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Commonwealth Partners with Boston Children's Museum to Support Family and Community Engagement in Early Childhood Learning

BOSTON – May 7, 2012 – The Patrick-Murray Administration's Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) and Boston Children's Museum (BCM) recently announced a new partnership to expand the state's network of resources for families and communities to support children's learning. This initiative, part of the Commonwealth's Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge plan, will equip local museums and libraries across the state with programming, curricula and other tools to increase the number of high quality and enriching experiences available to our youngest citizens.

Together, EEC and BCM will create and implement a statewide strategy with all Massachusetts children's museums and the Massachusetts Library Association to increase their ability to provide a solid foundation for children's development through intentional family engagement efforts and early learning opportunities. This partnership will also help expand existing resources currently being used in individual libraries and children's museums across the statewide network of these organizations.

"We are committed to reaching kids at an early age, before achievement gaps form, to ensure they are prepared for success in school and beyond," said Governor Deval Patrick. "Through partnerships like this one, we are equipping young people and their families across the Commonwealth with a solid foundation for lifelong learning."

"Informal early education and care environments are key components of the system of child development in the Commonwealth, as they are critical linkages to parents, caregivers, and families," said Department of Early Education and Care Commissioner Sherri Killins. "Museums and libraries are valuable resources for supporting families in their role as children's first teacher, providing caregivers with materials and information, and engaging the community in providing enriching experiences for children that support their brain development and lay the foundation for their future success."

The EEC-BCM partnership will focus on four areas in supporting family and community engagement in child development: early literacy, school readiness including preparation for Kindergarten, interest and awareness of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), and public awareness of the importance of early education and care through the state's *Brain Building in Progress* communications initiative.

"We are thrilled to partner with EEC. This is a unique and innovative opportunity to connect early learning and development in informal environments," said Jeri Robinson, BCM's Vice President of Early Childhood and Family Learning. "Museums and libraries are ideal places to emphasize activities that get children ready for school success. We're ready to reach out to all families across the Commonwealth."

This initiative is part of the Massachusetts Early Learning Plan, a four year blueprint for the state to advance child, youth, and community outcomes funded through the federal Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant. Massachusetts received a \$50M award to implement high-energy, achievable education reform initiatives that blaze the trail for closing the achievement gap.

About the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care

The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care provides the foundation that supports all children in their development as lifelong learners and contributing members of the community, and supports families in their essential work as parents and caregivers. www.mass.gov/eec

About Boston Children’s Museum

Boston Children’s Museum engages children and families in joyful discovery experiences that instill an appreciation of our world, develop foundational skills, and spark a lifelong love of learning. More information about Boston Children’s Museum can be found at www.BostonChildrensMuseum.org. Become a fan of the Museum on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/BostonChildrensMuseum> and follow us on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/#!/BosChildMuseum>. The Museum is open daily from 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. and Fridays until 9:00 p.m. Adults, \$12, children (1-15) and senior citizens, \$12; children under 12 months and Museum members are always free. Fridays 5:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m., all visitors \$1.

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