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Goddard School seeks five new franchises in Greater Baltimore

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The Goddard School wants to open five more locations in Greater Baltimore, a market it considers rich with parents in search of day care.

The King of Prussia, Pa., franchise already has 16 locations in Maryland, including seven in the Baltimore area. The chain is also eyeing New York, Atlanta, Minneapolis and Denver.

The centers provide traditional day care and early childhood education for infants to five-year-olds. Its curriculum includes foreign language instruction, math and computer skills along with the usual day care arts and crafts and playtime.

"People are looking more toward these pre-school type centers," said Lainey Glasser, a franchise consultant in Harrisburg, Pa. "Because of the demands of peoples' jobs, and the benefit of children getting a structured education early on, they're interested in these places."

Goddard School's focus on education could be key in attracting parents and franchisees, Glasser said. Pre-kindergarten education is gaining importance in the state.

It's not a market without competitors. Goddard School's biggest rivals, Kinder-Care and Celebree, have 33 and 19 locations in Maryland, respectively.

And no wonder.

Maryland parents pay on average \$12,000 a year for infant child care. That's near the high end of what other

Back to School

To start a Goddard School, a potential franchisee must have the following:

- \$700,000 for investment costs, including a \$135,000 franchising fee
- An 8,000-square-foot space
- 18-to 24-month opening timeline
- Two school directors
- Eight to 10 college-educated teachers
- 10 to 15 assistant teachers

Source: Goddard School

families in the U.S. pay for infant care, which ranges from an average of \$4,600 to \$15,900, according to the Child Care Bureau and Maryland Child Care Resource Network. For toddlers, Maryland parents paid an average \$8,000 at child care centers in 2009.

The U.S. childcare industry, valued at nearly \$40 billion, is expected to grow 9.2 percent annually over the next several years, according to *Marketdata*.

Such numbers are driving David O'Brien's desire to consider opening a third Goddard School location. O'Brien's centers in Forest Hill and White Marsh have had full enrollment each fall.