

Republican

HOLYOKE

HCC awarded \$2.4M in grants

Early childhood efforts to benefit from funding

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Two grants worth \$2.4 million that will support early childhood educators have been awarded to Holyoke Community College by the

Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care.

"There's a lot of brain research that says 0-5 is the most critical developmental stage for children," said Kimm Quinlan, director of HCC's Early Childhood Grant Initiatives in a prepared statement, "so it's really important to increase the education and quality of care provided to children by

supporting their teachers."

The \$2 million Career Pathways Grant will establish new professional development certification programs at the college as well as at Greenfield Community College and Berkshire Community College. The Childhood Development Associate Plus program will help early childhood educators already

working in the field attain their national credentials. Participants can also earn up to 16 college credits they can apply toward an associate degree program in Early Childhood Education.

Quinlan said the Department of Early Education and Care expects educators to get these certifications.

"They also understand that they often don't make

enough money to pay for it," Quinlan said. "That's why they create opportunities like this to provide support so it can be done in an affordable way."

The two-semester program will touch on everything from childhood behavior and development, early childhood programs, and health, safety and nutrition.

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Early Childhood Education major and HCC graduate Cindy Soriano, of Northampton, reads to pre-school students in Springfield during a service-learning project.

(HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PHOTO)

HCC

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Classes are held on Saturday mornings for the convenience of students, who must be working at least 20 hours a week in the field to qualify.

The grant covers all tuition, fees, and associated costs, including books and the \$420 credentialing fee.

Another \$400,000 grant has been awarded to the college which will allow HCC to offer a series of workshops providing training, coaching and technical assistance to early childhood programs

working on their Quality Rating and Improvement System, a methodology used to assess early childhood programs.

"It's all training around early childhood issues, so it could be curriculum development, environmental setup, behavior management, interactions, observation, STEM activities, or literacy for children under five years of age," Quinlan said.

The trainings will be offered days, nights and on some weekends, and attendees will be able to earn Continuing Education Units. Strong Start trainings will begin in November.