

2014

# THE EARLY YEARS MATTER!

Early learning experiences are a key predictor of success in school and in life. Research shows that the early years are the most important in shaping how children grow and learn. Maryland is at the forefront of the growing movement to create a world-class education system that begins at birth and prepares students for school and a lifetime of achievement. High-quality early learning experiences significantly increase a child's chance for success in school, college, and career. Investing in early childhood education initiatives provides future academic and workplace benefits for children and economic benefits for society.

“Quality early childhood education experiences put children on the track for success in school and reduce the achievement gap right from the start. Ready At Five is a leader in bringing together education, business and communities to benefit young children in Maryland. Providing quality professional development for early childhood educators and engaging families to support learning in the early years are hallmarks of Ready At Five's work.”

**Dr. Lillian M. Lowery**  
*Maryland State Superintendent of Schools*

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MATTERS!

High-quality early childhood educational experiences begin with high-quality early childhood educators. In 2014, Ready At Five supported the personal and professional development of early childhood practitioners in Maryland by hosting two School Readiness Symposia headlined by national early childhood researchers whose insight and expertise influence behavior, instructional strategies, and the quality of early childhood education in the state by focusing on what really works for young children. More than 450 early educators, policy makers, and state and local early childhood stakeholders were informed and impacted by the practical, powerful strategies offered by Dr. Kelly Mix and Dr. Richard Prather on the importance of math in early childhood and Ellen Galinsky's keynote on executive functioning as outlined in her book, *Mind in the Making*.

Ready At Five held three full-day STEM Institutes for Early Educators reaching 28 practitioners. Institutes are designed to create highly trained STEM "Fellows" who benefit from consistent, sustained professional development provided by experts in the field. They are a model of professional development that works.

Ready At Five's cadre of trained, effective VIOLETS (Vocabulary Improvement and Oral Language Enrichment Through Stories) teachers continues to grow through the delivery of professional development and one-on-one classroom-based coaching sessions. 103 new VIOLETS classrooms were started in 2014. There are now over 475 classrooms throughout Maryland where VIOLETS is being implemented to support young children's language development.

All of Ready At Five's professional development is designed to increase the knowledge and skills of those professionals who work with young children, creating learning experiences that have long-lasting outcomes.



"Ensuring that all children receive the best possible education from day one is an imperative if we are to achieve the best in workforce quality, innovation, leadership, and economic prosperity."

Dr. Dean R. Ertwine, D.A.,  
Executive Director, Maryland  
Business Roundtable for  
Education, Inc.



"After we participated in the Language and Literacy Parties, I realized that my son and I were already building a lot of these skills through our everyday reading. The Learning Parties helped me make the connections between what we are already doing and how these activities will help him learn, grow and be ready for school."

Parent of a four-year old son

# FAMILIES MATTER!

Parents, early educators and families are children's first teachers. Ready At Five knows that family engagement in the early years is a critical first step in a child's school readiness. Ready At Five's Learning Parties are highly-interactive, teacher-led family & child events that help parents learn how to encourage and enhance their children's skills and abilities and to practice those techniques with their children,

building stronger connections between school and home. Learning Party curricula support the seven domains of learning (Language and Literacy, Science, Math, Social Foundations, Physical Well-Being and Motor Development, Social Studies and The Arts) that lead to school readiness and vocabulary enrichment at home. A new curriculum in health was created in partnership with the University of Maryland School of Medicine's Department of Pediatrics, and is now being implemented. More than 12,000 families and children have benefited from our Learning Parties since 2008.

Ready At Five's monthly ParentTips and Parents Matter publications are resources developed to support families that are delivered in person, in print and on our newly redesigned, mobile-friendly website.





# NEXT YEAR MATTERS!

In 2015, Ready At Five will continue to create and deliver high-quality resources and professional development opportunities to benefit children, families, and early childhood practitioners. In partnership with the Maryland State Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Development, Ready At Five will produce the 2014-15 School Readiness Report and associated publications, reporting on the results of the new, more robust Kindergarten Readiness Assessment administered for the first time in late fall. Instead of focusing solely on kindergarten readiness, the new assessment looks at and defines specific learning progressions at various intervals throughout early childhood, making it possible to identify areas of need and guide instructional strategies.

Building on the success of the VIOLETS Program, Ready At Five will develop PETALS (Promoting Enrichment to Advance Language Skills), a curriculum designed to give early educators and families the guidance needed to support the development of oral language and literacy skills for children ages 18 months to three years, particularly young English Language Learners (ELLs) and children with low expressive language skills. A shared Read Aloud approach, a strong family engagement approach, and an evaluation process will be embedded in PETALS.

Ready At Five will leverage online learning technology to refine and strengthen its training delivery models to build capacity through expanded professional development efforts for our Learning Parties, VIOLETS Program, and STEM Institutes.

Ready At Five will craft a new Strategic Plan that will chart its course in reducing the achievement gap, strengthening Maryland's early childhood workforce, and promoting family engagement starting at birth, so that all children are ready for success. The strategic plan will include outcomes-based evaluation efforts to identify effective practices that will raise the quality of care, services and resources for Maryland's children and families.

## PARTNERSHIPS MATTER!

Ready At Five has established strong ongoing and emerging partnerships and collaborations with practitioners, families, the philanthropic and business communities, and national early childhood leaders. These partnerships are part of its sustained efforts to leverage resources and develop effective and efficient solutions to make school readiness a reality for all of Maryland's children. Strong partnerships and robust collaborations are Ready At Five's signature strategy for supporting Maryland's outstanding early childhood system.

“It is essential that we work together and pool our resources to ensure that all of Maryland's young children are fully ready to succeed in school, in college, in their careers and throughout life – they are our future.”

David Hanlin, Development Coordinator, Washington County Free Library, Chairman, Rotary Literacy Task Force, Rotary Club of Hagerstown, and Ready At Five ELC Member



# OUTCOMES MATTER!

“High-quality early childhood education reaps benefits beyond the classroom. Every dollar spent on early childhood education leads to returns of 7-10% per year based on increased academic and career achievement as well as reduced remedial and social costs. Ready At Five’s advocacy, professional development, and programs are critical in advancing high quality early childhood education.”

Meredith C. Callanan (Chair),  
Head of Corporate Marketing & Communications, T. Rowe Price Group

# YOU MATTER!

Ready At Five gratefully acknowledges and thanks the individuals, corporations, foundations, local school systems, organizations and the Maryland State Department of Education for their financial support that strengthened, expanded and enriched our programs, curricula, professional development and events. Their financial and in-kind support allowed us to scale-up “what works” and enhance early childhood opportunities in Maryland.

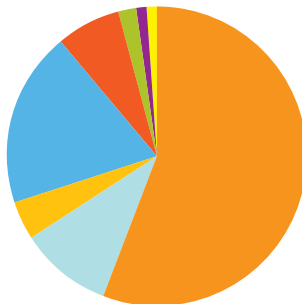
Ready At Five is a self-sustaining board-designated program of the Maryland Business Roundtable for Education, Inc.



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Government	56%
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