



Maryland 2012 Annual Performance Report Summary

Lead Agency: Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)

Participating State Agencies: Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of Human Resources, Governor's Office for Children.

Amount of Grant: \$49,999,143

Focused Investment Areas Addressed:

(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.

(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.

(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.

(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.

(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.

(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.

(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.

Highlights of 2012 Accomplishments (excerpted from Executive Summary):

The current Governor's State Advisory Council on Early Care and Education functions as the lead team for this project and works with staff at MSDE, namely the Division of Early Childhood Development (DECD) and the Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services (DSE/EIS), to coordinate all aspects of the State Plan. Maryland has begun implementation of 10 thematic projects that break down into 25 activities that are designed to improve the school readiness results from 81 percent in 2010 to 92 percent in 2015, which is the last year of the grant. In addition, many of the activities target reducing the readiness gap for low income children, English language learners, and young children with disabilities.

OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS

Both lead divisions, the Divisions of Early Childhood and Special Education/Early Intervention Services, have embarked on implementing the ten projects which are broken down into 698 specific tasks which are outlined in Maryland's approved Scope of Work. As of December 2012, after 12 months of implementation, 42 percent of all tasks have been completed or have been initiated on time. The majority of the tasks will commence in 2013 or later.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The major accomplishments are related to the RTT-ELC team's ability to solve problems regarding the two major anchors to Maryland's RTT-ELC plan:

- Establishment of a TQRIS, i.e., Maryland EXCELS;
- Revision of an existing Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS) and a Kindergarten Assessment.

Maryland's TQRIS, named Maryland EXCELS, has a successful pilot and recruitment for its field test. More than the targeted number of programs expressed interest in joining EXCELS. The development team resolved the inclusion of public school prekindergarten programs by adjusting the standards to align with the Charlotte Danielson model which has been adopted by 22 of the 24 local school systems. In addition, the pilot test revealed a number of design flaws which were redesigned to strengthen the viability of the system. The revision of the CAS and the Kindergarten Assessment is a joint project between the States of Ohio and Maryland. The states are joined by Johns Hopkins University Center for Technology in Education and WestEd.

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

- Establishment of formally established local early childhood advisory councils;
- Establishing a new infrastructure for continuous program improvement;
- Establishing a new model of capacity building beyond the typical child care resource and referral work through the technical assistance provided by Early Childhood Breakthrough Centers;
- Development of prekindergarten Common Core standards, including research-based Executive Functioning standards as part of the Social Foundation domain;
- Collaboration with Ohio on developing a new comprehensive assessment system;
- Formal mechanisms to coordinate early childhood services with pediatricians and family practitioners;
- Creating a Maryland specific framework on family engagement;
- Developing a comprehensive data system.

The RTT-ELC award raised the profile of early learning in Maryland. While MSDE had strong support from the state's legislature, other critical stakeholders expressed their support and interest in the projects, including the business and investment community. MSDE has been approached by a number of private investors to explore effective investment options in early childhood education programs. In addition, the legislature has responded by introducing legislation which builds on the RTT-ELC infrastructure, i.e., legislation to create a competitive grant program for local early childhood councils that resembles the principles of the Federal Race to the Top reform initiative.