

October 10, 2011

The Honorable Mark Dayton
Office of the Governor
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., 130 State Capitol
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Governor Dayton:

On behalf of the Science Museum of Minnesota I wish to express my support for Minnesota's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC). As a science and education institution, we strongly believe that legislation, policies and programs that invest in young children - especially those with the highest needs – makes Minnesota a stronger, more vibrant state.

Although Minnesota has many great opportunities for young children to grow and learn, there is still a great need for systematic organization to implement change and support early childhood education. The RTT grant would enable Minnesota's youngest citizens to take the fullest advantage of all of that is offered to support healthy growth, learning, and development.

At the Science Museum of Minnesota, we've always taken great pride in our education and learning programs, both formal and informal. We're especially proud of one of our newest exhibits -- *Wonder Years: The Science of Early Childhood Development* -- which shows us what's happening in the brain during the first five years of life. *Wonder Years* is designed to help adults learn about and better understand the world that children are experiencing in order to give them the best start in life.

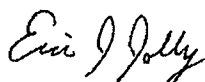
The brain is the only organ in the human body that is incomplete at birth, yet it is the most complex. Because the brain develops so rapidly in early childhood, these early years are the most critical.

In May, the Science Museum, along with its partners from the University of Minnesota, convened 110 parents, grandparents, citizens, educators, and civic and business leaders for the first *Wonder Years* Citizen Conference on early childhood. The purpose of these conferences is to foster public deliberation on issues related to early childhood, with a particular focus on what roles families, communities, and the public should play in early childhood development. Convening groups from different backgrounds to talk about child development serves as an example of the interest in the integration of different viewpoints and individuals to promote system-wide organization and change.

The creation of a Director for Early Learning position is also a strong indicator that our state wants, needs and stands behind building a coherent system that supports Minnesota's children and their families. Let's keep the momentum going. An RTT grant would be a big step in moving us in the right direction. When we engage citizens around issues of science, we do more than create a healthy environment and a better quality of life. We advance our society. Scientifically literate citizens ask the important questions and demand sound and equitable public policy decisions that are based on the science rather than politics.

Please consider Minnesota for the RTT grant. It's good for our state's future and quality of life for its residents. We all can benefit when children are successful and have a strong start in life.

Sincerely,



Eric J. Jolly, Ph.D.
President, Science Museum of Minnesota



September 29, 2011

The Honorable Mark Dayton
Office of the Governor
130 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Governor Dayton:

The Start Early Funders Coalition for Children & Minnesota's Future applauds Minnesota's commitment to making quality early childhood care and education a priority in Minnesota. The Coalition stands behind Minnesota's commitment to apply for federal Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge funds and the resulting high quality plan for Minnesota's early learning and development system. We believe application for this grant is an essential opportunity to improve systems and support high-quality, affordable and accessible early childhood initiatives in Minnesota, which is why we have provided resources and information to support the development of the application.

The Start Early Funders Coalition is committed to helping Minnesota enhance leadership, accountability and funding to improve early childhood systems and outcomes. The Coalition was instrumental in helping the Minnesota Department of Education create an Office of Early Learning through public policy initiatives, funding for research and garnering public and private sector support. The Office of Early Learning is a critical leadership position that will ensure a comprehensive approach to quality early learning and will allow Minnesota to focus on how best to deliver services to children and families.

We support expansion of a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and believe statewide implementation is essential to helping families make informed decisions and have improved access to quality care for their children.

The Start Early Funders Coalition represents more than 30 members of Minnesota's philanthropic community. We provide critical leadership and funding for research, program development, public policy and grant making to improve early childhood efforts in Minnesota. We are working together to ensure every child in Minnesota is physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively prepared for school and lifelong success. Our mission is to leverage our unique perspective as early childhood funders to advance public policy and community support for

affordable, accessible, high quality care and education in Minnesota so that all children have a strong and healthy start and are prepared to contribute to our state's vitality.

Our members participate on Governor Dayton's Early Learning Council, meet regularly with public sector leadership and have strong relationships with Minnesota's business community.

As members of Minnesota's engaged philanthropic community, the Start Early Funders Coalition pledges to continue to support efforts to improve our state's early childhood care and education in partnership with the State of Minnesota.

Sincerely,



Frank Forsberg
Senior Vice President
Systems Change & Innovation
Greater Twin Cities United Way



Karen Kelley-Ariwoola
Vice President
Community Philanthropy
The Minneapolis Foundation

on behalf of the Start Early Funders Coalition for Children & Minnesota's Future

Start Early Funders Coalition member organizations include: Blandin Foundation, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation, Development and Training Resources, Frey Foundation, Greater Twin Cities United Way, Grotto Foundation, The Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation of Minnesota, The McKnight Foundation, Medica Foundation, The Minneapolis Foundation, Northland Foundation, Northwest Minnesota Foundation, Opus Philanthropy Group, Sauer Children's Renew Foundation, The Saint Paul Foundation, The Sheltering Arms Foundation, Social Venture Partners, Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation, Southwest Initiative Foundation, United Ways of Minnesota, West Central Initiative Foundation and Women's Foundation of Minnesota.

One day, all children in this nation will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education.

TEACHFORAMERICA

October 5, 2011

The Honorable Mark Dayton
Office of the Governor
130 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Governor Dayton:

This letter is to serve as support for Minnesota's Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge application. We support and encourage Minnesota to put forward an application which demonstrates courage, commitment, capacity, and creativity. We believe deeply in the promise of a high-quality plan for Minnesota's early learning and development system which is why we are in support of the aforementioned application.

Teach For America is the national corps of outstanding recent college graduates who commit to teach for two years in urban and rural public schools and become lifelong leaders in expanding educational opportunity for low-income children. This fall, 9,300 teachers – who we call corps members – will be teaching in 42 regions across the country, while nearly 24,000 Teach For America alumni continue working from inside and outside the field of education for the fundamental changes necessary to ensure educational excellence and equity. Teach For America – Twin Cities has grown to include 90 teachers placed at 30 schools who impact the lives of over 5,000 students every day.

Recognizing that the achievement gap starts before kindergarten and widens as children progress through the school system, Teach For America established an Early Childhood Initiative in 2006 to bring more outstanding pre-K and kindergarten teachers to low-income communities. Teach For America offers an infusion of talent to support burgeoning pre-K efforts taking place across the nation.

As Teach For America seeks to expand its Twin Cities, Minnesota region, we are actively pursuing partnerships with local early childhood education providers which will allow us to place our corps members in pre-K classrooms. If provided a framework for doing so, Teach for America – Twin Cities will provide high-quality pre-K teachers for classrooms throughout our system (schools and community based organizations), strengthening our state's "early childhood education workforce" and "promoting early learning development outcomes for children," two of the focus areas for our Race to the Top application.

Sincerely,



Daniel Sellers
Executive Director, Teach For America – Twin Cities



AN AMERICORPS PROGRAM



technology so you can teach

October 10, 2011

The Honorable Mark Dayton
Office of the Governor
130 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Reference: Letter of Intent - Minnesota Race to the Top Application

Dear Governor Dayton:

As the Executive Director of TIES, I am delighted to have the opportunity to partner with you on Minnesota's application for funding through the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge. I welcome the opportunity to be part of this important effort to develop improve outcomes for early learners.

We are aware that partnering with the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) on this proposal will involve:

- Leading a Prekindergarten Cooperative Personalized Learning Plans (CPLP) expansion advisory group to review the current CPLP, survey potential users (e.g., parents, Early Childhood Educators, various geographic and cultural groups) and to plan for revisions and refinements to the software that will increase its utility in ELD programs.
- Adapting existing software to produce a web-accessible format appropriate for use in ELD programs
- Piloting the improved version in ten sites that subscribe to the current software version, including the four place-based Target Communities
- Planning for statewide use, including development of a business plan for long-term sustainability

We support the efforts of MDE to improve the connection between assessment data and instructional decision-making in early childhood, and feel strongly that the return on investment is maximized when interventions are delivered as early as possible. We are excited to contribute to this effort, and believe that our innovative software positions us uniquely to support the goals of the Minnesota application.

TIES looks forward to working with MDE on this project. I strongly believe that this proposed work will contribute greatly to advancing educational outcomes for children in Minnesota, and informing the education community nationwide.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Schweizer
Executive Director

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Twin Cities Campus

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University of Minnesota
1954 Buford Avenue, Suite 425
Saint Paul, MN 55108-1062
612-625-3058; Fax: 612-625-2093*

October 10, 2012

The Honorable Mark Dayton
Office of the Governor
130 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Governor Dayton:

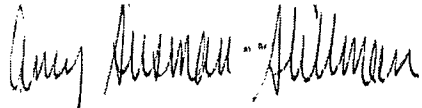
It is with the utmost delight, as well as with a sense of urgency that the Center for Early Education and Development (CEED), part of the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Minnesota, expresses our enthusiastic support for Minnesota's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge application. In our opinion, the time has come for Minnesota to take its early childhood initiatives to the next level, and we feel a strong sense of commitment to improving the infrastructure and quality of Minnesota's early learning and development system. Our enthusiasm is shared by both Dean Jean Quam and Associate Dean David Johnson, who have demonstrated the commitment of our College to promote the quality of early childhood education through research, undergraduate and graduate-level training programs, and they support this application and our potential role in it.

CEED, which has been part of the University and broader community for over 30 years, has as its central goal the improvement of developmental outcomes for children through its tripartite mission of research, professional development and policy education/outreach. Most recently, our evaluation work for the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation, the Minnesota Departments of Human Services and Education, and myriad Minnesota organizations have contributed to the state's knowledge about effective early care and education programs. Furthermore, we have played a central role in Minnesota in promoting high quality professional development for a wide range of early care and education professionals. In particular, our Assessment and Training Center (ATC) has played a leading role across the state in building the knowledge and skills related to program quality tools.

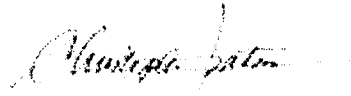
We are particularly positive about Minnesota's Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge application because we see the opportunities to promote early learning and development outcomes for children through a skilled early childhood education workforce, especially in the area of early childhood assessment. While early childhood assessment has received a great deal of attention in the last few years, there is still much to be done to incorporate the principles of appropriate assessment and its links to improved quality into the early care and education infrastructure in Minnesota.

We welcome both the challenge and the opportunities this application brings, and feel confident that together with our local and state colleagues, our collaborations can bring a greater coherence, structure and strength to Minnesota's early learning and development system.

Sincerely,



Amy Susman-Stillman, Ph.D.
Co-director



Christopher Watson, Ph.D.
Co-director