

THE CHILDREN'S INVESTMENT FUND HELPS MOVE CHILD CARE PROJECTS FORWARD

The Children's Investment Fund marks significant milestone with the passage of the Early Education and Out of School Time Capital Fund, which authorized \$45 million in capital bond financing to improve facilities serving low income children.



Warehouse space acquired by Bigelow Cooperative Daycare Center before renovation

The Children's Investment Fund (the Fund) marked a significant milestone in 2013 with the passage of the Early Education and Out of School Time Capital Fund (EEOST), which authorized \$45 million in capital bond financing to improve facilities serving low income children. The new capital program was part of the 2013 Housing Bond Bill, making Massachusetts the first state in the nation to finance capital improvements to child care centers as part of a broad community development effort. In commenting on the importance of the bond bill, Mav Pardee, Program Manager of the Fund, noted, "the bond bill offers sustainable financing to help transform the quality of learning environments for low income children, and better program facilities will enhance other efforts to improve the education and healthy development of the most vulnerable children in our state."

While working to support the bond bill, in 2013 the Fund also continued its role helping non-profit providers improve their facilities with private financing and technical assistance. The Fund saw two important child care projects come to fruition – Bigelow Cooperative Daycare Center and College Bound Dorchester.

With less than a year's notice, Bigelow Cooperative Daycare Center had to move out of the church basement it had occupied for 26 years. Like many non-profit child care programs, Bigelow had financial constraints, which limited options for leasing another space. The center wished to remain in or near Cambridge, but finding suitable, affordable space near their original Harvard Square location proved impossible. After expanding its search, Bigelow decided to lease and renovate warehouse space on the Cambridge/Somerville line.

The Fund provided a \$930,000 loan to support the renovation, and the building owner upgraded the utilities and the exterior of the building. The new space reflects the values and culture of the organization. The design team created a lovely, light-filled center of 5,500 square feet, with a large central active play space, five classrooms, space for infant care, a commercial kitchen, and administrative and teacher work space. Bigelow developed an adjacent 3,500 square foot outdoor play area that emphasizes nature and opportunities for active play and skills development. The new location has helped to introduce Bigelow to new families, and the center has expanded enrollment from 32 to 44 children.

"With the help of the Fund, Bigelow transformed a dark, cavernous warehouse into a high quality spacious, vibrant and engaging education facility for children and families from mixed income levels," said Theresa Jordan, Senior Project Manager for the Fund, who worked with Bigelow to complete the project.

College Bound Dorchester, another project completed in the last year, serves 257 low income children in center-based and home-based programs in Dorchester. As demand for center-based early education services grew, and to serve additional children, College Bound decided to expand its existing center on Samoset Street. Working closely with the Fund, which provided a \$100,000 loan and a \$68,000 Facilities Improvement Grant for the project, College Bound renovated 3,000 square feet on the ground floor of its building. The renovation created two bright preschool classrooms, featuring new children's and adult lavatories, new finishes, furnishings and equipment, and made the facility accessible with the installation of a wheelchair lift. The renovated space will allow College Bound to expand enrollment from 100 to 140 children.

"The support from the Fund has made it possible for us to move all our center-based early education programs under one roof, which means increased ability to provide our teachers with professional development and more easily share best practices among all our classrooms," said Mark Culliton, CEO of College Bound Dorchester.

