

IMPROVING YOUNG CHILDREN'S SUCCESS: CALIFORNIA'S RACE TO THE TOP-EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE

OVERVIEW

California recently received a highly competitive Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) federal grant to improve the quality of early learning programs and close the achievement gap for vulnerable young children. Over the next three years, California, led by local efforts in 16 counties in collaboration with the California Department of Education, will work together to ensure positive outcomes for the state's infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

The end goal of California's RTT-ELC effort is that young children, particularly those who are low-income, English learners, or children with disabilities or developmental delays have access to high quality early learning programs so that they thrive in their early learning settings and succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

CALIFORNIA'S APPROACH

California is taking a unique approach that builds upon the state's local and statewide successes. This will allow locals to develop and maintain control over their own quality improvement processes and build off of local investments, from First 5 Commissions and others, while still allowing counties to coordinate efforts when feasible and share lessons learned.

WHAT IS A QRIS?

A Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is a set of tools to collect and disseminate information about, as well as improve the quality of early learning programs. They are based on a set of standards that describe the requirements center- and home-based early learning programs must meet in order to qualify for a QRIS rating -- the higher the quality the higher the rating. A QRIS can support early learning educators/providers with increased training, support and compensation; provide parents/families information on the type of learning and care their young children receive; and inform policymakers and the general public about the effectiveness of programs. Currently 25 states have a statewide QRIS.

CA RTT-ELC Facts at a Glance:

- Received \$52.6 million four-year grant (January 2012 - December 2015);
- One of only 9 states to win grant;
- CA will take a local approach with state support:

Local: Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) with three common tiers across counties, and setting goals that focus on child development and readiness for school; teachers and how they interact and support young children's learning and development; and program and classroom environment;

State: Ten one-time investments to support local efforts including teacher/provider training and professional development; kindergarten readiness; community care licensing; home visitation; developmental screenings; and evaluation of local QRIS efforts.

Nearly 75% of California's \$53 million RTT-ELC grant will be spent at the local level to support a voluntary network of 17 Regional Leadership Consortia, each led by an organization that is already operating or developing a Quality Rating and Improvement System, in 16 counties.

- + Alameda: First 5 Alameda
- + Contra Costa: First 5 Contra Costa
- + El Dorado: First 5 El Dorado
- + Fresno: Fresno County Office of Education
- + Los Angeles: LA STEP & LAUP
- + Merced: Merced County Office of Education
- + Orange: Orange County Office of Education
- + Sacramento: Sacramento County Office of Education
- + San Diego: First 5 San Diego
- + San Francisco: First 5 San Francisco
- + San Joaquin: First 5 San Joaquin
- + Santa Barbara: First 5 Santa Barbara
- + Santa Clara: First 5 Santa Clara
- + Santa Cruz: First 5 Santa Cruz
- + Ventura: First 5 Ventura
- + Yolo: First 5 Yolo

The number of children under five-years-of-age in these 16 counties is almost 1.9 million, representing 70 percent of the total children birth to five in California.

LOCAL ACTIVITIES & LOCAL QRIS

Consortia, comprised of 17 lead agencies in 16 counties, will bring together organizations in their regions with the same goal of improving the quality of early learning and expand their current areas of impact by inviting other programs to join their QRIS or reaching out to mentor other communities. By joining California's Race to the Top effort, the Consortia voluntarily agree to align their local QRIS to a common "Quality Continuum Framework" and will implement three common tiers in addition to any locally-determined tiers. In addition to a statewide evaluation of the common QRIS tiers, Consortia will also set local goals to improve the quality of early learning and development programs in the following three areas:

- *Child development and readiness for school;*
- *Teachers and how they interact and teach young children;*
- *Program and classroom environment.*

STATE ACTIVITIES

California will also use RTT-ELC funding to support one-time investments in state efforts improving the lives of young children.

Early Learning Educator Training & Professional Development

- Create a web-based overview of the California Collaborative for the Social and Emotional Foundations of Early Learning teaching pyramid and build a network of regional trainers and coaches to support local implementation.

- Provide "Train-the-trainer" instruction on the Program Administration Scale/Business Administration Scale training tools to California Early Childhood Mentor Program's Director Mentors and Family Child Care Home Mentors to support technical assistance to participating centers and family child care homes in the Consortia.
- Develop online training materials of existing early childhood content: (1) Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations; (2) Preschool Learning Foundations and Frameworks; and (3) the Environment Rating Scales, to increase provider access.
- Coordinate alignment between and within community colleges and public universities for three additional child development unit-based coursework areas: infant/toddler; children with special needs; and program administration.

Kindergarten Readiness Information

- Link Kindergarten entry assessment information from the Desired Results Developmental Profile - School Readiness (DRDP-SR) to the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS).

Community Care Licensing Information

- Enhance the Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division website to include educational and training materials for parents/families and child care providers.

Home Visiting

- Provide training to local California Home Visiting Program staff on implementing the Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC) practices and lessons from the “Three R’s of Early Childhood: Relationships, Resilience, and Readiness” DVD.

Developmental Screenings

- Provide coordinated training for Early Start early intervention program staff and support implementation of best practices in developmental and health screenings at the local level in collaboration with Consortia.
- Provide training on and distribute “Ages and Stages” developmental screening tools and materials to the Consortia and CDE Child Development Division contracted programs.

For More Information:

Visit the California Department of Education’s RTT-ELC website: www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/rt/

Email the California Department of Education, Child Development Division: rtt-elc@cde.ca.gov

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CHILDREN NOW

Children Now is the leading, nonpartisan, multi-issue research, policy development, and advocacy organization dedicated to promoting children’s health and education in California and creating national media policies that support child development.

www.childrennow.org

In Partnership with:



The California Child Care Resource & Referral Network promotes affordable, accessible quality care through research, education, policy, and advocacy.

www.rnetwork.org



ZERO TO THREE is a national, nonprofit organization that informs, trains, and supports professionals, policymakers, and parents in their efforts to improve the lives of infants and toddlers.

www.zerotothree.org



Advancement Project is a public policy change organization rooted in the civil rights movement. We engineer large-scale systems change to remedy inequality, expand opportunity and open paths to upward mobility. Our goal is that members of all communities have the safety, opportunity and health they need to thrive.

www.advancementprojectca.org



Preschool California is a nonprofit advocacy organization working to increase access to high-quality early learning for all of California’s children, starting with those who need it most.

www.preschoolcalifornia.org