**Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant Progress Update
August 2014**

Progress on Scope of Work Activities – Successes and Next Steps

Local Early Childhood Councils - Project 1

1.2.3 Finalize plan of allocation of RTT funds to local councils, parameters for spending requirements and budget reporting mechanisms

✓ August 2014 monitoring site visits are scheduled for Allegany County, Howard County and Queen Anne's County local councils. During the review, parameters for spending requirements and budget reporting mechanisms are thoroughly discussed and documented.

1.3.6 Support will be provided after all regions receive the Leadership Capacity Building, coordinated through MSDE, i.e. attending local meetings and developing customized technical assistance based on local need

✓ August 4th and 6th, selected members of local councils were invited by local schools to attend the Early Learning & Leadership Academies, *"Closing the Gap Together."* The conference provided opportunities to think more deeply about creating quality instruction and learning as an intervention for closing their school's achievement gap. The event goals were to :
  - Develop a common understanding of Executive Functioning, the effects of poverty on its development, and classroom strategies to support students,
  - Align instructional practices to better meet the needs of all students, especially students living in poverty, students with disabilities, and English Language Learners,
  - Become more knowledgeable about Maryland's new Early Learning Framework, and
  - Build stronger relationships between early learning programs, elementary schools, and *the local Early Childhood Advisory Councils* to ensure a smooth transition from early education to K-2nd grade.

1.3.7 Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF) Support will be provided after all regions receive the Leadership Capacity Building, coordinated through MSDE, i.e. attending local meetings and developing customized technical assistance based on local need

✓ On August 5th, the team working with Leadership Capacity Building from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) met with the Annie E. Casey Foundation Leadership Team. The meeting focused on planning future Booster Professional Development Sessions, *"Strengthening Collective Accountability with New Partners: Shared Strategies and Performance Measures"* for the local councils. Currently, all logistics are being developed with plans of the first booster session to take place in December 2014.

Maryland EXCELS - Project 2

2.5 Increase the number of early learning and development programs, including publicly funded programs, participating in Maryland EXCELS.

✓ **3,294** programs are participating in Maryland EXCELS.
✓ **924** programs have published ratings on the Maryland EXCELS website.
✓ **59%** of programs receiving Child Care Subsidy reimbursements were participating in Maryland EXCELS as of April, 2014; a 2 percentage point increase from March, 2014.

✓ **67%** of children whose families receive Child Care Subsidy received care in an EXCELS participating program as of April, 2014; a 2 percentage point increase from March 2014.

2.5.8 Launch family/public awareness marketing campaign including print, online interactive (such as Locate High-Quality mobile apps), and social and mass media elements.

✓ Family outreach and public awareness campaign begins the week of September 8th with advertisements on public transportation buses in Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Montgomery County, posters at light rail kiosks, and the Maryland EXCELS mobile app available for free download.

✓ Outreach to families with Child Care Subsidy vouchers begins concurrently with the larger family outreach campaign and includes a mass mailing to all families (approximately 10,000) who have used, or are using, a child care voucher for their child/children. An insert on Maryland EXCELS will be included in all mailings of initial child care subsidy vouchers and renewals beginning mid-September.

2.5.12 By December 31, 2014, 23% of all early learning and development programs, including all publicly funded programs, will be participating in Maryland EXCELS.

✓ 30% of all eligible licensed child care centers and registered family child care homes are participating in Maryland EXCELS.

2.8 The Maryland EXCELS website will be updated to reflect current information, designations and technical assistance opportunities.

✓ The website at www.marylandexcels.org has been updated with an expanded view for published programs to show their ratings in all 5 content areas, in addition to their overall published level. Achievements (formerly known as designations) have been added for Asthma Friendly Child Care, Health and Wellness, and Quality Business Practices. The final achievement for Cultural and Linguistic Competency will be added this month.

2.10.2 Develop resources for families and communication protocols for service providers and eligibility workers for choosing high quality child care options.

✓ Resources for families for choosing high quality child care options have been developed and provided statewide to eligibility workers and service providers. Maryland EXCELS staff presented this information with the MSDE Child Care Subsidy branch staff statewide at four meetings of Local Departments of Social Services on August 4th, 6th, 11th and 13th.

Coaching and Mentoring – Project 3

3.6.3 Ongoing provision of quality assurance for the early learning and development programs participating in the Early Childhood Breakthrough Center

✓ Program planning and technical assistance meetings/calls were held in August. Capacity builders report that they have provided assistance to current programs, and are identifying new

programs for the 2014-15 school year. Capacity builders are planning technical assistance activities such as support groups and cafes to assist programs in progressing in MD EXCELS.

✓ Meetings at Resource Centers with Breakthrough Center staff are continuing in September 2014 as a part of statewide program planning and monitoring.

3.8.7 Deliverable: By December 31, 2014, two additional sites for Judy Center Partnerships will be established
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✓ FY 15 grant applications are being processed for the Judy Centers at Arundel Elementary School and at Liberty Elementary School in Baltimore City. Start-up is expected this fall. Both Judy Centers are public-private partnerships and are jointly funded by the Baltimore Community Foundation.

3.9.8 Milestone: By December 31, 2014, an additional 1,350 parents and children will receive comprehensive services through Community Hubs

✓ Race-to-the Top Community Hubs are busy with transitioning services to support Early Head Start programming. Considerable time has been devoted to hiring additional staff and providing training for existing staff on Head Start Performance Standards, including eligibility, recruitment, screening, and enrollment protocols. Hubs are working to transition three-year olds into Head Start and other early childhood programs while recruiting pregnant women and infants and toddlers, birth to 36 months. Integration of Early Head Start will enable the Hubs to reach more families with infants and toddlers in the target communities.

✓ Through the efforts of the Cherry Hill Child Care Community Outreach Specialist, 18 providers, three early learning centers and one Head Start Center are participating in EXCELS. Through the efforts of the Park Heights Child Care Community Outreach Specialist, 30 providers are participating in EXCELS. Most have published at level one and/or two, and two have published at level 3. Several training programs were provided to 23 child care staff from both Hub communities, featuring topics such as: *All Children are Gifted*, and *Who's Space is it anyway?*

Promoting Use of Early Learning Standards- Project 4

4.4 Completion of the Guide to Early Childhood Pedagogy (Prek-Grade 2)
✓ The Guide has been finalized and submitted to a layout designer for design and formatting of the print version.

4.5.6 Implement VIOLETS and VIOLETS Learning Parties in an additional 70 programs during FY15

✓ Eight new consultants have been engaged by Ready At Five to be VIOLETS coaches and assessors for the 70 new VIOLETS classrooms. Orientation and training for the new consultants was held on August 27th. There are currently 23 consultants providing coaching support and assessing children in VIOLETS classrooms.

✓ Early Childhood Programs selected to be part of the 2014-15 VIOLETS scale-up received welcome letters, Program Agreements and October training dates. (Interest in participating in VIOLETS far exceeded the ability to accommodate all the classrooms.)

✓ Three full-day professional development trainings have been scheduled for VIOLETS teachers and staff. They will be held in Howard County - October 2nd; Caroline County - October 9th, and in Annapolis - October 16th.

Professional Development Maryland Model for School Readiness - Project 5

5.0 Professional Development to Promote MD's Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children

✓ The Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) 5 module training is transitioning July 1 to a new title, "Setting the Stage: Assessment in Early Education and Care Modules." In the fall of 2014, training on the new formative assessment called the Early Learning Assessment will be implemented for child care programs through Maryland Family Network.

Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS) – Project 6

6.2.4 Develop items and tasks for the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) and Pre-K/K formative assessments using experts and practitioner stakeholder groups in Ohio and Maryland-the KRA is replacing the MMSR Work Sampling System

✓ After initial items for the formative assessment were developed by WestEd, the formative was tested in two phases in Maryland and Ohio. The first test consisted of a virtual performance assessment usability study where 3-4 year old children were observed and assessed on their use of both the iPad and VPA activity. Children were observed in 2 sites in Maryland from February 24th through March 7th. The second test consisted of a hands on performance assessment (HPA) pilot. The major goals of the Formative HPA Pilot were to explore children's accessibility to the formative tasks and the feasibility of the assessment administration for teachers. It was conducted to validate the usability of the tasks for formative purposes and to use the qualitative data collected from surveys (usability, feasibility, and perception) and focus groups to inform further development, administration, and implementation of the system. Materials were shipped to teachers in March. Professional development came in the form of attendance at a webinar also conducted in March. The testing window for the Formative HPA study was between March 24th and May 9th. A total of 62 teachers enrolled in this study, 33 from Maryland and 29 from Ohio. A total of 1038 children, 572 from Maryland and 466 from Ohio, participated. Data gathered from this study have been analyzed and a report is in process.

6.2.6 Conduct extensive pilot test of KRA and PreK/K formative assessments and 6.2.9 Conduct formal field test of the KRA and formative assessments in selected sites in Ohio and Maryland

✓ The validation and testing process for the KRA was complete in the spring of 2014 with a final small test of the VPA items. Census administration of the KRA statewide will begin in September.

✓ The first test of the formative, the virtual performance assessment (VPA) usability study included 3-4 year old children from two sites in Maryland who were observed and assessed on their use of both the iPad and VPA activity from February 24th through March 7th. The second

test consisted of a hands on performance assessment (HPA) pilot. The major goals of the Formative HPA Pilot were to explore children's accessibility to the formative tasks and the feasibility of the assessment administration for teachers. It was designed to validate the usability of the tasks for formative purposes and to use the qualitative data collected from surveys (usability, feasibility, and perception) and focus groups to inform further development, administration, and implementation of the system. Ohio will administer portions of the formative assessment statewide this school year. Data collected in the fall during Ohio's administration will provide data that can be analyzed to further test the system before roll out in Maryland in the spring of 2015.

6.2.10 Complete a technical report of the development, validity, and reliability of the KRA and formative assessments

✓ Technical reports of the development, validity, and reliability of the KRA have been received and consist of findings from Cognitive Interviews, Content and Bias and Sensitivity Reviews, a Pilot Test, a Field Test, and a test of the VPA items. Data and feedback gathered from the Field Test of the KRA was presented to leadership teams in Ohio and Maryland in February 2014 and a technical report has been received.

✓ A technical report on the development of the formative will not be issued until after the extensive formal testing that will take place in the fall of 2014 for the assessment items and progressions and January 2015 for the technology structure that will support the system.

6.2.11 Implement KRA and PreK/K formative assessments statewide in Ohio and Maryland

✓ Census administration of the KRA will begin in September of 2014.

✓ There will be a phased roll-out of the formative assessments beginning in March 2014 in Maryland. Professional development for the formative will begin in November and December of 2014 with Training of Trainers (TOT) sessions and training of teachers will occur in the spring of 2014.

6.3 Develop and implement professional development for administration and use of assessments

✓ Data and feedback gathered from the validation of the KRA were used to further develop and refine the training protocol for administration and use of the KRA. Professional development Trainers (TOT) sessions on March 31, 2014 and April 1, 2014. The second session occurred in May 2014 and took place in July. Professional development for teachers in preparation for census administration of the KRA took place through the end of August. Census administration began in September 2014.

✓ There will be a phased roll-out of the formative assessments beginning in March 2015 in Maryland. Professional development for the formative will begin in November/December of 2014 with Training of Trainers (TOT) sessions and training of teachers will occur in the spring of 2014.

6.3.13 Develop a Training of Trainers program for preschool educators on the administration of formative assessments.

✓ The training protocol on the administration of the formative assessments is in the planning and development phase. The preliminary timeline consists of beginning the Training of Trainers

professional development in November or December of 2014 and professional development for teachers from January to March 2015 followed by a phased roll-out of the formative assessments beginning in March 2015 in Maryland.

6.4 Develop and deploy technology infrastructure for EC-CAS.

✓ CTE assumed responsibility for the development, design, and deployment of the technology infrastructure that will support the delivery of the KRA, Formative, and EC-CAS online system. The EC-CAS online system was finalized and rolled out for implementation of the KRA assessment and supporting professional development on August 18th. The technology infrastructure for delivery of the formative will be finalized and tested in January 2015.

Child Development Innovations – Project 7

7.1.4 Identify community referral resources, conduct resource mapping

✓ This goal is ongoing. Six resource maps (Allegany, Calvert, Charles, Garrett, St. Mary's, and Washington) have been completed. CHECK Up website includes these resource maps: http://www.mdbhipp.org/locate-services.html. To date, this includes 230 early childhood referral resources from 23 counties across Maryland. Sixty two (62) are for early childhood mental health providers/consultants; fifty four (54) are for family support; and one hundred and fourteen (114) are for early childhood education and development.

7.2.7 Recruit mental health professionals interested in providing support to pediatric PCPs; conduct resource mapping around early childhood mental health; connect pediatric PCPs with ECMH graduates

✓ This goal is underway for the Lower Shore. Thirty-one early childhood and mental health providers in four Southern Maryland counties attended the training and mixer on July 24. The participants were mental health providers, psychologists, teachers, system navigators, special educators, psychiatric nurses, child welfare workers, developmental specialists (Child Find, Occupational Therapists and care coordinators).

7.2.8 Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Training for Pediatricians: Recruit and train primary care providers and ECMH consultants - Recruit a minimum of 20 pediatric Primary Care Providers for training

✓ Twenty-four primary care providers enrolled and 20 attended at least one session (6 completed all three sessions, 5 completed 2 sessions, 9 completed one session) in the Southern Maryland Learning Community. The team has begun recruitment in on the Lower Eastern Shore and developed a local planning team.

7.2.9 Conduct training with pediatric PCPs

✓ Two CHECK Up Learning Communities are completed and the third learning community is in planning phase.

7.10.8 Collect and analyze results of trainee evaluations

✓ Post training evaluation responses by staff and providers on developmental screening requirements were conducted: Over-all ratings of "agree" or "strongly agree" with questions range from a low of 81% to high of 94%. In essence, the questions demonstrate positive feedback from the training that is provided.

Family Engagement and Support – Project 8

8.1.4 Identify any additional potential new members and conduct Coalition meetings three times per year

✓ On August 18th both the Full Family Engagement Coalition and Communications Work Group met to discuss moving forward "Return to Implementation Plan: Guide for Parents and Service Providers". Next steps toward developing strategies to support the Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework: *Maryland's Vision for Engaging Families with Young Children* is currently being developed.

✓ Barbara Scherr, Coordinator, Family Involvement and Title I Specialist from MSDE, Division of Student, Family and School Support updated coalition members on the efforts to create a framework for families of K-12 students that is aligned with *Maryland's Vision for Engaging Families with Young Children*. Additional information relating to Student, Family, and School Support can be found at http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/studentschoolsvcs/index.html

8.4.3 Connect with hard-to-reach families, making times and dates for the cafes flexible to promote wide participation

✓ Maryland Family Network has scheduled the first Cherry Hill community Parent Café for September 23 through a contractual agreement with Abilities Network; a total of three Parent Cafés are planned for the Cherry Hill community. During the past month, two additional Parent Cafés were held in Maryland, with a combined total of over 20 participants. Since summer events often have a low turn-out, the success of these two Cafés is particularly notable.

8.7.11 Offer training in Learning Parties to staff in participating program

✓ Outreach is underway to identify early childhood classrooms and staff to be trained in and offer Learning Parties throughout the new school year. Learning Parties are being offering in September and October as a family engagement strategy to engage families early in the school year.

Workforce Competency and Leadership Development- Project 9

9.4.4 By December 31, 2013, review the status of access to and transfer out of the Associate of Arts-Early Childhood Education degree program and develop recommendations for the Governor's P-20 Council

✓ Through the work of the State Superintendent's Task Force on Early Learning Teacher Education, this issue has been reviewed and recommendations will be included in the Task Force's report to the State Superintendent due in December 2014.

9.5 Conduct Early Childhood Leadership Academies each year, starting October 2013

✓ Over 300 participants attended the 2nd Annual 2014 Early Learning and Leadership Academies held this year in Cambridge and Towson in August. School teams made up of the principal, school staff, and child care staff who feed into the school, as well as local Early Childhood Advisory Council members, higher education, and local and state level staff spent the day together in professional development sessions and collaboration time. Frank Kros of the Upside Down Organization presented the morning workshop on "Beyond Poverty: Brian-Inspired Ways to Understand and Respond to Poverty." After lunch, participants attended sessions on "The New IQ: Understanding and Teaching Executive Function Skills In and Out of the Classroom," Resources to Support Embedding IFSP Outcomes/IEP Goals into Daily Routines, English Language Learners in the Early Childhood Classroom, and Breaking the Silos: Creating Collaboration from Birth to 8. The day ended with an opportunity for participants from each school system to provide feedback to a member of their local Early Childhood Advisory Council for the council's upcoming action plan. The Academy will be held again next summer.

Early Learning Data System – Project 10

10.1 Create the professional development grants and incentives module in the internal CCATS application

✓ Develop and document the functional requirements of the module - in progress.

10.2 Enhance the CCATS public portal by including the trainer support and professional development grants and incentives modules

✓ Design system changes that meet all the functional requirements -in progress.

10.2.8 By February 1, 2015, the trainer support and grants/ incentives modules are live in the CCATS public portal

✓ The target date for implementation remains July 2015.

Activity 10.3 Design, develop, and implement the child care subsidy point-of-service (POS) system for pilot purposes

✓ Design system changes that meet all the functional requirements of the POS system - in progress. The projected roll-out date of the portal for user acceptance testing purposes is September 30, 2014, with a go-live pilot of the attendance/enrollment tracking module to be implemented by November 31, 2014.

Activity 10.5 Develop 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 of data dashboards, pre-determined data reports, and an ad hoc database query capability

✓ Develop and implement a set of data dashboards to present information addressing established policy queries- in progress.   Preliminary requirements for the school-child care program GIS mapping project, being conducted with Towson University, have been established. The GIS module is expected to be rolled out for public use in January 2015.

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For more information:

  http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/challenge.htm