

been so exciting to see the progress that's been made with these grants! We have also continued to advocate for resources that would allow additional projects to be funded, helping to improve space for even more of the state's most vulnerable young children in centers that demonstrate a strong commitment to quality improvement.

It gives us great pleasure to report that we were successful in obtaining additional funding from both the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) and the Department of Human Services (DHS) so that additional requests could be funded. Awardees were selected from the Waves 1-5 applicant pool utilizing our previously ranked list of very worthwhile and shovel ready projects. Projects had been ranked based on the funding's priority criteria. Awards have been made for an additional \$915,000, benefitting another 31 businesses and organizations state-wide. Centers receiving awards have been notified and we are excited to see these projects get off the ground! Unfortunately, this leaves \$4.5 million in requests that we are still not able to fund at this time, but please know that we will continue to advocate for the importance of investment in facilities.

Slow and Steady Wins the Race – the Benefits of Project Phasing



Creating and improving outdoor spaces can be costly. One strategy that is used to control cost is to break up a project into phases. Simply put, phasing a construction project means that portions of the project are logically divided up and built over a period of time as funding becomes available. This is one way to make a very expensive project more manageable and affordable. For projects that are on hold until appropriate funding is raised, first phase construction builds excitement and anticipation and can act as a great fundraising catalyst to improve the quality of your outdoor space. Having a solid plan in place is an essential first step in an effective phased project. A phased plan will generally focus on addressing key structural elements first, like fencing, surfacing, drainage, and site access. While these renovations are often the least exciting elements of the project, they set a strong foundation off which you can build.

A great example of a phased playground project is happening at East Bay Community Action Program (EBCAP), Turner Avenue. After working with a landscape architect to come up with a conceptual design plan funded through the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Facility Planning Grants, they quickly determined a manageable budget as well as the prioritized portions of the project that could be built out in their first phase. Though not glamorous or flashy, their first phase changes included re-grading the entire site for

proper water drainage, installing additional piping from the gutters to a drywell, adding ADA accessible pathways around the site, installing appropriate safety surfacing under and around the climber, and removing all tripping hazards. By improving all of the infrastructure (the basic services needed for operation) first, they stayed within their prescribed budget, and set the foundation for incorporating more play elements and equipment in a future phase. EBCAP also used the momentum and opportunity to make improvements that had little or no cost, things such as better organizing their storage shed to make good use of loose parts!

Get Your Space Ready for the New School Year

As teachers and children prepare for the new school year, we encourage you to make sure that your facility is also ready to start the school year off right! LISC, through the Rhode Island Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund (RICCELFF), has developed an interactive, downloadable PDF tool that is designed to guide you through the process of assessing the indoor and outdoor physical components of your early learning facility. The tool will also help you to prioritize any needed improvements to your space!



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Appropriate Weather Conditions for Taking Children Outside



Outdoor play provides learning opportunities and many health benefits. Children should go outside daily as long as conditions do not pose a safety risk, child health risk, or risk of

frostbite or heatstroke. According to the guidance in Standard 3.1.3.2 in *Caring for Our Children*, children should not be outside if the chill factor is at or below -15° or if there is a heat index of over 90° . All of the temperatures in between are deemed safe for outside play! It is important to keep in mind the following:

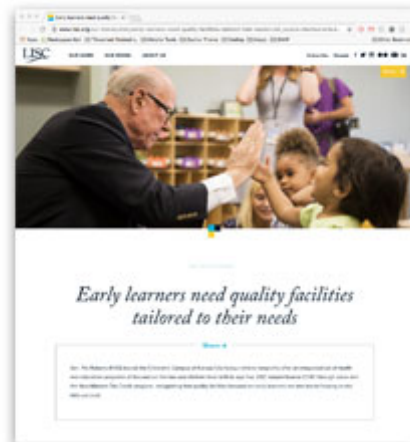
- Protect children from the sun using shade, protective clothing, and sunscreen
- Keep children hydrated
- Be appropriately dressed for weather conditions

Even snow and rain do not need to be deterrents to outdoor play if children are appropriately dressed for the weather! There are lots of unique, exciting gross motor and learning activities that puddles, mud, snow, slush, and other weather elements provide! But, do keep in mind that weather can impact safety on playgrounds. For example, frozen mulch will not provide sufficient cushioning under climbing structures and slippery equipment may become less safe. Therefore, as the weather changes, new play activities may need to be introduced.

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Early Learners Need Quality Facilities Tailored to Their Needs – Sharing Success from Across the Nation

Please take a moment to read this great article about the Children's Campus of Kansas City. LISC's New Markets Tax Credits filled a critical gap in the financing of this model center. New Market Tax Credits are an innovative financing tool that encourages private sector investment into distressed neighborhoods, bringing programming that residents need, and helping revitalize neighborhoods. Right here in Rhode Island, NMTC were used in the development of the Hope Street School in Woonsocket where Connecting for Children and Families now offers quality child care services and operates two state pre-k classrooms.



Children's Campus of Kansas City focused on developing a space tailored to young children's needs. According to a report published by the [National Institute for Early Education Research \(NIEER\)](#), a facility's layout, size, materials, and design features can improve program quality and contribute positively to child development, while a poorly adapted and overcrowded environment undermines it. The physical configuration of early care and education spaces directly affect adult/child interaction and influence how children grow and learn.

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About RICCELFF

The Rhode Island Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund (RICCELFF) is an innovative public-private partnership dedicated to expanding access to quality child care and early education opportunities throughout Rhode Island. The RICCELFF provides the capital and technical expertise that child care and early learning centers need to improve the quality and capacity of their physical space. The RICCELFF provides a combination of training, technical assistance, grant funding and flexible, affordable financing for a wide range of indoor and outdoor projects including minor renovations or construction of new, state-of-the-art facilities and playground spaces. [Click here](#) to learn more about what the RICCELFF can offer your program.

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