



Early Learning Quality Incentive in Budget

The primary statutory incentive for improving the quality of Florida's early learning system is the Gold Seal program, which basically requires providers to be accredited by an approved accrediting organization in order to receive up to a 20 percent increase in their per student reimbursement. Unfortunately, it is widely accepted that because accreditation provides only a snapshot in time of the quality of a program and because some of the approved accreditation tools are not themselves quality-based, that many Gold Seal providers are not providing quality programs.

Proviso language in the 2014-2015 budget bill ([HB 5001](#)) creates a pilot program that will test the effectiveness of a new way for the state to truly incentivize quality in our early learning system.

Proviso language on line 87 of the bill provides for creation of an Early Learning Performance Funding Pilot Project, and appropriates \$10.5 million to fund it.

The pilot project will be developed with input from a workgroup chosen and coordinated by the Office of Early Learning. The workgroup will include the Executive Director of the Office of Early Learning, two representatives from Early Learning Coalitions (one representing a multi-county coalition), two representatives from private provider organizations (one must be faith-based), and two representatives from other organizations that provide match funding to the early learning system. The ELCs chosen to participate in the pilot project will be selected by the workgroup in order to provide statewide representation and they must meet benchmarks determined by the workgroup.

The funding will be held in reserve until a budget amendment is approved by the Legislative Budget Commission. The budget amendment must include an allocation of the funding to the early learning coalitions based on a methodology to award child care providers and instructors for improving School Readiness program outcomes. The allocation methodology must include provisions for:

- a funding differential incentive for high need populations;
- a professional development system to significantly improve instructor quality;
- a research-based observational system to significantly improve instructor interactions with children; and
- alignment to Early Learning Florida to provide consistency in technical assistance and to significantly improve instructor quality.

The budget amendment must be submitted by the Office of Early Learning to the Executive Office of the Governor no later than July 15, 2014.