

Race to the Top: Early Learning Challenge Grant – Year 4, June 30, 2016 Final Update



Maryland received one of twenty Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Fund Grant (RTTT-ELC) awards in the amount of \$50 million over four years. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) was designated as the lead agency to coordinate a multi-agency approach to submitting Maryland's state plan. The current Governor's State Advisory Council on Early Care and Education, working with the Division of Early Childhood Development (DECD) and the Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services (DSE/EIS) staff, implemented the ELC projects over the four years.

Maryland's RTT-ELC spotlight projects are the Maryland EXCELS quality rating and improvement system (EXCELS) and the Ready for Kindergarten (R4K) Early Childhood - Comprehensive Assessment System. The progress made in increasing access to quality care for at-risk children through EXCELS and measuring student growth through the R4K could not have been accomplished without the RTT-ELC grant. As programs enter EXCELS, they have received technical assistance and most have "stepped up" the quality of early childhood services for young children and their families. The development of the R4K assessment allows Maryland to measure the skills and abilities of incoming kindergarteners against the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards. The KRA is administered during the first few weeks of kindergarten. Teachers and principals are able to identify early gaps in achievement as a means for intervention and targeted early learning support.

Maryland's application included 10 thematic projects designed to improve the school readiness results. The ten projects strove to reduce the readiness gap for low-income children, English language learners, and young children with disabilities through various strategies. Maryland's RTT-ELC was designed to address these gaps by targeting supports to early childhood programs in low-income neighborhoods and Title 1 attendance areas. The grant's theory of action presumes that early interventions prior to school entry boost the chances for student groups that traditionally have experienced an ever-widening gap between the school's academic expectations and the students' abilities to meet them. Below are highlights of the project successes:

Local Early Childhood Councils - Project 1

\$1,250,870.46

Key Achievements –

- Twenty-four local early childhood advisory councils were established with by-laws approved by their local governments.

Summary of Activities –

- Each local council has successfully completed and is closing out their RTT-ELC Implementation Grant. Local ECACs have met or exceeded goals, objectives, and activities stated within their grant action plan.

Improved School Readiness –

- Each Local ECAC is studying their KRA results and strategically designing next steps toward closing the achievement gap.

This project was completed as of December 31, 2015.

**Maryland EXCELS/Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) -
Project 2** **\$18,875,279.40**

Key Achievements –

- As of June 30, 2016, 4,591 programs and providers were participating in Maryland EXCELS; representing 50% of all licensed child care programs in Maryland. The percentage of Public Prekindergarten programs grew to 13% from the baseline of <1%. The number of programs with published quality ratings in Maryland EXCELS has grown to 3,512. Published programs can be searched by families on www.marylandexcels.org and on the Maryland EXCELS mobile app.

Summary of Activities –

- Tiered Reimbursement/Quality Differential Payments – there are 447 programs with published quality ratings of Level 3, 4, or 5 who are eligible for differential reimbursement payments for Child Care Subsidy. Quality payments range from 10% to 44% per child, depending upon the age of the child, the program type, and the program’s quality rating.
- Outreach and support continues to be provided through the network of Quality Assurance Specialists and the Child Care Resource and Referral Centers, who hold regional training and work group meetings to assist providers with Maryland EXCELS. Program Coordinators, employed by Johns Hopkins University, verify evidence uploaded by the program, and offer support with the online system and QRIS requirements.
- Online professional development modules on the Maryland EXCELS system and the rationale between the standards and continuous quality improvement are in development. Five MSDE-approved training workshops are offered in all areas of the state, to assist providers in meeting the QRIS requirements, and developing a deeper understanding of continuous quality improvement and the impact on children, families, and society.

Improved School Readiness –

- Maryland EXCELS programs create Program Improvement Plans at Levels 3, 4, and 5 to address school readiness components from the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA). A new and simplified resource has been developed from the KRA data for programs to identify school readiness goals and objectives.
- When the enrollment and attendance reporting system (Project 10) reaches full implementation, students will be tracked from their child care and early education placement(s), linking their early experiences with the KRA assessment results. This data will yield information about the link between program quality and kindergarten readiness.

Coaching and Mentoring – Project 3 **\$9,505,825.95**

Breakthrough Centers

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Key Achievements –

- Over 922 child care providers/programs worked with Center staff and enrolled in Maryland EXCELS; Breakthrough Centers are located in CCRCs.
- The Centers provided technical assistance and capacity building services to child care programs/providers that were in the 412 Title I School Improvement Areas throughout Maryland. These programs include English Language Learners and children with special needs and behavior concerns.

Summary of Activities –

- Many child care programs earned Core of Knowledge and Pre-Service Training hours to meet the staff professional development requirements for Maryland EXCELS.
- The CCRCs provided training and the overview for the new Developmental Screenings to meet the Developmentally Appropriate Learning and Practice (DAP) in the Maryland EXCELS Program Standards.

Improved School Readiness –

- When the online attendance system is fully implemented, MSDE will be able track programs in EXCELS, and their students' performance on the KRA.

This project was completed as of December 31, 2015.

Community Hubs

Key Achievements –

- Two Community Hubs were created under the ELC grant, both located in Baltimore City. Each Community Hub facilitates the transition for each child to a Head Start program when the child turns three years old.
- Community Outreach Specialists (CCOS) worked with over 55 child care providers by providing training and technical assistance in the Park Heights and Cherry Hill communities to increase their participation in the EXCELS program. By June 30, 2015, over 20 providers were registered at Level 1 and an additional 10 providers at Level 2.

Summary of Activities –

- The Transition Specialist worked to develop contacts and relationships with the public schools as well as community agencies to smooth transitions for families with children entering Head Start, community preschool programs, and Pre-K.
- Supports were provided to parents through referrals to various resources in the community, sharing parent education opportunities, and offering child development information through home visiting services.

Improved School Readiness –

- School readiness was improved through working with families and service providers to ensure smooth transitions for those children turning three and transitioning to Head Start programs or community programs as well as those children entering public and private Pre-K programs.

This project was completed as of December 31, 2015.

Preschool for All

This project is closed, and the participating community based PreK programs were transferred to the federal Preschool Development Grant beginning July 1, 2015.

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Judy Center Satellites

Key Achievements –

- The two additional Judy Centers located at Arundel Elementary School and Liberty Elementary School in Baltimore City became operational, and are part of a public-private partnership with the Baltimore Community Foundation (BCF). BCF continues to fund Judy Centers in Baltimore City, adding five more in FY 2016.

Summary of Activities –

- The Arundel Judy Center has been established at the Arundel Elementary School. Through a highly operational office/resource center for staff and families, they have secured 13 active partnerships with Baltimore City organizations to bring services and information to Judy Center families. The Liberty Judy Center, in response to community needs, established the *Judy Cares* program for early childhood counseling services and hosted parent workshop sessions with topics surrounding social/personal development.

Improved School Readiness –

- In a 2015 study, a comparison was made on whether entering kindergarteners who had received Judy Center services were better prepared for school compared to those who did not. The study suggests that Judy Center services are positively associated with students' readiness.

This project is closed, and the five Judy Centers funded by ELC grant were transferred to the federal Preschool Development Grant beginning July 1, 2015.

Making Access Happen (MAH)

Key Achievements –

- MAH online "toolkit" for reflective coaches premiered December 9, 2015 at a statewide leadership meeting for local school systems (LSS) and other external partners and advocates. The toolkit highlighted challenging behaviors, the most frequently identified barrier to maintaining children with disabilities in inclusive community-based early childhood programs.

Summary of Activities –

- The MAH team, comprised of Johns Hopkins University School of Education and MSDE staff, addresses challenges faced by local implementation teams and jointly develops strategies to address them. The focus for the final reporting quarter has been on assisting local programs with planning for sustaining local efforts beyond the grant funding period.

Improved School Readiness –

- Least Restrictive Environment data available from the two most recent years of statewide reporting show that the percentage of preschool children participating in inclusive early childhood settings has increased. Increased access to general education early childhood programs, curricula and instruction is the first critical step toward narrowing the school readiness gap for children with disabilities.

Promoting Use of Early Learning Standards- Project 4

\$1,107,493.18

PEEP

Key Achievements –

- Assessment and implementation data collected from the first implementation will be analyzed over the next few months with a report issued by April 2016. Year 2 data will be combined with Year 1 and analyzed following the post data collection window in June 2016.

Summary of Activities –

- The second year of full scale implementation began with two days of professional development focused on science and *PEEP*, a comprehensive science program to attract and engage kids three to five years old, on October 12 and 13, 2015. Teachers are now implementing the *PEEP* units over the next six months and will facilitate children’s science explorations with coaching support from their administrator.

Improved School Readiness –

- The evaluation of *PEEP* will allow MSDE to assess the efficacy and impact of intentional science curriculum implementation on the development of scientific thinking during the preschool years. MSDE will also utilize the new state Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) and follow the *PEEP* children and comparison group children (those children in classrooms that did not implement the curriculum) into Kindergarten to examine differences in kindergarten readiness.

Guide to Pedagogy

Key Achievements –

- The Guide is being disseminated statewide, and is available online. A training module is being developed to introduce the guide to educators.
- Approved trainers have been given a hard copy of the guide to assist them in the development of training that includes information from the Guide.

Improved School Readiness –

- The information provided in the guide will help providers improve their quality of instruction, and assist trainers in developing high quality trainings materials.

This project was completed in September 2015.

Vocabulary Improvement and Oral Language Enrichment through Stories (VIOLETS)

Key Achievements –

- VIOLETS new teacher and VIOLETS Booster and Extension Trainings were offered regionally for 73 participants.
- An evaluation of VIOLETS was completed, demonstrating higher gains in receptive language skills among English Language Learners.

Summary of Activities –

- VIOLETS Extension Bags, with four new books and VIOLETS scripts and activities, were created and disseminated to 53 VIOLETS teachers.

Improved School Readiness –

- The VIOLETS Evaluation demonstrates that participating in the VIOLETS program can help children make gains in two types of vocabulary words, and that children who are Dual Language Learners (DLL) tended to make greater gains to help close the gaps between DLLS and their English-proficient peers.

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PETALS:

Key Achievements –

- PETALS is a customized version of VIOLETS for younger children that includes a strong family engagement component to involve families in language development, books, and literature. The research and design underpinnings of PETALS have been established. Books have been chosen for use with PETALS, including informational and narrative texts.
- The majority of PETALS books will be available either bilingually, or in English and Spanish versions. PETALS will incorporate a strong family engagement component.

Summary of Activities –

- The Internal Advisory group met to review and provide feedback on the PETALS prototypes, which are currently in development. An evaluation of existing language and vocabulary evaluation tools began.

Improved School Readiness –

- PETALS is targeted toward children ages 2-3 who are DLLs or have low expressive language. Based on the successful VIOLETS model, extending PETALS to a younger age group will allow for targeted programming to begin the process of a child's language development even earlier.

Early Learning Standards

Key Achievements –

- The Maryland Early Learning Standards were completed and published.

Summary of Activities –

- The standards have been disseminated through distribution of the Supporting Every Young Learner: Guide to Early Childhood Pedagogy, posted on the DECD web page, and presented at numerous conferences and meetings. The Fine Arts standards revision is nearing completion. Once completed, the revised standards will replace the existing standards.

Improved School Readiness –

- Teachers, schools and school systems, MSDE, and community early childhood stakeholders are using the Standards in the data analysis of the Kindergarten Readiness.

This project was completed in September 2015.

Professional Development Maryland Model for School Readiness - Project 5 \$688,261.58

Maryland, through an approved budget amendment dated June 9, 2015, moved \$ 423,476.00 from Project 5 to Project 6. This project is closed, and professional development will continue under Project 6 – Kindergarten Readiness Assessment and the Early Learning Assessment.

Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS) – Project 6

\$5,632,644.22

The Ready for Kindergarten (R4K) assessment system has been systematically developed within a framework grounded in theory, research, and best practice to ensure its validity and reliability. The reporting scale of both the formative assessments and the KRA allows the progress of individual

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students to be tracked within and across school years and allow cohorts to be tracked across years. The system includes a kindergarten entry assessment, and formative assessments for children aged 36 through 72 months, i.e., Early Learning Assessment. Combined, these two assessment components provide key stakeholders—families/caregivers, educators, administrators, and policymakers—with a balanced view of students’ learning needs and provide actionable information to help tailor instruction and interventions. The assessments are part of an overall educational system that includes early learning and development standards, curricular resources and instructional practices, professional development, and instructional interventions and policy improvements. The system has been designed to enhance the school-readiness skills of entering kindergarten students and ensure that students are on a learning trajectory to graduate from high school ready for college and careers.

Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA)

Key Achievements –

- KRA v1.0 was administered in the fall of 2014, KRA v1.5 was administered in the fall of 2015 and the results were publicly released each spring.
- Other system enhancements and assessment content changes will be field tested in Maryland, Ohio, and Tennessee in the fall of 2016 for the next round of development with implementation of KRA v2.0 in the fall of 2017.
- Connecticut and a number of school districts in Michigan are planning to implement the KRA in 2017.

Improving School Readiness –

- The R4K, which includes the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA), provides a framework to assess what students should know and be able to do when they enter kindergarten to ensure they are ready to learn. The KRA provides data that teachers can use to identify learning gaps and ensure quality early learning opportunities for children by building on the strengths of every child.
- Based on the 2014-2015 KRA results, nearly half (47%) of all children in Maryland displayed the foundational skills assessed in 2014 – 2015 indicating they were fully ready for kindergarten, 36% were approaching readiness, and 17% of children were assessed as emerging. The school readiness report for school year 2015-2016 showed similar results with 45% demonstrating readiness, 37% approaching readiness, and 18% as emerging. The full report for Maryland is available online at www.marylandpublicschools.org and at www.readyatfive.org.

Early Learning Assessment (ELA)

Key Achievements –

- The learning progressions, tasks for the ELA, and the online system have been completed. Training for public school general education and special education teachers, Head Start, and community-based teachers has begun. The ELA materials are available to teachers in the form of a kit as well as online.
- Thirty-five programs representing public PreK, Head Start, and community-based programs are currently participating in a User Acceptance Pilot to be completed by June 1, 2016.
- The 2016-2017 school year will be a pilot year for the administration of the ELA to preschool children with disabilities, with revisions based on teacher feedback to be incorporated into the

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ELA for a full rollout in 2017-2018. Public PreK, Head Start, and community-based programs that have completed training can begin use of the ELA the fall of 2016.

Child Development Innovations – Project 7

\$4,057,998.21

Best Beginnings

Key Achievements –

- The first objective of this project was to field-test Best Beginnings for screening the development of infants and toddlers in child care centers with child care teachers implementing the tools. The Best Beginnings system is comprised of a professionally administered Best Beginnings Developmental Screen (BBDS) and the parent-completed Best Beginnings Family Questionnaire (BBFQ).
- Fifty-four early child care providers from 30 child care centers across the state agreed to participate. Providers attended one day Best Beginnings training and successfully completed a certification test. Centers were split into two groups: validity or feasibility. The Battelle-II was used as the gold standard assessment and was administered by two graduate students.

Summary of Activities –

- Best Beginnings passed both validity and feasibility studies and made the MSDE list of recommended developmental screening tools.

Improved School Readiness –

- Developmental screenings will enable parents and child care teachers to identify delays earlier and provide students with needed services earlier.

This project is closed as it was completed in September 2015. The Best Beginnings tool was available free to providers through this link through January 15, 2016:

<http://mptchildcarecourses.thinkport.org/dev-screening-tool-review-and-application-2.html>

Developmental Screening

Summary of Activities –

- The regulation requiring all child care providers to use developmental screenings will be promulgated on July 1, 2017. This change will allow the Division of Special Education/Intervention Services more time to prepare for a potential increase in referrals and services. The free tools were available through January 15, 2016 and the online training was free through December of 2016 (see link above).
- The free online training launched in June and through the month of December: a total of 8,674 providers enrolled, and 6,063 professional development certificates were issued.

Improved School Readiness –

- Developmental screenings will assist in identifying children with special needs earlier and provide them with necessary services to prepare them for Kindergarten.

This project is closed as it was completed December 2015.

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Training of Pediatricians

Key Achievements –

- Collected and coded stakeholder interviews to determine training needs and preferences. Provided training and curriculum for mental health professionals to support pediatric primary care physicians.
- Held cross disciplinary training in four regions of the state around early childhood mental health, with 145 various providers in attendance.

Summary of Activities –

- Behavioral Health Integration in Pediatric Primary Care program (BHIPP) has enrolled 508 providers for training in children’s mental health issues.
- Provided mental health phone consultation for pediatric PCP’s Statewide, a total of 107 consults were for children 0-5. BHIPP Reflections Video completed, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_muCLmaFzE

Improved School Readiness –

- By providing the medical community with supports needed to improve the social and emotional health of young children, school readiness for many children is enhanced.

This project is closed as it was completed December 2015.

Social and Emotional Foundations of Early Learning (SEFEL)

Key Achievements –

- Continued to update and add to SEFEL Website, <https://theinstitute.umaryland.edu/SEFEL/>.
- Posted two additional Trauma informed SEFEL Trainings, and began pilot outcomes monitoring section of website with two counties.

Summary of Activities –

- Twelve SEFEL Leadership Committee Meetings have been held to help guide and support the updating of the web site, and 158 Providers have obtained certificates in SEFEL Preschool Training or the SEFEL Infant and Toddler Training.
- Participants have come from 17 States and five countries.

Improved School Readiness –

- The SEFEL website is used by 3,556 users, which is an additional 383 users over the last quarter as more providers learn of the importance of Social Foundations for later school success.

This project shifted to another funding source as of December 31, 2015.

Family Engagement and Support – Project 8

\$2,150,678.03

Maryland Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework and Coalition

Key Achievements –

- MSDE was awarded a \$494,370 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to build upon the work accomplished under the RTT ELC Project 8: Family Engagement; notably, the establishment of *The Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework: Maryland’s Vision for Engaging Families with Young Children*. The grant was awarded for the one year period of September 1, 2015 - August 31, 2016. The Maryland Early Childhood Family Engagement Coalition is the advisory group and steering committee that will oversee grant implementation.

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Summary of Activities –

- The Kellogg grants were distributed to nine local early childhood councils, and each grant was \$8,800.

Improved School Readiness –

- As providers move up the levels in Maryland EXCELS, the amount of family engagement activities (written and oral communication, parent-teacher conferences, family events, written shared policies, etc.) expected of licensed providers increases. As of September 2015, 53% of Maryland's licensed child care providers were participating in Maryland EXCELS.

This funding for this project shifted to the Kellogg Grant as of January 1, 2016.

Coalition - Effective Practices Toolkit

Key Achievements –

- The Early Childhood Family Engagement Coalition developed a plan for the Effective Practices Toolkit to support the *Maryland Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework* which helps child care providers increase and improve family engagement practices with their families.

Summary of Activities –

- The toolkit is aligned with documents such as the Workforce Competencies Framework and the Guide to Pedagogy. The toolkit design incorporates *Framework* goals and offers examples that illustrate how various child care programs are meeting these goals.
- The subcommittee is also working to include information on pertinent topics for educators such as Toxic Stress and Trauma, Dual Language Learners, and working with families with children with disabilities.

Improved School Readiness –

- By developing the Effective Practices Toolkit, providers will have tools and resources to strengthen and improve relationships with the families of the children in their care. By working together, families will receive valuable information on being their child's first teacher and advocate, and providers will be better informed about the development of children through parent interaction.

Parent Cafes

Key Achievements –

- The goals for this project have been completed. In 2015, there were a total of 37 Parent Cafés provided (exceeding their goal of 24) throughout Maryland with 522 people attending. By training an additional 56 Parent Café Facilitators, Maryland Family Network (MFN) was able to further increase the capacity for the provision of Parent Cafés.

Summary of Activities –

- During the second quarter, 218 people attended Parent Cafés and completed evaluations. Evaluations completed by participants after each Parent Café show parents find support through their peers, more easily access community resources, and gain an increased understanding of their child's development.

Improved School Readiness –

- By increasing awareness of child development, school readiness, and available community resources, parents are better informed to help their children increase the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school.

This project is closed as it was completed December 2015.

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Library Learning Councils

Key Achievements –

- Public libraries have organized Library Learning Cafes in 18 libraries to bring in families to network on early childhood topics in Title I school districts and to receive information on valuable early childhood and family resources.

Summary of Activities –

- As of December 2015, 28 Library Parent Cafés have been held and 16 libraries have created Family Resource/Parent Information Centers.

Improved School Readiness –

- The Library Partnership has improved the quality of parents’ interactions with library staff; increased the frequency of children and families’ engagement with libraries, including obtaining library cards for children; and encouraged families to take greater advantage of other social services in their communities.

This project is closed as it was completed December 2015.

Learning Parties

Key Achievements –

- Forty-five sets of Learning Parties were held in 27 different programs over the course of the grant, including child care programs, public PreK programs, Judy Centers, libraries, and a homeless shelter, meeting the goal established through RTT-ELC.
- All seven domains of the Learning Party curriculum have been revised to align with the KRA.
- Through 2015, Learning Parties reached approximately 450 children and 350 adults in 13 jurisdictions.

Summary of Activities –

- Five regional Learning Party trainings were held in 2015, reaching over 110 participants.
- Learning Party parent evaluations were revised and updated in both English and Spanish.

Improved School Readiness –

- Families exposed to the Learning Parties have a greater understanding of the importance of early learning as the foundation for school readiness and success in school. Parent evaluations completed at the end of the Learning Parties indicate that families had increased awareness of the importance of early learning and their roles as their child’s first teacher.

This project is closed as it was completed December 2015.

Raising A Reader

Key Achievements –

- The third year of the Raising a Reader (RAR), a family engagement and early literacy initiative, was implemented. Approximately 2,500 prekindergarten students in over 50 Title I schools participated in nine school districts in Maryland. Spanish-speaking students make up 22% of the children in the program. There has been an increase of nearly 300 students at four additional schools that have implemented RAR for the first time this school year.
- Schools completed the orientation or kick-off activity for parents. Students are taking books home in a red bag each week to engage their parents in book sharing activities.

Improved School Readiness –

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- An analysis of the two year’s results of parent pre and post surveys (latest results available at this time) indicate a significant increase in the time spent with parents reading with their children and children being active participants in the book sharing process. The book sharing behaviors that had a significant increase include children choosing the book to read, turning pages in a book, asking questions about a book, and helping by “reading” or telling a story using the pictures.

Reach Out and Read (ROAR)

Key Achievements –

- There are 87 pediatric practices and clinics in 19 counties plus Baltimore City participating in ROAR this year. One hundred thousand children have received free books during their “well” visits to the pediatrician.
- Parents are given advice by doctors and other health practitioners on the importance of reading to their children during each visit. Quality assurance visits are made to sites that have been operating for more than one year. The Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics is currently exploring alternative options for the continued funding of this program.

Improved School Readiness –

- ROAR provides an opportunity for health care practitioners to encourage parents to read with their children and increase their exposure to written materials.

This project was completed in September 2015.

Workforce Competency and Leadership Development- Project 9 \$1,010,049.19

Workforce Competency Framework

Key Achievement –

- The new “Knowledge and Competency Framework for Child and Youth Care Professionals” was completed in April 2015.

Summary of Activities –

- Evaluation Strategies aligned state and national resources and professional work group members conducted cross checking of alignment and knowledge areas/domains.

Improved School Readiness –

- MSDE/OCC approved trainers were given training on how to use “Maryland’s Knowledge and Competency Framework for Child and Youth Care Professionals” and have begun developing training to meet the specific competencies.
- The Framework is available on-line with hyperlinks to professional resources.
- Collaboration with local community colleges to align current pre-service training to the Framework is completed.
- The development of a self-reflection tool for child care professionals to use alongside the Framework is in progress. This will include application based self-checks.

This project was completed in September 2015.

Maryland Approved Alternative Preparation Program MAAPP

Key Achievements –

- In Cohort 2, twelve candidates successfully finished year two (residency) of MAAPP in December. They finalized outstanding paperwork and other requirements necessary for

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certification. The 17 candidates in Cohort 3 completed year one of MAAPP. They finished their internship in a public school setting and submitted their final seminar portfolios for review. The teachers are now beginning the residency (year two) of the program and will submit their initial instructional videos for feedback

Improved School Readiness –

- From Cohort 1, the candidates completed the state application for early childhood certification.
- Cohort 2 and 3 candidates have enhanced their knowledge of early childhood education through the successful completion of MAAPP classes and public school internship.

Strengthening the Workforce

Summary of Activities –

- During the 2015 legislative session, the General Assembly passed Senate Bill 677 requiring the Department of Education, the Commission on Higher Education, and representatives from institutions of higher education in the State that offer early childhood education programs to develop a master plan addressing the critical shortage of qualified professional teachers and child care providers in the early childhood education workforce.

Improved School Readiness –

The Master Plan workgroup's recommendations will strengthen the quality of the Early Childhood workforce through these activities:

- MSDE will collaboratively plan and develop degree programs with four-year colleges to increase the number of teacher education programs that provide dual certification in special and general education in early childhood education for children from birth to grade 3;
- MSDE will work with local school systems on the alignment of high school Career and Technology Education programs in Early Childhood Education/Childcare with the requirements of the Child Development Associate credential and course content/standards alignment to the community college early childhood education programs;
- Early Learning Leadership Academies will be continued, including a focus on supporting students with disabilities (IT/Preschool Special Education); and
- A statewide job board will be established to advertise internships and paid positions designed to enhance child care providers' efforts to find qualified applicants.

This project was completed in December 2015.

Early Learning Academies

Key Achievements –

- The third annual series of Early Learning Academies was held July 13, 14, and 16, 2015.

Summary of Activities –

- The one day Academies were held in Annapolis, Frederick, and Cambridge, MD. The theme was Executive Function in Action through STEM. Over 400 participants made up of school principals and their team of early childhood teachers and child care teachers from their school communities attended sessions on computer coding, science instruction, math instruction, and teaching the engineering process through puppetry.

Improved School Readiness by –

- Based on the evaluation summary, 94 percent of the respondents found the academy relevant and engaging. Overall, respondents found that the academy provided them with strategies helpful to improve their school programs.

This project was completed in August 2015.

Early Learning Data System – Project 10

\$4,288,759.66

Key Achievements –

- The MSDE Division of Early Childhood Development (DECD) has been developing its Early Childhood Data Warehouse (ECDW) as part of MSDE's Longitudinal Data System, with project completion expected in June 2016.
- Enhancements to the existing Child Care Administrative Tracking System (CCATS) expanded the scope of the ECDW by collecting, linking, and integrating data about children in publicly funded early childhood programs, program quality data on all types of early learning and development programs, and early childhood programs participating in the Maryland EXCELS (TQRIS) program.

Summary of Activities –

- DECD is in the process of testing the professional development grants and incentives module in the internal CCATS application. The professional development grant module was fully operational and integrated with licensing, subsidy, and credentialing services in June 2016.
- The child care subsidy portal, including child attendance, voucher receipt and payment, is being tested for release late 2016.
- DECD developed the Early Childhood Data Warehouse (ECDW) as the main repository for collection, integration, and reporting of DECD data through the creation of a comprehensive database and the development and implementation of data dashboards, pre-determined data reports, and established policy queries.

Improved School Readiness by –

- The IT systems will enable MSDE to track student performance on the KRA, analyze their prior attendance in child care and preschool, and examine the quality of the programs students attended.

The management of the RTT-ELC had many “firsts” for Maryland. They are:

- Establishment of formally chartered local early childhood advisory councils, and the awarding of planning and implementation grants,
- Implementing a new infrastructure for continuous program improvement (i.e., Maryland EXCELS);
- Implementing a new model of capacity building (beyond the typical child care resource and referral work) through the Early Childhood Breakthrough Centers;
- Development of the prekindergarten component of the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards, including research-based executive functioning standards;
- Collaboration with another state on developing a new comprehensive assessment system, and the development and implementation of the Ready for Kindergarten (R4K) assessment system;
- Formal mechanisms to coordinate early childhood services with pediatricians and family practitioners through the training of physicians on developmental screenings and offering physicians early childhood mental health consultation;
- Creating a Maryland specific framework on family engagement; and

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- Developing a comprehensive data system.

The implementation of each of these projects has increased the scope of services to children and families and strengthened the infrastructure of Maryland's early childhood education system significantly. Many of the projects introduced will continue through various funding sources, including local funding and foundation funding. The impetus of this grant facilitated the passage of two legislative mandates to expand Prekindergarten (PreK) slots in Maryland. The first was House Bill 297 "The Prekindergarten Act of 2014" which provided \$4.3 million annually in state funding for new PreK slots beginning in school year 2014-2015. The second bill was House Bill 668 which provides the state match of \$3.7 million to the federal Preschool Development Grant in fiscal year 2017 and \$7.3 million in fiscal year 2018. Together, the Prekindergarten Act of 2014 and the federal Preschool Development Grant expanded Maryland's PreK slots for children in Title 1 neighborhoods by 2,957. This increase in PreK slots has greatly expanded Maryland's ability to reach young learners sooner in their academic life. The RTT-ELC award raised the profile of early learning in Maryland, and created new opportunities to increase services to Maryland's youngest learners.