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.

GSRP utilizes information from screenings, ongoing observations, program quality evaluations, and insight from staff and parents to determine if the systems in place are working, whether there is an efficient use of resources and how the program can best respond to the needs of enrolled children. The focus of a systematic approach to local data collection and data use is to provide continuous improvement feedback to staff and enrolled families. See the *Recommended Program Evaluation Plan* in the resources for the *Early Childhood Specialist* section of this manual.

The GSRP is required by legislation to provide for active and continuous participation of parents of enrolled children. Parents partner in child-development goals as active decision-makers. Parents discuss data with their children's teachers and understand what the data means for their children, both inside and outside of the classroom. Upon enrollment, parents must be informed that information about their child and family is 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.

Each Intermediate School District (ISD) must have a written evaluation plan that covers the implementation of all required program components. The annual program evaluation process includes the following elements.

Systemic Collection and Utilization of Data

Programs are required to conduct developmental screening and comprehensive child assessment. Representing the grantee, the Early Childhood Contact (ECC) collects data on the curricula, screening and child assessment tools used in the area. The ECC supports common measurements and consistent data reporting mechanisms across subrecipients. Data are reviewed to guide parent-teacher decisions about specific child interventions, the teaching staff's lesson planning, and administrative decisions about classroom- and program-wide improvement. Effective practices include program-level aggregation of child assessment data three times per year. See the Child Assessment section of this manual for more information.

At the start of each school year, the Office of Great Start provides information about annual contracts between the ISD and the HighScope Educational Research Foundation for program evaluation. The OnlinePQA hierarchy for GSRP is

- State, as grant funder
- ISD, as grantee
- Subrecipient (or ISD if directly implementing the program)

- Subrecipient Site(s)
- Subrecipient Site-level Classroom(s)

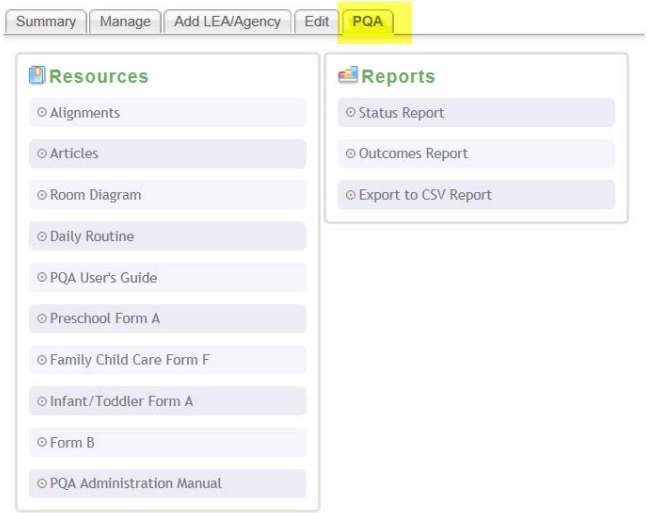
Excluding tribal subrecipients, the GSRP subrecipient name entered into OnlinePQA must be the licensee; the legal entity grant funds are being contracted to, as reported on the LARA Child Care Licensing Division license/approval.

The Early Childhood Specialist (ECS) utilizes the Program Quality Assessment® (PQA) throughout the year to assess local classroom structure, processes, and outcomes to document program effectiveness; and to provide information for program improvement and accountability. PQA Form B (Agency Items) is completed between November 15 and January 15, with data due into the OnlinePQA by January 31. PQA Form A (Classroom Items) is completed between March 1 and May 15, with data due into the OnlinePQA by May 31. Information on a systematic approach to use of the PQA can be found in the Early Childhood Specialist section of this manual. The ECC is responsible to monitor compliance with the PQA reporting requirement. The ECC will access, aggregate and analyze OnlinePQA information to support those serving in the ECS role across the ISD and also inform the creation of an area-wide professional development plan. Each year, the ECC must generate ISD-level reports to monitor that:

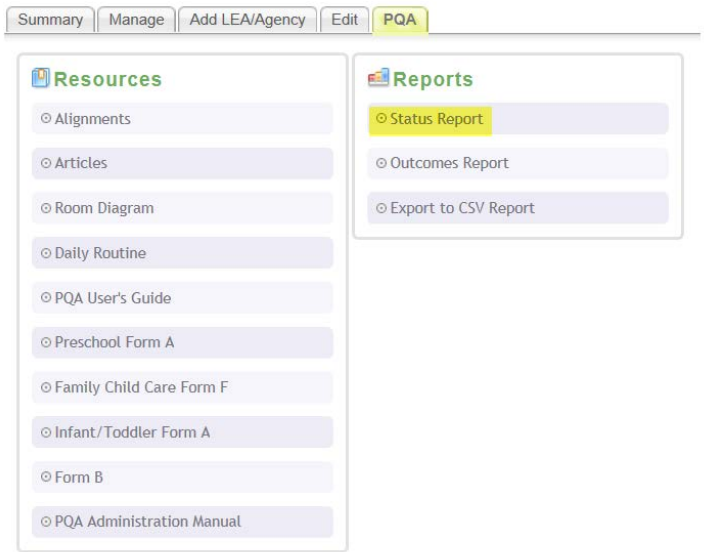
- Each subrecipient has a completed Form B by January 31. Reliable assessors will designate these Form Bs as "end-of-year" and those without reliable assessor status must designate forms as "baseline."
- Each GSRP classroom has a completed Form A by May 31. Reliable assessors will designate these Form As as "end-of-year" and those without reliable assessor status must designate forms as "baseline."
- Each item requires evidence and data except item III-E, Support for non-English speakers, which is completed as appropriate.

The *OnlinePQA User Guide, pages 36-41,* describes how to generate a variety of reports and is available within the online system: Online PQA User Guide. The *PQA Status Report* is especially useful because it can list the subrecipients by ISD and the status of baseline or end-of-year PQAs. Directions are reported here:

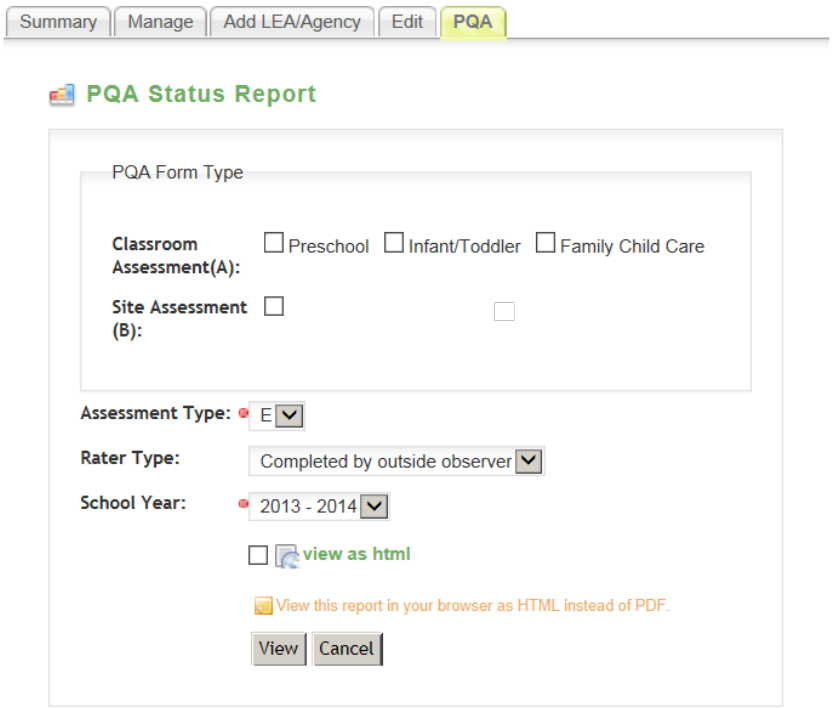
1. Use the "**+**" buttons in the OnlinePQA navigation tree to navigate to the name of the ISD.
2. Click the **PQA** tab to display the screen below.



3. Select “Status Report.”



4. Select the Assessment Form Type (Classroom Assessment A: Preschool or Site Assessment B).



5. Use drop-down menus to select the Assessment Type (B for Baseline or E for End-of-Year), Rater Type (Self-observed or Completed by outside observer) and the School Year.
6. The report can be viewed as a PDF or within an internet browser.

Data are used to guide program improvement, monitor and support change elements, and share program quality information with parents, the ISD, and the community. A data analysis team led by the ECS includes parents, the program supervisor, representation from teaching teams, and other specialists or stakeholders, as appropriate. A systematic approach brings the team together three times each program year. Program quality data from the PQA and child outcome data from child screening and assessment are aggregated and provided to the data analysis team in advance. Data sets should be prepared for the meeting in a reader-friendly format such as bar graphs, and without identifying features such as child names. During the end-of-year meeting, the team:

- Identifies the current level of performance across relevant indicators, evident strengths, and extraordinary accommodations for children/families (e.g., attendance rates, program settings and/or options, language groups, child, family or community risk factors);
- Uses data to establish professional development priorities;
- Sets measurable goals and objectives to address classroom quality (Form A), agency quality (Form B), and child outcomes;
- Agrees to eliminate what is not effective, for example, strategies which resulted in PQA scores of three or less;
- Addresses whether policies and procedures require revision; and
- Inventories available program resources such as time, money, personnel, technology, curriculum resources, and local training opportunities.

After the end-of-year meeting, the ECS arranges for meaningful professional development related to the goals. Action plans, including timeframes for progress monitoring, are shared with teaching teams. The ECS is responsible for monitoring fidelity of intervention and gains in child development. Measurement strategies are critical because they address accountability to the continuous improvement efforts that are in place. Changes to agreed-upon strategies may at times require an additional team meeting. When progress monitoring is implemented, the result is a strengthened and individualized instructional program. Resources for this section include tools for helping with the analysis of data.

When this process is complete at the local level, the ECC convenes the ECS team to aggregate and analyze the overall results for the year. The ECC uses aggregated child outcome and program quality data to share success in meeting goals and to address needs that are revealed by data disaggregated by sub-groups, e.g. English Language Learners, race/ethnicity, and socio-economic status. The ECC determines if data collected are being used in ways that drive continuous improvement efforts. The ECC evaluates the degree to which data are being used to differentiate supports to subrecipients, staff and children. Data patterns may reveal a need for ISD-wide goals for improvement and professional development. See the *Early Childhood Contact* description in the *ISD Administration* section of this manual for additional description of responsibilities of the ECC.

GSRP sites must attain at least a 3-star rating in Michigan's Great Start to Quality (GSQ) system. GSRP sites that are unable to achieve at least a 3-star rating must not receive continued GSRP funding. ISDs must be aware that such sites are "out of compliance" with GSRP, and sanctions, up to and including recapture of all GSRP funds for those sites, may be implemented. See the *Funding* section of this manual for more information on the GSQ.

Follow-up Through Second Grade

Subrecipients are required to develop a local evaluation component, including a follow-up study through second grade. 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 this section for sample follow-up documentation and the required *Parent Notice of Program Measurement.*

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. Each GSRP-enrolled child must be documented in the MSDS.

Michigan's *Kindergarten Entry Assessment* (KEA) will also enhance longitudinal efforts. Michigan is preparing for widespread Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) use as part of a broader focused initiative on early literacy and 3rd grade reading proficiency. The KEA will validly, reliably, and fairly assess what kindergarteners know and are able to do upon kindergarten entry through its administration within each child's first 45 days of kindergarten. Teaching Strategies GOLD™ was chosen as the tool to be piloted and field tested as the KEA in Michigan and it will continue to be the tool in the 2015-2016 school year for the next phase of field testing, on a voluntary basis. The data will inform instructional decisions from the classroom to the state level across six essential domains of child development: Language, Literacy, Mathematics, Social Emotional, Physical health and Cognition.

National, Regional, and Statewide Evaluation

Program evaluation results are used annually by MDE for statewide evaluation of the program: 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. Reports at kindergarten entry, in the primary grades, at the first administration of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) in 4th grade, in middle school, and after the planned graduation date, have confirmed the initial findings of differences between the program group and the control group. These reports are all available at detailed findings of longitudinal study. The findings of the longitudinal study from 1995-2011 include:

- Kindergarten teachers rated GSRP graduates as more advanced in imagination and creativity, demonstrating initiative, retaining learning, completing assignments, and having good attendance;
- Second grade teachers rated GSRP graduates higher on being ready to learn, able to retain learning, maintaining good attendance, and having an interest in school;
- A higher percentage of 4th grade GSRP graduates passed the MEAP compared to non-GSRP students;
- GSRP boys took more 7th grade math courses than non-GSRP boys;
- GSRP children of color took more 8th grade math courses;
- Significantly fewer GSRP participants were retained in grade between 2nd and 12th grades;
- More GSRP students graduated on time from high school than non-GSRP participants; and
- More GSRP children of color graduated on time from high school than non-GSRP participants.

In addition to the MDE reporting requirements, programs may be selected to participate in national, regional, and/or statewide GSRP data collection efforts. If selected, programs 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.