

More Hopeful Futures or Children as Collateral Damage?: Head Start as Cornerstone to Early Learning and Development

May 27, 2025



Panelists



Brittany Alexander
Research Assistant Professor
Children's Equity Project
Arizona State University



Bernadine Futrell
Senior Fellow, IEL
Former director, Office of Head Start
US Department of Health and Human Services



Khari Garvin
Former director, Office of Head Start
US Department of Health and Human Services



Lori Ferris
Executive Director
Iowa Head Start Association



Cleo Rodriguez
Executive Director
National Migrant and Seasonal
Head Start Association



Cynthia Yao
Former Regional Program Director
Region IX, Office of Head Start
US Department of Health and
Human Services

Moderator



Tammy Mann
President and CEO
The Campagna Center

Setting the Stage



Brittany Alexander
Research Assistant Professor
Children's Equity Project
Arizona State University

**More Hopeful Futures
or Children as
Collateral Damage?
Head Start as
Cornerstone for Early
Learning and
Development**

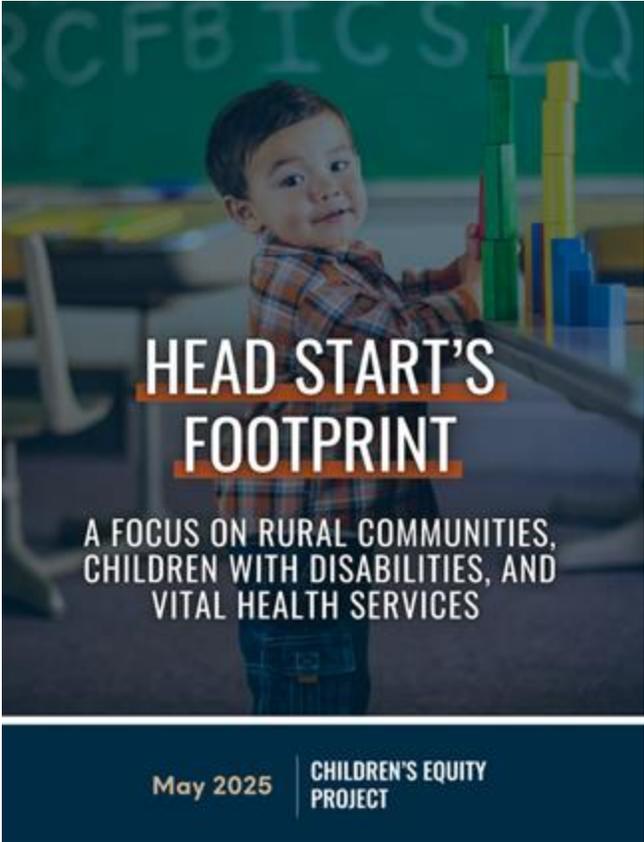
Brittany Alexander, PhD

May 2025

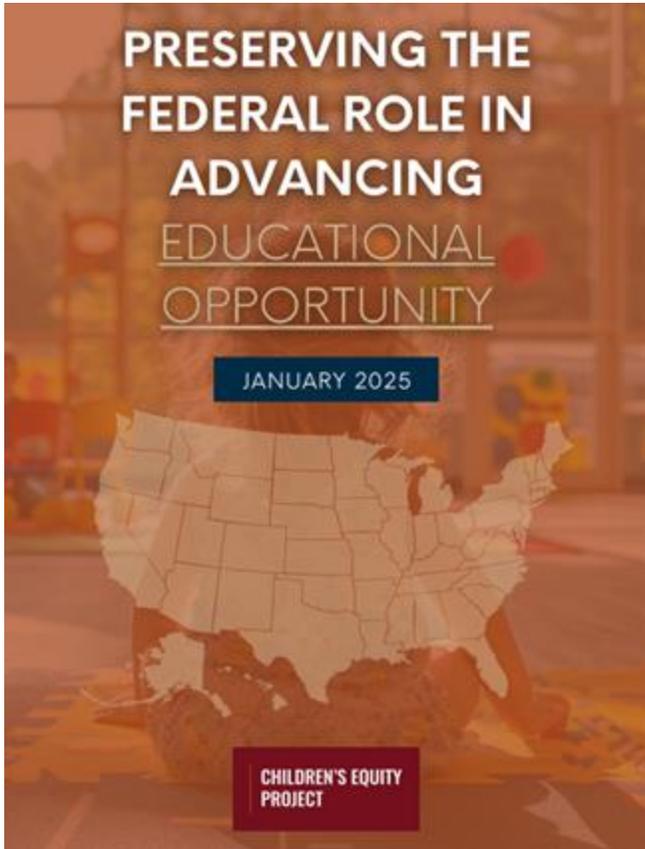


**CHILDREN'S EQUITY
PROJECT**

Check out our most recent reports!



Shantel Meek, PhD Children's Equity Project, Arizona State University	Eric Bucher, EdD Children's Equity Project, Arizona State University
Xigris Soto-Boykin, PhD Children's Equity Project, Arizona State University	Lisa Gordon Children's Equity Project, Arizona State University
Tunette Powell, PhD Children's Equity Project, Arizona State University	Mario Cardona, JD Children's Equity Project, Arizona State University
Evandra Catherine, PhD Children's Equity Project, Arizona State University	Brittany Alexander, PhD Children's Equity Project, Arizona State University
Darielle Blevins, PhD Children's Equity Project, Arizona State University	Cynthia Palomino, PhD Children's Equity Project, Arizona State University
Pranshu Mihirbhai Jayswal Children's Equity Project, Arizona State University	



Eric Bucher, EdD Children's Equity Project Arizona State University	Shantel Meek, PhD Children's Equity Project Arizona State University	Mario Cardona, JD Children's Equity Project Arizona State University
Brittany Alexander, PhD Children's Equity Project Arizona State University	Xigris Soto-Boykin, PhD Children's Equity Project Arizona State University	Evandra Catherine, PhD Children's Equity Project Arizona State University
Conor Williams, PhD Children's Equity Project The Century Foundation	Pranshu Mihirbhai Jayswal Children's Equity Project Arizona State University	Rosemarie Allen, PhD Children's Equity Project Arizona State University

Research on Head Start

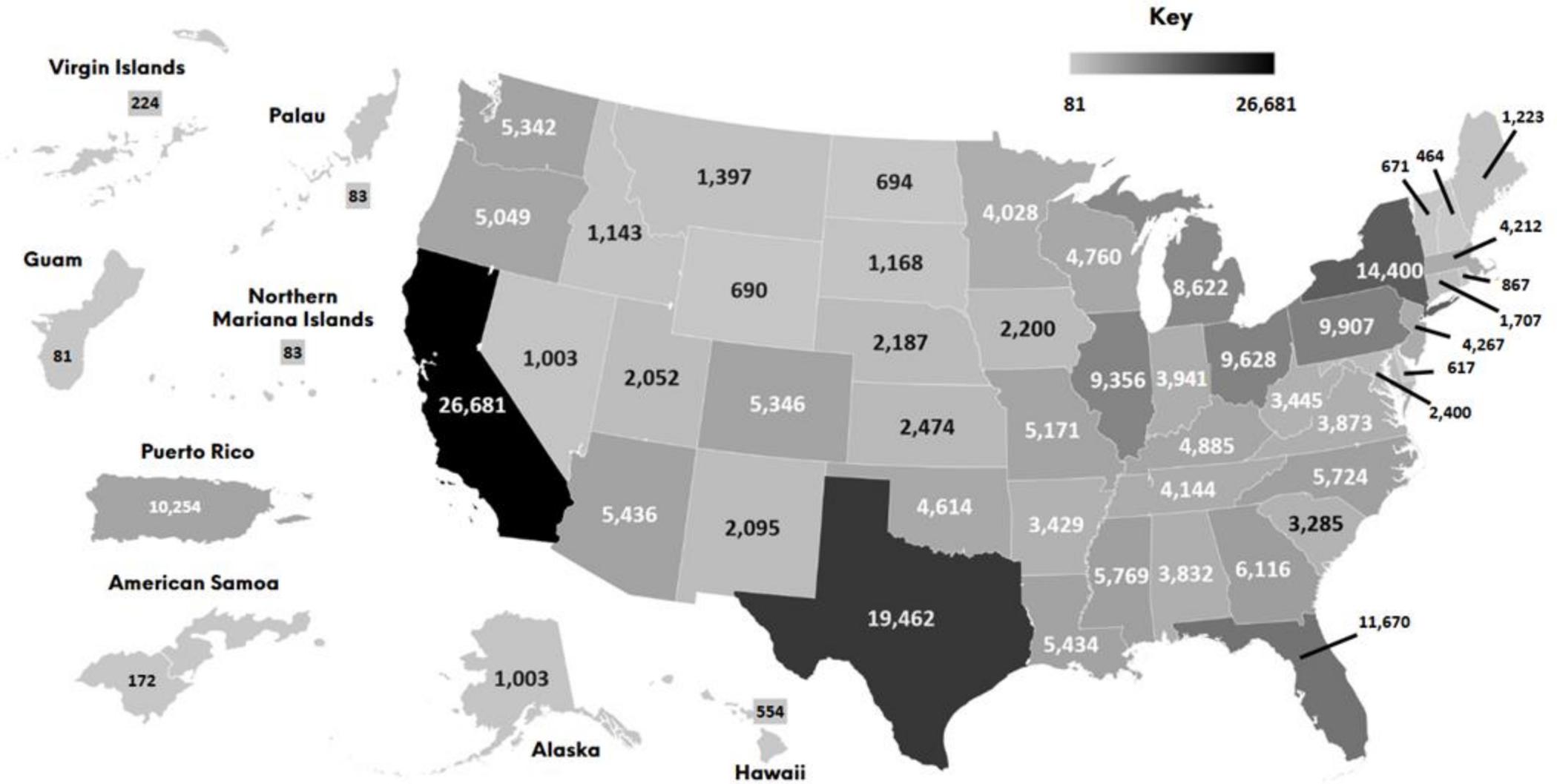
Head Start has been shown to have positive effects for children and their families, including the next generation

- Head Start children showed greater cognitive, language, and social-emotional gains by Kindergarten.
- Participants had higher rates of high school graduation, college enrollment, and college completion.
- Head Start parents exhibited more positive parenting, completed more education, and were more likely to work or study.
- Benefits extended to the next generation, including higher education levels, fewer teen pregnancies, and reduced criminal involvement.



Head Start by the Numbers

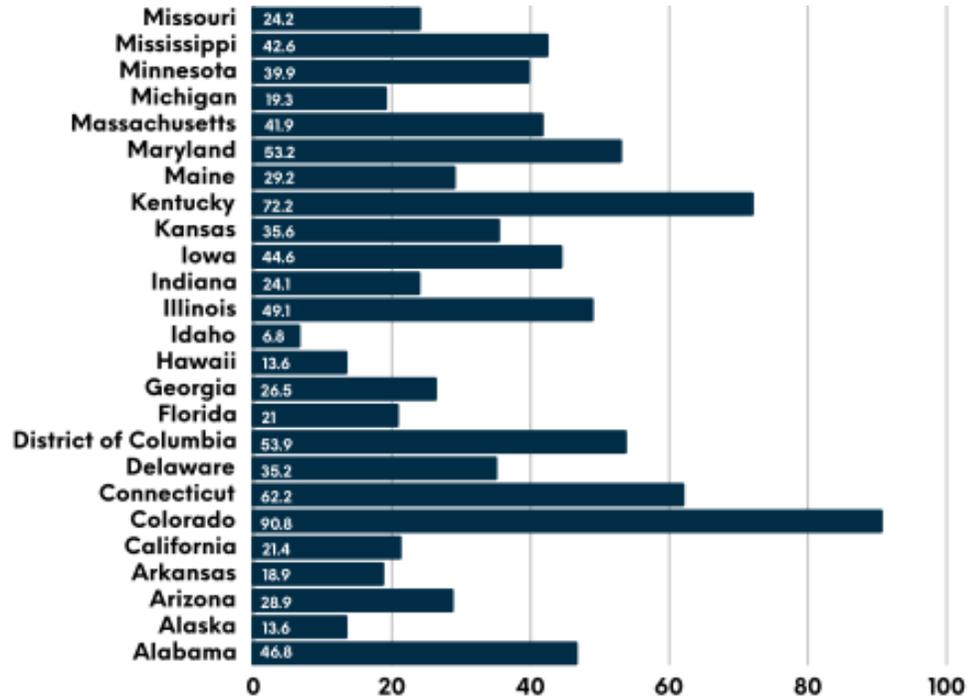
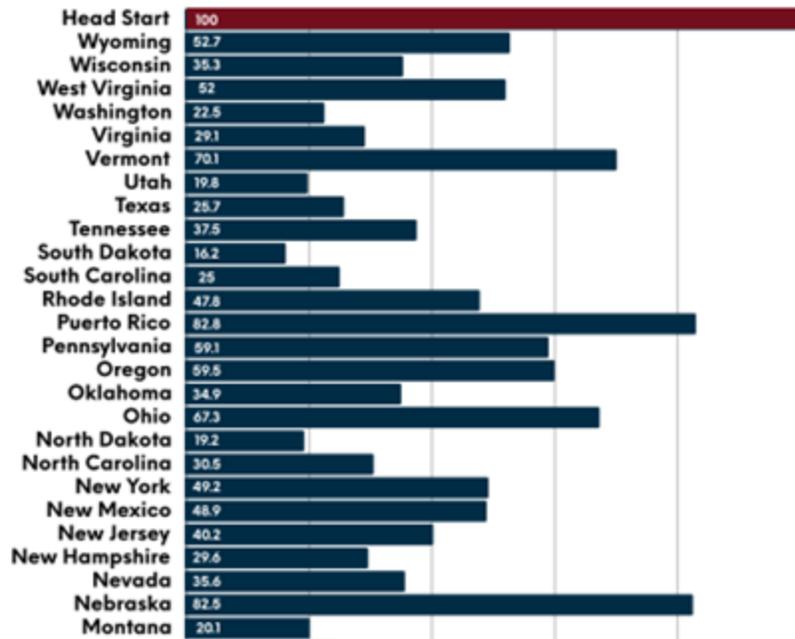
Number of Workers by State Who Could Lose Employment if Head Start Were Eliminated 2024



Head Start & Children with Disabilities

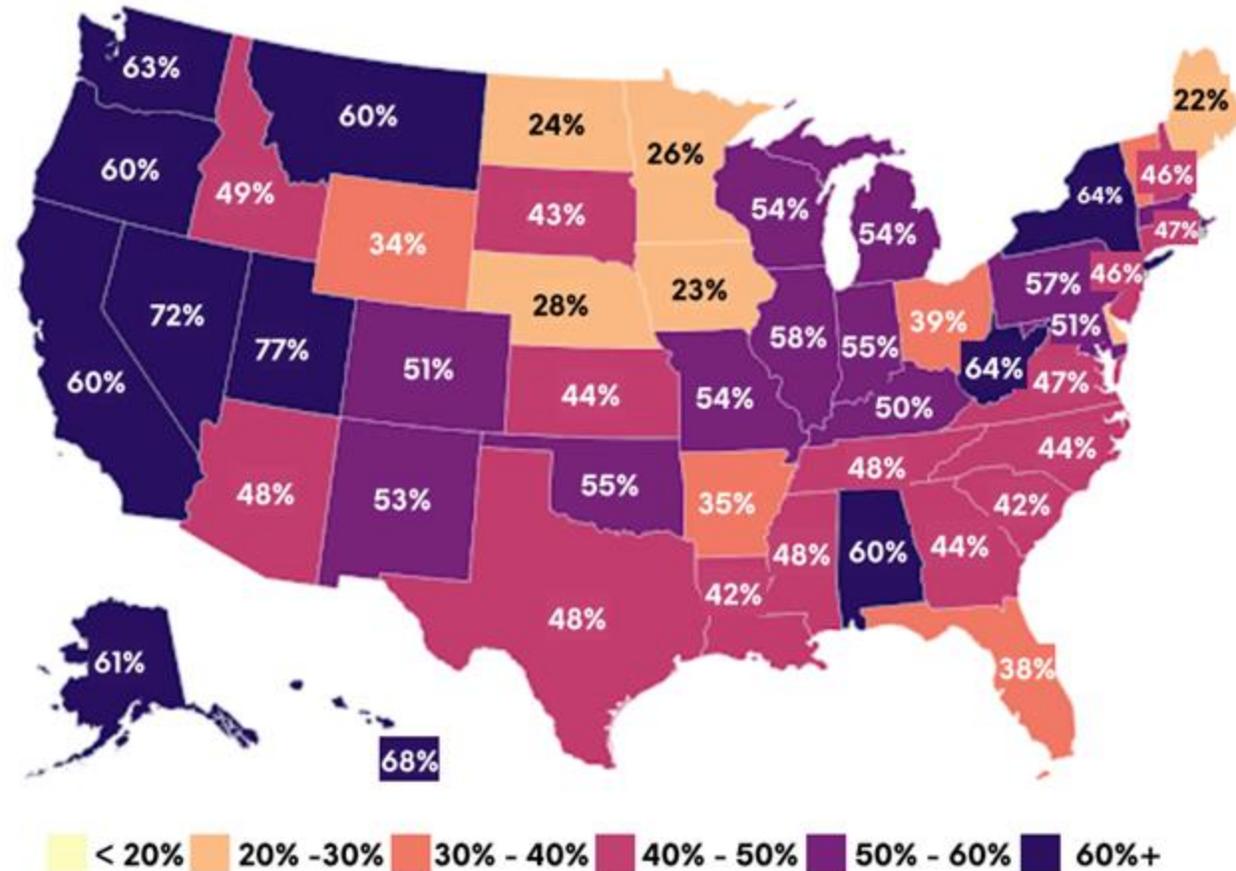
Since its inception, Head Start programs have been accessible to—and inclusive of—children with disabilities by design. That is, 10% of Head Start enrollment at each program is required to be children with disabilities, and all of those children have access to inclusive and high quality early learning opportunities in the Head Start setting.

Figure 4: Inclusion Rates for Preschoolers with Disabilities by State/Territory Compared to Head Start, 2023³⁴



Head Start & Child Care Supply

Figure 2: Percentage of Population Living in Low/No Child Care Supply Areas, 2018²⁰



Head Start & Child Care Supply

ZOOMING IN - COUNTY EXAMPLES¹²

- **In Graham County, Arizona**, around 84% of children under age 5 in poverty are served in Head Start programs. Head Start slots represented the significant majority (90.4%) of the share of total licensed child care slots in the county.
- **In Lincoln County, Montana**, Head Start serves around 7 in 10 children age 5 and under living in poverty (69.9%).
- **In Braxton County, West Virginia**, an estimated 88.8% of children birth to age 5 in poverty are served in Head Start programs.
- **In deep rural Plumas County, California**, where the child care gap is 1 in 2 children (49.6%), Head Start enrolls around half of children under age 5 in poverty (50.2%).

86% of rural counties across the nation had Head Start centers

Head Start & Health

Just as school-aged children often rely on school breakfast and lunch to fight off hunger, young children in poverty often rely on Head Start for meals.

In 2023, the number of children who were up-to-date on their schedule of age-appropriate preventive and primary health care increased by 30.72% by the end of children's enrollment in Head Start.⁶²

Impact of Head Start's Health and Dental Connections in 2023:

- 745,877 children relied on Head Start for connections to continuous, accessible health care.
- 678,141 children relied on Head Start for connections to continuous preventive dental care and treatment.
- 36,189 children in Head Start received dental treatment after being diagnosed as needing dental care.

Head Start & Health

Examples of the impact of Head Start's health-focused comprehensive services provided to families enrolled in the program in 2023⁹⁶ include:

- **95,271** families received mental health services.
- **33,273** families received training on substance abuse prevention.
- **8,366** families obtained substance abuse treatment.
- **346,185** families were trained on preventative medical and oral health.
- **108,432** families trained on the consequences of tobacco use on children's health and development.
- **324,317** families were trained on healthy nutrition.

Head Start Recent Developments

Over the last few months there have been a number of developments:

- Head Start programs experiencing issues drawing down funds
- Federal guidance issued
- Funding under threat
- Strong Head Start advocacy

Thank you!

Access our full suite of resources at:
cep.asu.edu

Follow us on Twitter:
[@ChildrensEquity](https://twitter.com/ChildrensEquity)

Or Contact Me at:
Brittany.L.Alexander@asu.edu



START WITH EQUITY

FROM THE EARLY YEARS TO THE EARLY GRADES

Data, Research, and an Actionable Child Equity Policy Agenda

CHILDREN'S EQUITY PROJECT

Equity Policy Center



START WITH EQUITY:

EARLY CHILDHOOD EQUITY STRATEGIC PLAN TEMPLATE

JUNE 2021 CHILDREN'S EQUITY PROJECT



EQUITY IS QUALITY, QUALITY IS EQUITY

Operationalizing Equity in Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

Shontel Mack, PhD
The Children's Equity Project, Arizona State University

Reema U. Saha, PhD
Equity Research Action Coalition of PhD, The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Kyrala Soto-Boydin, PhD
The Children's Equity Project, Arizona State University

Danielle Blanton, PhD
The Children's Equity Project, Arizona State University

Brittany Alexander, PhD
The Children's Equity Project, Arizona State University

Maria Cardenas, JD
Child Care Action of America

Dina Coates, PhD
Boston University

CHILDREN'S EQUITY PROJECT

Child Care Aware of America



START WITH EQUITY

14 PRIORITIES TO DISMANTLE SYSTEMIC RACISM IN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

DECEMBER 2020 CHILDREN'S EQUITY PROJECT

Panel Discussion 1



Bernadine Futrell
Senior Fellow, IEL
Former director, Office of Head Start
US Department of Health and Human Services



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Panel Discussion 2



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US Department of Health and
Human Services

Questions & Discussion

Upcoming GLR Learning Tuesdays Webinars

GLR LEARNING TUESDAYS, ????????

Starting Strong: Preparing Children and Families for Kindergarten Success

Tuesday, June 3, 12:30–2:00 p.m. ET/9:30 –11:00 a.m. PT

LEARNING LOSS RECOVERY CHALLENGE

The Foundation of EdTech is Connection: Ensuring Universal Access to the Internet

Tuesday, June 3, 3–4:30 p.m. ET/12–1:30 p.m. PT

CRUCIBLE OF PRACTICE SALON

Accelerating What Works in Rural Communities

Tuesday, June 10, 12:30–2:00 p.m. ET/9:30 –11:00 a.m. PT

LEARNING LOSS RECOVERY CHALLENGE

More Hopeful Futures or Children as Collateral Damage: SNAP

Tuesday, June 10, 3–4:30 p.m. ET/12–1:30 p.m. PT

Please stand by...Webinar will begin momentarily!

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