

APPENDIX F

LOCAL INITIATIVES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

THE ESSENTIALS OF THE PROGRAM

The Program goal is to ready children for success in secondary school, and therefore for success, in college, in a career, and in life. It does this by providing services to children of low-income families from birth to kindergarten age.ⁱ

The Program targets Eligible Communities comprising census tracts that meet specified economic criteria. Federal funding may be provided to qualified Program Sponsors in those communities. The authorized Program Sponsor is responsible for all aspects of the Program in the designated community, including working with local schools, public agencies, family welfare organizations, and private sector charities. The Program Sponsor is accountable for the Program's results in the community.

Excellent leadership by the Program Sponsor is essential to achieving excellent results. To assure excellent leadership, a Program Sponsor must jump several hurdles in order to be designated to run the Program in a community.

One of those hurdles is that each Program Sponsor must have a substantial commitment from private sector donors before making application for Federal funds. Thus, the donor community acts as a source of both financial strength and quality assurance.

The Program seeks to educate the whole child by encouraging positive attitudes, good character, and collaborative and social skills as well as core academic competences. The Program encourages children to set high goals. The Program does not, however, impose detailed educational standards. The details of each local education program are to be supplied by the Program Sponsor as part of its application for federal funding.

Annual progress and quality measurements by the Program Sponsor itself, by donors, and by an academic institution or other accredited research organization are required. All evaluations must be posted on the Program website, thereby putting them before the public and generating pressure to remedy shortcomings.

LOCAL CONTROL

The Program does not prescribe details that Program Sponsors must follow in educating parents and children. Each community has unique aspects and unique people. The Program seeks to unlock the positive creative energies of local people and to attract to each Program Community the kinds of people who will help to make the community a better place. We believe that there are creative people in low-income communities all over the country who, with the proper systematic program and tools, can be moving forces in turning their communities around. Local leadership will be a key to success.

REQUIREMENTS FOR FEDERAL FUNDING

To be eligible for Federal funding, a Local Program must have the following elements:

- A Program Sponsor that has experience, expertise, and the support of private sector donors.

- An academic team that is willing and able to perform prompt annual reviews.
- A defined Program Community that meets specific economic criteria.
- A plan to roll out the Local Program.
- A plan that
 - starts at the beginning of the child’s life, teaching the parents and all who live in the household with the children;
 - includes health, nutrition, psychological well-being, and physical fitness;
 - has an education program that progresses consistently and effectively throughout early childhood;
 - includes the teaching of character and social skills as well as academic skills and recognizes that boys may need special attention in order to develop social skills;
 - is designed to make education fun, with the goal of engendering lifelong curiosity and learning;
 - provides childcare that helps working parents;
 - integrates the Local Program with other local educational, health, nutritional and family welfare initiatives;
 - is based on mutual respect and accountability among administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community agencies;
 - includes means for communicating goals, progress and expectations to the Program Community.

DEFINING PROGRAM COMMUNITIES

Defining what communities may be eligible to be Program Communities is important to the effectiveness of the Program. In essence, there have to be two kinds of communities: Communities where the population is almost uniformly low-income; and communities where the population is more mixed but there are, nevertheless, significant numbers of at-risk children that need to be served. The major difference between Local Programs in these two kinds of communities is that in more uniformly poor communities (Concentrated Communities), the Local Program is required to serve all children in the specified age groups, but in more economically diverse communities (Diverse Communities), the Local Program will have to serve only the children from low-income households.

The size of the community has to be flexible enough to fit the many situations throughout the country. The size also has to be flexible so that large communities can be divided into more manageable neighborhoods. The best way to retain flexibility appears to be to base communities on combinations of census tracts. (An urban census tract typically has about 10,000 people. Good data is available at the census tract level.) A Program Community can be a single census tract or a multiple, but each census tract in a Concentrated Community must qualify. (In some urban communities, areas comprised of multiple census tracts might include part but not all of some census tracts because natural community or school boundaries may cut across a census tract.)

Qualification of a census tract to participate in a Concentrated Community is measurable because economic data are available at the census tract level. Economic data alone is used to qualify census tracts because the Program is designed to address poverty through education, without regard to race, ethnicity or family lifestyle.

Concentrated Communities are identified by one or more census tracts in which a majority of households are in the bottom 25% economically, compared with the rest of their MSA.ⁱⁱ We target all children in a Concentrated Community because in areas of concentrated low income, substantially all children are likely to need help in order to make the desired impact on K-12 when they enter.

We estimate that there are about 130 communities in the U.S. that qualify under the definition of Concentrated Communities, although some of those communities may be broken down further in the process of local control. The Concentrated Communities are located in substantially all states that have significant urban concentrations.

HOW THE PROGRAM WILL WORK—PROGRAM SPONSOR RESPONSIBILITY, DONOR ORIGATION AND OVERSIGHT

Proposed Program Sponsors will have to make application to the U.S. Department of Education to be designated as the Program Sponsor for a defined Eligible Community. The application will have to show a detailed plan; but just as important, the application will have to be backed by a donor or group of donors that are committed to supporting the program in the Eligible Community. The federal government will not unilaterally designate people or entities to run programs in Eligible Communities.

The Program Sponsor, once approved, will be responsible for all Program activities in the Program Community. If any aspect of the Program is not working in that Program Sponsor's community, the Program Sponsor is solely responsible both to the donors and to the Department of Education. No excuses. The buck stops there.

Donor roles. The requirement that each Local Program be supported by private sector donors has several functions: First, it insures that people or institutions outside government have substantial "skin in the game." Although a potential Program Sponsor might, on its own, be prepared to "take a shot" at a half-baked proposal, donors who commit substantial funds are not likely to support a program that is not properly planned or that does not have a high likelihood of success. Second, because the Program Sponsor and its donors must have an agreement before the Program Sponsor may apply to the federal government for funding, the requirement insures that applications will be thought through at several levels before being presented. Third, the requirement supports a variety of ways that public-private partnerships may be formed at the local level to support a proposed program. In many cases, for example, donors may play key roles in arranging agreements between charitable educational groups and local school authorities. And fourth, donor oversight of the program provides interested yet independent reporting to governments and the public.

Oversight is a major component of a successful program. A four-part publicly transparent oversight system is designed to make certain that problems are identified quickly and dealt with promptly. In each Program Community there must be:

(1) Annual or more frequent self-reviews by the Program Sponsor that must be delivered to the Department of Education and the donor, then published on the program's website. The annual report will have sections that contain mandatory data so that comparisons can be made. But it also may have sections that are designed by the Program Sponsor to meaningfully explain its results.

(2) Annual donor reviews that also must be published on the website.

(3) Annual community reviews by an academic group designated by the Program Sponsor in its application and approved by the Department of Education—which reviews also must be published on the website. The academic reviews are not designed to duplicate the educational reviews by donors and government. They are designed to

measure the extent to which the program is being effective in meeting its published goals and to evaluate the Local Program's impact on the community to which it is addressed. The academic team thus should not be limited to education specialists

(4) Periodic (perhaps every three years) reviews by the Department of Education that also must be published on the website.

The public nature of the oversight system will bring immediate pressure on a Program Sponsor that is not getting appropriate results. Donors, parents and local politicians are not likely to sit idly when results are disappointing. Indeed, they may tend to over-react, which we believe is the lesser evil when compared to the defects of secrecy or non-measurement.

WHO WILL BE PROGRAM SPONSORS?

Many types of organizations may be Program Sponsors. They may include groups like the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) or Educare that already run early education programs in Concentrated Communities. Indeed, HCZ and similar organizations might greatly increase their scope by leveraging their fund-raising ability, their proven educational abilities, and their reputations and governmental acceptance. Other groups may be joint ventures between groups like HCZ and local public, private or charter schools. In less concentrated communities, existing providers may be able to scale up to meet the requirements of the Program. The requirements will be substantive, not organizational.

POORLY PERFORMING PROGRAM SPONSORS OR DEFAULTING DONORS

How should the overall administrators of the national program deal with or replace a poorly performing Program Sponsor or a donor that abandons a Program Community? It is not possible to foresee every situation; therefore, at least as a starting proposition, the U.S. Department of Education should be given discretion in solving problems of this nature, but even with discretionary power, we can foresee that in some cases replacing the Program Sponsor or the donor may be difficult, and, depending on the stage of the program in the community, winding it down without damaging the children or the community could be difficult. Although we would not expect extreme failures to occur frequently, we have to recognize that they could occur. In extreme cases, the Department of Education may have to take more direct control until an appropriate local Program Sponsor or donor organization can be identified.

SELF-CORRECTING MECHANISMS

Within a very few years, the annual reports rendered by donors and academic institutions will provide clear evidence of what works and what does not work. That evidence will allow programs all over the country to improve their processes and results. The annual oversight of each local program therefore is a key to ongoing quality and success.

ⁱ In communities that have universal pre-K, the Program would be able to scale down its involvement when the children enter pre-K.

ⁱⁱ Using census tract income data compared to the local Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) rather than compared to the nation as a whole is appropriate because the MSA comparative data take account of regional differences in incomes and costs.