



WINNING BEGINNING NY News

For immediate release
December 16, 2011

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New York State Not Chosen for \$100 million *Race to the Top* Early Learning Challenge Grant

Winning Beginning NY Urges State Leaders to Stay Focused on Better Quality Early Care and Education

ALBANY, NY -- New York State has been notified that it will not receive a \$100 million federal Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant to improve early childhood education. The grant would have established a statewide five-star rating and improvement system for all early education programs, standardized Kindergarten assessment and created a data tracking system to better coordinate children's services.

Despite current economic challenges, Winning Beginning NY, the state's early care and learning coalition, says New York State cannot afford to abandon these important initiatives.

"This grant would have been a welcome shot in the arm, but we can't walk away from the patient," said Nancy Kolben, Executive Director of the Center for Children's Initiatives in New York City. "The stakes are way too high. By not establishing a true early childhood education system, we are gambling with our children's future – but also the future economic success of the state."

The Early Learning Challenge grant would have helped New York State fully implement *QUALITYstarsNY*, a quality rating and improvement system that awards "star ratings" (similar to those used for movies or restaurants) to all early education providers in New York State. *QUALITYstarsNY* would also include training for providers to improve their quality and raise their star rating. In 2010, the initiative was piloted in more than 200 programs in 13 communities and must now be rolled out statewide.

The grant would have also standardized Kindergarten assessment statewide, to help districts and the state target gaps in school readiness. And it would have created the New York State Student Identification System (NYSSIS) Unique Statewide Identifier (ID) to better coordinate state services and track the child's progress.

"We now know that 75% brain growth and 85% of intellect, personality and social skills develop **before** age five," said Marsha Basloe, Executive Director of the Early Care and Learning Council in Albany. "Early learning is key. And while we did not win this grant, our proposal can still serve as the blueprint to ensure our youngest children are getting the quality early learning they need to compete in a 21st century workforce."

The states that won the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant funding include: California, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island and Washington.

Winning Beginning NY is co-convened by the Center for Children's Initiatives, the Early Care and Learning Council, the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, and the New York State Association for the Education of Young Children.

To learn more about the importance of high-quality early learning, go to: www.winningbeginningny.org.
