



Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

November 1, 2020

The Honorable Larry Hogan
State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones
State House, H-101
100 State Circle
Annapolis MD 21401

The Honorable Bill Ferguson
State House, H-107
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Judith P. Hoyer Early Care Annual Report (MSAR #11941)

Dear Governor Hogan, President Ferguson and Speaker Jones:

Enclosed is a report outlining the details regarding the Judith P. Hoyer Early Care and Education Enhancement Program for School Year 2019-2020. The report includes updates on the three principles addressed in the program:

1. Judy Center Early Learning Hubs;
2. Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA); and
3. Program Accreditation and Preschool for All.

The report also includes the FY20 budget for the program.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the details of the program with you. If you need additional information, please contact Zachary Hands, Acting Director, Office of Education Policy and Government Relations at zachary.hands1@maryland.gov or (410) 767-0504.

Best Regards,

Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Schools



The Judith P. Hoyer Early Care and Education Enhancement Program Report School Year 2019-2020

Report authorized in 5-217 of the State Government Article, the
General Assembly MSAR #10071

Maryland State Board of Education

Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.

*State Superintendent of Schools
Secretary-Treasurer, Maryland State Board of Education*

Clarence C. Crawford

President, Maryland State Board of Education

Larry Hogan

Governor

Steven R. Hicks

*Assistant State Superintendent
Division of Early Childhood*

Board Members

Jean C. Halle (Vice President)

Shawn D. Bartley, Esq.

Gail Bates

Charles R. Dashiell, Jr., Esq.

Susan J. Getty, Ed.D.

Vermelle Greene, Ph.D.

Rose Maria Li, MDA, Ph.D.

Dr. Joan Mele-McCarthy

Rachel L. McCusker

Lori Morrow

Brigadier General Warner I. Sumpter (Ret.)

Holly C. Wilcox, Ph.D.

Jason T. Wu

Judith Walker

Early Learning Branch Chief, Division of Early Childhood

Amy Beal

Judy Center Grant Manager, Division of Early Childhood

**© Maryland State Department of
Education 2020**

Published October 2020

CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Principle Number One: Judy Center Early Learning Hubs	5
Judy Center Standards	6
Community Partnerships	7
Population Served	8
Measuring Success	9
Judy Center Impact	11
Challenges	14
Future Activities	15
Principle Number Two: Kindergarten Assessment	16
Ready for Kindergarten (R4K) System	17
Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) Results	18
Principle Number Three: Program Accreditation and Prekindergarten Expansion	18
Prekindergarten Expansion	19
High Quality Prekindergarten Program	20
Appendix A: FY2020 Program Budget	21

The information contained in this annual report reflects the fiscal year period spanning July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020.

INTRODUCTION

As the early education coordinator for Prince George's County Public Schools, Judith P. Hoyer lamented the gaps in available services for low-income families. In the 1990s, she created a central location in Adelphi, Maryland for important early childhood services, thus fostering cooperation of governmental and private agencies around the needs of local families. After her untimely death in 1997, her husband, Congressman Steny Hoyer (D-MD), in partnership with then Governor Parris N. Glendening, led a successful movement to bring her model of collaboration to other areas of Maryland. As a result, the Maryland State Legislature enacted the Judith P. Hoyer Early Child Care and Education Enhancement Program in May of 2000.

That legislation addressed three important principles in Maryland's early childhood care and education programs:

1. Judy Centers - The need for greater coordination among the providers of early childhood education and support services was essential in focusing the services and resources of the various programs and providers on families with high needs in designated Title I school zones. This type of collaboration provides a greater opportunity for positive outcomes for children and greater school readiness.
2. Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) - The need for a uniform assessment of success in early childhood education. This allows the State to better measure progress with some definition of success, and a means to assess that success.
3. Program Accreditation and Preschool for All - The need to ensure that all preschool age children receive quality care and education by promoting professional development for the early education workforce and accreditation for childcare providers.

It has been nineteen years since the landmark legislation was passed, but these three principles continue to be all-important in early childhood education. In fact, in 2011, funding awarded to Maryland under the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) Grant supported the expansion of Judy Center Early Learning Hubs. This report provides a current review of accomplishments and challenges that took place during State Fiscal Year (FY) 2020.

PRINCLIPLE NUMBER ONE JUDY CENTER EARLY LEARNING HUBS

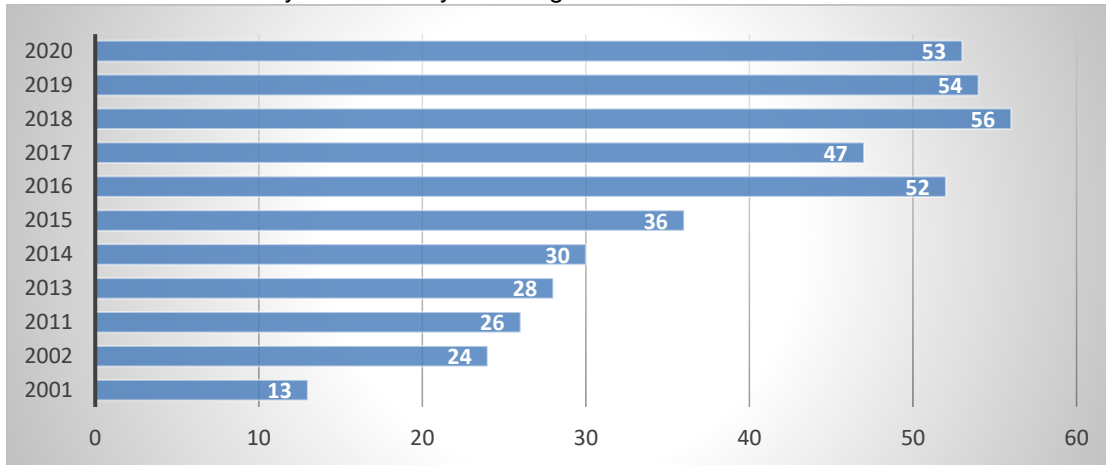
HISTORY

The first Judith P. Hoyer Family Learning Center, which began operations in Prince George's County, served as the model for the rest of the state to follow. Dedicated to the needs of low income families in the local elementary school catchment area, this first Judy Center (although not named as such until after her death) quickly demonstrated the true value of such coordination.

Maryland's legislation took Judy Hoyer's model and financed expansion across the state, offering comprehensive, integrated, full-day and full-year early care and education services. The year 2001, the first year of operation, saw the establishment of thirteen Judy Centers in Allegany, Calvert, Caroline, Charles, Dorchester, Frederick, Kent, Montgomery, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's and Washington counties, and Baltimore City. The following year, eleven more centers were funded in Baltimore, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Garrett, Howard, Montgomery, Talbot, Wicomico and Worcester counties, and Baltimore City. The number of locations remained unchanged until 2011 when the Judy Center in Anne Arundel County and a third one in Baltimore City opened.

In FY2013, the RTT-ELC Grant provided funding for a second Judy Center in Prince George's County and a fourth site in Baltimore City. FY2014 resulted in the growth of more Judy Centers through diverse funding streams. First, a Judy Center in Harford County opened with state funding. Secondly, through a collaboration of the Baltimore Community Foundation, Baltimore City Public Schools and the MSDE, the first Judy Center funded by a public-private partnership in Baltimore City was established. Also of note, in FY2014, the passage of the Maryland Prekindergarten Expansion Act of 2014 (Senate Bill 332) ensured the addition of three more Judy Centers in FY2015 – an additional one in both Garrett and Caroline counties and a first-time Judy Center in Somerset County. This expansion completed the State's mission to have at least one Judy Center in each of the twenty-four jurisdictions. Also in FY2015, the public-private partnership with the Baltimore Community Foundation resulted in two more Judy Centers in Baltimore City. Since then, the Baltimore Community Foundation has helped to fund six additional Judy Centers in Baltimore.

Chart 1: Number of Judy Center Early Learning Hubs from FY 2001-2020.



JUDY CENTER STANDARDS

All Judy Centers are required to meet the following twelve (12) Component Standards deemed essential to the positive impact on children's school readiness.

I. Full Day/Full Year: Judy Centers collaborate with child care and other high quality early education care agencies to ensure families receive care and services year round.

II. Meals: Children and families are provided meals not only during the school day but during school breaks, weekends, and after school hours.

III. Case Management: Case management is a process at the Judy Center that includes referrals to agencies, intakes with families, needs assessments, developmental screenings, home visiting, follow up and active case review.

IV. Integration of Early Education Services: There are curriculum enhancement activities including transition strategies and activities for children and families across all programs, including prekindergarten, kindergarten, Head Start and child care, as well as children entering formal programs for the first time.

V. Family Engagement: The Judy Center models a two generation approach in regards to family engagement centering on the family's ability to participate in and support their child's learning. This approach follows Maryland's Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework.

VI. Early Identification: All children ages birth through five years, regardless of abilities, have access to all programs and services in least restrictive environments. There is an outreach plan in place to identify all children ages birth through five years of age who live in the designated Judy Center school zones. Once identified, the Judy Center implements many different levels of engagement to work with the family to meet their needs and ensure the child will enter school ready to learn.

VII. Children with Disabilities: Children with disabilities and their families are fully

included in all of the services as part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), including family support and involvement, service coordination, full-day/full-year services, and prekindergarten.

VIII. Health Related Services: Judy Centers ensure that children are referred for dental, vision and hearing screenings when appropriate; mental health assessments and referrals when appropriate; and physical growth and nutritional assessments, including referrals to the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and local health departments if warranted. Additionally, Judy Centers work to ensure that all families have access to health care insurance.

IX. Professional Development: Professional development to address various program needs and community trends is offered to all members of the Judy Center Partnership, including programs such as kindergarten, prekindergarten, Head Start, and early education and care providers.

X. Adult Education and Career Services: Parents are encouraged to pursue their own education to allow them to enter the workforce and better support their children. Judy Centers partner with local colleges and universities for a continuum of higher education opportunities for parents, including career planning, coursework, enrollment in trade programs, or transition plans for those entering or returning to college.

XI. Accreditation: All early care and education programs for children in the Judy Center Partnerships must be accredited or pursuing accreditation. This helps to ensure that children and families have access to high quality education programs.

XII. Partnerships: The Judy Center Partnership is actively engaged and is consistently and frequently involved in the school readiness mission of the Judy Center. As a recognizable member of the communities they serve as well as a leader in early childhood development, Judy Centers are represented on the State and Local Early Childhood Advisory Councils and support the missions of its partners by participating in their work in the community.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Judy Centers are primarily located in Title I schools and support children birth through kindergarten in the catchment area. Most of the work of the Judy Centers is accomplished through its partnerships. The partnerships reflect Judy Hoyer's vision of how professionals collaborate to deliver a wide spectrum of early childhood education programs and family support services for children and families. Judy Centers are required to include the following in their partnership:

- public kindergarten and prekindergarten
- Early Intervention and preschool special education programs in the school catchment area,
- Head Start/Early Head Start programs in the school catchment area, and

- licensed/registered and accredited child care providers, including faith-based child care, family child care, and center-based child care programs

Judy Centers enter into Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with community agencies and organizations that are critical to meeting the needs of families. Judy Centers have a variety of partners that allow them to meet the needs of families in unique and creative ways, including,

- partnering with local barbers and stylists to offer free back to school haircuts;
- partnering with local libraries and various community agencies to provide books and school supplies;
- partnering with health departments and medical clinics to offer free vaccinations and health care services at a lower cost. or on a sliding scale; and
- providing essential nutritional information and activities for children and adults through a partnership with the University of Maryland Extension.

The number of partners varies across Judy Centers depending upon population density and the number of agencies, organizations and businesses available in the area. Partnerships may include thirty or more agencies and organizations and with no set limit for participation per organization, it is not unusual to see large numbers of participants representing different departments within an organization, involved with Judy Centers. Partnership meetings occur frequently to accomplish the work as quickly and as effectively as possible. Each partner plays a key role in decision-making and goal setting. Figure 1 below illustrates how the Judy Centers are an integral piece to Maryland’s early childhood system and help to connect all major early childhood stakeholders at the state and local levels.

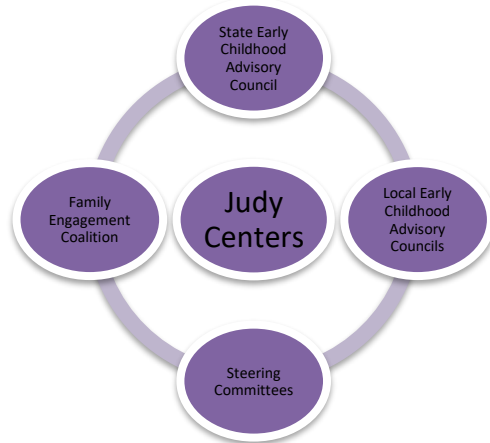
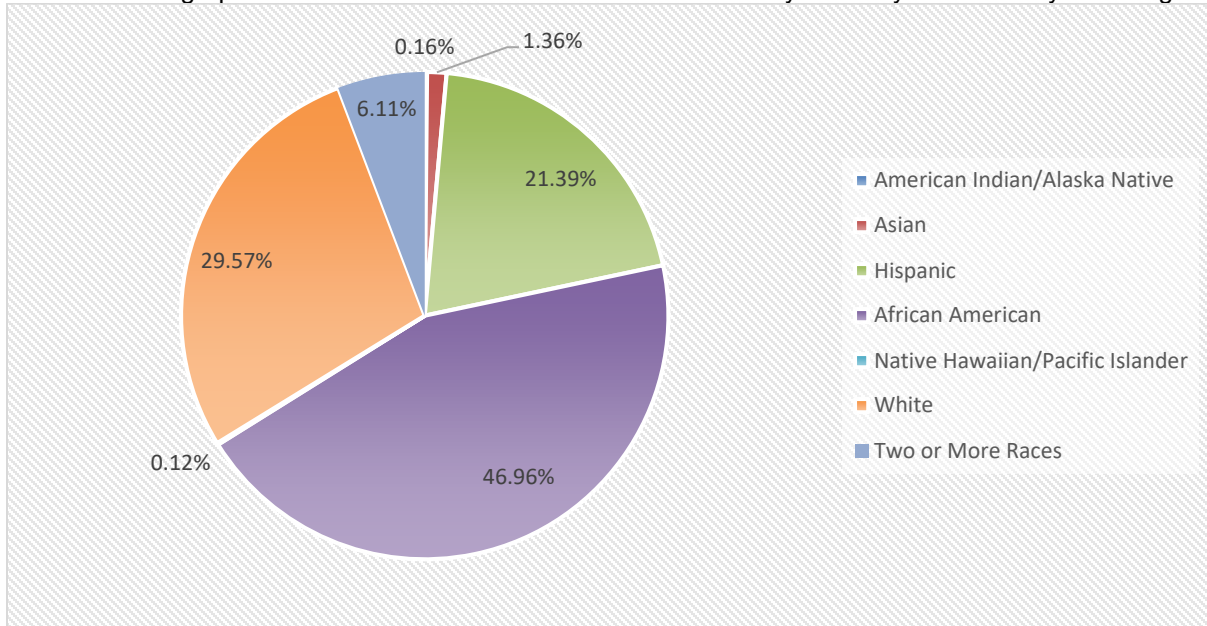


Figure 1: Judy Center Early Learning Hubs collaborate at all levels of the community and government.

POPULATION SERVED

In FY2020, there were 53 Judy Center Early Learning Hubs that served 16,463 children (ranging in age from birth through kindergarten) across Maryland. The chart below describes the demographic data of the families served by the Judy Centers.

Chart 2: Demographic Data of the Families and Children Served by the Judy Center Early Learning Hubs



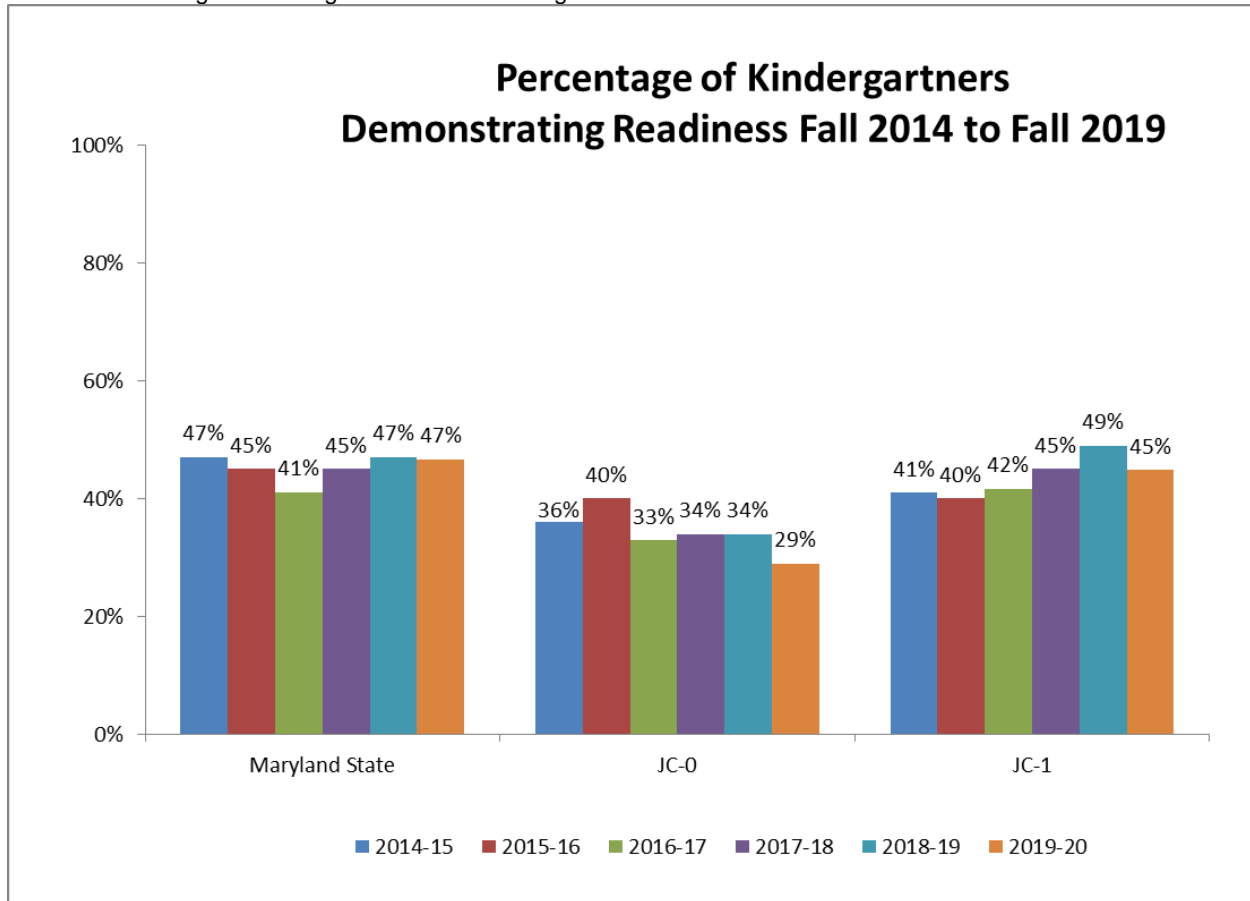
MEASURING SUCCESS

In Fall 2014, Maryland introduced Ready for Kindergarten (R4K), Maryland’s Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System to align with the State’s more rigorous Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards (MCCRS). R4K is a developmentally appropriate assessment system for young children that builds upon the success of the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) which was the statewide assessment tool in use from 2001 to 2013. Fall 2019 was the sixth year the new assessment was used and is referred to as the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA). An overview of KRA results from all Judy Centers is compiled each year.

Fall 2014 KRA data demonstrated impressive results when comparing the school readiness results of entering kindergartners who had at least one year of Judy Center experience with their kindergarten peers who did not have the advantage of the Judy Center experience. Fall 2014 data showed that 41% of children with Judy Center experience prior to entering kindergarten were Demonstrating Readiness for school compared to 36% of the children who entered kindergarten at Judy Center schools without prior experience. Forty-seven percent of the state’s kindergartners were Demonstrating Readiness. Interestingly, in Fall 2015, the percentage of children demonstrating readiness for kindergarten who had prior Judy Center experience slightly decreased as did the percentage of Maryland’s kindergartners at large while the percentage of children demonstrating readiness who did not have Judy Center experience increased. Forty percent of both Judy Center groups were Demonstrating Readiness while 45% of the state’s kindergartners were Demonstrating Readiness. However, fall 2016 and 2017 showed impressive results again as the data illustrates that children with Judy Center experience made gains in school readiness scores, increasing from 42% Demonstrating Readiness to 45% Demonstrating Readiness.

Maryland kindergartners overall also made gains moving from 41% in 2016 to 45% in 2017, while children without Judy Center experience demonstrated 33% in 2016 and 34% in 2017. Gains were demonstrated again in the fall of 2018 when 49% of children with Judy Center experience were ready for kindergarten compared to only 34% of children without Judy Center experience. Statewide, 47% of children were ready for kindergarten. In the fall of 2019, the percent of children demonstrating readiness decreased by 4 percentage points (to 45%), while the kindergarten readiness without Judy Center experience decreased by 5 percentage points (to 29%). This in line with the overall 4 percentage point decrease in readiness for students in Title I schools with Judy Centers from fall 2018 to fall 2019.

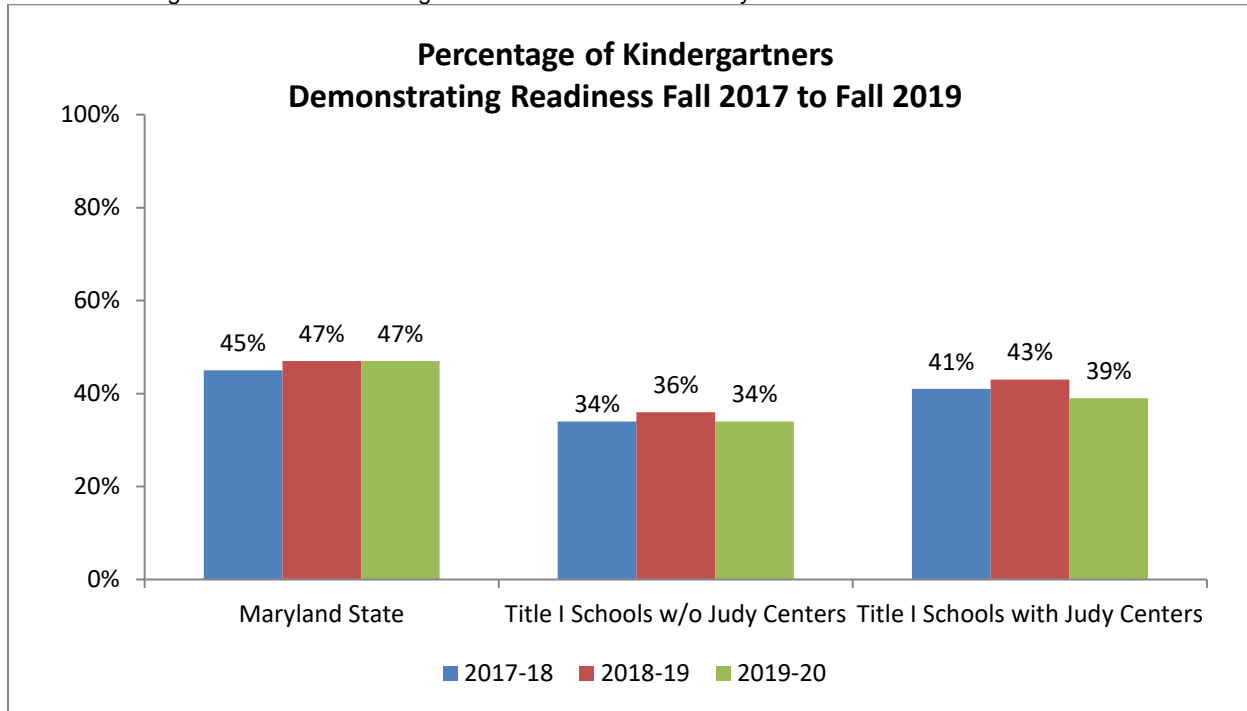
Chart 3: Percentage of Kindergartens Demonstrating School Readiness on the KRA from FY 2014-2019



Note: Data is weighted due to administering of KRA sampling at schools. Note: JC-0 refers to entering kindergartners without Judy Center experiences prior to kindergarten. JC-1 refers to entering kindergartners who received Judy Center services prior to kindergarten.

As Judy Centers are located primarily in Title I schools, it is important to note that there is a much larger proportion of Judy Center children who are at-risk and may receive special services. These services include, but are not limited to, free and reduced-price meals, special education or early intervention services, and/or language support for children who are English Learners.

Chart 4: Kindergarteners Demonstrating School Readiness in school years 2017-19



Note: Data is weighted due to administering of KRA as sampling in some schools.

JUDY CENTER IMPACT

Statistics are not the only way to measure outcomes. Family engagement is at the heart of the Judy Center mission. To effectively engage families, Judy Center staff must establish relationships with their families. When programs and families work in partnership together, the impact of the Judy Centers is immeasurable. Below are a few examples from select Judy Centers.

Wicomico Judy Center

The Wicomico County Judy Center Early Learning Hub maintains great participation with their in-person engagement activities. Due to the global pandemic, the Wicomico County Judy Center was forced to convert highly successful in-person programs to a completely virtual platform. The Summer Enrichment Program was the first program to be executed virtually for Wicomico County.

The goal for the virtual summer program was to assist in preventing summer learning loss, promote readiness for children entering prekindergarten, promote readiness for children entering Kindergarten, and to provide support to families with children birth-age 5. The Wicomico County Judy Center knew that the summer program would look different in 2020. The Judy Center staff, alongside teachers and Early Childhood Coaches from Wicomico County Public Schools, developed a plan and model to use for virtual interaction. The patience and creativity of the team truly made the virtual transition nearly seamless for families.

During the 4-week summer program, 60 families and 5 childcare programs registered to either join live sessions or work at their own pace with the interactive Google site. The Wicomico County Judy Center Summer Program Google site mirrored the live interactive lessons each week. Each week brought a new theme as well as alignment with the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards. In addition to the interactive lessons, the Google site also highlighted free virtual field trips, Zumbini videos created by Shore Grace Family Wellness, and Music Therapy sessions with Chesapeake Music Therapy. Guest speakers from the Wicomico County Public Library and the Wicomico County Health Department joined different live sessions to speak to families about important topics.

Each child was given a transition backpack filled with learning resources and supplies to use during the summer or throughout the school year. Social Emotional kits and educational supplies were purchased and distributed as giveaways for families and childcare programs that participated. A pre- and post-survey was requested from participants and staff. This ensured an evaluation of the program as well as the knowledge to better support families and staff. The Wicomico County Judy Center Virtual Summer Program was an amazing hands-on learning experience.

“My daughter participated alongside her daycare provider and I did the Google Slides activities and was excited to be able to participate in a Zoom with her to see all of the fun she has been talking about! It is evident just how much dedication, care and planning has been put forth by all of the amazing educators for the Judy Center Summer Program and we wholeheartedly thank each of you for your time, creativity and flexibility in creating this virtual program for all. This has been a great way to practice what virtual Kindergarten will look like in the fall with both my child, daycare provider and myself trying to figure out the best way to support such a young learner virtually. We also thank you for the personalized Google Slides for name practice as well as for the other Google Slides for the week for continued skill reinforcement; I also wanted to add that there were a few Nearpod assignments on the website that my daughter truly loved and wanted more of, I think she preferred these at times because it was easier for her finger to move the pieces than on Google Slides with her finger/laptop mouse navigating but with practice and support she was able to overcome this with the Google Slides and it also gave her the exposure to Google Slides for the fall. We truly could not thank you all enough for this opportunity to learn and have fun this summer! Very engaging and extremely well organized with the weekly materials, slides and emails as well as holding the daycare provider evening meetings to provide support and expanding this program for the community, I could not say enough wonderful things about this program--my daughter is so sad it is already coming to an end! Time sure does fly when you are having fun!! Kudos to the entire team for such a job well done!!” - Wicomico County Judy Center Virtual Summer Program Parent

Montgomery County Gaithersburg Judy Center

The programs and supports for families have not wavered during the pandemic; in fact they have gained strength. Virtual Play and Learn classes are offered five days a week

with a Monday or Wednesday Zoom session which includes movement/dancing, stories, activities, and guest speakers. A box with all the materials needed for fifteen days of learning activities is provided to families each month. Videos are posted daily on the Google site for families to view movement, stories, and directions for the four days without Zoom sessions. We provide service for more than 65 families with children under four in these programs, families may also sign up for special virtual events such as cooking classes, Apple Pie Night, Game Night, Trips to the Baltimore Aquarium, Nutrition Lessons from University of Maryland Extension SnapEd, JumpBunch classes, Soccer Shots classes, Montgomery County Infants and Toddlers Program information sessions, and Child Find Information sessions. These same extra virtual events are offered to prekindergarten and kindergarten families keeping calendars filled with morning, afternoon, and evening events. Through these events, the development of lasting relationships is the key to creating a trusting and supportive environment for the families.

It takes a village to provide the caring and dedicated environment at the Judy Center. The partnerships with Good Shepherd Lutheran Preschool, Georgetown Hill Early School, Village Montessori, and Academy Child Development Center provide food, clothing, and activity bag donations to families. Working with Montgomery College and the Gilchrist Center, we have parents participating in English as a Second Language (ESL) and technology classes to pursue personal educational goals. PNC Grow Up Great program volunteers support the evening events and conduct tutoring sessions with prekindergarten and kindergarten students. These partnerships continue to expand each year, allowing the staff to provide more resources and supports which ultimately empowers families to help their children be ready for school and life.

Charles County Judy Center

At the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, the Judy Center formed a new partnership with the Southern Maryland Food Bank. The partnership consisted of weekly snack sacks that were sent home with children for the weekend. The purpose of these bags was to ensure that there are healthy snack choices in the home over the weekend and during school breaks. In addition to the snack sacks, families could also receive a weekend pantry bag, which provides items for a meal or two in an emergency. The Southern Maryland Food Bank welcomed as many referrals to this program as needed and was incredibly helpful in making the process smooth and effective.

The Judy Center has had a long-standing partnership with the Infants and Toddlers Program. In August of 2019, the Judy Center was able to enhance the partnership by offering their program the ability to use the classroom space two times per week to hold Infant and Toddler learning groups for children with IEPs. The Judy Center staff also invited some of the Judy Center playgroup children to participate in those groups as typically developing peer models. The parents of the peer models remained on site and served as parent volunteers in the school. Their duties included material prep for teachers and some served as reading buddies for children in grades kindergarten to fifth grade.

A playgroup specifically for families with children ages 6 months-24 months old called TAP (toddlers and parents) Café was formed. This group was incredibly successful. It was structured around play and led by the Infant and Toddler teachers. Parents had the opportunity to engage in purposeful play with their babies, learn routine songs and movement to promote physical and language development, and gain the ability to consult with professionals on their child's overall development. The community partners were invited to attend TAP café once a month to provide useful information for the families. Some of the guests included the Department of Health, a physical therapist who presented infant/toddler massage techniques, and Maryland Coalition of Families with information on children's mental health resources.

Unfortunately the Judy Center experienced an unprecedented school shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the shutdown, The Judy Center had to quickly reinvent a way to interact and serve the families. During the spring of 2020, the Judy Center began offering virtual My Gym and dance classes in order to promote physical development. The Judy Center also offered evening virtual parent workshops on how to balance work, home, and school life during a pandemic. As a follow up, the Judy Center held evening virtual coffee connection sessions where parents had a place to talk about what they were experiencing during COVID and the opportunity to connect with other parents who were experiencing similar things. During the coffee connections, the Judy Center presented information and resources on topics that parents requested

The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly had a huge impact on the Judy Center, the families that it serves, and it has posed many challenges. The participation continues to increase and the staff is making steady referrals to the valuable community partners. The technological advances are one of the positive effects of the pandemic and ones that the Judy Center will continue to use in the future. Even though the Judy Center has made great strides in the virtual world, the Judy Center is looking forward to having the children and families back in person.

CHALLENGES

The end of FY2020 was challenging due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While schools and Judy Centers closed their physical doors for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, the Judy Center work carried on. Judy Centers found ways to serve their communities in creative ways such as implementing virtual playgroups, social distancing food and diaper giveaways, no contact drop offs to homes for supplies, and providing protective equipment to families. Preparing for the uncertainty is challenging. Prior to the pandemic, the challenges facing the Judy Centers were increasing in complexity, such as addressing mental health concerns, suspension and expulsion rates, and early identification for special needs. These factors make outreach efforts even more important so that vulnerable children and families are identified earlier and receive an intense level of services over a longer period of time to increase school readiness. These challenges will continue and will likely become greater as the effects of the pandemic become clearer.

During FY2016, the Maryland State Legislature passed legislation for the KRA to be administered as a random sample rather than census administration (all kindergartners assessed) with the provision for local school systems to maintain census administration if desired. In the 2017-2018 school year, Judy Centers in 17 school systems still assessed all entering kindergartners. In the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school year, Judy Centers in 22 school systems assessed all entering Kindergartners. The value of the data provided by the KRA at the district level and the ability of the Judy Centers to utilize the data to drive programming is evident through this increase from the 2016-2017 school year, in which Judy Centers in only 14 school systems were assessing all entering kindergartners.

Judy Center partnerships have become an important and effective support to Title I schools that receive supplemental federal funds to provide additional services in a school district's highest poverty communities. However, while children make early gains and progress during their preschool years, such positive early results are hard to sustain unless the support structure for the family and the individual child's needs are maintained throughout their education.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

The two generational approach of high-quality early education coupled with the comprehensive family support services approach has proven successful. Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) authored a federal provision to encourage the wider adoption of the full-service community schools model that was authorized in Title IV of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which was signed into law December 2015 to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The program is authorized at a minimum of 10 grants per year. This is approximately how many grants the demonstration program has been funding since its creation in 2007. Full Service Community Schools are modeled after Judy Centers and serve students K-12.

While children and families make gains with Judy Center services and early childhood education and care programs, it is imperative that supports are in place to help children and families maintain these gains. Supporting families in transition is a core component to school readiness and the transition into kindergarten and elementary school is a milestone for families. Although the goal of improving child and family outcomes is the same for both early childhood education programs and elementary school, the structure can look very different. This often results in families becoming unsure of their role in their child's education and therefore becoming less engaged with the school.

In January 2018, the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education, also known as the Kirwan Commission, released its final report. Among the many recommendations for early childhood education, the Commission discussed in detail the critical need to increase supports for families and children under the age of four, specifically those families that are at risk. The Commission stated, "It has an inescapable obligation to make a recommendation designed to strengthen not only the early childhood education system but also the systems that provide other vital services

in communities, especially those that serve mainly low-income residents because, in the Commission's view, the health, education, and social service systems, at the least, are inextricably and directly related to the function of the schools and to their capacity to do their job, both in early childhood and throughout students' schooling." This had led to the Commission strongly recommending the State significantly expand its network of Judy Centers.

The expansion of the Judy Centers and its services is necessary to ensure that all children enter school ready to succeed, however, a high level of training and technical assistance that is provided by MSDE is required to ensure that all sites operate in an effective manner. To maintain the quality of exemplary programming characteristic of Judy Centers, any increase in the number of sites must be carefully considered should additional funding streams be identified. This will ensure that the number of Judy Centers is kept at a manageable level to ensure MSDE continues to monitor progress closely throughout the expansion period and is able to continue to provide necessary technical assistance, ensuring high quality programming.

PRINCIPLE NUMBER TWO KINDERGARTEN ASSESSEMENT

With the recognition of the importance in providing quality early care and education to our nation's children, the issue of how to assess the quality of that care and instruction in educational terms is being addressed by many states. To promote the development and use of such assessments, the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services provided federal support through the RTT-ELC grant. Maryland was one of the beneficiaries of this grant and used these funds to provide a variety of projects and initiatives that improved the quality of early childhood care and education. Thanks to the Judith P. Hoyer legislation, Maryland has implemented a kindergarten readiness assessment for all public school kindergartners the last sixteen years. Maryland used RTT-ELC funds to develop Ready for Kindergarten (R4K): Maryland's Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment includes the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) and the Early Learning Assessment (ELA). All public school kindergarten teachers begin administering the KRA at the start of the school year. The ELA is a formative assessment that is available at no cost. The ELA has been developed for children age thirty-six to seventy-two months. It is available for use by early educators who work in child care, Head Start or nursery school settings as well as public school prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers who can use it throughout the school year. In contrast to the KRA, the use of the ELA is optional for schools and early childhood programs. MSDE engaged local school system leaders and teachers throughout the process of developing R4K and informed them about the necessary steps for implementation. The assessment system is supported by a statewide technology infrastructure and a professional development program with the intent to prepare teachers and administrators in the effective use of R4K data. Since the spring

of 2014, state approved trainers provide yearly KRA professional development to all kindergarten teachers.

Kindergarten teachers can use the student level KRA data to help plan instruction and to address achievement gaps for individual students. Programs, public schools, Judy Centers, school systems, and local Early Childhood Advisory Councils can also use the disaggregated data to plan programmatic or policy changes that can address the achievement gaps and promote positive outcomes for Maryland children. Although the legislative change to the KRA in 2016 now allows school systems to administer the assessment to a representative sample of kindergarten students, school systems, schools, and individual teachers have the option of continuing to administer the assessment to all of their kindergarten students. For school year 2019-20, eighteen of the twenty-four school systems choose to assess all of their kindergartners resulting in assessing 65% of all kindergartners across the state. This was a significant increase from 2018-19 when only 39% of all kindergartners were assessed. Parents of any assessed student receive an Individual Student Report (ISR) on their child's performance.

READY FOR KINDERGARTEN (R4K) SYSTEM

The Ready for Kindergarten (R4K) System is composed of the KRA and the Early Learning Assessment (ELA). The ELA is an assessment system for children, 36 to 72 months (three to six years of age). It examines the learning progressions (knowledge, skills, and abilities) of children over time. The ELA also defines specific learning progressions at various intervals for each developmental domain. These learning progressions describe the pathway that children typically follow as they learn, or the sequence in which knowledge and skills develop.

The ELA uses observations and evidence of children's work, while the KRA incorporates a combination of selected response items, performance-based items, and observational items. The KRA includes child-friendly technologies, such as a touch screen technology App, to make a sub-set of activities appealing to young children. Teachers have flexibility in the administration of the KRA assessment during the window that starts at the beginning of the school year and concludes October 10th.

The key areas of learning in the ELA measure a child's learning progressions in seven domains. They are:

- Social Foundations
- Physical Well-Being and Motor Development
- Language and Literacy
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies
- Fine Arts

While all seven domains are available in the ELA, the KRA reports student information across four domains: Social Foundations, Language and Literacy, Mathematics, and

Physical Well-Being and Motor Development. The reporting format of the KRA assessment information each year includes individual student reports for parents of assessed students. In census districts, interactive data reports and data displays are available at the classroom, school, school system, and state level. In sample districts, reports are available for the school system and state levels only.

KINDERGARTEN READINESS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Annual reports summarizing the statewide results of the KRA are released each year in January. The results provide data on the level of readiness of incoming kindergartners to engage in the kindergarten curriculum. Since the assessment measures the essential skills, knowledge, and behaviors against the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards for end of year prekindergarten students, the data is a starting point in tracking the annual school readiness results in terms of outcomes for all kindergarten students, as well as subgroups of kindergartners. The outcomes are reported as a composite and by the four domains. The composite score data is reported by performance levels: demonstrating readiness, approaching readiness, and emerging readiness. The domain score data is reported as scale scores. This assessment information should be used to assist kindergarten teachers with their instructional program, determine the strengths and needs of all kindergarten students, and provide appropriate interventions and resources to close any achievement gaps that were identified.

PRINCIPLE NUMBER THREE PROGRAM ACCREDITATION AND PREKINDERGARTEN EXPANSION

Maryland Accreditation recognizes public prekindergarten programs and licensed child care centers that meet the highest standards of quality to benefit children, families, staff, and the community. Maryland Accreditation is a voluntary process in which public prekindergarten and child care centers participate in self-appraisal, program improvement, and external program review. Maryland accredited programs achieve and publicly confirm that they meet high quality state standards. The Maryland Accreditation standards define nationally accepted best practice for policies and procedures in three areas:

1. Program Administration
2. Program Operation
3. Home and Community Partnerships

Maryland Accreditation is beneficial to families to identify high quality programs for their children. Families are included in the self-appraisal process as part of achieving and maintaining accreditation.

In Maryland's current early care and education system, the elements of quality are manifested differently among the various types of providers. Early childhood programs located in public schools are governed by state regulations and operated by local boards of education. Head Start programs for children birth to five are governed by the federal government and operated by local organizations, generally non-profit agencies.

Child care and nursery programs are operated privately and either licensed by the MSDE and/or approved by the MSDE in accordance with the non-public school regulations.

Professional development of the child care workforce was one of the major tenets of the original legislation, and thus through the years, Hoyer grant funds have been used to train those directly caring for young children.

PREKINDERGARTEN EXPANSION

The Prekindergarten Expansion Grant, previously funded for four years through a combination of federal preschool grant funds and funds provided by the Maryland Prekindergarten Expansion Act of 2014, is now sustained through state funding as a result of HB 1415 - Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education passed in 2018. This Bill provided funds beginning in FY2020 for the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant at the FY2019 funding level when the federal grant expired.

The Prekindergarten Expansion Grant, a competitive grant program administered by the Division of Early Childhood at MSDE, funds local school systems and community-based providers to improve the quality of existing half-day slots to full-day or establish new, full-day prekindergarten slots. MSDE awarded \$27 million in prekindergarten expansion grant funds for FY2020.

The Prekindergarten Expansion Grant provides the foundation for a collaborative approach across a mixed delivery system to serve 4-year-olds throughout the state. This grant has been awarded to public schools, Head Start, community-based childcare, Montessori programs, and public charter schools. The scope of Maryland's plan is statewide, thereby including many high-need communities in all regions of the state.

The grant prioritizes communities with schools that have high numbers of income eligible families. In addition, four additional needs' assessment criteria are considered:

- Elementary schools in school improvement (e.g., Focus or Priority schools);
- Subgrantees in jurisdictions with the highest number of income eligible four-year olds who are not enrolled in prekindergarten;
- Subgrantees in jurisdictions with high numbers of low-income and Hispanic four year-olds enrolled in informal care arrangements; and
- Subgrantees that provide specialized services for income-eligible four-year-olds who are medically fragile or need therapeutic nursery services.

Eligible programs must serve four-year-old children in a full-day setting at or below 300 percent of federal poverty guidelines, be published at Level 5 in Maryland EXCELS, be currently accredited by MSDE or an MSDE recognized national accrediting organization, and meet the definition of a "High-Quality Prekindergarten Program."

Definition of a High Quality Prekindergarten Program

High-Quality Preschool Program means an early learning program that includes structural elements that are evidence-based and nationally recognized as important for ensuring program quality, including at a minimum—

- (a) High staff qualifications, including a teacher holding a State certification for teaching in early childhood education or a bachelor's degree in any field pursuing residency through a State-approved alternate pathway, which includes coursework, clinical practice, and evidence of knowledge of content and pedagogy relating to early childhood, as well as a teacher assistant with an AA, CDA, or enrolled in a program to obtain these credentials;
- (b) High-quality professional development for all staff;
- (c) A child-to-instructional staff ratio of no more than 10 to 1;
- (d) A class size of no more than 20 with, at a minimum, one teacher with high staff qualifications as outlined in paragraph (a) of this definition;
- (e) A full-day program (6.5 hour instructional day);
- (f) Inclusion of children with disabilities to ensure access to and full participation in all opportunities;
- (g) Developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and evidence-based curricula, and learning environments that are aligned with the Maryland Early Learning and Development Standards, for at least the year prior to kindergarten entry;
- (h) Individualized accommodations and supports so that all children can access and participate fully in learning activities;
- (i) Instructional staff salaries that are commensurate with the salaries and benefits of local K-12 instructional staff;
- (j) Program evaluation to ensure continuous improvement;
- (k) On-site or accessible comprehensive services for children and community partnerships that promote families' access to services that support their children's learning and development; and
- (l) Evidence-based health and safety standards.

APPENDIX A

FY2020 Judy Center Early Learning Hubs Program Budget

VENDOR NAME	SCHOOL	STATE FUNDS	FEDERAL CCDF	FEDERAL B-5	GRAND TOTALS
Allegany	Beall	195,000		55,000	250,000
	South Penn	195,000		55,000	250,000
Anne Arundel	Hilltop	195,000		55,000	250,000
	Belle Grove	195,000		55,000	250,000
Baltimore City	Arlington	195,000		55,000	250,000
	Arundel	195,000		55,000	250,000
	Commodore John Rodgers	195,000		55,000	250,000
	Curtis Bay	195,000		55,000	250,000
	Dorothy I. Height	170,000	25,000	55,000	250,000
	Eutaw-Marshburn	195,000		55,000	250,000
	Harford Heights	195,000		55,000	250,000
	John Ruhrah	195,000		55,000	250,000
	Lakeland		195,000	55,000	250,000
	Liberty		195,000	55,000	250,000
	Moravia Park		125,990	124,010	250,000
Baltimore County	Campfield	250,000			250,000
	Hawthorne	195,000		55,000	250,000
Calvert	Patuxent Appeal Campus	195,000		55,000	250,000
Caroline	Greensboro	195,000		55,000	250,000
	Federalsburg	195,000		55,000	250,000

VENDOR NAME	SCHOOL	STATE FUNDS	FEDERAL CCDF	FEDERAL B-5	GRAND TOTALS
Carroll	Cranberry Station	195,000		55,000	250,000
	Elmer Wolfe	195,000		55,000	250,000
	Robert Moton	195,000		55,000	250,000
	Taneytown	195,000		55,000	250,000
Cecil	Thomson Estates	195,000		55,000	250,000
Charles	Dr. Samuel A. Mudd	195,000		55,000	250,000
	Eva Turner	195,000		55,000	250,000
Dorchester	Sandy Hill	145,000		55,000	200,000
Frederick	Lincoln	195,000		55,000	250,000
	Waverly				
Garrett	Friendsville	195,000		55,000	250,000
	Grantsville				
	Broadford	195,000		55,000	250,000
	Crellin				
	Yough Glades				
Harford	Magnolia	195,000		55,000	250,000
Howard	Cradlerock	195,000		55,000	250,000
Kent	H.H. Garnet	195,000		55,000	250,000
Montgomery	Rolling Terrace	195,000		55,000	250,000
	Summit Hall	195,000		55,000	250,000
	Washington Grove				
Prince George's	Cool Spring	195,000		55,000	250,000
Queen Anne's	Sudlersville	195,000		55,000	250,000

VENDOR NAME	SCHOOL	STATE FUNDS	FEDERAL CCDF	FEDERAL B-5	GRAND TOTALS
Somerset	Princess Anne	195,000		55,000	250,000
	Woodson	195,000		55,000	250,000
St. Mary's	George Washington Carver	195,000		55,000	250,000
	Green Holly	195,000		55,000	250,000
Talbot	Easton	195,000		55,000	250,000
Washington	Ruth Anne Monroe	195,000		55,000	250,000
Wicomico	Beaver Run	195,000		55,000	250,000
	Pemberton	195,000		55,000	250,000
Worcester	Pocomoke Snow Hill	250,000			250,000
Grand Total All Funding Sources		8,615,000	540,990	2,544,000	11,700,000