

Notification of Funding Opportunity
Early Launch to Learning Initiative (ELLI)
2006-2007

Lucille E. Davy
Acting Commissioner

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. Box 500
Trenton, NJ 08625-0500

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Contact Number: (609) 777-2074

Proposal Due Date: May 23, 2006 4:00 p.m.

<http://www.nj.gov/njded/ece/>

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I. PROGRAM INFORMATION

1.1 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This funding notification is to announce the availability of funds for the Early Launch to Learning Initiative (ELLI) to increase access to preschool for four-year-olds. The classes will be composed of children from low-income families, children with disabilities, and other general education children. Districts already receiving Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA), with the exclusion of Abbott districts, are eligible for funding to increase from half-day to full-day programs or otherwise enhance their preschool programs by making changes such as decreasing class size, implementing an approved curriculum, or increasing the qualifications of teachers.

<u>Early Launch to Learning Initiative FY07</u> <i>(pending budget approval)</i>	
Cost of low-income children:	\$3,000,000
Districts Eligible:	474 (All non-Abbott districts are eligible, ECPA districts could increase to full-day or enhance half-day program)
Anticipated Districts Funded:	25 - 55
Anticipated Range of Awards:	\$25,000 - \$700,000

1.2 ELIGIBILITY TO APPLY

Districts with the following characteristics are eligible to apply:

- Districts that received ELLI funding during 2005-2006. (These districts must submit revised plans and budgets. If they meet all program requirements, they receive priority for funding.)
- Districts that currently serve elementary aged children.
- Districts that already offer preschool for children without disabilities may apply to expand their current program to serve more children or to offer longer hours.
- Early Childhood Program Aid districts that do not expend ECPA funding on 1st-3rd grade are eligible to apply to expand and/or enhance their program to full-day.

Abbott districts are not eligible for this funding.

To be eligible for this award, districts **must** send the preschool coordinator or the head of curriculum and instruction (or the equivalent person) to a technical assistance meeting on April 27, 2006. In addition, districts that **have not previously received** ELLI funding **must** also send an appropriate representative to a Curriculum Showcase which will be held on April 26, 2006. District representatives must pre-register by April 24, 2006 for the appropriate meeting(s). Registration materials will be available on the DOE website by March 31, 2006.

1.3 STATUTORY/REGULATORY SOURCE AND FUNDING

The application and implementation of the program must be in conformance with all applicable state and federal regulations. **The resources that support this discretionary state aid are subject to appropriation in the FY07 Appropriations Act.**

A total of \$3,000,000 is in the proposed budget for this program in FY 2007. The Department of Education anticipates funding between 25-55 districts with average awards of \$25,000 to \$700,000 depending upon the applicant's projected enrollment of low-income children.

1.4 DISSEMINATION OF THIS NOTICE

The Department of Education, through the Office of the Early Childhood Education, made notice of the award opportunity available to eligible districts in the State of New Jersey, as described in Section 1.2, Eligibility to Apply. Superintendents, Chief School Administrators, and Department of Education county superintendents and assistant commissioners also received notification of availability of these funds via correspondence dated March 30, 2006.

Copies of this Notification of Funding Opportunity and Forms are available on the NJDOE web site <http://www.nj.gov/njded/ece/> or by contacting the Office of Early Childhood Education at the New Jersey Department of Education by telephone (609) 777-2074; or by fax at (609) 777-0967.

1.5 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Attendance at the Technical Assistance meeting and Curriculum Showcase is a requirement for application for ELLI funding. The preschool coordinator or the head of curriculum and instruction (or the equivalent person) from the applicant district **must** pre-register by April 24, 2006 for the appropriate meetings. Each district may send more than one representative **if and only if** they also pre-register.

Districts that **have not applied before** must attend the technical assistance meeting on April 27, 2006 at the DOE, 100 Riverview Plaza, Trenton from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. **AND** the Curriculum Showcase on April 26, 2006, 8:30 – 4:30, at the Trenton Marriott. The Curriculum Showcase is an additional technical assistance meeting that will provide information about evidence-based early childhood curricula to enable each district to make appropriate selections.

Districts that **have received ELLI** funding in the past **must** attend the technical assistance meeting on April 27, 2006 at the DOE, 100 Riverview Plaza, Trenton from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. and will be invited, but **not** required, to attend the Curriculum Showcase. Registration materials will be available on the DOE website by March 31, 2006.

1.6 PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

The Department of Education *will not accept a late proposal*. The responsibility for a timely submission resides with the applicant. The Application Control Center (ACC) must receive an original and four copies and a PC formatted computer disk of the complete proposal **NO LATER THAN 4:00 P.M. ON May 23, 2006. Without exception**, the ACC will not accept a proposal received after this deadline. The applicant agency will not be eligible for an award if the proposal is received after the due date.

The original and four (4) copies of the proposal along with a PC formatted computer disk containing the proposal must be mailed or delivered to:

Application Control Center

New Jersey Department of Education
River View Executive Plaza, Building 100
P.O. Box 500
Trenton, NJ 08625-0500

To ensure timely delivery and receipt of the proposal, the applicant is encouraged either to:

- hand deliver the proposal to the address above, which is located next to Mercer County Waterfront Park on Route 29 in Trenton, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday (excluding state holidays) and obtain a dated receipt; or
- send the proposal by Certified Mail, Return Receipt Requested; or
- arrange for delivery by an overnight delivery service.

Postmarks are not acceptable evidence of timely submission. Receipt by the due date and time is required. The applicant is encouraged to obtain a receipt or signature upon delivery to verify NJDOE receipt. Complete proposals are those that include all elements listed in Section 3.2, Proposal Component Checklist of this notice. The proposal received by the due date and time will be screened to determine whether it is, in fact, eligible for evaluation. The NJDOE reserves the right to reject any proposal not in conformance with the requirements of this program application.

Proposals submitted by fax can not be accepted in any circumstances.

1.7 REPORTING

Reports on program implementation and fiscal accounting will be required in a format that will be available at the time of award. An interim report will be due on January 15, 2007 and a final report on July 7, 2007.

1.8 DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS

Award funds will be disbursed in ten payments of ten percent of the total ELLI award per month. If a special request for supplemental funds is granted, the amount of the approved special request will be included in the first payment. The last payment, scheduled for June, is withheld until receipt of final expenditure report. All funding is contingent upon verification of enrollment of low income-children.

II. PROJECT GUIDELINES

- New applicants must submit a completed Early Launch to Learning Initiative Three-Year Operational Plan, an ELLI Budget Statement and additional forms provided by the Department of Education.
- Current ELLI awardees must submit only the parts of that plan that have been revised, with clear indications of where changes have been made AND an ELLI Budget Statement along with the forms provided by the Department of Education.

2.1 PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

- The district shall have an existing or newly established Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) or its equivalent. The purpose of the ECAC is to provide information to the district on community resources and the needs of children and families within the community. An additional purpose of the ECAC is to ensure that this initiative will not adversely affect area child care or Head Start providers. The council must include representatives from the school district **AND** child care providers, Head Start (if applicable to the district), and other community or municipal agencies interested in young children. Letters of support must be included with the proposal, and provide evidence of the involvement and agreement of the ECAC with the proposal.
- The ELLI program must be offered for either a 2 hour 45 minute to 3 hour half-day or a 6 hour full-day for the entire school year.
- The district must have space to operate classes or arrangements with existing child care or Head Start agencies for collaboration. In the program application, districts may submit a plan for future expansion of the preschool program (i.e. districts may start with a small number of classrooms with a plan to increase over time).
- Children with disabilities must be included full time in the proposed general education preschool classrooms. This is beneficial for all children, in compliance with federal and state law, and offsets costs since the cost of serving children with disabilities is already in the district budget.
- Class sizes of 15 to 18 children are preferred but an absolute maximum of 20 is allowed with evidence of highly qualified teachers with preschool credentials and experience;

- Regardless of setting, each classroom must have a teacher with the appropriate Department of Education license (e.g. P-3, N-K) and a teaching assistant.
- ELLI funding is provided for low-income four-year-olds (eligible for free and reduced lunch) and there must be evidence that they will be served. For planning purposes, a projection of the number of low-income four-year-olds in the district should be based on the number of first grade students eligible for free and reduced lunch. **However, the actual funding will be based on actual enrollment.** In some cases, children whose family circumstances merit special consideration due to hardship may be included in the count of low-income children funded by the State.
- Classes must consist of a mix of children with disabilities, ELLI-funded low-income children, tuition-funded children (parent payment) or children funded through district general funds. Mixed income and mixed ability classes are required. If children with disabilities will not be served in a particular classroom, justification must be provided. An exception to the mixed income requirement will be made for Head Start classrooms due to income eligibility requirements for this program. However, there must be other classrooms that serve mixed income children in the district.
- The proposed program must implement an approved evidence-based curriculum model and must meet the Office of Early Childhood Education's *Preschool Teaching and Learning Expectations: Standards of Quality*. To be eligible for this award, districts must send the head of curriculum and instruction or the equivalent person to a technical assistance meeting on April 27, 2006 and districts that have not previously applied for ELLI funding must send an appropriate representative to a Curriculum Showcase which will be held on April 26, 2006. District representatives must pre-register by April 24, 2006. Registration materials will be available on the DOE website by March 30, 2006.

Although not required, the following factors lead to more competitive proposals: (These are also the factors that would be considered enhancements for ECPA-funded programs that request ELLI funds to enhance their existing preschool program)

- Meeting most or all of the *Abbott Preschool Program Implementation Guidelines* which delineate higher standards;
- Collaborating with private child care or Head Start agencies to offer full-day and full-year programs (before and after school and during the summer). Or, funding child care or Head Start to upgrade their program by reducing class size, hiring certified teachers and implementing the approved preschool curriculum;
- Including innovative approaches that will meet the specific needs of children and families in the community by partnering with other agencies. Examples of such programs are preparing high school students for careers in early childhood education by assisting in the preschool classroom, implementing dual generation programs that help parents learn work place skills, or initiating a grandparent program with a local senior citizen center;

- Offering a systematic and well-planned curriculum that provides specific, developmentally appropriate supports for English language learners; and
- Offering a preschool/child care program for the full school day. At least half of the day must meet the criteria for class size and teaching staff listed above and meet the *Preschool Program Implementation Guidelines*. Half-day or a combination of half- and full-day preschool programs will be considered if the district can show that half-day more appropriately serves the needs of their community.

2.2 COST PROPOSAL

Costs of Half-day Programs

For half-day programs of no less than 2 hour 45 minutes to 3 hours, the funding is \$3,000 for each four-year-old child eligible for free or reduced lunch **who is actually enrolled in the program**. For planning purposes, estimates of the low-income population should be based on the number of first grade children eligible for free and reduced lunch. Proposed enrollment of low-income four-year-olds should be based on space and the advice of the Early Childhood Advisory Council. Families over 200% of the poverty level may be assessed tuition up to the full cost of the program in districts that do not also receive Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) funding. In some cases, children whose family circumstances merit special consideration due to hardship may be included in the count of low-income children funded by the State. Districts must determine what to charge and how to allot their own resources, but all ELLI and parent-generated funds must be spent on the preschool program. This per pupil amount also applies to ECPA districts applying to increase to a full-day program of at least six hours.

Costs of Full-day Programs

For full-school day programs of at least 6 hours the funding is \$6,000 for each four-year-old child eligible for free or reduced lunch **who is actually enrolled in the program**. For planning purposes, estimates of the low-income population should be based on the number of first grade children eligible for free and reduced lunch. Proposed enrollment of low-income four-year-olds should be based on space and the advice of the Early Childhood Advisory Council. Families over 200% of the poverty level may be assessed tuition up to the full cost of the program in districts that do not also receive Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) funding. In some cases, children whose family circumstances merit special consideration due to hardship may be included in the count of low-income children funded by the State. Districts must determine what to charge and how to allot their own resources, but all ELLI and parent-generated funds must be spent on the preschool program.

Allowable Use Of Funds

Funds from this initiative may only be used to cover additional costs of providing preschool to low-income four-year-old children to an extent not previously available in the district. The eligible population for ELLI funds is defined as the following:

- Children who will meet the birth date cut-off for kindergarten in the subsequent school year;
- Children who meet residency requirements of the applicant district(s) (districts may join together to offer this program); and
- Children whose families are eligible for free or reduced lunch. In some cases, children whose family circumstances merit special consideration due to hardship may be included in the count of low-income children funded by ELLI.

ELLI funds may be braided with other funding sources but may only be used to supplement (not supplant) current resources. ELLI funds may only be used for the following categories:

- Instructional salaries and benefits,
- General classroom supplies,
- Professional development for instructional staff, and
- Contracted services from private child care or Head Start agencies.

Other costs of the program should be funded through district general funds, special education funds, and parent tuition. For districts that currently serve four-year-old children without disabilities, the total number of children served or duration (length of day) of the program must increase with these funds. If private child-care agencies contract with the district to provide a preschool program, they may not increase their profits through student co-pay or tuition payments. Tuition for the regular program day cannot be assessed to children with disabilities.

Special Request for Supplemental Funding

The department will consider special requests for a one-time infusion of supplemental funds for an ELLI program. ELLI districts may use the Special Request form provided to make one-time budget requests that require funds over and above those provided through the braiding of ELLI funds, district general funds, special education funds, and parent tuition. Special requests can be made only in the categories of professional development for teachers and assistants, and books and/or materials for the classroom. Only those special requests accompanied by detailed descriptions and justifications (such as detailed professional development plans with associated costs, or purchase plans for classroom materials accompanied by catalog pages or other cost documentation) will be considered by the department. You may attach any additional relevant information or documentation to support your request.

In the case of special requests for categories already included in the budget, a detailed account of the total costs needed for that category must be presented. For example: If a district requests additional funding for professional development, it must show how funding from all sources will be spent in addition to detailing how the special request funding will be spent.

Special Request funding is intended as a one-time infusion of funds to assist districts in taking significant steps to enhance the quality of the preschool program and ensure that all of the ELLI requirements are met appropriately.

Districts may submit Special Requests of up to \$10,000, depending upon the nature of the request and the detailed expenditure projections with full documentation. Each request will be evaluated by the DOE and may be adjusted as necessary.

III. COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

To apply for funds under this program, each new applicant must submit a complete ELLI Three-Year Operational Plan including **all Excel tables**, the special request form if needed, and the 2006-2007 budget worksheet. Current ELLI recipients need only to submit plan revisions (including any changes to the Excel tables) and a 2006-2007 budget statement and worksheet.

IV. AWARD SELECTION

4.1 Distribution of Awards

In making awards under this program, NJDOE will ensure, to the extent practicable, a distribution of awards among the geographic regions of the state. Current recipients who are already implementing ELLI programs will receive first consideration for funding. Remaining funds will then be distributed among new, approved applicants.

4.2 Proposal Review and Scoring

Committees consisting of DOE staff and other early childhood education experts will evaluate all eligible applications. The application is evaluated on the basis of quality, comprehensiveness and accuracy of response to the guidelines and requirements. Applicants may request information about their evaluation scores by writing to the NJDOE Application Control Center. The NJDOE reserves the right to withdraw from consideration any application that does not include each component to be evaluated and scored in the evaluation process.

Current ELLI recipients' applications will be reviewed first, then new applications will be reviewed and scored. The application must receive a score of at least 65 points out of 100 to be eligible for funding. Eligible applications will be ranked and funded in descending order, from highest to lowest score, until available funds have been used.

Reviewers will use the following Scoring Rubric to evaluate applications:

(1) Outreach and enrollment plan

10 pts

- The program will begin operation on the first day of school in September, 2006
- Effective methods of recruitment are detailed

- Methods will attract hard to reach families and indicate a commitment to serving a large proportion of low-income children in mixed-ability/mixed-income classes
- It is evident that the plan is based on knowledge of community needs

(2) District-wide planning with evidence of community partnership through the Early Childhood Advisory Council; 20 pts

- The ECAC has been established and has convened [**If not, the district is ineligible.**]
- The ECAC membership reflects broad representation of stakeholders
- Collaboration with community agencies serving young children and their families is evident
- Actual contracting with community child care and Head Start agencies or collaborative arrangements to serve children for more than the regular school day is evident [Automatic 5 points.]
- Letters of support, included in the application, provide evidence of the involvement and agreement of the ECAC with the application

(3) Curriculum development and implementation; 30 pts

- The district will implement one of the curricula introduced at the Curriculum Showcase [Automatic 10 points]
- The curriculum is comprehensive and designed to help teachers and children meet all of the *Preschool Teaching and Learning Expectations: Standards of Quality*
- Transition plans show effective articulation and communication, from preschool through grade three
- Innovative approaches for meeting children’s needs are evident [see Project Requirements section above]
- Clear and evidence-based methods for meeting the language needs of children who are English language learners are described
- Teachers and other staff are highly qualified and have experience with preschool education
- Class size is no more than 20 [Automatic 5 points for class size of 15 – 18]

(4) Professional development and training; 10 pts

- The professional development plan is systematic and comprehensive
- Teaching staff will receive on-going support from knowledgeable supervisors/administrators

(5) Inclusion; 15 pts

- All classrooms will include children with disabilities [Automatic 5 points.]
- No more than one-third of the children in any classroom have disabilities. [Children are served in the natural proportion that they are found in society – i.e. If 10% of the

preschool population have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) then an average of 10% of the children in each classroom have disabilities, Automatic 5 points]

- The program is designed to provide appropriate supports for children with disabilities during the regular routine, such as adaptive activities and materials, adjusted schedules and integrated therapies (pull out is rarely used)
- Teachers will receive consultation from special education staff and other experts. It is not necessary to have special education teachers in each classroom.
- If children with disabilities will not be served in a particular classroom, justification must be provided.

(Please note: in order for the district to be eligible for ELLI funding, at least some of the classrooms **must** include children with disabilities for the full classroom day.)

(6) Program evaluation;

10 pts

- The program evaluation plan will result in valid information that will be useful in program development and planning for individual children
- With the exception of developmental screenings and diagnostic testing or random assessment as part of an experimental research design, no standardized testing will be administered on preschool children. Instead, performance-based assessment will be administered

(7) Budget;

5 pts

- The proposed budget uses ELLI funds only as allowed [If not, the district is not eligible.]
- It is evident that the program will be efficient
- Funds generated through tuition will not be used for any other program or costs

Please note: If submitted, a special request will be evaluated separately. The review committee will make recommendations about special requests based on the appropriateness of the request and the availability of funds.