

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STAFF NOTE

Review Item:

Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant Update

Rationale:

To update the board on the status of the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant.

Applicable Statute or Regulation:

KRS 157.3175, 156.160, 199.8943, 704 KAR 5:070

History/Background:

Existing Policy: In December 2013, the Governor’s Office of Early Childhood was awarded a four-year, \$44.3 million dollar Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) Grant from the United States Department of Education and the Administration of Children and Families. The grant is designed to ensure more high-needs children have access to high-quality early care and education. The objectives are organized into seven projects:

1. Grant management
2. Redesigning the tiered quality rating and improvement system
3. Integration of early childhood standards
4. United Way Born Learning Academies
5. Kentucky Strengthening Families
6. Responsive Professional Development
7. Integration of data into the Kentucky Longitudinal Data System

Ninety-three percent of the funds go to support the enhancement and expansion of the tiered quality rating and improvement system (TQRIS). Implementation of the new system, Kentucky All STARS, started in July 2016.

To support implementation, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) is collaborating with the Governor’s Office of Early Childhood (GOEC), the Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet (KEWD), and the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) to amend regulations related to the implementation of the quality rating and improvement system. CHFS is authorized by KRS 199.8943 to promulgate these regulations.

Summary: This is the fourth year of implementing RTT-ELC. Accomplishments include increased activities to support families such as the Born Learning Academies, the Kentucky Strengthening Families initiative, enhanced data collection resources including

the Early Childhood Profiles released in February and implementation of the Kentucky All STARS in July 2016.

Concerns with the grant include timeliness of implementation. Several activities have fallen behind timelines with limited progress toward implementation of the TQRIS. As a result, the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services placed Kentucky's RTT-ELC Grant on a corrective action plan. Kentucky is in the process of addressing federal concerns by preparing a detailed plan for meeting Kentucky All STARS deliverables, drawing down funds necessary to implement revised plans, developing a written communication plan for sharing RTT-ELC implementation information and implementing new interagency leadership governance procedures to streamline approvals for various grant processes. Kentucky was directed to submit a revised work plan, including an updated 2017 work plan for project two (Kentucky All STARS) by December 1, 2017. The Governor's Office has the lead on the development of the work plan.

New regulations should further strengthen Kentucky's efforts to implement RTT-ELC Grant deliverables. KDE has developed draft regulatory language to address state-funded preschool's participation in Kentucky All STARS. The proposed regulation includes sections required by KRS 199.8943 regarding the early childhood rating system for public-funded child-care and certified family child-care homes, public-funded preschool, and Head Start, as well as time frames of reviews for a rating, an appeals process and procedures to request reevaluation for a rating.

Budget Impact: As a partnering agency, the Kentucky Department of Education receives \$4,799,038 to implement RTT-ELC activities. Approximately 36% of KDE's portion of the budget is invested in salaries to support preschool participation in Kentucky All STARS. This support will be difficult to sustain beyond the grant period without additional funding.

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Commissioner of Education

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