As the media partner for the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care’s Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant, WGBH will employ a series of research-based digital strategies to enhance ongoing efforts to build an effective early childhood education workforce and family support system in the Commonwealth. By developing, disseminating, and facilitating use of a robust set of media-based curricular resources, our overarching goal is to build the capacity of preschool classroom teachers and family daycare providers to promote the growth of young children across the Commonwealth. This work will leverage and expand upon our role as media partner in the state’s K-12 Race to the Top initiative.

The centerpiece of this work is the production of a “digital hub,” a free, online platform that will feature a centralized library of these resources, direct links to related materials, and customized pathways to guide the teachers, parents, and other care providers through the site, maximizing direct relevance, accessibility, and utility.

The core resources will be derived from early childhood education curricula developed around two of WGBH’s award-winning television programs: Between the Lions (BTL) and Peep and the Big Wide World (PEEP). Comprised of lesson plans, video segments, and interactive games, these curricula specifically target ELA (English Language Arts), STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), and social/emotional skills, the domains featured in the state’s QRIS standards. Flexible in format, these media-based materials will be customized for use by school- and center-based teachers and family child care providers either as a self-contained curriculum that follows a prescribed scope and sequence, or as a repository from which to pick and choose as desired to enhance existing lessons.

We will also produce a series of media-based professional development modules, both for teachers and care providers of children ages 3-5 and for educators working with infants and toddlers. Delivered through videos, interactives, and PDFs, these materials will include introductory and follow-up modules that address foundational skills, a comprehensive range of videos presenting “best practice” in applying the teaching strategies outlined in the QRIS standards, and illustrations of effective and appropriate use of media with young children. They will be embedded within the curriculum units to provide contextualized learning opportunities, but also offered as stand-alone resources.

The digital hub will also feature media-based tools specifically designed for use by and with parents of children ages 0-5. Building on its extensive online catalog of parenting resources, we will explore creation of a new “School Readiness” section on the PBS Parents site, modifying the very popular “child development tracker” to include supporting media assets such as video segments from television shows and interactive games. We will also produce videos designed for parents that explain important developmental milestones and recommend activities and conversations for supporting their own child’s learning. As part of our efforts on behalf of families, we will aim to modify delivery of these messages to suit different access capacities, from simple text messaging, to email newsletters, to mobile-optimized versions of the hub site, and we will explore public library distribution of pre-loaded tablets as an alternative strategy.