**Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant Progress Update
January -February 2015**

Progress on Scope of Work Activities – Successes and Next Steps

Local Early Childhood Councils - Project 1

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

- ✓ The first booster session "*Results-Based Leadership Seminar to Sustaining a Results-Driven Approach to Ensuring All Children Enter Kindergarten Ready to Learn*", took place on February 19th. Over 50 people attended this first session that reinforced results-based accountability and facilitated team planning on sustaining the progress made so far.
- ✓ During the session, Laura McCoy, Project Director from Towson University conducted interviews with several local council members. Ms. McCoy is currently in the process of creating a short film highlighting the works/accomplishments of local councils across Maryland. The next session is scheduled to take place on March 6th. The video is planned to be completed by June 2015.
- ✓ Attending local meetings: On February 11th some members of Local ECACs attended the Maryland Head Start Association (MHSA) Strategic Planning Meeting. During the meeting participants collaborated on new goals for children, families and communities they serve.

Maryland EXCELS - Project 2

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

Date	Total Participating Programs	Family Child Care	Child Care Center	Public PreK	School-Age Only	Programs w/Published Ratings*
January 2015	3,735	2,156	1,095	7	477	1,248
February 2015	3,881	2,254	1,138	7	482	1,320

Check Level by Publishing Status – February 2015

Check Level	Published
1	914
2	182
3	54
4	29
5	141
Total	1,320

Published Programs by Level and Program Type –February 2015

Check Level	Family Child Care	Child Care Center	Public Pre-K	School-Age Only
1	530	254	0	130
2	92	82	0	8
3	20	32	0	2
4	8	21	0	0
5	66	73	0	2

*** Published** means that the program has requested to have their level published (made public). The documentation is reviewed and the level verified before posting on **www.MarylandEXCELS.org**
Unpublished means that the program is participating and working to meet the standards, and has not yet requested to be published, or is currently under review for publication.
Total Participating means the total number of child care and Public Pre-K programs that have submitted an online application and been accepted into Maryland EXCELS.

2.10.13 Report programs meeting differential reimbursement eligibility for payment by MSDE
- ✓ 229 programs published at Levels 3, 4, and 5 accepting Child Care Subsidy, are eligible for differential EXCELS tiered reimbursement payments.

2.10.14 Establish new thresholds for high-need children participation rates to influence priority selection of recruited programs in full-scale implementation.
- ✓ Focused Subsidy outreach results - in the two week period 2/13/15 – 3/2/15, 164 applications were submitted to the Maryland EXCELS system by providers. 83 of those applications (51%) were from providers who were paid Subsidy reimbursement in the past 12 months.
- ✓ Number of formal providers receiving Child Care Subsidy reimbursement as of October 2014 = 2,977 representing 71 more providers than in September 2014.
- ✓ Number of formal providers receiving Child Care Subsidy reimbursement participating in Maryland EXCELS as of October 2014 = 2070/2,977 (about 69.5%) representing a 1.5 percentage point increase from September 2014.
- ✓ Percentage of children served in Maryland EXCELS participating programs as a percentage of all Subsidy children served by formal providers = 13,324/17,009 (about 78%) as of October 2014, a 2 percentage point increase from September 2014.

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
- ✓ By December 31, 2014 Breakthrough Center services were provided to 454 programs. The Breakthrough Center provided services to Breakthrough Center capacity builders participated in bimonthly conference calls and meetings to discuss services provided to individual programs. The capacity builders are recruiting additional programs to participate in the Breakthrough Center activities. Monthly support groups, cafes and weekly meetings continue to provide technical assistance to providers to assist them in preparing, organizing and developing documents for participation in Maryland EXCELS.
- ✓ By December 31, 2015 Breakthrough Center services will be offered to an additional 213 programs.

3.9.4 Monitor the implementation of the two community hubs in accordance with the approved work plan

- ✓ RTT Community Hubs continued providing comprehensive Early Head Start services to over 100 pregnant women, infants and toddlers and their families. Programs have been focusing efforts at building family engagement opportunities through strong Parent and Policy Committees. Parents represent the majority membership for these Committees and are responsible for working with management staff around governance and program policies.
- ✓ Child Care Community Outreach Specialists are currently visiting programs with the Mobile STEM Lab and presenting activities to the staff and children. In addition, the Specialists are providing professional development opportunities with staff on the importance of incorporating STEM activities into the curriculum and strategies for using commonly found objects in the environment as teaching tools.

Promoting Use of Early Learning Standards- Project 4

4.4 Completion of the Guide to Early Childhood Pedagogy (Prek-Grade 2)

- ✓ The Guide is being disseminated statewide. The Guide is available online. A training module is being developed to introduce and guide educators through the document.

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

- ✓ Seventy-five classrooms are implementing VIOLETS in 18 Maryland jurisdictions.
- ✓ Child assessments have been completed on children in this year's VIOLETs classrooms. Coaches have been visiting teachers and supporting the implementation of VIOLETS.
- ✓ A February Meeting of the VIOLETS assessors and coaches was held to gain insight into their experiences, successes and challenges. A rich discussion emerged regarding ways to continue to support the over 450 VIOLETS classrooms.
- ✓ A pre-existing VIOLETS Portal and a new Discussion Board are operational giving VIOLETS teachers ways to share their experiences and be supported by their peers. **Dear VIOLET**, the portal for extension activities and the Discussion Board are all designed to create and support a statewide *VIOLETS learning community*.
- ✓ A video describing VIOLETS is being developed using Carroll County Head Start and other programs. The video will be housed on the DECD website and used for information and training.
- ✓ **PETALS** a literacy program for children ages 2-3, based on VIOLETS is being created. PETALS will extend the "reach" of VIOLETS into programs that serve younger children who need vocabulary and language enrichment. The program will be piloted and evaluated in several sites across Maryland; this program is not funded by the ELC.

Professional Development Maryland Model for School Readiness - Project 5

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

- ✓ "Setting the Stage: Assessment in Early Education and Care Modules"was provided to the child care community by the Maryland Family Network through December 31, 2014 and is now concluded.. Planning for the professional development modules for the new Early Learning Assessment (formative assessment component of the R4K) has begun. The Trainer of Trainers sessions will begin in April 2014.

Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS) – Project 6

6.2.4 Develop items and tasks for the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) and Early Learning Assessment (formative) using experts and practitioner stakeholder groups in Ohio and Maryland

✓ The development of the tasks for the ELA (36-72 months) was completed in September 2014 for all learning progressions. The development and testing of extended learning progressions for children who may be functioning below 36 months will take place in April 2015 and will be finalized by summer 2015.

✓ The Census Administration of the KRA ended in November 2014, and was followed by discussions with stakeholders regarding the length of the KRA and teacher burden. Both Maryland and Ohio lead teacher focus groups to examine the assessment content further and determine what items on the KRA could be eliminated to shorten the administration time for teachers. Leadership teams from both states reviewed teacher feedback and approved the items that could be removed. This resulted in an approximately 20% reduction for administration of version 1.5 of the KRA in the fall of 2015.

6.2.11 Implement KRA and ELA statewide in Ohio and Maryland

✓ Census administration of the KRA statewide began in September and the assessment window went through November 8th.

✓ There will be a phased roll-out of the ELA beginning in March 2015. Professional development for the ELA will begin in March of 2015 with Training of Trainers (TOT) sessions and a phased roll out of training for teachers will begin in July of 2015.

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

✓ After the window for administration of the KRA closed on November 8 teachers completed a survey to provide additional information on their preparation for and administration of the KRA. Data from the teacher survey were analyzed and presented to state leadership teams in February. Additional changes to the training protocol and assessment administration are being made based on teacher feedback. This includes a refresher module that will be available for teachers prior to their administration of the KRA version 1.5 in the fall of 2015.

✓ Development of the professional development to support administration of the ELA is in the planning phase. There will be a phased roll-out of the ELA beginning in the late spring/summer of 2015 in Maryland. Professional development for the formative will begin in the late spring 2015 with Training of Trainers (TOT) sessions and training of teachers will occur in the summer of 2015.

Child Development Innovations – Project 7
7.2 Conduct training with pediatric PCPs

✓ Two Check-up Learning Communities are completed and the third learning community completed the first learning session. The fourth one will be held in Prince George's County.

Family Engagement and Support – Project 8
8.2.2 Oversee implementation of strategies

✓ The Coalition met to review all Effective Practices submitted and discuss the organization of the Toolkit. The Coalition reviewed the overall vision of the Effective Practices Toolkit and discussed possible templates as well as what type of submissions would be appropriate for the Toolkit.

✓ The Coalition will meet again in April to review the organization of the Effective Practices Toolkit and further discuss next steps for the development of this resource.

8.4 Family Engagement coalition. Plan and conduct annual local community cafes.

✓ A Strengthening Families Maryland Parent Café Facilitator Training Institute was held on January 22-23. Despite inclement weather challenges, the Institute was a success with 37 people completing the training. Several newly trained facilitators have already begun planning for the first Cafes.

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

✓ The final three Cherry Hill community Parent Cafes facilitated by Maryland Family Network were held on February 4. Staff from Abilities Network completed the Facilitator Training Institute in January, and there are plans to continue providing Parent Cafes in Cherry Hill. Two additional Parent Cafes were held during the past month, with another Café held for staff of one organization, which will subsequently be trained as Table Hosts.

8.5 Learning Parties

✓ Two regional Learning Party Professional Development Trainings were held in Baltimore County and Howard County in February, with a total of 35 attendees representing 9 counties, including representatives from public library systems. All attendees received the full Learning Party Curricular binder and are poised to start implementing Learning Parties for children and families in child care/Head Start and PreK classrooms.

✓ Active recruitment is under way for the 2015 cohort of programs, classrooms and libraries interested in offering Learning Parties.

✓ Learning Party curricula in The Arts, Social Studies, and Play have been revised and aligned with the new R4K assessment. The revision and alignment process continues for the remaining Learning Party materials.

8.12.4 Nine remaining library systems establish Library Family Cafes

✓ Three of the nine remaining library systems in Title I areas are now well on their way to establishing Library Family Cafes.

8.14.11 To have at least 15 additional Title I schools and 40 classes with at least 1,200 Pre-K students participate in Raising A Reader (RAR) in Year 2

✓ Fifteen additional schools have joined the existing 26 schools in offering RAR to Pre-K students:
- 38 new classes from the 15 schools are now in the program with at least 6 additional classes and 3 schools expected to join in January.
- 2,036 Pre-K students are now participating in Raising A Reader.

Workforce Competency and Leadership Development- Project 9

9.2 Initiate a Maryland Approved Alternative Preparation Program for Early Childhood Education (ECE-MAAPP)

✓ Cohorts I of the MAAPP-ECE completed the program in December 2014, and are awaiting confirmation from Educator Effectiveness Division at MSDE that all teacher certification requirements have been met. Cohort II has completed the first year of the cohort which includes coursework and the internship. Cohort II will begin the year long residency in their current place of employment January 2015. Cohort III candidates attended a mandatory orientation on January 27th and began MAAPP-ECE classes in February.

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 were included in the Task Force's report to the State Superintendent submitted November 2014. See this link for full report - http://marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/challenge.htm .

9.5 Conduct Early Childhood Leadership Academies each year, starting October 2013
- ✓ Planning is underway for 3 Early Learning and Leadership Academies to occur the summer of 2015. Each one day Academy will be held in 3 different locations across the state. The overall theme will focus on STEM and executive function skills.

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 March 31, 2015, with a go-live pilot of the attendance/enrollment tracking module to be implemented by June 1, 2015.

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.   The school-child care program GIS mapping module ("Maryland Child Care Mapping Tool") developed by Towson University is ready for public release.

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For more information:

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