



**Department of
Early Education and Care**

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Thomas L. Weber, Commissioner



Massachusetts Department of
**ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY
EDUCATION**

February 4, 2014

NAME

Superintendent, School District

Address

Town, State, Zip

Dear District Leader,

We are writing to provide you with information about the Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment (MKEA), an important initiative focused on supporting individualized teaching and learning for kindergarten students. Your district will be participating in MKEA as part of the third implementation Cohort, and as a condition of receiving the Quality Full-Day Kindergarten Grant.

In collaboration with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE), the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) is implementing the Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment (MKEA) system to support school districts in using a formative assessment tool that measures growth and learning across all developmental domains during the child's kindergarten year. School districts in MKEA Cohort 3 will all utilize the *Teaching Strategies-GOLD* System (with training during 2014, and using the assessments first during the 2014-2015 school year).

The MKEA is designed to provide the following benefits:

- Assess children's growth and learning across all developmental domains (e.g., cognitive, physical, social, emotional);
- Inform instruction and strengthen professional development, leading to more individualized teaching and learning; and
- Provide schools with new sources of data to share with families through report cards and other forms of communication.

Training for teachers and other school staff on use of the formative assessment tool will take place beginning in the Spring of 2014 and continuing through the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year. Funding will be provided for costs associated with use and professional development associated with *Teaching Strategies-GOLD*. Specifically, through Race-to-the-Top Early Learning Challenge Funds, EEC will provide funds to cover the following costs:

- Online licenses for the estimated number of children to be enrolled in kindergarten for the 2014-2015 school year;
- Attendance at the April 7, 2014 conference on observation of young children;
- Professional development of all kindergarten teachers, kindergarten instructional assistants, and administrators on the GOLD system (approximately 2 days); and

- Limited substitute money to cover these costs while kindergarten staff participate in the professional development of the GOLD system during regular school hours.

Other costs related to implementation of the MKEA must be covered by other funding sources, such as the Quality Full-Day Kindergarten Grant. These costs may include:

- Stipends for professional development that takes place outside of regular school hours (after-school or summer months);
- Stipends for kindergarten staff to enter observational data into the online system;
- Technology purchases, such as iPads, to support the data collection and entry; and
- Additional professional development beyond what is listed above.

On April 7, 2014, EEC and ESE will be holding a conference on formative assessment for MKEA Cohort 3. It will be similar in structure to the conference for Cohorts 1 and 2 held in October, 2013. At that conference, over 450 participants attended a morning plenary session followed by a choice of five breakout sessions on skills and best practices for observation and documentation of young children. Information regarding registration will be sent to districts and posted on the MKEA webpage as the conference draws closer.

Additional Information

EEC has recently awarded a grant to the Collaborative for Educational Services (CES) to design, deliver and coordinate screening and assessment system training. **CES will be contacting districts in Cohort 3 to begin scheduling of training on the use of *Teaching Strategies-GOLD*.** CES will also be coordinating with Educator and Provider Support (EPS) grantees and Readiness Center grantees to ensure that districts engaged in formative assessment have adequate technical assistance and support following the training to integrate screening and assessment into their programs.

For information on MKEA, including tools, support, resources, and contact information for all grantees supporting assessment, please visit the webpage at <http://www.mass.gov/edu/birth-grade-12/early-education-and-care/mkea/>.

We would appreciate if you could forward this important information to personnel who will be working on MKEA in your district. Please direct any questions regarding MKEA to Pam Roux at EEC (Pam.Roux@state.ma.us / 617-988-7820).

Thank you for your participation in this important *Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant* initiative, and for your ongoing commitment to educating the children of Massachusetts. We look forward to partnering with you on MKEA.

Sincerely,



Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner
Elementary and Secondary Education



Thomas L. Weber, Commissioner
Early Education and Care