

Section 2151(e)(6) of the ESEA requires the Secretary to announce achievement indicators for the ECEPD program. These achievement indicators must be designed: (1) To measure the quality and accessibility of the professional development provided; (2) to measure the impact of that professional development on the early childhood education provided by the individuals who receive the professional development; and (3) to provide any other measures of program impact that the Secretary determines to be appropriate. The statute requires each partnership receiving an ECEPD grant to report annually to the Secretary on the partnership's progress toward attaining these achievement indicators. The Secretary may terminate an ECEPD grant if the Secretary determines that the partnership receiving the grant is not making satisfactory progress toward attaining the achievement indicators.

The Secretary will use these final achievement indicators for the ECEPD grant competition for FY 2003, and for future years, unless otherwise announced.

On January 6, 2003, the Secretary published a Notice of Proposed Achievement Indicators for this program (68 FR 547). These final achievement indicators are similar to those proposed indicators, with two differences. First, these final indicators will measure the extent to which projects provide professional development on the effective, age-appropriate assessment of young children. Second, these indicators clarify that research-based approaches in early childhood pedagogy and child development and learning domains include activities that promote the age-appropriate development of oral language, phonological awareness, print awareness, alphabet knowledge, and numeracy skills. These changes from the proposed indicators are explained in the Analysis of Comments and Changes in this notice.

Analysis of Comments and Changes

The Department received relevant comments from three parties in response to the Assistant Secretary's invitation to comment in the Notice of Proposed Achievement Indicators. The Department also received other comments that were not relevant to the proposed indicators. Commenters indicated their support of a number of aspects of the proposed indicators, including commending the indicators' general emphasis on child development research and high-quality professional development, supporting in particular the indicator on participation in and intensity of the professional

development (Indicator 2), and supporting the indicator on using research-based approaches that include using a content-rich curriculum and activities (Indicator 4). An analysis of other relevant comments, and the Secretary's responses to those comments, is presented below. Comments are grouped according to subject.

Comment: One commenter requested that the achievement indicators include professional development in the areas of effective observation, tracking, and assessment of young children, including children with disabilities. The commenter indicated that, to ensure that content-rich curriculum and activities that promote cognitive, language, social, physical, and emotional development are achieving desired child outcomes, early childhood educators must have access to high-quality, research-based instruction and best practices in effective data gathering, tracking, assessment, and analysis of child development. The commenter indicated that professional development should include specific, targeted training in how to use, and analyze effectively, diverse valid and reliable research-based assessment instruments for young children, including those that effectively track and measure the developmental progress of children with disabilities.

Discussion: The applicable definition of "professional development" in section 9101(34) of the ESEA includes instruction in the use of data and assessments to inform and instruct classroom practice. The Secretary agrees that specific training for early childhood educators in the effective, age-appropriate assessment of young children is an integral part of a high-quality professional development program. This training will enable the educators to administer screening and other assessments effectively and use the results to inform instruction, and to identify children with special needs.

Change: A clarifying change has been made to the first, third, and fourth achievement indicators to clarify that the effective, age-appropriate assessment of young children is included in a high-quality professional development program.

Comment: One commenter expressed the understanding that mastery and control over a variety of teaching strategies is included in "high-quality professional development" in the first indicator and "effective strategies to support school readiness" in the third indicator.

Discussion: The Secretary agrees that high-quality professional development,

and effective strategies to support school readiness, both generally require knowledge and understanding of a variety of teaching strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of all students in the classroom, including students with special needs.

Changes: None.

Comment: One commenter addressed the specific ways that children may demonstrate "improved readiness for school" in Indicator 5. With respect to social and emotional child behaviors, the commenter indicated that behaviors that demonstrate readiness include growth in initiative, ability to orient to and feel comfortable in a group setting, decision making, and negotiating ideas and social interactions with peers and adults. The commenter also stated that readiness in the areas of language and literacy will be demonstrated when children can show growth in the use of language to express ideas, relate to others, and explain and discuss their thinking as they investigate their surroundings.

Discussion: The Secretary believes that the indicator on how children will demonstrate improved readiness for school needs to remain broad, to provide applicants with the flexibility to be responsive in their grant proposals to their own State standards. School readiness is defined by what each child should know and be able to do by the time that child enters elementary school in the State in which that child lives. That is, early childhood education should prepare children with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to meet a State's preschool standards or content guidelines, if any, and the foundational knowledge and skills that the children will need in order to meet that State's content standards when the children reach the lowest grade for which the State has elementary content standards.

Change: None.

Comment: Two commenters suggested that the achievement indicators would be stronger if they were more specific concerning content and quality of professional development. For example, one commenter suggested that achievement indicators should indicate how early childhood educators: engage children in appropriate interactions that encourage early language and cognitive development; individualize experiences for young children based on observation of children's abilities, development, and learning; and form and maintain culturally competent relationships with parents of young children served. Another commenter suggested that the achievement indicators specify the experiences in which early childhood