

The Politics and Policy of Early Childhood Education and Care in 2014

By Christine Lowry

On March 13, 2014, the United States Senate passed the Child Care Development Block Grant Act (CCDBG) of 2014. The significance of this is twofold. First, this bill is the first education bill to pass with bipartisan support (96-2) in recent sessions. Secondly, and more importantly, it is the first revision and reauthorization of the CCDGB in 18 years. "Child care has not been re-evaluated since 1996. At that time, the program was solely envisioned as a workforce aid," said one of the bills co-authors, Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) after the bills passing. This recent revision of the bill includes numerous measures designed to improve the quality of child care as well as its availability to children of low income families.

In August, 2013, Dr. Libby Doggett was introduced as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Office of Early Learning, first established in November of 2011, within the U.S. Department of Education. At this introduction, Dr. Doggett said, "President Obama and Secretary Duncan both recognize that by expanding learning programs, we can begin eliminating the opportunity gaps that confront far too many American children even before they enter kindergarten." She went on to say, "I am thrilled to be a part of such an important turning point in our nation's education system."

On February 12, 2013, President Obama, in his State of the Union address said, "I propose working with states to make high-quality preschool available to every child in America.....Let's do what works, and make sure none of our children start the race of life already behind. Let's give our kids that chance"

The Race to the Top- Early Learning Challenge grant competition, with an allocation of \$500 million, was announced in May of 2011. With the intention of increasing and improving high-quality programs targeted at the children of low income families, 35 states had applied by the fall. In December, 14 of these states were awarded the first of the Race to the Top- Early Learning Challenge grants. With an emphasis on quality, through the development of Quality Rating and Improvement Systems and professional development and educational standards for early childhood teachers, a consumer protection and education component, and measurements of student achievement, the goals of high-quality pre-school for all were becoming policy and priority in the first 14 states, and the additional 6 awarded grants the following year.

In the President's Fiscal Year 2015 Budget, \$1.3 billion in mandatory funds have been proposed for the Preschool for All program. This program would continue the expansion of publicly funded pre-school for all 4 year olds from low income families, would expand access to full day kindergarten, and would encourage the development of programs for children under the age of 4. An additional \$500 million would be used to provide funding to states to develop comprehensive preschool systems and to expand early learning programs with proven models of success through the Preschool Development Grants.

Why this extraordinary attention to early childhood education with accompanying policies and funding? In an area of education policy that has been largely invisible to the policy and political arena throughout our history, why now? What are the political justifications? Why is this the time of Early Childhood Education?

A tracing of the history of education and care for young children can lead to some answers. This history can be thought of in three phases; first, a period of developing and establishing traditions which came to be understood as standards for best practices for young children; second, a period of the development of governmental policies and programs which led to program growth, and research of diverse models of practice; and third, a period of system building for the delivery of early childhood education and care. Each of these phases has a cultural and policy context which has contributed to the evolution and creation of the field of study now known as Early Childhood Education.

The history of child care in the United States began with the Industrial Revolution as religious and civic groups provided care for the children of poor working mothers. The Boston Infant School, sponsored by the Society for Relief and Employment of the Poor, was opened in 1828 and was based on the Robert Owen childcare model in Britain. Owen was a socialist, philanthropist and advocate for improved living conditions for the working poor. In following his model, ideas about equality, opportunity and charity became the motivation for the early Day Nursery movement. In 1854, the first of these day nurseries was opened in New York City to care for the children of working mothers. By the late 1800's, the Women's Christian Temperance Union was offering free nurseries to the children of poor women, and the National Association of Colored Women provided for the care of African-American children. The National Federation of Day Nurseries, the first worldwide organization of its kind, was established in 1898 shortly after a Model Day Nursery was introduced at the Chicago World's Fair. By the end of the 1800's, however, child care was still primarily a charitable and custodial endeavor provided, with no little stigma, to the poor, minorities and immigrants.

The middle class, prompted by the work of Pestalozzi, Freud, Montessori, and Froebel, was beginning to see the value these day nursery programs could have for the early education of their children. The works of these social scientists explored the needs of young children and the impact that early experience could have on the adult the child would become. As a result, the first free kindergarten, based on the Froebel model was opened in 1870 and by 1880, 30 states were offering free kindergarten for all children.

The early years of the 20 century were witness to a shift from merely providing custodial care to a recognition of the benefit that early care and education might have for the child. The study and research of child development by Gessell, Vygotsky, Piaget and Erikson (both students of Dr. Montessori) was contributing to the understanding that children have typical rates and stages of development in cognitive, psychological, and moral development and that a supportive environment and positive social contact could have a significant influence on that growth and development. This continuation of the work begun by the child development theorists in the late 1800's resulted in a change and purpose in child care and early education that the middle class could embrace.

The McMillan sisters introduced the Open Air Nursery School and Training Center in London in 1911. The open-air environment, thought to have health benefits, had a play oriented approach with an emphasis on nurturing and learning. The Training Center component was added with the intention of educating specially trained teachers to work with these young children. Imitations of this model led to rapid growth of programs in the U.S. such as the City and Country School in New York City, The Nursery School in Chicago, the University of Chicago Cooperative Nursery School, which required guided parent involvement, and the Ruggles Street Nursery School and Training Center based specifically on the McMillan model. Soon after, the Child Institute of Yale University, the Clinic of Child Development at the Iowa Research Station and the Merrill-Palmer Institute of Detroit and The Bureau of Educational Experiments, a research and lab school which was renamed Bank Street in the 30's and was integral to the formation of the Head Start program in the 60's, were experimenting with models and researching their impact on young children. In 1929, the nursery school movement was being publicly supported by the National Association of Nursery Education, and, led by Gesell and with support from the Child Institute at Yale, published the *Minimum Essentials for Nursery Education*. This represented one of the first attempts to create standards of practice in the care and education of young children.

Although interest in the benefits of early education by the middle class had led to much of the growth in programs and research, the reform-oriented socialist movement which had its roots in philanthropic child care for the children of poor women continued their work with a focus on equity, social welfare, and health concerns. Lillian Wald and Florence Kelley, both instrumental in the founding of the National Association for the Advancement for Colored People (NAACP), urged President Roosevelt to establish the US Children's Bureau to focus on the well being of poor children and their mothers. In 1912, President Taft signed the law creating the Bureau and placed it within the Department of Commerce and Labor. For the next several years, the Bureau focused on child labor regulations and law. In 1921, with the Bureau's support, the Sheppard-Towner Act allocated the first federal grants in aid which were used for children's health programs.

The Great Depression had significant impact on federal policy regarding child welfare and care. Supported by the US Children's Bureau, every state, by 1930, had a mother's or widow's pension law. The first federal investments in childcare were made through the Federal Emergency Relief Administration as these programs were seen as beneficial and needed by families. The head of the FERA: "educational and health programs...can aid as nothing else can in combating the physical and mental handicaps being imposed on these young children." These government sponsored programs were set up as schools rather than simply child care and were endorsed by the National Association for Nursery Education. The programs included parent education and involvement and served children from 2-5 years of age from families receiving "home relief" funds. This program would become the Aid to Families with Dependent Children in 1935.

Private preschool programs did not fare well during this economic collapse and most programs closed during this period. In spite of the growing child development research in support of early childhood education, the schools provided by the FERA were all closed by 1943.

At this time, the popular media was accusing working mothers of being bad mothers. Child development experts were making the claim that mothers should stay home with their children and that children who spent their early years in the home would be at an advantage in their later years. In spite of that press, however, the number of women in the workforce was steadily increasing. By 1942, Congress had passed the Lanham Act 25, providing funding for child care for any working mother who needed it. Federal money could be used by both private and public agencies with priority given to communities with the greatest need defined by their contribution to the war effort. Although the

director of the War Manpower Commission stated that “The first responsibility of women with young children, in war as in peace, is to give suitable care in their homes to their children,” the need for government subsidized child care was justified as a “national emergency” as increasing numbers of women were needed in the workforce. Although the quality of these programs was generally poor, they remained open through the duration of the war. In 1946, the Maternal and Child Welfare Act, which would have provided continued funding for these war time programs, did not pass Congress reflecting the ambivalence of group care, rather than maternal care, for young children.

The decade from 1950 to 1960 is one of contrasts and transitions. A period of marked economic growth of the middle class, political conservatism, and conformity to social mores was evidenced by the dominate family structure of a working father, and stay at home mother with her children. In 1950, only 21% of America’s children attended kindergarten. Government involvement in early education was limited to providing a tax deduction for low to moderate families who required child care based on their employment needs.

In stark contrast to this middle class comfort and increase in prosperity, the demographics of the African-American population witnessed a dramatic increase in single parent homes with substantial poverty increases. The beginning of the civil rights movement and its impact on education in the US was epitomized by the *Brown v. Board of Education* case heard by the Supreme Court in 1954. The accepted notion that segregated schools for children of color provided equal opportunity to those of schools for white children was challenged and by unanimous vote and opinion that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal” an integrated education system nationwide became the goal of policy. Never before, had public policy considered this ideal of equal opportunity and implicit in this ideal, the notion that children from low income families could explicitly be “at-risk.”

Primary in the transitional changes of this period was the increasing number of women in the workforce. In spite of ongoing ambivalence about young children in group care, this statistic began to see dramatic rise. The Inter-City Committee for Day Care of Children, an activist group, became the National Committee on Day Care for Children in 1958. This group had sought government support for childcare, through the US Children’s Bureau and the US Women’s Bureau, claiming that child care would safeguard the welfare of children. They had mobilized grassroots support for several childcare bills sponsored by Senator Jacob Javits (R-NY) and in 1960 sponsored the National Conference on Day Care of Children in Washington D.C.

As a result of the number of women entering the workforce in the 60's, there was a dramatic increase in private pre-school and child care programs for the children of the middle and upper class. In 1961, the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women concluded that maternal employment was becoming the norm and that child care would help women and be of developmental benefit to children to advance social and racial integration. It was this commitment to social and racial integration, however, that was the primary focus of a government concerned with the needs of the growing population of low income and "disadvantaged" children and their mothers. As President Kennedy stated, "I believe we must take further steps to encourage day care programs that will protect children and provide them with a basis for a full life in later years."

The Institute for Developmental Studies Early Enrichment Program at New York University studied the benefits of early childhood education from 1963-69 with a grant from the Kennedy Foundation and concluded that communication skills, approaches to learning, motivation, a healthy self-concept, and modest increases in I.Q. were noted in children who participated in early learning programs. The Ford Foundation funded the New Haven Pre-Kindergarten Program which opened early learning programs in the public schools "to test the validity of traditional nursery for poor children." They developed curriculum guidelines, set goals for social, emotional, physical and intellectual development, and recommended a flexible teaching style based on children's natural curiosity and creativity. A study by Bloom at the University of Chicago in 1964 concluded that the first four years of life are crucial to physical and cognitive growth and that intervention during this time can have the greatest impact on future development and success.

With the rise in the Civil Rights movement, fueled in part by the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board*, the passage of The Civil Rights Act of 1964, making discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin and gender illegal, the elimination of poverty and racial injustice were the dominate public policy issues. The impact on early childhood education was seen almost immediately with the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 with the goal of eliminating poverty, expanding educational opportunity, and increasing the safety net for the poor. Although welfare reform measures included establishment of the Food Stamp program, the free and reduced lunch program for school age children, and dramatic increases in the Aid for Families with Dependent Children program, the goal of the *elimination of poverty* and education, including early childhood education, was clearly seen as a component of this "war on poverty."

The Head Start program, an early childhood education program targeting low income families and their children was begun as a summer program in 1964. Children of ages 3-5 were to receive comprehensive services aligned with the child development research of the day. The director of the Institute for Developmental Studies was appointed to the Head Start Advisory Board. Julius Richmond, a pediatrician from the Children's Center, a research and demonstration center in New York, was made the first director and the New Haven Pre-Kindergarten Program became one of its first programs. Dr. Richmond used work from the Children's Center to inform day to day planning of Head Start and with practices from his center, as well as standards and goals which had been set at the New Haven program, a Head Start program was created.

The program's federal funding was allocated to local agencies, with a 20% match, for implementation. It would be free to the children of parents whose income fell below the poverty level. The emphasis was on education, health and social services for families. By 1965, this program was made permanent through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act: Title I funding.

This same year, the National Association of Nursery Education became the National Association of Education for Young Children (NAEYC). Having originated with the nursery day school movement of the 1920's, and with a connection to the federally funding childcare programs of the Great Depression and the Lanham Act of the 1940's, the newly named NAEYC was now aligning itself with the Head Start program and its goals and standards for early childhood education. It held its first annual conference in Washington D.C. in 1966.

Although there was little rigorous research to support the claim, it was widely believed, and publicly stated, by the National Institute of Mental Health, that $\frac{3}{4}$ of all retardation was caused by "deprived life conditions" of poverty. President Johnson was convinced that the Head Start program, in part, could remedy this through the War on Poverty. While there was little scientific evidence in support of this belief, there was also little robust, research-based evidence of the value of Head Start programs. In 1968, the Early Training Project at the George Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville concluded that low income children did demonstrate lags in language development and social skills but that early intervention had to be long term for any long lasting impact.

Again, the popular press again had impact on cultural beliefs and subsequent behavior as evidenced by a 1970 Reader's Digest article by Joe Hunt, at the University of Illinois, titled "How To Raise Your Child's IQ By 20 Points." This article only fueled the argument that intelligence is based on environment.

This led to the “logical” conclusion that a positive early learning environment could undo the harmful effects of poverty for children at risk. It also, however, gave cultural permission for women to join the workforce in ever greater numbers.

By 1971, a coalition of feminists, labor leaders, civil rights leaders, and early childhood advocates, notably NAEYC, lobbied Congress to legislate a universal child care policy. The Comprehensive Child Development Act of 1971 stated that comprehensive child development programs should be available, as a matter of right, to all children, regardless of the families’ socio-economic status. This bill included federal standards for quality, training of teachers, and facility design and development. President Nixon vetoed this bill based on concerns that it would lead to a communal, rather than family, upbringing of children. In the place of universal child care, the Nixon administration offered indirect support to middle and upper class through tax incentives for employer based childcare and in the form of income tax deductions for individuals.

The Head Start program continued to be reauthorized based on several factors build into its design. These included: a central and intentional design, a shared name, mission, and philosophy across programs, standardized training and technical assistance, uniform standards for curriculum and consistency of goals, its parent involvement component, and a delivery system of federal dollars to local community organizations.

The period from the Industrial Revolution to the War on Poverty brings insight to the major cultural and political themes that guided the development of child care and early childhood education from the 19th century and well into the 20th century. Phase one of this development, from roughly 1800 through the 1950’s, is based on two major themes: women in the workforce and attention and care for the children of these women. Recall that child care began primarily as a philanthropic and charitable endeavor to support women forced into the labor market and to provide their children with a safe and healthy environment while their mothers worked. As the middle class, however, began to see the benefits their children might receive by attendance at these nursery day programs, a second trend of policy began to arise as child development theorists and child development research centers, with accompanying lab schools, began a systematic study of young children’s growth and learning.

The growth of child care programs and early learning schools paralleled the growth of women in the workforce from both middle and low socio-economic levels. With the Great Depression and World War II, federal and state governments became involved with policy and legislation in providing for the needs

of the children of working women. In Phase Two of the development of early childhood education programs and policies, the federal government took a much greater role and involvement. The social changes brought about through the Civil Rights Movement and the Women's Movement of the 60's, both deepened and expanded the commitment to supporting women and providing for the needs of children. A third theme, however, the notion of equality and equity in opportunity, began to emerge. The War on Poverty had its roots in the philanthropic care of the poor but was now fueled by the policy that stated that the cycle of poverty could be ended through government aid and expansion of educational opportunity. The combination of these themes can be seen in the creation of the Head Start program as part of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. The Head Start program was seen as the means and method for changing the cycle of inequality by providing young children with the environmental conditions which would allow them to thrive and compete with the middle class. Child care for working women of the middle class was given governmental support through stimulation of voluntary for-profit programs and a dramatic increase in private programs was seen.

Although standards and goals had been crafted by child development centers involved in creating Head Start, standardized quality of early childhood programs was not yet a major concern. As the research on the values and benefits of early experiences for young children increased, however, a shift in focus began to define and measure quality and how it correlated with outcomes for children as both Head Start and private child care programs continued to expand. The Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute first published the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS) in 1980. This rating scale was designed to assess levels of quality in facilities, curriculum, child and teacher interactions, parent involvement, and staff training in public programs for low income children. That same year, NAEYC started its Accreditation Program with specific Standards and Criteria with which to measure the quality of programs. Six years later, Bredekamp edited the *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth to Eight*. These "developmentally appropriate practices" were based on the research and writings of Vygotsky (1925-1934) and explicitly rejected the work of Piaget. These "best practices" were incorporated in the revised version of the ECERS, and were adopted by NAEYC. This same year, NAEYC began to publish its *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*.

Many of the themes emerging in the third phase of understanding the current landscape of early childhood education have origins in this shift from equity to an emphasis on excellence. *The Nation At Risk*, 1983, a report issued by the Reagan National Commission on Excellence in Education, introduced

the notion that the American educational system was lagging the rest of the industrialized world in quality and as a result would not have a workforce prepared to compete in the global economy. The Commission called for an assessment of the quality of teaching and learning in content, standards, goals, leadership, and fiscal support. The National Governor's Association: Education Summit, just six years later, released its eight goals for education in America. These goals were consistent with those of Reagan's Commission and included the need for quality teachers, challenging curriculum which would raise literacy rates and provide math and science competencies equal to those of any nation, increase the high school graduation rate, assure school safety, increase parental involvement, and, the most important impact on early childhood education, "All children will start school ready to learn."

Within this policy context and an environment ready for reform to the welfare system designed for the War on Poverty, the Child Care Development Block Grant was signed into law in 1990. This bill consolidated several federal child care programs to provide child care subsidies for "at-risk" families receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Administration of the program was placed within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) with the goals of facilitating collaboration with Head Start and to elevate childcare issues. The goals of the program were to 1. Support self-sufficiency through work and 2. To streamline federal programs with conflicting rules and to increase state flexibility.

At this same time, NAEYC started its public policy and advocacy wing and was creating position papers and setting standards for high quality early childhood programs in the public sector. The National Education Goals Panel was expanding the goal that all children would begin school ready to learn by stating that all disadvantaged children would have access to high quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs to help prepare them for school, that all children would receive nutrition and health care, and that every parent, as their child's first teacher, would have access to the training and support they would need in this role. This panel also asserted that 50% of America's children were at risk of not meeting this goal and the Carnegie Foundation asserted that one in three children were not ready for kindergarten. The Goals 2000: Educate America Act made educational standards and measures of quality and assessment of student achievement legislative policy in 1994.

The policy trend in education was now merging the mandate toward excellence with the cultural believe and policy of equality. Child development research was reporting on the importance of a

nurturing and stimulating environment and the significance of the early years for brain development, and the need for school readiness by age five.

As part of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Aid to Families with Dependent Children now included a job training and employment requirement with a time line for accomplishment. In conjunction with meeting these goals, the Child Care Development Block Grant was reauthorized to include maximum flexibility for states in developing child care programs for low income families but with the requirement that health, safety, licensing and registration standards be implemented in those programs, promoted parental choice through certificates that gave parents the ability to choose the program they felt best for their child, and a consumer education program to inform parents about the availability and quality of child care.

By 2000, based on a National Research Council report titled From Neurons to Neighborhoods, the National Governors Association recommended the “strong need for a fundamental re-examination of public and political responses to development for early childhood policy, practice, professional development and research.” Goals of this recommendation included a ten year plan to provide sustained relationships between children and their caregivers, and that no child should suffer from the effects of poverty.

The impact of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001(NCLB) on early childhood education can be seen in the Good Start, Grow Smart initiative introduced in President George W. Bush’s state of the union speech in January of the following year. With funds from Head Start, the Child Development Block Grant, and Title I, the president pledged funds of \$18 billion to target the children of low income families and assure that all children would start school with an equal chance. His initiative, building on NCLB, included new accountability for Head Start with standards for learning, a federal and state partnership in the delivery of early childhood education, quality criteria, standards of learning aligned with K-12 curriculum, and a public awareness campaign to share information about early childhood education with parents, teachers, and the public.

An ever increasing body of research continued to stress the value and benefits of high quality early childhood education. These benefits for the child, however, were beginning to be seen as a remedy to social issues as longitudinal studies were published indicating the long term benefits for children who participated in high quality programs. School readiness, closing of the achievement gap between low income and middle/upper income children, a decrease in social problems such as drug abuse,

delinquency, and crime, and health problems such as obesity, and so –called “soft skills” such as executive functioning, social skills, and emotional health were all being labeled as benefits from high quality pre-school programs.

This ability to rectify social problems while providing an equal opportunity for all is echoed in the history of child care programs through phases one and two. With the influence of the call to excellence so that America could compete on the global stage, the shift to greater control by the federal government in mandates and the establishment of standards and measures of quality and achievement to meet that level of excellence, became the beginning of the trend for system building from the federal to the state and local level. As coalitions of businesses, child advocates, educators and state and local governments joined together in the call for early childhood education, a fourth trend in policy emerged. With its origins in A Nation at Risk and the National Governors Association meetings, leading economists were now touting that quality pre-school is an investment in the economic strength of America as part of a global market. The Joint Economic Commission, the director of the National Institute of Early Education Research, and Ben Bernanke, former chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve System made the case for a shift in the view of the child from needy to “investable.” As Economic Nobel Prize winning economist, James Heckman put it: “It is a rare public policy initiative that promotes fairness and social justice and at the same time promotes productively in the economy and in society at large.”

The evolution of education and social policy, guided by research, national organizations and foundations, and corporate business leaders, as well as long held American beliefs, became the impetus for the system building of early childhood education for the 21st century. Politicians and policy makers could cite research that sets the ground for the importance of the early years and the need for high quality early care and education with outcome studies which demonstrated both the importance of school readiness and the long term value of early education. Economists and business leaders shared their belief that with high quality early education, the welfare of society could prosper with “total benefits to society as high as \$10 for every dollar invested” and that with a systematic investment in early childhood learning, Americas’ students would, once again, be able to complete in a global economy. In remarks by the U.S. Secretary of Education given at the Education Commission of the States in 2013 at the National Forum in St. Louis, Missouri, Mr. Duncan reiterated these arguments as he presented the President’s “landmark plan that would enable states to provide universal access to high-quality preschool for four year olds from low-income and moderate families.” In addition to his call for the value of investment in high quality early childhood education for young children for economic

reasons, and for the benefits to society, however, he appealed to the long standing belief in the importance of equal opportunity, in making the right value decisions, and in the moral and ethical imperative to care for young children.

It is in this policy climate that initiatives such as Pre-School for All, the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grants and the Pre-School Development grant initiatives and proposals have been presented as remedies to major concerns in early childhood education policy. A strong systematic delivery of quality measures and standards mandated at the federal level and implemented through a collaboration between federal and state governments ; standards of quality with a robust research evidence-base; programs targeted to meet the needs of children considered most vulnerable based on their socio-economic status; and the involvement and support for working families are policy trends designed to address the long standing issues of equal opportunity for all, care and concern for at -risk children and their families; and the betterment of society and America's place in the global economy.

The reauthorization of the Child Care Development Block Grant Act of 2014 is the first evidence of bipartisan support of a bill targeted to increase and improve high quality child care in 18 years. It could represent a turning point in legislative policy regarding young children as the 2014 version of CCDBG is a comprehensive revision of many of the components of the program. The new Senate bill would strengthen the quality and safety of existing programs based on child development research, states would be required to improve staff quality, training and professional development and would provide parents with more consumer information to compare programs and make informed choices for their children. A greater percentage of state matching funds would be dedicated to quality improvement of programs. Health, safety and licensing standards would be required of all participating programs and at least one annual supervisory visit of programs would be required. Certificates, or vouchers provided to parents to offset costs would be awarded annually to maintain continuity of care.

Although passage in the House is not yet guaranteed, John Kline, (R-MN), chairman of the House education committee is a staunch supporter of early childhood programs and hearings on the bill have already been heard. This bill is not seen as a substitute for comprehensive pre-school proposals but it is seen as a path for moving forward.

The Child Care Development Block Grant Act is significant in its' inclusion of all of the major early childhood education policy trends. It is targeted to giving opportunity to the children of low income families, it recognizes the importance of high quality, mandates standards and measures of quality in programming and teachers, and takes a strong stance on the support of parental choice and consumer education.

The evolution of care, concern and policy regarding young children has a long history. As Assistant Secretary of the Office of Early Learning has said, we are " at a turning point in our nation's education system." Will we, as Stacie Goffin asks, be able to distinguish "between child development as a political construct and early childhood education as a discipline of practice....between advocacy efforts targeting expanded public responsibility for children and families' well-being and the *internal advocacy* needed to mobilize changes in the field's structure and leadership capacity so pedagogical, developmental, and content knowledge essential to effective ECE practice...is consistently available to children and their families, regardless of program setting."

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