



## Early Learning Challenge Collaborative



July 15, 2011

Dear Colleague,

Thanks to the diligence and hard work of the early learning community, the Early Learning Challenge is a reality.

In May, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced the new \$500 million Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge “to encourage states to develop bold and comprehensive plans for raising the quality of early learning programs across America.”

This unprecedented federal grant competition for states presents the early learning field with a unique opportunity to help state leaders strategically leverage a new significant federal investment into practices and policies that can help close the achievement gap for all children. The Challenge is an incredible opportunity for states to make strategic advances in early education reform, and to plan early learning systems with a coherent vision for providing services to young children in ways that improve child outcomes and maximize the efficient use of resources.

BUILD and the First Five Years Fund, with the Birth to Five Policy Alliance as a key collaborator, have joined together to create the **Early Learning Challenge Collaborative (ELCC)**, to help states do just that. We are committed to working with many partners to ensure that the Early Learning Challenge makes an invaluable and lasting contribution to efforts to create an early learning system that meets the needs of our youngest and most vulnerable children. This will include early education and K-12 leaders, experts and visionaries.

Private philanthropic dollars will be used to support all interested states, in differentiated ways, to take advantage of this pivotal opportunity to advance high-quality and comprehensive early childhood systems and services. Additionally, the Early Learning Challenge Collaborative will work to ensure that systems-building demonstrates the kind of results that will enable it to take root and create a fundamental shift in the way this nation invests in young children and solidifies early learning as part of the education continuum and reform efforts. This will be done in a way that augments, not substitutes for, the ongoing efforts to increase federal investment in a range of early childhood programs.

Specifically, the ELCC will:

1. Cultivate a pool of outstanding state applications.
2. Support states with sophisticated, relevant and individualized technical assistance, consultation services and information, with a further emphasis on creating learning communities among interested states.

3. Promote quality and the development of a robust cross-sector early childhood system connected to education outcomes in all states.

4. Develop a coordinated federal policy and advocacy strategy to sustain funding and inform federal policy in this area, both short and long-term.

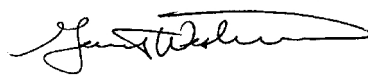
The ELCC will help governors and state leaders identify and navigate information and resources as they strengthen their early learning practices and policies.

For more information about the technical assistance and learning community activities, please contact the BUILD Initiative (Kathy Glazer, State Services Director, at [kglazer@buildinitiative.org](mailto:kglazer@buildinitiative.org) or 804-350-3782). For more information about the federal policy and advocacy effort, please contact the First Five Years Fund (Harriet Dichter, National Director, [hdichter@ffyf.org](mailto:hdichter@ffyf.org) or 202-248-5075).

Sincerely,



Phyllis Glink  
Executive Director  
The Irving Harris Foundation



Gerrit Westervelt  
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The BUILD Initiative



Cornelia Grumman  
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First Five Years Fund