Maryland Awarded $15 Million Grant to Expand Access to Pre-K Programs

Federal funds will build on State’s ongoing efforts to increase number of students in high-quality prekindergarten

Maryland has been awarded a $15 million federal grant to expand access to high-quality prekindergarten for four-year olds. As a result, MSDE will continue to increase access to prekindergarten for families who, until now, did not meet income eligibility requirements to enroll in the programs, building on the State’s initial expansion this year. (Continued on Page 2.)
Concern Regarding Length of Assessment to be Addressed

First Administration of KRA Completed

This fall, more than 3,500 public school kindergarten teachers across Maryland administered the newly developed Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) which is a part of the Ready for Kindergarten (R4K): Maryland’s Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System. Trained teachers completed observations and scored performance tasks for each of their students in six key areas: Language and Literacy, Social Foundations, Mathematics, Physical Development and Well-Being, Science, and Social Studies. The assessment items measure knowledge, skills, or behaviors that students should have developed prior to entering kindergarten.

Teachers worked hard to learn this new online process. Some school systems provided teachers with tablets or computers for students to use when answering questions or performing tasks. Besides learning to use new technology, teachers had to become comfortable with online professional development as well as face-to-face trainings. Data was entered online and teachers could view students’ scores as they went along.

While some technology glitches were experienced during this first year, teachers at a number of school systems were still able to administer items through a mobile app on an iPad device. However, many teachers felt overwhelmed with the length of the assessment. MSDE and its partners are already working on responding to these concerns. Next year, more items will be accessible through the mobile app which will reduce some of the administration time, since the students will be able to complete the items more efficiently. Along with the new app additions, teacher concerns, suggestions, and data analysis are being incorporated to make the assessment more efficient and shorter next year.

It also should be noted that a number of teachers offered praise about the assessment. Kendra Sarris, a Prince George's County kindergarten teacher said she “likes that the tests give teachers an opportunity to be with the child one-on-one. And the students, at that age, like the individual attention.” She also appreciated the fact that teachers had from the beginning of the school year in September until the beginning of November to assess their class of students.

Teachers are encouraged to embed as many items as possible into their normal instructional day. “You have to pick and be strategic, but you can accumulate a lot of tidbits day-to-day,” shared Amy Knight, a Carroll County kindergarten teacher. “I like the process. It does feel like a lot to do, but it’s very clear and it gives me a lot of valuable information.”

While teachers were encouraged to use the student data this fall to begin planning lessons to help support any achievement gaps some students might be demonstrating, the first readiness reports on subgroups of students will not be available until March 2015. School systems, early childhood educators, and policy makers will use this data as they plan to address school readiness gaps for groups of students.

Maryland’s Preschool Development Grant application spans four years and builds on the State’s Prekindergarten Expansion Act of 2014, which was spearheaded by Lt. Governor Anthony Brown, Senate President Mike Miller and House Speaker Michael E. Busch during the 2014 legislative session. Under the expansion, the State is partnering with local child care providers and schools systems across the state to expand high-quality full- and half-day pre-k during the 2014-15 school year. The announcement of this federal grant award will expand access to nearly 3,000 additional students during the 2015-16 school year.

“We are absolutely elated about receiving this award. Expanding access to high-quality preschool is the single most important step we can take to improve the future of our children,” said Dr. Lillian M. Lowery, Maryland State Superintendent of Schools. “The brain research is clear: When very young children are exposed to a variety of learning experiences, their foundations for learning are strengthened and accelerated. Investing in our children’s earliest years is critical to closing the opportunity gap for success among all students.”
With any new implementation, changes come with challenges until it becomes familiar and a part of the routine. For the teachers who became more comfortable with the new items, they created ways to make the assessment go more smoothly, like one Anne Arundel County teacher who found that the “most important thing was to pull students and do several items together, not one at a time.” For example, she assessed verbs, nouns, and prepositions together, and according to her, “It flowed beautifully.”

Introducing the Social Foundations Framework

Last spring, the Maryland State Board of Education approved the new Social Foundations Framework for prekindergarten and kindergarten. These standards are now part of Maryland’s College and Career-Ready Standards. Social Foundations includes the Social-Emotional skills and behaviors that were part of the previous Maryland Model for School Readiness Personal and Social domain indicators, and the new Approaches to Learning and Executive Function skills and behaviors. Examples of Social Foundations include:

**Social-Emotional**

- **End of Prekindergarten** - Shares materials and equipment with other children with adult modeling and support.
- **End of Kindergarten** - Asks permission to use others’ materials and accepts peer’s response.

**Approaches to Learning and Executive Function**

- **End of Prekindergarten** - Takes and gives cue to other children during transition and models their appropriate behavior with adult support.
- **End of Kindergarten** - Consistently demonstrates the ability to independently stop an engaging activity to transition to another less desirable activity.

A selection of important Social Foundations standards are evaluated in the new R4K: Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System both in the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) and in the upcoming Early Learning Assessment (ELA). The entire Social Foundations Framework can be viewed online at http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/early_learning/index.html.

You also can learn more about the framework in the Maryland Early Learning Standards Birth to 8 Years Appendix included in MSDE’s new publication - Supporting Every Young Learner: Maryland’s Guide to Early Childhood Pedagogy, Birth to Age 8 (see page 12 for announcement). For more information and resources, including on-line training for Social Emotional Development, please visit the Social Emotional Foundations of Early Learning MD website at https://theinstitute.umd.edu/sefel/index.cfm.

On Track: All Aboard for Developmental Progress

Maryland’s Early Care & Education Developmental Screening Program

Beginning July 2016, a new regulation will take effect requiring all licensed early care and education programs (child care centers and family child care home providers) to conduct developmental screening on children ages birth through five-years-old.
MSDE has identified the following developmental screening tools that would meet the regulation requirements:

- Ages & Stages Questionnaires Third Edition (ASQ-3),
- Best Beginnings Developmental Screen
- Brigance Early Childhood Screen III,
- Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning Fourth Edition (DIAL-4), and

The initial cost for the developmental screening tool chosen by the child care provider will be covered by MSDE. As early as February 2015, providers will be able to access free online training on developmental screening and apply for the tool they choose to use in their program through an online application.

As part of Project 7 in Maryland’s Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Grant, this initiative aims to address the health and behavioral needs of children through a system of early detection, prevention, and intervention programs. Part of this system is early detection through developmental screening. Each day child care professionals observe the children in their care for developmental milestones which help them plan activities and create learning opportunities. Using a recognized, validated developmental screening tool helps parents and providers in identifying strengths and potential areas where additional resources and a referral may be needed. Samples of the five tools identified by MSDE will be available for review at each of the Child Care Resource and Referral offices.

New CCCPDF Regulations Effective March 2

Beginning on March 2, 2015, a new regulation will change the Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund (CCCPF) application process. Applications received prior to March 2, 2015 will not be affected.

New Application Requirements

- Applicant must be credentialed at a level 2 or higher to apply for the CCCPDF.
- Applicant is required to work at least ten hours a week in a licensed child care program (home or center) in Maryland to continue participation in the program.
- Applicant is required to work at least ten hours a week in a licensed child care program (home or center) during the service commitment period.

The CCCPDF, which is regulated under COMAR 13A.14.09.08, is a tuition assistance program for child care professionals to obtain or continue their pursuit of a college education at participating colleges/universities in Maryland. The fund pays the cost of tuition, fees, and books. Funds are awarded for one school year at a time, with a review of academic performance and continuation of requirements to participate at the end of each approval year. To learn more about CCCPDF visit the MSDE website online at http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/msde/divisions/child_care/credentials/CCCPF.html.

MARYLAND EXCELS

The deadline for providers accepting Child Care Subsidy vouchers to submit an application to participate in Maryland EXCELS is now June 29, 2015. The original January 2015 deadline was extended to allow time for the new regulations to take effect.

According to the most recent data available, sixty-six percent of all providers that received Child Care Subsidy reimbursement this past August were already participating in the Maryland EXCELS program.

Beginning in early 2015, notifications will go out to families, presently using a Child Care Subsidy voucher to assist with their child care costs, encouraging them to visit www.marylandexcells.org to see if their current provider has published a Maryland EXCELS rating. Thirty-seven percent of all licensed child care centers and registered family child care providers are participating in Maryland EXCELS. If a family does not see their provider published, they should ask their provider if they have registered to participate. The letter notification also will explain that informal child care providers are not eligible to participate in Maryland EXCELS and that if the family’s voucher is used for informal care, this new regulation will not affect them.

As of January 2015:

- 3,737 – Participating programs/providers
- 1,230 – Programs/providers with published ratings

Summer Deadline Set for Child Care Subsidy Participation in Maryland EXCELS
In the fall 2014 issue of PARTNERS, it was reported how rapidly Judy Centers were expanding across the state. The following reports on the continued Judy Center expansion statewide.

New Judy Center Opens at Magnolia Elementary in Harford County

This past October, the Judy Center at Magnolia Elementary School in Harford County held its grand opening, extending an invitation to all families living within the school district to come out and join in the festivities. Families enjoyed dinner and participated in fun learning games and activities. They also met and engaged with agencies and organizations in the county that they can access for resources and services. Superintendent of Harford County Public Schools Barbara Canavan, Sheriff Jessie Bane and Councilman Dion Guthrie were among the distinguished guests that were in attendance and addressed the audience. The event was also supported by Magnolia Elementary School PTA, Mountain Christian Church, Wegman’s Food Store and Pat’s Pizzaria.

Since its opening, the Judy Center at Magnolia Elementary has been busy building formal partnerships with local agencies, organizations and businesses in the community. To date, the center has established relationships with a host of partners including Harford County Public Schools, the Health Department, Department of Social Services, Catholic Charities/Villa Maria, Child Care Links, Harford County Public Libraries, Harford Community College, Abilities Network, MRDC Head Start, Early Head Start, the Infants and Toddlers Program, MSDE Office of Child Care, KinderCare Learning Center, and Open Arms Family Learning Center.

The Coordinator of the Judy Center is Bonnie Mitrega and the Family Service Coordinator is Niesha Franklin. For more information, please contact Bonnie Mitrega at 410-612-1553 or email her at bonnie.mitrega@hcps.org.

Mr. Casey Weininger from the Biochemical Department at the Aberdeen Proving Ground provides STEM activities to a captive audience at the grand opening of the Harford County Judy Center.
New Greensboro Judy Center in Caroline County Kicks Off Parent and Child Activities with Learning Parties

With funding support from the Maryland Prekindergarten Expansion Act of 2014, Caroline County added a new Judy Center to the northern end of the county for children who live in the Greensboro Elementary School zone. The Greensboro Elementary School serves more than 760 children including the largest number of children of Hispanic origin in the prekindergarten and kindergarten grades. The Hispanic population represents thirty-two percent of residents living in the area.

The Greensboro Judy Center and Greensboro Elementary School held a four night VIOLETS Learning Party in October and November. The Learning Parties targeted children age three to five and their parents. The events began with a light meal each night for families. Child care was provided for younger siblings, as well as planned activities for older children. An average of seventeen parents and nineteen children attended the events each night.

Parents were provided with opportunities to learn how to increase their child’s pre-literacy skills and increase their vocabulary and oral language skills. Parents also had opportunities to share and ask questions about the skills presented each night, as well as how they presented the skills and homework to the children at home. The children enjoyed the literacy activities with the teachers and then sharing their activity with their parents. The parent and child activities were well-received by all and provided additional sharing times for parents and children. The parents and staff are looking forward to the next Learning Party to be held in the spring.

Meanwhile at the Federalsburg Judy Center, three series of Learning Parties have been conducted since late spring. The Learning Parties covered VIOLETS as well as the Social and Emotional and Science domains.

New Early Childhood Center at Commodore John Rodgers includes a Judy Center

This past December, an early childhood center for children ages birth through five-years-old opened in East Baltimore City. It is part of an initiative to better prepare that area’s children from low-income families for school. Located in the 100 block of North Chester Street, the new Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Early Childhood Center will serve more than 100 children. The center includes an Early Head Start, Head Start, and a Judy Center. The Judy Center also will serve children living in the community ages birth through kindergarten, who are not enrolled in the early childhood center, to ensure they are ready for school. The coordinator of the Judy Center is Niki Venuti and the family service coordinator is Veronica Jackson.

The new facility is housed in a former recreation center attached to the Commodore John Rodgers School. A fund drive spearheaded by Living Classrooms, a local non-profit educational and workforce development organization, raised $1.6 million in public and private money to transform the unused space into an 11,000 square foot modern early childhood center.

The early childhood center is a result of a collaboration of several entities including the Living Classrooms Foundation, the Y of Central Maryland, Kennedy Krieger, Maryland State Department of Education, Baltimore City Public Schools, Baltimore Community Foundation, and the Maryland Family Network.

The December 3rd grand opening ceremony featured several distinguished speakers, including MSDE Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Lillian Lowery; City Council President Jack Young; Senator Bill Ferguson; Baltimore City Councilman Warren Branch; and The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation; and Living Classrooms President and CEO, James Piper Bond. The speakers were introduced by several very confident four-year-old children, who reached the microphone by standing on a step stool. Guests were entertained by kindergarten students who sang pop singer Katy Perry’s song Roar. The ceremony was followed by a tour of the new facility.
New Judy Center in Somerset County Holds Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

Somerset County Public Schools celebrated the official ribbon cutting of the county’s first Judy Center Partnership on December 3rd. The Judy Center serves children and families in the Greenwood and Princess Anne Elementary School catchment area. Community members came together to celebrate the start of this exciting new early learning community partnership endeavor. The group was addressed by school, county and board of education officials. Attendees were entertained by songs sung by prekindergarten students.

Cutting the ribbon to officially open the new Judy Center in Somerset County

[featured L to R] are: Penny Nicholson, BOE Member; Garland Hayward, Princess Anne Town Commissioner; Dan Kuebler BOE Member/ SELAC co-chair; Charles Fisher, County Commissioner; Tracie Bartery, Elementary/Reading/Title I Supervisor; Karen Karten, Judy Center Coordinator; Dr. John Gaddis, Somerset County Superintendent of Schools; William Miles, BOE Member; Randy Laird, County Commissioner; Jerry Boston, County Commissioner

State Senator James Mathias recently visited the new Somerset County Judy Center. Giving him a tour are Jamie Jenkins, Family Service Coordinator on the left and Karen Karten, Judy Center Coordinator.

Anne Arundel County Judy Center Sponsors Gingerbread House Night

The Anne Arundel County Judy Center located at Glen Burnie’s Hilltop Elementary School had an impressive turn out for its recent Gingerbread House Night. The event, hosted in partnership with the Anne Arundel County Public Library, was a perfect tie-in to the holidays. With the aid of marketing materials distributed to all partners and child care providers in the Hilltop Elementary School area, word got out to a large number of people. Children ages birth through five, including prekindergarten and kindergarten students living in the Hilltop Elementary School zone were invited to the event.

The evening began with the bilingual library staff read a book, sang, and engaged the children in a fun activity in English and Spanish. Families in attendance were provided with a variety of materials and challenged to construct the most creative gingerbread house. The completed houses showcased some of the builders’ great imaginations. The Judy Center staff provided cookies, juice, hot chocolate, fruit, and tea throughout the evening as a snack. It was a very successful evening!
Invites Go Out For Social Studies Learning Party

Ready At Five, an organization dedicated to elevating school readiness for all Maryland children, announces the availability of its seventh and final learning party series - Social Studies Learning Parties and ParentTips. The concept of social studies is introduced to children, from birth, as they explore the world around them. Social Studies involves learning about people, places, government and good citizenship, and history.

The Ready At Five Learning Party curricula is being revised to align with the new Ready for Kindergarten (R4K) – Maryland’s Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System. Previously the Learning Parties were aligned with the Maryland Model for School Readiness Assessment (MMSR). Learning Parties are interactive, hands-on, parent/child “parties” that promote young children’s development of school readiness skills.

Based on the belief that parents are their child’s first teacher, Learning Parties teach parents how to make everyday moments learning moments through playing, singing, talking, reading, and engaging in fun activities. The Learning Party curriculum is available in the six key Domains of Learning. If you are interested in attending a Learning Party Training, please email Ready At Five at info@readyatfive.org.

Local ECACs Engage at the Local Level, Statewide

As a result of the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTTT-ELC) grant, Maryland was able to create twenty-four Local Early Childhood Advisory Councils (LECACs) throughout the state. These local councils, which replicate the responsibilities of the State Early Childhood Advisory Council, assist in implementing the RTTT-ELC State plan by developing local action agendas. The LECACs are committed to ensuring that all young children and their families are supported in the State’s efforts to overcome school readiness gaps, and that all children, particularly those from low-income families, with disabilities, and Dual Language Learners, are entering school ready to learn.

The efforts of the LECACs have resulted in some success in achieving their goals of closing the achievement gap within their jurisdictions. New public/private partnerships have been established, technology has been reformed to better reach families, and connections have been made to other RTTT-ELC grant projects. Some of the exciting initiatives the local councils have implemented in the effort to bring children, parents and families together include:

- Anne Arundel County (Every Child Ready to Read @ Your Library)
- Calvert, Charles and St. Mary’s County (New Webpage-Southern MD Parents)
- Howard County (Road to Kindergarten Sessions)
- Somerset County (Partnership w/McDonalds…The Healthy/Educational Way)
- Washington County (Learning Parties)
- Wicomico County (Family Resource Fair)

To learn more about Maryland’s Local Early Childhood Advisory Councils, please email Grant Specialist, Wendy Baysmore at Wendy.Baysmore@maryland.gov or visit online at http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/planning.html.
What’s New in Credentialing?
Successful Reduction of Credentialing Applications Backlog

Thanks to the effort of MSDE’s Credentialing Branch, the backlog of credentialing applications has been successfully reduced and a more timely processing method has been put in place. Applications are now being processed within thirty days of receipt, with only a few exceptions. Applications not processed within the thirty day window may be due to any of the following reasons:

- Verification of employment through the Child Care Automated Tracking System (CCATS).
- Multiple party IDs in the CCATS.
- Training submitted may not have been previously approved by MSDE and need to be researched and added.

Credentialing Program Updates

Professional Activities

The Maryland Child Care Credential Program includes requirements for participation in professional activities that contribute to the growth and career development of those working in the field of child care. By actively engaging in an activity that contributes to providing quality child care and the advancement of the profession, providers can earn “activity units.”

Professional activities are those that:

- Engage the participant in the broader aspect of the field of early childhood education and school-age care, or
- Increase the knowledge of others in and outside of the profession

The Credentialing program requires training in the Core of Knowledge area of Professionalism and the completion of professional activities. Completing approved training does not qualify as a professional activity.

Enhanced PAU Materials Available

A Professional Activity Unit (PAU) refers to the number assigned to a professional activity. The number of units assigned to an activity is determined through a review of documentation including the total number of hours spent engaging in the activity, level of effort put forth, or level of commitment to an activity by the participant.

Three charts have been developed that list the number assigned for each PAU with the description and the documentation required. Please note that “care child center event” is a new activity listed and will count only one time during an application cycle.

Continued on Pg. 10
Also available is a PAU Matrix that provides Credentialing Program applicants with examples of PAUs along with a worksheet for tracking and reporting. While the Matrix does not offer a complete listing of all possible activities, the accompanying form does provide users with the ability to check off completed activities and calculate total units.

For any professional activities completed that are not listed on the PAU Matrix, applicants must submit a Maryland Child Care Credential Program - Professional Activities Approval Form. The Office of Child Care – Credentialing Branch will make determinations regarding the recognition of professional activity units. To review and/or download the new Professional Activity Charts, Criteria for PAU, Professional Activities Matrixes, or Professional Activities Approval Form, visit us online at http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/credentials/mdcred.htm.

**Training Vouchers/Reimbursement**

**Training Vouchers**

Currently, training vouchers are issued for all workshops, conferences, and pre-service training. However, effective March 2, 2015, vouchers will only be issued for the following:

- Statewide Conferences,
- National Conferences, or
- Pre-service Training.

**Training Reimbursement**

Currently, applications for reimbursement must be submitted by no later than 120 days (four months) from the date of completion. Beginning March 2, 2015, the following change takes effect:

- Applications for reimbursement must be submitted no later than 180 days (six months) from the date of completion.

**Training Corner**

**Criteria for Early Childhood Conference/Symposium Approval**

The purpose of an early Childhood Training Conference is to bring together and provide opportunities for early childhood professionals to learn and connect through exploration of the latest research in the field and enhancement of professional development through workshops, networking, and resources.

**A conference must:**

- Include at least six hours of early childhood related training conducted by experts in the field, include a keynote speaker, provide resources for professionals attending, and allow time for networking opportunities.

Individual workshop sessions must be at least two hours in length to be considered “Core of Knowledge” training. The keynote address will count only as “Continued Training.”
Approved Training

MSDE’s Credentialing Branch is responsible for ensuring that trainers and training content adhere to regulations and meet all requirements. It is your responsibility to ensure you are registering for approved training from an approved training organization/individual. When registering for a training being advertised as “MSDE approved training” you should verify that the training title has gone through the MSDE approval process. Although an organization or individual trainer may be approved to offer training, each training/workshop presented also has to be submitted to MSDE and go through a review process before the training can be advertised and conducted.

To check a particular training status, you can request to view the approval letter from the individual or organization conducting the training. You may also contact the MSDE Credentialing Branch office to request verification of a training being advertised by e-mailing your request to OCCCredential@maryland.gov.

Cash for Food! Thousands Available Through CACFP

Ensuring children receive adequate nutrition for proper growth and development is a priority of parents and child care providers alike. Through federal reimbursements, child care centers are able to improve the nutritional quality of snacks and meals offered, provide nutrition education, participate in grant opportunities, and strengthen existing programs. The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides cash reimbursements to child care providers for healthy meals and snacks served at eligible, licensed child care centers, family child care homes, and after-school programs. The program is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and is administered by the MSDE Office of School and Community Nutrition Programs.

Child Care Centers and Family Child Care Homes may receive reimbursement for up to two meals and one snack per child, per day. A Family Child Care Provider caring for six children could receive up to $6,800 per year. Child Care Centers receive an average of $22,725 per year in cash reimbursements! In addition, the CACFP assists centers with menu planning, nutrition education, and training opportunities.

Child Care Centers interested in learning more about the CACFP can contact the MSDE Office of School and Community Nutrition Programs at 410-767-0214 or visit the website at www.eatsmartmaryland.org.

Family Child Care Homes may contact a Maryland Sponsoring Organization listed below:

**Baltimore City:**
The Family League of Baltimore @ 410-662-5500
The Planning Council @ 410-296-2512 or 800-410-9774

**Carroll County:**
Human Services Programs of Carroll County, Inc. @ 410-857-2999

**Cecil County:**
Cecil County Board of Commissioners @ 410-669-0173

**Frederick County:**
Frederick County Department of Social Services @ 301-600-2416

**Montgomery County:**
Montgomery County Public Schools @ 301-548-7505

**Prince George’s County:**
Prince George’s County Public Schools @ 301-780-5810

**For all other counties:**
The Planning Council @ 410-296-2512 or 800-410-9774
New Resource Guide for Early Childhood Education Professionals

MSDE’s Division of Early Childhood Development is proud to announce the availability of a new resource for teachers, principals, and community-based early childhood education programs. The publication – Supporting Every Young Learner: Maryland’s Guide to Early Childhood Pedagogy, Birth to Age 8 is the latest tool produced to inform and engage early educators on evidence-based practices of teaching and learning. Also as an expansion of the knowledge available in this comprehensive resource you will find the appendix – Maryland Early Learning Standards Birth to 8 Years, which serves as a companion guide for the pedagogical and programmatic decisions of early childhood programs and providers. Aligned with the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards, this new guide provides chapters of critical analysis, examples from the field, practical teaching tips, outlines of the continuity of learning, and a host of resources and websites for further study. To learn more about this new publication, or to view it electronically visit MSDE online at http://bit.ly/Guide2EarlyPedagogy.

Ready at Five Unveils New Look Website

If you are looking for a wealth of well-organized information related to Maryland school readiness check out Ready at Five’s new look website – www.readyatfive.org. In addition to a sleek appearance and a mobile friendly interface, the enhanced website features a new blog and a “PEEP Portal.” Check out their updated site today!

Looking for Quality Child Care? There’s An App For That!

Finding quality child care in Maryland has never been easier, thanks in part to the new Maryland EXCELS Quality Finder mobile app. The free app, which is currently available for download via the iTunes Store and Google Play, allows families to locate Maryland EXCELS rated programs within a given radius of their current location (using their mobile device’s GPS system), by zip code, or by check level.

When a child care program meets all requirements for one of the five Maryland EXCELS quality levels, their rating is published and made available online via the “Find a Program” portal, and now via mobile app. The Quality Finder mobile app is made available through a partnership between MSDE and Johns Hopkins University Center for Technology in Education as part of a campaign to raise awareness about quality child care in Maryland. For more information about the new mobile app or Maryland EXCELS, visit online at www.marylandexcels.org.

Subscribe to the Maryland EXCELS eNews

Did you know that you could get monthly email updates about Maryland EXCELS, including up-to-date participation data, spotlight profiles of standout programs, community calendar features, training opportunities, professional tips, and more? Check out the latest issue, online at http://tinyurl.com/eNewsNov14 and then subscribe today at http://tinyurl.com/MarylndEXCELSeNews
Wanted: New MSCAA Members!

The Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA), a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of professional licensed child care and learning centers in Maryland, is looking for new members. If you support the growth and development of Maryland’s professional licensed child care and learning centers, this may be the organization for you.

For more information about joining MSCCA, visit www.mscca.org online, email mscca1@comcast.net or call 410-820-9196.

Working with Children with Developmental Disabilities, an eLearning Opportunity

Maryland Family Network announces the availability of Working with Children with Developmental Disabilities, a new eLearning opportunity funded by the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council. This is the latest in Maryland Family Network’s expanding catalogue of online learning offerings that give child care providers the know-how to offer high-quality service to children of all abilities. It also is an opportunity to receive three Core of Knowledge clock hours upon completion.

During the three hour workshop, participants are provided an overview of working with children with developmental disabilities. Users will gain a greater appreciation for the many approaches to learning and living that are available to individualize instruction. Participants also learn best practices for working and communicating with parents who have children with developmental disabilities.

This workshop is designed with busy professionals in mind. For convenience, there are no set time constraints for participants to start or end a session. Working with Children with Developmental Disabilities is available in both English and Spanish language. The cost for registration is $29.99 and is available at www.marylandfamilynetwork.org.

Opportunities for School-Age Child Care Providers

The Maryland School Age Child Care Alliance (MSACCA), the state affiliate of the National AfterSchool Association (NAA), is a professional organization comprised of child care professionals dedicated to promoting high-quality programs for school-age children and youth. MSACCA meets regularly, across the state, to promote the discussion of critical information regarding child care in the state of Maryland, to network, plan strategies for supporting statewide school-age program quality, and for free or low-cost core of knowledge training opportunities.

MSACCA has the following opportunities available:

- **FREE Core of Knowledge training throughout 2015 for members** (training is offered at nominal fee for non-members).

- **For qualified applicants, there are available scholarships and grants of up $300 per provider.** A new round of scholarships and grants is currently underway.

- **MSACCA’s Fundraising Committee is offering a number of practical resource guides (e.g. Transition Tricks and Rainy Day Games) at a nominal fee.**

To learn more information about MSACCA’s opportunities or becoming a member, visit online at www.msacca.org or email the alliance at msacca@gmail.com.
This past October, more than ninety early childhood educators from Frederick, Washington, Allegany and Garrett counties and Waynesboro, PA gathered at Hagerstown Community College for the 2nd annual Western Maryland Early Childhood Conference. The conference was co-sponsored by the Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children – Western Maryland Chapter, APPLES for Children, Inc., The Judy Center of Washington County, and Hagerstown Community College.

The theme for this year was “Building a Community of Learners” and participants were able to choose from nine breakout sessions addressing topics such as sensory integration, classroom environments, Maryland EXCELS, Kindergarten Readiness Assessments, and STEM topics including light and shadows, buildings and gravity, and finding math concepts in popular children’s books. Family child care provider Stephanie Budnicki gave this overall review of the conference, “I had a great time at the conference. It was an awesome opportunity to network with other providers and professionals while continuing my child care training. I had a blast!”
Maryland EXCELS sign-up and support sessions are offered to help individuals get registered in the EXCELS program. Additionally, some sessions offer support for centers and providers that have already registered but need assistance submitting documentation indicating how the standards are being met. Registration is recommended for most sessions and required for select locations.

### Region 1: Anne Arundel County
Contact: Randi Moody, 410-514-7846

- **Jan:** 28th @ Odenton Library, 11am-1pm
- **Feb:** 12th @ Annapolis Library, 12:30-2pm
- **Feb:** 12th @ Arundel Child Care Connections, Annapolis, 6:30-8:30pm
- **Mar:** 19th @ Annapolis Library, 12:30-2pm

### Region 2: Baltimore City (Sign-up Sessions Only)
Contact: Audrey Cope Green, 410-554-8304 or Patty Aurburn, 410-583-6224

- **Jan:** 22nd @ Baltimore City Ofc of Child Care, 1-3pm, lunch provided
- **Feb:** 11th @ Roland Park Library, Baltimore, 6-8pm
- **Mar:** 7th @ Herring Run Library, Baltimore, 10am-12pm

### Region 3: Baltimore County
Contact: Lisa Smith, 410-583-6213

- **Feb:** 5th @ Owings Mills Library, 2-4pm
- **Feb:** 17th @ Cockeysville Library, 6-8pm
- **Mar:** 26th @ Pikesville Library, 6-8pm

### Region 4: Prince George’s County
Contact: Sheila Maness, 301-333-9553 or Vickie DiSanto, 240-314-1424

- **Jan:** 20th @ Ofc of Child Care, Landover, 1-30-3:30pm
- **Feb:** 11th @ PG County Resource Center, Largo, 6:30-8:30pm
- **Feb:** 17th @ Ofc of Child Care, Landover, 1:30-3:30pm
- **Mar:** 17th @ Ofc of Child Care, Landover, 1:30-3:30pm

### Region 5: Montgomery County
Contact: Vickie DiSanto, 240-314-1424 or Yvonne Bell, 240-314-1424

- **Jan:** 24th @ Wheaton Library, Rm 6, Silver Spring, 10am-12pm
- **Feb:** 7th @ Germantown Library, Rm 4, 10am-12pm
- **Mar:** 10th @ Germantown Library, Rm 4, 6:30-8:30pm
- **Mar:** 17th @ Wheaton Library, Rm 6, Silver Spring, 6:30-8:30pm

### Region 6: Howard / Carroll Counties
Contact: Rena Dubensky (Howard), 410-750-8773 or Sharon Vance (Carroll), 410-549-6494 x305

- **Jan:** 28th @ Carroll County Ofc of Child Care, Eldersburg, 1-3pm
- **Feb:** 11th @ Ofc of Children’s Svs, Elicott City, 6:30-9:30pm
- **Feb:** 21st @ Ofc of Children’s Svs, Elicott City, 8:30-10:30am
- **Mar:** 16th @ Child Care Choices, Westminster, 6-8pm
- **Mar:** 21st @ Ofc of Children’s Svs, Elicott City, 8:30-10:30am
- **Mar:** 25th @ Carroll County Ofc of Child Care, Eldersburg, 1-3pm

### Region 7: Western MD
Contact: Darlene Schmidt, 301-777-2091

- **Jan:** 27th @ Mt. Ridge High School, Frostburg, 6:30-8:30pm
- **Feb:** 5th @ APPLES for Children, Hagerstown, 6:30-8:30pm
- **Feb:** 14th @ Garrett College, McHenry, 9-11am
- **Feb:** 24th @ Mt. Ridge High School, Frostburg, 6:30-8:30pm
- **Mar:** 5th @ APPLES for Children, Hagerstown, 9-11am
- **Mar:** 14th @ Garrett College, McHenry, 9-11am
- **Mar:** 28th @ APPLES for Children, Hagerstown, 9-11am
- **Mar:** 31st @ Mt. Ridge High School, Frostburg, 6:30-8:30pm

### Region 8: Upper Shore
Contact: Mary Beth Johnson, 410-819-5801 x108

- **Jan:** 22nd @ Caroline County Library, Denton, 5:30-7:30pm
- **Feb:** 18th @ Caroline County Library, Greensboro, 5:30-7:30pm
- **Mar:** 3rd @ Caroline County Library, Federalsburg, 5:30-7:30pm

### Region 9: Lower Shore
Contact: Dianna Aguierre, 410-713-3430

- **Feb:** 2nd @ Cooperative Extension Building, Salisbury, 6-9pm
- **Feb:** 21st @ Ocean Pines Library, Berlin, 9:30am-12:30pm
- **Mar:** 16th @ Cooperative Extension Building, Salisbury, 6-9pm

### Region 10: Southern MD
Contact: Sara Martin, 301-475-3770 x119

- **Jan:** 22nd @ The Promise Center, Charlotte Hall, 6:30-9:30pm
- **Feb:** 19th @ Waldorf West Library, 5:30-7:30pm
- **Feb:** 24th @ Lexington Park Library, 6:30-8pm
- **Mar:** 26th @ The Promise Center, Charlotte Hall, 6:30-8:30pm
  Must Register for Promise Center sessions, call 301-290.0040

### Region 11: Harford / Cecil Counties
Contact: Rosé Ihedigbo-Franklin, 410-569-2653 X302

- **Jan:** 20th @ Child Care Links, Bel Air, 6-8pm (Support)
- **Feb:** 26th @ Holly Hall Elementary School, Elkton, 6-8pm (Support)
- **Feb:** 29th @ Edgewood Public Library, 6-8pm (Sign-up)
- **Feb:** 2nd @ Child Care Links, Bel Air, 6:30-8:30pm (Sign-up)
- **Feb:** 7th @ Cecil County Public Library, Elkton, 10am-12pm (Sign-up)
- **Mar:** 19th @ Child Care Links, Bel Air, 6:30-8pm (Sign-up)
- **Mar:** 23rd @ Holly Hall Elementary School, Elkton, 6-8pm (Support)
- **Mar:** 2nd @ Child Care Links, Bel Air, 6:30-8:30pm (Sign-up)
- **Mar:** 18th @ Child Care Links, Bel Air, 6-8pm (Support)
- **Mar:** 21st @ Aberdeen Public Library, 10am-12pm (Sign-up)
- **Mar:** 23rd @ Holly Hall Elementary School, Elkton, 6-8pm (Support)

### Region 12: Frederick County
Contact: Petrea Fletcher, 301-696-9766

- **Jan:** 26th @ Frederick Ofc of Child Care, 6:30-8:30pm
- **Feb:** 2nd @ Frederick Ofc of Child Care, 6:30-8:30pm
- **Feb:** 23rd @ Frederick Ofc of Child Care, 6:30-8:30pm
- **Mar:** 2nd @ Frederick Ofc of Child Care, 6:30-8:30pm
- **Mar:** 16th @ Frederick Ofc of Child Care, 6:30-8:30pm

Contact your local quality assurance specialist about these and other upcoming sessions.
BCCC Offers Online Child Care Courses

Interested in becoming a preschool teacher, infant/toddler teacher, school age teacher, child care director, or a family provider? Baltimore City Community College Business and Continuing Education offers classes designed to meet MSDE’s licensing requirements. Once you have completed forty-five hours in Child Growth and Development and a forty-five hour course in age-appropriate curriculum (preschool infant-toddler, or school-age) you qualify to receive a 90-hour certificate. To receive the 99-hour Child Care Certificate, an additional nine-hour Communication Skills course must be completed. As all courses take place online, you will need access to a computer, the internet, and email.

Available Online Course Included:

- Child Growth and Development
- Preschool Curriculum & Activities
- School Age Child Care Curriculum
- Infant and Toddler Care
- Child Care Administration
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Communication Skills for Child Care Professionals
- Family Child Care Pre-Service

For additional information email Karen Mobley at kmobley@bccc.edu or call 410-580-2757.

Howard Community College - Learning That Works!

With Howard Community College’s (HCC) help, Courtney earned her 90-hour child care teacher certification and is now working as a lead teacher with full benefits. HCC’s Division of Continuing Education Child Care Programs offers certification preparation courses to help students prepare for successful careers in child care. With HCC, you will receive…

- Career skills and credentials
- Online, classroom, or hybrid formats
- Customized training for employer groups and organizations

For more information, visit HCC online at coned.howardcc.edu/childcare or call 443-518-4049.
Clock In With MPT Online Courses

Struggling to find time to meet your continuing education requirements? Maryland Public Television (MPT) has a convenient and affordable online solution to fit your busy schedule. MPT offers MSDE-approved facilitated and self-paced courses to fulfill the specific needs of new and experienced family child care providers, and center-based staff.

Learners who complete these in-demand courses can celebrate their achievements quickly by downloading and printing their certificate from any computer. So, get started today! Now is the right time to elevate your career to the next level!

Thinking about a career as a Family Child Care Provider?

Start with a strong foundation! MPT offers a series of six online courses designed to meet the 24-hour pre-serving training requirements to become a family care provider.

- Courses can be taken in any order and are offered every month
- Gain core skills and program knowledge from dedicated and responsive facilitators
- Connect with other providers online in a friendly, collaborative learning environment

To access these courses, please visit MPT’s education website at eecourses.thinkport.org

National Administrator Credential

The National Administrator Credential (NAC) is a professional recognition awarded by the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA) Commission, Inc. The NAC is a comprehensive, 40-hour course for directors and administrators of child care programs and awarded for demonstrated mastery of administration skills. For more information about the NAC, visit http://www.necpa.net/NACCourseOverview.php.
**LEGO® Castle Adventure, New Traveling Exhibit**

Port Discovery Children’s Museum invites builders of all ages to explore, build and play in its newest traveling exhibition – LEGO® Castle Adventure! In this exhibit kids and their families are transported to a LEGO® kingdom where they too can become master castle builders, using one of the greatest building materials of all time – LEGO® bricks. Guests also will be able to sit in the king and queen’s thrones, explore secret passageways, launch a catapult, design a courtyard landscape and more!

Access to the exhibit is free with a museum admission. Port Discovery will be hosting LEGO® themed birthday parties, overnight adventures, and other activities during the exhibit run from February 14 – September 20, 2015. For more information about Port Discovery’s LEGO® Castle Adventure call (410) 864-2681, or visit online at www.portdiscovery.org.

**Port Discovery Takes Museum Experience On The Road**

In an effort to share its unique, interactive museum experience with even more people, the Port Discovery Children’s Museum is packing up and hitting the road. With its new program – Museum on the Road™ – Port Discovery brings the experience right to your classroom!

Museum on the Road, which is available for assembly or classroom settings, offers one-hour workshops as well as a five session series all filled with hands-on activities to engage children in active learning. From colorful art and music programs, to innovative STEM programs, you are sure to find something to meet your curriculum needs. Museum on the Road’s programs cater to a range of grades from pre-k through 5th grade. Programs can be booked Monday through Friday from 10am to 3pm.

There are fees associated with Museum on the Road depending upon program selected or travel distance from the museum’s Baltimore location. For more information about Port Discovery’s Museum on the Road™ call (410) 864-2690, or visit online at www.portdiscovery.org.
For MSFCCA “Every Day Is An Adventure!”

The Maryland State Family Child Care Association (MSFCCA) will hold its 2015 Conference from October 16-17, at the Carousel Oceanfront Hotel in Ocean City, MD. The annual conference brings together child care professionals from across the state to network and discover new tools, strategies, and resources to assist in their work with children.

This year’s conference, which has the theme “Every Day Is An Adventure,” will feature keynote speaker Lisa Murphy, the Ooey Gooey Lady! Murphy, an early childhood specialist as well as Founder and ECO of Ooey Gooey, Inc., is an outspoken advocate for child-centered, play-based early childhood environments, and is known nationwide for linking fun hands on activities to educational standards. Those seeing her for the first time will be in for a treat.

For more information about the 2015 Conference visit online at www.msfcca.org.

OMEP to Host World Conference in DC This Summer

From July 27 through August 1, 2015, the USA national chapter for the World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEP) will host the organization’s 67th World Assembly and International Conference in Washington, DC at the Omni Shoreham Hotel. Themed “Early Childhood Pathways to Sustainability” the conference will provide a forum to address a number of issues affecting children worldwide including: children’s rights, living conditions, improving early childhood education, and creating peaceful environments.

OMEP is an international, non-governmental organization that advocates for the education and well-being of children under the age of eight years-old throughout the world. For more information visit online at http://www.omep-usa.org/OMEPWorldConference2015/.

Join MSCCA For Its 2015 Conference By The Sea!

This spring, the Maryland State Child Care Association (MSCCA) will host its “2015 Conference by the Sea” in Ocean City, Maryland, at the Carousel Hotel and Resort. The conference will take place from April 24-26 and will feature hands-on sessions that are fun, educational and motivational. This event also is ideal for child care professionals seeking Core of Knowledge and continuing education credits on topics related to child development; curriculum; health, safety and nutrition; special needs; community; and professionalism. Registration is open now!

For more information, or to register, visit www.mscca.org, email mscca1@comcast.net, or call 410-820-9196 today.
CONFERENCES Cont.

27th Annual National AfterSchool Association Convention

Join more than 2,000 after school professionals for learning, networking, and professional development as the National AfterSchool Association (NAA) hosts its 27th annual convention from March 8-11 at the National Harbor's Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center. The convention offers more than 150 workshops, a variety of presentations, the AfterSchool for All Challenge, and other opportunities to make new connections and enhance your skills. Space is limited so visit http://naaweb.org/convention online, and register today!

The Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children (MDAEYC) will be hosting a conference on April 11, 2015 at the Maritime Institute in Linthicum, Maryland. Look for more information on the MDAEYC website at www.mdaeyc.com as it becomes available.

Save The Date!

The Maryland Association for the Education of Young Children (MDAEYC) will be hosting a conference on April 11, 2015 at the Maritime Institute in Linthicum, Maryland. Look for more information on the MDAEYC website at www.mdaeyc.com as it becomes available.

Join The Conversation!

https://www.facebook.com/MdPublicSchools  https://twitter.com/MdPublicSchools  https://www.youtube.com/user/mdsetv

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Contact US
BY PHONE: Division of Early Childhood Help Desk: 877.605.1539