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TO: Members of the Maryland State Board of Education
FROM: Nancy S. Grasmick *Nancy*
DATE: September 23, 2008
SUBJECT: Early Childhood Accreditation in Garrett County

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this item is to recognize Garrett County for being the first county in Maryland to obtain State accreditation of its major early care and education programs.

BACKGROUND:

In the past three years, kindergarten, prekindergarten, Head Start, and child care programs in Garret County have completed program accreditation. The programs are: prekindergarten and kindergarten at all ten (10) elementary schools, all eleven (11) Head Start and Early Head Start sites operated by the Garrett County Community Action Program, and one (1) child care center as well as four (4) family child care providers.

Over the last four years, Garrett County is the first and only system in the State which had all major early care and education programs participate and receive State program accreditation which reflects research-based quality early education for children, birth to six.

In 2001, the accreditation of early childhood programs was established by MSDE in response to legislative demands calling for improving the quality of early childhood education in Maryland. Since the inception of the Early Childhood Education Accreditation Project at MSDE, 594 early childhood centers and 170 family child care providers have been accredited either by MSDE or by a recognized national accrediting organization such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or the Middle States, Early Ages Accreditation. The expansion of the accreditation across all early childhood programs has increased six-fold since 2001 (ATTACHMENT.) To obtain the State's accreditation, each program must conduct a self-appraisal of the program quality with respect to program standards and quality indicators in the areas of:



- Program administration;
- Learning environment;
- Early childhood curriculum;
- Early learning instruction;
- Developmentally appropriate assessment; and
- Family and community partnerships.

The second phase involves extensive program improvement based on the self-appraisal conducted by an interdisciplinary team. As the final step, the programs are reviewed by external validators, trained by MSDE. Based on the validation report, an accreditation decision is made by MSDE. National accrediting organizations have a similar process in place.

MSDE has established several incentives for programs to become accredited. They are:

- Appropriation of Judy Hoyer funds to provide resources for improving programs to meet State or national standards;
- Eligibility to become a qualified vendor to provide prekindergarten services;
- Referral information of accredited programs on the MSDE website.

SUMMARY:

Recognition by the Maryland State Board of Education of Garret County as the first jurisdiction in Maryland where all early care and education programs have obtained State or national program accreditation. MSDE has facilitated early childhood program accreditation since 2001 by providing a State accreditation program for kindergarten, prekindergarten, Head Start, and child care centers. MSDE also recognizes national organizations which offer program accreditation to early childhood programs. Since 2001, the number of accredited programs in Maryland increased six-fold to 764.

ACTION:

For information and recognition.

Attachment

Maryland State Department of Education Early Childhood Accreditation Project Accredited Programs by Year 2000-2008

