

# Maryland's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant Supports Children and Families of Hispanic Origin and Children Learning English



The Maryland State Department of Education received a four-year, \$50 million grant award from the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the national Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge grant competition. Maryland was one of only nine states receiving an award; a total of 35 states submitted grant applications. The grant period is through December, 2015.

The grant was awarded to states for the purpose of improving early care and education outcomes for children with high needs. Successful state systems demonstrated past commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible early learning and development programs and services for children with high needs.

Young children who are English language learners and their families are supported by Maryland's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant through the following projects and activities.

➔ Local Early Childhood Councils in each region of the state will coordinate the grant efforts and develop local action plans to improve school readiness including English language learners and provide supports to their families.

➔ Maryland EXCELS, the state's new Quality Rating and Improvement System will offer families of English language learners the ability to identify and select high-quality child care that meets their child's individual needs. Programs that offer a bi-lingual educational environment, have staff who are Spanish-speaking or provide other specific services will be designated in the Maryland EXCELS online system for families to make quality child care choices.

➔ In areas of the State that have large numbers of children with high needs, including English language learners and their families, supports will be added through the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant funding.

- Five new Preschool for All sites will be established in child care or Head Start settings in areas of high need.
- Two new community hubs in Baltimore City will provide and coordinate existing services for families with children birth to five years.
- Two new Judy Center satellite sites that provide comprehensive services for high needs children and their families will be established at The Historic Samuel Coleridge Taylor Elementary School in Baltimore City and the Carmody Hills Elementary School in Capitol Heights, Prince George's County.

- **Early Childhood Breakthrough Centers will provide technical assistance and professional development to child care centers in Title 1 communities so that all children enter kindergarten with the necessary skills to be successful.**



**The VIOLETS language and literacy curriculum will be expanded to 150 early childhood classrooms to develop oral language proficiency and pre-reading skills. The VIOLETS program (Vocabulary Improvement and Oral Language Through Stories) will include Learning Parties for children and their families to introduce activities that can be used at home to enhance language and pre-reading skills. The VIOLETS program has a special focus for children learning English. VIOLETS curriculum components are translated into Spanish. The emphasis on vocabulary development addresses the needs of English language learners.**



**Family Information Centers and resource kits for families with young children will be created in local public libraries in or near areas with a concentration of children with high needs, including English language learners.**



**Parent-Child Learning parties will be expanded in areas where children who are English language learners and their families reside. Learning Parties are interactive, hands-on, parent-child events that promote the development of school readiness skills for young children.**



**Pediatricians/primary care physicians will work with families around literacy, child development and school readiness through the Reach Out and Read program. During visits to pediatrician's offices, an estimated 46,000 children will receive books and parents will receive information from their child's physicians throughout the four years of the grant.**

**The goal of Maryland's early care and education system, enhanced by the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, is to improve the school readiness of all incoming kindergarteners who are English language learners from the baseline in 2010 of 56% fully ready to 80% fully ready in 2015. By increasing supports and services for these children and their families, Maryland continues making progress to reduce the school readiness gap and to achieve this ambitious goal.**

**For more information on Maryland's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant and the related projects, visit the website at [http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child\\_care/challenge](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/challenge)**