

## **NKyTribune**

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The federal government has selected Kentucky for a nearly \$36 million grant to support families and the state's economy by ensuring more children are ready for kindergarten.

When a young child enters kindergarten ready for school, there is an 82% chance that child will master basic skills by age 11 compared with a 45% chance for children who are not school ready.

The Office of Early Childhood Development Preschool Development Birth through Five (PDG B-5) grant will provide Kentucky with \$11.9 million each year over a three-year period. The Governor said these funds will help the commonwealth develop and expand early learning programs; build an early childhood education workforce talent pipeline and expand access to high quality for children most in need.

(Photo from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

"This funding strengthens our economy with high-quality early childhood education for our future workforce while meeting today's concerns of working parents with young children," said Kentucky Education and Labor Cabinet Secretary Jamie Link.

The \$36 million federal award will build upon a \$10.6 million PDG B-5 grant to Kentucky in 2019. Since the original award in 2019, Kentucky has advanced the goals outlined in the grant's strategic plan.

In addition to stewarding federal funding, the Beshear-Coleman administration has also increased state funding for early childhood education. This year, Team Kentucky's budget request of \$125.9 million won legislative approval and fully funds full-day kindergarten for the children of the commonwealth. During the next two years, Gov. Beshear has allotted \$1.4 million for the Governor's Office of Early Childhood. The state will invest \$6 million in the state's Regional Collaborative Network and \$1.4 million annually.

As part of his commitment to early childhood education, the Governor has proposed an Education First Plan to be considered during the upcoming 2023 legislative session. The Governor's plan aims to address student learning loss brought on by the pandemic and years of denied pay raises that have contributed to the state's nearly 11,000 public school teacher vacancies, by providing funding for a 5% pay raise for school staff, universal pre-K, textbooks, technology and training, teacher student loan forgiveness and social and mental health services. The Governor is also asking lawmakers to consider restoring new teacher pensions, which he said is the single most effective action we can take to keep new teachers in the classroom.

"Kentucky has long embraced promoting greater collaboration, emphasizing high quality and continuous improvement to ensure more children enter kindergarten prepared," said Governor's Office of Early Childhood Executive Director Amy Neal. "Our innovative and ambitious plan with this new federal funding will continue transforming the commonwealth into the best place to start and raise a family."

Governor's Office