



Department of Early Education and Care



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PATRICK ADMINISTRATION AWARDS \$480K GRANT TO SPRINGFIELD AGENCY TO INCREASE EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM QUALITY AND SUPPORT CHILDREN'S LEARNING OUTCOMES

\$3.17M in grants aimed at providing enhanced child services across Massachusetts

BOSTON – The Patrick Administration today announced \$3.17 million in grant awards statewide to strengthen the capacity of the early education and care and out-of-school time field to support improved outcomes for children and youth. Among those receiving the funds is Springfield's Preschool Enrichment Team, to provide services in western Massachusetts.

The Department of Early Education and Care is administering the funding to provide "Educator and Provider Support" (EPS) networks across the state. The EPS networks are regionally-based providers of workforce development, accreditation support, and other quality enhancement services for educators and programs. These resources will help early educators to increase their knowledge and skills and improve their classroom practice, in alignment with higher standards for early education and care programs.

"We know from academic research, from years of public policy and from our own experience as parents that investing in our children at a young age pays huge dividends for them and for our communities as a whole," said Governor Patrick. "Part of that is ensuring the people who care and teach our children are well prepared and supported in their work. These grants will go a long way in helping us enhance the quality of the early education and out-of-school services available to families across Massachusetts."

Specific resources that Preschool Enrichment Team and the other EPS networks across the state are providing for educators include coaching, mentoring and coursework that leads to attainment of core competencies, degrees, and other advanced qualifications including Child Development Associate credentials. These supports are designed to assist programs with achieving and maintaining accreditation, and meeting the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) standards as well as progressing to higher levels in the QRIS.

The EPS networks are comprised of local partners that help design and deliver a system of professional development opportunities which support quality enhancements that lead to improved outcomes for children. These partners include:

- Readiness Centers (regional consortia that includes institutions of higher education, educational services providers and businesses)
- Early Intervention programs (for children with special needs from birth to age three)
- Head Start/Early Head Start (for children from low income families birth to age five)
- Coordinated Family and Community Engagement networks
- Child Care Resource and Referral agencies
- Public schools

Preschool Enrichment Team and the other EPS networks are assessing the professional development needs in their respective communities and designing offerings that will support their educators and programs. Each EPS network maintains a calendar of opportunities that are provided in their region.

“We need strong teachers for all of our children, and especially in early education programs with the most vulnerable and at-risk populations,” said Secretary of Education Matthew Malone. “The same way that we want our children to always be learning and growing, we want our educators and programs to increase their capacity to support the future generations of the Commonwealth.”

“Investing in early educators and out-of-school time professionals is a great strategy for closing educational achievement gaps and improving program quality,” said EEC Acting Commissioner Tom Weber. “Ongoing professional development increases the capacity of our educators and programs to provide children with the foundation for future success.”

“These grants provide educator supports, including professional development and accreditation opportunities, which ensure a strong early educator workforce,” said Representative Alice Peisch, House Chair, Joint Committee on Education. “A strong workforce forms the foundation for quality programs that support the learning of the Commonwealth’s youngest children. I applaud the Administration for its dedication to securing a high quality early education for all children.”

There are four other Educator and Provider Support networks across the state in addition to Preschool Enrichment Team, as follows: Family Services of Central Massachusetts (Central), North Shore Community College (Northeast), Child Development and Education, Inc. (Southeast, Cape Cod, and Islands), and Action for Boston Community Development, Inc. (Greater Boston). These five agencies together will support an estimated 4,000 classroom educators and family child care providers in 351 communities across the state. The EPS networks are funded through the Department’s fiscal year 2014 state budget appropriation.

For more information about the Preschool Enrichment Team’s EPS network, contact:

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About the Department of Early Education and Care

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) is the lead agency for the regulation of early education and care and out-of-school time programs in Massachusetts and for the administration of child care financial assistance to low-income and other at-risk families. EEC licenses child care programs, residential programs, and

adoption/foster care placement agencies, including over 10,000 family child care and group/school age child care programs across the Commonwealth. EEC provides financial assistance for over 51,000 children to attend high-quality programs that support their growth, development and learning. In addition, EEC provides support for information and referral services, inclusive programming for children with special needs, parenting and family support, and professional development opportunities for educators in the early education and out of school time fields. EEC's mission is to provide a system of early education and care and out-of-school time in Massachusetts that provides all children with the necessary foundation for healthy and positive educational development and lifelong success.