
R00A99

Early Childhood Development

Maryland State Department of Education

Response to the Analyst's Review and Recommendations

House Education and Economic Development Subcommittee –
February 14, 2013
Senate Education, Business, and Administration Subcommittee –
February 15, 2013



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Maryland Public Schools: ***#1 in the Nation Five Years in a Row***

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) welcomes this opportunity to share with the Committee some of its success stories in early learning and to address the specific questions raised by the analyst.

Kindergarten Readiness - Home & Informal Care

MSDE should discuss why kindergarten readiness among children in home and informal care has increased as much as 33 percentage points since 2001-2002.

It is very difficult to identify reasons for these gains. This model is not designed to be an evaluation where we could identify specific causes and effects. Obviously some early childhood experiences happen at home as well. However, the data indicates that children coming from group settings are doing better.

The interpretation of the Prior Care data includes the relative comparison of the six categories – child care center, family child care, Head Start, prekindergarten, non-public nursery schools, and home/informal care. While an increase can be observed for all the groups, the slope of each category is different. The data from 2001 suggest that children in Home/Informal Care category have consistently performed lower than children in the other five categories.

The results from 2011-12 show that the results on the Composite score were 11 percent below the state average and 16 percent below in terms of Language/Literacy scores. MSDE has interpreted the data as favorable for children being enrolled in state regulated programs, especially for low income children. MSDE analysis on the school readiness data show, when controlling for income and comparing the 2011-12 results across the Prior Care categories, that low income children in the Home/Informal care category perform consistently lower. On the Composite score, children in Home/Informal Care were at 63% or 13 percentage points below the state average (FARM Comp=76%) and for Language/Literacy they were at 48% or 17 percentage points below the state average (FARM L/L= 65%).

All of the other categories of Prior Care outperform the Home/Informal Care category. Thus, while the overall trend is positive, relative to the other categories, the odds of children in Home/Informal Care meeting the school readiness goals are lower than those of children enrolled in state regulated programs.

Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) – Alignment to Common Core

As part of the State’s Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTTT-ELC) grant, MSDE is revising the MMSR to align to the Common Core Standards. MSDE should discuss how this revision is expected to change the existing assessments, and whether kindergarten readiness rates are expected to decrease under the revised assessments.

As suggested in the analysis, MSDE expects that the Kindergarten Entry Assessment, which is being developed under the RTT-ELC, will impact the results of kindergarten readiness rates.

The alignment of assessment standards to the Common Core State Standards will raise the skill levels expected by entering kindergarten students. Over the past years, kindergarten children entered skills with higher skill levels each year as measured by the current Maryland Model for

School Readiness (MMSR) Kindergarten Assessment. As of school year 2012-13, 83% of all incoming kindergarteners were fully ready for kindergarten, a 2 percentage point increase over the previous year and an increase of 34 percentage points over the past 11 years since the inception of the program when the benchmarks for kindergarten entry were established. Major investments in program expansion, namely prekindergarten and across-the-board quality improvement initiatives have raised the skill levels of incoming kindergarteners.

The newly devised Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) will measure the skills of incoming kindergarteners based on standards set by the Common Core for kindergarten, which are more rigorous than the ones developed in 2001. It is anticipated that the skills measurement with the new instrument (which MSDE is developing in collaboration with the State of Ohio) will render lower school readiness results than the current measure. Thus, in 2014-15, the first year of KEA implementation, the results will serve as a baseline of skills against the new Common Core State Standards.

Since Maryland's RTT-ELC application promoted a plan that will narrow the school readiness gaps for special subgroups, using trend projections based on the current system, MSDE will produce a methodology that creates school readiness results that extend the current trendline through 2015.

MSDE acknowledges that it is critical that all major stakeholders, such as General Assembly, Governor's State Advisory Council on Early Care and Education, local school systems, and the child care advisory councils, as well as the general public, be briefed in advance on the impact that new assessment will have on the results.

RTTT - Early Learning Challenge

MSDE should comment on the RTTT-ELC grant's progress to date and on whether all projects are on track to be successfully completed by the end of the grant period.

As shown in Exhibit 7 of the analysis, Maryland's application included ten thematic projects, designed to improve the school readiness results from 81 percent in 2010 to 92 percent in 2015, the last year of the grant. In addition, it strives to reduce the readiness gap for low income children, English language learners, and young children with disabilities.

MSDE's 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 have been outlined in Maryland's approved Scope of Work (SOW). As of December 2012, after 12 months of implementation, 42 percent of all tasks have been completed or have been initiated in time. The majority of the tasks will commence in 2013 or later. While some tasks had to be extended, for which the U.S. Department of Education gave approval, all projects are currently on time. A summary of the progress is attached.

In terms of project accountability, MSDE submitted the following documents as required by the USDOE:

1. Scope of Work for each of the ten Projects;
2. Monitoring Plan of Subgrants, including a monitoring instrument;
3. Draft Validation Study for Maryland EXCELS, the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System;
4. Preliminary Report on the Progress of Performance Measures.

A detailed accounting of the progress for each of the ten projects (ATTACHMENT) indicates the progress of scheduled project activities that have been initiated and were underway toward meeting the first set of milestones and deliverables by December 31 of last year.

Child Care Subsidy Program Reopening

MSDE should comment on how it will determine whether there are sufficient funds to reopen additional income brackets in the Child Care Subsidy program in fiscal 2013, and on how it will ensure that program expenditures remain within the fiscal 2014 appropriation if additional income brackets are reopened.

MSDE, in close coordination with the Department of Budget and Management, examined the sustainability of lifting partially the "freeze" on the income levels for low income wage earners in need of child care subsidy. In November 2012, three (out of ten) income levels in the category of wage earners that do not receive targeted cash assistance (non-TCA), have been re-opened.

On March 11, 2013, the State will lift the freeze on five (5) additional income levels. Thus, families of three with incomes at or below \$23,676 will be eligible to receive child care subsidies. MSDE projects that over the next three years, more than 2300 families will be able to reenter the program.

As shown below, the projected expenditures for the program will remain within the appropriations for FY 2013 and FY 2014.

	Budget Allowance	Projected Expenditures ¹
FY 2013	\$78.7 million	\$71.5 million
FY 2014	\$75.0 million	\$73.4 million

Recommendation

Concur with Governor's allowance.

On behalf of Maryland's youngest learners, MSDE gratefully concurs with the recommendation.

¹ Based on reopening a total of eight income levels (three from November 2012 and five more in March 2013)

Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge ATTACHMENT

STATUS REPORT YEAR 1 (January 1 – December 31, 2012)²

Project 1	RTT-ELC Funding	Milestone/Deliverable	Status (as of 12/31/12)	Comments
Local EC Councils	\$1,325,461	Local early childhood advisory councils will be operational in each jurisdiction	Met	All 24 jurisdictions established a local early childhood council. 22 Councils applied for and were awarded planning grants to develop long-term action agendas. Councils are eligible to receive implementation grant based on formula. Leadership training conducted by the Annie E Casey Foundation.
Focus		Annie E. Casey Foundation will have developed the <i>Capacity Building Leadership Curriculum</i> , including a Results-based Accountability product.	Met	Curriculum was available by July 15, 2012. Leadership program is broken out into eight cohorts (with three jurisdictions each) and started in October 2012.
Promote school readiness for all children by narrowing the achievement gap particularly for children with high needs		Complete activities related to the Governor’s Task Force on Maryland’s Child Care Subsidy Program	Met	Task Force included representation from DHR, DHMH, and DBM to establish efficiencies in the child care subsidy program and to ensure access of low income children into high quality early childhood programs. Activities included MOA between MSDE and DHR, data tracking of eligibility cases, and consumer education.

² Includes task and activities which were initiated or completed in 2012.

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Project 2	RTT-ELC Funding	Milestone/Deliverable	Status (as of 12/31/12)	Comments
Maryland EXCELS	\$21,265,147	Complete pilot of 45 early childhood programs and develop analysis and recommendations for revisions to EXCELS	Met	Participation is strictly voluntary. Focus on licensed child care but includes also Head Start and Prek programs. JHU-CTE is administering EXCELS data collection system and providing program coordination (See Project 10).
Focus		Initiate field test with 290 programs by November 2012.	Met	More than 330 programs are participating in the field test, including licensed child care, Head Start, nursery schools, and prekindergarten programs.
Quality rating and improvement system for continuous program improvement of early childhood programs. (Voluntary participation)		Develop technology platform for EXCELS and launch EXCELS website.	Met	Information about EXCELS available on marylandexcels.org Pilot and field test participants use EXCELS portal.
		Recruit, train, and determine reliability of assessors administering instruments to measure the quality of programs participating in EXCELS	In Progress	Assessors are currently trained in accordance with business standards. MSDE will focus on the recruitment of assessors for two separate instruments ³ . Still in the process of building capacity. Recruitment and training must be finalized by December 2013.
		Develop marketing plan and social networking protocols for EXCELS	In Progress	Marketing campaign for the field test is completed. Materials and communication protocols for public marketing will be created in the spring 2013.
		Submit draft of EXCELS validation study for review to U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services.	Met	EXCELS validation study, developed by JHU-CTE, internally reviewed by DECD's Research Advisory Group and national reviewers, was submitted in December 2012.

³ Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales (ECERS/ITERS/FDCERS); Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

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Project 3	RTT-ELC Funding	Milestone/Deliverable	Status (as of 12/31/12)	Comments
Quality Capacity Building	\$9,462,500	Establish master list of all early childhood programs located in the attendance areas of the state's Title 1 schools.	Met	Use of GIS mapping to identify licensed child care, Head Start, prekindergarten, and nursery schools, including information about each program. Master list will be used for Projects 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9.
Focus Coaching for child care and expansion of effective models (Judy Centers, Preschool for All)		Establish an Early Childhood Breakthrough Center infrastructure to build capacity among programs participating in EXCELS and to align early learning program with academic program at Title 1 schools.	Met	Modeled after MSDE's Breakthrough Center, the early childhood component will use the state's child care resource and referral agencies to work with early childhood programs in Title 1 communities. Completed pilot study in 12 regions. Established Cross Sectional Team with representation from several MSDE divisions as well as DHMH, and DHR.
		Establish 2 Judy Centers in Baltimore City and Prince George's County	Met	Judy Centers are based at BCPSS's Historic Samuel Coleridge Tayler and PGCPSS's Carmody Elementary Schools
		Establish 2 community hubs in Baltimore City	Met	Hubs are designed to coordinate social and education services for families of young children in under-resourced neighborhoods. Were established in the Park Heights and Cherry Hill neighborhoods.
		Expand 5 <i>Preschool for All</i> sites in Title 1 communities.	Met	The early childhood sites are early childhood programs non-public school sites. ⁴
		Establish a coaching and mentoring training program for community-based early childhood programs.	In Progress	Designed for children with IEP's or ISFP's. Identified JHU School of Continuing Education as the vendor to pilot and implement the project ⁵

⁴ at Howard County and Washington County Community Colleges, Downtown Baltimore Child Care, King's Academy Child Care (Worcester Co.), and Montessori Charter School at Crossway Communities (Montgomery Co.)

⁵ Pilot in Allegany County. MSDE's DSE/EIS will be working with Harford, Wicomico, Anne Arundel and Carroll Counties in the spring 2013.

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Project 4	RTT-ELC Funding	Milestone/Deliverable	Status (as of 12/31/12)	Comments
Promoting the Use of Statewide Early Learning Standards	\$1,146,904	Develop draft alignment document for Healthy Beginnings (Birth to 48 months), Common Core Standards for Prek, and Head Start Early Learning Framework	In Progress	Draft document was posted for public comment in August 2012. Need to develop prekindergarten Common Core standards for Science, Social Studies, and the Arts. Will revise the domain Social and Personal and name it Social Foundations. Final document expected to be completed December 2013.
Focus		Complete <i>Guide to Early Childhood Pedagogy</i> (Prek to 2)	In Progress	Established workgroup and recruited writer. Completed review of national and international research. Draft versions of several chapters have been reviewed. Guide and online resources to be completed by December 2013.
Prekindergarten alignment of Common Core Standards, development of Guide to Early Pedagogy, and dissemination of effective models in early reading and STEM		Expand VIOLETS ⁶ to 30 additional classrooms	In Progress	Initiated training for first cohort (30 classrooms) in Title 1 communities. A total of 150 classrooms will be participating by 2015.

⁶ Vocabulary Improvement and Oral Enrichment Through Stories (VIOLETS) is promoting tier 2 vocabulary comprehension for ELL and children with language deficiencies

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Project 5	RTT-ELC Funding	Milestone/Deliverable	Status (as of 12/31/12)	Comments
Professional Development (MMSR)	\$1,812,389	Revise existing MMSR PD program ⁷ to child care providers and provide five full-day sessions for 1,500 participants.	In Progress	PD modules have been revised and training of trainer sessions will be scheduled in February 2013. To be completed by June 2014.
Focus Dissemination of PD activities to licensed child care				

⁷ Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) professional development includes knowledge and skill development in Maryland’s early learning standards, instructional practices, formative assessment, and communication with families.

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Project 6	RTT-ELC Funding	Milestone/Deliverable	Status (as of 12/31/12)	Comments
Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS)	\$4,671,480	Establish governance and management structure for the CAS project.	Met	Executed MOA with the Ohio Dept. of Education, recruited staff, executed grant with JHU-CTE and WestEd, established a State Advisory Council which reports to the Governor’s Advisory Council on Early Care and Education, and established a national Technical Assistance Council with the support of CCSSO.
Focus		Develop assessment framework (Conceptual Design Document) and the test blueprint for the KEA and the formative assessment.	Met	Completed assessment framework in October 2012. Completed draft test blueprint for review by the State Advisory and the national TAC (scheduled for January and February 2013).
Development of a formative assessment (36-72 months) and a Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA)		Schedule cognitive interviews and develop assessment items for the KEA and the formative assessments.	In Progress	Activities are scheduled in January in both states.
		Develop professional development curriculum.	In progress	Designed for pre- and post-administration as well as administration of assessments. Completed professional development requirements survey in both states. Completion of PD curriculum by May 2013.
		Conduct business analysis of existing Maryland technology and data infrastructure and identify need for needs for new infrastructure.	In progress	Completed business analysis in both states. Identified infrastructure gaps (i.e., lack of WiFi access). Coordinate with PARCC related activities regarding technology in schools.
		Develop technology platform to support development and use of assessment data.	In progress	Use and customize existing CTE tech platforms (i.e., those being used for the current MMSR K Assessment.) Solicitation of vendor using touch screen technology.

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Project 7	RTT-ELC Funding	Milestone/Deliverable	Status (as of 12/31/12)	Comments
Child Development Innovations	\$1,354,099	Develop plan to train primary care providers to participate in the early childhood mental health consultation for pediatricians.	In progress	Plan was completed in partnership with the University of Maryland-Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), Training for 20 primary care providers will start by February 2013. Established statewide early childhood mental health consultation hotline to provide immediate consultation to pediatricians and family practices for young children birth to 8 years of age with social/emotional/behavioral concerns including psychotropic medication consultation and referrals to ECMH resources and services
Focus		Develop on-line training modules for the Social and Emotional Foundations of Early Learning (SEFEL)	In progress	Scripts for the online training have been developed and are being reviewed. Anticipated completion of the online training is June 30, 2013.
Addressing developmental and behavioral needs of young children		Finalize statewide developmental screening process and professional development plans.	In progress	Developmental Screening Workgroup has been formed to recommend developmental screening tools ⁸ to align with the Comprehensive Assessment System (CAS) and meet psychometric properties. Workgroup is currently working on business rules impacting early childhood programs such as costs of screening tools, when to screen, how to monitor, report, and design referral form.

⁸ The screening instruments are ASQ, ESI-R, PEDS, and Best Beginnings.

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Project 8	RTT-ELC Funding	Milestone/Deliverable	Status (as of 12/31/12)	Comments
Family Engagement Support	\$2,180,387	Establish Coalition for Family Engagement and develop the Maryland Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework	In progress	Five of eight meetings have been held and a consultant/writer has been recruited to write the document. Anticipated completion by March 31, 2013.
Focus		Conduct, at a minimum, 12 community meetings to solicit recommendations and articulate needs related to the family engagement framework.	Met	All 12 meetings were held across the state and informed the Coalition on its work.
Development of the Maryland Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework.		Establish leadership, governance and statewide infrastructure for Reach Out and Read (ROR).	Met	The Maryland Chapter of the AAP assumed leadership in establishing a statewide ROR project in all 24 jurisdictions. Local literacy councils will be incorporated in the local early childhood advisory councils (Project 1).
Establishment of Family Councils at public libraries, expansion of Reach Out and Read, , and dissemination of learning parties (i.e., parent, child, school transition activities before kindergarten)		Develop mechanism for book distribution to local literacy councils and establishing training opportunities for pediatricians.	Met	The Maryland Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is setting up literacy councils and working closely with physicians to train physicians. AAP started to distribute books to pediatric practices.
		Establish Family Library Councils and parent information centers at five library systems.	Met	Designed to plan for space, outreach, meeting agendas, speakers, and parent/child activities. Under the leadership of the Maryland Public Library Association, five library systems. ⁹

⁹ Baltimore, St. Mary's, Caroline, Frederick, Carroll Counties

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Project 9	RTT-ELC Funding	Milestone/Deliverable	Status (as of 12/31/12)	Comments
Workforce and Leadership Development	\$1,052,628	Establish committee to review and revise the current Core of Knowledge and Workforce Competency Framework (i.e., knowledge and skills of what early childhood educators should know and be able to do.)	In progress	Committee will align the competency framework with the Early Learning Standards, Common Core Standards, and the <i>Guide to Early Childhood Pedagogy</i> (Project 4). Committee report, including revised framework, due by March 31, 2013.
Focus		Establish the first cohort of 15 candidates to participate in the Maryland Approved Alternative Preparation Program for Early Childhood Education (MAAPP-ECE)	Met	Contracted with The New Teacher Project (TNTP) to conduct the 2-year preparation work leading to state certification of teaching.
Projects that strengthen the career pathways of those working in child care. Establish Early Learning Leadership Academies (Prek-2)		Conduct Early Childhood Leadership Academies (Prek-2) for 60 Title 1 schools	In progress	Received technical assistance and entered pre-planning phase, i.e., replacing vendor contract as planned with one customizing online professional development to support face to face sessions. Developed list of invitees using Title I schools that are currently designated Priority or Focus schools or with a School Performance Index (SPI) in Strands 4 or 5. Will include key early childhood programs in their attendance areas. Early Childhood Academies are projected to start in late spring 2013.

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Project 10	RTT-ELC Funding	Milestone/Deliverable	Status (as of 12/31/12)	Comments
Early Childhood Data System	\$4,764,115	Establish Early Childhood Data Warehouse (ECDW) interfaces with the Division's Child Care Administrative Tracking System (CCATS), Electronic Licensing Inspection System (ELIS), and MMSR Kindergarten Assessment datasets.	Met	The CCATS database includes all child care provider data, provider staff credentialing data, program accreditation data, and child care subsidy program data. The ELIS database provides detailed compliance data from child care provider licensing inspections. The annual MMSR datasets provide individual performance scores for children enrolled in public kindergarten.
Focus Integrates various data systems into the Early Childhood Data Warehouse as part of the MLDS		Establish ECDW interfaces with non-Division early childhood data sources maintained by MSDE.	In progress	Other MSDE data sources include the DSE/EIS Infants and Toddlers Program, Public Pre-K site and enrollment files, and the Child Food and Nutrition Program.
		Establish ECDW interfaces with early childhood data sources maintained outside of MSDE.	In progress	Non-MSDE data sources include the Maryland EXCELS maintained by Johns Hopkins/CTE, and the Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) program maintained by the University of Maryland. The interfaces with the Maryland EXCELS and ECMH databases are expected to be operational by February 2013. Arrangements are also underway to interface with Department of health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) data sources pertaining to child immunizations and health screenings, and with the Department of Human Resources (DHR) data sources on foster care and child adoption data. New data sources for the ECDW are being developed in connection with other Division RTT-ELC projects such as the Early Childhood Breakthrough Centers and family support programs.

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Project 10	RTT-ELC Funding	Milestone/Deliverable	Status (as of 12/31/12)	Comments
Early Childhood Data System	\$4,764,115	Establish the Child Enrollment and Attendance Record System (EARS) within the ECDW.	In progress	The EARS application is in the final stages of development and is expected to be ready for piloting for selected child care centers by April 2013. This system will capture continuing, real-time child enrollment and attendance data and staff-child assignment data from licensed child care programs. It is housed directly within the ECDW, and it will interface with MSDE/DAADS to permit unique student identifiers to be assigned to all children identified within EARS so that their status and performance can be tracked throughout K-12.

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