# Taking on the Challenge:
# Building a Strong Foundation for Early Learning

Early Learning Challenge Summary Report

December 2017

# Taking on the Challenge: Building a Strong Foundation for Early Learning

## Early Learning Challenge Summary Report

## 2017

Suggested citation: Caron, B., Kendall, R., Wilson, G., and Hash. M. (2017). *Taking on the Challenge: Building a Strong Foundation for Early Learning.* Early Learning Challenge Summary Report. AEM Corp. Herndon, VA.

This report was developed as part of the Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance (ELC TA) Program through a contract from the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families, #ED-ODS-12-A-0019/0020. The findings, conclusions and opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. ELC TA is administered by AEM Corporation, Herndon, VA.

# Table of Contents

## List of Tables



## List of Figures

# Executive Summary

*Picture children in three early learning classrooms.*

*Picture them having vastly different learning experiences.*

*Picture directors making decisions based on disconnected standards and funding streams.*

*Now envision State agencies creating a systems-level response to quality.*

*Now envision ALL children entering kindergarten ready to learn.*

The Early Learning Challenge (ELC) program awarded more than $1billion in four-year grants to 20 States to implement comprehensive and cohesive high-quality early learning systems that support young children with high needs and their families. Congress made this unprecedented investment in early learning because the research is clear that children who enter kindergarten ready to succeed are more likely to read by 3rd grade and thrive in high school and beyond.

A key lever in making these improvements was the enhancement of States' Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS). A QRIS is designed to measure, rate, and dissemination information about the quality of the early learning and development programs that participate in the QRIS. Through ELC, States worked across agencies to improve, or in some cases, reinvent their QRIS.

This report summarizes the progress ELC States made since the program began in 2012. It includes selected examples of key initiatives States undertook to create a comprehensive system of high-quality programs for young children and their families. Specifically, it looks at States' efforts to refine their QRIS; examine progress elements (including early learning standards, screenings, and assessment systems); engage and support families; support the early learning workforce; enhance early childhood data systems; and foster community connections. The content was drawn from States' ELC Annual and Final Performance Reports.

As a result of the efforts States have undertaken, it can now be said that more children with high needs are enrolled in high-quality programs and more programs participate in the States' QRIS.

- The number of programs that participate in their States' QRIS increased by 92 percent, from 37,630 programs to nearly 72,000 programs by 2016.
- More than 14,600 programs moved up into the top tiers of their QRIS, an increase of 162 percent. By 2016, nearly 24,000 programs were in the top tiers of their States' QRIS.
- More children with high needs are enrolled in programs and services that are in the top tiers of their QRIS.
    - In 2016, more than a quarter million children were enrolled in high-quality programs that accepted child care subsidies through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), an increase of 101 percent.
    - More than 300,000 children were enrolled in high-quality State-funded preschool programs in 2016, an increase of 221 percent.

  - Nearly a quarter million children were enrolled in high-quality Early Head Start and Head Start programs in 2016, an increase of 175 percent.

States made progress in developing and strengthening their comprehensive early learning and development systems.

- States improved program quality by providing technical assistance, professional development opportunities, scholarships, merit awards, and grants.
- Families learned about the value and availability of high-quality early learning programs and services through media campaigns, websites, parent cafés, and other strategies.
- States enhanced their early learning standards and aligned them with program standards that were adopted across agencies.
- States addressed the importance of developmental screenings. Over the course of the grant, the number of children who received regularly scheduled development screening increased by 32 percent, to nearly 775,000 children.
- Most States enhanced their existing kindergarten entry assessment (KEA) or implemented new KEAs to measure children's progress at the beginning of kindergarten. Others developed new tools or adapting commercially developed tools for use as their KEA.
- States provided families with information about activities to support their children's development. They developed culturally appropriate program standards for family engagement and trained educators to engage and support families.
- States aligned professional development requirements with early learning and development standards, and they strengthened the workforce through professional development opportunities, career ladders, enhanced coursework, and improved workforce registries.
- States built integrated data systems to streamline data collection and reporting, minimize data duplication, and enable programs and stakeholders to make data-driven decisions and programmatic improvements.
- States empowered local communities to improve opportunities for children and families at the community level.

States used the ELC program to make advancements and drive positive changes in their early learning and development systems, often in the face of significant challenges. Other States are benefiting from these experiences and lessons as they work on improving their own systems.

And the work continues. Every year a new set of children gets ready to enter kindergarten. So, States continue to find ways to answer critical questions, address complex challenges, and implement innovative solutions to ensure that their early learning systems evolve and improve.

States continue this work with the enduring vision that all young children will have a strong foundation for success.

# ELC Overview and Background

## ELC Framework for Reform

The Early Learning Challenge (ELC) program, authorized by Congress in 2011, awarded grants to 20 States to support their efforts to implement an integrated system of high-quality early learning programs and bring promising practices to the broader early learning field.

The fundamental goals of the ELC program were to improve the quality of early learning programs and services and increase access to those programs and services for young children with high needs so they enter kindergarten ready to succeed. The key to achieving these complex goals under ELC was developing a comprehensive, State-level early learning system that reflects a unified approach to supporting young children with high needs and their families. Such a comprehensive and coordinated system requires effective governance structures and broad-based participation by key agencies and stakeholders in the State.

The theory of change that underlies the ELC program includes five key reform levers that, if influenced positively, lead to a comprehensive system of high-quality programs for young children and their families. These individual reform levers are: Strengthening Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS); Examining progress elements (including early learning standards, screenings, and assessment systems); Engaging and supporting families; Enhancing early childhood data systems; and Strengthening the early learning workforce. Figure 1 represents the framework that serves as the foundation of an effective early learning and development reform agenda focused on school readiness and ongoing educational success for all children.


*Figure 1. ELC Framework and Theory of Change*

States used this framework for reform when developing their ELC plans. Each of the framework components is described in detail in the sections of this report, along with examples of how States have addressed these areas in their State plans.

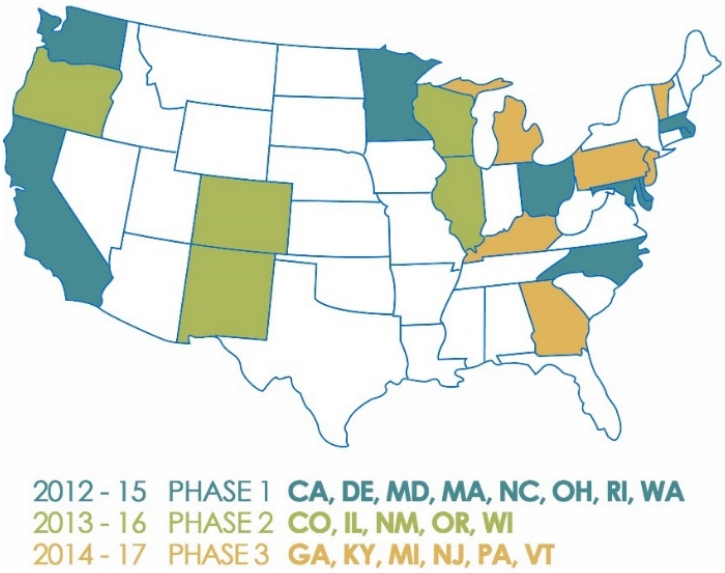
When submitting their grant applications, all States were required to address the core components of improving their comprehensive State systems and their QRIS. Beyond those fundamental requirements, States identified specific components within "focused investment areas" that they believed would have the greatest impact for children and families within their unique State contexts.[i] Table 1 shows the core areas and focused investment areas addressed by each of the ELC grantees.

| Core Areas and Focused Investment Areas Addressed in ELC State Plans | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Core Areas (Required for all Grantees)** | | |
| Section A: Successful State Systems | Total Number of States Addressing Area | List of States Addressing this Area in their ELC Plans |
| Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development | 20 | All States |
| Articulating the State's rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals | 20 | All States |
| Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State | 20 | All States |
| Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant | 20 | All States |
| Section B: High-Quality Accountable Programs | # of States Addressing Area | List of States Addressing this Area |
| Developing and adopting a common, statewide tiered quality rating and improvement system | 20 | All States |
| Promoting participation in the State's tiered QRIS | 20 | All States |
| Rating and monitoring early learning and development programs | 20 | All States |
| Promoting access to high-quality early learning and development programs for children with high needs | 20 | All States |
| Validating the effectiveness of State tiered QRIS | 20 | All States |
| **Focused Investment Areas** | | |
| Section C: Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children | # of States Addressing Area | List of States Addressing this Area |
| Developing and using statewide, high-quality early learning and development standards | 18 | CA, CO, DE, GA, KY, MD, MA, MN, NJ, NM, NC, OH, OR, PA, RI, VT, WA, WI |
| Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems | 11 | CO, GA, MD, MA, MN, NM, NC, OH, PA, RI, VT |
| Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of children with high needs to improve school readiness | 8 | CA, DE, MD, MI, NJ, NC, OR, VT |
| Engaging and supporting families | 10 | GA, KY, MD, MA, MI, NJ, NC, PA, WA, WI |
| Section D: Supporting and Strengthening the Early Childhood Workforce | # of States Addressing Area | List of States Addressing this Area |
| Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials | 14 | CO, DE, GA, KY, MD, MN, NJ, NM, OH, OR, PA, RI, WA, WI |
| Supporting early childhood educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities | 15 | CA, CO, DE, GA, IL, MD, MA, MI, MN, NM, NC, OR, PA, RI, VT |
| Section E: Measuring Outcomes and Progress | # of States Addressing Area | List of States Addressing this Area |
| Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry | 19 | CA, CO, DE, GA, IL, KY, MD, MA, MI, MN, NJ, NM, NC, OH, OR, PA RI, VT, WA |
| Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies | 16 | GA, IL, KY, MD, MA, MI, MN, NJ, NM, NC, OH, OR, PA, RI, VT, WI |

*Table 1. Core Areas and Focused Investment Areas Addressed by ELC Grantees*

# ELC Grantee States

The ELC grants were awarded in three phases. The initial nine Phase 1 State grants (**California, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island,** and **Washington**) were awarded in 2012. The following year, five Phase 2 States (**Colorado, Illinois, New Mexico, Oregon,** and **Wisconsin**) received initial funding, and received supplementary funding in 2014. A new grant competition was held in 2014, with minor adjustments to requirements based on lower funding levels. Six Phase 3 States (**Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, New Jersey, Pennsylvania,** and **Vermont**) received funding under that competition. Each grant cycle was four years with the option of a fifth no-cost extension year. The Federal investment in these 20 ELC grants amounted to just over $1 billion. This discretionary grant program is administered jointly by the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services.
The 20 ELC grantee States, their phases, and funding amounts are represented in Figure 2.[ii]




**ELC FEDERAL GRANT AMOUNTS**

**PHASE 1 GRANTEES 2012-2015**

| | |
|---|---|
| California | $75,000,000 |
| Delaware | $49,676,744 |
| Maryland | $49,999,143 |
| Massachusetts | $50,000,000 |
| Minnesota | $44,858,313 |
| North Carolina | $69,991,121 |
| Ohio | $69,993,362 |
| Rhode Island | $50,000,000 |
| Washington | $60,000,000 |

**PHASE 2 GRANTEES 2013-2016**

| | |
|---|---|
| Colorado | $44,888,832 |
| Illinois | $52,498,043 |
| New Mexico | $37,500,000 |
| Oregon | $30,763,353 |
| Wisconsin | $34,052,084 |

**PHASE 3 GRANTEES 2014-2017**

| | |
|---|---|
| Georgia | $51,739,254 |
| Kentucky | $44,347,932 |
| Michigan | $51,736,815 |
| New Jersey | $44,286,179 |
| Pennsylvania | $61,733,877 |
| Vermont | $36,930,618 |

**Total ELC Funding: $1,000,197,700**

*Figure 2: Early Learning Challenge Grantees and Funding Amounts*

A distinct focus of ELC is ensuring that children with the highest needs have increased access to high-quality early learning experiences. A child with high needs is defined under ELC as a child from birth through kindergarten entry who is from a low-income family or otherwise in need of special assistance and support. This definition includes children who have disabilities or developmental delays; who are English learners; who reside on "Indian lands"; who are migrant, homeless, or in foster care; and other children as identified by the State.[iii]

According to the most recent census data, there are nearly **12 million children** under the age of 6 living in the 20 ELC Grantee States. Forty-six percent of these children are living in low-income families (with a family income of less than twice the Federal poverty threshold). Collectively, the ELC Grantee States are implementing initiatives that have the potential to reach more than half of all low-income children under the age of 6 in the nation. Table 2 shows the numbers and percentages of children living in low-income families in each of the ELC States and nationally.

| Children Under Age 6 in Low-Income Families in ELC States | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Grantee** | **Total number of children under age 6** | **Total number of children under age 6 in low-income families** | **Percent of children under age 6 in low-income families** |
| California | 2,882,449 | 1,368,566 | 47% |
| Colorado | 397,334 | 166,530 | 42% |
| Delaware | 64,685 | 27,712 | 43% |
| Georgia | 784,724 | 422,012 | 54% |
| Illinois | 941,411 | 404,997 | 43% |
| Kentucky | 323,227 | 169,138 | 52% |
| Maryland | 424,061 | 143,150 | 34% |
| Massachusetts | 428,387 | 137,930 | 32% |
| Michigan | 680,020 | 337,758 | 50% |
| Minnesota | 411,410 | 149,243 | 36% |
| New Jersey | 629,117 | 220,906 | 35% |
| New Mexico | 163,455 | 96,052 | 59% |
| North Carolina | 724,479 | 388,225 | 54% |
| Ohio | 825,820 | 411,240 | 50% |
| Oregon | 269,911 | 133,414 | 49% |
| Pennsylvania | 842,084 | 358,115 | 43% |
| Rhode Island | 65,780 | 29,153 | 44% |
| Vermont | 36,668 | 15,715 | 43% |
| Washington | 512,831 | 219,851 | 43% |
| Wisconsin | 410,114 | 178,315 | 43% |
| **All 20 Grantees** | **11,817,967** | **5,378,022** | **46%** |
| **National** | **23,187,636** | **10,875,860** | **47%** |
| Percentage of children in ELC States under 6 in low-income families compared to National total | | | **51%** |

*Table 2: Population of Children under Age 6 Who are Living in Low-Income Families*

*Sources: Data for children ages 0–5 from the Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau for data year 2012. Data for children below 200 percent FPL from the American Community Survey (ACS) for data year 2012.*

# Building and Enhancing Coordinated Early Learning Systems

Services and supports that promote young children's early learning and development are delivered through programs overseen by a variety of State agencies. Each of these programs has its own funding stream, accountability requirements, personnel and program standards, and data collection and reporting procedures. This patchwork of services and systems can lead to inefficiencies, duplication or disruption of services, confusion for families, and ultimately lost opportunities for young children.

The drafters of the ELC program challenged States to "sustain and build on the strengths of these programs, acknowledge and appreciate their differences, reduce inefficiency, improve quality, and ultimately deliver a coordinated set of services and experiences that support young children's success in school and beyond". [iv] In addition, States were required to have a functioning State Advisory Council as a grant requirement.

Successful coordination of services into a comprehensive and cohesive early learning system requires meaningful partnerships and effective governance structures to guide and support the work. ELC States took up the challenge to develop governance structures that support the implementation of multiple plans and approaches. They also made efforts to ensure that the partners within the State worked from a single vision and coordinated their efforts to create systems-level solutions that stand the test of time and survive beyond the current leadership.

## Partnerships with Participating State Agencies

An important focus of the ELC program was encouraging States to bring together the various sectors in their States to coordinate their early learning systems. At a minimum, ELC Grantees were required to engage agencies that administer the following programs: Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), State-funded preschool, home visiting, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Head Start State Collaboration Grant, Title V Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant, the State's Child Care Licensing, and the State Education Agency (see Text Box on page 9 for a complete definition of Participating State Agencies.) In practice, there has been variability in the degree to which States actively engaged these agencies in their ELC grant activities. States varied in the number of major agencies that administer their early childhood programs and in the structures they use to oversee these programs. Some States centralized the management of all projects under a single entity. In other States, individual projects within the overall ELC State plan were managed by different agencies. The following examples illustrate efforts made by States to engage participating agencies in their ELC work.

A number of States established leadership teams with representatives from each of their Participating State Agencies.

It is important to note that despite the establishment of participating agency leadership teams, there were many instances in which key representatives within the leadership teams left their positions and new relationships had to be formed.

**California's** Early Learning Challenge Integrated Action Team was charged with active coordination of project implementation.

**Georgia** established an Implementation Team composed of key staff members from participating State agencies responsible for implementing the ELC projects. This cross-agency implementation team meets regularly to review progress on Georgia's scope of work, troubleshoot any challenges, and ensure collaboration across grant projects.

Membership in **Illinois'** Interagency Team evolved over time to include more participating agencies.

**Massachusetts** established interagency partnerships with several of their participating State agencies, including agencies that were not required under the ELC grant, such as the Office of Immigrants and Refugees.

**Minnesota** established an advisory group made up of representatives of participating programs and instituted multiple cross-sector and cross-agency feedback loops to solicit input on project activities.

### Participating State Agencies

Participating State Agencies are State agencies that administer public funds related to early learning and development and are participating in the State's ELC Plan. Required Participating State Agencies under the program included:

- Agencies that administer or supervise the administration of CCDF;
- Section 619 of Part B of IDEA and Part C of IDEA programs;
- State-funded preschool;
- Home visiting;
- Title I of ESEA;
- Head Start State Collaboration Grant;
- Title V Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant;
- State's Child Care Licensing Agency; and
- State Education Agency.

The State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care and other State agencies, such as the agencies that administer or supervise the administration of Child Welfare, Mental Health, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, can be participating State agencies if they elect to participate in the ELC State Plan.

Several States have actively engaged their State Early Learning or Early Childhood Advisory Councils in their ELC Work. Advisory Councils in **Illinois, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island** and **Vermont** play key advisory roles in their grant implementation. **North Carolina's** Early Childhood Advisory Council served as their lead oversight agency. A number of the ELC States utilized their Advisory Councils to

engage stakeholders in the planning and implementation of ELC project activities as well.

## Governance

Effective governance is critically important in supporting the State's efforts to implement a comprehensive, integrated system of high-quality early learning programs and services. A well-functioning governance structure allows participating State agencies and other partners to work together to benefit young children and their families. Leaders within such a structure must have the authority and responsibility to set policies that facilitate interagency coordination, streamline decision-making, effectively allocate funds and other resources, make program decisions, collect and interpret data, and create opportunities for long-term sustainability.

There are four basic types of governance structures for early care and education programs and functions in ELC States. Each of these types of governance structure has its unique advantages and disadvantages.

- Programs and functions are consolidated in an independent State agency focused specifically on early education and care (e.g., **Georgia** and **Massachusetts**).
- Programs and functions are consolidated in a State agency that has broader responsibilities beyond early education, typically the State Education Agency (e.g., **Maryland** and **New Mexico**).
- Programs and functions are administered by multiple agencies but are under the purview of a coordinating office. This management structure crosses State agencies to create unified policy and

implementation (e.g., **Pennsylvania**).

- Programs and functions are administered by multiple agencies with no formal coordination or collaboration structure.

Despite the type of structure in place, many ELC States were challenged by leadership changes in the State that jeopardized their ELC governance structure during the years of their grants. For example,

**Illinois** faced leadership changes across several State agencies and unprecedented State budget challenges. Despite these challenges and a change in Governor, Illinois was able to maintain their initial ELC governance structure.

**Kentucky** experienced significant governance challenges due to a gubernatorial change that resulted in new leadership appointments in both the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet and the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, which oversee a number of ELC grant projects.

Gubernatorial changes in **Rhode Island** resulted in a reconvened Children's Cabinet, which had an impact on the leadership structure for the grant.

For more information on ELC governance structures, see the Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance publication, *Early Learning Governance in Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge States*.

# Legislation, Policies, and Executive Orders

The ELC grant helped States target increased attention to early childhood programs and services in their States. Legislation, executive orders, and agencies' regulations and policies enacted during the ELC grant period had an impact on the implementation of the grant and the quality of early childhood education.

States were affected by Executive Orders and budgeting decisions.

In **Illinois**, the lack of a FY 2016 State budget and the resulting fiscal crisis contributed to significant instability in the early childhood system and impacted their ability to implement many ELC initiatives.

In **Michigan**, Executive Order 2015-4 created a new Department of Health and Human Services, and child care licensing was moved to the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, both of which necessitated learning new policies and procedures.

In **Rhode Island**, the effects of an Executive Order 15-07 to reduce regulatory burden and the changes resulting from new agency leadership significantly delayed the promulgation of revised regulations for family child care.

Several States passed legislation that used the State's quality rating and improvement system as a key framework for improving the quality of early learning.

**California**'s FY 2014–15 Budget Act process (Trailer Bill - Senate Bill 858) established a State QRIS Block Grant program for California's State Preschool.

**Kentucky** passed HB 234 in 2015 that requires all publicly funded early learning and development programs to participate in the State's QRIS.

In 2013, **Rhode Island** implemented a regulatory rule change that required participation in their QRIS for all programs accepting the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP).

**Vermont's** Universal Prekindergarten Act 166 of 2014 established universal preschool for 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds. Preschool programs that met quality requirements (national accreditation, 4 or 5 stars, or 3 stars with an approved plan) were eligible for tuition reimbursement of $3,000 per child.

**Washington's** Early Start Act of 2015 requires programs that serve families using subsidies be rated 3, 4 or 5 in Washington's QRIS by 2019. Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) providers must earn a rating of 4 or 5. In addition, the State must develop single set of standards and address diversity barriers.

Additional legislative actions and policy decisions affect States' early care and education systems:

The **North Carolina** Kindergarten Entry Assessment is now a statewide mandate for all kindergarten children.

**Oregon's** Early Learning Division is strengthening their professional development system.

In **Rhode Island**, family child care providers have the right to union representation.

In **Vermont**, the Health Department has the authority to collect developmental screening data.

Many States experienced legislative, policy and regulatory changes to accommodate new requirements from the Federal Child Care and Development Block Grant related to eligibility, background checks, licensing caseloads, and consumer- friendly websites.

## Ohio Legislative Changes

House Bill 64 passed in 2015, required identification of specific components, goals, and benchmarks to be included in *Step Up To Quality*, **Ohio's** QRIS. It requires instructional time for homes and centers in QRIS and mandates State-funded preschool programs and preschool special education classroom be rated by July 1, 2018. It also requires all centers and Type A homes using public funds be 3, 4, or 5 star rated by July 1, 2025. In addition, it requires common application and program eligibility for publicly funded programs across agencies. Ohio's Administrative Code defined minimum instruction time for *Step Up to Quality*, and adjusted co-payment requirements and eligibility criteria for families. Additionally, the Ohio Departments of Job and Family Services and Education expanded Ohio's 3 star *Step Up To Quality* system to a 5 star system.


# STRENGTHENING QUALITY RATING AND IMPROVEMENT SYSTEMS

The ELC program provided an unprecedented opportunity for States to make improvements in their early learning and development systems for children from birth through age 5 that could lead to higher quality programs and increased access to those programs for significantly more children with high needs. A key lever in making these improvements is the enhancement of States' Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS). A QRIS is a system that is designed to measure, rate, and dissemination information about the quality of the early learning and development programs that participate in the QRIS. Most States' QRIS are voluntary systems, meaning that some or all programs are not required to participate.

## QRIS in ELC States

States' QRIS were initially designed to address quality in center-based child care programs and family child homes and built higher levels, or tiers, of quality based on State child care licensing regulations.

States that applied for ELC grants were awarded points by grant reviewers based on their plans to improve, or in some cases reinvent, their QRIS. To increase access to high-quality programs and services for all children in every type of early learning and development program, ELC required States to expand QRIS beyond child care programs. ELC required States to design and implement a common, statewide QRIS in which all State-regulated early learning and development programs had incentive to participate, with an emphasis on programs run by participating State agencies (for a list of Participating State Agencies, see the text box on p. 9). In addition, ELC required States to conduct validation studies of their QRIS systems to determine whether the tiers in their QRIS reflected meaningful differences in the levels of program quality, as well as to measure other elements of the system. Links to individual validation studies that have been completed by ELC States are included in individual State profiles that accompany this report.

States focused their ELC funding on improving and enhancing their QRIS at a variety of levels. Some States focused initially on expanding the system to include participation of a broader range of early learning and development programs. Other States could move forward more quickly with providing supports to improve program quality. All States worked toward increasing the number of children with high needs in programs that were of high quality.

The key components of an effective QRIS system that States addressed in their grants include bringing the QRIS statewide; expanding program eligibility in the QRIS; enhancing program standards; refining program monitoring and accountability processes; providing supports and incentives to improve quality; and communicating about the QRIS to families and consumers (see Figure 3).

QRIS are complex and multi-faceted systems so only a cross section from the various types of State improvement activities are included in this report. For additional examples of the efforts States are making to enhance their QRIS, see the BUILD E-Book Chapter 8: Impact of the Early Learning Challenge on State Quality Rating and Improvement Systems and the QRIS Compendium.

## Building and Enhancing Statewide Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

Some States used the ELC grant funds as an opportunity to strengthen existing QRIS, while others overhauled or even completely re-created their systems. **North Carolina**, for example, had a mature QRIS at the beginning of their ELC grant, so they were able to devote energy and resources to improving quality of programs within the system. Similarly, **Washington** has had 100 percent program participation in their QRIS since the beginning of their grant. Some States, however, including **Colorado, Illinois,** and **Ohio**, have redesigned their QRIS through their ELC grants. **Ohio** moved from a three-star system to a five-star system. **Illinois** transitioned from *QUALITY COUNTS* to a new system, *ExceleRate IL*. **Kentucky, New Mexico,** and **Pennsylvania** are also revising their systems and are in the process of rolling out these new systems. **Wisconsin** made substantial revisions to their QRIS during their grant period.


*Figure 3. Components of an Effective QRIS*

## QRIS Standards

As part of improving and enhancing their QRIS, many States revised and expanded their QRIS program standards.

**Delaware** established "Essential Standards" for their 4 and 5 star level programs in their QRIS, *Delaware Stars*. Essential standards include annual child developmental screenings, child formative assessments, early childhood curriculum and child observations, administrator credential requirements, and curriculum and assessment credential requirements.

**Illinois** established common QRIS standards for licensed child care centers, school-based preschool classrooms, and Head Start/Early Head Start programs. They cross-walked their standards across all types of settings, including licensed child care centers and family homes, State-funded preschools, and Head Start programs.

***Colorado*** *Shines* established five categories of quality standards for their QRIS: 1) workforce qualifications and professional development; 2) family partnerships; 3) leadership, management, and administration; 4) learning environment; and 5) child health.

**Kentucky** established programs standards in four domains: Family and Community Engagement; Classroom and Instructional Quality; Staff Qualifications and Professional Development; and Administrative and Leadership Practices. Quality coaches work with licensed programs to help them submit evidence for verification for their Kentucky *All STARS* ratings. Kentucky ties professional development opportunities and incentives to these standards.

**Michigan's** QRIS, *Great Start to Quality*, is organized around five standards of quality: Curriculum and Instruction; Staff Qualifications and Professional Development; Family and Community Partnerships; Environment; and Administration and Management – with identified indicators of high quality within each category.

**Pennsylvania,** for their revised *STARS*, created three program tracks of evidence–based standards, individual improvement activities, and monitoring and reporting.

Several States aligned their QRIS with their States' early learning and development standards (e.g., **Michigan, Vermont**).

(For examples of State's efforts to enhance early learning and development standards, see the Examining Progress section of this report.)

## Monitoring and Accountability

QRIS accountability systems involve examining and rating program quality as well as ongoing monitoring. States have enhanced their rating, monitoring, and accountability processes in a number of ways.

**Colorado** made it easier for programs to get rated by helping them get onto the QRIS rating schedule and into the rating pipeline.

**Georgia** and **Kentucky** expanded their rating assessment teams by adding more raters to streamline the process and reduce rating times.

**Illinois, Kentucky, North Carolina**, and **Ohio** put effort into providing additional training to their QRIS raters.

In **New Jersey**, raters undertook a process of guided practice, which included lessons on developmentally appropriate practices, reviews of completed assessments, and simulated ratings using video clips of real situations.

States have also offered incentives for programs to get re-rated. For example, **Georgia** provides supports to programs that want to get re-rated, and **Washington** offers one free re-rating to providers that do not rate a Level 3 within an identified time frame.

# Increasing Program Enrollment in QRIS

A primary lever for the ELC program was to improve the quality of all types of programs by enrolling them in the States' QRIS. In some States, participation in these QRIS is legislatively mandated or defined by administrative rules, and in other States participation is voluntary for some or all types of programs. Variations in State performance on the program participation measure often reflects whether participation is voluntary for all programs, required for all programs that are licensed by the State, required for all early education programs that receive public funding, or required for all programs that receive CCDF (subsidy) funding.

Participation in the QRIS is voluntary in 12 ELC States (**California, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Pennsylvania,** and **Vermont**). Regardless of the voluntary nature of these systems, many States have been successful at recruiting and enrolling substantial percentages of programs into the system. For example, all State-funded preschool programs and all Head Start/Early Head Start programs participate in the QRIS in **Delaware**. In **Michigan,** all licensed and registered programs and providers are in the QRIS and are assigned an "Empty Star" until they volunteer to be rated for one of the published star levels.

> Washington's QRIS has attained scale across the State, has a clear set of supports for providers to increase their quality, and has significant public and political support to ensure its future.

In three ELC States (**Colorado, Illinois,** and **North Carolina**), all licensed programs are assigned to the first level of the QRIS until they meet additional requirements. There are no requirements that programs be rated beyond the licensing requirement of the first level. **Ohio** requires all publicly funded programs to participate in the QRIS. **Kentucky** passed legislation mandating the participation of publicly funded child care centers and certified family child care homes in their revised QRIS.

The remaining four ELC States (**Maryland, Rhode Island, Washington,** and **Wisconsin**) require programs that participate in the child care subsidy program to participate in QRIS.

Increasing the number of programs in a State's QRIS requires thoughtful planning and a multipronged approach. Initially, QRIS focused on enrolling child care programs into the system. With ELC funding, these systems have further evolved, and the emphasis has shifted to bringing more programs, such as State-funded preschools and Early Head Start and Head Start, into the QRIS in an effort to ensure that all families of children birth through age 5 have access to quality early learning opportunities regardless of where they receive services. ELC States are also exploring ways to include home-based programs that have not traditionally been included in the QRIS, such as IDEA Part C early intervention services and home visiting programs. Figure 4 shows the progress ELC States are making to include more programs in the QRIS.


*Figure 4. Increasing the Number of Programs Participating In the QRIS*

Overall, ELC Grantees combined showed a 92 percent increase in the number of programs that participate in their States' QRIS. At the time of their applications (baseline), there were 37,630 programs enrolled across all 20 ELC States QRIS'. Nearly 72,000 programs were enrolled by the end of 2016 – an increase of 34,361 programs. The most success has been seen in enrolling more CCDF-funded programs, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, and State-funded preschool programs in the QRIS.

Based on their unique State contexts, States have emphasized bringing different types of programs into the QRIS, with some States making concerted efforts to engage certain program types or targeting particular communities.

**Georgia** increased the number of licensed child care centers in the system and used community-based recruitment efforts in their Zones.

**Michigan** and **Oregon** worked to engage tribal communities and to overcome barriers to their participation in the QRIS.

**Kentucky** and **Michigan** focused efforts on enrolling regulation-exempt family providers into their QRIS.

**Illinois** and **North Carolina** used their Child Care Resource and Referral agency (CCR&R) Quality Specialists to help engage community programs in the QRIS.

**Illinois** piloted expedited pathways for Head Start programs to achieve quality ratings. As a result of the findings from the pilot, all Head Start programs will be presumptively eligible for the Silver Circle of Quality based on Federal Head Start monitoring results.

CCR&R staff have played a number of central roles in **Georgia, Illinois,** and **North Carolina's** QRIS efforts, including providing professional development to raters and technical assistance to programs as they proceed through the rating process.

**Ohio** offered mini-grants to organizations to help their programs become rated.

**Oregon** increased participation for programs serving children of color, children of diverse language families, children in poverty, and children in rural communities. They are also working with Head Start programs to identify system barriers and create system alignment.

**Pennsylvania** established the Start-Up Technical Assistance Peer Mentoring program to help recruit new providers in moderate-high risk and high-risk counties.

Some States targeted efforts toward enrolling more IDEA Part B, section 619 programs into their QRIS.

**Delaware, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Ohio,** and **Rhode Island** successfully increased participation of their Part B, section 619 programs in the QRIS. In addition: **Georgia** incorporated an inclusion endorsement in their QRIS; **Illinois** implemented an Award of Excellence for Inclusion of Children with Special Needs that programs could earn at the highest tier of their system; and **Wisconsin** invested in a variety of training and professional development activities aimed at supporting inclusive practices.

**Minnesota** saw increases, but as a result of recent changes in Minnesota's QRIS, IDEA Part B, section 619 and Part C programs are no longer eligible to participate in *Parent Aware*.

Limitations in State data systems have made it challenging for most States to report consistent data on some program types in their QRIS, including IDEA Part B, 619 and Part C programs, and ESEA Title I programs. For this reason, aggregate data are reported here only for CCDF-funded programs, State-funded preschool programs, and Early Head Start and Head Start programs. State data on other types of programs enrolled into their QRIS can be found in the individual State APRs.

Figures 5, 6, and 7 illustrate increases in the numbers of programs enrolled in the States' QRIS over time. When examining the data on CCDF-funded programs in the QRIS, it is important to note that the majority of States experienced a decrease in the overall number of CCDF-funded programs in their States, primarily due to program closures.

Between 2015 and 2016, the number of CCDF-funded programs declined in 13 of the 20 ELC states. The number of CCDF-funded programs remained flat in **California** and **Washington**. Only **Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts,** and **Ohio** saw increases in the number of CCDF-funded programs.

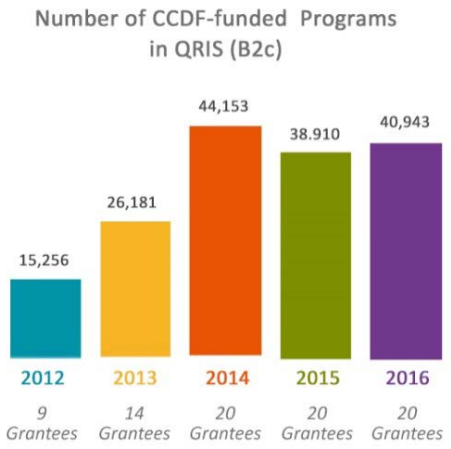



*Figure 5. Number of CCDF-funded Programs in QIRS*

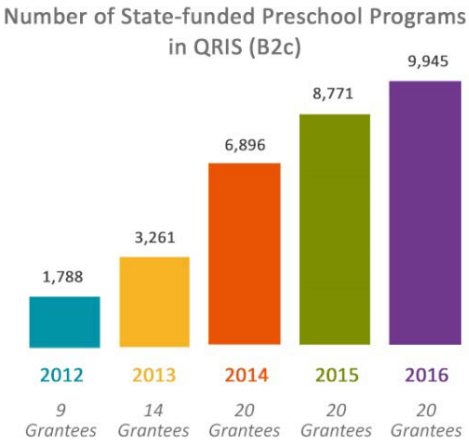



*Figure 6. Number of State-funded Preschool Programs in QRIS*

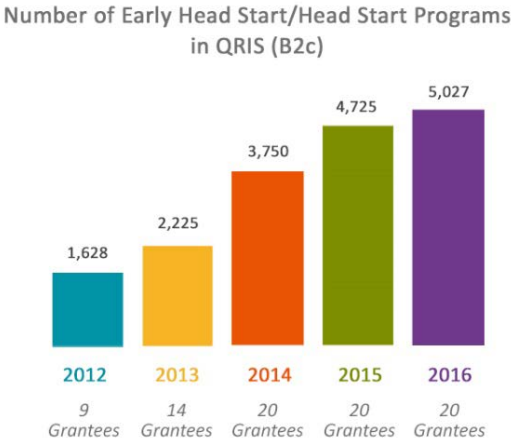



*Figure 7. Number of Early Head Start/Head Start Programs in QRIS*

# Improving Program Quality

In addition to increasing the number and types of programs that participate in the QRIS, ELC States invested considerable effort and resources to support programs in moving up through the State-defined tiers of quality. During the initial years of their grants, many States focused on enrolling more programs, and in later years they addressed strategies and incentives to improve program quality.

For ELC performance measure reporting, States were required to designate which of their tiers make up their highest quality tiers. States differed in the numbers of tiers or levels in their QRIS system and which tiers they designated as top-quality tiers. Table 3 shows the numbers of tiers in each State's QRIS and which tiers the State defined as their highest quality levels for ELC reporting purposes.

| State | Number of Tiers | State Definition of Highest Quality Tiers |
|---|---|---|
| California | 5 | Tiers 3, 4, 5 |
| Colorado | 5 | Tiers 3, 4, 5 |
| Delaware | 5 | Tiers 3, 4, 5 |
| Georgia | 3 | Tiers 2 and 3 |
| Illinois | 5 | Tiers 4 and 5 |
| Kentucky | 5 | Tiers 3, 4, 5 |
| Maryland | 5 | Tiers 4 and 5 |
| Massachusetts | 4 | Tiers 2, 3, 4 |
| Michigan | 5 | Tiers 3, 4, 5 |
| Minnesota | 4 | Tiers 3 and 4 |
| New Jersey | 5 | Tiers 3, 4, 5 |
| New Mexico | 5 | Tiers 3, 4, 5 |
| North Carolina | 5 | Tiers 4 and 5 |
| Ohio | 5 | Tiers 3, 4, 5 |
| Oregon | 5 | Tiers 3, 4, 5 |
| Pennsylvania | 4 | Tiers 3, 4 |
| Rhode Island | 5 | Tiers 4 and 5 |
| Vermont | 5 | Tiers 3, 4, 5 |
| Washington | 5 | Tiers 3, 4, 5 |
| Wisconsin | 5 | Tiers 4 ,5 |

*Table 3. States' Definitions of Top Tiers*

As seen in Table 3, the majority of States (**California, Colorado, Delaware, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington,** and **Wisconsin**) use 5 tiers or levels in their QRIS. Three States (**Massachusetts, Minnesota,** and **Pennsylvania**) have 4 tiers, and one State (**Georgia**) has a 3-tiered system.

The 20 ELC Grantees combined showed a 162 percent increase in the number of programs in the top tiers of their QRIS – from the baseline of 9,053 programs to 23,736 programs by 2016. (See Figure 8).

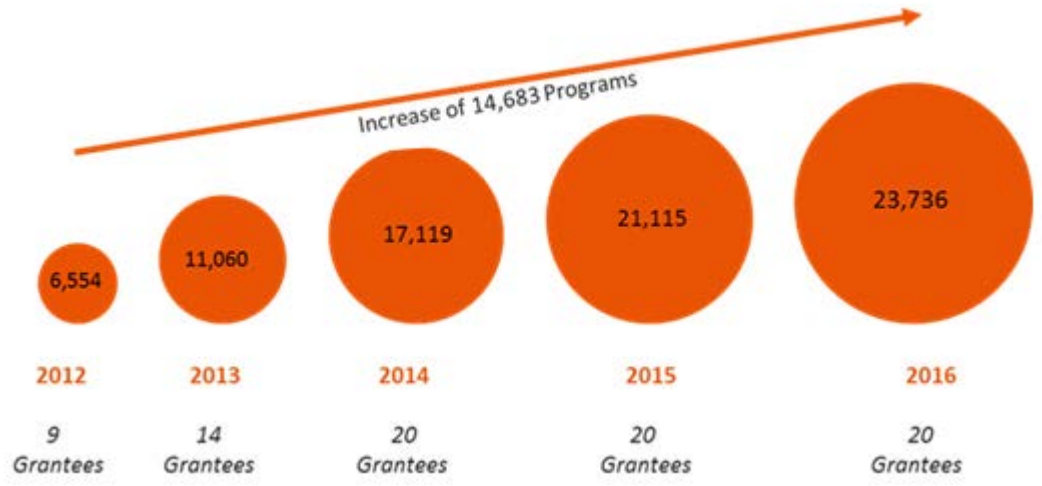



*Figure 8. Number of Programs in the Top Tiers of the States' QRIS*

## *Supports and Quality Incentives*

States used a variety of strategies and incentives to encourage and support program quality improvements. The most common incentive for programs is the use of a tiered reimbursement system that provides higher child care subsidy rates for programs at higher levels of the QRIS. Nearly all ELC States have some sort of tiered reimbursement structure in place. In **Delaware,** for example, tiered reimbursement continues to be one of the strongest supports for high-quality rated child care programs. Other States that are using tiered subsidy reimbursement as a key enrollment and/or quality improvement strategy include **Colorado, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island,** and **Washington**.

Other common supports and incentives include financial incentives to individuals and to programs; technical assistance; and professional development in the form of coaching, mentoring, and peer supports.

## *Financial Incentives*

Financial incentives issued directly to individuals include bonuses, merit awards, or grants and vouchers for professional development.

> **Delaware's** Compensation, Retention and Education (CORE) Awards are cash incentives to providers to increase formal education or credentials. Over the life of the grant, more than $6 million was given to more than 1,500 early educators.
>
> **Georgia** created AWARDS, which rewarded early care and education professionals for earning higher early childhood education credentials and degrees than the credential or degree they currently held.

Financial incentives to programs include quality improvement grants that provide incentives to programs to work toward increasing their QRIS levels. These grants could

be used for a variety of purposes.

**Colorado's** Merit Awards provided funding to support program achievement at the highest quality rating levels. Colorado also issued Quality Improvement Grants for coaching, non-consumable materials for the child care learning environment, and professional development compensation.

**Delaware** awarded Quality Improvement Grants to child care programs to support their work toward reaching a Star level 3, 4, or 5. These grants were used to fund facility improvements, professional development, curriculum, and materials necessary for improved quality.

**Georgia** issued quality improvement grants to child care programs with a Star level 3, 4, or 5 to fund facility improvements, professional development, curriculum, and other materials and purchases required for increased quality.

In **Illinois,** Bronze, Silver, and Gold level child care centers and homes were eligible for a one-time bonus payment once they achieved their Circle of Quality ratings. Bonus payments ranged from $1,000 to $6,500 for centers and from $250 to $950 for family child care homes.

**Kentucky** partnered with Lakeshore Learning on an innovative funding strategy. Lakeshore Learning developed kits of classroom materials that aligned with the age-appropriate Kentucky *All STARS* standards. Coaches based recommendations for which programs would receive these kits on the programs' ECERS scores and improvement plans. Lakeshore Learning also provided classroom makeovers to attendees at the *Kentucky Ready Kids Conference*.

**Michigan** piloted Quality Improvement Grants to help increase quality. Michigan also issued $500 participation bonuses to increase participation in the QRIS.

**Pennsylvania's** *STARS* Merit and Education & Retention Awards (MERA) supported expenses for equipment, supplies, and materials, as well as professional development, accreditation costs, staff bonuses, salaries, compensation, and other expenses. Pennsylvania also issued one-time only enrollment incentive grants. Programs that enrolled in *Keystone STARS* could earn a $1,000 enrollment incentive if they successfully reached a STAR 3 designation, or $2,000 if they successfully reached a STAR 4 designation.

**Rhode Island's** Quality Awards program allocated funds to programs to maintain their ratings in the highest tiers of the program. Recipients of these awards were required to spend a percentage of their award on mandatory expenditures, such as wage enhancements, staff bonuses, expanded benefits, and staffing/release time for professional development activities. Rhode Island also gave one-time Rising Stars awards to center-based early learning programs, public schools, and family child care homes to recognize their achievement in advancing in the *BrightStars* QRIS.

**Wisconsin** issued Challenge Awards to *YoungStar* participating child care programs that increased their *YoungStar* rating. Amounts range from $300 to $1,300 depending on the size of the program and the number of stars they increased.

Some States issued specialized bonuses for specific purposes.

For example, **Rhode Island** provided bonuses to early learning programs that provided care to infants and toddlers.

**Vermont** provided bonuses to programs in their QRIS to fund nutritious meals and/or snacks for children.

Early Learning Scholarships in **Minnesota** were provided to families to financially support their access to programs with 3 or 4 Star *Parent Aware* ratings.

In addition to providing program and provider incentives, **Delaware, Illinois, New Jersey,** and **New Mexico** were also studying which incentives are most effective.

## *Training and Professional Development*

States also used ELC Funds to provide professional development and technical assistance that were designed to improve program quality. Many of these opportunities were offered free of charge. In other instances, States offered scholarships as an incentive to participate in training and professional development opportunities.

**Colorado, Delaware, Michigan, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, Vermont,** and **Wisconsin** provided T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarships to offset tuition costs and encourage child care professionals to further their education.

Most States provide some sort of coaching, mentoring, or technical assistance to providers and programs. A few examples include the following:

**Georgia, Kentucky, Pennsylvania,** and **Vermont** offer peer supports or peer mentoring to assist providers in improving program quality. **Pennsylvania** established Rising STARS – a peer mentoring program designed to help providers move up in STAR levels.

**Colorado** funded administrative supports and substitute teachers so providers could attend trainings.

**Illinois** provided their Innovation Zone teams with technical assistance, coaching, and opportunities for peer-to-peer learning.

The **North Carolina** Head Start State Collaboration Office established a statewide family engagement training and coaching initiative designed to build the capacities of early childhood educators in a range of settings (including private child care, local education agencies, religious-sponsored child care and military child care) to work with the families they serve to support their children's development.

**Washington** offered coaches and targeted professional development to programs that failed to meet their mandated ratings in the allotted time period.

States also found other innovative strategies to encourage programs to improve quality:

**Delaware's** Office of Early Learning worked with Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood to improve technical assistance and training services by providing multi-part professional learning opportunities in a variety of content areas.

**Illinois** developed six learning modules to support providers in reaching higher quality standards. The learning modules address such topics as technology for family child

care, selecting and managing materials for multi-age learning, selecting culturally relevant and anti-bias materials, and managing environments to effectively communicate and connect with families and community.

**Wisconsin** awarded funds to their State NAEYC affiliate to provide scholarships for group child care programs that sought NAEYC accreditation. Programs that successfully complete NAEYC accreditation were eligible for a 5 Star rating in *YoungStar*. Wisconsin's Family Child Care Association provided accreditation training with a qualified certified trainer in several regions of the State. Participants were awarded self-study scholarships and matched with a mentor who helped them earn National Association for Family Child Care accreditation.

Several States made efforts to expand the reach of their professional development and training to providers who speak languages other than English.

**Massachusetts** translated their Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP) tool into multiple languages and developed an online QRIS fundamentals course for providers in multiple languages including English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, Chinese, Khmer, and Portuguese.

In **Minnesota,** *Parent Aware* training was offered in many languages, including Spanish, Somali, Oromo, Arabic, Karen, Bhutanese and Amharic.

**Washington** translated all their provider tools into Spanish and Somali — the two most prominent languages in Washington, after English.

**Wisconsin** provided coursework to *YoungStar*-participating child care providers in languages other than English and during non-traditional times of day.

## *Communication and Family/ Consumer Education*

Quality Rating and Improvement Systems, at their core, are intended to support parents and families in making decisions about their children's early learning experiences. By having easily recognizable measures of quality, families should be able to identify and choose higher quality programs for their children. For this reason, communicating with and educating families about the QRIS is a major goal of the ELC program.

In order to make quality ratings publicly available, States undertook marketing campaigns and created or enhanced websites to share information about program quality with families.

> Through the ELC grant, we were able to build and strengthen the QRIS and help early educators, legislators, and the general public understand the value of high-quality early education.
> - Massachusetts

**Colorado** developed an awareness and engagement campaign that targeted families of young children, child care providers, and other early childhood professionals. The campaign included materials in both English and Spanish, paid media (television, radio, print, and digital advertising); earned media (placements in local newspapers, Spanish-language radio, and television programs); social media (Facebook and Twitter); public events (e. g. Statewide Rocky Mountain PBS Kids' Fun Fests or health fairs); marketing tool-kits and dissemination materials; and both an English and a Spanish version of the QRIS program website. Licensed child care programs were encouraged to market their

businesses to the public on the site.

**Georgia's** extensive marketing campaign increased awareness of *Quality Rated* while communicating the importance of high-quality early learning to families and the public.

**Kentucky** revised their *Kentucky ALL STARS* website, which now includes information about how *Kentucky All STARS* works, how providers can apply to be rated, how to download the Standards of Quality, and how to submit questions.

**Minnesota** established their ***Parent Aware* website** with an online search tool that displays easy-to-understand information about ratings and resources for finding programs. The website was developed through a public-private partnership created as part of their ELC plan.

**Ohio** has been working on a public website that will allow parents and caregivers to access information about program quality online. Information is linked directly to the Ohio Child Licensing and Quality System.

**Rhode Island's** *Quality Matters* campaign focused on community outreach, direct parent contact, and advertising. In addition to paid ads throughout the State in both English and Spanish, Rhode Island's campaign made use of the web, television, and social media outlets.

## *Increasing Access to High-Quality Programs for Children with High Needs*

One of the key goals of the ELC program has been to increase the number of children with high needs who are enrolled in the highest quality programs available in States. A child with high needs is defined under ELC as a child from birth through kindergarten entry who is from a low-income family or otherwise in need of special assistance and support. This definition includes children who have disabilities or developmental delays; who are English learners; who reside on "Indian lands"; who are migrant, homeless, or in foster care; and other children as identified by the State.[iii] Progress on this indicator is measured by reported data on the number of children who are enrolled in programs that are in the top tiers of the State's QRIS. States defined their top tiers of quality (see Table 3).

Figures 9 through 11 present data on the number of children with high needs who are in CCDF-funded programs, State-funded preschools, and Head Start and Early Head

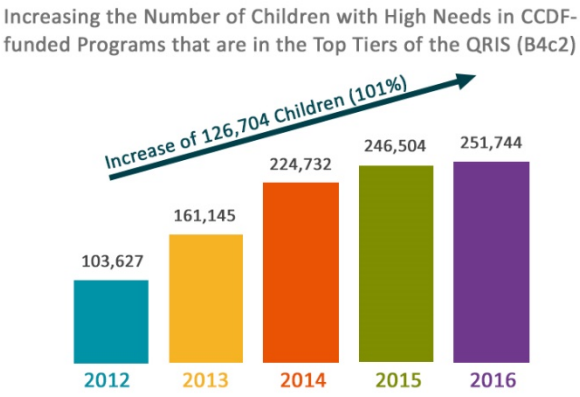



*Figure 9. Number of Children in CCDF-funded Programs in QRIS Top Tiers*

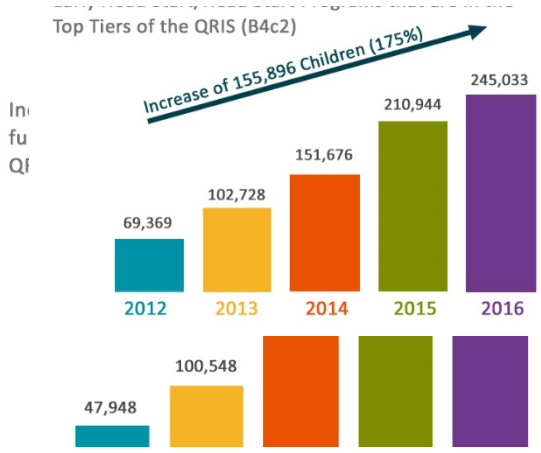



*Figure 10. Number of Children in State-funded Preschool Programs in QRIS Top Tiers*

Start programs that are in the top tiers of States' QRIS. The numbers of children are reported by type of program because children may be enrolled in more than one of these programs and most States cannot report unduplicated counts of children in their QRIS.

Overall, ELC States showed a 101 percent increase in the number of children with high needs who are enrolled in CCDF-funded programs in the top tiers of the States' QRIS. The number increased from 125,040 children at baseline (when States' applied for their grants) to over 250,000 children in 2016. The number of children with high needs enrolled in State-funded preschool programs in the top tiers of the States' QRIS increased by 221 percent over that same period of time, from

*Figure 11. Number of Children in Early Head Start/Head Start Programs in QRIS Top Tiers*

96,750 children at baseline to 310,718 children in 2016. States saw a 175 percent increase in the number of children with high needs enrolled in Early Head Start and Head Start programs in the top tiers of the States' QRIS; increasing from 89,137 children at baseline to 245,033 children in 2016

## Challenges

Some States struggled with recruiting programs from specific early learning sectors into their voluntary QRIS. Not all programs can see the benefits of doing the work required to receive a QRIS rating, especially if their program is already fully enrolled or meets other quality standards, or if their eventual rating might be lower than they would anticipate or prefer. Many States struggled to engage family child care providers, school-based preschool programs, and Head Start programs in particular.

**Colorado** experienced challenges with recruiting these programs into their QRIS and **Michigan** struggled with engaging early childhood special education programs into the QRIS. Michigan found programs with self-contained early childhood special education classrooms were reluctant to participate in a voluntary rating system because QRIS indicators that promote inclusion often yielded low-quality ratings for these classrooms.

**California** worked to address their recruitment and retention challenges by assigning a State Implementation Team Liaison to each consortium to help them work through their individual challenges.

In other cases, participation in the QRIS may be complicated by the various regulations, policies, and procedures that affect early learning and development programs.

**Kentucky** experienced challenges with assigning an *All STARS* rating to sites that house multiple program types since each program has separate regulations, policies, and procedures. The programs are also monitored by different agencies on differing schedules. Kentucky is working across agencies to develop a cross-rater reliability plan that will enable Kentucky to implement a truly unified QRIS.

**Massachusetts** conducted a study of program directors that found that program leaders were motivated to improve their quality, but were daunted by the processes and were concerned about a lack of resources to make the desired advances in the QRIS. These directors also articulated a concern that staff educational requirements posed a barrier to improved quality. Program directors were concerned that they would not be able to adequately compensate staff for the increased educational attainment required to move up a tier in the QRIS.

Other struggles States have encountered include staff turnover, communications and time constraints to complete the work. For example, it is time-consuming to engage stakeholders and come to consensus on issues that affect diverse groups. Many ELC States experienced staff turnover that slowed down efforts and required new relationships to be established before critical steps in the work could proceed. Some States described challenges with internal communications across agencies. Key communications did not always get through the multiple administrative layers and down to the staff in the field.

**Oregon** experienced delays in revising their QRIS because they prioritized engaging their communities in the process. They felt it was critical to ensure that culturally and linguistically diverse populations had sufficient opportunity to provide input, which required additional time than was initially scheduled.

States also experienced continued challenges with disaggregating data for individual children by program type. This has limited their ability to provide complete data or unduplicated counts of the numbers of children in high-quality programs in their QRIS.

Despite these numerous challenges, the available QRIS data make it clear that the ELC States have managed to move the evolution of QRIS along in their States and have found ways to engage more programs in the systems and increase the quality of those programs as well.

For more information about QRIS, see the following Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance publications:

- *QRIS One Pagers for 20 RTT-ELC States.* 2017
- *Accreditation in Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement Systems in RTT-ELC States.* 2015
- *Alternative Pathways for State-Funded Preschools in TQRIS in RTT-ELC States.* 2016
- *Contractors Selected for State-Funded TQRIS Validation Studies.* 2015
- *Coordination of Monitoring Systems for Early Care and Education.* 2017
- *Incentivizing Programs to Continue to Improve Their Quality.* 2015
- *Increasing Provider's Participation in Quality Rating Improvement Systems.* 2014
- *Innovative Work with Family Child Care Providers in Phase 2 and Phase 3 RTT-ELC States*. 2016
- *Licensing Violations and QRIS Ratings.* 2017
- *Mandatory Participation in TQRIS.* 2017
- *Review of Weighted Criteria for Enrollment in Early Childhood Programs.* 2015
- *Shared Services as a Strategy to Support Child Care Providers*. 2016
- *State Incentives to Encourage Programs to Achieve the Highest Level of the TQRIS*. 2015
- *TQRIS Validation Questions in RTT-ELC.* 2015
- *Webinar Summary: Building Public Will as You Race to the Top*. 2015


# EXAMINING PROGRESS

## Early Learning and Development Standards

Early Learning and Development Standards (also referred to in some States as Early Learning Guidelines) provide guidance to families, teachers, and administrators about what young children should know and be able to do as they progress from one developmental stage to the next.

Eighteen States used the ELC grant to put in place high-quality early learning and development standards that:

- Are used statewide by early learning and development programs;
- Are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers;
- Cover all essential domains of school readiness, which include language and literacy development; cognition and general knowledge (including early mathematics and early scientific development); approaches toward learning; physical well-being and motor development (including adaptive skills); and social and emotional development;
- Are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards in early literacy and mathematics;
- Are incorporated in program standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities;
- Are shared with parents and families along with suggestions for appropriate strategies they can use at home to support their children's learning and development; and
- Promote understanding of and commitment to the early learning and development standards across early learning and development programs.

See Table 1 for a list of States that addressed this reform area.

> Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards were one of the greatest accomplishments achieved during their ELC Grant. The progress made in early childhood education across settings and silos, came about because these standards created the foundation for everything from assessments to a QRIS to professional development.

The following are selected examples from States' Annual Performance Reports or Final Performance Reports about how they have used the opportunities presented by the ELC program to update early learning and development standards to meet the needs of young children in their States.

### *Standards Are Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate*

**Georgia** and **Massachusetts** updated their standards to address the needs of young dual language learners. **Georgia** partnered with the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium in this effort.

**Ohio** reviewed and revised their standards to ensure they were appropriate for children with disabilities and children with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

In **Wisconsin**, the Tribal Coordinator participated in a workgroup on the revision of the early learning and development standards.

### *Standards Cover All Essential Domains of School Readiness*

During the grant period, **Maryland, Massachusetts, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania** and **Wisconsin** added or updated standards related to the domains of social-emotional development and approaches to learning.

### *Standards Are Aligned with the State's K-3 Standards*

ELC Invitational Priority 4[v] encouraged States to plan how they would sustain and build upon improved early learning to ensure the successes of the Pre-K years carried into the early elementary school years.

**Ohio and Rhode Island** aligned their early learning and development standards with their K-12 State standards.

**Colorado, Oregon, Vermont,** and **Washington** aligned their early learning and development standards with academic standards for preschool through grade 3.

**Maryland's** and **Pennsylvania's** early learning and development standards delineate benchmarks along the birth to grade 2 continuum and are aligned with standards that span through the 12th-grade.

### *Standards Are the Basis for a Systems-Approach to Early Learning*

**Colorado's** and **Kentucky's** QRIS are directly aligned to their early learning and development standards. Colorado programs that align their curriculum or their child assessment system with these standards accumulate points that help determine their QRIS rating.

**Colorado, Vermont,** and **Washington** aligned their early learning and development standards with the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.

Several States support programs that use curricula tied to the early learning and development standards.

In **Ohio**, a Curriculum Standards Assessment Alignment Tool aligns with the child and program standards. Programs use the tool to support the alignment of the early learning and development standards to their assessments and curricula.

**Vermont's** universal Pre-K law requires school districts and prequalified public Pre-K programs to align their curriculum with the State early learning and development standards.

States have also worked to tie their child assessment tools directly to their early learning and development standards.

Items from the **Colorado** Early Learning and Development Guidelines correspond to items from the *HighScope 2014 Child Observation Record.*

**Vermont** cross-walked their new *Ready for Kindergarten! Survey (R4K!S)* domain areas with the new early learning and development standards.

## *Professional Development Is Aligned with Standards*

Several States offer interactive online learning platforms with training modules and other resources.

The **Georgia** *Planning Educational Activities for Children (PEACH)* website is an interactive site that allows early childhood teachers to plan lessons using the Georgia early learning and development standards and makes high-quality, developmentally appropriate activities available to teachers. **Oregon** and **Rhode Island** have developed similar websites, and **Vermont** is designing an interactive web platform.

Online training modules allow States to make professional development opportunities available to more teachers.

**California** Early Childhood Online, an ELC project, has online training modules based on the State's early learning and development standards.

**Kentucky** offers two free online modules to early care and education professionals statewide.

**North Carolina** offers an online entry-level 0.5 CEU course and an intermediate level Foundations course.

In **Oregon**, online training on early learning and development standards is required of all licensed early learning practitioners.

**Washington** provides online training about early learning and development standards that are required for all State-approved trainers and participants in Washington's QRIS.

### Wisconsin Early Learning Standards

The Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) were first created in 2003 and are now in their fourth edition. Wisconsin has a robust, cross sector, professional development framework for implementing training on the standards. The system includes a WMELS coordinator, regional coordination, a 15–18 hour training format, and a parent engagement module. Participation in this training is a component of the *YoungStar* Quality Rating System with points generated to increase in rating levels. There are 106 State-approved trainers representing a variety of early childhood sectors. A process is in place for school districts to align WMELS with literacy and language arts State standards. In 2015, the WMELS document and training materials were translated into Spanish.

Onsite training allows participants to have in-person contact with trainers and coaches.

**Colorado's** *Expanding Quality in Infant Toddler Care* 48-hour training course is aligned with the States' early learning and development standards.

**Minnesota** developed six training modules as an introductory training for each domain. The trainings are designed to be delivered in-person, but can also be adapted for online learning.

**Georgia, Minnesota, North Carolina,** and **Washington** trained trainers for their introductory courses.

Several States are working to make sure training on early learning and development standards is available to educators who come from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

The **Colorado** Early Learning and Development Guidelines website features both a Spanish and an English platform.

In **Massachusetts**, the Early English Language Development Standards (E-ELDS) for children ages 2½ to 5½ years old, and the Social and Emotional Learning and Approaches to Play and Learning Standards (SEL/APL) for preschool and kindergarten children were translated into five languages. In addition, an online course on the SEL/APL Standards was developed in English and Spanish.

In **Wisconsin**, the WMELS document and training materials were translated into Spanish. In addition, Wisconsin adapted the approval process for Tribal WMELS trainers to be more culturally relevant. The WMELS Leadership Team also began addressing the linguistic needs for Spanish and Hmong trainers.

**Vermont** provides early childhood educators and leaders with *The Right Stuff*, an ongoing monthly resource-sharing newsletter to share resources related to the early learning and development standards.

## *Standards Are Shared with Families*

Information about early learning and development standards have been disseminated to families and other early childhood stakeholders online, as guidebooks, as videos and at conferences and workshops.

The **Colorado** Early Learning and Development Guidelines website is a one-stop shop for parents, providers, and partners seeking more information on the Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines. In addition, Colorado created more than 30 videos that highlight actions parents or caregivers may take to encourage age-appropriate learning and development.

**Kentucky** created Parent Guides for parents of children ages birth to 4.

**Rhode Island** translated and distributed the early learning and development standards to all early childhood programs, family child care homes, State agency leads and staff, and postsecondary education faculty and trainers. New programs receive a set of Rhode Island's Early Learning and Development Standards upon approval of their initial licensing application. The standards were also used statewide by librarians to update the curriculum *Learning and Readiness Kits (LARK)*, and included in parent learning bags that contained *Fun Family Activity Cards* and other materials to support learning at home.

*Communities Promote Standards*

**Maryland, Pennsylvania,** and **Vermont** provide training on standards to community teams.

**Maryland** provides professional development for combined school and community teams in Title I school areas that focus on increasing knowledge of early learning standards.

**Pennsylvania's** summer Pre-natal through 3rd Grade (P–3) Governor's Institutes help community teams focus on P–3 alignment strategies, build collaborative partnerships, and implement standards effectively with young children.

The two-day 2016 **Vermont** Early Learning Standards Institute attracted more than 200 professionals who work with children birth through third grade and their families.

Work undertaken through the ELC grants to review and revise early learning and development standards has served as the foundation for quality rating and improvement systems, child and program assessments, development screenings, workforce development and supports, data systems, and child care licensing regulations.

## Developmental Screening

Children's health and learning are intertwined. By promoting healthy development, States help to ensure that all children, especially children with high needs, can make the most of their high-quality learning and development experiences and are prepared to succeed when they enter kindergarten.

One way to promote children's health is to ensure children receive regularly scheduled

developmental screenings. These screenings measure whether children are learning basic skills as expected or whether there are indications of a delay that require a referral for further assessment. Early identification of children with special needs allows them to receive services that will improve opportunities for them to succeed in school.

In their grant applications, eight States (**California, Delaware, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon,** and **Vermont**) addressed the Health Promotion Focused Investment Area (see Table 1 for States that addressed each reform area)., Eight additional ELC States (**Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Ohio, Rhode Island,** and **Wisconsin**) made efforts to support developmental screening processes although they did not specifically target ELC grant funds to this effort in their applications.

Highlights from two States (**Oregon** and **Vermont**) that are taking comprehensive and innovative approaches to promoting healthy development are described in the State

spotlights on p. 34 and p. 35.

Prior to ELC, States did not regularly report the number of children screened, so the ELC program provided the impetus to examine and target this measure for improvement. As shown in Figure 12, the eight States that addressed this area in the ELC grants reported in 2016 that 774,538 children received a developmental screening. This number represents a 32 percent increase in the number of children screened since the States applied for their grants (baseline). Four States (**Michigan, New Jersey, Oregon,** and **Vermont**) will continue to report on the number of children screened during the final years of their grants.

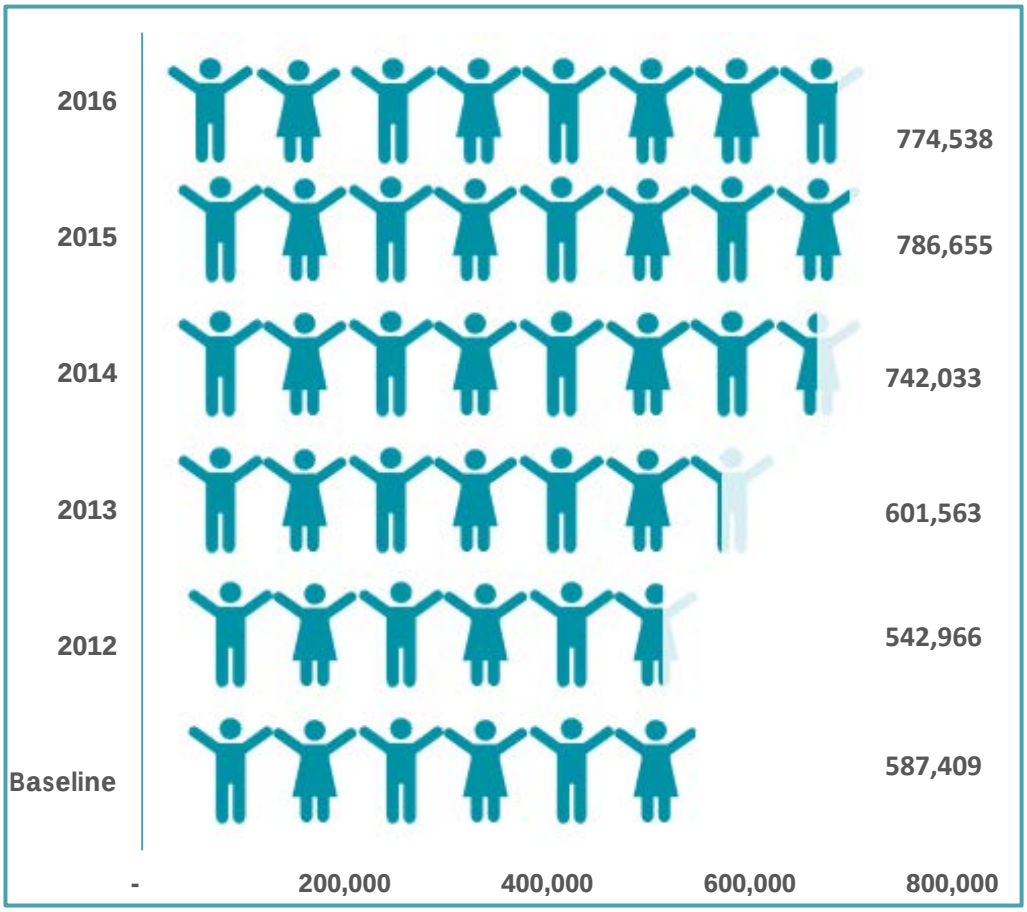



*Figure 12. Number of Children with High Needs who are Screened*

The strategies that States reported for promoting developmental screening included incorporating screening as a component of the State's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), working with health care professionals to include developmental screening in well child visits, training early childhood educators and related professionals to conduct developmental screenings, ensuring screening tools are appropriate for dual language learners and reflect cultural differences, selecting screening tools, integrating developmental screening data into health data systems, collaborating across sectors, and marketing. Selected examples of these strategies are included on the following pages.

## *Screening as a Component of QRIS*

Seven States (**Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, New Jersey,** and **Ohio**) incorporated developmental screening as a component of their States' QRIS.

In **Georgia's** QRIS, screening measures and formative assessments are required to earn quality points at all tiers of the system.

In **Illinois**, providers at the Silver and Gold Circles of Quality levels are required to develop and implement policies and procedures that ensure that all children served receive developmental screening at least annually. The Gold Circle also requires a formal written Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the program and the local Early Intervention provider and/or the Local Education Agency. Illinois developed a standard MOU template that includes step-by-step instructions and an inventory of screening and training resources.

In **Kentucky**, the Classroom and Instructional Quality Standard includes the use of developmental screenings for programs in QRIS STARS levels 3-5.

**New Jersey** requires child care centers participating in *Grow NJ Kids* to conduct routine developmental screenings using a standardized tool.

## *Health Care Providers and Partners*

Primary health care providers were trained to conduct developmental screenings during well child visits.

### Comprehensive Screening: Oregon

Oregon has taken a comprehensive approach to promoting young children's healthy development through training efforts, increased coordination, and a focus on equity. Specifically, Oregon's approach to improve screening of young children includes: (1) delivery of workforce development trainings on implementation of developmental screening in early childhood settings, (2) development and delivery of webinars on topics relevant to developmental screening, (3) leveraging other funds to support health promotion goals, (4) cross-systems coordination to support health and early learning system transformation, (5) exploration of electronic sharing of developmental screening results, and (6) an equity focus in all components of the work, including conducting trainings in top languages spoken in Oregon, including American Sign Language, and translating training materials into Spanish and Russian.

In **Delaware**, health providers conducted developmental screenings during well child visits using the *Parent Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS)* tool, and entered the results into the Division of Public Health's PEDS portal.

Selected counties in **North Carolina** integrated routine developmental screening into well child visits. Medical professionals were taught to use the *Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers*, along with other screening tools.

As part of a comprehensive assessment system, **Rhode Island** implemented a developmental screening campaign and supported physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants in 39 health practices to implement standardized developmental screening using an electronic system. Twenty-eight practices chose to continue to cover the cost of the electronic system after grant funding ended. The **Rhode Island** Department of Health also added an additional staff position to respond to increased referrals resulting from increased screening.

### *Early Childhood Educators and Related Professionals*

States provided training to early care and education professionals to perform developmental screenings.

**California** and **Wisconsin** supported communities of practices that addressed issues related to developmental screenings. **California** also created a developmental Screening Network and a *Screening Guide for Early Care and Education Providers*.

In 2016, **Georgia** professional development opportunities focused on the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's free professional development module, *Watch Me! Celebrating Milestones and Sharing Concerns*.

In **Illinois**, the Greater East St. Louis Innovation Zone fully trained all their early childhood educators in the QRIS Bronze training cohort on the *Ages & Stages Questionnaire®* screening tool so they could conduct developmental screenings in their programs.

#### Innovative Approach to Screening: Vermont

Help Me Grow **Vermont** (HMG VT) improves access to existing resources and services for young children and families and promotes parent-engaged developmental monitoring and screening for all Vermont children. HMG VT has four system components: a centralized access point; family and community outreach; provider outreach and training; and data collection and analysis.

In partnership with Vermont Birth to Five (a project of the Permanent Fund for Vermont's Children), the Vermont Child Health Improvement Program expanded developmental screening training from the health sector to early care and education professionals across the State.

Vermont is also working with their Universal Development Screening Registry to improve statewide data collection and reporting of developmental screening results.

The **Vermont** Child Health Improvement Program expanded developmental screening training to early care and education professionals so they could screen the children in their care.

States also provided training to professionals in related fields to administer developmental screenings.

In 2016, *Great Start* ***Georgia***, a program administered by the Georgia Department of Public Health, trained all their staff to use the *Ages & Stages Questionnaire: Social Emotional®, Second Edition.*

**Massachusetts** and **Minnesota** trained staff in community organizations. Massachusetts included staff in homeless shelters in these trainings. Massachusetts also disseminated the developmental screening tools, the *Ages and Stages Questionnaire®* and *Ages and Stages Questionnaire for Social Emotional®*, through the State's Coordinated Family and Community Engagement grantees. These grantees offered developmental screenings to families of young children who were not in formal early learning settings.

## *Language and Culturally Responsive Screening*

**Oregon, Rhode Island,** and **Wisconsin** trained Dual Language Speakers to administer screening tools.

**Oregon** focused on dual language speakers and culturally responsive screening in their final Training of Trainers for the *Ages and Stages Questionnaire – Third Edition (ASQ-3)*. Two communities of practice supported *ASQ-3* trainers who conducted trainings in Spanish, Russian, Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, and American Sign Language. The *ASQ-3* curriculum was translated into Spanish in 2015. Early learning glossaries were developed in Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, and Chinese. Additional materials were translated using the glossaries.

The **Rhode Island** Department of Education's Dual Language Learner Screener initiative partnered with three translation agencies to train local interpreters to conduct child outreach screenings in 16 languages. A directory of dual language interpreters was posted to the Department's website.


## *Including Screening Information in Data Systems*

States worked to include data from screenings and referrals in their existing data systems.

In **Delaware** and **Rhode Island**, data-sharing agreements were in place, and screening data were being entered into the State's integrated data system.

**Georgia** made progress in linking screening and referral data to the State's early childhood integrated data system.

The **Vermont** Department of Health completed a Universal Developmental Screening (UDS) Registry as part of their Health Department immunization registry that includes screening results for multiple tools. Legislation passed in 2016 gives the Health Department legal authority to collect the screening data. In 2016, a pilot of the UDS Registry began with three primary care practice sites.

**Maryland, New Jersey,** and **Oregon** were exploring how to link screening data to their existing registry/data systems.

**Oregon** conducted a pilot project in Yamhill County to map out resources and develop tools for facilitating streamlined referral and follow-up to developmental screenings.

States have explored how to make electronic screening results available to parents and professionals and how to transfer the resulting data to an integrated database**.**

**Minnesota** and **Rhode Island** actively piloted the use of electronic screening instruments.

## *Collaboration*

States saw collaboration as an important strategy for increasing the number of children who received developmental screenings and referrals, and for sharing data across systems.

The **California** Statewide Screening Collaborative focused on cross-agency and systems work.

Cross-sector Screening Collaboratives in an **Illinois** Innovation Zone and in selected **North Carolina** counties led to an increase in the number of developmental screenings of children.

**Wisconsin** finalized a State blueprint for an aligned system for screening and assessment.

**Vermont** appointed a Child Care Wellness Consultant Coordinator to support marketing and strategic planning efforts targeted at increasing efficiencies and enhancing effective collaboration.

## *Marketing*

States targeted various audiences to promote developmental monitoring and screening by using tools such as posters, magnets, brochures, and website activities.

**Georgia** has been promoting developmental monitoring and screening through customized printed materials and has developed a plan with State and local community partners to distribute the materials and provide training opportunities.

In **Illinois**, a marketing firm in the Greater East St. Louis Innovation Zone led community stakeholders through a message mapping process. The various approaches and messages that resulted from the process can be used to communicate to primary and secondary audiences including parents, State agencies, and the media.

**Oregon's** parent-focused *Vroom* activities complement the efforts of their early childhood workforce to promote developmental screening and follow-up.

In 2015, the **Rhode Island** Department of Education launched a developmental screening campaign that included radio advertisements, bus stop displays, and a developmental screening and milestones family website. **Rhode Island** also trained pediatricians, home visitors, Department of Children, Youth and Families staff, public librarians, and others to use developmental screening kits to share information with families about screening tools, when they should be used, and who should be conducting the screenings.

## *Screening Tools*

Several developmental screening tools are commonly used by the States, and providing training on these tools was a major focus of many ELC State efforts:

The most commonly referenced screening tools by ELC States are the multiple versions of *Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ)*.

- *ASQ* (**California, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina,** and **Wisconsin**)
- *ASQ-3* (**Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont,** and **Wisconsin**)
- *ASQ-SE* (**California, Delaware, Georgia, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont,** and **Wisconsin**)
- *ASQ 3 SE* (**Delaware**)
- *Best Beginnings Developmental Screen (BBDS)* and *Best Beginnings Family Questionnaire (BBFQ)* (**Maryland**).
- *Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (M-CHAT)* (**North Carolina, Rhode Island,** and **Vermont**).
- *Parent Evaluation of Development Status (PEDS)* (**Delaware, North Carolina,** and **Rhode Island**).
- *Survey of Wellbeing of Young Children (SWYC)* (**Rhode Island**) (**Georgia** was making plans to use it).
- *Parent's Observations of Social Interactions (POSI)* (**Rhode Island**)
- **Minnesota** and **New Jersey** require the use of a State-approved standardized tool.

For more information about developmental screenings, see the Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance publications:

- *Early Childhood Mental Health Initiatives in Delaware, Maryland, and Ohio.* 2016.
- *Developmental Screening Activities in Early Learning Challenge States.* 2017.

# Comprehensive Assessment Systems

The ELC grant program provided an incentive to States to develop and enhance a comprehensive assessment system (CAS) that includes, at a minimum, a) developmental screening measures, b) ongoing formative assessments to help educators plan activities to improve instruction and student learning, c) measures of environmental quality, and d) measures of the quality of adult-child interactions. The evidence gathered is used to provide evidence of children's learning and development to inform instruction and improve program quality.

As part of a comprehensive approach to child assessment, the ELC program also emphasized the importance of an assessment that helps program administrators know how children are performing when they are ready to enter kindergarten. These assessments are often referred to as kindergarten entry assessments (KEAs) though States call them by very different names. Many States took the opportunity to think broadly about how they would measure children's development and learning, both during their early learning years and as they entered kindergarten.

**Maryland** and **Ohio** collaborated on an early learning assessment that is a comprehensive system of formative assessments for children from 36 months of age to 72 months of age and includes a kindergarten entry assessment component.

A Comprehensive Assessment System

is a coordinated and comprehensive system of multiple assessments — each of which is valid and reliable for its specified purpose and for the population with which it will be used — that organizes information about the process and context of young children's learning and development in order to help early childhood educators make informed instructional and programmatic decisions - as defined in the ELC Notice Inviting Applications.

## *Overview*

Eleven ELC States directed grant funds specifically to building or enhancing their comprehensive assessment systems, and all but one State focused some funds on kindergarten entry assessments (see Table 1 for the breakdown of which States addressed each reform area). Included here are a few examples of the types of activities States undertook to address comprehensive assessment systems.

**Colorado's** *Results Matter* Expansion project includes ongoing child assessment, family outcomes surveys, and program quality evaluations. These data inform results-driven program and policy decisions and help demonstrate the efficacy of services available to Colorado's children and families. Colorado has reached beyond child care subsidy programs and Early Head Start/Head Start programs to include family child care homes and a child development center on the Ute Indian Reservation.

As a result of the **Colorado** project:

- Teachers are making positive connections between developmentally appropriate assessment and the *Colorado Shines* QRIS;
- Teachers use the tool to develop individualized learning plans and guide their daily practices to support positive outcomes for the growth and development of their students;
- Directors use the *Teaching Strategies GOLD*™ reports to guide program planning and professional development opportunities.

**Georgia** established a Comprehensive Assessment Task Force to identify opportunities to align and improve Georgia's current assessment practices and recommend changes to policy and practice related to child-level assessments in Georgia's early care and learning settings. The task force focused on developmental screening and formative assessments and made recommendations to inform statewide policy, coordinate child assessment efforts, and support effective professional development. These recommendations addressed: the identification and selection of appropriate screening instruments and formative assessment tools; the inclusion of families in screening and assessment processes; the development of processes for sharing screening and assessment results to link children with services and supports; and the promotion of professional development that emphasizes quality administration and data use to support outcomes.

In **Pennsylvania**, programs may choose from a list of approved, valid and reliable, and comprehensive assessment tools that are rigorously aligned to the State standards-based frameworks (for infants, young toddlers, older toddlers, and pre-kindergarteners). The assessment companies must ensure that their on-line systems can communicate outcomes into Pennsylvania's Early Learning Network (ELN). The ELN combines structural information about the programs, including the quality and experience of staff, with information on the development of children over time. The ELN enables Pennsylvania to better understand the children served by providing a platform for collecting, tracking, and analyzing information about children, classrooms, staff and providers across all program types. The ELN receives program, staff, and child information from the State-funded preschool program, the early intervention program, and the early care and education professional development system. Information from the ELN is used for program quality improvement and to inform classroom instruction and professional development. Professional development activities that are underway

include an Assessment Basics course that consists of four one-hour lessons to help practitioners: gain knowledge about the types and uses of assessments; learn to observe, document, and interpret data with the goal of providing children with appropriate experiences to support growth and learning; and learn how to use child assessment outcomes to guide instruction and engage families. Once finalized, the course will be added to the Pennsylvania Key PD Registry.

**Maryland** and **Ohio** partnered to develop and implement the *Ready for Kindergarten (R4K) Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System*, which includes both an *Early Learning Assessment (ELA)* for children from 3 years to 5 years of age and a *Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA),* administered by teachers to children at the beginning of kindergarten. The ELA is an optional formative assessment that provides teachers an opportunity to measure a child's development with 32 Learning Progressions across seven learning domains that have been found to be critical for a child's success in school and life. The ELA gives teachers' insights about children that inform instruction and promote continued growth and development. In Ohio, the ELA (and the KRA) is aligned to the Ohio Early Learning and Development Standards, and the State has trained 10,000 preschool teachers to complete and score 10 of the available 32 learning ELA progressions.

**Massachusetts** utilized multiple approaches to expand the use of formative assessments as part of a broader comprehensive assessment system. Through their Massachusetts Kindergarten Entry Assessment initiative, they engaged public school districts in a broader conversation about developmentally appropriate practices such as observation and formative assessment. Massachusetts incorporated the use of formative assessment as a best practice for high-quality programming and provided training on formative assessment to all programs in the QRIS.

**Minnesota** completed an online Early Learning Tool Finder to assist early learning programs with choosing appropriate assessment tools. This finder is designed to match respondents with assessments based on their responses to an online algorithm. The tool finder currently includes all *Parent Aware*-approved tools and kindergarten entry assessments. Minnesota has developed an assessment crosswalk that aligns assessment tools to the Minnesota Early Learning and Kindergarten standards and shows how items on various tools relate to one other.

In **Rhode Island**, all State-funded Pre-K programs, all public school early childhood special education programs, and 46 child care centers are using *Teaching Strategies Gold* to collect information on children's development. The number of child portfolios that have been administered has more than doubled since the start of the grant, with 7,165 portfolios administered across State-funded Pre-K programs, public and private schools, and community programs.

**Vermont** established the Vermont Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System framework, and an Early Childhood Assessment guidance manual is under development to accompany the

framework.

## *Training and Professional Development*

A number of States used ELC funds to offer training and professional development on specific assessment instruments, as well as on the uses of assessment data.

**Delaware, Minnesota, Rhode Island,** and **Vermont** directed ELC grant funds to train providers in the use of the *Teaching Strategies Gold* formative assessment. **Delaware** also trained providers to use the data to inform instructional decision-making. **Minnesota, North Carolina**, and **Vermont** also trained providers and trainers on the use of the *Classroom Assessment Scoring System™ (CLASS™).*

**Rhode Island** developed and delivered two online professional development series consisting of nine modules that support providers in: understanding appropriate purposes and uses of different assessment types; implementing assessments reliably; and interpreting and using data to inform instruction. Rhode Island has also provided technology grants to support high-quality child assessment practices in programs, including family child care homes. These Child Assessment Technology Grants provided technical assistance and professional development to support grantees in enhancing their Quality Improvement Plans in child assessment, assessment planning and implementation, and in developing competencies to implement strong child assessment practices.

The **Minnesota** Department of Education provided training on the *Formative Assessment System for Teachers* and partnered with the Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education to provide workshops in reflective practice, developmental parenting, and quality interactions to parent educators and early childhood teachers. In addition, the Minnesota Department of Education and the University of Minnesota completed a series of hybrid learning modules that focus on authentic assessment for special topics

**Minnesota** Early learning programs can access in-depth face-to-face training or online overviews on the following seven topics: (1) primer on authentic assessment, (2) embedding authentic assessment into everyday practice, (3) involving families in the assessment process, (4) assessment, standards and curricula, (5) support for administrators, (6) using assessment to inform instruction, and (7) assessment for special populations. Online modules are available on the University of Minnesota's website. The Minnesota Department of Education is also finalizing online self-paced learning modules that will provide immediate access to authentic assessment learning modules to help programs meet training and professional development requirements for *Parent Aware*, Minnesota's QRIS.

The **North Carolina** Division of Child Development and Early Education partnered with Child Care Resources, Inc. and the University of North Carolina at Wilmington to develop a train-the-trainer course titled *Choosing and Using an Appropriate Curriculum and Formative Assessment* to help early learning program staff understand the value of using a strong curriculum, identify an appropriate curriculum, and understand how to use a

curriculum and instructional assessment tool. North Carolina is also working with the FirstSchool Initiative to strengthen the use of assessment data to guide instruction in Pre-K through grade 3. Observational data from the *FirstSchool Snapshot* and *CLASS* are used to address evidence-based characteristics of practices that support children. Coaching and professional development was provided to teachers, leadership teams, and principals, as well as central office staff.

For more information about comprehensive assessment systems, see the Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance publication: *Untapped Potential of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.* 2015

# Kindergarten Entry Assessments

The ELC program emphasized the use of kindergarten entry assessments (KEAs) as an important tool for determining what children know and are able to do by the time they reach kindergarten. Under ELC, the KEA was intended to produce results that could be used to help close the school readiness gap at kindergarten entry and to inform instruction in the early elementary school grades. KEAs are also intended to inform parents about their children's status and involve them in decisions about their children's education. They should not be used to prevent children's entry into kindergarten or as a single measure for high-stakes decisions[vi]. The characteristics of a KEA are included in the text box on this page.

Characteristics of a KEA:

It is administered to children during the first few months of their entering kindergarten.

It covers all the Essential Domains of School Readiness.

- Language and literacy development
- Cognition and general knowledge (including early mathematics and early scientific development)
- Approaches toward learning
- Physical well-being and motor development (including adaptive skills)
- Social and emotional development

Its use conforms to the recommendations of the National Research Council reports on early childhood [vii]

It is valid and reliable for its intended purposes and for the target populations and is aligned to the State's early learning and development standards - as defined in the ELC Notice Inviting Applications

## *Overview*

Nineteen of the 20 ELC States chose to dedicate some portion of their ELC funds to implementing a kindergarten entry assessment. (**Wisconsin** chose to adopt the *PALS Literacy Screener* as their statewide literacy assessment in 2012, but the PALS is not a comprehensive KEA.)

States refer to their kindergarten assessment systems in different ways, in some cases to emphasize the role of the assessment in examining children's progress and inform instructional practice, and in other cases to signal its use as a readiness measure and not an assessment that could be used to determine eligibility to enter kindergarten. Some examples of the names ELC States give to their KEAs include: *Desired Results Developmental Profile-School Readiness* (DRDP-SR, **California**), **Delaware** *Early Learning Survey (DELS), Readiness Checklist* (**Georgia**), *Kindergarten Individual Developmental Survey* (**Illinois**), *Kindergarten Observation Tool* (**Kentucky**), *Kindergarten Readiness Assessment* (**Maryland** and **Ohio**), *Kindergarten Entry Profile* (**Minnesota** and **Rhode Island**), *Kindergarten Entry Inventory* (**Pennsylvania**), *Ready for Kindergarten! Survey (R4K!S,* **Vermont**), and **Washington** *Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS)*.

Within these systems, States are using a variety of assessment tools to determine what children should know and be able to do by kindergarten entry. Some States chose to use or modify commercially available assessment tools, most commonly *Teaching Strategies Gold*, while other States were developing or adapting their own State tools. Some States are using a combination of tools and allowing districts to select from among a list of approved tools to assess kindergarten readiness (e.g., **Minnesota**). A list of tools used in States in 2016 is included in Figure 13.

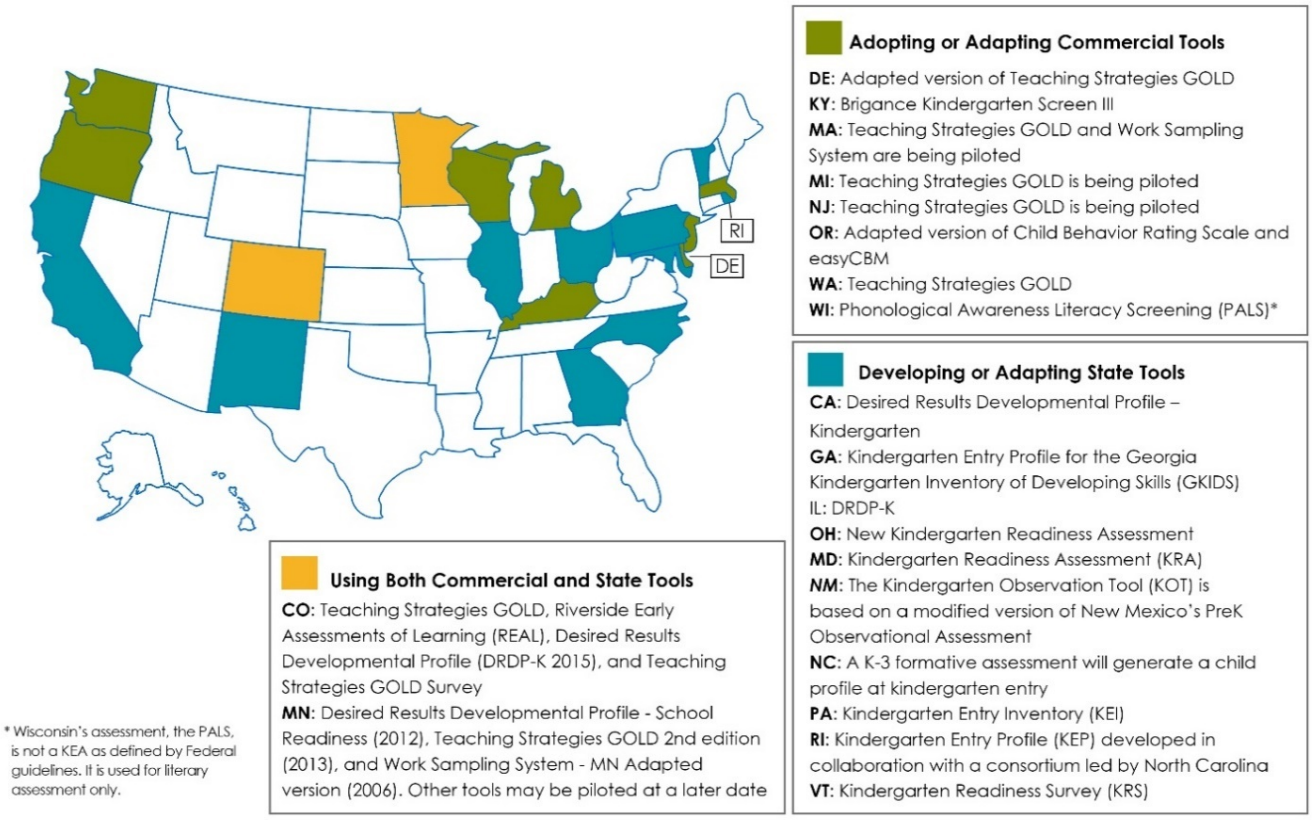



*Figure 13. Kindergarten Entry Assessment Tools used in ELC States.*

*Source: Full-size graphic available in this document: Kindergarten Entry Assessments in RTT-ELC States (KEA). 2016*

ELC funds to support KEAs have been used for a variety of activities, including assessment modifications, professional development and administration, and reporting.

## *Tool Development and Modification*

Since the ELC program outlined the importance of an assessment, or suite of assessments that addressed all essential domains of school readiness (described in the text box on p. 44), some States began by modifying the assessments already in place in their States.

**Vermont** revised their *Ready for Kindergarten! Survey (R4K!S)* and contracted for an examination of the alignment between the survey and their State early learning standards. They found a strong alignment.

Based on stakeholder input the State board in **Colorado** approved a reduced item version of the *Teaching Strategies Gold Kindergarten Entry Assessment Survey* for use in Colorado.

**Oregon** focused on strengthening both the administration and content of their KEA assessment. For example, as a result of stakeholder feedback and an alignment study of Oregon's Early Learning and Common Core State Standards, the Early Literacy measures were revised to provide a more accurate picture of the strengths of Oregon's incoming kindergartners and a measurement of growth over time.

**Washington** updated the objectives and dimensions of their *WaKIDS* system and reduced the number of assessed items with the intent of better informing instruction and connecting to end-of-year standards, while continuing to provide important information about kindergarteners' strengths.

Many States addressed validity and reliability aspects of their system, with specific emphasis on construct validity and inter-rater reliability.

**California** conducted a Field Test and Calibration Study to measure the reliability and construct validity of the *Desired Results Developmental Profile – School Readiness (DRDP-SR*).

**Georgia** conducted an inter-rater reliability study that included narrative and video vignettes of the assessment items.

**Illinois** contracted with WestEd to develop an online system through which teachers can establish and maintain reliability in administering *KIDS*.

**Maryland** and **Ohio** conducted validity and reliability checks on the KRA and published technical reports online. Maryland implemented a validation plan to examine concurrent and predictive validity of the tool. The KRA is being field tested in Maryland, Ohio, and Tennessee in preparation for the implementation of KRA v. 2.0. Connecticut and a number of school districts in **Michigan** are also planning to implement the KRA. School Readiness data or **Maryland** is available online.

**Pennsylvania** focused in part on examining the validity and reliability of their assessment system and funded an external validation study through ELC.

## *Professional Development and Administration*

A major focus of many States has been on training teachers and administrators in the implementation and administration of the tools and on the use of assessment results.

**Delaware** offered technical assistance to all schools to support the accurate use of the Delaware Early Learning Survey, a customized version of *Teaching Strategies GOLD*.

**Georgia** developed a series of online training modules to support the launch of the *Readiness Check*. A train-the-trainer model was utilized with a series of live informational and training webinars to train teachers in administration of the *Readiness Checklist*. The Georgia Department of Education contracted with Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB) to film students participating in *Readiness Check* activities.

Video clips will be used in online training modules to demonstrate administration and scoring of the *Readiness Check* activities.

**Illinois** teachers attend a two-day training to learn how to gather evidence for and complete the assessment, use the results to inform the planning of curriculum, and share results with parents. Teachers can find resources for implementing *KIDS* on the KIDS website, including tutorials, observation resources, checklists, and articles.

**Maryland** developed an Administration Guide that is shared with all teachers and includes procedures for administering the KRA and how to provide levels of allowable supports to dual language learners and students with disabilities. [Maryland uses a Trainer-of-Trainer model statewide for the KRA, and Ohio uses the model regionally.] The model is a blended approach of face-to-face meetings and online activities and includes customizable training materials and online learning communities.

**Massachusetts** contracted with an external vendor to provide training to teachers and administrators on the use of the *Teaching Strategies GOLD* or *Work Sampling System®* as formative assessment tools at kindergarten entry. The training includes a series of online video modules.

**North Carolina** utilizes District Implementation Teams to establish and revise implementation plans, review professional development materials, organize training sessions, and plan for ongoing support in preparation for full implementation of the kindergarten entry assessment portion of the State's K-3 Formative Assessment Process.

**Rhode Island** is focusing on providing professional development to local education agencies to understand and support developmentally appropriate kindergarten instruction, assessment, and curricular practices, as well as transitions from preschool to kindergarten.

**Vermont** developed training modules and resources that were revised as e-learning modules for easy access by teachers in user-friendly formats.

**Maryland, Ohio, Rhode Island,** and **Washington** all use some form of certification process to determine the inter-rater reliability of teachers. In **Maryland** and **Ohio**, after receiving training, all teachers complete a simulation and content assessment to fulfill reliability qualifications. Follow-up coaching is available to teachers as needed. **Rhode Island** developed online certification modules that are used to assess inter-rater reliability of teachers and to certify their reliability in administering the assessment. Additional training is available to teachers who do not pass the reliability check. **Washington** includes an inter-rater reliability certification as part of the *WaKIDS 101* teacher training.

## *Communications and Reporting*

A critically important piece of implementing KEA systems is communicating and reporting the results to various stakeholder audiences, including parents, teachers, administrators, and legislators.

**Georgia** was developing reporting structures and report shells that will be presented to a committee of kindergarten teachers for review and revision prior to the

statewide launch. Georgia contracted with Georgia Public Broadcasting to design and develop a public parent resource site, which will include background information, descriptions of *Readiness Check* activities, and resources for helping their child at home.

**Maryland** *Ready for Kindergarten Online* provides secure access for teachers to enter student performance data and teacher observational data. Accessible via desktop computer, laptop, or tablet, the *Ready for Kindergarten Online* system allows for data import and export. User dashboards and reports support State-, district-, school-, classroom, and student-level data reporting and analysis. Customizable views and reports can be created for families, teachers, and administrators at the school, district, or State levels.

**Ohio** teachers can access final Individual Student Reports to share with parents. Individual district and State data reports are available online for public access.

**Pennsylvania** disseminates an electronic newsletter to all KEI system users. They have developed and disseminated resources to describe the KEI and its role in defining kindergarten readiness, as well as a flyer on how KEI data is used by teachers, schools, and communities. Pennsylvania has convened an external research council to provide recommendations on statewide early learning outcomes reporting, as well as a larger research agenda.

**Rhode Island** developed a communication plan that includes providing personalized community profiles to each district to spotlight major predictors of children's preparedness for kindergarten and to help

administrators understand the potential number of children who enter kindergarten already behind expected developmental levels.

**Vermont** has released statewide assessment reports, and **Colorado** is piloting a school readiness data report.

**Washington** publishes *WaKIDS* data on State Report Cards that include data at the school-, district-, Educational Service District-, and State-levels. Data are available online on the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction website.

Implementing a statewide kindergarten entry assessment brings a number of challenges. ELC States acknowledge the importance of involving kindergarten teachers and administrators when planning to implement a KEA. States continue to address issues such as teacher and administrator buy-in, data collection and reporting challenges, legislative changes that affect administration, and ongoing costs for administering the KEAs. Despite these many complicating factors, ELC States have made considerable progress in developing and implementing systems to better understand how children in their States are performing at the time of kindergarten entry.

For more information about kindergarten entry assessments, see the Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance publications:

- *Kindergarten Entry Assessments in RTT-ELC States (KEA).* 2016
- *Insights on Readiness: What States are Learning from Kindergarten Entry Assessments*. 2015


# ENGAGING AND SUPPORTING FAMILIES

Families provide children with the love and sense of security they need to make sense of the larger world. Partnering with families and engaging them in meaningful ways in their children's early learning experiences is critical to helping children reach their potential.

Ten ELC States (**Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Washington,** and **Wisconsin**) directed Early Learning Challenge resources to engage and support families in promoting their children's development and learning (see Table 1 for the breakdown of which States addressed each reform area). Figure 14 shows the four key areas in which these 10 States made changes and improvements to engage families: enhanced program standards; targeted parent and family supports; training for early childhood educators; and statewide efforts to support and engage families.

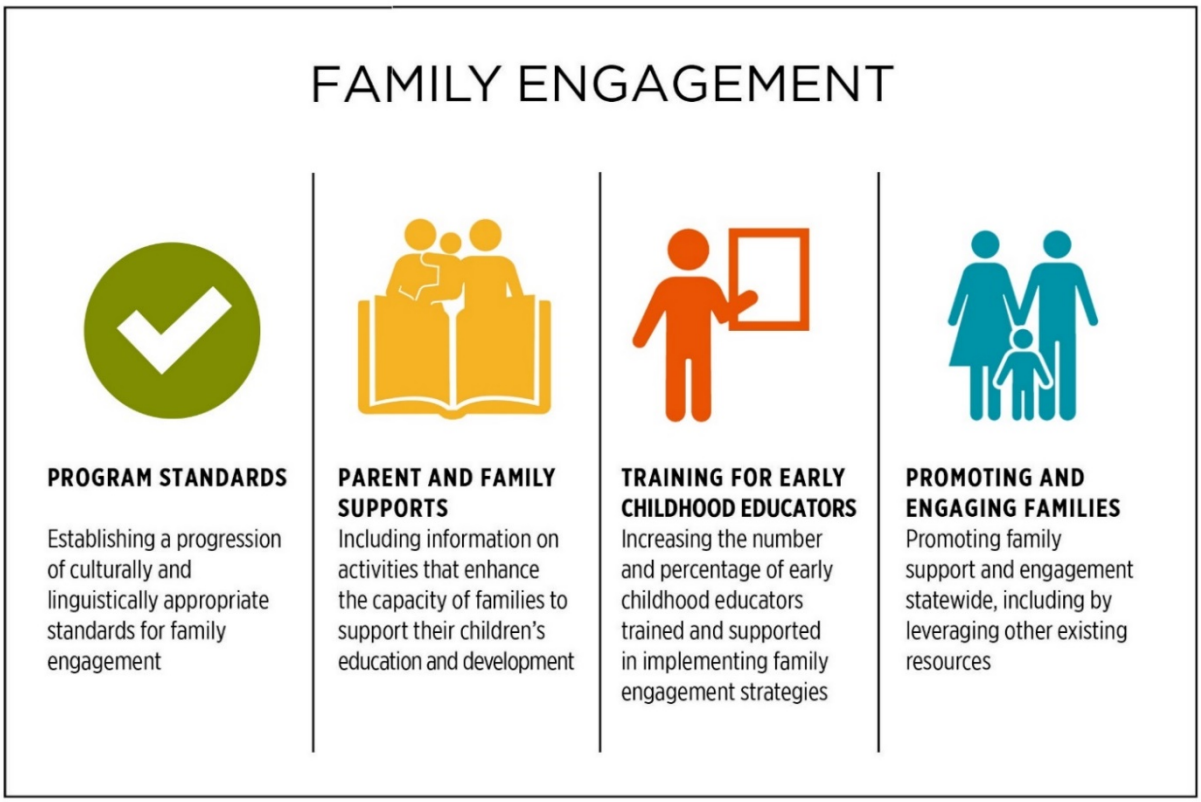



*Figure 14. Family Engagement*

As noted in the examples throughout this section, many States use the Strengthening Families Framework as a way to organize their work around family engagement.

## Program Standards

It is not uncommon for early learning and development programs, as well as schools, to think their work is done by simply inviting families into the child's program. However, mere attendance or basic participation does not reflect best practices in engaging and supporting families. A progression of standards for family engagement that are culturally and linguistically appropriate can provide early childhood educators with the tools they need to expand their family engagement activities. Successful engagement of families in supporting their children's development and learning should go beyond requesting their participation at center events or parent-teacher conferences and should include policies and program standards that support parent education, ongoing two-way communication with families, linkages to community supports, parent involvement in decision-making, and parent leadership development.

Examples of work conducted by States to expand program standards to better support and engage families include the following:

The **Maryland** Family Engagement Coalition used ELC funds to develop and publish the *Maryland Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework* that sets forth the vision for engaging families of young children in Maryland. The Framework is designed to help providers who serve young children by supporting intentional thinking and actions regarding the implementation of family engagement policies and practices. The document allows programs to assess their family engagement practices and suggests policy and practice changes that can be made to better support and engage families.

The **Pennsylvania** Kindergarten through Grade 2 Early Learning Partnership Standards are a result of a crosswalk of the Head Start Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework, PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships, and the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework™.

While **Vermont** did not dedicate ELC funds to Family Engagement directly, they have been designing and conducting regional family-focused trainings, family guides, and additional family resources aligned to the Vermont Early Learning Standards.

**Michigan and Washington** Incorporated Strengthening Families[a] Protective Factors into their the GSQ program standards.

In **Washington**, Strengthening Families is the cornerstone of the Early Achievers(QRIS) Family Engagement and Partnership standard. Points can be earned toward rating by completing the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment, developing a plan of action based on the results, and involving parents and families in long-term planning.

Several States have integrated culturally and linguistically appropriate family engagement practices into the program quality standards for their QRIS. For example,

In **California**, some consortia added unique requirements to their Tier 5 including implementing a developmental cultural linguistic approach in lesson plans and classroom materials and having one member of the teaching team fluent in any language that represents at least 20 percent of children in the classroom.

The top level of **Illinois'** QRIS for center- and school-based programs consists of five Awards of Excellence. Two of these are Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Practice and Family and Community Engagement.

## Parent and Family Supports

ELC States made significant progress in giving parents the information and tools they need to make informed decisions and to support their children's early learning.

The ***Maryland*** *EXCELS* website and *Maryland EXCELS* mobile app let families search for information about regulated child care, including programs that participate in Maryland's QRIS.

The **Massachusetts** Department of Early Education and Care partnered with the WGBH Educational Foundation to create the Resources for Early Learning website for educators and parents and partnered with United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley to develop a public awareness campaign, *Brain Building in Progress*, In addition, the **Massachusetts** partnered with the Massachusetts Community Action Programs to develop a Financial Literacy Education online course to support families.

**Pennsylvania** enhanced the Pennsylvania's Promise for Children website to provide families with easy-to-understand information about child development and quality early learning programs. The site features the *CONNECT Helpline* that provides families with information about child development and connections to Early Intervention services. The interactive Early Learning GPS tool and app helps families support their children's development. Pennsylvania plans to launch the Early Learning GPS site in Spanish as well.

The **Washington** Department of Early Learning and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction Washington partnered with local and State organizations to support the *Love. Talk. Play* campaign. The campaign distributes weekly tips and fun facts about child development through social media, a website, and e-mail.

Several States offered programs designed to educate, strengthen, and support families with young children by offering information and resources including home visiting.

The *Great Start* ***Georgia*** framework is being implemented through a partnership with a licensed child care learning center in each of the State's four Early Education Empowerment Zones. The framework includes evidence-based home visiting, a central intake component that provides community outreach, identification and referral of families to *Great Start Georgia*, intake screening, parent education, and linkage of families to resources and services.

The **New Jersey** County Councils for Young Children used the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework to provide training to engage families and develop mutual goals and creative strategies

In **North Carolina**, *Family Connects,* a universal nurse home visiting program, served hundreds of families with newborns in the four county Transformation Zones. Nurse home visitors provided support and education about newborn and postpartum care, assessed family risks and needs, triaged needs, and referred families to appropriate and acceptable community services,

In addition, the **North Carolina** Division of Public Health, Department of Health and Human Services implemented the Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) in 19 northeastern North Carolina counties. Triple P is a universal multi-level evidence-based family strengthening program that aims to reduce the prevalence of child emotional, behavioral, and mental health problems. North Carolina is continuing to implement Triple P statewide beyond the grant through community providers and through an online personal parenting course.

One strategy States have used to share information and resources with parents is the use of family gatherings, including learning parties, parent cafés, and academies.

In Title 1 neighborhoods in **Maryland,** teachers and parents and their rising kindergarteners participated in Parent-Child Learning Parties that supported the successful transition from early childhood settings to public schools.

**Pennsylvania** and **Wisconsin** conducted Be Strong Families Parent Cafés to teach parents about protective factors through individual deep self-reflection and peer-to-peer learning. Wisconsin offered Café series that focused specifically on families and children with special needs and disabilities.

States offered programs to families to support early literacy practices.

In **Maryland**, Title I schools in nine school districts participated in *Raising A Reader* to help parents develop the habit of sharing books with their young children. Spanish-speaking students made up 22 percent of the children in the program.

In **Massachusetts,** 24 Coordinated Family and Community Engagement programs used ELC funding to enhance implementation of evidence-based early literacy programming for children and families in their communities.

Through the **North Carolina** Transformation Zone literacy strategies project, counties implemented three Motheread, Inc. curricula: *Story Exploring*, *Motheread/Fatheread,* and *Birth and Beginning Years (B.A.B.Y.)*.

States partnered with health care providers, libraries and museums, and other community organizations to support parents with information and resources.

Health care providers supported parents as their children's first teachers. **Georgia** established First Steps services in each of the *Great Start Georgia* Early Education Empowerment hubs. At each hub, specific implementation activities included: 1) development of protocols and procedures for engaging families for First Steps screening and ongoing resource assistance, 2) First Steps training of all intake staff and supervisors, and 3) creation of parent packets with information about local and statewide resources on key issues affecting family health. **Maryland** and **North Carolina** participated in *Reach Out And Read*. During well-child visits, children received free books, and parents were given advice on the importance of reading to their children.

In **Maryland**, 18 public libraries in Title I school districts organized Library Learning Cafés to provide families with information about early childhood and opportunities to network. Sixteen libraries also created Family Resource/Parent Information Centers. The **Massachusetts** Department of Early Education and Care collaborated with Boston Children's Museum and engaged over 119 libraries and 52 museums across the State to support intentional family engagement activities and early learning opportunities. The partnership focused on four areas: early literacy; school readiness; interest and awareness of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM); and public awareness of the importance of early education and care through the State's *Brain Building in Progress* communications initiative.

The **Massachusetts** Department of Early Education and Care offered trainings on the *Brazelton Touchpoints* model, which provided a common language of child behavior and development to participants from community nonprofits and State agencies.

## Training Early Childhood Educators

States used ELC grant funding to train early childhood educators to better support families and to engage them in their children's development and early learning.

In **North Carolina,** 22 Head Start/Early Head Start training hubs provided training on family engagement strategies, technical assistance, demonstration and coaching, and follow-up to the early childhood workforce in programs licensed by the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education.

Providing training to coaches and trainers allowed States to have a more uniform training model and to expand the reach of their training dollars.

The **Michigan** Department of Education and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services combined resources to offer training to all *Pathways to Potential (P2P) Success* coaches in Michigan. Coaches provided training to the staff implementing *P2P* programming in nearly 230 schools.

The **North Carolina** Head Start State Collaboration Office worked with the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute to incorporate the content of the family engagement training and the Office of Head Start's Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework into the *Advanced Course on Emotional and Social Development and Family Engagement*, a series of online, self-paced training modules.

In **Washington,** a six-hour introductory *Strengthening Families* training is required for all facilities enrolled in *Early Achievers*, Washington's QRIS. Points can be earned toward rating by completing the *Strengthening Families Self-Assessment*, developing a plan of action based on the results, and involving parents and families in long-term planning.

Several States offered State or regional institutes to provide training about parent engagement.

All *Great Start* ***Georgia*** staff participated in the 2016 Georgia Home Visiting Institute with a focus on special issues within home visiting, self-care, and motivational interviewing. In addition, *Parent as Teachers* Early Education Empowerment Zone supervisors attended a two-day Advanced Supervision Summit facilitated by the *Parents as Teachers* National Center.

**Maryland** used five regional Learning Parties to train early learning teachers to support the successful transition of preschool children from early childhood settings to public schools.

### State Highlight: Kentucky

*United Way bornlearning® Academies* provide families with information and resources about their child's nutrition and health, brain development, school readiness, and social/emotional health. The Early Learning Challenge Grant funded 100 *United Way bornLearning® Academies* in 57 counties through elementary school Family Resource & Youth Service Centers that collaborate with local businesses, the faith-based community, school partners, and civic organizations.

The Kentucky Strengthening Families Leadership (KYSF) Team created a train-the-trainer module that focused on the importance of protective factors and how they may be applied to help families mitigate toxic stress and build family resilience. The training includes a Strengthening Families online module that is targeted primarily to child care professionals and provides credit toward licensing. This enhanced module has allowed Kentucky to meet the need to train a large number of early childhood educators in preparation for the implementation of the new Kentucky *All STARS* quality rating and improvement system.

In **Pennsylvania,** five Community Innovation Zone partners participated in the *Be Strong Parent Café Institute*, a two-day experiential and highly interactive institute that prepared a team of parents and providers to convene and implement parent Cafés.

**Pennsylvania** and **Wisconsin** both offered annual Family Engagement conferences attended by parents and professionals from a wide variety of sectors to engage in conversations about successful strategies and practices in family and community engagement.

The **Maryland** Family Network increased the capacity of organizations to provide Parent Cafés by training an additional 56 Parent Café Facilitators.

The **Vermont** Birth to Five program built hub-and-spoke networks to train home-based providers to help families build protective factors, make a strong connection to community resources, and connect families to needed supports and services.

Two States trained parents to engage other parents in their own communities and to enhance awareness and support for early childhood.

In **Michigan**, local Great Start Parent Coalitions competed for "Trusted Advisors" grants ranging from $5,000 to $60,000 to help coalitions develop a cadre of trusted advisors who disseminate culturally and linguistically appropriate materials and information about early childhood learning and development.

**Wisconsin** trained nine "Parent Ambassadors" during a year-long, intensive parent leadership training program. The parent leaders had children in many early childhood sectors, including Head Start, 4-year-old kindergarten, home visiting programs, and private child care and education programs. The "Parent Ambassadors" program was administered through an inter-agency agreement between the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee's Milwaukee Child Welfare Training Partnership.

## Promoting and Engaging Families

**Michigan** hired a State-level Family Engagement Specialist to lead the ELC grant family engagement activities. In 2017, Michigan planned to hire local Family Engagement Consultants in seven Pathway to Potential counties plus one rural community. In each of the counties, planning meetings included the Great Start Collaboratives and Great Start to Quality Resource Centers.

Several States offered grants to local coalitions to support family engagement efforts.

The **Georgia** Department of Early Care and Learning awarded Family Engagement Community Grants of $10,000 to Family Connection Partnership Collaboratives. The Collaboratives hosted family events including parent meetings and cafés; provided transportation and other resources to increase family engagement

and participation in school and community activities; developed and distributed literacy brochures and children's books to families; and provided translation services at parent/teacher conferences and school family events.

**Georgia** also awarded Family Engagement Opportunity Grants ranging from $8,300 to $15,000 to the four Early Education Empowerment Zones and metro Atlanta. These grants were designed to increase availability and accessibility to quality family engagement programs, activities, and opportunities; provide supplemental educational outlets that promote, encourage, and support community awareness and advocacy; and provide access to free, ongoing parent leadership and child development resources. These grants were available to legally operating early childhood care and education organizations.

In **Wisconsin** in 2015, communities that put together cross-sector teams to participate in the annual Family Engagement conference received pre-conference mini-grants to assess their current practice and prepare stories and questions to bring to the event. The 2016 conference focused on concrete, evidence-based strategies for family and community engagement, including Parent Cafés, parent leadership programs, and fatherhood initiatives.

For more information about family engagement, see the Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance publication, *Webinar Summary - Building Public Will as You Race to the Top*. 2015

# SUPPORTING THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION WORKFORCE

A well-trained and properly supported early childhood education workforce is an essential element of a State's plan to provide young children with high-quality early learning experiences. The foundation for a comprehensive State approach to supporting a qualified early childhood education workforce is a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework[viii] that outlines what early childhood educators should know and be able to teach young children. This framework supports a common progression of credentials and degrees that allows early childhood educators to progress along a career ladder. It also gives institutions of higher education and professional development providers a common tool to use to align their coursework and training opportunities. Elements of a comprehensive approach to supporting the early childhood workforce include development of competencies, career progressions, connections with postsecondary institutions and other providers, and professional development and training opportunities. See Figure 15 for the ELC framework for supporting the early childhood education workforce.

Fourteen States (**Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Washington**, and **Wisconsin**) addressed the focus area that required them to establish a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees that were aligned with the framework.

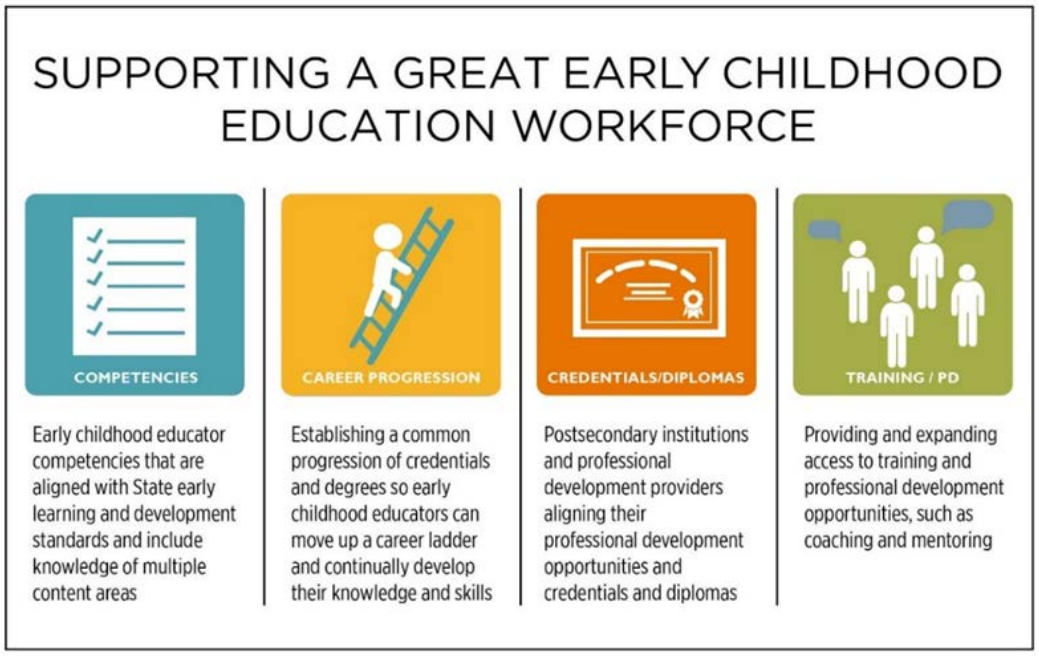



*Figure 15. Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce*

In addition, fifteen States (**California, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island** and **Vermont**) elected to focus on providing and expanding access to professional development opportunities that are aligned with their Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. (See Table 1 for the complete list of which States addressed each reform area).

Strategies States used to promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway based on the State's Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework include State-level professional development coordinators, workforce registries, and incentives such as scholarships and wage supplements.

The following are examples from the many ways States have supported their early childhood education workforce under their ELC grants.

## Articulated Career Pathways

As individual early childhood educators move from a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or State credential, to an associate degree, to a bachelor's degree and beyond, they should be building on commonly defined, previously learned information and skills. States used ELC funds to articulate their career pathways and align them with their early childhood competences.

**Illinois** and **Washington** adopted statewide "stackable certificates" that build on each other, provide transferable credits, and lead to credentials or degrees.

Several States created articulation agreements that included developing or refining coursework.

In **California,** the Community Colleges Curriculum Alignment Project developed eleven foundation courses that have been approved for transfer to a bachelor's degree.

**Colorado** and **Illinois** worked with their institutions of higher education to collaboratively redesign early childhood educator preparation programs with a focus on improving articulation and transfer pathways.

**Massachusetts** and **Rhode Island** worked on articulation agreements from an associate degree to a bachelor's degree.

**Vermont** developed a new Early Childhood Education Licensure program, offered primarily online, that helps move those with an associate degree to a bachelor's degree with licensure, and those with a bachelor's degree to licensure.

## Aligned Coursework

The ELC program helped higher education institutions align their early childhood courses with the established core knowledge competencies.

**Colorado, Massachusetts,** and **North Carolina** aligned all core early childhood community college courses with their Early Childhood Competencies, teacher preparation and licensing rules, accrediting bodies, and program standards.

**Ohio** hosted three one-day Early Childhood Education Summits to explore aligning pre-service early childhood education within two-year and four-year institutions and the State agencies' policy and program priorities. Representatives from 29 higher education institutions attended.

The University of **Rhode Island** revised their early childhood education curriculum to align with the key concepts in their early learning and development standards and their Workforce Knowledge and Competencies.

> We focused on bringing agencies together to align their professional development policies and requirements. We created a statewide policy that finally established one set of guidelines for instructors and EC professional development participants. Now, when a training has the Ohio-approved designation, an early childhood program employee knows that it will count towards his or her credential, across all programs and settings.

In **Washington**, all community and technical college programs in early childhood education recognize the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals framework as the standard for core knowledge and skills for early learning professionals. Each of the colleges aligns all early learning program curricula with the State's Core Competencies.

In several States, institutions of higher education developed new coursework and degrees to meet the needs of the workforce.

**California** created additional courses in the areas of Infants-Toddlers, Administration, and Children with Special Needs.

**Maryland** adopted The Maryland Approved Alternative Preparation Program in Early Childhood Education (MAAPP - ECE). The ELC grant covered the cost of coursework, program oversight, and stipends for participating public school supervising teachers and substitutes. Candidates were required to commit to remain in a licensed child care setting for two years upon completion of the MAAPP-ECE program.

The University of **North Carolina** at Greensboro offers an online Master of Education in Birth-Kindergarten Interdisciplinary Studies in Education and Development, with an emphasis in Early Childhood Leadership & Program Administration. The University of North Carolina at Wilmington offers an online master of education in Leadership, Policy and Advocacy in Early Childhood.

Five States (**Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota**, and **Washington**) worked with high schools and community colleges to align and integrate coursework.

In **Delaware, Maryland,** and **Massachusetts**, high school students took community college courses for credit in their high school classrooms.

The **Maryland** Department of Education worked with local school systems to align the high school Career and Technology Education curriculum with the requirements of the CDA credential. This alignment allowed high school students to take the

CDA exam upon graduation.

**Minnesota** worked with secondary Family and Consumer Science teachers to develop a teacher cadet program to engage high school students in early learning.

**Washington** created alignment toolkits to attract high school students into early learning, giving them the ability to earn college credit in high school and begin on the pathway towards the stackable certificate and a career in early childhood education.

**Illinois** launched a website specifically for early childhood higher education faculty. Early Childhood Higher Education Resources Online (EC HERO) provides resources for faculty, including links to articles, publications, websites, blogs, videos, research, and classroom activities.

Several States supported accreditation of community colleges as a strategy to ensure that workforce programs provide early childhood educators with relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities.

**Michigan, North Carolina,** and **Rhode Island** used ELC funds to support community colleges in their States to pursue the accreditation or re-accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

## Credentials, Certificates, and Endorsements

Credentials, certificates, endorsements, and degrees measure the professional development of the workforce. The ELC program encouraged States to focus on aligning their professional development

systems with their Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. Several States created new credentials, certificates, and endorsements that align with their workforce framework.

**Delaware, Massachusetts** and **Rhode Island** created certificates for leadership.

**Illinois** developed Family Specialist, Family Child Care, and Technical Assistance Credentials. Illinois also provided support to licensed educators with bachelor's degrees to pursue an English as a Second Language (ESL) or Bilingual Education endorsement.

The **Maryland** Approved Alternative Preparation Program in Early Childhood Education was designed for teachers working in licensed child care settings who were interested in obtaining certification in early childhood education.

**Minnesota** developed a certificate for infant and toddler care.

**Minnesota, North Carolina,** and **Washington** developed certificates for coaching. In North Carolina, professional development and technical assistance staff within the Child Care Resource & Referral system were encouraged to become certified and earn endorsements that demonstrated competence in providing professional development and/or technical assistance.

**Washington** worked with family child care providers to provide high school equivalency certificates. Higher education institutions offered the program in a variety of delivery methods and in three languages – English, Spanish and Somali.

**Supporting the Workforce: Colorado**

ELC funding allowed Colorado to work on aligning their Early Childhood Competencies with all core Early Childhood Community College courses and with the Colorado Educator Preparation and Licensing Rules, which govern four-year teacher preparation programs.

In addition, Colorado's Early Childhood Professional Credential 2.0 was aligned to the Early Childhood Competencies, the child care licensing regulations, and Colorado's QRIS. All four-year institutions are now required to align their courses to the Early Childhood Competencies and the Council for Exceptional Children Standards.

The Colorado Professional Development Information System functions as both a workforce registry that tracks the qualifications of the early childhood workforce and as a Learning Management System for delivery of educational courses or training programs.

## Professional Development

To support statewide coordination of professional development, **Wisconsin** created a Professional Development Coordinator position at the State level. In addition, they fund Regional Collaboration Coaches and Networks to support regional level coordination of system development, trainings, and technical assistance.

Developing and providing training courses and technical assistance for individuals who are not seeking a credential or degree is another way for States to support their early childhood workforce.

**Massachusetts** and **Michigan** developed business planning courses to help center-

based programs and family child care providers improve their business practices, and recruit and retain staff.

**Massachusetts** conducted the Early Educators Fellowship Initiative, a community-based leadership series for early childhood providers in public and private programs serving children from birth to grade 3.

**New Mexico** integrated the Pyramid Framework into their trainings to promote social-emotional wellness and to help practitioners understand the impact of nurturing relationships on children's capacity to learn. A train-the-trainer model has ensured that training was available in every corner of New Mexico.

The University of **New Mexico**, with assistance from The Center for Development and Disability, aligned training content in inclusion and special education.

**North Carolina** worked with Head Start grantees to provide training on family engagement, and trained Child Care Resource & Referral staff to facilitate communities of practice.

**Wisconsin** created a project to frame a cross-sector, comprehensive, and consistent approach to the professional development content and methods. These trainings addressed early learning, classroom environment, inclusive practices for children with disabilities, homelessness, dual language learners, and screening/assessment.

Coaching is another common strategy that the ELC States used to support their workforce.

**Georgia** created a statewide coach designation system that outlines coaching competencies, and policies, procedures, and training requirements for coaches.

**Massachusetts** developed Peer Assistance and Coaching to help early childhood teachers and directors improve their practice through effective peer support and coaching statewide. They also created a coaches' training series.

**Vermont** created a coaching program called M.A.T.C.H. (Mentoring, Advising, Coaching, Consulting and Helping) that includes a registry of professionals who provide on-site training, one-on-one mentoring, and relationship-based professional development to the early childhood workforce.

Several States created professional development opportunities for early childhood educators whose first language was not English.

**Massachusetts** developed an online fundamentals course about their QRIS for providers in English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, Chinese, Khmer and Portuguese.

**Minnesota** increased support for child care providers who are "New Americans" from the Minnesota immigrant and refugee communities. Minnesota supported the professional development of trainers statewide from typically underrepresented communities so that providers in these communities could receive training in their native languages.

**Rhode Island** developed a pilot program to provide English as a Second Language and adult basic education instruction with wrap-around support services for a cohort of 11 family child care providers.

## Incentives

Recognizing that incentives can be a great motivator, several States used various types of scholarships to help early childhood staff, and some cases parents, enhance their professional development.

**Colorado, Michigan, New Mexico, North Carolina, Rhode Island,** and **Vermont** all used some version of the Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood®) program.

**Illinois, Maryland,** and **Pennsylvania** used their own State-developed scholarship programs to incentivize staff to take coursework and improve their education. Maryland used the Training Voucher/Reimbursement and the Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund (CCCPDF) to help credentialed child care providers cover the cost of approved professional development and obtain an associate and/or bachelor's degree

Apprenticeships are another strategy that can improve the knowledge, skills, and compensation of their early childhood workforce.

**Vermont** worked with the Vermont Child Care Industry and Career Council, Inc. to offer classes and to expand the availability of a series of six 3-credit college courses that were required by the Vermont Child Care Apprenticeship Program.

Other means of supporting compensation and wage supplements for early childhood staff include the following:

**Delaware** offered Compensation, Retention and Education (CORE) awards to professionals in the form of individual financial awards.

**Georgia** created early educator scholarship awards that rewarded early care and education professionals for earning higher early childhood education credentials and degrees.

**Illinois** continued implementation of the State-funded *Great START (Strategies to Attract and Retain Teachers)* program, which provided wage supplements to providers in full-day, year-round programs based on their educational attainment and continued employment.

**North Carolina** enhanced the Smart Start supplement for WAGE$ to the17 counties in their Transformation Zones.

**North Carolina's** Birth-through-Kindergarten (B-K) Project expanded licensure support and mentor/evaluation services to selected early childhood education teachers who hold, or eligible for, a North Carolina (B-K) or Preschool Add-on license and teach in non-North Carolina Pre-Kindergarten classrooms (Head Start, Developmental Day, Child Care).

**Pennsylvania** created an opportunity for qualified partnerships to apply for funding to build innovative and sustained career-oriented pathways for current early childhood workers to earn industry-recognized credentials, including a credit-bearing Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate, an associate degree, a bachelor's degree, or a Pennsylvania ECE PreK-4 instructional certificate.

## Workforce Registries and Professional Development Systems

A workforce registry is a web-based system designed to verify; securely store; and track the employment, training, and education accomplishments of early childhood teachers and providers. States used ELC funds to create new registries, revise and update their existing registries, and train providers to utilize the registries.

**Illinois, Minnesota, Pennsylvania,** and **Rhode Island** all made improvements to their registry systems.

**Georgia** and **Illinois** required providers receiving child care subsidy funding to create profiles in the registry.

**Minnesota, Pennsylvania,** and **Rhode Island** added features to their registries to make them easier to use.

**Minnesota** created Develop, their Quality Improvement and Registry Tool, which brings three data systems into a single system. Early childhood educators can now search, register, and pay for professional development events in one system.

**Colorado, Minnesota, Rhode Island**, and **Vermont** use data from their registries to know who has applied for credentials, produce annual reports on their early education workforce, support quality improvement initiatives, and create a bridge between their existing child care licensing and QRIS systems.

**Colorado** and **Wisconsin** developed professional development information systems.

**Colorado's** Professional Development Information System functions as both a workforce registry and as a Learning Management System.

The online **Wisconsin** Professional Development Systems Portfolio allows early care and education, health/mental health, and family engagement professionals to share information, discover professional training opportunities, and align cross-sector efforts. Once completed, this system will be able to store, track, and evaluate the various projects, committees, leadership, deliverables, documents, work plans, and training/ technical assistance materials.

Some States utilize online self-assessment tools to assist early childhood professionals in determining the best path for their own professional development. These tools provide early childhood staff with easy access to information and a way for professionals to identify areas for continued professional growth.

**California** created the Early Childhood Educator Competencies Self-Assessment Toolkit (ECE CompSAT).

**Minnesota** revised their Individual Training Needs Assessment (ITNA), an online, interactive self-assessment tool aligned with Minnesota's Knowledge and Competency Framework.

## Workforce Studies

Having good data about the State's early childhood education workforce is crucial in helping policymakers and programs make decisions about how to effectively support the workforce. ELC funds provided States with the

opportunity to conduct workforce studies, interpret the data, and communicate effectively with various stakeholders.

**Maryland** and **Vermont** used the results of their workforce studies to work with their legislatures to identify needs and address the high cost of care. Maryland created a master plan to address the critical shortage of qualified professional teachers and child care providers.

**Massachusetts** conducted a two-year research study focused on validating educator competencies in the domains of social emotional development, literacy, and numeracy. They also evaluated the effectiveness of digital strategies in increasing teacher competency and of parent involvement on children's development. Their report provided recommendations on supporting the needs of English Language Learners as they navigate in the higher education system.

Overall, States found the ELC grant helped them continue their work to improve their early childhood education workforce at a more intentional level and had a positive impact on the professionalism of their early childhood workforce.

For more information about supporting the early childhood education workforce, see the following ELC Technical Assistance publications:

- *Articulation Strategies in RTT-ELC States.* 2015
- *Authorized Access to Professional Development Registry Data.* 2015
- *Early Childhood Workforce Data: Collection Practices and Possibilities*. 2016
- *Early Childhood Workforce Studies.* 2017
- *Innovative Work with Family Child Care Providers in Phase 2 and Phase 3 RTT-ELC States.* 2016
- *Institute of Medicine (IOM)'s Recommendations for the Early Childhood Workforce: Responsibilities of States and Institutions of Higher Education.* 2015
- *RTT-ELC Grantees That Incorporate Business Trainings for Child Care Providers in Their Scope of Work.* 2015
- *Scholarships for Early Childhood Educators in RTT-ELC States*. 2016
- *State Professional Development Strategies to Support Inclusive Practices.* 2015
- *Supporting Coaching as a Professional Development Strategy within RTT-ELC Grants.* 2017
- *Webinar Summary: State Professional Development Strategies to Support Inclusive Practices.* 2015


# ENHANCING DATA SYSTEMS

Data systems are a critical component for a comprehensive early learning system. Data systems allow programs to make good programmatic decisions and States to make good data-drive policy decisions. The results lead to quality improvements in early learning, professional development, and services for families.

Within the ELC framework, States were encouraged to build or enhance early learning data systems that could be used to improve instructional practices and services and inform policy decisions. States could address data systems work in one of three ways: 1) build a new early learning data system, 2) enhance their existing Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS)[ix] to include early childhood data, or 3) enhance existing early learning data systems and link them to their SLDS.

The inclusion of data systems in the ELC framework was intended to encourage States to build or enhance early learning data systems that would have the following features:

- Include all Essential Data Elements (see text box on page 67)
- Enable uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by participating State agencies and participating programs
- Facilitate the exchange of data among participating State agencies by using standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions (such as the Common Education Data Standards) to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data
- Generate information that is timely, relevant, accessible, and easy for early learning and development programs and early childhood educators to use for continuous improvement and decision making and to share with parents and other community stakeholders
- Meet the Data System Oversight Requirements[x] and comply with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws.

The data elements needed at all levels of an effective early learning and development system must be coordinated and aligned if they are to be used to improve the instruction, practices, services, and policies that can lead to better outcomes for young children.

# Overview

Sixteen ELC States (**Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont,** and **Wisconsin**) chose to use ELC grant funds to strengthen their ability to collect early learning data to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.

An important goal of the ELC program's emphasis on data systems was to develop comprehensive, integrated early childhood data systems that include data from all the systems that touch young children's lives. By pulling together data from these systems, States can begin to answer policy questions about the availability and quality of services available to young children and their families and can use these data to track progress and improve program quality and access over time. For a detailed discussion of integrated and linked early childhood data, see *The Integration of Early Childhood Data: State Profiles and a Report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education*.

In addition to ELC funds, some States also received funding under the Institute of Education Sciences (IES)-funded SLDS program to incorporate early childhood data into their SLDS or to develop or enhance their Early Childhood Integrated Data Systems (ECIDS). States that have received both IES and ELC funds for data systems work include: **Illinois, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania** and **Wisconsin**.

### The Essential Data Elements

- A unique statewide child identifier or another highly accurate, proven method to link data on that child
- A unique statewide early childhood educator identifier
- A unique program site identifier
- Child and family demographic information, including indicators identifying the criteria that States use to determine whether a child is a child with high need
- Early childhood educator demographic information, including data on educational attainment and State credential or licenses held, as well as professional development information
- Program-level data on the program's structure, quality, child achievement, suspension and expulsion rates, staff retention, staff compensation, work environment, and all applicable data reported as part of the State's QRIS
- Child-level program participation and attendance data

# Challenges in Building and Enhancing Early Childhood Data Systems

Given the complexities required to develop and enhance comprehensive early learning data systems, some States did not progress as far as they had anticipated in establishing data systems that met the intent of the ELC system components listed above. States faced challenges that are common to data system development work, including staffing

shortages, difficulty gaining agreement about data sharing among multiple stakeholder groups, establishing governance structures, activities taking more time than anticipated, and budgetary issues.

*Staffing.* A few ELC States expressed challenges with staffing related to their data system work.

- Staff turnover in **Michigan** slowed down the work on their professional development system. **Rhode Island** described the challenge of competing with the private sector for staff who have the appropriate skill sets needed to perform critical data system roles. **Vermont** expressed difficulty with filling temporary data collector roles.

*Governance and Data Sharing Agreements.* Data governance structures take considerable time and effort to put into place.

- **New Jersey** noted the length of time it takes to put data sharing agreements in place. **Illinois** also identified delays in data sharing agreements, due in part to new information security policies that require inter-agency agreement and alignment. **Rhode Island** noted that putting a data governance structure in place earlier would have prevented delays in developing critical data sharing agreements.

*Time Constraints.* Other States acknowledged that many of the critical steps to integrating or linking early childhood data took more time than expected.

- **Kentucky** indicated that it took more time than planned to integrate home visiting data into their SLDS. In addition, they acknowledged that it took a great deal of time to collect Head Start data as it is not stored in a statewide database.

## ECIDS and Alignment to SLDS

One method of integrating early childhood data is to add additional data elements directly into an existing longitudinal data system, or SLDS. Another approach is to link data elements within an early childhood integrated data system (ECIDS) to the SLDS. Among the types of data that State are working to link to or include in their SLDS are child care data, Head Start data, IDEA program data, screening and health data, workforce data, homelessness data, licensing data, and workforce/professional development data. Examples of efforts States are making to build integrated data systems or link early childhood data systems to their SLDS include the following:

- **Kentucky's** longitudinal data system, KCEWS, houses their SLDS data. They are working on linking the following sets of early childhood data to the KCEWS: data on home visiting, child care, Head Start, and early intervention and data from the Division of Family Resource and Youth Service Centers.

- **New Mexico** is establishing an ECIDS, and is making progress on information technology solutions to the system, including procuring database server hardware and developing architectural diagrams and security plans. The ECIDS team is establishing data sharing agreements among participating agencies and working on matching data using unique identifiers.

**Oregon** is developing an early learning information system (ELIS) that will include data on child care facilities, background registry information, and program QRIS ratings. They are in the process of establishing functional requirements and systems designs.

**Illinois** is planning an early learning data system as part of their SLDS. Similarly, **Vermont** has plans to integrate their early childhood data into the K-12 SLDS once it is complete, although progress on the SLDS has been delayed.

## Data Linkages

Several States are working on establishing unique identifiers, sometimes called unique student IDs, which will allow data on individuals to be matched across data systems and minimize data duplication.

**Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio,** and **Rhode Island** are examples of States that are using this approach.

Even in States that are working on building an ECIDS, there are still some data elements in separate databases that need to be linked to be able to answer key policy and practice questions. Examples of data linking, mapping, and matching efforts include the following:

**Illinois** plans to build an early learning data system as part of their broader SLDS work that will link Head Start data, home visiting data, early intervention data, school readiness data, and workforce data. With the progress they have made, they can now match data and provide an unduplicated view of children enrolled in Preschool for All, Prevention Initiative, and the Child Care Assistance Program.

State Highlight: Georgia

Georgia is building out their Cross Agency Child Data System (CACDS) and aligning it to their Pre-K through workforce SLDS, known as GA AWARDS, through the use of unique student identifier numbers. The CACDS database includes integrated data on children from birth to age 5 and data from the programs and providers who serve them, such as Early Head Start and Head Start data, child care subsidy data, pre-k data, IDEA data, QRIS data, and Department of Labor census data. Georgia is also working on linking screening, foster care, home visiting, TANF, SNAP, and professional development data to the system. Georgia is also improving the user interfaces, adding online tools for data entry and online consumer awareness tools. They have established a child care resource and referral agency call center that has a direct interface with the data system. These enhancements will lead to improved data entry and quicker data retrieval and use.

**Kentucky** is integrating home visiting data, Health Access Nurturing Development Services data, child care data, and early intervention data among other elements into their KCEWS longitudinal data system.

**Maryland** used ELC funds to further develop their Enrollment Attendance Reporting System that allows child care providers and parents to submit enrollment and attendance data electronically.

**Michigan** is working on matching data elements using a unique identification code across the data systems that have early learning elements. Michigan is also working on longitudinally tracking children

who receive subsidized child care services.

**New Jersey** is conducting extensive data mapping activities to enhance their data system, NJ- EASEL.

**Pennsylvania** is integrating data from IDEA programs.

**Rhode Island** is linking screening data to their ECIDS and SLDS.

Several States are working with Head Start to incorporate Head Start data into other early learning data systems.

**Georgia** added Early Head Start and Head Start data to their Cross-Agency Child Data System.

**Illinois** is working with their contractors to integrate Head Start data into their SLDS.

**Kentucky** is finalizing the essential Head Start data elements they want to connect to their longitudinal data system (KCEWS) and has developed data sharing agreements with a set of pilot Head Start grantees.

**Michigan** is leveraging the new Head Start Performance Standards to encourage Head Start to report data into their Michigan Student Data System (MSDS) and is piloting the use of the UIC to link child-level Head Start data. Initial data have already been collected in a pilot of six Head Start grantees.

**Minnesota** used ELC funds to support school districts and Head Start agencies to update software and receive training on the software to meet ELC reporting requirements.

## Data Governance

An important step in integrating data systems is the establishment of a data governance structure, which involves the development of policies and procedures for data management, use, privacy, security, and access. An effective data governance body or board should include family representatives, as well as stakeholders that represent the agencies and programs that serve them. Examples of data governance efforts in ELC States include the following:

**New Jersey** established a data governance plan and is in the process of executing data sharing agreements among participating agencies. They have begun mapping data elements across systems and creating mock-ups of data reports.

**New Mexico** established a Data Governance Committee that is responsible for approving any data elements that contain personal identifiable information. A data governance working group reviews all data elements that will be used in data profiles to answer key inter-agency policy questions.

**Ohio** established a cross-agency governance committee that addresses data sharing and confidentiality issues. Ohio passed legislation that requires each State agency to assign a data privacy point person and to adopt rules about accessing confidential personal information.

**Rhode Island** hired a consultant to facilitate the development and implementation of a data governance structure for the State. The Rhode Island data governance group created guiding documents, developed privacy policies, finalized data sharing agreements, and established Terms and Conditions of Use.

**Vermont's** data governance efforts involve a hierarchical governance structure made up of a Data Governance Council and designated data stewards workgroups. Data governance activities included developing a data vision, drafting of a Data Governance Manual, and developing a proof case that will be used to test the governance process and promote sustainability of the work.

The **Wisconsin** ECIDS Data Governance Workgroup drafted a master Data Use Agreement that has been signed by the agencies who share data. Wisconsin is also establishing a data privacy policy and a technical infrastructure policy to help guide the ECIDS work.

## Data Collection and Reporting

For data to be useful as a significant lever to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies, the data collection must be accurate, and data reporting must be timely, relevant, and accessible. Examples of efforts to ensure quality and accurate data collection and reporting include the following:

**Georgia** developed a Provider Self-Service platform that allows licensed child care centers and homes to complete transactions and update information directly into the State data system. Georgia also developed a direct interface with the State data system for family-facing referral and data collection purposes, which allows child care providers to pay license fees and enforcement fines online and to process employee criminal records checks online.

The **Massachusetts** Early Childhood Information System (ECIS) Data Warehouse is a single high-quality source of data for reporting. Massachusetts has developed a reporting platform which reduces time needed to generate reports. The ECIS has a dashboard that allows policymakers to measure trends against goals so that they can improve decision-making using real time data. Massachusetts also built a new licensing data system (the Licensing Education Analytic Database, called LEAD) that houses data and generates reports on licensing, investigation information, and complaint tracking information. The LEAD system includes some innovative features, such as a mobile tablet that allows licensors

to immediately capture licensing visit results and communicate those results to providers; reports and dashboards for Early Education and Care executives, managers, supervisors, investigators and licensors, allowing them to easily monitor status of licensing work; and a provider portal that allow providers to conduct common licensing transitions online.

**Rhode Island** developed a longitudinal data warehouse to support their data integration efforts. They established a data query process that allows administrative users to query the data warehouse directly and define data extracts that give them the data reports they need.

Several States have developed interactive web portals to allow stakeholders and users to enter and access data electronically.

**Illinois** developed an online portal for early learning programs to apply online for *ExceleRate*, the State's QRIS. **North Carolina** created an interactive web portal that provides aggregate statewide reports, which can be customized by county, child demographics, and fiscal year. **Vermont's** online data portal, is a public access point for timely, relevant, and accessible data that stakeholders can use for program improvement and decision-making.

**Kentucky** established online Early Childhood Profiles. These profiles are housed on the Kentucky Department of Education's Open House data repository, which contains a dynamic reporting tool that allows stakeholders to access and use the data. This visibility into the data allows Kentucky to identify gaps in the information and continually improve the quality of their data collection and reporting.

## Data for Research

One of the requirements that ELC States committed to as part of their grant was to provide researchers with access to data from their QRIS, SLDS, and coordinated early learning data system, as applicable and allowable under Federal, State, and local privacy laws. This requirement encouraged States to give researchers opportunities to help them analyze quality improvement efforts and answer key policy and program questions using the available data.

A number of States expressly focused on providing researchers with access to the early learning data in their systems.

**Georgia** developed and implemented policies for handling internal and external research requests related to their early learning data.

**Illinois** established a Data, Research, and Evaluation Committee to develop and curate a robust and actionable research agenda. In addition, participating State agency leaders were invited to participate in a multi-year project of the Midwest Early Childhood Research Alliance to help develop the capacity of stakeholders to use research in decision-making.

As part of their broader ECIDS data system website, **North Carolina** set up a dedicated, private portal where researchers can make online requests to access and use North Carolina's data in their research.

**Wisconsin** has established an ECIDS research workgroup. A dedicated Research Analyst identifies research questions and analyzes stakeholder research priorities.

## Stakeholder Engagement

Engaging stakeholders in an ongoing way is essential for any data system to be useful and meaningful. In addition to those agency leaders who own the data and the various data users, key stakeholders include families, foundations or other funders, vendors, advocacy groups, and professional organizations.

**Minnesota, Vermont,** and **Wisconsin** are examples of States that spent time to engage their stakeholders in various aspects of their data system development and enhancement.

**Minnesota** convened stakeholders who had influence over and understood the importance of the ECLDS. ELC funds were used to facilitate focus groups of stakeholders who reviewed policy questions and features of the website.

**Vermont** included stakeholder voices in the drafting of the Data Governance Council scope, purpose, vision statements, and the Data Governance manual. Vermont also hosted their fifth Data Stewards and Stakeholders meeting, Connecting Data for Vermont's Communities, Children and Families, to encourage discussions about innovative data practices, including how to align, share, and use data over time and across sectors.

**Wisconsin** created an ECIDS Stakeholder Communication and Engagement Plan that includes an ECIDS website and Fact Sheet. They are planning a quarterly newsletter to keep stakeholders apprised of ECIDS efforts and activities.

## Workforce Data

In addition to improving child- and program-level data collection and reporting, many ELC States invested grant funds in improving data on the early childhood workforce. Workforce data are collected in different systems that involve the professionals who work with young children, including workforce registries, professional development or scholarship programs, licensing and certification systems, State child care licensing systems, and QRIS. Examples of efforts to align these diverse systems are described below.

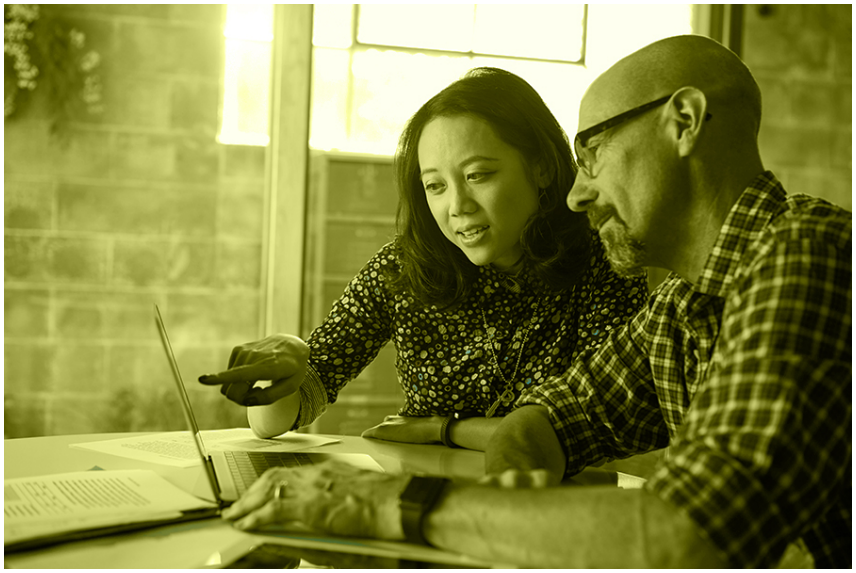
**Georgia** launched the Georgia Professional Development System (GA PDS) which consolidates the Professional Development Registry and the Training Registration systems into a single convenient, web application. GA PDS allows teachers to maintain their credentials and find and register for approved trainings. The system also allows trainers to schedule trainings, maintain rosters, and mark training completions. Completed trainings are updated automatically in teacher records, which improves data accuracy.

**Illinois** is working to link early childhood professional data and student enrollment data. Illinois is also making progress on their Gateway to Opportunity Registry, which houses early childhood workforce data. The Registry includes several different portals to allow members to easily access and input data: a Director Portal allows program directors and administrators to manage staff listings, membership, and training completion summaries; an Authorized Entity Portal allows training agencies to enter approved trainings and reconcile attendance; and a Department of Children and Family Services Portal allows licensing representatives to access information on staff training hours and membership in the registry. A smartphone app allows participants at Registry-approved conferences to scan and submit conference attendance data to the Registry. Those data transfer automatically to the individual's Professional Development Record.

**Massachusetts** added workforce data to their ECIDS, including workforce demographics, program quality trends, child waitlist, and licensing data.

**Michigan** established a Professional Development Registry system incorporating data elements that align with the National Workforce Registry Alliance standards.

**Rhode Island's** data integration efforts include establishing a portal that allows program administrators, individuals in the early learning workforce, and State agencies to access and update personnel workforce registry information. Individuals have a digital staff file. Program Administrators can use the information in the Workforce Registry to support employees' professional development plans and monitor the staff requirements for regulatory agencies. The workforce registry is linked to the Department of Education eCert system so teacher certification information in automatically displayed in the workforce registry. An Annual Workforce Report includes data on the early education workforce, such as demographics, previous experience and professional development participation, and evidence of standards or compliance with regulations.



## Sustainability

Given the considerable costs of development and maintaining data systems work, a few States made specific efforts to plan for the sustainability of their efforts.

**Rhode Island** articulated a sustainable data governance plan to fold the overarching ECEDS data governance structure into the SLDS.

**Vermont** began their sustainability work by developing a business plan for sustainability with key stakeholders that will be implemented in FY18–FY20. The plan includes a three-prong revenue model that incorporates foundation and grant funding, donor investments, and Earned Income–Tiered Pricing for Data Producers/Suppliers. The financial model will be phased in over three years.

**Wisconsin** established a collaborative cross-agency ECIDS Sustainability workgroup that developed a plan to maintain their Longitudinal Information for Family Touchpoints (LIFT) data warehouse after their ELC grant ends.

Examples of how ELC States are enhancing data collection and reporting efforts related to their States' QRIS are included in the section of this report titled *Strengthening Quality Rating and Improvement Systems*.

For more information about enhancing data systems, see these Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance publications:

- *Authorized Access to Professional Development Registry Data*. 2015
- *Key Considerations for Data Systems that Support TQRIS*. 2015
- *Statewide KEA Data Collection and Reporting in RTT-ELC States*. 2015
- *Using Data to Strengthen Technical Assistance*. 2015
- *Early Childhood Workforce Data: Collection Practices and Possibilities*. 2016


# STRENGTHENING LOCAL AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

The level of effort required to make the changes in school readiness for children with high needs envisioned in ELC grant applications required collaboration with local communities. Recognizing that some communities had more challenges and fewer resources than others, many ELC States made significant funding and technical services available to local communities to build their local systems' capacity to effectively implement programs.

Using ELC funds, 11 ELC States (**California, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania,** and **Vermont**) targeted resources and supports to local leadership teams to transform targeted geographic areas, both urban and rural, that had a significant number of children with high needs. These areas were geographically well-defined and in general, were the size of one or more counties or school districts. They were large enough to include public and private leaders who could make system-level policy decisions and allocation of funds, and were small enough for the leadership team to know the needs of the community and see the impact of their efforts. In the ELC grants, these areas were called achievement zones, community hubs, early childhood hubs, empowerment zones, innovation zones, investment zones, promise communities, and transformation zones.

Representation on local leadership teams came from local education agencies, health and family services agencies, community organizations, institutions of higher education, private philanthropic groups, business leaders, and families.

Local implementation teams oversaw the following types of coordinated services:

- Economic development initiatives to attract high-quality early learning and development programs into the QRIS;
- Support for programs to improve QRIS ratings;
- Incentives to redirect Title I funds into State-funded preschool programs;
- Enhanced child care subsidy payments;
- Coordinated home visiting;
- Health care consultation;
- Family engagement grants;
- Specialized professional development;
- Developmental screening, assessment, and referrals; and
- Leveraging additional funding

States supported local communities with funding, technical assistance, and statewide meetings. States learned from local communities about conflicting State-level rules, regulations, policies, and procedures that created barriers to local implementation. States also gained insights into which innovative strategies to recommend for more wide-spread adoption.

Documenting the effectiveness of their efforts was an important components of State grants to local communities. For example, **Georgia** and **North Carolina** used the Implementation Science Framework, an approach that provides a systematic method for studying, documenting, and assessing the effectiveness of the specific activities, strategies, and implementation processes. **Illinois** engaged University of Illinois researchers to conduct an evaluation to measure the impact of work done in its Innovation Zones, and the **Minnesota** Department of Education contracted with SRI International to conduct an annual evaluation of Minnesota's strategies.

In addition to support for public-private leadership teams in local communities, several States (**Maryland**, **Michigan**, **New Jersey**, and **Pennsylvania**) invested in community-level strategies that were implemented by an existing local agency.

# Community Collaboration

In their ELC Annual Performance Reports and Final Performance Reports, 11 ELC States described their investments in local and community collaboration as a strategy to improve the quality of early learning and development programs and to close educational gaps for children with high needs.

## *California Consortia*

**California's** ELC grant supported 17 consortia and 14 mentee counties. Through ELC, key stakeholders in local consortia came together to explore how to improve the quality of early learning programs, engage more early learning and care settings in the QRIS, and reach out to local leaders and businesses. They leveraged ELC funding with local funding; accessed State quality improvement professional development systems; and coordinated community resources such as their local child care resource and referral agencies, local libraries, and community colleges. These efforts were accomplished by aligning program requirements, tweaking systems for efficiency, and blending resources to maximize efforts. Staff from the California Department of Education, Early Education and Support Division, along with staff from First 5 California, served as the ELC Implementation Team and provided workgroup meeting planning and facilitation, technical assistance and support, and fiscal and programmatic oversight.

## *Delaware Readiness Teams*

The **Delaware** Office of Learning supported 20 Delaware Readiness Teams comprised of families, early childhood programs, postsecondary educators, and community and business leaders. Using information from community assessments, teams worked together to help build strong links connecting children, from birth to grade 3 and beyond, so they are prepared for school and life. These teams established a presence in their communities and built partnerships with stakeholder organizations to enhance and expand efforts. One partnership with the Delaware Division of Public

Health supported the Early Childhood Comprehensive Services Impact grant.

## *Georgia Empowerment Zones*

**Georgia** created four *Early Education Empowerment Zones*. In each zone, local stakeholders met regularly to oversee the rollout of key professional development, technical assistance, family engagement, and child care subsidy initiatives in their region. Georgia hired community coordinators to help implement the *Early Education Empowerment Zones* initiatives. The role of the coordinators was key to providing the advocacy and resources the zones needed to be successful. Georgia also hired a Business Operations Specialist who connected with participating State agencies to identify important steps in establishing local economic incentive packages to encourage high-quality child care programs to open or expand in the zones. The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning partnered with the Department of Community Affairs to design and award the Child Care Expansion Grant to encourage zones to establish new high-quality early learning programs. In 2016, the number of programs participating in the QRIS in the zones almost doubled compared to other areas of the State. The numbers of children with child care subsidies in high-quality programs also doubled in the targeted communities compared to the State as a whole.

## *Illinois Innovation Zones*

**Illinois** created Innovation Zones in 11 communities with the goal of creating effective strategies for identifying, engaging, and enrolling children with high needs in high-quality programs. The following are some of the strategies the communities used with the coordination funds available to them:

> Another profound lesson learned from ELC is the extraordinary power of communities when provided the opportunity, resources, and explicit permission to collaborate and innovate.
> – Illinois

- Hired a zone coordinator
- Coordinated outreach, screening, and enrollment across Preschool for All, Head Start, and child care programs within a community
- Built referral pipelines with local partners to engage priority populations including children who were experiencing homelessness; were involved in the child welfare system; had teen parents; or were recent immigrants or refugees
- Forged partnerships with local support systems – food pantries, refugee organizations, public housing, hospitals, home visiting programs, public schools
- Created "Pop-Up Preschools" to help parents have a better understanding of what early learning programs had to offer and to become comfortable with preschool
- Developed "Parent Ambassadors" (including grandparents) to educate parents about what programs have to offer
- Created a "warm line" to provide information and referrals to all parents

## *Massachusetts Birth to Grade 3 Community Grants*

The **Massachusetts** Department of Early Education and Care awarded Birth to Grade Three (B-3) Community Implementation/Planning grants to 12 communities. Communities used the grants to strengthen the existing B-3 infrastructure the in following ways: increasing family engagement; improving alignment and transitions among community-based early learning programs and public schools; improving 3rd grade literacy scores; providing professional development for educators and administrators, and improving school readiness. At the core of the B-3 communities' work was developing strong partnerships and collaboration among partners serving young children and their families to improve outcomes for young children. The Department of Early Education and Care partnered with a private non-profit organization to provide guiding support to new grantees as they began to implement their projects and to create the Birth through Third Grade Learning Hub website. The website includes information about the alignment initiatives being conducted locally and nationally, as well as promising practices and relevant research.

## *Minnesota Transformation Zones*

**Minnesota's** four Transformation Zones were geographically diverse high-needs areas with high poverty rates and a documented need for increased access to high-quality early learning programs. These communities also contributed resources and made a commitment to implement ELC initiatives in a way that would support positive outcomes for children, families, and the community. Transformation Zones selected activities that fit the specific needs of their communities.

- Zones provided intensive support to help early learning programs achieve higher levels of quality and higher ratings in the QRIS.
- Each Zone implemented Minnesota's Early Learning Scholarships to provide families with increased access to high-quality early learning and development programs.
- Each Zone adopted local strategies to promote Minnesota's Title I Preschool Incentive Grants. These grants encouraged school districts to direct Title I money into pre-K programming. Each Zone also developed outreach strategies to inform families and their communities about the availability of the Title I Pre-K Programs.
- Zones participated in pilot programs using online versions of the ASQ and ASQ-SE screening tools.
- Zones used child care health consultation to assist child care providers and quality coaches with health and safety questions.
- Three Zones used Early Childhood Family Education parent educators to work with local family, friend, and neighbor providers.

**Minnesota** held quarterly meetings with the Transformation Zones to communicate progress on grant activities, receive feedback on implementation, and work collaboratively to resolve challenges across Transformation Zones and within specific Transformation Zones.

## *New Mexico Early Childhood Investment Zones*

**New Mexico's** 13 Early Childhood Investment Zones cover 11 priority counties and 35 priority school districts, and range from frontier to urban population centers. The Investment Zone initiative is designed to engage all sectors of the early childhood system (home visiting, the Family Infant Toddler (FIT) program, early learning, Head Start, 619 special education, Title I, Pre-K, public health, and family support) to make a shared commitment to improving outcomes for young children.

## *North Carolina Transformation Zones*

Through their Transformation Zone initiative, **North Carolina** provided intensive community-based system-building to support young children's early learning and development in four of the highest need counties in the rural northeastern region of the State. Each of the four counties built system-wide capacity for serving children and families, including improving the quality of child care, encouraging early literacy, and supporting families. The four counties also created strategic plans for sustaining their work beyond the grant.

## *Oregon Coordinated Early Learning Hubs*

**Oregon's** Early Learning Hubs achieved statewide coverage in 2015. They engaged partners from early childhood, K-12 education, health, human services, and the business sectors around a common vision and shared measurable outcomes for children and families. Hubs are responsible for identifying children who have not been sufficiently prepared for kindergarten by the existing system. A major aspect of Hubs is the emphasis on measurable outcomes that are shared across systems, moving beyond a fragmented system to one that is coordinated, aligned, and collectively accountable to children and families. Oregon created webinars about programs the Early Learning Hubs are tasked with coordinating; developed an Early Learning Hub workbook; offered data sets and maps to help with planning; and provided information about policy, legislation, and State rules related to Early Learning Hubs.

### *Pennsylvania Community Investment Zones*

In 2014 and 2015, **Pennsylvania** awarded 50 Community Innovation Zone (CIZ) grants to local collaborations working to reduce the achievement gap by third grade. The zones reflected neighborhoods served by a target elementary school. CIZ coalitions included representation from the target school, an early childhood program, and other local agencies who were vested in closing the achievement gap for underserved children in their community. Grantees were required to work collaboratively with early childhood programs and local school districts to align their work around standards, family engagement, and community partnerships. Pennsylvania hired a CIZ Grant Manager in 2014 to help further develop the infrastructure needed to adequately support the CIZs.

### *Vermont Promise Communities*

**Vermont's** seven communities joined the first Promise Communities cohort and identified innovative and transformative strategies to address the needs of local children and families, including home visiting programs, parenting programs, family events, and housing efforts. Some communities also looked at the training needs of professionals in the community in areas such as the Strengthening Families framework and trauma informed care. Over the course of the initiative, Vermont will have a total of 24 Promise Communities in three cohorts. Vermont hired a Promise Community Director to help partners work collaboratively to serve children and families as effectively as possible and moved from providing coaches for each community to providing targeted technical assistance. The Child Development Division developed a Promise Communities Handbook to support understanding of the initiative.


## Community Support through Local Agencies

**Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New Mexico**, and **Pennsylvania** described using local agencies to implement community-level strategies designed to improve the quality of early care and education and to support parents and increase access to these programs for their children.

### *Maryland Breakthrough Centers and Community Hubs*

**Maryland** created Early Childhood Breakthrough Centers located in Child Care Resource Centers in 412 Title I school improvement neighborhoods throughout the State. Child Care Resource Center staff provided training and technical assistance and capacity-building services to child care programs. With this assistance, more than 900 child care providers/programs enrolled in *Maryland EXCELS*, Maryland's QRIS. These programs served children who were dual language learners and children with special needs and behavior concerns.

**Maryland** also used ELC grant funding to create two Community Hubs in Baltimore City. Community Hubs provided and coordinated existing services for families with children birth to age 5. They created a single platform in the community for services to pregnant women, children from birth to kindergarten and their families, and child care providers. Services included:

- Traditional Family Support Center services
- Parenting education
- Health education and access to health care
- Center-based and home visiting programs
- Training programs for child care providers to enhance the quality of their child care programs and better prepare children to succeed in school
- Supports to help families make a smooth transition to elementary school
- Adult education
- Facilitated access to services via transportation, meals, and non-traditional hours of operation

### *Michigan Pathway to Potential Counties*

In partnership with the Early Childhood Investment Corporation, **Michigan** planned to hire Family Engagement Consultants in each of the seven Pathway to Potential counties, plus one rural community to increase effort for the planning and implementation of the family engagement activities. Local-level planning meetings were scheduled with each community to determine the best fit for hiring and housing these Family Engagement Consultants.

### *New Jersey Central Intake Hub*

The **New Jersey** Department of Health expanded Central Intake Hubs. Operating in all 21 counties, Central Intake Hubs help build connections and communication, and support health literacy between parents, health care providers, and early learning programs to improve access for families to needed infant/child health services and supports. These county-level hubs function as a single point of entry to simplify the referral and linkage process to community-based services.

### *New Mexico*

The University of **New Mexico**, Family Development Program provided collaborative leadership training for effective coalition-building and immersion in *Mind in the Making: The Science of Early Learning* to support development of a common, accessible language for how young children learn and grow. The overall goal of this engagement is to establish cross-sector commitment and coalition sustainability for local communities to become fully engaged in New Mexico's QRIS and its long-term investment in quality for all young children in the State.

## *Pennsylvania*

Eighty-six teams of school district personnel, early childhood professionals, higher education faculty and other representatives attended one of four Pre-natal-3rd Grade Governor's Institutes in **Pennsylvania**. These Institutes focused on preschool to third grade alignment strategies, building collaborative partnerships, and implementing standards effectively with young children. Based on feedback from previous Institutes, more time and facilitation was added for teams to network and develop practical strategies they could implement in their communities.

Overall, ELC States have found that investing in local communities is an effective strategy to create coordinated, aligned, and family-centered local early learning systems; help children arrive at kindergarten ready to succeed; and ensure families are healthy and stable. States are working to address the challenges of sustaining initiatives past the life of the ELC grant and translating local successes into statewide initiatives.

For more information about local and community connections, see the Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance publication, *Transformation Zones - an Early Learning Improvement Strategy*. 2016

# Summary

The Early Learning Challenge Program provided the nation with an unprecedented opportunity to make investments in innovative approaches to early learning and development systems-change. States took up the challenge and created more unified systems of early learning and development that provide more young children and their families with high-quality early learning opportunities. With this unparalleled infusion of Federal and State funding, well-formulated State plans, and coordinated technical assistance, these 20 State have improved the quality of their early learning and development systems and developed streamlined services and supports that provide more children with high-quality early learning experiences that will help prepare them for success in school and beyond. In addition to the positive impact these grants have had on the young children and families who live in these ELC States, the innovative strategies and lessons learned have advanced the field of early learning and laid a solid foundation for future improvements.

*In closing, RTT-ELC has been instrumental in launching a new phase of systems change in Oregon. This has been accomplished through funding and technical supports that have assisted in efforts to reach children and families furthest from opportunities using strategies that aim to improve the quality and availability of culturally responsive resources that support all of Oregon's children and families to learn and thrive. The strides made towards developing relationships with myriad partners representing different systems have laid a foundation for continued partnership. The work launched under RTT-ELC has set Oregon on the trajectory towards success at meeting the early learning system goals of ensuring that children arrive at kindergarten ready to learn, families are healthy, stable and attached, and that the early learning system is coordinated, aligned and family centered.*

– Oregon 2016 Annual Performance Report

# Appendix A: State-Level APR Data Tables

## 1. Number of CCDF-Funded Programs in QRIS (B2c)[1]

| Phase 1 Grantees | Baseline | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Change Baseline to 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| California | 19 | 177 | 312 | 646 | 724 | 757 | 738 |
| Delaware | 94 | 236 | 418 | 478 | 481 | 459 | 365 |
| Maryland | 35 | 57 | 291 | 1,964 | 2,515 | 2,251 | 2,216 |
| Massachusetts | 1,088 | 3,287 | 3,393 | 3,702 | 3,332 | 3,710 | 2,622 |
| Minnesota | 203 | 112 | 385 | 531 | 762 | 749 | 546 |
| North Carolina | 6,467 | 5,694 | 5,129 | 4,952 | 4,724 | 4,565 | (1,902) |
| Ohio | 804 | 809 | 1,027 | 1,029 | 922 | 1,500 | 696 |
| Rhode Island | 86 | 166 | 774 | 659 | 744 | 694 | 608 |
| Washington | 4,718 | 4,718 | 4,718 | 4,718 | 4,718 | 4,718 | 0 |
| **Phase 1 Subtotal** | **13,514** | **15,256** | **16,447** | **18,679** | **18,922** | **19,403** | **5,889** |

| Phase 2 Grantees | Baseline | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Change Baseline to 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Colorado | 0 | 245 | 577 | 1,367 | 1,365 | 1,365 |
| Illinois | 507 | 2,941 | 2,923 | 2,981 | 2,982 | 2,475 |
| New Mexico | 2,215 | 813 | 962 | 947 | 959 | (1,256) |
| Oregon | 2,159 | 2,254 | 3,259 | 2,159 | 2,064 | (95) |
| Wisconsin | 3,858 | 3,481 | 3,255 | 3,076 | 2,953 | (905) |
| **Phase 2 Subtotal** | **8,739** | **9,734** | **10,976** | **10,530** | **10,323** | **1,584** |

| Phase 3 Grantees | Baseline | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Change Baseline to 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Georgia | 775 | 1,242 | 1,610 | 1,931 | 1,156 |
| Kentucky | 632 | 556 | 1,116 | 1,224 | 592 |
| Michigan | 8,624 | 7,679 | 1,541 | 3,411 | (5,213) |
| New Jersey | 26 | 268 | 241 | 340 | 314 |
| Pennsylvania | 3,675 | 3,767 | 3,905 | 3,345 | (330) |
| Vermont | 597 | 986 | 1,045 | 966 | 369 |
| **Phase 3 Subtotal** | **14,329** | **14,498** | **9,458** | **11,217** | **(3,112)** |

| Grand Total | 36,582 | 15,256 | 26,181 | 44,153 | 38,910 | 40,943 | 4,361 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

[1] Thirteen States had an overall decline in CCDF programs from baseline to 2016. This steady decline in the number of CCDF programs overall is reflected in the decreases in the number of CCDF programs in the QRIS. States that had an overall decrease in the number of CCDF programs include: Colorado, Delaware, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin.

## 2. Number of State-Funded Preschool Programs in QRIS (B2c)

| Phase 1 Grantees | Baseline | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Change Baseline to 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| California | 28 | 177 | 463 | 818 | 1,411 | 1,490 | 1,462 |
| Delaware | 1 | 12 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 10 |
| Maryland | 0 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 50 | 88 | 88 |
| Massachusetts | 192 | 166 | 226 | 224 | 224 | 184 | (8) |
| Minnesota | 53 | 138 | 464 | 548 | 587 | 605 | 552 |
| North Carolina | 850 | 1,028 | 1,027 | 1,170 | 1,159 | 1,164 | 314 |
| Ohio | 0 | 0 | 0 | 159 | 298 | 371 | 371 |
| Rhode Island | 6 | 6 | 8 | 16 | 18 | 30 | 24 |
| Washington | 260 | 260 | 260 | 260 | 260 | 260 | 0 |
| **Phase 1 Subtotal** | **1,390** | **1,788** | **2,460** | **3,213** | **4,018** | **4,203** | **2,813** |
| **Phase 2 Grantees** | **Baseline** | | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **Change Baseline to 2016** |
| Colorado | 222 | | 202 | 224 | 781 | 783 | 561 |
| Illinois | 0 | | 486 | 1,195 | 1,250 | 1,250 | 1,250 |
| New Mexico | 39 | | 0 | 39 | 196 | 145 | 106 |
| Oregon | 70 | | 96 | 141 | 21 | 115 | 45 |
| Wisconsin | 5 | | 17 | 18 | 23 | 31 | 26 |
| **Phase 2 Subtotal** | **336** | | **801** | **1,617** | **2,271** | **2,324** | **1,988** |
| **Phase 3 Grantees** | **Baseline** | | | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **Change Baseline to 2016** |
| Georgia | 433 | | | 598 | 741 | 830 | 397 |
| Kentucky[2] | - | | | - | - | 536 | - |
| Michigan | 580 | | | 764 | 1,029 | 1,084 | 504 |
| New Jersey | 13 | | | 159 | 130 | 208 | 195 |
| Pennsylvania | 221 | | | 260 | 264 | 387 | 166 |
| Vermont | 268 | | | 285 | 318 | 373 | 105 |
| **Phase 3 Subtotal** | **1,515** | | | **2,066** | **2,482** | **3,418** | **1,903** |
| **Grand Total** | **3,241** | **1,788** | **3,261** | **6,896** | **8,771** | **9,945** | **6,704** |

[2] KY: In 2016, Kentucky launched Kentucky *All STARS*, their expanded QRIS, and will now report on participation for both rating systems in Grant Years 3 and 4, as Kentucky works to place the new rating system into regulation. Both QRIS will run simultaneously until Kentucky *All STARS* is put into regulation.

## 3. Number of Early Head Start/Head Start Programs in QRIS (B2c)

| Phase 1 Grantees | Baseline | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Change Baseline to 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| California | 9 | 145 | 286 | 438 | 633 | 650 | 641 |
| Delaware | 4 | 31 | 31 | 31 | 31 | 31 | 27 |
| Maryland[3] | 1 | 5 | 57 | 96 | 115 | 105 | 104 |
| Massachusetts | 112 | 214 | 219 | 233 | 221 | 182 | 70 |
| Minnesota | 23 | 229 | 258 | 257 | 257 | 263 | 240 |
| North Carolina | 350 | 350 | 350 | 402 | 419 | 436 | 86 |
| Ohio | 206 | 223 | 274 | 283 | 343 | 378 | 172 |
| Rhode Island[4] | 10 | 16 | 29 | 36 | 43 | 38 | 28 |
| Washington | 415 | 415 | 415 | 415 | 415 | 415 | 0 |
| **Phase 1 Subtotal** | **1,130** | **1,628** | **1,919** | **2,191** | **2,477** | **2,498** | **1,368** |

| Phase 2 Grantees | Baseline | | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Change Baseline to 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Colorado | 130 | | 61 | 63 | 207 | 202 | 72 |
| Illinois | 25 | | 73 | 263 | 376 | 439 | 414 |
| New Mexico | 30 | | 32 | 32 | 32 | 30 | 0 |
| Oregon | 72 | | 98 | 142 | 192 | 195 | 123 |
| Wisconsin | 37 | | 42 | 45 | 138 | 156 | 119 |
| **Phase 2 Subtotal** | **294** | | **306** | **545** | **945** | **1,022** | **728** |

| Phase 3 Grantees | Baseline | | | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Change Baseline to 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Georgia | 48 | | | 151 | 201 | 244 | 196 |
| Kentucky | 136 | | | 136 | 110 | 196 | 60 |
| Michigan | 199 | | | 399 | 539 | 518 | 319 |
| New Jersey | 5 | | | 40 | 68 | 119 | 114 |
| Pennsylvania | 80 | | | 232 | 312 | 363 | 283 |
| Vermont | 42 | | | 56 | 73 | 67 | 25 |
| **Phase 3 Subtotal** | **510** | | | **1,014** | **1,303** | **1,507** | **997** |
| **Grand Total** | **1,934** | **1,628** | **2,225** | **3,750** | **4,725** | **5,027** | **3,093** |

[3] MD: Maryland had a decrease from 2015 to 2016 because Prince George's County no longer had Head Start programs, and Anne Arundel County reduced the number of programs.
[4] RI: The decrease in the number of Head Start programs participating in the QRIS is due to a merger of programs in 2016.

## 4. Number of Programs in the Top Tiers[5] of the QRIS (B4c1)

| Phase 1 Grantees | Tiers in the "Top Tiers" | Baseline | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| California | 3, 4, 5 | 33 | 194 | 628 | 1,169 | 2,220 | 2,540 |
| Delaware | 3, 4, 5 | 36 | 102 | 189 | 284 | 374 | 418 |
| Massachusetts | 2, 3, 4 | 179 | 1,254 | 1,692 | 1,593 | 1,517 | 1,731 |
| Maryland | 4, 5 | 25 | 17 | 108 | 166 | 193 | 222 |
| Minnesota | 3, 4 | 365 | 483 | 1,119 | 1,397 | 1,653 | 1,998 |
| North Carolina | 4, 5 | 3,813 | 4,012 | 4,118 | 4,105 | 4,185 | 4,118 |
| Ohio | 3, 4, 5 | 206 | 278 | 742 | 861 | 1,594 | 1,488 |
| Rhode Island | 4, 5 | 22 | 35 | 42 | 66 | 70 | 74 |
| Washington | 3, 4, 5 | 162 | 181 | 253 | 444 | 931 | 1,133 |
| **Phase 1 Subtotal** | | **4,841** | **6,554** | **8,891** | **10,085** | **12,737** | **13,722** |
| **Phase 2 Grantees** | | | | | | | |
| Colorado | 3, 4, 5 | 386 | | 377 | 396 | 623 | 663 |
| Illinois | 4, 5 | 467 | | 951 | 1,356 | 1,318 | 1,411 |
| New Mexico | 3, 4, 5 | 326 | | 308 | 329 | 346 | 380 |
| Oregon | 3, 4, 5 | - | | 17 | 212 | 320 | 566 |
| Wisconsin | 4, 5 | 397 | | 516 | 557 | 584 | 630 |
| **Phase 2 Subtotal** | | **1,576** | | **2,169** | **2,850** | **3,191** | **3,650** |
| **Phase 3 Grantees** | | | | | | | |
| Georgia | 2, 3 | 142 | | | 318 | 584 | 747 |
| Kentucky | 3, 4, 5 | 251 | | | 250 | 255 | 679 |
| Michigan | 3, 4, 5 | 604 | | | 1,881 | 2,480 | 2,913 |
| New Jersey | 3, 4, 5 | 28 | | | - | - | 17 |
| Pennsylvania | 3, 4 | 1,191 | | | 1,221 | 1,253 | 1,334 |
| Vermont | 3, 4, 5 | 420 | | | 514 | 615 | 674 |
| **Phase 3 Subtotal** | | **2,636** | | | **4,184** | **5,187** | **6,364** |
| **Grand Total** | | **9,053** | **6,554** | **11,060** | **17,119** | **21,115** | **23,736** |

[5] State definitions of the top tiers: One State (Georgia) uses three tiers, and they define the top tiers as tiers 2 and 3. Three States (Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania) have four tiers; Massachusetts defines top tiers as tiers 2, 3, and 4, while Minnesota and Pennsylvania defines top tiers as tiers 3 and 4. New Jersey uses five tiers but has not conducted ratings for tiers 3, 4, or 5. All other States (California, Colorado, Delaware, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin) use five tiers or levels; Illinois, Maryland, North Carolina, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin define their top tiers as tiers 4 and 5, while California, Colorado, Delaware, Kentucky, Michigan, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington define their top tiers as tiers 3, 4, and 5.

## 5. Number of Children with High Needs in CCDF-Funded Programs that are in the Top Tiers[6] of the QRIS (B4c2)

| Phase 1 Grantees | Baseline | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Change Baseline to 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| California | 530 | 12,033 | 12,045 | 46,295 | 38,327 | 31,289 | 30,759 |
| Delaware | 446 | 1,113 | 1,927 | 4,336 | 6,869 | 15,806 | 15,360 |
| Maryland | 145 | 954 | 1,078 | 1,227 | 1,092 | 500 | 355 |
| Massachusetts | 1,935 | 14,000 | 37,113 | 20,261 | 24,794 | 19,379 | 17,444 |
| Minnesota | 4,049 | 2,395 | 5,150 | 5,261 | 6,001 | 7,231 | 3,182 |
| North Carolina | 60,178 | 51,433 | 48,367 | 61,919 | 60,887 | 61,450 | 1,272 |
| Ohio | 7,369 | 9,947 | 11,027 | 9,895 | 10,005 | 17,661 | 10,292 |
| Rhode Island | 244 | 563 | 576 | 811 | 794 | 924 | 680 |
| Washington | 108 | 11,189 | 11,118 | 9,272 | 18,289 | 20,422 | 20,314 |
| **Phase 1 Subtotal** | **75,004** | **103,627** | **128,401** | **159,277** | **167,058** | **174,662** | **99,658** |

| Phase 2 Grantees | Baseline | | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Change Baseline to 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Colorado | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 3,909 | 4,136 | 4,136 |
| Illinois | 15,059 | | 18,420 | 17,555 | 19,891 | 21,528 | 6,469 |
| New Mexico[7] | 5,202 | | 5,844 | 3,346 | 8,317 | 3,715 | (1,487) |
| Oregon | 0 | | 48 | 450 | 1,702 | 1,702 | 1,702 |
| Wisconsin | 6,219 | | 8,432 | 9,022 | 9,687 | 10,612 | 4,393 |
| **Phase 2 Subtotal** | **26,480** | | **32,744** | **30,373** | **43,506** | **41,693** | **15,213** |

| Phase 3 Grantees | Baseline | | | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Change Baseline to 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Georgia | 1,236 | | | 4,075 | 6,179 | 8,768 | 7,532 |
| Kentucky[8] | 5,542 | | | 4,086 | 3,934 | 2,738 | (2,804) |
| Michigan[9] | 0 | | | 8,458 | 8,957 | 1,439 | 1,439 |
| New Jersey[10] | 38 | | | 0 | 0 | - | - |
| Pennsylvania | 14,019 | | | 15,719 | 13,538 | 19,014 | 4,995 |
| Vermont | 2,721 | | | 2,744 | 3,332 | 3,430 | 709 |
| **Phase 3 Subtotal** | **23,556** | | | **35,082** | **35,940** | **35,389** | **11,833** |
| **Grand Total** | **125,040** | **103,627** | **161,145** | **224,732** | **246,504** | **251,744** | **126,704** |

[6]State definitions of the top tiers: One State (Georgia) uses three tiers, and they define the top tiers as tiers 2 and 3. Three States (Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania) have four tiers; Massachusetts defines top tiers as tiers 2, 3, and 4, while Minnesota and Pennsylvania defines top tiers as tiers 3 and 4. New Jersey uses five tiers but has not conducted ratings for tiers 3, 4, or 5. All other States (California, Colorado, Delaware, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin) use five tiers or levels; Illinois, Maryland, North Carolina, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin define their top tiers as tiers 4 and 5, while California, Colorado, Delaware, Kentucky, Michigan, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington define their top tiers as tiers 3, 4, and 5.

[7] NM: Data include programs participating in the AIM High QRIS. There were no programs verified using FOCUS QRIS during Year Two of the project.

[8] KY: The full implementation of Kentucky *All STARS* will take place in year four, during which Kentucky expects to see high-needs children in centers at the high-quality levels at similar rates to the previous QRIS.

[9] MI: The target of serving 40 percent of children receiving CCDF subsidized care in top tiers of GSQ has been impacted both by the decreasing number of children identified as eligible as well as the decreased number of licensed and registered providers with openings for children utilizing subsidy. In addition, Michigan has seen a decline in the number of licensed and registered care providers, which has also been impacting the number of providers who accepted children eligible for subsidy.

[10] NJ: Star levels 3, 4, and 5 are included as "top tiers". New Jersey has not identified many programs in "top tiers" as ratings have not been widely conducted. They anticipate the rating process to continue and increase in early 2017 and continuing throughout the life of the grant.

## 6. Number of Children with High Needs in State-Funded Preschool Programs that are in the Top Tiers of the QRIS (B4c2)

| Phase 1 Grantees | Baseline | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Change Baseline to 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| California Preschool | 836 | 6,409 | 20,357 | 38,525 | 65,207 | 66,869 | 66,033 |
| Delaware ECAP | 72 | 500 | 658 | 976 | 1,191 | 1,609 | 1,537 |
| Maryland Preschool | - | 148 | 1,032 | 1,018 | 260 | 1,760 | 1,760 |
| Massachusetts UPK | 4,308 | 5,844 | 3,456 | 3,071 | 4,208 | 5,730 | 1,422 |
| Minnesota Preschool | 2,857 | 7,401 | 21,489 | 24,818 | 26,748 | 28,875 | 26,018 |
| North Carolina Pre-K | 18,568 | 23,632 | 25,553 | 26,851 | 27,458 | 27,109 | 8,541 |
| Ohio EC Education | - | - | - | 4,858 | 13,546 | 10,265 | 10,265 |
| Rhode Island Preschool | 69 | | 73 | 175 | 259 | 414 | 345 |
| Washington ECEAP | 1,936 | 4,014 | 4,747 | 4,604 | 9,869 | 11,028 | 9,092 |
| **Ph 1 Subtotal** | **28,646** | **47,948** | **77,365** | **104,896** | **148,746** | **153,659** | **125,013** |

| Phase 2 Grantees | Baseline | | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Change Baseline to 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Colorado Preschool | 6,623 | | 6,249 | 5,472 | 9,817 | 9,551 | 2,928 |
| Illinois Preschool For All | | | 16,934 | 44,291 | 46,235 | 53,974 | 53,974 |
| New Mexico Pre K | 1,463 | | - | - | 5,407 | 3,103 | 1,640 |
| Oregon | - | | - | 637 | 1,801 | 5,033 | 5,033 |
| Wisconsin Preschool[13] | - | | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Ph 2 Subtotal** | **8,086** | | **23,183** | **50,400** | **63,260** | **71,661** | **63,575** |

| Phase 3 Grantees | Baseline | | | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Change Baseline to 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Georgia Pre-K | 1,800 | | | 3,454 | 5,252 | 7,162 | 5,362 |
| Kentucky Preschool[14] | 22,558 | | | - | - | 22,176 | (382) |
| Michigan Great Start Readiness Programs | 24,426 | | | 30,517 | 37,506 | 38,771 | 14,345 |
| New Jersey Preschool [15] | 660 | | | - | 13,568 | - | (660) |
| Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts | 4,863 | | | 5,222 | 6,478 | 9,963 | 5,100 |
| Vermont Pre-K | 5,711 | | | 5,871 | 5,681 | 7,326 | 1,615 |
| **Ph 3 Subtotal** | **60,018** | | | **45,064** | **68,485** | **85,398** | **25,380** |
| **Grand Total** | **96,750** | **47,948** | **100,548** | **200,360** | **280,491** | **310,718** | **213,968** |

[13] WI: There is no currently no way to identify which child care providers are participating in a 4K Community Approach program because the data are not collected at Department of Children and Families or the Department of Public Instruction.
[14] KY: State-funded preschool includes programs funded by IDEA, Part B, Section 619, and programs funded under Title I of ESEA; therefore, data reported in the State-funded preschool line include programs funded by IDEA, Part B, Section 619, and programs funded under Title I of ESEA.
[15] NJ: New Jersey has not identified many programs in "top tiers" as ratings have not been widely conducted. New Jersey anticipates the rating process to continue and increase in early 2017 and continuing throughout the life of the grant.

## 7. Number of Children with High Needs in Head Start/Early Head Start Programs that are in the Top Tiers[11] of the QRIS (B4c2)

| Phase 1 Grantees | Baseline | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Change Baseline to 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| California | 208 | 2,704 | 11,564 | 21,000 | 33,560 | 30,513 | 30,305 |
| Delaware | 227 | 2,481 | 2,613 | 2,539 | 2,020 | 1,445 | 1,218 |
| Maryland | 48 | 567 | 605 | 1,226 | 1,850 | 980 | 932 |
| Massachusetts | 9,614 | 10,770 | 16,086 | 8,246 | 6,193 | 11,297 | 1,683 |
| Minnesota | 3,397 | 11,163 | 11,747 | 11,743 | 12,017 | 11,873 | 8,476 |
| North Carolina | 22,348 | 22,348 | 22,972 | 21,268 | 25,310 | 24,146 | 1,798 |
| Ohio | 4,711 | 11,474 | 18,974 | 26,952 | 33,816 | 35,013 | 30,302 |
| Rhode Island | 515 | 687 | 759 | 1,466 | 1,328 | 1,287 | 772 |
| Washington | 3,401 | 7,175 | 6,371 | 4,668 | 8,420 | 9,394 | 5,993 |
| **Ph 1 Subtotal** | **44,469** | **69,369** | **91,691** | **99,108** | **124,514** | **125,948** | **81,479** |
| **Phase 2 Grantees** | **Baseline** | | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **Change Baseline to 2016** |
| Colorado | 5,519 | | 2,135 | 2,730 | 13,078 | 12,578 | 7,059 |
| Illinois | - | | 2,257 | 9,213 | 10,891 | 15,730 | - |
| New Mexico | 3,842 | | 3,662 | 3,662 | 3,662 | 10,478 | 6,636 |
| Oregon | 0 | | 0 | 996 | 2,702 | 6,325 | 6,325 |
| Wisconsin | 2,432 | | 2,983 | 3,172 | 5,223 | 9,754 | 7,322 |
| **Ph 2 Subtotal** | **11,793** | | **11,037** | **19,773** | **35,556** | **49,087** | **37,294** |
| **Phase 3 Grantees** | **Baseline** | | | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** | **Change Baseline to 2016** |
| Georgia | 520 | | | 2,671 | 6,603 | 10,081 | 9,561 |
| Kentucky | 15,920 | | | 0 | 0 | 14,755 | -1,165 |
| Michigan | 13,060 | | | 22,545 | 34,255 | 34,227 | 21,167 |
| New Jersey[12] | 240 | | | 0 | 0 | - | - |
| Pennsylvania | 1,245 | | | 5,894 | 8,296 | 9,224 | 7,979 |
| Vermont | 1,890 | | | 1,685 | 1,720 | 1,711 | -179 |
| **Ph 3 Subtotal** | **32,875** | | | **32,795** | **50,874** | **69,998** | **37,123** |
| **Grand Total** | **89,137** | **69,369** | **102,728** | **151,676** | **210,944** | **245,033** | **155,896** |

[11] State definitions of the top tiers: One State (Georgia) uses three tiers, and they define the top tiers as tiers 2 and 3. Three States (Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania) have four tiers; Massachusetts defines top tiers as tiers 2, 3, and 4, while Minnesota and Pennsylvania defines top tiers as tiers 3 and 4. New Jersey uses five tiers but has not conducted ratings for tiers 3, 4, or 5. All other States (California, Colorado, Delaware, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin) use five tiers or levels; Illinois, Maryland, North Carolina, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin define their top tiers as tiers 4 and 5, while California, Colorado, Delaware, Kentucky, Michigan, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington define their top tiers as tiers 3, 4, and 5.

[12] NJ: Star levels 3, 4, and 5 are included as "top tiers". New Jersey has not identified many programs in "top tiers" as ratings have not been widely conducted. They anticipate the rating process to continue and increase

in early 2017 and continuing throughout the life of the grant.

## 8. Number of Children with High Needs Screened (C3d)

| Phase 1 Grantees | Baseline | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Change Baseline to 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| California[16] | 126,184 | 157,008 | 186,429 | 196,644 | 212,500 | 190,443 | 64,259 |
| Delaware | 22,755 | 27,650 | 27,881 | 27,776 | 26,407 | 25,765 | 3,010 |
| Maryland | 9,130 | 9,153 | 9,443 | 9,721 | 15,205 | 15,426 | 6,296 |
| North Carolina | 313,506 | 349,155 | 340,310 | 335,033 | 336,126 | 336,064 | 22,558 |
| **Phase 1 Subtotal** | **471,575** | **542,966** | **564,063** | **569,174** | **590,238** | **567,698** | **96,123** |

| Phase 2 Grantees | Baseline | | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Change Baseline to 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Colorado | - | | - | - | - | - | - |
| Illinois | - | | - | - | - | - | - |
| New Mexico | - | | - | - | - | - | - |
| Oregon[17] | 13,375 | | 37,500 | 16,427 | 26,816 | 28,413 | 15,038 |
| Wisconsin | - | | - | - | - | - | - |
| **Phase 2 Subtotal** | **13,375** | | **37,500** | **16,427** | **26,816** | **28,413** | **15,038** |

| Phase 3 Grantees | Baseline | | | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Change Baseline to 2016 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Georgia | - | | | - | - | - | - |
| Kentucky | - | | | - | - | - | - |
| Michigan | 14,400 | | | 56,763 | 58,457 | 62,856 | 48,456 |
| New Jersey | 75,399 | | | 86,880 | 95,480 | 100,254 | 24,855 |
| Pennsylvania | | | | - | - | - | - |
| Vermont | 12,660 | | | 12,789 | 15,664 | 15,317 | 2,657 |
| **Phase 3 Subtotal** | **102,459** | | | **156,432** | **169,601** | **178,427** | **75,968** |
| **Grand Total** | **587,409** | **542,966** | **601,563** | **742,033** | **786,655** | **774,538** | **187,129** |

[16] CA: While 2016 numbers demonstrated a decline from 2015, the data included for "Number of Children with High Needs screened" continues to be significantly under-reported due to California's varied screening delivery systems and lack of a centralized data system. For these reasons, California was unable to report a true count of screenings that accurately reflects the wide array of delivery methods.

[17] OR: Developmental screening is an incentive metric for which Oregon's Coordinated Care Organizations (CCOs) receive financial incentives when demonstrating improved rates of developmental screening in their member clinics. The benchmark for this CCO metric was 50 percent of children screened for 2013– 2015. In 2015 all 16 of Oregon's CCOs increased their screening rates, and 12 of 16 met or exceeded the 50 percent benchmark. For 2017, the screening benchmark was increased to 60.1 percent, which represents the 75th

percentile of CCOs' screening rates in 2015. An additional positive influence on developmental screening rates is the work of Oregon's 16 Early Learning Hubs covering the entire State.

## ENDNOTES

[i] The first phase of ELC Grantees were required, at a minimum, to select two components within Focused Investment Area C, one component from Focused Investment Area D, and one component from Focused Investment Area E. Given reduced levels of available funding, Phase 2 Grantees were required to select at least one component from two of the three Focused Investment Areas. Phase 3 Grantees were required to select among the components of the focused investment areas that would most significantly improve program quality and outcomes for children with high needs in their States. Phase 3 Grantees were also given the option to earn competitive preference priority points by 1) including all early learning and development programs in their QRIS, 2) creating preschool through third grade approaches to sustain improved early learning outcomes through the early elementary grade, and/or 3) addressing the needs of children in rural areas. For more information, see 2011 RTT-ELC Notice Inviting Applications

[ii] For more information about the three phases of RTT-ELC, see the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge website, which contains links to materials related to the three phases.

[iii] The definition of Children with High Needs is from the RTT-ELC Notices Inviting Applications and is identical across the three ELC Phases. See 2011 RTT-ELC Notice Inviting Applications, p. 110 (Aug. 26, 2011).

[iv] U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Federal Register*. Part III: 2011 RTT-ELC Notice Inviting Applications, p. 19 August 26, 2011.

[v] U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Federal Register*. Part III: 2011 RTT-ELC Notice Inviting Applications, p. 57 August 26, 2011.

[vi] The definition of KEA included in the text of the report is from the RTT-ELC Notices Inviting Applications and is identical across the three ELC Phases. See 2011 RTT-ELC Notice Inviting Applications, p. 155.

[vii] National Research Council. *Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What, and How*. Committee on Developmental Outcomes and Assessments for Young Children, C.E. Snow and S.B. Van Hemel, Editors. Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Board on Testing and Assessment, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. The National Academies Press, 2008.

[viii] Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework means a set of expectations that describes what Early Childhood Educators (including those working with children with disabilities and English learners) should know and be able to do. The Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, at a minimum, (a) is evidence-based; (b) incorporates knowledge and application of the State's Early Learning and Development Standards, the Comprehensive Assessment Systems, child development, health, and culturally and linguistically appropriate strategies for working with families; (c) includes knowledge of early mathematics and literacy development and effective instructional practices to support mathematics and literacy development in young children; (d) incorporates effective use of data to guide instruction and program improvement; (e) includes effective behavior management strategies that promote positive social emotional development and reduce challenging behaviors; and (f) incorporates feedback from experts at the State's postsecondary institutions and other early learning and development experts and Early Childhood Educators. This definition is from the 2011 RTT-ELC Notice Inviting Applications and is identical across the three ELC Phases.

[ix] Statewide Longitudinal Data System means the State's longitudinal education data system that collects and maintains detailed, high-quality, student- and staff-level data that are linked across entities and that over time provide a complete academic and performance history for each student. The Statewide Longitudinal Data System is typically housed within the State educational agency but includes or can be connected to early childhood, postsecondary, and labor data. This definition is from the 2011 RTT-ELC Notice Inviting Applications at 53570 and is identical across the three ELC Phases.

[x] Data System Oversight Requirements means policies for ensuring the quality, privacy, and integrity of data contained in a data system, including--

a) A data governance policy that identifies the elements that are collected and maintained; provides for training on internal controls to system users; establishes who will have access to the data in the system and how the data may be used; sets appropriate internal controls to restrict access to only authorized users; sets criteria for determining the legitimacy of data requests; establishes processes that verify the accuracy, completeness, and age of the data elements maintained in the system; sets procedures for determining the sensitivity of each inventoried element and the risk of harm if those data were improperly disclosed; and establishes procedures for disclosure review and auditing; and

b) A transparency policy that informs the public, including families, Early Childhood Educators, and programs, of the existence of data systems that house personally identifiable information, explains what data elements are included in such a system, enables parental consent to disclose personally identifiable information as appropriate, and describes allowable and potential uses of the data.

This definition is from the RTT-ELC Notices Inviting Applications and is identical across the three ELC Phases. See 2011 RTT-ELC Notice Inviting Applications at 53568.