

PROGRAM EVALUATION

The Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) evaluation requirements come from three sources: the Michigan Legislature in the law that establishes and funds GSRP, the Michigan State Board of Education in the criteria established for GSRP, and Michigan Department of Education (MDE) reporting guidelines.

Local Evaluation

Grantees evaluate the local program structure, processes, and outcomes to document program effectiveness; and to provide information for program improvement and accountability. The focus of a systematic approach to local data collection and data use is to provide continuous improvement feedback to staff and enrolled families. Results are submitted annually to MDE for statewide evaluation of the program.

Each program must have a written evaluation plan that covers the implementation of all required program components. A team consisting of the program director, one or more teaching teams, a supervisor, one or more parents, and led by the early childhood specialist, must analyze assessment efforts and data. The following evaluative actions meet these requirements.

Systematic Data Use: PQA and Child Assessment Data

Grantees implementing Center-Based preschool utilize the *Program Quality Assessment* (PQA) to assess program quality. The PQA is minimally used three times each year. PQA Form A includes assessment of the Learning Environment, Daily Routine, Adult-Child Interaction, and Curriculum Planning and Assessment. Form A must be completed for each unique teaching team. If a unique teaching team changes classrooms, a second Form A must be completed. Each teaching team is reviewed for one full session, and the teaching team is interviewed when children are not present. One PQA Form B is completed for the program and includes assessment of Parent Involvement and Family Services, Staff Qualifications and Development, and Program Management. More information on a systematic approach to use of the PQA can be found in the Early Childhood Specialist section.

Grantees are required to conduct comprehensive child assessment. Data are reviewed to guide parent-teacher decisions about specific child interventions and to guide administrative decisions about classroom- and program-wide improvement. Effective practices include program-level aggregation of child assessment data three times per year. Please see the Child Assessment section for more information on child assessment.

The early childhood specialist has a responsibility to lead continuous improvement efforts. The annual program evaluation process includes the following: data from the PQA and child outcome measure are reflected on together, minimally three times per year, by the team involved in evaluation activities.

Additionally, data are used to guide program improvement, monitor and support change elements; and program quality information is shared with parents, the fiscal agent, and the community. End-of-year program quality data and child outcome data are reflected upon to determine project plans for the next program year; this will include goals to address classroom quality (Form A), agency quality (Form B), and child outcomes. Focused and meaningful professional development activities to address the project plans occur at the

start of each school year. Resources for this section a sample evaluation plan and tools for helping with the analysis of data.

Parent Engagement in Evaluation

GSRP grantees are required by legislation to provide for active and continuous participation of parents of enrolled children. Parents partner in evaluative activities as active decision-makers in the GSRP Advisory Committee. Please refer to the Parent Involvement section of this manual for a full discussion of the GSRP Advisory Committee.

All grantees are required to have a GSRP Advisory Committee with representation from parents, GSRP teaching staff, GSRP administrators, the early childhood specialist, Head Start teachers, Title I Preschool teachers, kindergarten teachers, school specialists, Department of Human Services, Community Health Services, Head Start, and local early childhood programs. The Advisory Committee must have one parent for every 18 children enrolled in the program, with a minimum of two parent or guardian representatives.

Follow-up through Second Grade

Programs are required to develop a local evaluation component, including a follow-up study through second grade. Local longitudinal efforts are enhanced by participation in the Michigan Student Data System (MSDS). The MSDS is the state education database and includes discrete information about individual children such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, and program participation. Grantees that provide preschool programming must identify enrolled children in the MSDS.

Local longitudinal data collection facilitates communication between preschool and early elementary grades. Data collected provide information regarding the progress of children enrolled in GSRP through subsequent grades, referral to special services such as Special Education and Title I, school attendance, school performance, retention, and parent involvement. Reflection on longitudinal data provides preschool program staff with insight into the conditions of successful transition from preschool to subsequent grades and should be coupled with other program data to further program quality. See Resources for sample Follow-Up documentation and required Parent Notice of Program Measurement.

National, Regional, and Statewide Evaluation

The purpose of the GSRP evaluation is to assess the extent to which programs contribute to children's development and readiness for school success. In 1995, the HighScope Educational Research Foundation was awarded a grant by the Michigan State Board of Education to design and conduct a longitudinal evaluation to assess the implementation and impact of GSRP. Results of the ongoing evaluation can be found at www.highscope.org. One important result is that those programs which show high levels of implementation of the GSRP model result in impressive gains for children as they enter school and continue on their educational paths.

In addition to the MDE reporting requirements, grantees may be selected to participate in national, regional, and/or state-wide GSRP data collection efforts. If selected, grantees must cooperate with MDE, its designated evaluation contractor(s), and any of MDE's other research partners. Cooperation includes, but is not limited to:

- making classrooms available for observation;
- providing non-classroom space on site for child assessment;

- allowing administrators and staff to take time to complete surveys and questionnaires (via telephone, internet, paper, and/or in person; as necessary);
- returning completed surveys and questionnaires promptly and regularly;
- providing program information to the contractor, including children's unique identification numbers, as recorded in the MSDS;
- participating in project informational webinars, conference calls, and in-person meetings; and
- distributing parent information letters.

Upon enrollment, grantees must inform parents that information about their child and family will be collected, reported, and analyzed to learn about the effectiveness of GSRP. Confidentiality must be maintained. A sample announcement to parents on program evaluation can be found in the resources for this section.