP.

Many parents in focus groups who felt welcomed in their ECEC programs indicated that once their children transitioned to the K-12 system, they no longer felt included or engaged in their children's education experience. Successful parent engagement efforts in school districts appeared to be largely dependent on whether school leadership actively embraced and supported these efforts. While Head Start has a mandate to collaborate with school districts to aid in kindergarten transition and often organizes activities accordingly, many school districts were seen as uncooperative and dismissive of the need for collaboration with ECEC staff.

D. Smaller minority groups and speakers of less common languages are particularly underserved and struggle with basic access both to high-quality ECEC opportunities and to parent engagement opportunities.

Among focus group participants, those speakers of less common languages were likely to be left out of even the most basic language access and outreach efforts. Often these parents have more limited social networks, further reducing their ability to engage with ECEC opportunities. While many parents indicated that they had at least heard about program opportunities through their social networks, those lacking these networks were more isolated and disconnected, either lacking knowledge about opportunities for enrollment of their children in ECEC services or feeling alienated and unwelcome in the programs in which they were participating.

E. Community support and a positive climate toward immigrant communities continue to play a critical role in providing a comfortable and welcoming environment for immigrant parents, and pockets of good practice are often surrounded by neighboring communities and school districts that have a more hostile approach toward diverse groups.

Both focus group conversations and site interviews revealed that immigrant families faced radically different host-community climates across even closely neighboring school districts and communities. Overall climate and attitudes toward immigrant issues created wide differences across schools and other institutions – from availability and referrals to ECEC and parent programming, to provision of even basic language access services.

F. Those programs that work successfully with diverse parents and families have an explicit parent engagement and outreach strategy that all staff understand and support.

All of the sites and programs that were identified for this study based on their successful work with immigrant parents, particularly low-literate and LEP parents, had staff who could speak explicitly about their institution's parent engagement strategy as a comprehensive approach rather than an ad hoc list of disparate services. A shared understanding of what effective parent and family engagement means for a



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specific program, embraced by all program staff, appears to be a critical starting point for an effective approach to reaching all families and meeting their individual needs.

G. Efforts to take the needs of newcomer families into account in early childhood system planning and program development efforts are hindered by the lack of pertinent data collected at the federal, state and school-district levels on immigrant parent and young child characteristics.

U.S. states and districts do not currently collect centralized data regarding parental levels of education and language proficiency or children's Dual Language Learner status until entry to kindergarten, if at all, making these needs invisible during the critical 0-5 years of children's development. This lack of information makes it impossible to determine what policies or resources may be necessary to ensure that immigrant families' needs are being appropriately served in programming, and to incentivize programs, in turn, to effectively reach out to and serve these populations, which are often the most underserved and hardest to reach.

IV. LOOKING AHEAD: CURRENT POLICY AND PROGRAM OPPORTUNITIES

Given extensive system-building efforts underway in the early childhood field, perennial attention to education reform issues, and strong prospects for immigration reform legislation in 2014, potential opportunities to expand effective programming exist at all levels of government and across several significant service-delivery systems. Areas to watch for policy action, budgetary investment and innovation in program design include:

1) Targeted adult education, literacy and English language programs. Expanded and innovative programs are needed to provide effective support for low-literate and limited-English-proficient parents of young children, offering an on-ramp of basic language and literacy training that prepares them for engagement in their children's early learning and later education. Opportunities to create or expand such programs include:

- Creation of a large-scale demonstration program that provides support for innovation in expanding services to meet a range of literacy, parenting skill, and education-system knowledge needs, targeting newcomer parents with the lowest levels of literacy and/or English proficiency. Such a program could allow a variety of promising initiatives at the state and local levels to expand and be studied, and thereby build knowledge and momentum in the field for effective, scalable approaches. Vehicles for such a program include an "Integration Success Fund" that is being proposed as part of federal immigration reform legislation.
- Increased support for "traditional" Family Literacy programs or a slightly evolved definition of such programming could be proposed and enacted as part of potential federal legislation to reauthorize the country's major adult education and workforce training law (currently known as the Workforce Investment Act). Such an investment would support programming for all low-literate parents, not only those who are immigrants or refugees. However, the design of accountability measures for such programming remain a stumbling block, given an overall system accountability design that will likely seek to primarily reward the attainment of education degrees and certificates.
- Ideally, the President's *Preschool for All* initiative might be leveraged to include promotion of comprehensive and purposeful parent engagement strategies for low-literate and LEP parents, aligned with K-12 systems, as part of state expansion of universal pre-K programs. Again, such a program would include all low-literate parents.



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2) Stronger incentives or accountability for existing program funds. Regulations governing existing programs and funding streams that touch on parent skill, literacy and/or engagement issues, seeking to adapt them to more effectively serve parents of at-risk children, are also a likely focus of advocacy efforts. For example:

- *The Family Engagement Act of 2013*, federal legislation which addresses the Elementary and Secondary Education Act's Title I family engagement provisions, seeks to expand capacity-building and technical assistance at the state and local levels in order to strengthen the overall quality and effectiveness of family engagement programs. Incentives and/or accountability for funds could be further strengthened by requiring schools and districts to take into account key demographic characteristics of parents and use strategies that address parents' cultural and functional literacy knowledge needs.
- Additional parent engagement guidance to Head Start programs could emphasize outcomes specific to hard-to-serve families, offering additional support for programs that successfully increase the skills and engagement of, for example, low-literate and LEP parents, through tailored indicators and metrics.

3) State policy-making and capacity-building efforts. As states build and continue to develop their ECEC infrastructure, including expansion of pre-K programs and implementation of Quality Rating Improvement Systems, community advocates and other system stakeholders will likely seek to ensure that parent skill, education and engagement support, especially for underserved communities, is included as a critical priority by seeking:

- Creation of data systems that collect and share pertinent parent information – e.g. family home language and parents' English proficiency (speaking, writing and reading) – for all programs serving children ages 0-8, available in a centralized location, disaggregated by subgroups.
- Designated leadership and responsibility for these issues at the state level, including senior specialists accountable for implementing and monitoring the effectiveness of parent engagement efforts, particularly for minorities and other subgroups.
- Inclusion of metrics for effectiveness in meeting parent skill, education and engagement needs in program and system rating systems.

4) Build evidence and awareness of gaps. Policy and capacity-building efforts in the ECEC field are still at an early stage in their evolution, at the same time that public understandings of the intersection of immigrant integration needs with key policy issues – like those in the ECEC field – are just emerging as well. In order to make apparent and reinforce the urgency of addressing these intersections, several efforts might be advanced in 2014 to underscore the inadequate linguistic and cultural competence in many ECEC and K-3 systems, and the barriers they present to meaningful engagement by many immigrant, refugee and/or LEP adults. These include:

- Request for a federal General Accountability Office study that would be commissioned to determine language and cultural barriers that impede access to federally-supported early childhood and K-3 services.
- Initiation of a compliance review by the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division aimed at strengthening language and cultural access provisions across ECEC services to ensure that LEP parents can effectively participate in and benefit from parent-facing services.



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