

Early Childhood Education Initiative

Milton Hershey School, Hershey Trust Company Seek to Expand Impact and Reach Through New Cost-Free Early Childhood Education Initiative

\$350 Million Investment in Up to Six Centers in Pennsylvania Will Serve More Children from Economically Disadvantaged and At-Risk Backgrounds and Help Address School Readiness Gap

Sept. 30, 2020, Hershey, PA – Milton Hershey School and the Hershey Trust Company today filed a petition in the Orphans’ Court Division of the Dauphin County Court of Common Pleas requesting authorization to develop and fund a holistic Early Childhood Education Initiative (ECE Initiative). The Initiative will initially consist of up to six cost-free Early Childhood Resource Centers (ECRCs) in Pennsylvania for economically disadvantaged and at-risk children from birth to age 5. The Centers will operate through subsidiaries of Milton Hershey School.

The proposed ECE Initiative, to be funded by a limited portion of the annual and accumulated income from the Milton Hershey School Trust, is designed to expand the impact and reach of the vision of Milton Hershey School’s founders, Milton and Catherine Hershey. The School’s current annual enrollment has climbed to more than 2,100 children at the beginning of the 2019-20 school year, the largest in its history, with plans to continue enrollment growth.

“Throughout our 110-year history, Milton Hershey School has developed new ways to expand and enhance the impact of Milton and Catherine Hershey’s vision. The ECE Initiative continues that process,” said Peter G. Gurt ’85, Milton Hershey School President and alumnus. “With sustained outstanding academic results and a retention rate that reached a 50-year high, we now have an incredible new opportunity to serve even more children from economically disadvantaged and at-risk backgrounds.”

The ECE Initiative will help address the disparities in academic performance between children who receive high-quality education prior to entering kindergarten and those who do not - commonly referred to as the “school readiness gap.”

The proposed ECE Initiative was developed in collaboration with internal and external experts. It will focus on a core early learning program that features a rigorous and relevant curriculum and is aligned with the mission to enhance the development of an enrolled child’s educational, social, emotional, cognitive and physical well-being during their most formative years. Additional key components will include nutritious meals, transportation (as necessary) and other needed supplies. Integrated support services will also be included for families of enrolled children.

Subject to Court approval, the proposed ECE Initiative is designed to improve school readiness for children from disadvantaged and at-risk backgrounds while introducing new populations to the benefits and programming of Milton Hershey School.

ECE Initiative Funding

The \$350 million investment to initially construct and operate up to six ECRCs over approximately six years will be provided by a limited portion of the annual income from the Milton Hershey School Trust and a limited portion of the Trust’s accumulated income from prior years. The Trust has grown substantially and has historically produced more income than is needed for full funding of Milton

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Hershey School. Even with its planned enrollment growth, the Trust is projected to continue earning more income than is needed for full funding of Milton Hershey School.

“Throughout our research and validation of the ECE Initiative, it was critically important that the funding and well-being of Milton Hershey School and its students were a top priority,” said Robert Heist ’82, Chairman of the Milton Hershey School Board of Managers, also an alumnus. “We are always investing in Milton Hershey School, our programs, and our staff to better serve our students. The plan provides a financial basis for the ECE Initiative without any negative impact on funding for the School or on our continuing plan for enrollment growth.”

If the Court approves the Petition, the first ECRC will be built on the Milton Hershey School campus. A second ECRC will be built in Harrisburg. The locations of other ECRCs will be determined by the School’s Board of Managers after Court approval.

More information about the ECE Initiative can be found at hersheyearlylearning.org.

About Milton Hershey School

Milton Hershey School® is one of the world’s best private schools, offering a top-notch education and positive home life to children in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade from families of lower income at no charge. For more information, visit mhskids.org.