

# Rhode Island | Race to the Top

## EARLY LEARNING CHALLENGE GRANT

### Informational Brief

#### Supports for Programs, Administrators, Educators and Parents

The ultimate goal of Rhode Island's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant is to improve outcomes for children. To support programs and educators in their quest for continuous improvement toward this ambitious but achievable goal, the following supports are available:

#### **For Programs:**

##### Participation Incentives

BrightStars distributed one-time participation incentives to programs that voluntarily joined BrightStars between October 2011 and March 31, 2013. These participation incentives were \$250 for Family Child Care Home and \$500 for child care centers.

##### Quality Improvement Grants

The State recognizes that to achieve high-quality, programs need high-quality materials and equipment to ensure the health and safety of children and to promote their growth and development across all the domains of early learning, including motor development, social and emotional development, language development, and cognitive development. Programs also need resources to support staff professional development, curriculum planning, child assessment, and family engagement. For this reason, the Departments of Education (RIDE) and Human Services (DHS) have budgeted \$400,000 to support Interim Quality Improvement Grant funds to eligible programs. These grants will be available beginning in April 2013 and will continue until the interim fund is expended. RIDE and DHS expect to make available a larger pool of regular grant money shortly after July 1st. For more information on Program Improvement Grants please visit <https://www.earlylearningri.org> or BrightStars at <http://www.brightstars.org/>.

*Additional Questions regarding Quality Improvement Grants may be directed to Karen Beese at the RI Department of Human Services at [KBeese@dhs.ri.gov](mailto:KBeese@dhs.ri.gov) or (401) 462-1390*

## Program Quality Awards

Early learning programs that meet higher quality standards usually have higher program operating costs. These higher costs are primarily associated with increased staff compensation and benefits to attract and retain more qualified teachers and expanded staffing to cover staff time for curriculum planning, individual child observation and assessment, and family engagement activities. Child care programs serving low and moderate income families struggle to secure adequate resources to meet recommended program quality standards. Because of increased staffing needs, programs that serve infants and toddlers face significant challenges in achieving quality standards with resources currently available. It is clear that providing targeted, on-going financial support would help programs achieve and sustain higher quality levels. The Department of Human Services will provide Quality Awards to programs that meet eligibility criteria to off-set increased operating costs for programs operating at higher quality levels.

For programs that meet the 10% CCAP enrollment threshold, awards will be calculated based on the program's BrightStars rating, the overall enrollment of children under age 6, and the number of CCAP infants and toddlers. Quality Awards must be spent to support direct costs of the early childhood program and cannot be taken as profit or applied to agency overhead. Quality Awards can be used to provide enhanced compensation and/or benefits to staff who meet qualifications outlined in BrightStars, support expanded staffing needed to meet higher quality standards (supplemental staff, expanded hours for assistants, etc.), and/or to pay on-going costs associated with meeting higher quality standards (e.g., individual child assessment system). For more information on Program Quality Awards please visit [www.earlylearningri.org](http://www.earlylearningri.org) or BrightStars at [www.brightstars.org](http://www.brightstars.org).

*Additional Questions regarding Quality Improvement Grants may be directed to Karen Beese at the RI Department of Human Services at [KBeese@dhs.ri.gov](mailto:KBeese@dhs.ri.gov) or (401) 462-1390.*

## Teaching Strategies GOLD State Rate

RIDE is offering support to programs that are interested in implementing Teaching Strategies GOLD, by providing the opportunity to purchase child subscriptions at the state rate. This rate is half the cost of the regular subscription, allowing more programs to purchase and implement a high-quality child assessment system. Programs are required to ensure their teachers will receive training and use the system with fidelity and to share student data so that RIDE can use it to inform decisions around professional development and assessment policies.

*For more information on this resource, please contact Judi Stevenson Garcia at (401)222-8176 or [Judi.Stevenson-Garcia@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Judi.Stevenson-Garcia@ride.ri.gov)*

## **For Administrators and Educators:**

### Access to Formal Credentials

T.E.A.C.H. Ready to Learn Providence is the Rhode Island home of T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood®. The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Project® pays a percentage of tuition and book costs to early childhood professionals who wish to pursue either an AA or BA degree in Early Childhood Education/Child Development and provides supports for scholars in the program. Center or home care sponsorship is required. Sponsorship involves some cost sharing.

*For more information about T.E.A.C.H contact Maura Pearce at [mpearce@provplan.org](mailto:mpearce@provplan.org) or call 401-490-9960, Ext. 229.*

Rhode Island is providing multiple opportunities for up to 160 child care providers annually to receive formal early childhood coursework at little or no financial cost. CCRI's Early Childhood Education & Training Program offers beginning students the opportunity to earn 12 college credits in ECE through a combination of formal coursework and intensive mentoring, which is aligned with Level I of the Teacher and Teacher Assistant Workforce Knowledge and Competencies (WKC).

*For more information about CCRI's Early Childhood Education Degree Program, contact Lynne Trudel at [ltrudel@ccri.edu](mailto:ltrudel@ccri.edu) or call 401-455-6128.*

### Access to Professional Development/Technical Assistance

*Professional Development (Interim):* In order to increase available professional development opportunities immediately, DHS expanded the existing RI Resource Center contract by \$40,000. The Resource Center conducted a review of existing professional development opportunities aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework for Teachers and Teacher Assistants and identified gaps in the domains of health, safety and wellness; family engagement and curriculum; and in opportunities for administrators, infant-toddler professionals, and Spanish-speaking providers. The additional funds added to the existing contract will provide additional professional development opportunities to address those gaps through June 2013.

*Technical Assistance (Interim):* In order to increase access to technical assistance opportunities immediately, RIDE expanded and revised its existing RIELS technical assistance project to provide a year of technical assistance to 24 programs; including 14 school districts and 10

community-based programs (5 Head Start). These programs received individualized support by a RIELS Technical Assistance consultant who supported the program in developing a program improvement plan. The programs then implemented identified strategies with the support of the consultant to improve quality at the program and classroom levels. Decisions were based on their program assessment data, including data from ECERS. All participating programs are committed to quality improvement and are working diligently on environmental changes, teacher child interactions, and family engagement.

Coming soon! The Professional Development and Technical Assistance Center will provide a continuum of learning opportunities to prepare adults to work with young children and their families in all settings and sectors, and includes the learning opportunities that enhance and improve one's skills as a professional over time. A Request for Proposal (RFP) to identify a vendor for the statewide PD/TA Center will be released in April with a contract expected to start in July 2013. Provision of training is expected by September 2013. The PD/TA Center will provide professional development opportunities aligned with WKC Frameworks, individualized technical assistance, and Quality Improvement Grants to support programs and individuals progress on the path toward high-quality.

*Additional questions regarding the Professional Development and Technical Assistance Center may be directed to Karen Beese at the Department of Human Services at [KBeese@dhs.ri.gov](mailto:KBeese@dhs.ri.gov) or (401) 462 – 1390 or Sara Mickelson at [Sara.Mickelson@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Sara.Mickelson@ride.ri.gov) or (401) 222 –8460*

#### Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards (RIELDS) Professional Development

Early learning standards articulate shared expectations for what young children should know and be able to do. Further, they provide a common language for measuring progress toward achieving specific learning goals (Kendall, 2003; Kagan& Scott-Little, 2004); *Charting a Course for Success in the Ocean State: Rhode Island's Early Learning and Development Standards* outlines early learning expectations at key benchmarks, from birth to 60 months of age.

Rhode Island is unique in its investment in high quality standards-based trainings. Rhode Island has dedicated significant resources to creating a series of professional development trainings which support early childhood professionals in their various roles in understanding how to create effective learning experiences for young children. Delivery of these trainings occurs throughout the year, across the state and in various community settings.

The Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards (RIELDS) project provides four professional development opportunities to support early care and education professionals in creating high-quality, Standards-based programs for young children. Professional development participants receive training from experienced RI Early Learning Standards Certified Trainers, work in small and large groups, share information, reflect on past and current practice and

complete assignments that lead to improved early childhood programs and effective teacher practices.

The RIEDLS professional development opportunities include:

- Introduction to the RI Early Learning Standards
- Level I: Using the RI Early Learning Standards as a Framework for Curriculum Development
- Level II: Implementing a Standards-based Program
- Level III: The Administrator's Role in Implementing a Standards-based Program
- Next Steps Sessions

*For more information on this opportunity, visit <http://www.ride.ri.gov/els> or contact Gloria Linakis at [Gloria.Linakis@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Gloria.Linakis@ride.ri.gov) (401) 222- 2118*

### Supporting Effective Child Assessment

Coming Soon! RIDE will work with the Education Development Center to design and provide professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators working with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers to support the implementation of developmentally appropriate and comprehensive child assessment practices. The professional development opportunities will be aligned with Workforce Knowledge and Competency Frameworks and will address the different purposes and uses of child-assessment information at a program level; selecting assessment systems and approaches that are appropriate for target populations and purposes; interpreting and understanding classroom-quality measures and using that information to improve classroom quality; supporting effective, formative child-assessment practices in classrooms; and using appropriate authentic assessment strategies and planning for ongoing classroom assessment. These professional development opportunities will be available starting in September 2013.

*For more information on this opportunity, visit <http://www.health.ri.gov/> or contact Stacey Aguiar at [stacey.aguiar@health.ri.gov](mailto:stacey.aguiar@health.ri.gov)*

### **For Families:**

#### Family Fun Activities

The training series titled Fun Family Activities for Preschoolers is based on the knowledge that parents have a critical role in preparing children for school success. The content of the training

builds upon research and best practice in both early childhood development and parenting and our understanding that children learn best through play.

As a result of participation in this training, families will: discover new, enjoyable, and creative ways to support their child's growth and development, learn specific ways to support their child in the eight areas of learning addressed in the RI Early Learning and Development Standards, create individualized Family Treasure Boxes with activities that reflect each family's unique culture and values, strengthen connections with community organizations and public institutions such as public schools, libraries, parks and recreation facilities and more, and commit to ongoing involvement in their child's education. Participants engage in a variety of activities utilizing materials and resources that are low cost and accessible. Participants are then encouraged to replicate the activities with their own child when they return home. Participants then spend time individualizing their treasure boxes by creating additional activity cards that represent their own child's development, interests, and learning styles and reflect each family's unique culture

*For more information on this opportunity, visit <http://www.ripin.org> or contact Deb Meiklejohn [meiklejohn@ripin.org](mailto:meiklejohn@ripin.org) 401-270-0101 ext. 108*

#### Increased Access to Developmental Screens

The Rhode Island Department of Education and The Rhode Island Department of Health are working together to support primary care providers to conduct developmental screening for children ages birth to three using standardized tools and follow up to this screening. This work includes providing support to primary care providers to implement electronic systems of standardized developmental screening to identify the needs of the patients and their families in care. Primary care providers will also be supported to provide resources to meet the needs of their patients as identified through screening. Primary care providers can apply for funding for evidence based interventions which would be made available meet the needs of for those children and families who may not qualify for other services.

*For more information on this resource, please contact Judi Stevenson Garcia at (401)222-8176 or [Judi.Stevenson-Garcia@ride.ri.gov](mailto:Judi.Stevenson-Garcia@ride.ri.gov)*

Child Outreach is a FREE service offered to ALL children 3 to 5 years old by your local school district in partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Education. Child Outreach provides information about children's development and resources that are available within the community. Child Outreach can help identify children who may need further assessment, intervention and/or services at an early age in order to prevent the occurrence of more severe problems later.

To access this support, families can schedule a screening appointment at any time during the school year by calling their local school district and asking to speak with the Child Outreach Coordinator. Families can also visit the Early Childhood Section of the Rhode Island Department of Education website, [www.ride.ri.gov](http://www.ride.ri.gov), for a complete listing of names and telephone numbers of each of the district's Child Outreach Coordinators.

*For more information on this opportunity, visit <http://www.ride.ri.gov> or contact Ruth Gallucci [ruth.gallucci@ride.ri.gov](mailto:ruth.gallucci@ride.ri.gov) or call (401)222-8947.*

### References

Kagan, S. L., & Scott-Little, C. (2004). Early learning standards: changing the parlance and practice of early childhood education?. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 85(5), 388-396.

Kendal, J. S. (2003). Standards and early learning. *Educational Leadership*, 60(7), 64-68.