

GRANTEE ABSTRACT

Maryland



THE GOAL OF MARYLAND'S EARLY CARE AND education infrastructure, as enhanced by the RTT-ELC grant, is to improve the school readiness skills of incoming kindergartners. Maryland aims to increase the percentage of children assessed as "fully ready" to enter kindergarten from the current baseline of 81 percent in 2010 to 92 percent in 2015, as measured by the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) kindergarten assessment. Maryland's reform agenda aims also to narrow the readiness gap for all children with high needs. The state plan will improve the trajectory for all three subgroups: children from families with low incomes, English language learners, and children with disabilities.

Maryland will create 24 local early childhood councils to support the implementation of the state Advisory Council on Early Care and Education. The Annie E. Casey Foundation will invest in and partner with Maryland to coordinate implementation over 12 months with the goal of developing local plans that assist in the implementation of the RTT-ELC state plan.

Maryland will field test, maintain, enhance, and administer a full-scale implementation of its tiered quality rating and improvement system (TQRIS), called Maryland EXCELS. A validation/evaluation study of the TQRIS will be conducted to validate whether the check levels of Maryland EXCELS differentiate levels of program quality and to assess the relationship between quality ratings and children's learning and school readiness. The improvement and promotion of early learning and development programs within the TQRIS will be enhanced by an Early Childhood Breakthrough Center, a coaching model for continuous program improvement of early learning and development programs located in Title 1 attendance areas. In addition, Maryland will expand a number of proven program models for children with high needs, including an expansion of its Judy Centers, Preschool for All sites, and community hubs, and a professional development model for children with disabilities in natural or least restrictive environments.

Applicant

Office of the Governor,
State of Maryland

Lead Agency

Maryland State
Department of Education

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Total Federal Award

\$49,999,143

Grant Period

January 1, 2012 –
December 31, 2015

The Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) discretionary grant program supports states in building statewide systems that raise the quality of early learning and development programs and increase access to high-quality programs for children with high needs, so that all children enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

Information in this abstract is drawn from the state's RTT-ELC grant application.

Maryland addressed the following Focused Investment Areas in its application:

*Early Learning
and
Development
Standards*

(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality early learning and development standards. Maryland will develop an instructional guide for early learning and development programs to support the use of early learning standards and assessment for PreK to grade 2. Maryland will promote the use of early learning standards by conducting ongoing professional development for a total of 3,100 early childhood educators on early learning practices to support the early learning standards, including supplemental curricula in the areas of vocabulary development and comprehension, focused on English language learners, and early childhood STEM field tests for early learning and development programs in Title 1 attendance areas.

*Comprehensive
Assessment
System*

(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of comprehensive assessment systems. Maryland will revise its existing formative assessments, develop new formative assessments, and revise the existing kindergarten entry assessment to align with the adopted Common Core State Standards. The assessment program will feature a transmedia technology platform for assessment administration, including linkage to a reporting database and online resources for early learning. Training modules will be developed for the administration of state-recommended developmental screening instruments, in collaboration with the state of Ohio.

*Health
Promotion*

(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of children with high needs to improve school readiness skills for those students. Maryland will provide training for pediatricians on the state-recommended developmental screening instrument. In 2014, Maryland will introduce regulations to require the use of state recommended developmental screening instruments for all regulated child care programs. Other strategies include field testing and reporting on a screening instrument for children birth to age 3; building mental health capacity in primary care, including childhood mental health detection and intervention; and developing and implementing an online data collection and analysis system for Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning training participation and outcomes.

*Family
Engagement*

(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families. Maryland will provide consistent, statewide outreach for family engagement using the Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework. A coalition of family engagement organizations will implement strategies for evidence-based practices and training in early learning and development programs and organizations. Other efforts include the creation of Family Advisory Councils in libraries in or near Title 1 attendance areas; expanding “Parent-Child Learning Parties” in Title 1 attendance areas to promote the development of school readiness skills for young children; and expanding the statewide Reach Out and Read project with the American Academy of Pediatrics.

*Establish
Workforce
Knowledge and
Competency
Framework*

(D)(1) Developing a workforce knowledge and competence framework and a progression of credentials for Maryland's workforce of early care and education teachers. Maryland currently provides competency standards for pre service courses and has the MMSR Framework and Standards and the Maryland Child Care Credentialing Program. Grant-funded efforts will include improving the credentialing program to include incentives for programs participating in Maryland EXCELS.

*Support
Workforce
Improvement*

(D)(2) Supporting early childhood educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities. Maryland will provide statewide and consistent professional development opportunities to reinforce its revised Early Learning Framework and workforce competency standards. In addition, Maryland will work with the Maryland Higher Education Commission to review and stimulate the access and articulation agreements related to the Associate of Arts Degree in Teaching for Early Childhood Education (AAT-ECE), which was designed to create an affordable pathway toward teacher education. It will also initiate a Maryland Approved Alternative Preparation Program (MAAPP) for early childhood education, enabling candidates with four-year degrees in early childhood to obtain their state licensure in teaching. In coordination with the current Race to the Top Effective Teacher and Principal Academies, the Early Learning Challenge plan will initiate Leadership in Early Learning Academies for teams of early educators (PreK-2) from public schools and early childhood programs.

*Kindergarten
Entry
Assessment*

(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry. Maryland's existing MMSR kindergarten assessment will be revised to align with the revised Early Learning and Maryland Common Core Standards. The kindergarten assessment will use a state-of-the-art technology platform which includes professional development and online resource support for teachers.

*Build or
Enhance Data
Systems*

(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies. Maryland has an existing Child Care Automated Tracking System (CCATS) and will use grant funds to expand the CCATS portal to include services for early care workers, including professional development plans and applications for grants and incentives. Additionally, a module for grants funds management and provider benefits will be activated that makes data available for analysis in the state's longitudinal data system. A secure system for attendance reporting will be developed, piloted, and then implemented statewide.

Maryland has 103,802 children, birth to kindergarten entry, from low-income families. The state reports that it is leveraging \$115,363,244 in other funding sources to support this effort.