

March 30, 2006

TO: Chief School Administrators

FROM: Tonya Hall-Coston and David Joye  
Acting Directors, Office of Early Childhood Education

RE: Early Launch to Learning Funding Opportunity, 2006-2007

ATTACHMENTS: Highlights of the Early Launch to Learning Initiative

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The Office of Early Childhood Education, NJDOE, is now able to reopen the Early Launch to Learning Initiative (ELLI) funding opportunity to a new round of potential applicants as well as to districts that previously received ELLI funding. Funding is dependent on approval by the state legislature. All districts that serve elementary-aged children are encouraged to apply. Districts may form partnerships or consortia to operate preschool programs. Level of funding is based on the number of low-income children to be served. Districts already providing preschool through other funding sources are eligible to apply for funding to cover all income-eligible children if they plan to expand or enhance their program. Districts receiving Early Childhood Program Aid, with the exclusion of Abbott districts, are eligible for funding to increase from half-day to full-day programs or to make significant enhancements to their existing program. Classes should be in operation by the first day of school in September 2006.

The long term aim of ELLI is to provide access to high-quality preschool for all four-year-olds in New Jersey by 2010. The interest to the taxpayers of New Jersey is clear. High-quality preschool results in savings to society over time and improves the quality of life, not only for the participants and their families, but for the communities as a whole. Currently, too many children are in low-quality care, and parents have great difficulty finding and paying for good educational experiences for their young children.

The appropriation of \$3,000,000 for FY 2007, if approved, will fund approximately 1,000 low-income children's participation, through a competitive award process. Other children will be assisted through braided funding, using a combination of existing district funds (general fund or other funds), collaboration with Head Start and child care, and parent tuition. The classes will

comprise children with disabilities, children from low-income families and children supported through other means.

Detailed information and instructions for the Early Launch to Learning Initiative are available on the Department of Education Web site at <http://www.nj.gov/njded/ece/elli/>. Please address all questions to Karen Nemeth at [Karen.nemeth@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:Karen.nemeth@doe.state.nj.us).

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## Highlights of the Early Launch to Learning Initiative (ELLI)

### DID YOU KNOW...

- **Any non-Abbott K-8 or K-12 school district may be eligible for ELLI funding?**  
*All non-Abbott districts currently serving elementary aged children can apply!!*
- **Districts that receive Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) funding may be eligible for ELLI funding to expand or enhance their existing preschool program?**  
*ECPA districts that do not expend ECPA funding on 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade can use ELLI funding to enhance their program or expand it to full-day!*
- **Non-ECPA districts may also apply for ELLI funds to start a new program or expand/enhance an existing preschool program?**  
*Whether a district has not yet offered general education preschool or even if they have a program in place for preschool and/or inclusion, ELLI funds may be used to start, expand or enhance preschool according to the posted guidelines.*
- **There is no minimum enrollment required for ELLI eligibility?**  
*ELLI funding is based on the number of income-eligible four-year-olds the district serves. A district may be approved for funding for even one or two income-eligible children.*
- **ELLI funded preschool classrooms do not have to be housed in district buildings?**  
*Districts can overcome space limitations by contracting with local child care providers, nursery schools or Head Start programs that agree to meet all ELLI requirements.*
- **Professional development, technical assistance, and networking opportunities are available to districts through an extensive program offered by the Office of Early Childhood Education?**  
*The Office of Early Childhood Education provides conferences, meetings, workshops, networking, site visits and technical assistance throughout the year to support the implementation of high-quality preschool in ELLI districts!*
- **ELLI funding can help districts meet Special Education goals and standards for including preschoolers with special needs in regular education classrooms?**  
*The Office of Special Education expects significant growth in the number of districts who appropriately serve classified preschool children in fully inclusive classrooms. ELLI funding can help districts support inclusive preschool classrooms – and inclusion is required for participation in ELLI.*
- **ELLI funding can help districts support services for English language learners?**  
*The ELLI program does not focus on English language learners in preschool, but it can be helpful in supporting preschool services that will enable young English language learners to be better prepared for their entry into Kindergarten and beyond!*
- **Professional development and technical assistance may be available to districts regardless of their participation in the ELLI program?**  
*Over the past several months, the OECE has offered training on the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS-R), the Early Learning Assessment System (ELAS), and our statewide Preschool Leadership conference. Keep an eye on our website for information about upcoming opportunities.!*