

THE CALL

The Blackstone Valley's Neighborhood Newspaper

Thursday, August 1, 2013

Two Woonsocket pre-schools to get 'Race to the Top' money from state

By JIM BARON

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PROVIDENCE – The Capt. G. Harold Hunt Early Learning Center topped 42 similar centers across the state, winning a \$25,805 in Program Quality Improvement grant issued by the state Department of Education through the Race to the Top program.

Beth Tanner, early childhood principal at the school, said there are about 137 students enrolled at Capt. Hunt and 260 kindergarteners at the Robertson school, "so we are excited to educate early learners there.

"This grant in particular we are tickled pink about because it's going to provide myriad opportunities for dramatic play supplies and outdoor learning equipment," Tanner said. "My favorite children's book is Miss Rumphius and in the story Miss Rumphius makes the world better by planting flowers; she makes the world more beautiful. And I feel so excited that the money from this grant is going to make the world more beautiful for the youngest learners in Central Falls."

"Each program submitted an application based on their needs," Education Commissioner Deborah Gist told The Times, "it was a competitive grant, so their award was based on their proposal and the budget that they submitted.

"Every day, Rhode Island families entrust the teachers and staff members in early-learning schools, centers, and programs with the care, well-being, and education of their very young children" Gist told a small group of educators gathered at the Smith Hill Early Childhood Learning Center. "There is no greater responsibility and no more important calling. Today, we are awarding grants to early-learning programs across the state to ensure that those who work with our youngest learners have the resources, tools, training, and support they need to do their job well. These grants are a significant step toward improving early-learning access and quality across our state."

Gov. Lincoln Chafee added that, "many state
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agencies and partners have come together and worked tirelessly to secure a positive future for our children. We know that to transform education in Rhode Island, we must continue to invest in the education of our youngest children, with a special focus on high-need populations."

Chafee said 71 percent of the \$50 million grant the state won is being used to provide direct assistance to preschools and early childhood centers and family childcare homes. About \$321,900 was divvied up among 43 such facilities on Wednesday, he said, noting that the money will be used "to provide quality for educational programs and materials, high quality education equipment and support professional development for staff members.

Eva Marie Mancuso, chairwoman of the newly-

formed RI Board of Education, said "I can't stress how important" early childhood development is to education. "Our kids have to start out on an even playing field."

"Education starts at birth," said Elizabeth Burke Bryant of RI Kids Count, "it doesn't start with the K-12 system. Around 90 percent of brain development happens in the first five years of life."

Other local grant recipients, and the amounts they received, include Ana Day Care of Pawtucket, \$1,492; Angeles Home Day Care of Central Falls, \$1,402; Daysi De los Santos of Pawtucket, \$1,475; Divino Nino Home Day Care of Central Falls, \$1,400; Happy World Child Care of Pawtucket, \$2,500; Highland Park Center – Woonsocket Head Start, \$13,418; Hope Street Child

Care Center of Woonsocket,
\$4 400; Nana's Home Day
Care of Pawtucket, \$1,474;
and Pawtucket School
Department, \$9,156.

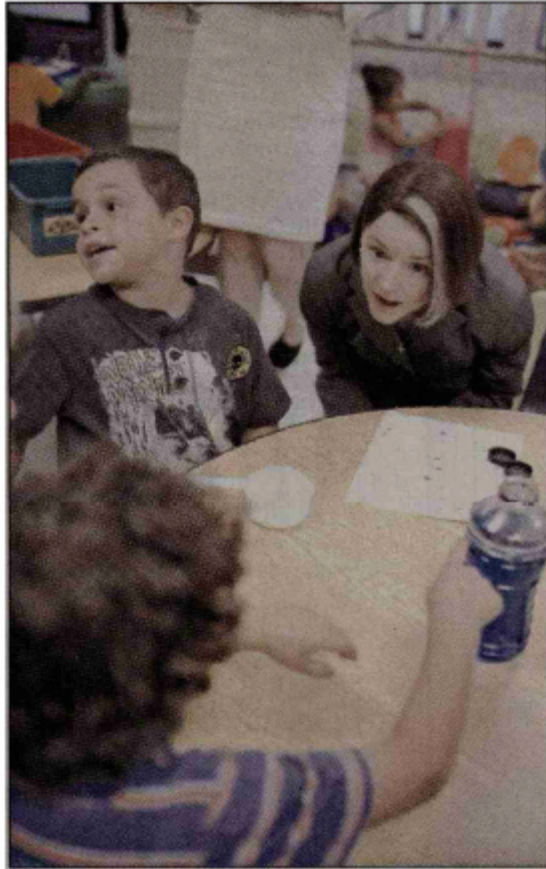


Photo courtesy Rhode Island Department of Education
**Rhode Island Commissioner of Education Deborah
A. Gist interacts with students at the Smith Hill
Early Learning Center in Providence, one of the
schools awarded state 'Race to the Top' grants.**