

Memo

To: Policy and Research Committee

Fr: Chau Ly, Program Manager and Liz Belsito, Project Director

Re: Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant Update

Date: April 7, 2014

The following is a summary of the key activities that have happened since the last Policy and Research Committee meeting.

2013 RTT-ELC Annual Performance Report

EEC is currently revising the 2013 Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant annual performance report based on comments from the Federal Project Officer. The revised performance report will be re-submitted by April 4th.

Museums and Libraries Project (project 4.4)

The Boston Children's Museum has completed materials related to our RTT work that are posted on their website and will be posted on EEC website in the near future. Materials were developed in four core areas: STEM, Kindergarten Readiness, Brain Building in Progress, and Literacy.

Birth to Third Grade Strategy Development (project 5.3) In March, EEC awarded 6 communities with Birth to Third Grade grants ranging from \$140,000 to \$200,000 to align their local birth to third grade infrastructure. The grantees include: Berkshire United Way, Cape Cod Collaborative, Childcare of the Berkshires, Community Day Care of Lawrence, Lowell Public Schools and Somerville Public Schools. EEC Staff, including the new Early Education Coordinator will conduct site visits with all of the grantees in May and June.

Standards Alignment (project 6.2)

Based on the recommendations from the alignment studies conducted by Dr. Lynn Kagan at Teachers College at Columbia University, the EEC will begin work in 2014 to develop Social Emotional Development and Approaches Towards Play and Learning standards to incorporate into the state's Preschool Learning Experiences and to develop professional development resources to support educators in using the newly developed standard to inform practice and child assessment. EEC is currently drafting a scope of work and will put it out to bid to find a vendor to revise the standards.

Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment (MKEA) (project 3)

EEC and ESE held a MKEA Leadership Kickoff meeting for Cohort 3 on March 7 at the Worcester Public Library. Over 100 school teachers and administrators attended to learn about MKEA. The state is modifying its MKEA plan to address the concerns of the school districts. The changes to MKEA include: a) Cohort 3 adopting the Teaching Strategies Gold tool (instead of having the option to choose between the Teaching Strategies Gold tool and the Work Sampling System tool); b) Cohort 1 and 2 school districts

that are currently using Work Sampling have the option to switch over to Teaching Strategies Gold if they choose; c) in the 2014-2015 school year, MKEA cohorts will only be required to assess children in two developmental domains (social-emotional and approaches to learning and play). The following school year, they will be required to assess children in all the developmental domains.

The Collaboration for Educational Services (CES), the state's assessment vendor, trained 11 trainers in the Teaching Strategies Gold Assessment tool and will be training additional trainers in the upcoming weeks. CES has also trained 2 districts in MKEA Cohort 3 in the Teaching Strategies Gold Assessment.

15 of the school districts from MKEA Cohort 1 and 2 have agreed to switch from using the Work Sampling tool to the Teaching Strategies Gold tool. These school districts will join Cohort 3 districts in the training for the Teaching Strategies Gold Assessment Tool.

EEC staff attended a Superintendent Working Group meeting to discuss districts' concerns and needs concerning the MKEA project; EEC staff were well received and report a growing positive relationship with school superintendents.

Staffing

Three new Race to the Top staff people came on board with a fourth starting in early April. Staff who started in March include the Liz Belsito as Project Director, Betsy Edes as Early Education Coordinator for the MKEA and Birth to 3rd Grade Alignment project and Joyce Nkwah as a Auditor. The fourth staff person, the Interagency Liaison will join EEC on April 7th.

RTT-ELC Budget

In March, EEC conducted an analysis of the overall RTT-ELC budget. Unspent funds from grant year 2 (calendar year 2013) were re-allocated to select projects in grant year 3 (calendar year 2014) and 4 (calendar year 2015). EEC re-allocated funding to support implementation and professional development support of MKEA, QRIS and Early English Development Standards.