

EEC Monthly Update

*A newsletter to inform you
about recent developments
at the Department of
Early Education and Care*

Volume 2 Issue 8
Mon., April 23, 2007



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EEC Identifies Information Technology Upgrades Needed to Build a Coordinated System

At its April meeting, the Board approved EEC's *Information Technology Needs and Strategic Plan*. This report, required by the Legislature through the FY2007 Budget, explains the need for an overhaul of the agency's current data-gathering and transaction-processing systems. The report details a series of seven projects that, once implemented over the next three years, will effectively replace current systems with a new service-oriented IT system and a new generation of completely integrated, Web-based applications.

The proposed projects include the following:

- **Integrated Provider Database:** To provide all Massachusetts parents with the most comprehensive information needed to make the best choices for early education and care for their children.
- **Financial Assistance Management:** To provide all families seeking EEC financial assistance with a single enrollment and eligibility process.
- **Integrated Billing and Payment for Direct Services:** To make providers' business practices easier, by supporting attendance, invoicing and payments.
- **Licensing and Visit Management:** To make the licensing system

web-based to facilitate tracking of licensed, unlicensed, and licensed-exempt providers.

- **Practitioner Registry:** To support enhanced certification processes and provide automated access to training and professional development information, as well as links to course enrollment, scholarships and career opportunities.
- **Child and Family Tracking:** To support an integrated database of Massachusetts children enrolled in early education and after school programs, allowing for smooth transitions and links between programs and to other state agencies, including the Department of Education, and allowing for longitudinal studies of child outcomes.
- **Tracking and Payment for Non-Direct Service:** To track the distribution of non-direct service contracts and grants, such as mental health and professional development, to reduce manual data entry and paper-based processes and improve access to and awareness of available resources and services.

The next step in EEC's Information Technology Strategic Plan is to identify available funding for implementation, draft a Request for Response, select a qualified vendor, and finalize the project plan and implementation timeline. EEC is committed to involving external stakeholders as much as possible during this process.

To view a copy of the full IT report, please visit the news and updates section of EEC's website at: <http://www.eec.state.ma.us/>.

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FY2008 Grant Round Preview

At the April Board meeting, the Board received an update on plans for EEC's FY2008 grant programs. The overview presented assumed no changes in funding structure or appropriation amount, although some are likely as the budget process unfolds over the next few months. EEC will continue to update the field as the FY08 budget process progresses and grant funding levels and requirements become more certain.

Plans for the FY08 grants fall into three different categories, based on assumptions for FY08 funding. They are:

Continuation Grants

Current plans for these grants assume that there will be funding for all current grantees to receive the same grant amounts as they have received in FY2007. These continuation grants will be awarded by July 1, 2007, subject to legislative appropriation, with limited changes to grant requirements:

- UPK Classroom Quality
- Early Childhood Mental Health
- Community Partnership Councils-
 - CPC Funded Preschool Direct Services
 - Local Planning and Coordination
- Family Education and Outreach-
 - Massachusetts Family Networks
 - Parent Child Home Program
 - Joint Family Support
- State Supplement for Head Start Programs
- Federal Special Education Funding ("262")

Grants with Changes to Award Requirements Probable for FY2008

Current plans for these grants assume that they will be funded as continuation grants through December 31, 2007, with new grants beginning January 1, 2008, subject to Board review, input, and approval.

- Professional Development
- Accreditation

- Early Childhood Resource Centers

Grants with No Funding for FY2008

Funding will end for these grants on June 30, 2007, unless additional funding is provided in the FY2008 budget:

- UPK Assessment Planning
- Behavioral Management Training

To view a copy of the full Board presentation, please visit the news and updates section of EEC's website at: <http://www.eec.state.ma.us/>.

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EEC Announces Preliminary Selection of UPK Pilot Assessment Planning Grant Recipients

EEC received \$2.5 million in funding requests from nearly 400 applicants for the UPK Pilot Assessment Planning Grants. Approximately \$1.3 million in funding was available for these one-time grants.

The preliminary selection of grantees was announced on March 30th. A total of 59 agencies with 165 sites were preliminarily selected to receive these one-time funds. Grants are designed to have a lasting impact on the program's ongoing ability to assess children's progress and to plan the programs' future activities accordingly. Eligibility verification and budget review is currently in process for these grants.

The selection process for the assessment planning grant was designed to address many goals. In accordance with EEC Board recommendations, all programs that had begun to use one of the four assessment tools in at least one of their sites were selected. To distribute funds more equitably, all grantees were capped at a maximum grant size per umbrella agency of \$75,000 and programs that received a Quality Classroom grant were not eligible for an Assessment Planning grant.

A list of all preliminary grantees is posted under the Highlights section of EEC's website, along with additional details about the selection process at: <http://www.eec.state.ma.us/>.

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More than 75% of Children on Waitlist for Supportive Care Placed Since January

EEC has heard from Supportive Contracted Providers that referrals and placements to their programs have occurred in "record time" since January 2007. This important expansion initiative is providing nearly 800 additional children referred by the Department of Social Services (DSS) with access to early education and after school programs.

EEC and DSS will continue working closely together to implement this expansion and will focus additional efforts on more difficult to reach areas where there has not yet been as significant an impact. Both agencies are also reviewing supportive child care policies and will work collaboratively with the supportive provider community to gather input and suggestions to improve this important program.

EEC has also been working with the Massachusetts Head Start Association to begin placing children referred by DSS in Head Start programs that had not

previously received DSS referrals. In March, EEC piloted a model of Head Start expansion in coordination with a Child Care Resource and Referral agency in the Lawrence area. Other Head Start programs will begin accepting children through the Supportive expansion during April and May.

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Early Childhood Educators Scholarship Update – Applications for FY2008 Funding Will Soon be Available

EEC has received many inquiries about the status of the FY2008 Scholarship program. At the April Board Meeting, Commissioner Reale told the Board that the application for the 2007-2008 Scholarship will be available on-line by the end of April, and that the Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) at the Board of Higher Education will mail applications to those individuals who received the scholarship this year. Any other practitioners interested in applying for the scholarship will be able to access the application on-line beginning in April on the EEC and the OSFA websites. Applicants will be able to apply online or to download an application to be mailed to OSFA.

More than 600 practitioners pursuing Associate or Bachelors degrees have received financial support through the program during Fiscal Year 2007. OSFA has recently begun notifying current scholarship recipients of their eligibility for summer awards if they had requested this funding on their scholarship applications.

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EEC Receives Fifty Proposals for First Round of Quality Improvement Grants

EEC received 50 applications totaling over \$790,000 in funding in the 2007 first quarter application round for Quality Improvement Grants — funded by the revenue from the “Invest in Children” license plate fund. EEC is now reviewing these applications and will make awards by early May.

EEC accepts Quality Improvement Grant applications on a rolling basis, with the next round of grant applications due May 31. The quarterly schedule is as follows:

Submission Due Date	Quarterly Grant Award Date
May 31, 2007	July 1, 2007
August 31, 2007	October 1, 2007
December 31, 2007	February 1, 2008

Any non-profit organization may apply for the grant to meet one of the intended purposes — to promote school readiness, school success, and positive outcomes for children by supporting and enhancing the quality of services being delivered to children in early education and out of school time settings across the Commonwealth. However, organizations that are not legally defined as non-profit, including family child care providers, school districts and municipalities, are not eligible due to the constraints of the law

governing this funding source — the Child Care Quality Fund, (<http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/29-2jj.htm>).

For more information about this RFR please visit:
http://www.eec.state.ma.us/kr_grant_submit.aspx.

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Massachusetts Special Commission on After School and Out of School Time to Hold Regional Public Hearings

The Massachusetts Special Commission on After School and Out of School Time has begun its work to recommend how Massachusetts defines and better coordinates, expands, finances and ensures accessible, affordable, and quality out-of-school time programming for school age children in all Massachusetts settings. Led by Senator Thomas McGee and Representative Marie St. Fleur, the 36 member commission, which includes Commissioner Reale, will hold public hearings and work group meetings to make recommendations on how the Commonwealth addresses 1) Information and Access; 2) Quality, Workforce and Professional Development; and 3) Sustainability issues. The Commission's findings will be published in Fall, 2007.

The Special Commission held its first public hearing in Springfield on April 10. Additional hearings are expected to be held on Tuesday, May 1 in Pittsfield and Tuesday, May 8 in Central Massachusetts. Hearing locations are not yet confirmed. Additional hearings are likely to be scheduled for other parts of the state in May.

The Special Commission's website, found at <http://www.massafterschoolcomm.org> has additional information about hearing dates and locations, under the Public Hearing Schedule tab. This website will also include any changes that may occur in the schedule.

The Special Commission has also set up a blog at <http://www.massafterschoolcomm.blogspot.com>. Members of the public are encouraged to submit their comments to either the website or to the blog, if they cannot attend the public hearings.

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Contact/Get Help from EEC

EEC is changing and we know that sometimes that makes it hard to know how to get your questions answered! EEC has created a new resource list to help you get the answers you need. To find out where to direct questions regarding: technical support, EEC policies, grants, licensing and regulations, eligibility for EEC financial assistance, teacher qualifications, finding licensed EEC providers in your area, signing up to be added to EEC's communication distribution list, and other general questions, please visit: <http://www.eec.state.ma.us/docs/HowToContactEEC.pdf>.

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If you know people who would like to be added to our e-mail distribution list to receive regular updates on EEC's work, please forward them this e-mail or have them join our distribution list at:
<http://www.eec.state.ma.us/usernews.aspx>.

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