

## LEGISLATIVE BILL 567

Approved by the Governor April 4, 1990

Introduced by Withem, 14; Ashford, 6; Wesely, 26;  
Bernard-Stevens, 42

AN ACT relating to early childhood education; to state intent; to establish the Early Childhood Training Center and the Early Childhood Education Pilot Project Program.

Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

Section 1. (1) The Legislature hereby finds and declares that: (a) Early childhood and parent education programs can assist children in achieving their potential as citizens, workers, and human beings; (b) early childhood education has been proven to be a sound public investment of funds not only in assuring productive, taxpaying workers in the economy but also in avoidance of increasingly expensive social costs for those who drop out as productive members of society; (c) the key ingredient in an effective early childhood education program is a strong family education component because the role of the parent is of critical importance; (d) while all children can benefit from quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood education experiences, such experiences are especially important for at-risk infants and children; and (e) current early childhood education programs serve only a fraction of Nebraska's children and the quality of current programs varies widely.

(2) Therefor, it is the intent of the Legislature and the public policy of this state to encourage the provision of high-quality early childhood education programs for infants and young children. The purpose of this act is to provide state assistance for early childhood education training and pilot projects and to encourage coordination between public and private service providers of early childhood education and child care.

Sec. 2. (1) The State Board of Education shall establish or designate, under the jurisdiction of the State Department of Education, an Early Childhood Training Center. The purpose of the center shall be to train individuals who provide education and development activities for infants and young children and their parents. The center, taking into consideration existing

public and private training efforts, shall provide support and assistance to schools and public and private providers of early childhood education services in developing training programs for staff. The center, taking into consideration existing public and private training efforts, shall also provide clearinghouse information and publications on available early childhood education training opportunities throughout the state.

(2) The center shall establish a statewide training program to support the development of parent education programs in local communities. The goal of this project shall be to train individuals who will be able to work with public and private providers of early childhood services to establish parent education programs in their communities.

Sec. 3. (1) The State Board of Education shall establish the Early Childhood Education Pilot Project Program. The State Department of Education, with the assistance of an Early Childhood Education Pilot Project Steering Committee appointed by the State Board of Education, shall establish guidelines and criteria for pilot projects. Based on such criteria and guidelines, the board shall request proposals from local school districts and cooperatives of school districts and select four proposals for early childhood education pilot projects. Each project so selected shall be provided funds of up to one hundred thousand dollars per year.

(2) Each pilot project proposal which is accepted by the board shall include (a) a planning period of at least six months, (b) an agreement to participate in an evaluation of the project to be specified by the department, (c) evidence that the project will be coordinated or contracted with existing programs, including Head Start and services for handicapped children below five years of age as provided in the Special Education Act, and (d) a plan to use a combination of funding sources, including sliding fee scales, to maximize the participation of diverse groups.

(3) Each project shall also demonstrate the following elements of quality early childhood education programs, including: (a) A strong family education component recognizing the central role of parents in their children's development; (b) well-trained staff and optimum staff and child ratios; (c) developmentally appropriate curriculum, practices, and assessment; (d) sensitivity to the economic and logistical needs and circumstances of families in the provision of services;

(e) integration of children of diverse social and economic characteristics; (f) a sound evaluation component, including at least one objective measure of child performance and progress; and (g) continuity with programs in kindergarten and elementary grades.

(4) One pilot project shall be located in each of the three congressional districts and one shall be located at large according to the decision of the department.

(5) The pilot projects shall continue for three calendar years, and by July 1, 1993, the department shall conduct an overall evaluation of the success or failure of the pilot projects and components thereof. A report evaluating the pilot projects shall be made to the State Board of Education and the Legislature by November 30, 1993.