

MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE
FY2009 ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE REPORT

SUBMITTED MARCH 18, 2009

REPORT OUTLINE

CONTEXT FOR THIS REPORT	2
SECTION 1: Jan 2008-Jan 2009 BOARD/EEC ACTIONS, POLICY DECISIONS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS	4
SECTION 2: PROGRESS UPDATES BY INITIATIVES	10
a. Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK)	10
b. Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)	12
c. Alignment of "Rates" and Quality Standards	14
d. School Readiness Assessment/Child Outcomes	16
e. Workforce and Professional Development (Core Competencies)	17
f. Supporting National Accreditation	19
g. Promoting Positive Behavioral and Mental Health in Early Education and Care	20
AREAS ON WHICH WE ARE NOT REPORTING	23
CONCLUSION	23
ATTACHMENTS	
1. Reporting Requirements Index	
2. Department of Early Education and Care Strategic Plan	
3. Workforce Report	
a. Early Childhood Educators Scholarship Program Fact Sheet	
b. Building Careers in Early Education and Care Program Fact Sheet	
c. Child Development Associate Fact Sheet	

CONTEXT FOR THIS REPORT

EEC Board's Strategic Plan, the framework for this report

This Report is presented within the framework of the EEC Board's Strategic Plan. In December, 2007, with a legislative mandate to develop a multiyear plan to achieve a well-coordinated system of high achievement in early education and care in the Commonwealth, the Board undertook a strategic planning process. The methodology used was inclusive and participatory and built on the successes and assets of EEC's ongoing work and expertise and wisdom provided by a broad range of planning participants. The Board's strategic plan outlines a mission, a practical vision, strategic directions, and indicators of success. EEC is developing an Agency companion Work Plan to identify activities and goals that will help meet the success indicators.

The 5 Strategic Directions identified by the Board- which will serve as the Framework for this report- are as follows:

1. **Quality-** Create and implement a system to improve and support quality statewide.
2. **Family Support, Access, and Affordability-** Increase and promote family support, access and affordability.
3. **Workforce-** Create a workforce system that maintains worker diversity and provides resources, supports, expectations, and core competencies that lead to the outcomes we want for children.
4. **Communications-** Create and implement an external and internal communications strategy that advocates for and conveys the value of early education and care to all stakeholders and the general public.
5. **Infrastructure-** Build the internal infrastructure to support achieving the vision.

The "Board/EEC Actions and Accomplishments" Section of this report highlights key decisions and actions taken this past year within each of the 5 Strategic Directions.

Landmark Early Education and Care Bill Signed into Law

On Thursday, July 31st2008, Governor Patrick signed into law "*An Act Relative to Early Education and Care,*" a major milestone in the effort to build a truly comprehensive and coordinated system that meets the needs of families and children. This bill codifies in state law, and helps shape future directions for, a broad range of programs and initiatives that EEC has been developing and implementing for the last 3 years.

New Executive Office of Education

In January, 2008, legislation passed creating an Executive Office of Education (EOE) to oversee the Commonwealth's three Education Agencies (Department of Early Education and Care, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and Department of Higher Education). Governor Deval Patrick proposed this Secretariat to encourage the seamless delivery of education from birth through higher education and beyond. EEC is now a family's first point of entry to the Commonwealth's education system and an integral part of the overall continuum, providing the foundation for children's healthy development and learning.

EEC Board Changes

In the Spring, Governor Patrick appointed three new members to EEC's Board: Lynson Moore Beaulieu, Director of Programs and Strategic Leadership at the Schott Foundation for Public Education; Orlando Isaza, Senior Program Officer and Manager for Grant Making Initiatives at the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts; and Mary Pat Messmer, Executive Director of the Cape Cod Child Development Program.

9C Budget Reductions in EEC's FY2009

On October 15, 2008, Governor Deval Patrick announced that state revenues for the first quarter of FY2009 were reported well below benchmark and he revealed an estimated \$1.4B budget gap. The reduction to EEC's budget as part of this plan totaled \$14.1M, or approximately 2.4% of EEC's final FY2009 budget, which meant significant adjustments for many and real hardship for some, including those who directly provide education and care every day to children across the state. It is important to recognize that the measures required to implement these cuts, as painful as they were, had minimal impact on access to child care for families currently enrolled.

On January 28, the Governor announced a second round of 9C reductions to the Fiscal Year 2009 budget. These reductions presumed as a base the FY09 funding level of \$559,237,397 (which is inclusive of the first round of 9C cuts) and further reduces EEC's budget by \$3,342,579 or 0.6%. As with the previous round of 9C reductions, EEC's guiding principle has been to continue to prioritize access to child care for all families currently enrolled, particularly in light of the severe pressure on the Income Eligible Account that required us to limit access in early November. Although these additional reductions impacted or slowed down several key agency priorities, for the most part they focus on projected surpluses, savings realized through proactive agency action, and/or expansion funding not yet awarded.

EEC Board FY2010 Budget Recommendations

In November, the Board approved a 2-part recommendation of spending priorities for FY10. Due to the national economic downturn that has significantly impacted state revenues, the Board was first charged with presenting an FY2010 proposal that incorporated a 4% cut to current FY09 funding levels. The Board focused on balancing the potential impacts on key areas of the system; preserving the capacity of the agency to be responsible fiscal stewards; ensuring the health and safety of children; and continuing forward progress on policy innovations. Secondly, the Board was charged with recommending priority areas for increased investment, in the event that additional funding becomes available. This expansion proposal focused on increasing access to financial assistance for the Commonwealth's most vulnerable children and families; ensuring that providers of early education and care receive an increase in rates for serving these families; and continuing growth in the UPK program. As much as possible given the challenging environment, the Board's recommendation maintained essential supports for children and families and balanced the important system needs of access and quality.

Education Secretary Appoints Sherri Killins as New EEC Commissioner

On December 22nd, Education Secretary Paul Reville appointed Dr. Sherri Killins, most recently Vice President for Human Development and Operations at the Annie E. Casey Foundation, as the Commissioner of Early Education and Care. The EEC Board recommended Dr. Killins to the Secretary after an extensive search and interview process that began over the summer. Dr. Killins assumed the post on February 2, 2009.

SECTION 1: 2008-2009 BOARD/EEC ACTIONS, POLICY DECISIONS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

This section highlights key decisions and actions taken this past year, organized within each of the five Strategic Directions. It is designed to respond, in part, to legislative language asking for an annual update on “progress made in achieving goals and implementing programs.” Where relevant, a brief summary of public commentary received on these actions and decisions is noted.

Strategic Direction 1- Create and implement a system to improve and support quality statewide.

- **Board Decides to Update EEC Licensing Regulations**

The Board voted to move forward on the development of new licensing regulations that align EEC regulations for family child care homes, group child care centers, and school age child care programs. The Board also voted to move forward with the public hearing process; EEC held 12 well-attended public hearings across the state in February, and gathered significant amounts of public input that were used to help craft the licensing updates.

- **Board Approves UPK Expansion Plan and Policy Changes**

In September, the Board approved a plan for FY09 UPK program expansion and eligibility that included several policy changes, including:

1. Prioritizing expansion funds for programs located within high-risk priority districts (in collaboration with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) and/or serving a high proportion of subsidized children (50% or greater);
2. Expanding eligibility for new UPK family child care providers with national accreditation or a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential **or higher** versus the previous requirement of national accreditation or a CDA, which inadvertently limited some highly qualified family child care providers from participating in UPK. This shift was reflected in FY09 budget line-item language; and
3. Expanding allowable quality expenditures to include family engagement and transition to kindergarten activities.

- **Public commentary.** Public commentary prior to the vote was supportive of EEC’s proposal and appreciated that it reflected input from the field and from EEC’s Advisory Team and UPK Working Group. Public commentary- and subsequent Board discussion- reiterated the importance of prioritizing funds in high-risk priority districts, as is reflected in the policy changes outlined above, and discussions highlighted the importance of funding programs at varying levels of quality.

- **Universal Pre-K Pilot Implementation Evaluation Released**

The findings of the FY08 UPK Pilot Program Evaluation were released in September. The evaluation focused on the implementation design and early outcomes of the UPK program, and showed that the UPK program is being implemented effectively and, as it was designed, with a deliberate focus on support for high-quality programs. Grantees are spending UPK funds as expected, on activities that produce the highest quality preschool programs, and as the research shows, are most likely to produce positive educational outcomes for children.

- **Board Approves Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Funding**

In November, the Board voted to expend up to \$250,000 (for six month grants) for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Services through a competitive Request for Responses (RFR) to expand capacity among EEC’s current mental health programs, and that remaining funds be used for one-time activities to strengthen mental health services such as technical assistance, resource development, and training, professional development, strengthening partnerships, and developing resources for trauma response. *(Although 9C reductions eliminated this expansion, the Governor’s FY10 budget recommendation included it.)*

- **Public commentary:** The public commentary received by the Board was very supportive of EEC's proposal, which reflected feedback received from the field that new funding be used to expand and enhance the current Mental Health Consultation Services grant program through a new, competitively-issued RFR.
- **Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Moves Forward**
Early this year, the Board heard a presentation on QRIS including recommendations for its development and implementation, and EEC began to chart a course forward for EEC's goal of implementing such a system in Massachusetts. A workgroup of 22 external stakeholders worked hard throughout the spring at the first phase of QRIS design, which has moved into the Public Input Phase.
- **Massachusetts Selected as one of Four States to Receive Technical Assistance to Develop an Early Childhood Accountability System**
Massachusetts was selected to participate in a national project on designing and implementing early childhood accountability systems, in collaboration with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE). This strong interagency relationship and EEC's innovative approach to UPK were identified as key factors leading to the selection of Massachusetts.

Strategic Direction 2- Family Support, Access, and Affordability- Increase and promote family support, access and affordability.

- **Homeless Families Gain Immediate Access to Financial Assistance**
EEC's newly developed and streamlined procedure for homeless families went into effect on December 3, 2007. Families who are placed in shelters through the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) now have immediate access to child care as part of EEC and DTA's ongoing work to improve the experience of parents and children in our financial assistance system.
- **Board Approves COLA Adjustment for Financial Assistance**
In June, the Board voted to update the State Median Income (SMI) level used to determine eligibility for EEC financial assistance in FY2009, representing a 5% shift in income eligibility and recognizing small increases in a family's cost of living. The Board also acted to authorize EEC to annually update to the current SMI hereafter.
 - **Public commentary:** Public comments and the EEC Advisory Team expressed strong support for this policy change. Prior to the vote, the Board discussed the fact that a small number of new families would have to wait longer for financial assistance because other families would be staying in care longer as a result of this policy change.
- **Progress made in family support programming for infants and toddlers, despite 9C reductions.** EEC's two primary programs for infant and toddlers- the Massachusetts Family Network (MFN) and Parent Child Home Program (PCHP)- have continued to provide much-needed services to infants and toddlers and their families.
 1. MFN is comprised of strength based, high quality, local networks of early education and family support for parents of young children birth to three. In FY '08, MFN served approximately 28,000 families with 29,000 children (0-3) directly through Network activities. MFN programs offered child development information and support through over 100 play-to-learn groups per week, often with community partners, including Early Intervention and public libraries. 6,800 parents participated in education and support activities, and over 4,000 parents participated in adult education and family literacy activities. MFNs responded to more than 57,000 requests for services directly or made referrals to other supportive services and collaborating partners. In October 2009 the MFN Program was reduced by \$1.1million as part of the 9C budget reductions, necessitating staff and program reductions. In response to the cuts, many parent leaders emerged, volunteering their time and talents to keep many vital MFN programs and services available to the community.

2. PCHP is a home-based early literacy, parenting and school readiness program designed to help strengthen verbal interaction and educational play between parents and their young children (18-30 months old). PCHP supports and strengthens parents' skills in enhancing their children's cognitive development and school readiness. PCHP serves families challenged by poverty, limited education, language barriers, and other obstacles to educational success. In 2007, EEC expanded PCHP through the Joint Family Support Program (JFSP), a hybrid model of PCHP combined with MFN programming. Through this model, EEC-funded family support programs are explicitly linked to provide services that are responsive to the needs of PCHP eligible families. There are 25 PCHP and 11 JFSP grants that provide PCHP programming in 62 communities. In FY '08, the program served 1,318 children. Of those children, 639 lived in single parent homes, 68 were children of teen parents and 150 were experiencing homelessness, living in shelter. Also, in FY '08, 32 family child care providers were served through the PCHP program.

- **Massachusetts Becomes a "Strengthening Families" State**

EEC has become an Affiliate State of the national *Strengthening Families Network*, a collection of early education and care programs, state agencies, advocates, and other organizations across the country that give families the tools they need to be strong. A key strategy is to build on the natural relationship between early education and care programs and parents to: help parents connect with each other, give parents information they need to be successful parents and provide access to needed community services. EEC is involved on several fronts to infuse this approach in the field:

- EEC's Income-eligible Reprourement will ask programs to describe their policies and practices around family engagement and support, and how they assess their impact. Primary areas of focus were derived from the Strengthening Families self-assessment tool for early education and care programs.
- In developing QRIS, EEC has suggested the Strengthening Families self-assessment tool as an excellent mechanism for programs to measure their effectiveness in the areas of family engagement and support.
- EEC has recently applied for a Center for Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) training and technical assistance opportunity. The National Association for the Education of Young Children identifies CSEFEL as an important training resource to support early childhood educators in their implementation of key family strengthening strategies. CSEFEL training would provide an excellent opportunity to link our involvement in Strengthening Families to our commitment to NAEYC standards.

- **Board Approves Income Eligible Reprourement**

In January 2009, the EEC Board approved the agency's recommendation for the re-bidding of Income Eligible contracts, which provide child care financial assistance to more than 12,000 children through 220 providers statewide. The plan will support EEC's ongoing efforts to promote quality programming by prioritizing providers based on quality criteria and phasing in an accreditation requirement over the life of the contract. The Board also approved the department's plan to align, over time, contract requirements with the forthcoming Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), and a modest demonstration project to contract with both independent family child care providers and public schools in communities with limited current capacity.

- **Public commentary:** The Board heard a great deal of public commentary in opposition to the Reprourement criteria as proposed because they allowed public schools- that are license-exempt and do not provide full-day full-year care- to be eligible for contracts. In response to the overwhelming opposition to this aspect of the proposed re-procurement, the Board voted to accept EEC's proposed criteria with the following two revisions: 1) require license-exempt programs to meet licensing standards; and 2) expect providers to offer continuing service at the same site for the same hours for the full school year. As proposed by EEC, this will be a limited demonstration project in areas with access challenges.

- **Deficiency Leads to New Limits on Access for EEC Financial Assistance**

Due to growing demand over the past several years, EEC has experienced increased pressure in the *Income Eligible* account (3000-4060), which provides child care financial assistance in the form of vouchers, contracts and grants to approximately 31,000 children enrolled in early education and care and after-school programs across the state. Due primarily to the current economic downturn, EEC has experienced a growing and unsustainable rise in the number of families given “priority” or immediate access under current policy and experienced a significant funding deficiency. In order to manage this, EEC took the unfortunate necessary action of limiting access to financial assistance for any new families beginning November 3, 2008, including a three month eligibility period for families in shelter who were not working. At the end of three months, families must be participating in the DTA employment services program or an EEC approved activity (employment, job training, education) to retain their eligibility for child care. Access for all families currently enrolled was not affected. New policies focused on maintaining access for children currently enrolled in programs, but several continuity of care categories, including access for siblings of children already enrolled, have been affected.

- **9C Reductions Expedite Implementation of New Policies Relative to Subsidy Management and Rates Paid to Providers**

EEC has been working over the past several years to create greater efficiency and consistency in policies and practices across our financial assistance programs, including subsidy management and the variation of rates paid to providers. The dire fiscal situation and related 9C reductions expedited several policy decisions including:

1. **Community Partnership Councils (CPC) Subsidy Management Transition-** EEC has been working with local CPC lead agencies to transition “subsidy” management from CPCs to either local EEC Income Eligible contracted providers or to the regional Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Agency.
 2. **Standard State Rate for All Children Receiving Financial Assistance through CPCs-** Effective January 1, 2009, all CPC providers serving EEC children will receive the standard state rate for children in their care, to create greater consistency in policies and practices across EEC financial assistance programs.
 3. **Grandfathered Rates-** A key part of the 9C cost savings was to expedite implementation of single payment/rate structure for all providers of subsidized early education and care. One element of this plan is to reduce the “Grandfathered” rates to the regional state rate paid to all other providers.
- **Public commentary:** The Board heard public commentary on the effect of 9C reductions, particularly the impact of lower rates on CPC’s ability to deliver quality services and the opposition of some CPCs to the transition of subsidy management to automated systems through the contracted providers and the CCR&Rs.

Strategic Direction 3- Create a workforce system that maintains worker diversity and provides resources, supports, expectations, and core competencies that lead to the outcomes we want for children.

- **Early Education and Care and Out of School Time Workforce Development Task Force Submits Recommendations**

In July 2007, EEC, partnering with the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley and the Schott Fellowship in Early Care and Education, convened The Massachusetts Early Education and Care and Out Of School Time Workforce Development Task Force charged with developing initial recommendations to advance the development of an effective workforce development plan. In July 2008, the Workforce Task Force concluded a year-long process and submitted its recommendations to EEC. Key recommendations and strategies follow:

1. Establish core competencies for all early education and care and out-of-school time professionals;
2. Create a well-designed orientation for all members of the field to clarify roles and expectations;

3. Delineate a clear and motivating career path with achievement-based compensation;
4. Ensure consistency in state policies to encourage higher education

The full report, *“Steps Forward: Recommendations of the 2007-2008 Massachusetts Early Education and Care and Out of School Time Workforce Development Report,”* can be found at <http://www.eec.state.ma.us/docs/EEC%20OST%20WDTaskForceFINAL.pdf>.

- **Board Approves New Guidelines for Early Childhood Educators (ECE) Scholarship Program**

In April, the Board voted to approve updated FY 2009 Eligibility Guidelines for the ECE Scholarship Program which would: prioritize scholarship assistance based on financial need; require a minimum number of hours working in a program; further define the types of degrees that individuals may pursue; increase academic accountability for current scholarship recipients; and expand eligibility to individuals with a bachelor’s degree in an unrelated field seeking “specialized coursework” in early education and care. These changes could not be presented to the Board of Higher Education in time for them to be implemented for the 2009 school year. Both agencies have decided to delay implementation of the proposed changes until 2010 and have revised the 2009 application to gather specific data about the proposed changes to more accurately predict their impact when implemented.

- **Note:** In approving these changes, the Board clarified that EEC worked closely with the Department of Higher Education (DHE) in their development. The former Commissioner of DHE originally shared scholarship eligibility concerns, which created the impetus for revisiting these policies.

- **New Professional Development Calendar Launched**

In July, EEC added a professional development calendar to its website which allows Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs) and Community Partnership Councils (CPCs) to display professional development opportunities in a coordinated way. This new function replaces dozens of individual training calendars and will enable providers across the state to view all EEC-funded professional development opportunities at a single glance.

Strategic Direction 4- Create and implement an external and internal communications strategy that advocates for and conveys the value of early education and care to all stakeholders and the general public.

- **New Family Guide, “Learn and Grow Together” Released**

This Guide provides easy-to-understand information on the key stages of child development, and suggests age-appropriate family activities that are fun and low-cost, and is available initially in three languages: English, Spanish and Portuguese.

- **Progress on translation of EEC materials/resources**

In 2008, EEC began a translation initiative to reduce duplicative efforts and cost associated with translating written materials. EEC prioritized approximately 60 documents to be translated into 6 languages, chosen through a comprehensive and inclusive process- Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Khmer, Traditional Chinese, and Vietnamese. With funding constraints, the first phase prioritized forms that families need to understand and that require their signature; on the provider front EEC focused on Family Child Care information. Documents are in the last level of review and will be released soon. EEC will add contact information for the “Commissioner’s Mailbox” on the documents so users may share their questions and concerns about the forms. EEC also piloted a call-in service through the CCR&Rs and is expanding its use to EEC regional office staff. Finally, through the “Qwest” phone service, EEC provides third party interpretation services for non-English speakers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in 150 languages and various dialects. In 2009, EEC’s continued translation efforts prioritize information for child care providers and families. Also in 2009, EEC’s new website will launch and will include an “Español” button with access to a wide range of resources/ information in Spanish.

- **Enhanced Child Care Search on Website Launched**

On January 8th, EEC launched a new and significantly improved Child Care Search function on its website. The search, available in English and Spanish, provides detailed information on early education and care and other programs, and makes available for the first time on the web important licensing information. This “soft launch” is the first phase of planned enhancements.

EEC is eliciting feedback from the field and will work to address the current limitations of the Search, including the inclusion of school-based opportunities.

Strategic Direction 5- Build the internal infrastructure to support achieving the vision.

- **Upgraded and Unified IT System Under Development**

EEC undertook the process of developing a comprehensive IT system to provide up-to-date information on EEC options and services, make it easier for providers to do business with us, and produce a real-time picture of funding allocations to inform policymakers and the public. Funded by the state’s Information Technology Division (ITD), this groundbreaking project will have a major impact on automating and improving the work that EEC does and will allow the agency to move forward in building a system of care that is responsive to the needs of families, providers and policy makers. In August, \$9.5M from the general government bond bill was allocated to design/ develop this system.

- **EEC Single Sign-On for Web Applications Launched**

In February, EEC unveiled a new streamlined sign-on process for users of multiple EEC web applications. Users who had numerous logins and passwords can now register for a single sign-on user account. This enhancement provides better security against unauthorized access.

- **Web-Based Improvements to Background Record Check (BRC) Processing Developed**

In an on-going effort to improve the timeliness of the Background Record Check (BRC) process for EEC programs, EEC has developed a new web-based method for submitting BRC requests and receiving data. The new, secure, web-based Manager, will allow EEC to notify an EEC licensed program online of the results of the vast majority of BRC requests submitted to EEC (The BRC process includes the CORI checks.)

SECTION 2: PROGRESS UPDATES BY INITIATIVE

This year's Progress Updates by Initiatives- as outlined in MGL 15D: section3(g) and in line-item 3000-1000 of the FY09 General Appropriation Act- cross all of the EEC Board's Five Strategic Directions- Quality; Workforce; Family Support; Access, and Affordability; Communications; and Infrastructure.

Initiatives

- a) Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK)
- b) Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)
- c) Alignment of "Rates" and Quality Standards
- d) School Readiness Assessment/Child Outcomes
- e) Workforce and Professional Development (Core Competencies)
- f) Supporting National Accreditation
- g) Promoting Positive Behavioral and Mental Health in Early Education and Care

a) Universal Pre-Kindergarten

EEC has made significant progress in the third year of implementation of the Massachusetts Pilot Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) program. Through UPK, EEC seeks to ensure that all children have access to a high-quality learning experience and enter school ready to learn and succeed.

The current pilot program is the first phase of a multi-pronged plan for a state UPK system. To plan for the longer term implementation of UPK, EEC has developed and continues to gather input on a UPK Concept Paper that summarizes the current state of preschool access, quality, and affordability and proposes key components of a comprehensive UPK system. The concept paper is available online at: http://www.eec.state.ma.us/docs/UPK_Concept_Paper_mostrecentMay2008.pdf

Quality and Planning Grants:

There are currently two types of UPK pilot grants to programs: UPK ***Classroom Quality Grants*** and ***UPK Assessment Planning Grants***.

Current ***Classroom Quality*** grants are awarded to program sites (renewed each year subject to ongoing eligibility and appropriations) to maintain and improve the quality of their services. The UPK eligibility requirements include:

- Accreditation from a nationally recognized organization;
- Well educated and skilled teachers/providers in each classroom/setting;
- Use of curriculum guidelines aligned with the Massachusetts K-12 Curriculum Frameworks;
- Use of an appropriate child assessment tool to ensure children's educational progress and effective implementation of a developmentally appropriate curriculum.

Quality grants are being used to:

- Improve teacher compensation;
- Strengthen teaching practice and professional development opportunities;
- Help programs understand and communicate about children's progress;
- Support accreditation activities;
- Provide additional comprehensive services;
- Enhance family engagement activities;
- Facilitate transitions to kindergarten and other programs;
- Improve the classroom environment; and
- Provide or facilitate access to full-day full-year services for working families.

Current UPK **Assessment Planning Grants**, which help emerging programs as they work to meet the UPK standard, are awarded on a one-time basis to allow programs to fully meet grant goals. These funds help programs implement developmentally appropriate child assessment systems. EEC has also been coordinating assessment-related technical assistance for grantees and providing and connecting programs to assessment trainings.

Table 1 below presents an overview of current UPK grantees. In addition, EEC is currently in the process of finalizing new FY09 Classroom Quality grants; this year EEC received applications for quality grants from more than 301 eligible classrooms serving over 4,600 children, which would cost \$6.6 million to fully fund (versus the \$1.5 million available for new sites), and has preliminarily selected 53 new sites for funding (please note that the new sites are not reflected in Table 1 since their grant status is still being finalized). 100% of these preliminary grantees are either in designated priority districts and/or serving more than 50% subsidized children, as has been prioritized by Board/EEC policy. EEC will not be able to award additional assessment planning grants this year because of the 9c budget reduction implemented in January; over 175 programs applied for these funds.

Table 1: Current UPK Grantee Overview

Grant Program	# Sites	# UPK Classrooms/ Homes	# UPK Children	# Cities/ Towns	Grant Award Amount
Current Classroom Quality Grantees* (originally funded in FY07 or FY08, renewed each year)	245**	406	5,700	97	\$5,000 - \$200,000 (average= \$36,400 per site)
FY09 Assessment Planning Grantees*** (one-time funding)	60 agencies including 162 programs	N/A	N/A	72	\$2,800 - \$60,000 (average= \$12,500 per agency)

*Classroom Quality grants have been awarded to designated classrooms within specific program sites or to designated family child care providers; 70% of current grantee sites are fully funded for all preschool classrooms.

**The 245 UPK sites include: 126 center-based programs (56 of which are Head Start sites); 106 family child care providers; 14 public school preschool programs, and 1 private school program.

***Assessment Planning grants have been awarded to designated program sites or family child care providers within agencies.

UPK Implementation Evaluation:

In Fiscal Year 2008, EEC funded an external evaluation of the implementation and early outcomes of the UPK pilot program and findings from this evaluation were released this fiscal year. The evaluation focused on documenting how the grant funding was allocated as well as perceptions of administrators, teachers, and family child care providers about improvements in quality since the grants were received and program areas where needs remained. This evaluation found that the pilot program is being implemented as intended and that programs are positive about the impact of the funds. A summary of the findings is available on-line at:

<http://www.eec.state.ma.us/docs/UPK%20Evaluation%20Executive%20Summary.pdf> and http://www.eec.state.ma.us/docs/UPK_Board_Sept08_Evaluation.pdf

Some recommendations were also made to EEC about how to further refine the grant programs to meet the needs of different programs types. These recommendations included:

- Narrowing allowable grant expenditures over time to focus on building staff capacity and other key quality improvement activities, with more flexibility given initially and more targeted spending in subsequent years of funding;
- Linking grant expenditures to more specific program outcomes;
- Improving communication with and supports for UPK family child care providers;
- Further studying how programs are using assessment data and how assessment is informing instruction;
- Further developing statewide technical assistance and training infrastructure to support assessment and other quality improvement activities; and
- Developing longer-term strategy for involving parents in the UPK system and increasing their awareness/understanding of quality early education.

EEC is in the process of designing program modifications in response to the above recommendations and plans to consider refinements to the grant program in the areas of grant expenditures, family child care supports and communications, parent communications, and statewide technical assistance and training infrastructure in Fiscal Year 2010.

Phase II of UPK Evaluation:

EEC is in the process of selecting a qualified research organization through a competitive process to serve as the evaluator for the next phase of assessing the effectiveness of the UPK program. EEC envisions that this evaluation will be multi-year and focus on: 1) assessing if UPK programs are providing a high-quality learning environment for preschool children and 2) measuring child outcomes to understand UPK is preparing children for school success.

CCSSO Technical Assistance Project:

EEC was recently selected to participate with three other states in a national technical assistance project with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (*See Section d below, School Readiness Assessment System*). As part of this project, EEC will receive technical assistance from national experts about the assessment tools that UPK programs are required to use and the design and implementation of the next phase of UPK evaluation.

Alignment of Quality Enhancement Grants: EEC's efforts to align classroom-based quality enhancement grants will be addressed in the "Capacity Report"- required by Chapter 15, Section 85 of the Acts of 2008- which will be submitted to the Legislature in June 2009.

UPK Related Board/EEC Policy Decisions and Changes (see Section 1 above for more information)

- *Prioritizing FY09 expansion funds;*
- *Refining eligibility requirements for family child care providers; and*
- *Expanding allowable quality expenditures to include family engagement and transition to kindergarten activities.*

b) Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

EEC's Universal Pre-Kindergarten program has taken bold steps toward defining quality indicators in preschool programs, which has helped set the stage for the development of the QRIS.

EEC has contracted with Oldham Innovative Research to develop the QRIS, which can be a powerful tool in supporting programs and providers to reach higher levels of quality. The process of developing this system, which will continue to take place over the next several months, began in early February 2008 with presentations to EEC staff and the EEC Advisory Team. At these meetings, Anne Mitchell, a nationally recognized expert on QRIS models, provided an overview of QRIS structures being used in other states, what the field has learned about their impact on program

quality, and key components and issues that EEC should consider in developing a successful model for Massachusetts.

Today, Massachusetts is well on the way in the process of creating a QRIS that will facilitate the state's efforts to build a comprehensive early care and education system. The QRIS will serve as a framework for organizing all of the functions of this system; this framework will include each of the five traditional components of a QRIS:

- 1) Standards
- 2) Monitoring and Accountability
- 3) Program and Practitioner Supports
- 4) Fiscal Incentives
- 5) Parent Outreach and Education

The work plan for Massachusetts' QRIS outlines three phases through which each of these components will evolve: Design, Public Input, and Implementation. Though Massachusetts began formally developing its QRIS in February 2008, the state's work to develop Standards and Guidelines for Early Childhood¹, and the coming together of EEC's two predecessor agencies, were both early efforts at beginning to build a QRIS. While each phase will be relatively fast and intense, it will still take several years before Massachusetts has a fully implemented QRIS.

An overarching principle to the development of the QRIS has been to have a transparent and collaborative process. Accordingly, design teams have been convened for each component of the QRIS; these teams bring together the relevant internal and external experts. In addition, opportunities for public input have been a deliberate step in the development process.

Since last February, Massachusetts has focused on designing the overarching structure of the QRIS and the Standards. To do this work, EEC convened both an Internal EEC QRIS Team, and an External Stakeholders QRIS Team. The two teams met together in the beginning and then the External group completed the majority of the work. This group worked tirelessly to develop overarching recommendations and a draft of the Standards. The EEC Board, Advisory Team, and Parent Advisory Team also gave guidance into the process. In June, a draft of the Standards was transferred to the Internal EEC QRIS Team. The job of this team was to review for any inconsistencies with other EEC efforts and to add their own expertise. The internal team produced a draft that then went through a research review to check for potential gaps based on what other states have been doing. The draft that emerged was previewed with the EEC Advisory Team in November 2008, and brought to the EEC Board in January 2009.

In the spring of 2009, the public input process will begin. This process will include presentations around the state about what a QRIS is, as well a review of the content of the standards. In addition, all relevant information will be on EEC's website with an online survey including specific questions on which EEC is seeking feedback. Public comments and suggestions will be incorporated and a further revised draft of the Standards will be ready to pilot in winter 2010.

Work has also begun in designing the Monitoring/Accountability and the Program/Practitioner Supports components of the QRIS. With the current challenging fiscal environment, EEC is working hard to align its efforts and to ensure that quality supports to programs are being delivered as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Ideally, the QRIS will be ready to pilot by FY10. This will launch the process of testing out that the processes, forms, and ratings work. Then, EEC hopes to be able to conduct a validation study of the QRIS, to ensure that the proposed standards differentiate between levels of quality, before taking it to full scale. One of the key pieces of work for the next year will be designing the Fiscal Incentives component of the QRIS. One of many options that EEC could consider is how reimbursement rates

¹ Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences and Early Childhood Program Standards

can be aligned with quality standards. In the meantime, EEC is also looking for ways to allow options for the Income Eligible procurement to align with the QRIS when it is more fully implemented.

c) Alignment of “Rates” and Quality Standards

EEC has taken several steps over the past three years to begin effectively aligning the rates paid to our providers of subsidized early education and care services with the standards EEC uses to ensure quality programming, outlined below. The development of the Income-eligible Re-procurement and QRIS will help to inform future multi-year plans to align rates and quality standards.

FY2009 9C Reductions: Realizing Subsidy Management Efficiencies and Implementing Rate Standardization/Reform

- Transition Management of CPC Direct Services to On-Line and Automated Systems:
EEC has been working with local CPC lead agencies to transition “subsidy” management from CPCs to EEC automated billing and information management systems either through local EEC Income Eligible contracted providers or through the regional Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Agencies. This transition has been discussed for several years and the current fiscal situation required us to move more quickly to make this system change.

While CPC’s will no longer perform the enrollment and billing functions of financial assistance, they will continue to act as the local point of entry to support families in accessing high quality programs by providing parents with information and referrals, as well as access to the EEC Centralized Waiting List.

- Standard State Rate for All Children Receiving EEC Financial Assistance:
Another key part of the 9C cost savings/rate reforms was to expedite implementation of single payment/rate structure for all providers of subsidized early education and care. In the multiple subsidy programs EEC inherited when the agency was created, providers were paid varied rates – even for the same service to two different children in the same classrooms. This plan has three components that are still in process of being implemented:

1. CPCs: Effective January 1, 2009, all CPC providers serving EEC children (through contracts, vouchers or grants) received the Regional State Rate (Tier 4) for children in their care (see <http://www.eec.state.ma.us/docs/FY08PublishedRateChart.xls>). EEC has been working over the past several years to create greater consistency in policies and practices across our financial assistance programs, including the variation of rates paid to our providers. While this has been a difficult change to manage mid-year, EEC has been working directly with CPCs and their providers to ensure continuity of care for all children currently receiving EEC financial assistance.

2. Grandfathered Rates: Another element of this plan is to reduce the “Grandfathered” rates to the regional state rate (paid to all other providers). Grandfather rates were, years ago, individually negotiated and EEC has been slowly phasing them out through rate increases over the past three years. Forty-two (42) providers still receive “grandfather” rates. We estimated the savings associated with this rate reduction allowed us to achieve the total target reduction (\$450,000).

3. Phasing Out of “Tiered” Reimbursements: The Office of Child Care Services (OCCS) implemented a tiered reimbursement system to encourage providers to achieve greater levels of quality. Providers agreeing to participate in or implement various quality activities were able to receive incremental and permanent increases in quality. The program was successful in many ways as the majority of providers achieved the highest rate level (Tier 4). One aspect of the rate reform implemented in the current fiscal year is to formally conclude or

phase out the tier program as EEC prepares for its successor – the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).

Income Eligible Reprourement:

The Income Eligible Reprourement has been designed to align with the nascent Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) where possible. Specific efforts to align these two initiatives include:

- The Reprourement evaluation criteria to select programs has been written to conceptually align with the QRIS Standards;
- During the first period of contracting, programs will be required to make progress on elements that will eventually be part of the QRIS Standards;
- At the time of renewal, there will be the opportunity to align with the QRIS standards as far as they have been developed at that time.

Market Rate Study:

The Federal funding agency, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) provides funding for all subsidized children in Massachusetts. ACF provides approximately 50% of funding for state subsidies through the Child Care Development Fund. Use of these funds is regulated by ACF under 45 CFR Parts 98 and 99. These regulations require states to complete a survey of market prices of child care every two years. The results of this market price study must be included in the state plan that each state submits to ACF every two years describing the activities of the state child care lead agency in the coming two years. ACF compares the results of the market rate survey to the state reimbursement rates to child care providers to determine whether the state rates provider access to child care for children using the subsidies. If the state sets its reimbursement rate at the 75th percentile of child care rates, ACF deems that the state to provide adequate access to early education and care for subsidized families. If the reimbursement rates are lower than the 75th percentile, the state must explain how it provides access for subsidized children. Many states including Massachusetts have reimbursed providers at maximum rates below the 75th percentile and justified access to care for subsidized children by citing the number of providers who participate in the subsidy program (60% of all licensed providers in Massachusetts accept subsidies from EEC).

2009 Market Rate Study

EEC has launched its 2009 Market Rate Survey which will gather new and valuable information from the provider community, and enable EEC to compare current prices to existing state regional reimbursement rates and analyze possible alternatives.

To complete the 2009 study, EEC has contracted with Mills Consulting Group and Goodman Research Group, in conjunction with the Massachusetts Child Care Resource and Referral Network. Presently, (January and February 2009), early education and care programs are being contacted by their local Child Care Resource and Referral agency and asked to update their price information. Data on market prices will be collected at the zip code level to provide the most detailed local data possible.

Collecting rate information at the zip code level requires that EEC collect data from more providers than in the past when a sample of providers was used to survey the price of care in each region. This year EEC will request data from all full day, full week providers which will allow analysis at a finer level. This data can be used to describe the actual locations of providers with similar rates and allow EEC to review the existing rate regions and explore amending these regions to better reflect actual provider price groupings.

Results will be published by 2009, and will not include identifying information about specific providers.

Board/EEC Policy Decisions and Changes (see Section 2 above for more information)

- *Transitioning Subsidy Management from CPCs*
- *Paying Standard State Rate to all CPC Providers; Eliminating grandfather rates*
- *Income-eligible Re-procurement*

d) **Developing an Early Childhood Assessment and Accountability System to Measure Child Outcomes**

As public investments in programs serving children birth to five, and particularly for three- and four-year olds have increased, state leaders are increasingly and seriously involved in designing processes for demonstrating outcomes for children, especially those participating in state preschool programs. As assessment systems are developed, it is critical to both 1) take into account the co-measure of program quality and 2) develop assessment systems that are congruent with knowledge about the complexities and risks of large-scale assessment of very young children (NECATF, 2007; Snow, & Van Hemel, 2008). The younger the child, the greater the potential for mis-measurement and the more critical the development of systems that protect both children and practitioners from the consequences of misapplying assessment practices more appropriate for older students (ECEA SCASS report, 2009). Finally, EEC recognizes that it is important for the agency's data systems to link child outcome measures to program standards and accountability (through QRIS, described above in section 2b) and to teacher qualifications and competencies through EEC's Professional development registry/data management system (described in the attached Workforce Report).

With these challenges and opportunities in mind, EEC is engaged in the following initiatives that are informing the development of a statewide system of early childhood accountability and assessment:

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) grant:

Massachusetts is one of four states to have received a technical assistance grant from CCSSO to help develop an early childhood accountability system. This project will build on recommendations made by the National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force in the report *Taking Stock: Assessing and Improving Early Childhood Learning and Program Quality* (http://ccf.tc.columbia.edu/pdf/Task_Force_Report.pdf). This report provides a framework for state planning and policy development in the areas of program quality, child learning standards, assessments, and data system development. EEC is the primary lead for the grant, in partnership with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) and community partners as appropriate. Through the grant, EEC is receiving technical assistance from Drs. Sharon Lynn Kagan, of Columbia and Yale Universities, and Thomas Schultz, of CCSSO; the other states are Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Louisiana. The work of this project builds on the work that Massachusetts has been doing for several years with the Massachusetts School Readiness Indicators Project and several additional workgroups along with EEC's support for assessment through UPK Assessment Planning grants and requirement for programs to use a selected child assessment tool to participate in the UPK program (see section 2a). The purpose of this grant and year-long process is to help develop and finalize Massachusetts' approach to school readiness assessment and child outcome measurement.

The three areas where technical assistance will focus are:

1. The next phase of evaluation of the Massachusetts UPK program, which will potentially include a longitudinal evaluation of children's outcomes;
2. How to measure and report on the developmental progress of all young children in Massachusetts, including how/if to coordinate this with: 1) current Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Indicator data reporting efforts and 2) current assessment tools that UPK programs are required to use to inform program practice; and
3. Guidance about how to sequence EEC's concurrent efforts to develop an early childhood accountability system.

As a result of this work, we expect to have a robust methodology for our UPK evaluation; a report with recommendations about how to pursue a population approach to child assessment followed by a responsive work plan; and a strategic work plan for our accountability efforts.

Unified Information Technology System Development

The development of a unified and comprehensive information technology system will facilitate EEC's efforts to build a high-quality early education and care and out-of-school time system and align our quality efforts with rates. From February 2007 through June 2007, EEC embarked on a comprehensive process to develop a strategic vision for a unified information technology system. In December 2007, the Commonwealth's Information Technology Division (ITD) made a \$9.4 million commitment to fund the EEC's three-year information technology strategic plan. The strategic plan will transform the existing technology infrastructure into a state-of-the-art system that will:

- Provide "one-stop-shopping" for families, with a single, user-friendly information portal for all EEC services and a unified enrollment process for all types of financial assistance
- Streamline billing, payment, licensing and information-sharing processes for providers;
- Provide policymakers with tools to **track the progress of** children in early education and care programs and build connections across state agencies to share information and coordinate services for children.

The RFR for a solution provider was developed, released and awarded between February 2008 and August 2008. For the past three months, EEC has been negotiating with the winner of the \$6 million bid, Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC). However, on February 13, 2009, after failing to reach agreement on key contract provisions, including the overall cost of the project to the Commonwealth, EEC ended contract negotiations with CSC. EEC is currently revising the approach and timeline for achieving the initiative's goals. In the coming weeks, EEC will work with partners and stakeholders on planned key project activities, including defining the nature of the new business processes and tools that will serve as the basis of the new unified online information system. EEC remains fully committed to continuing to move forward with the implementation of this important project.

Assignment of State Assigned Student Identifiers (SASIDs)

A key recommendation under the Governor's Education Action Agenda, is the development of a "Readiness Passport" for every child enrolled in Massachusetts schools. The Readiness Passport will provide parents, guardians and agencies the ability to document key elements of a child's educational experiences. One critical first step in this process is beginning to assign unique student identify numbers or SADIDs to children in early education. Children currently receive these numbers when they enter the public school. Under the guidance of EOE, legal counsel from EEC, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) have begun discussions on how to address state and federal privacy law constraints, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations (FERPA), that affect the ability of these agencies to share information with one another.

Board/EEC Policy Discussions:

In May, Dr. Sharon Lynn Kagan of Columbia University presented findings from the recent report of the National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force entitled Taking Stock: Assessing and Improving Early Childhood Learning and Program Quality, and discussed the implications of this report for Massachusetts. Dr. Kagan noted that Massachusetts is the only state to make such a strong commitment to quality and infrastructure within its UPK system. Board member questions focused on whether comparisons can be made across states in terms of child outcomes, how Massachusetts should proceed in terms of developing an early childhood assessment system and evaluation of its activities, how EEC and ESE can align their work, and how Head Start can inform the broader system.

e) Workforce and Professional Development (Core Competencies)

EEC offers three professional development initiatives that directly support early education and care and out of school time educators earn a credential or degree. Below, please find a brief overview of these initiatives: the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Scholarship program, the Building Careers

Grant, and the Child Development Associates (CDA) Scholarship programs. For a more detailed discussion and a full update of EEC's Workforce and Professional Development efforts, please see the attached Workforce Report: "Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care Workforce Development System Building update, February 2009." Also see Attachments 3a and 3b for more information on the ECE Scholarship and Building Careers programs.

The Early Childhood Educators (ECE) Scholarship:

The ECE Scholarship program is administered jointly by EEC and the Department of Higher Education Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA). It is a direct scholarship to eligible educators who are currently working in early education and care or out of school time, enrolled in an associates or bachelors degree program in early education and care or in a related degree field. Participants are eligible for a maximum of 9 credits per semester, 27 credits per year. ECE Scholarship award amounts are based per credit and vary depending on the institution of higher education. Scholarship recipients are required to remain in the field for six months for each semester of scholarship aid after graduation.

ECE Scholarship Program Funding History:

FY2009	\$4M	1018 applicants approved by EEC	57% Attending Public Institution 43% Attending Private Institution
FY2008	\$4M	980 applicants approved by EEC	54% Attending Public Institution 46% Attending Private Institution
FY2007	\$3M	743 applicants approved by EEC	55% Attending Public Institution 45% Attending Private Institution
FY2006	\$1M	614 applicants approved by EEC	59% Attending Public Institution 41% Attending Private Institution

Building Careers in Early Education and Care Grant:

The Building Careers grant program funds 21 institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth to support degree attainment by the early education and care and out of school time workforce. The Building Careers is based on a cohort model that supports coursework, academic advising, and other necessary college supports at times that are convenient for working adults. Awards to colleges range from \$48,480 - \$68,000 for 2- and 4-year institutions respectively. Goal of the program is to increase the number of educators in the field with a degree in early childhood education or a related field; increase access to higher education for early education and care and out-of-school time educators; promote high quality professional development; and encourage partnerships and broad-based collaborative planning efforts that leverage and maximize resources across public and private agencies.

Building Careers Funding History:

FY2009	\$1.2M	717 participants <i>(projected)</i>	18 Public Institutions 3 Private Institutions
FY2008	\$1,017,000	749 participants	18 Public Institutions 3 Private Institutions
FY2007	\$1,130,175	818 participants	19 Public Institutions 5 Private Institutions
FY2006	\$1,158,325	869 participants	20 Public Institutions 5 Private Institutions
FY2005	\$1,063,973	674 participants	20 Public Institutions 5 Private Institutions

Child Development Associate (CDA) Scholarship:

The CDA Scholarship program is a direct scholarship to individuals in the early education and care field who are applying for the national CDA credential issued by the Council for Professional Recognition. To participate in this program an educator must be living and working in Massachusetts and have a family income at or below 100% of the statewide median income. The Council issues CDAs to educators working in center-based programs with infants and toddlers or preschoolers, family child care providers, and home visitors. Almost half of the scholarships are awarded to family child care providers. Awards range from \$50 - \$325 depending on the credential applied for, and whether it is in an initial, second setting, or renewal application. All funding is directly paid to the Council of Professional Recognition on behalf of the educator.

CDA Scholarship Funding History:

	Allocated Funding	Approved Applicants
FY2009	\$50,000	146
FY2008	\$30,150	172
FY2007	\$23,175	136
FY2006	<i>Data not available</i>	44
FY2005	<i>Data not available</i>	67

f) Supporting National Accreditation

EEC supports programs to become accredited through the Community Partnership for Children (CPC) Accreditation Grant Program; the Quality Improvements Grant Program (license plate fund); and UPK Classroom Quality grants.

In FY09, EEC awarded 115 grants totaling \$1,738,739 to CPC lead agencies across the Commonwealth to support programs in achieving national accreditation (i.e., National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) for center-based programs and National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) for independent or system-affiliated family child care programs).

In the FY09 grant requirements, CPC programs were encouraged to collaborate with other CPC programs to maximize services in a larger geographic region. EEC also provided greater direction on the types of allowable accreditation activities to ensure greater consistency in service provision across the state. Specifically, grants are being used to support costs associated with accreditation and/or re-accreditation; consultation and mentoring, including a new provision allowing programs to provide stipends for staff to complete portfolios and documentation; and classroom quality materials and supplies.

In FY07, the last year for which we have data,

- 1,189 programs across the state participated in CPC and NAEYC accreditation activities
 - Of these, 693 programs became accredited by NAEYC.
- 180 family child care providers across the state participated in CPC and NAFCC accreditation activities;
 - Of these, 19 providers became accredited by NAFCC.

It is important to note that Massachusetts currently leads the nation in the number of accredited programs, with 1,067 programs serving 81,443 children. This includes 795 center-based, licensed

programs, 263 public school programs (111 are kindergarten accredited only), and 9 accredited programs are delegated, exempt or unlicensed.

Quality Improvement Grant Program:

Programs were also able to access accreditation support through the Quality Improvement Grant Programs (funding through revenues from the “Invest in Children” special Massachusetts license plates). In February 2008, EEC awarded 17 grants for \$247,734 and in January 2009, awarded 19 grants for \$208,808, to fund accreditation fees, materials, and consultation associated with accreditation, as well as other quality initiatives.

This spring EEC will begin designing the Program and Practitioner Supports section of the QRIS. To do this work we have formed a Design Team of internal and external stakeholders. As national accreditation is emerging as a significant aspect of the QRIS standards, it will be important to consider the effectiveness of our current approach to supporting accreditation and how we can strengthen and grow this support. The one-time System Capacity report that EEC has legislatively been asked to prepare will also focus on the issue of how to best maximize our current resources to help programs meet and maintain increasing levels of quality.

g) Promoting Positive Behavioral and Mental Health in Early Education and Care

Mental Health Consultation Services:

EEC's mental health initiatives are aimed at providing mental health promotion, prevention, and intervention services as soon as possible for children and their families. In FY09, EEC continues to fund two types of mental health consultation programs:

1. Mental Health Consultation Services Grant- \$2.4 million in FY09, serving over 1,400 children
EEC issued Mental Health Consultation Services continuation grants to ten grantees serving more than 70 cities and towns. Grantees serve as an “on-call” resource to child care programs, responding to referrals of children exhibiting behavioral challenges and providing on-site consultation by a mental health consultant to coach and mentor program staff.

Through this grant, EEC aims to accomplish the following objectives:

- Reduce the number of suspensions and expulsions of children from EEC funded programs
- Enhance staff competencies to work with behaviorally challenged children, thereby benefiting all children enrolled in the program
- Strengthen parenting skills and parent involvement, and
- Promote collaboration for better access to services for children and families.

From July to December of 2008, grantees provided consultation services for 1424 individual children referred due to behavioral concerns. In response to these referrals, mental health consultants provided more than 12,700 hours of on-site consultation services to 200 programs – directly benefiting all of the children in 587 classrooms or family child care homes.

EEC tracks consultation service grantee data, including the number of suspensions and expulsions (terminations due to behavior), the frequency of types of behavioral issues, and strategies used to address them. The mid-year data indicates that the most common emotional-behavioral issues in order of frequency (that grantees report as the primary problem for the child) are aggression and oppositional behaviors, peer relations/social skills issues, and overactivity/attention issues. The most frequent strategies used to ameliorate these behaviors are direct consultation to child care staff, modifications in teaching strategies including adjusting the daily schedule and classroom layout, modeling of behavior management strategies, and consultation with the child's family. Whole staff training appears to be particularly useful to help support children's peer relations/social skills needs.

Preliminary (mid-year) data indicates low rates of expulsions amongst the programs receiving mental health consultation services. Amongst 1424 children referred and receiving services because they were at risk for expulsion, there were 3 suspensions and 9 expulsions reported. Accounting for all of the children in the 587 classrooms served, a high estimate of the expulsion rate would be 1 out of 1000², which is significantly lower than the oft-cited study (Gilliam, 2005) estimating Massachusetts' rate of expulsion to be more than 11 per 1,000 children.³

While externalizing (“acting out”) behaviors are most likely to put a child at risk of being expelled from a child care program, it is important to note that grantees also provided a significant amount of service to children with internalizing behaviors such as depression and anxiety. These mental health issues – while causing less disruption in the classroom – are also important to address, as they can also have a negative impact on children’s ability to learn and be prepared for school.

2. Comprehensive Mental Health in Child Care (CMHCC) programs- \$620,000 in FY09, serving 360 children

In collaboration with MassHealth/Mass. Behavioral Health Partnership, EEC has worked to connect early education and care providers with mental health clinics to locate clinicians on-site at 16 child care programs that have Supportive Child Care contracts with EEC. These “embedded” mental health clinicians provide support and training to staff at the child care program and link families with needed clinical services through the partnering clinic. Goals include:

- Reducing expulsions or suspensions of children due to behavioral issues
- Preventing repeat psychiatric hospitalizations of children
- Improving the quality of child, parent, and family relationships, and
- Reducing the risk factors that impact children’s emotional development and their acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for success in school

From July to December of 2008, 360 children received individual services through the CMHCC program. EEC funding pays for approximately 2/3 of the clinicians’ time to support non-billable services such as home visits, classroom observations, service coordination, training and travel costs. The remaining 1/3 is made up by billing insurances for the clinical services provided. In the 6-month period mental health clinicians reported that they provided 2,500 hours of individual services to children, 1,400 hours of consultation to child care staff, 950 hours working with families, and 2,000 hours coordinating services for children involved in therapy. There were 2 suspensions and 3 expulsions reported.

Reducing and Monitoring Suspension and Expulsion

Research shows, and EEC’s experience confirms, that mental health consultation services significantly reduce terminations due to challenging behavior. EEC’s endeavors to provide strong social-emotional supports for all children are not limited to mental health consultation. Quality enhancement and workforce development efforts clearly improve overall classroom practice as well as support teachers’ ability to manage challenging behavior. Finally, EEC’s strengthened Licensing Regulations ensure that programs implement a procedure to prevent suspension and expulsion, including meeting with the parents, developing a behavioral intervention plan, providing referral options, and pursuing options for supportive services to the program.

As mentioned above, EEC currently monitors suspensions and expulsions in programs receiving mental health consultation services. EEC has conducted surveys of Child Care Directors and Mental Health Specialists (2007) and of Supportive Child Care Programs (2008) which have informed our planning. In both of these surveys about a third of programs report that they have expelled a child in the past year (yielding an estimate of 3.8 expulsions per 1000 children- still lower than Gilliam’s

² This estimate is based on an assumption of approximately 17 children per classroom. In future years, EEC will require Mental Health Consultation Services grantees to report on the precise number of children in each classroom benefitting from consultation services.

³ “Prekindergartners Left Behind: Expulsion Rates in State Prekindergarten Systems,” Walter S. Gilliam, Yale University Child Study Center, 2005.

estimate of 11.15 per 1000). We know that at times a child may benefit from a well-planned transition to a program that can more effectively accommodate the child's needs. Of most concern are children who are terminated from multiple programs due to behavioral challenges. EEC anticipates that its new Unified Information System will allow us to much more accurately estimate statewide expulsion rates. The new data system will make it possible for the agency to monitor retention of individual children in their child care placements, requiring all of our subsidized programs to report terminations due to behavior when they do occur.

Mental Health Consultation Services Expansion

The FY09 Budget included an additional \$500,000 for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, which was eliminated in the 9C reductions effective January 28, 2009.

EEC had proposed to use these funds to issue a competitive RFR for a new model of Mental Health Consultation Services Expansion Grants. EEC's Board approved a plan that would provide a comprehensive and collaborative array of supports to early education and care programs by combining the "embedded" and "on-call" consultation models.

Before the 9C reductions went into effect, an RFR was issued with priorities that reflected EEC's learning from current grantees and from gaps identified in a 2007 Survey of Child Care Directors and Mental Health Specialists. The RFR required grantees to build capacity for 3rd party billing and prioritized serving "at-risk" children and children enrolled via Supportive Child Care, serving infants and toddlers, addressing families' cultural and linguistic needs, working in partnership with families, coordinating with EI and Public Schools, and providing referral options for children with intensive mental health needs. While EEC was not able to award these grants, the RFR requirements point to EEC's future objectives regarding mental health consultation services. An additional \$500,000 would have allowed EEC to award 4-5 additional grants, potentially providing services in an additional 35-40 communities (over 100 total), but would still be far from funding mental health consultation services available to early education and care providers statewide.

Board/EEC Policy Decisions and Changes (see previous section for more information)

- *Approval of Mental Health Consultation Funding*
-

AREAS ON WHICH WE ARE NOT REPORTING

It is important to note that there are two areas on which the Board/EEC are asked to report that are not included in this document:

- Preschool Suspensions and Expulsions: “the estimated number of preschool suspensions and expulsions that occur each year in the commonwealth, the relative frequency of each type of mental illness or behavioral issues among children receiving programs and services from the department, and an analysis of the most effective intervention strategies.” (FY09 General Appropriations Act, line item 3000-1000)
 - Section 2, section g above reports some of this information for our Mental Health grants programs. However, at this time, we do not have the capacity to collect this data statewide. The development of our new Unified Information Technology System described in this report (Section 2d) provides an opportunity to begin developing the internal infrastructure necessary to collect this kind of data in the future.
- Full-day, full-year care study: “an estimate of the need for full-day, full-year care that meets the needs of parents who work full-time and shall include the number of pre-school aged children in the commonwealth who may be at risk due to family poverty, TAFDC status, special needs, or other risk factors.” (MGL Chapter 15D, Section 13d)
 - EEC has not conducted a study of this nature.

CONCLUSION

As this report illustrates, the past year has been one of tremendous progress on a number of key strategic initiatives. With a growing record of accomplishment, EEC looks forward to continuing the important work of creating a comprehensive and coordinated system focused on the needs of children and families. The on-going support and partnership of the Legislature, the Executive Office of Education, and the Governor have been instrumental and deeply appreciated. There is much more work to be done, and we look forward to working together in the months and years ahead.