MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Preparing World-Class Students

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**TO:** Members of the Maryland State Board of Education

**FROM:** Lillian Lowery, Ed.D. LMLowery

**DATE:** September 25, 2012

**SUBJECT:** Updates of the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant

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## PURPOSE:

The purpose of this item is to provide an update on the *Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant*.

## BACKGROUND:

Maryland was notified in December 2011 that it had received one of nine *Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Fund Grant (RTTT-ELC)* awards for a total of $50 million over four years. The *Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge* program is co-managed by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Early Learning takes the lead on the grant management of the RTT-ELC.

Maryland's application included 10 thematic projects (**ATTACHMENT A**), designed to improve the school readiness results from 81 percent in 2010 to 92 percent in 2015, the last year of the grant. In addition, it strives to reduce the readiness gap for low income children, English language learners, and young children with disabilities. The ten projects reflect the following approach:

- **Revising the current Early Learning Framework**, including guidelines for children under four, and content standards for prekindergarten and kindergarten as an integral part of the Maryland State Prek-12 Curriculum based on the Common Core Standards;
- **Refining the existing comprehensive set of assessments**, a kindergarten entry assessment, professional development, and early intervention systems to assure that children are entering school ready to succeed;
- **Implementing a tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (Maryland EXCELS)** to improve the quality of all early care and education programs, including those serving high-need children, and erasing the skills gap prior to school entry;
- **Developing a workforce** prepared to engage young children and their families in promoting early learning and development that is competency-based and improves the knowledge, skills, credentials, and retention of early educators and administrators; and
- **Building a statewide early childhood data system** that supports the administrative efficiency and effectiveness of the state's early childhood education system, including the tracking of progress and measuring outcomes to determine the extent to which children and families have benefited as a result of the reform efforts.

Since January 2012, MSDE's Division of Early Childhood Development (DECD) has been engaged in establishing the project management and communication system for this grant by:

- Completing the Scope of Work and detailed Budget for each of the 10 projects;
- Completing a Monitoring Plan of sub-grants, including a monitoring instrument;
- Establishing all vendor contracts, grants, and Memorandums of Agreement (MOA);
- Initiating recruitment of personnel;
- Establishing intra-departmental teams;
- Crafting communication tools for the general public and stakeholder groups;
- Scheduling of orientation and training sessions related to specific projects.

A detailed accounting of the progress for each of the ten projects (**ATTACHMENT B**) indicates that most of the scheduled project activities have been initiated and are underway toward meeting the first set of milestones and deliverables.

**ACTION:**

For information only.

ATTACHMENT A

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# Maryland's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant Project Brief

The Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant will enable Maryland to create a seamless Birth to Grade 12 reform agenda to ensure that all young children and their families are supported in the state's efforts to overcome school readiness gaps and to move early childhood education in Maryland from a good system to a great system.

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is the fiscal agent for the grant and its Division of Early Childhood Development takes the lead in implementing the funds. The Governor's State Advisory Council on Early Care and Education advises MSDE on the implementation of the RTT-ELC State Plan. Participating state agencies, including the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Maryland Department of Human Resources, and the Governor's Office for Children, collaborate with MSDE in support of the State Plan. Ten innovative projects address the scope of Maryland's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge State Plan.

## Project 1 Local Early Childhood Councils

Create 24 local early childhood councils with the goal of developing local plans for implementation of Maryland's RTT-ELC state plan. Leadership coordination to local councils is provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation over 12 months.

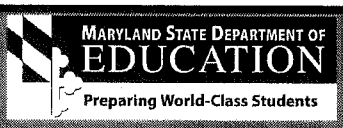
## Project 2 Maryland EXCELS

Enhance and administer a full-scale implementation of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (Maryland EXCELS) through a qualified vendor. Support all public, private and community early learning and development programs to participate in Maryland EXCELS. Evaluate the effectiveness of Maryland EXCELS to include the relationship between quality ratings and children's learning and school readiness.

## Project 3 Quality Capacity Building

Establish an Early Childhood Breakthrough Center to provide quality capacity building for programs participating in Maryland EXCELS and expand models of excellence to attendance areas of Title 1 schools in school improvement.

- Establish two (2) **Community Hubs** to provide and coordinate existing services for families with children, birth to five years of age.
- Establish five (5) **Preschool for All** sites in Title 1 attendance areas.
- Establish two (2) **Judy Center Satellite Sites** at Title 1 schools in school improvement in Baltimore City and Prince George's County and expand services from the existing Judy Center Partnership sites to other Title 1 schools.

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- Provide coaching and mentoring for programs serving children three to five years of age who have an **Individualized Education Program (IEP) or an Individualized Family Service Program (IFSP)** under the **Extended Option** provisions of IDEA.

## Project 4 Promoting Use of Early Learning Standards

Revise the state's existing early learning standards to align with Common Core Standards. Develop a Guide to Early Childhood Pedagogy to support the use of early learning standards and assessment. Implement two field tests of the Preschool Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) program to 150 classrooms in Maryland EXCELS participating programs. Expand the language program, VIOLETS, to 150 classrooms in Maryland EXCELS participating programs.

## Project 5 Professional Development Maryland Model for School Readiness

Conduct professional development to promote the use of the early learning standards by all early learning and development programs.

## Project 6 Comprehensive Assessment System

Revise the existing formative assessments (36-72 months), develop new formative assessments (birth to 36 months), and revise the existing Kindergarten Entry Assessment (Maryland Model for School Readiness) to align with the State adopted Common Core Standards. Develop training modules and professional development for the administration of state-recommended developmental screening instruments. Develop a technology platform for assessment administration with linkage to a reporting data base and on-line resources for early learning. This project is conducted in collaboration with the State of Ohio.

## Project 7 Child Development Innovations

Address the health and behavioral needs of children through a coherent set of early intervention and prevention programs.

- Field test and report on **Best Beginnings Developmental Screen** instrument birth to three, developed by the University of Maryland.
- Introduce the use of four state-recommended, valid **Developmental Screening Instruments** for children birth to five years.

- Conduct **Training of Pediatricians** through a qualified vendor on state-recommended developmental screening instruments.
- Build mental health capacity in pediatrics and family practice through **Maryland Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation in Pediatric Care** to include detection and intervention.
- Develop and implement an online data collection and analysis system for training participation and outcomes in **The Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (SEFEL)** to interface with Maryland's Longitudinal Data System/Early Childhood Data Warehouse.

## Project 8 Family Engagement and Support

Create a **Coalition for Family Engagement** to develop a Maryland-specific Family, Parent, and Community Engagement Framework to implement strategies and training for all early learning and development programs and family engagement organizations.

- Create **Family Advisory Councils in Local Libraries** located in or near Title 1 attendance areas, including the establishment of Family Information Centers and resource kits for families of young children.

- Expand **Parent-Child Learning Parties** to 25 percent of all early learning and development programs in Title 1 attendance areas to promote the development of school readiness skills of young children.

- Expand the **Reach Out and Read Project of the American Academy of Pediatrics** to primary care physicians/pediatricians statewide. Distribute books and information to over 46,100 children and their families over the four years of the grant.

## Project 9 Workforce Competency and Leadership Development

- Align the **Child care Credentialing Program** with the **Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework** to identify specific coursework for each of the credentialing levels.

- Initiate a **Maryland Approved Alternative Preparation Program for Early Childhood Education (MAAPP-ECE)** for working early educators with four-year degrees to obtain state teaching certification in early childhood education.

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- Develop an **articulation agreement** for pre-service courses **between MSDE approved trainers and the state's community colleges** to establish new pathways of training and post-secondary education.

- Strengthen pathways for teacher education by improving the status of access to and transfer out of the **Associate of Arts Teaching (AAT) in Early Childhood**.

- Conduct **Early Learning Leadership Academies** for educators in public schools (Prek-2) and early childhood programs serving preschool-age children.

## Project 10 Early Learning Data System

Enhance the existing early childhood data system to link with the Maryland Longitudinal Data System.

- Expand the Child Care Automated Tracking System (CCATS) portal with **Professional Development** services for early care and education providers including applications for grants, incentives, training approval and professional development plans.

- Activate a CCATS module to include **Grant Funds Management and Provider Benefits** in one web-based location and make data available for analysis in the Maryland Longitudinal Data System.

- Develop, pilot and implement a statewide secure system for **Attendance Reporting** for child care programs. Through an interface, use data to prepare Child Care Subsidy invoices.

For additional information on the 2012 – 2015 Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant, visit the MSDE website at:
http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/challenge

ATTACHMENT B

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# Maryland's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant Update September 2012

The Maryland State Department of Education's Division of Early Childhood Development is taking the lead on the implementation of the Early Learning Challenge grant.

## Key Activities Underway or Completed

***Local Early Childhood Councils*** - Annie E. Casey Foundation has developed Results Based Accountability and Results Based Facilitation training materials for the local council leadership teams and has planned customized leadership training for regional training cohorts.

The orientation for Local Early Childhood Advisory Council teams will be held on October 1, 2012. This orientation will provide information on the five step process to forming local councils, including planning and implementation grant funding allocations.

***Maryland EXCELS Quality Rating and Improvement System*** - Recruitment is underway for Maryland EXCELS field test to begin in the fall. The pilot with 46 early childhood programs was completed in July 2012. The field test will include, at a minimum, 290 early childhood programs. More information is at www.marylandexcels.org.

***Quality Capacity Building*** - A program profile has been developed for each Early Childhood Breakthrough Title I school location in Baltimore City and Prince George's County. This profile contains a variety of information about each school, such as child capacity, accreditation status, and compliance with licensing regulations. A two day orientation and training program with all 12 regional child care resource and referral agencies was conducted.

Two new Judy Center satellite locations will be provided through ELCG funding. Satellites are overseen by an existing Judy Center and share the same leadership and partnership. The sites chosen are Carmody Hills Elementary School in Capitol Heights and The Historic Samuel Coleridge Taylor Elementary School in Baltimore City. Plans are underway to begin operations at the fall of School Year 2012-2013. In addition, three Preschool for All pilot sites have been added in Howard and Washington Counties as well as Baltimore City.

***Maryland Model for School Readiness/Professional Development*** – A vendor has been identified to disseminate the professional development program to 1,300 child care teachers. The vendor and MSDE have held several planning meetings to collaborate on the revisions of the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) modules for this project.

***Comprehensive Assessment Project (CAS)*** – The project team from Ohio and Maryland worked with its partners, Johns Hopkins University-Center for Technology in Education and WestEd on an alignment of each state's standards, developing the assessment framework and blueprint, and initiating the prototype development of specific indicators. In addition, learning progressions were developed for the formative assessment, 36 to 72 months, which define the learning trajectories of children before they start kindergarten. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) identified and recruited a national panel of experts to advise the project team as they design and develop the assessment system.

***Child Development Innovations*** - The Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (SEFEL) website is being built and will house the SEFEL online professional development modules, Maryland SEFEL resources and free downloads for early learning and development programs.

> The Developmental Screening Ad Hoc Committee is finalizing recommendations for decision making and statewide processes for early learning and development programs to follow to identify children with developmental delays earlier so they may receive needed services and supports.

> The Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation for Pediatricians is developing pilot projects and planning for pediatric practices to enroll. This project helps pediatricians with first line detection strategies and resources when families bring young children to the doctor with behavioral or emotional concerns.

> The Developmental Screening Training for Pediatricians is underway with a trainer and a group of pediatric practices that have requested this training.

***Family Engagement and Support*** - The planning team for the Family Engagement Coalition is meeting to determine the status of family engagement statewide in early childhood programs and is setting a full coalition meeting. Five public libraries in Title I areas are in the process of establishing Library Family Councils and Parent Information Centers. A MOA between the Maryland Academy of Pediatrics and MSDE define the plan are expand the Reach Out and Read statewide.

***Early Learning Data System*** - The design phase of a Web-based public portal for use by the Child Care Subsidy program has been initiated. This portal will allow families and child care providers who are participating in the Subsidy program to conduct a variety of program-related transactions online.

**Maryland's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant information:**
http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/challenge