



Welcome to EarlyStories, a weblog by Richard Lee Colvin and Liz Willen at the **Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media**, Teachers College, Columbia University. It contains commentary on coverage of issues (in newspapers, magazines, television, radio, blogs) related to early childhood education, broadly defined, inside and outside of schools, preschools, subway cars, living rooms and the dining table.

Wither Obama's early childhood agenda?

Posted by **Liz Willen** on March 22, 2010 9:47 AM

While celebrations continue over last night's **historic passage of President Barack Obama's** health-care bill, there are plenty of early childhood experts and advocates who are disappointed.

The president's promise of an expanded -- and expansive -- early childhood agenda got caught up in the **complexities of health care** reform and in the overhaul of **student lending**, leaving many questions about what will become of plans and promises.



AFP/Getty Images

The **First Five Years Fund**, whose goal is to expand high-quality early learning services to children from birth to age five, realized last week that the president's **Early Learning Challenge Fund** was in trouble. The Fund would have provided funding to help states build high quality early learning systems.

"Obviously, this is a bitter disappointment to all of us who have been working on this bill since last summer," said **Cornelia Grumman**, Executive Director of The First Five Years Fund, said in a statement last week. Grumman said in an interview with EarlyStories that she worried what will become of an agenda that would have allowed a much needed, coordinated approach to early childhood education in the U.S.

"The worry is, will there be another opportunity in this economy?" Grumman said. "I am incredibly disappointed and I'm skeptical that it will be done in a way that isn't piecemeal."

Marci Young, the Project Director of **Pre-K Now**, also expressed disappointment in the removal of the Early Learning Challenge Fund, calling it "a missed opportunity to provide more children with a high-quality early learning experience."

Young said in a statement she hopes momentum will build to add pre-kindergarten into authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan told **Education Week** that the administration will be looking for other ways to finance early-childhood education, and that the issue still has "huge bipartisan support."

How and what that support will look like remains to be seen. **EarlyStories** will be watching.