OVERVIEW

Introduction

This [Great Start Readiness Program Implementation Manual](#) is designed to serve as a guide for Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) administrators and staff. The Michigan State Board of Education criteria and Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) expectations for GSRP require adherence to this manual and all standards in the [Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Birth to Kindergarten](#) (ECSQ). GSRP must comply with Public Act 116 of the Public Acts of 1973, as amended, as well as the [Licensing Rules](#) for Child Care Centers.

MiLEAP requires grantees to address program quality. All programs must participate in [Great Start to Quality](#) and maintain at least the Enhancing Quality level. In addition, programs must utilize both the applicable program evaluation tool and an approved ongoing and authentic child assessment tool to gather and analyze outcome data for continuous quality improvement (see the *[Program Evaluation](#)* and [Child Assessment](#) sections of this manual for more information).

Details on the above tools as well as other resources critical to implementing high-quality PreK programs, such as an approved comprehensive curriculum and an approved developmental screener, can be found in subsequent sections of this manual.

Purpose

GSRP is Michigan's state-funded PreK program for four-year-old children administered by MiLEAP, Office of Early Education. Research on PreK programs and specific research on GSRP indicates that children provided with a high-quality PreK experience show significant positive developmental differences when compared to children from the same backgrounds who did not attend a high-quality PreK program.

To strengthen learning at home and strengthen positive child outcomes, programs must provide for active and continuous partnership with families in the learning process. Families are never charged fees for program elements such as transportation or meal service. Through advisory committees, families assist to evaluate and make recommendations about the program.

History

The Department of Education Appropriation Act, in fiscal year 1986, designated one million dollars to identify appropriate program models for the operation of PreK pilot projects. Fifty-three projects were funded and served 694 four-year-old children. In fiscal year 1987, Section 36 of the State School Aid Act, and the Department of Education Appropriation Act provided funds for targeted early childhood programs. Programs began operating after September 1, 1988.

The GSRP History of Funding with annual appropriations can be found on the program website under [Allocations](#).

Funding

GSRP is described in Sections 32d and 39 of the current State School Aid Act. GSRP grants are allocated by MiLEAP to intermediate school districts (ISDs). ISDs are the grantees for GSRP.

ISDs receive state funding via eleven State Aid Payments for each fiscal year, beginning in October. Information pertaining to State Aid Payments may be found under Section 32d "Great Start Readiness Program" in the State Aid Financial Status Report sent monthly to each ISD. GSRP funds are appropriated annually based on an October 1 to September 30 fiscal year. Revenue is not allowed to be earned on any GSRP funds.

Expansion

Michigan has a goal to provide every four-year-old with access to free Prekindergarten (PreK) by 2027. The [PreK for All](#) initiative includes expansion of GSRP. Funding within the School Aid budget is allocated to Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) who serve as the fiscal agent for GSRP, and are responsible for the selection, support, and monitoring of grantees, which include both public schools and community-based organizations (CBOs).

FUNDING

Requesting and Awarding of the Allocation

The ISD must complete all applications and reports for GSRP as determined by the Department, which may include NexSys and Excel templates. Only the ISD can initiate or submit a GSRP application and the associated reports. An ISD's Authorized Official, one who is a Level 5 in NexSys, is the only person who performs high-level administrative activities within a grant application or gives others access to the application.

An ISD intending to implement GSRP submits the Funding Application in NexSys. The Funding Application is prepopulated with data on the number of children in its area from families living at 400% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) or less, and the number it is estimated Head Start will serve the following year. After decisions are made with local partners on the documented need and how it will best be met, the Funding Application must go through a review and endorsement process with the local Great Start Collaborative.

After the State School Aid bill is signed into law by the Governor identifying the total statewide appropriation and the funding level per program option, MiLEAP calculates ISD allocations based on the specifications in legislation. The ISD may serve children in an extended program, school day, extended GSRP/HS blend, GSRP/HS blend, or part day option.

For FY 25, the funding per child by program option is as follows:

- $12,222 5 day extended program

- $10,185 4 day school day

- $6,111 5 day extended GSRP/HS blend

- $5,093 4 day GSRP/HS blend

- $5,093 part day

An email notification is sent to ISD staff with Level 5 authority in NexSys, application business officials, and early childhood contacts to inform them that the allocations have been posted on the GSRP website. The email announcement and allocation list serve as notification of funding for audit purposes. Email notification is sent to Level 5s, business officials and early childhood contacts when the Program Implementation Plan (PIP) is live in NexSys. Within this application, ISDs indicate the plan for serving children during the school year.

Funding

Initial Funding

The initial allocation to each ISD is the lesser of the total GSRP funding earned in the preceding year or the total GSRP funding requested by the ISD whichever is less.

Subsequent Funding

Annually MiLEAP will determine a percentage of children served by each ISD by dividing the number of children served by the ISD and Head Start in the immediately preceding year by the total number of children within the ISD who meet the criteria of Section 32d as determined by the Department utilizing the most recently purchased American Community Survey data. The resulting percentage of eligible children served shall be compared to a statewide benchmark to determine if the ISD is eligible for additional funds, should there be any. Currently the statewide benchmark is 100 percent.

If funds remain after the initial allocation, MiLEAP will distribute remaining funds to each ISD serving less than the state benchmark based upon each applicant's proportionate share of the remaining funds.

If the ISD or a subrecipient determines that it can serve additional eligible children in GSRP without additional funding, it may include additional eligible children in class, but will not receive additional funding under Section 32d for those children.

Funding Structure Review

MiLEAP will review the program components under Section 32d and under Section 39 at least biennially. The department shall also convene a committee of internal and external stakeholders at least every five years to ensure that the funding structure under Section 39 reflects current system needs under Section 32d.
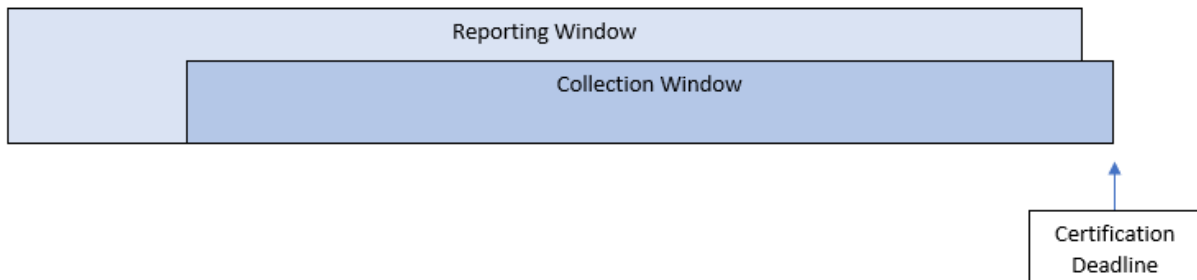
Counting Allocated Spaces as Filled/Not Filled

The total amount of funding earned each year by the ISD is determined by the number of children who have been entered during the MSDS Early Childhood Fall and Spring Collections (deduplicated) as enrolled in GSRP and the program option in which they attended. The total value of filled spaces from the accepted allocation will be the ISD's "Hold Harmless" amount to be used in the following year's allocation process.

Each child enrolled during the MSDS Early Childhood Fall and Spring Collections is considered to "fill" a discrete space. Children who leave the program must be exited with their accurate exit date entered in MSDS. Grantees may consider a space "filled" after a child completes participation in at least one preschool session during the MSDS Early Childhood Fall or Spring Collection.

The Early Childhood MSDS Collection windows can be found on the *CEPI calendar*. The CEPI calendar provides the Early Childhood Spring Collection certification deadline which is one week after the reporting window closes.

- Reporting window = Service window (start of program through early- to mid-February) during which GSRP children have been enrolled and count for funding purposes

- Collection window = MSDS is available to allow for data entry

- Certification deadline = Date when all children enrolled during the reporting window must be entered into MSDS and certified

To support service to the highest number of eligible children, grantees are encouraged to use the waitlist to fill vacated spaces.

Funding for unfilled spaces is recaptured through the State Aid Payment process.

Requesting and Awarding of the Transportation Allocation

For FY25, GSRP is appropriated State Aid funding of $28,000,000 for Transportation. Each year the ISDs will be asked to collect projected transportation budgets from subrecipients including community-based organizations (CBOs) seeking reimbursement for costs related to parent or guardian accompanied public transportation. A total transportation request will be forwarded to MiLEAP from each ISD. If the total request from all ISDs is equal to or less than $28,000,000, each ISD will receive the requested amount. If the total of the projected transportation budgets exceeds $28,000,000, MiLEAP will prorate the allocation. Transportation funds do not have to be distributed on a per FTE amount to subrecipients.

The ISD may accept all or only a portion of the transportation allocation. If a per FTE calculation determines the total transportation allocation to an ISD, the ISD may distribute transportation funds as needed across subrecipients for those children served within the ISD. The ISD must create a process to gather pertinent information that will guide decision-making on prioritization of transportation funds. Consider how collaborative child recruiting and public awareness activities, along with a dedicated transportation allocation, can support the goal to identify and serve children and families who may not otherwise be able to access the program. Other considerations include the number/location of GSRP subrecipients currently providing transportation, the number/residence of GSRP enrolled children receiving

transportation, family need by programming option, how well existing transportation costs are met, and areas of unmet need for transportation services. The school readiness advisory committee is the appropriate venue for data-based decision-making on distribution of the transportation allocation.

ISDs will document use of the accepted state-funded transportation allocation for the ISD and/or subrecipients in the NexSys PIP.

ISD Administration of GSRP

The Early Childhood Contact (ECC)

As part of administering the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP), the Intermediate School District (ISD) will designate an Early Childhood Contact (ECC). The ECC is the early childhood leader at the ISD, facilitating an ISD-wide plan with a vision to improve child outcomes, to minimize achievement gaps and help all stakeholders to see the "big picture" of how GSRP strategically fits into the local Great Start Collaborative (GSC) early childhood efforts. The ECC uses the written GSRP philosophy statement as a foundation to partner with the GSRP Early Childhood Specialists (ECS) on data-based decisions for continuous quality improvement. For ISDs with larger populations, the ECC may work with a team to fulfill the responsibilities of the position. For ISDs with smaller populations, the ECC may also serve as the ECS. In this instance, care must be taken to ensure that responsibilities of the ECS, as outlined in the *Early Childhood Specialist* section of this manual, are not compromised.

The ECC ensures that effective systems are in place to support GSRP. ISD administrative policies and procedures document approaches to overarching aspects of the grant, such as community needs assessment, choosing and supporting subrecipients, notification of funding, community partnerships, recruitment, family engagement, communication, record-keeping, staff credentialing, and program and fiscal monitoring. Administrative policies and procedures must also address systematic oversight of subrecipient practices.

Early Childhood Specialist (ECS)

The ECC ensures that there is an ECS assigned to each classroom. At times, ISDs are unable to identify a well-qualified candidate to fill an ECS position after an extensive search. In that case, the ECC should contact the assigned consultant.

- Only a Reliable Assessor/Certified Observer completes the observations, interviews and scoring of the program evaluation tools(s). The Reliable Assessor/Certified Observer participates in the recertification process to maintain status as a Reliable Assessor/Certified Observer. See the *Program Evaluation* section of this manual for related information.
- The ECS contract accommodates the intensive support and additional classroom visits, coaching and consultation that staff members with incomplete credentialing require.

In determining ECS classroom assignments and other duties, the ISD is responsible first and foremost for assuring the ECS's role in coaching and supporting the teaching team. As the ECC designs the system of ECS supports for the ISD and assigns classrooms to individual ECS, the following elements are considered:

- Required ECS functions and the hours needed to complete them.
- Additional functions the ISD assigns to ECS, and the hours needed to complete them.
- Expertise and experience of the ECS.
- Experience of the subrecipient and teaching team(s) with operating a PreK program, maintaining a child care license, and meeting GSRP requirements. For example, the ECC may plan additional classroom visits and/or more intensive support for beginning teachers, teachers new to GSRP or teachers that have less-than-expected program quality.
- Number of assigned subrecipients, sites, and classrooms.
- Geographic location of the assigned classrooms and amount of travel time between sites.
- Relationships between the ECS and teaching teams, especially if ECS are monitoring teaching staff as well as coaching them.

The ISD provides:

- A master calendar for all ECS activities, which aligns with reporting requirements on program evaluation, scheduled professional learning calendars and meetings such as ECS peer group, the local family participation groups, school readiness advisory committee (SRAC), or superintendent/school board meetings.
- A coaching documentation system and form(s) used for each session. The form must include at a minimum the date, the intention of the session, method of feedback with the lead and associate teachers, observational notes reflecting the session, any expected follow-up on either the part of the ECS or the teaching team, and confirmation that all members of the teaching team and the ECS participated in the session and agree to the content of the form. The ECS must keep a copy of the form and provide one to the teaching team. The ECC should review documentation periodically to see that teaching teams are getting the support needed and that the ECS team members are fulfilling the requirements of the position.
- A position description for every ECS, whether employed or contracted by the ISD or subrecipient, that includes the amount of time to be dedicated to GSRP work for the year. All position descriptions must be clear in the expectations to meet GSRP requirements: classroom observation/program evaluation, feedback, ongoing support, meetings, professional learning, etc. All must include a requirement to attend ISD and/or Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) ECS meetings and professional learning required for the ECS as well as being available to the ISD or MiLEAP as needed as part of the monitoring process. References to meeting the requirements included in the position description must be included

in all subrecipient contracts where the subrecipient provides the ECS.

- Support alignment of GSRP with K-12 and children's transition into kindergarten and protect hallmarks of early childhood education such as learner-centered, active, participatory learning and authentic partnership with families in their child's development. (See the *Transition* section of the Implementation Manual for more information.)

Branding

A program name-change in fiscal year 2008-2009, from the Michigan School Readiness Program (MSRP) to the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP), helped to directly align our state prekindergarten program with Project Great Start, our state early childhood initiative to foster school readiness and life success for young children. In 2024, Michigan launched the PreK for All initiative, focused on expanding access to free, high quality, PreK for all Michigan 4-year-olds. To accomplish this goal, the expansion of GSRP is essential. Michigan continues to offer a mixed-delivery system and increase the income threshold to allow more age-eligible children an opportunity to attend PreK for free. Grant branding must be evident at the ISD, subrecipient, and classroom, and may be formally addressed within written agreements and include minimally the GSRP logo. Additional logos may include the MiLEAP and PreK for All logo.

The name and logo identify each program as a strong partner in the systems-building efforts of Great Start, where services to children and families emerge from our Michigan *Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Birth to Kindergarten* (ECSQ). Name-branding assists advocacy efforts, making it evident that children who participate in GSRP have strong child outcomes, setting the stage for successful school experiences and graduation on-schedule with peers.

GSRP funding should be mentioned in speaking engagements and discussion with the media. In written materials, the grant name is spelled out fully at the first use of the acronym. The grant name is never modified, e.g., Great Start Preschool. The grant name, logo and acknowledgement of the funding source is included on public- and family-facing publications or project materials developed with funds awarded under this program, including print materials and electronic information (e.g., program websites and social media). This includes print materials that are publicly distributed, intended for program recruitment, or are 'family-facing' (e.g., application, newsletters, handbook, meeting minutes, etc.), reports/presentations, films, brochures, flyers, signs, etc. Social media posts must include the grant name and logo, however due to space limitations, are not required to include the funding source. Where more than one entity's logo will be used, they should be of a similar size and when possible, appear on a single line. Logos are available for use and located in the resources for the Overview section of this manual. The following statement for acknowledgement of funding will be used:

- For programs with only state-funding: These materials were developed under a grant awarded by the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential.
- For programs with braided or blended federal and state funding, such as the GSRP/Head Start Blend: These materials were funded in whole or in part under a grant awarded by the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential.

Child Eligibility Files

Eligibility for GSRP requires verification of a child's age and family income, as well as documentation of Program Eligibility Factors. Documentation of eligibility must be on file for every child enrolled in GSRP. This documentation must be maintained for seven (7) years.

MiLEAP requires that ISD monitoring of subrecipients includes annual review of child files to verify child eligibility was accurately and properly determined. Child files are also subject to periodic MiLEAP review.

Security of Sensitive Information

Maintaining copies of child birth certificates or other child and family personal information, as well as financial documents viewed to verify income in child files must be considered with great care. Maintenance procedures for sensitive documents must include security measures to ensure the files and the data contained therein is protected. This includes redacting personally identifiable data on forms including social security numbers, date of birth (for all but the child enrolled), maiden names, etc. Files should be kept in a secure location under lock and key, only accessible to authorized program staff.

Applications and accompanying documents should only be discussed with those that have permission to access the information. This would include among programs to determine placement as well as any others the parent/guardian authorizes to have access.

Electronic Files

Files may be electronic with scanned or photo images of eligibility documentation but must include proper security protocols to ensure safety of the data and limit file access only to authorized program staff.

Educational Records vs. Eligibility Records

The educational record for each child - including home visit and family conference forms, observation data, developmental screener data, other child growth/progress documentation, and samples of child's work, etc. - is distinctly different than eligibility documentation and should be maintained in a separate file. In cases of single, separated, or divorced families, both parents must be granted access to the child's educational information (unless court documents specify otherwise),

however, access to personal data provided to determine eligibility (e.g., tax forms, pay stubs, etc.) should be restricted to only the parent that provided that data.

ISD GSRP Advisory Structure

Each ISD must implement an advisory structure for GSRP. This advisory structure may vary according to the size and unique characteristics of each ISD. It may be composed of multiple committees/subcommittees/workgroups or may largely be accomplished by one central committee charged with the work. The SRAC may fulfill this role as one of its functions (See *School Readiness Advisory Committee* later in this section).

The **overarching purpose** of the GSRP advisory structure is to:

- Ensure active participation of all GSRP subrecipients with the ISD as grantee, in an ongoing dialogue as appropriate, by which the quality of the system and its services to families, children, and the community are examined.
- Ensure and facilitate active family participation, as appropriate, for children enrolled in the program.
- Ensure participation has been established in the SRAC and continues to meet requirements for the committee, on an ongoing basis.
- Ensure that data is analyzed and utilized in decision-making processes and for continuous improvement (see also the *Program Evaluation section* for more detail on continuous improvement).

While each ISD has the autonomy to create its own policies, procedures, protocols, and timeframes to achieve the overarching purpose, the ISD must minimally convene one ISD-wide group as follows:

- Purpose: To ensure that the following advisory structure functions are completed annually:
  o A formal conduit for bi-directional communication of information is provided;
  o All subrecipients have a local family participation group with a focus on local considerations (See Family Participation Group later in this section);
  o GSRP family representation on the regional GSC Family Coalition is promoted;
  o An ISD GSRP representative to the SRAC is designated and participates actively;
  o ISD level GSRP data analysis is conducted per requirements (see Data Analysis later in this section);
  o Subrecipients provide for transition opportunities into and out of GSRP.
- Leadership: Shall be led by the ISD ECC or their designee(s).

- Who/Members: Representation should include, but is not limited, to the following individuals:
  - ISD representative(s) *(required);*
  - Subrecipient representative(s) *(required)*
    - All subrecipients shall be invited to participate;
    - Each ISD establishes its own participation guidelines;
  - Program administrators, GSRP staff, and/or families;
  - Local Head Start and/or community stakeholder(s).
- Frequency: The ISD shall convene an ISD-wide advisory structure meeting a *minimum* of 3 times per program year.
- Records:
  - Attendance;
  - Agendas;
  - Meeting minutes;
  - Surveys, survey results, or other evidence of member participation in decision-making activities.

In addition to formal meetings, ongoing communication with subrecipients must be carried out on a regular basis throughout the program year.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the force that drives decision-making for the continuous quality improvement of early childhood educational experiences. Data is used to monitor and support change elements, and share program quality information with families, the local education community, and the community as a whole. While data analysis must be ongoing at the classroom level, periodic formal data analysis at the system level is required and is best done by a group convened specifically for this purpose. As stated above, the unique characteristics of each ISD may see this group function independently or as part of another advisory structure group or committee. Minimally, the structure must ensure that periodic formal data analysis is occurring at the classroom level, subrecipient level (for subrecipients with multiple classrooms and for ISD operated classrooms), and ISD-wide as follows:

- Purpose: To ensure that the following periodic formal data analysis functions are completed:
  - Classroom level analysis of data is completed examining individual child level data and whole group outcomes/trends;
  - Site and/or subrecipient level analysis of data is completed examining the data of multiple classrooms as appropriate/determined by the ISD and its subrecipients;
  - ISD level analysis of data is completed which examines data from all funded classrooms;
  - Continuous improvement goals are set and monitored at all levels.
- Leadership: *Supported by* the ECS, ECC, and/or administrator.
  - *Facilitated by* a person with experience and skills to effectively execute this program requirement (ECS, director, teacher).

- Who/Members:
  - The classroom and site/subrecipient formal data analysis group will ideally include, but is not limited to:
    - Teaching teams (required*)*;
    - ECS (required);
    - Administrators;
    - Parents.
  - The ISD-level formal data analysis group will ideally include, but is not limited to representation from:
    - ISD;
    - Subrecipient;
    - Site and/or classroom.
- Frequency: At each level, data analysis shall occur a minimum of 3 times per year.
- Records:
  - Attendance;
  - Agendas;
  - Meeting minutes.

Also see the *Program Evaluation section* for detail on systemic collection and utilization of data and recommended data analysis processes.

GSRP Policies and Procedures

Written policies and procedures support consistent operational activities. Policies and procedures provide clarity when dealing with accountability issues or activities that are of critical importance to the grant and may have serious consequences, e.g., grievance, flow of funding, and submitting reports. Well-written procedures that are implemented and followed help to minimize misunderstandings by identifying responsibilities and establishing boundaries. All parts of the system are dependent upon one another to function properly and provide the highest level of service to children and families.

GSRP Policies and Procedures must include program and fiscal policies as outlined below. ISDs have policies and procedures for grants which can be used to aid in writing GSRP fiscal and program policies. Subrecipients must be provided with a copy of GSRP Policies and Procedures. Some examples of policies and procedures that need to be written are: travel expenses allowable with amounts, steps for the bidding process, and seclusion and restraint. All GSRP policies and procedures will be reviewed during a program and/or fiscal review by MiLEAP.

Written processes must be in the GSRP administrative files.

1. Assurances

ISDs agree to comply with all applicable requirements of State statutes, Federal laws, executive orders, regulations, policies, and award conditions governing GSRP. ISDs understand and agree that if they materially fail to comply with the terms and conditions of the grant award, MiLEAP may withhold funds otherwise due from this grant program, any other federal grant programs, or the State School Aid Act of 1979 as amended, until the ISD as fiscal agent/grantee comes into compliance, or the matter has been adjudicated, and the amount disallowed has been recaptured (forfeited). MiLEAP may withhold up to 100 percent of any payment based on a monitoring finding, audit finding, or pending final report. All current grant assurances can be viewed in the GSRP Funding Application and the GSRP Implementation Plan in NexSys.

2. Child Recruitment

Refer to the *Recruitment and Enrollment* section of this manual for guidance on generating written procedures that align with legislative requirements about recruitment.

The ISD should work with subrecipients to create outreach and recruitment campaigns that can be funded by the 2% maximum that can be set aside and used for this work. Sharing ideas with other ISDs and adapting or adopting each other's work may make the most efficient use of the funds.

3. Closure Procedures

Closure procedures guide the ISD when a former subrecipient declines to participate in GSRP or in the event a subrecipient contract is terminated. A previous subrecipient that no longer chooses to implement the program must provide written notification to the ISD. Notification must include an inventory of the equipment and supplies purchased with GSRP funds that are remaining, this includes any food service equipment and supplies. The subrecipient must arrange to return all remaining equipment and materials to the ISD; ISDs will not be required to claim any items purchased with start up grant funds. The returned materials should be passed on to a new subrecipient that will serve children in the same area or distributed for use within other GSRP classrooms as needed. Excess materials can be sold to non-GSRP providers, and the funds utilized by the ISD to support GSRP after a determination is documented that use is not needed within the ISD. Materials that are well worn or aged may also be donated as appropriate.

There are infrequent instances where a program may close during the school year. Details on terminated contracts must be written in a policy and procedure by the ISD. The ISD will lead transitioning activities with the goal to prevent a break in service to children and to minimize distress to the children and families.

Considerations include:

- Agreement between parties of what is a reasonable amount of time needed to finalize the closure;
- Confirmed personnel contacts before agency closure, regarding who the ISD will work with for final invoice and payment structure pieces;
- Possible proration of the funding;
- Transfer of child files;
- Transfer of subrecipient administrative files;
- Final expenditure report;
- Transfer of inventory and supplies purchased with GSRP funds; and
- All remaining reports covering the period of time for which the subrecipient participated.

4. Communication

The ISD must establish and monitor systems to ensure that timely and accurate information is provided among the ISD, subrecipients, families, policy groups and staff. Consider the following strategies:

Communication with families must be carried out on a regular basis throughout the program year, and carried out in the family's primary or preferred language whenever possible, for example:

- Newsletters
- Focus groups or surveys
- Family conferences
- Open house events
- Local family participation group meetings and minutes
- Web site
- Children's progress notes

Communication with local family participation groups and the GSRP advisory structure includes the following information provided on a regular basis:

- Procedures and timetables for program planning
- Policies, guidelines, and other communications from MiLEAP
- Program and financial reports
- Program plans, policies, procedures, grant application

Communication among staff must include mechanisms for regular communication among all program staff:

- Staff meetings
- Distribution of program quality reports
- Intranet or listserv for internal staff correspondence
- Development of subrecipient plans that includes center operations

- Updates to annual written plans
- Professional learning communities (PLCs)

5. Funding Application

Legislation requires an annual comprehensive needs assessment using aggregated data from the ISD service area and a community collaboration plan. The ECC must seek endorsement of the plan by the local GSC and ensure that GSRP is part of the community's Great Start strategic plan. The signed GSC Endorsement Form is retained at the ISD. The needs assessment must document:

- Annual data collection on poverty, number of four-year-old children at risk for low educational attainment and existing PreK programming;
- Discussion of data with representatives from each local education agency (LEA), child care organizations and the GSC;
- Collaborative decisions on enrollment request, program options and process to determine PreK sites for the upcoming academic year and;
- The estimated number of eligible children who will remain unserved after the ISD, LEAs and community early childhood programs have met their funded enrollments. Justification will have to be provided as to why all eligible children could not be served.

See the resources for this section: *GSC Endorsement Guidelines*

6. Community Partnerships

GSRP administrative policies will reflect the role of the ECC as a trusted, credible leader in the GSC, where a collective impact approach prioritizes early childhood efforts. The ECC identifies and creates connections with administrators of the licensed child care centers in the region. The ECC increases the number of and strengthens partnerships between LEAs, Head Start grantees, child care organizations, municipalities with early learning initiatives, extended-learning programs, and other community-based programs.

It is important to have shared language and understanding of the early learning years, as well as the variety of settings that children are in before transitioning into GSRP and those they will experience after transitioning out of GSRP. Use of shared language, goals, and evaluation should be included in the strategic plan for GSRP and public statements. The ECC will support clear and consistent communication about vertical alignment as a priority in both internal (e.g., district strategic plans, teacher newsletters) and external (e.g., web sites, family newsletters) platforms.

7. Fiscal Policy and Review

Each ISD must have written fiscal policies outlining procedures for program, transportation, curriculum, and start up grant funding including but not limited to:

- How and when the subrecipients receive their allocations, including transportation;
- How and when the subrecipient budgets (original and carryover) and Final Expenditure Reports (FERs)/Carryover Final Expenditure Reports (COFERs) are submitted to the ISD, including supporting documentation;
- Budgeting and budget amendments;
- Completing FERs/COFERs;
- Allowability of costs;
- Inventory requirements;
- Cash management;
- Procurement, including capital outlay approval and competitive bidding requirements;
- Closeout procedures for subrecipients (FERs, audits, and equipment). See also "3. Closure Procedures" earlier in this section;
- Professional learning/training of subrecipients on fiscal components of GRSP;
- Travel;
- Fiscal monitoring process of subrecipients;
- Food service and required spreadsheet and/or other documentation.

Subrecipient documentation must be reviewed by the ISD, depending on the agreed upon payment schedule. For example, if 100% reimbursement is used, then the ISD must require supporting documentation before a payment is made. The ISD may also choose to review subrecipients on an annual basis. The ISD must provide professional learning to both the subrecipient fiscal and program staff responsible for GSRP. Fiscal policies will be reviewed by MiLEAP during a fiscal review. For further information on fiscal reviews, see the *Fiscal Review Process* document in the resources for the *Reporting and Monitoring* section of this manual.

8. Monitoring Subrecipients (Program)

Administrative policies must also reflect how the ISD will provide oversight and monitoring of subrecipient practices, such as local policies/procedures related to:

- MiLEAP, Child Care Licensing Bureau, including reports of site visits;
- Participation in Michigan's Great Start to Quality system;
- Family engagement, including formal contacts;
- Use of a family handbook that includes all required elements outlined in the *Program Administration and Staffing* section of this manual;
- The advisory structure including the family participation group(s), advisory committee(s), and data analysis team(s);
- Human resources (staff hiring, professional educator preparation plans, supervision);

- Adult/child ratio, class size, hours, and weeks of operation;
- Professional learning for teaching teams, including training in the curriculum and child assessment tools in use;
- Participation in the National School Nutrition Program and/or the Child and Adult Care Food Program, as applicable;
- Child enrollment;
- Child files;
- Transition plans into and out of GSRP; and
- All program policies identified in the *Program Administration and Staffing* section of this manual.

9. Family Participation Group

Active and continuous family engagement in the educational experiences of their children is crucial to facilitating the best possible child outcomes. Achieving such engagement with families often begins with opportunities for families to participate in ways that build connections between the school and home. Stronger, more frequent connections strengthen relationships, create partnerships, and lead to increased participation and ultimately active engagement. GSRP requires opportunities be provided for families to participate and engage with the programs serving their children in multiple ways. As not all families have the same readiness for engaging with their child's school, the ECC will champion families as active decision makers in GSRP.

Refer to the *Family Engagement Section* for more information on family engagement.

Subrecipients and/or programs must provide opportunities for active and continuous participation of families of enrolled children through the implementation of a family participation group.

- Purpose: Engage families on a high-level.
  - Opportunities allow for engagement of families, open communication, family advocacy, and integration of family input/voice.
    - Family voice/input is taken back to the GSRP advisory structure for consideration within the continuous quality improvement process.
  - Each meeting focuses on local considerations, such as:
    - Transition into and out of GSRP;
    - Recruitment/enrollment;
    - Program quality assessment results;
    - Child outcome data;
    - Family learning opportunities.
- Leadership: *Supported by* the ECS, ECC, and/or administrator.
  - *Facilitated by* a person with experience and skills to effectively execute this program requirement, ideally a parent when possible, but may also be a teacher, director, or ECS.

- Who/Members: May be made up of, but not limited to the following:
  - Family members of enrolled children (parents, grandparents, aunts/uncles, foster parents/guardians, or other family members with an active role in children's lives)
  - Classroom staff;
  - School or program level administrators;
  - ECS/ECC.
- Frequency: Shall convene or seek family input about the child/family experience in the classroom through meetings, events, surveys, etc., ideally several times annually, but a minimum of 2 times per program year.
  - For meetings, a minimum of one family member per classroom is ideal;
  - All family members should have the opportunity to participate, and to give and/or receive information in the manner that best fits their needs.
- Records: Evidence of family participation in decision-making activities may include:
  - Attendance;
  - Agendas;
  - Meeting minutes;
  - Surveys/results.

Additionally, ongoing communication with families must be carried out on a regular basis throughout the program year in the family's primary or preferred language whenever possible**.**

10. Philosophy

The ISD will ensure that each subrecipient has a written philosophy statement and must have a process to approve each philosophy statement, determine whether the statements are promoted widely and whether the beliefs documented are used in decision-making. Discrete philosophy statements will have common features that are aligned with the *Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Birth to Kindergarten* (ECSQ) yet will provide for local language to addresses social, economic, cultural, and family needs. See the *Program Administration and Staffing* section of this manual for additional information on PreK philosophy statements.

11. Professional Learning

Administrative policies acknowledge that effective professional learning (PL) can improve the instructional coherence among subrecipients and improve the quality of learning opportunities for young children. The planning of PL opportunities is data-driven, ongoing, and part of a long-term continuous improvement plan.

The ECC strengthens local administrative quality by arranging PL for elementary principals, directors of child care organizations, municipalities with early learning

initiatives, extended-learning programs, and other community-based organizations (CBOs). This group is poised for relationship-building and to learn best practices for prekindergarten.

The ECC and the ECS support meaningful PL for teaching teams. The ECS is critical to PreK quality and supports GSRP teaching teams throughout the academic year with expertise in the *ECSQ*, and status as a reliable assessor/certified observer in the applicable program evaluation tool. Refer to the *Early Childhood Specialist* section of this manual for more information on the ECS position. The ECC will demonstrate innovative efforts to create and standardize time for school- and community-based GSRP teaching teams to work together across different daily, weekly, quarterly, and school year calendars.

ECS need time to reflect on what makes their own professional learning work strong, and what hinders it. The ECC engages and supports ECS teamwork by gathering the ECS as a community of learners more than once per year to reflect on the ECS role and responsibilities. The ECC also ensures that the ECS is able to attend professional learning events, such as curriculum/child assessment training, state sponsored professional learning events, the Annual Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) State Conference or the HighScope International Conference.

12. Program Evaluation

The program evaluation plan reflects a discriminating use of data. Data markers include child-based data, classroom-based data, staff surveys and markers of family well-being.

13. Record-keeping

ISD administrative procedures must identify where critical grant records are housed and staff position(s) responsible to maintain files. Refer to the *Reporting and Monitoring* section of this manual. Refer to the *Program Evaluation* section of this manual for guidance on generating written procedures that align with grant requirements about evaluation.

14. School Readiness Advisory Committee (SRAC)

The SRAC is established as a workgroup of the local Great Start Collaborative (GSC). The SRAC is designed to improve all children's school readiness within a community, so that no matter their PreK experience children come to kindergarten ready and aligned with their peers. This is accomplished through the involvement of classroom teachers, families of program participants, and community, volunteer, and social service agencies and organizations, as appropriate, who make recommendations to the Great Start Collaborative regarding GSRP and other community services. The ECC or their designee must be an active participant in the SRAC.

- Purpose: Specific to GSRP, the SRAC is charged with the task of annually reviewing and making recommendations regarding the program components listed below, as specified in Sections 32d and 32p of the State School Aid Act and by the department as follows:
  o Participation of all GSRP subrecipients in a collaborative recruitment and enrollment process to assure that each child is enrolled in the program most appropriate to his or her needs and to maximize the use of federal, state, and local funds;
    ▪ Review should include local enrollment policies, procedures, and timelines for recruitment and enrollment.
  o Use of an age-appropriate educational curriculum in all GSRP classrooms that is in compliance with the *Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Birth to Kindergarten* children adopted by the State Board of Education;
  o Nutritional services for all program participants supported by federal, state, and local resources as applicable;
  o Physical and dental health screening and developmental screening services for all program participants;
  o Referral services for families of program participants to community social service agencies, including mental health services, as appropriate;
  o Active and continuous involvement of the families of the program participants;
  o A plan to conduct and report annual GSRP evaluations and continuous improvement plans using criteria approved by the department.
  o The GSC review or endorsement of the GSRP Funding Application, including the community needs assessment, annually.
  o Other community services designed to improve all children's school readiness.
- Leadership: GSC Director, ECC or their designee(s).
- Who/Members: Shall be made up of, but not limited to the following:
  o GSRP Representation:
    ▪ At least one representative from the ISD is expected to participate fully in this committee and act as a liaison/conduit of information between the GSC and the ISD;
    ▪ The ISD's representative is responsible for sharing information with all subrecipients, as appropriate;
    ▪ Classroom teachers;
    ▪ Family members of program participants;
  o Community, volunteer, and social service agencies and organizations.
- Frequency:
  o As established by the local GSC, but no less than once per year.

- Records:
  - In collaboration with the GSC.

15. Distribution of Funds

Involving the local SRAC and the GSC in the creation of the distribution plan is advised; the GSC works with community partners and is called on annually to endorse the ISD's Funding Application, the first step in the GSRP funding process. The ISD should also partner with the GSC and the local Resource Center (RC) to build capacity for CBOs to serve as GSRP sites in future years. GSRP subrecipients must minimally have the following quality ratings in the Great Start to Quality (GSQ) system: Enhancing Quality, Enhancing Quality-Validated, Demonstrating Quality.

State funding is appropriated for GSRP using the state fiscal year from October 1 to September 30. Until the State Aid Act is signed by the governor each year, allocations for ISDs are tentative. As such, ISDs should consider the following points when making plans for contracting with subrecipients, enrolling children, or beginning programming.

- Any expenditures not utilizing carryover, thus dependent on new funding, are at risk of not being reimbursed if the GSRP appropriation is reduced.
- Communication with subrecipients and families should carefully clarify that any programming for the upcoming year is dependent on the inclusion of GSRP in the State School Aid Act.
- When working with subrecipients to determine start dates, ISDs should balance caution of risk with likelihood of continued GSRP funding levels.

Legislation requires each ISD to distribute at least 30% of its total allocation to CBOs. Each ISD reports to the department in its GSRP Program Implementation Plan (PIP) a detailed list of subrecipients by provider type, including private for-profit, private non-profit, community college or university, Head Start grantee or delegate, local government, and district/PSA or ISD. From the total amount of program funding the ISD awards for the operation of classrooms, the ISD must indicate the amount awarded to CBOs. A percentage is then calculated. ISDs unable to distribute 30% of their allocation to CBOs must demonstrate to MiLEAP the specific steps required, as detailed below, have been taken to meet the requirement.

Funds awarded to Head Start agencies, even when the Head Start agency is the ISD, contribute to the total percentage distributed to community-based partners.

Faith-Based Organizations (FBO) are considered CBOs and as such also contribute to the total percentage distributed to community-based partners. FBOs can make strong GSRP partners as they are often well-connected to community agencies that support families. Faith-based subrecipients keep prayers and religious instruction from being a part of a GSRP classroom. In space used for dual purposes, there is no

need to remove or cover faith-based displays. These subrecipients do not restrict GSRP enrollment or staff hiring due to faith-based considerations.

Public School Academies (PSA) and Community Education PreKs are considered LEA subrecipients. If an open-to-the-public PreK is operated by an LEA, this is also considered an LEA subrecipient. Review the MiLEAP child care license to confirm whether an LEA or a community agency is the licensee. LEA programs are only counted as community-based providers when they are Head Start grantees or Head Start delegates.

A PSA must include pre-k in the charter to be eligible for GSRP funding. The PSA should contact the authorizer to have pre-k added prior to being awarded funding.

Existing subrecipients that have met the variety of quality and administrative benchmarks required of the grant should be able to expect consistency of funding awarded. That is, the ISD may 'hold harmless' existing, strong GSRP partners and should look to additional community partners and competition between all partners when distributing increased funding.

The ISD must have a written process to distribute GSRP funding that will be fair to all current and potential early childhood partners. The document will reflect policy and procedures to follow each year, with specific consideration of allocating funds to community partners.

The policy must describe minimally one ISD notification made to licensed centers which serve PreK children and are not current subrecipients. The ISD must work with stakeholders to determine the most effective timing and method for notification(s). The notification must include information regarding:

- The center's eligibility to participate;
- Information regarding GSRP requirements; and
- A description of the subrecipient application and selection process.

An exception to this requirement is provided for a licensed center which is not a current GSRP subrecipient and for which the ISD has documentation on file that the current licensee administration has declined partnership with GSRP.

Additionally, an approvable process addresses the following:

1. Are there current subrecipients that struggle to fill their spaces?
2. For current subrecipients, how does the ISD weight classroom quality and grant compliance in hold-harmless determinations?
3. Are there areas of high-need that require additional funding? If so, how will need for services be balanced with quality of programming?
4. How are subrecipient decisions regarding program options and services addressed? (For example, Part-day, 4 day School-day, vs. 5 day Extended Program, transportation, etc.)

5. Are there administrative issues that would prohibit a program from being funded? (For example, licensing, fiscal capacity, pattern of late or incomplete reporting, disqualification of CACFP, etc.)
6. Are there specific local issues that will impact the distribution of funding or that could be addressed through the distribution plan?
7. How does the ISD partner with the local GSC, Resource Center, and others to build the capacity of local community agencies to take part in GSRP in future years?

Planning for the subsequent grant and academic year considering that the ISD will receive contact information for each licensed childcare center located in the service area of the intermediate district or consortium by March 1 of each year:

1. What is the timeline for subrecipient selection and notification of funding?
2. In what ways and at what time will the ISD reach out to notify each licensed center that serves PreK children located in the service area of the intermediate district or consortium that is not a current subrecipient to make them aware of the opportunity to become a part of GSRP?
3. In these notices, how will the ISD provide information regarding GSRP requirements and a description of the subrecipient application and selection process for community-based providers?
4. How does the ISD give the potential partners contact information for someone who could answer questions during the subrecipient selection and distribution process?
5. What programs in the community are prepared either to increase the number of children served or to begin a GSRP?
6. What is the process for the competitive request for proposals?

    a. What factors will be considered in selecting subrecipients?
    b. How will fairness across all eligible entities (LEAs/CBOs) be assured?
    c. How and when will the ISD share the requirements the potential partner would have to meet to apply and those that would have to be met if chosen? An example would be staff credentialing requirements. Applicants would not have to have compliant staff to apply. They would however have to agree that, if chosen to receive funding, appropriate staff would be hired.
    d. What is the timeline and process for the ISD to collect pertinent information from potential partners?
    e. What is the objective review process to rate/rank proposals?
    f. What stakeholders make up the team that reviews proposals and makes funding distribution decisions?
    g. How and when does the ISD inform potential community partners of the factors the ISD will consider in making its decisions to award funding?

h. How and when does the ISD communicate to those being awarded funding?

i. What is the timeline and process for how the ISD will communicate with those applicants not being awarded funding for the grant year and give feedback as to why the decision was made?

7. What process will an entity not awarded funding, or an entity awarded a reduced level of funding, have to appeal the decision locally and how will they be informed of that process? The essential question for an appeal should be whether the ISD provided the process to award funding in writing and followed its process with fidelity.

8. How will the ISD provide to the public and to participating families a list of community based GSRP subrecipients with a GSQ quality level of at least enhancing quality?

16. Flexibility Waiver

Public Act 120 of 2024 (PA 120) provides MiLEAP with the ability to temporarily waive selected implementation requirements under subsection (4) allowing for new or expanding programs to be eligible for funding. "New classroom" is defined as a classroom that is operating for the first time as a GSRP classroom and has entered into a contract with the ISD after October 1, 2024.

The following requirements in subsection (4) can be waived:

(b) An <u>age-appropriate educational curriculum</u> that is in compliance with the early childhood standards of quality for prekindergarten children adopted by the state board, including, at least, the Connect4Learning curriculum.

(d) Developmental screening services for all program participants.

(j) Participation in this state's great start to quality process with a rating of at least enhancing quality level.

To be eligible for the flexibility waiver, the program must demonstrate to the satisfaction of MiLEAP that the program meets all of the following:

(a) Is a licensed child care center or is a licensed program.

(b) For the initial year the program enters into contract, provides the minimum instructional time of 90 days if offering the school day or part day options and 120 days if offering the extended program with each day meeting a minimum of 6 hours.

(c) Participates in this state's quality rating system at the maintaining health and safety quality level.

(d) Implements a professional educator preparation plan (PEPP) for any lead teachers not meeting teacher credentialing requirements. See the Program

Administration and Staffing section for additional information about the PEPP requirements.

(e) Uses a developmentally appropriate curriculum that aligns with the Early Childhood Standards of Quality.

(f) Conducts a developmental screening and referral process for children the program identifies as possibly needing services.

(g) Commits to participating in program financial review and monitoring by the ISD.

(h) Provides a plan to implement an approved GSRP curriculum and meet the additional waivered GSRP requirements.

Programs granted a flexibility waiver are not subject to the following subsection (4) requirements for the below-listed amount of time, unless the program's flexibility waiver is revoked.

GSRP requirement	Waiver Description	Length of waiver (time until program must come into compliance with GSRP requirements)
Participation in Great Start to Quality at an Enhancing Quality Level	The program must be at the Enhancing Quality level or higher by the end of the first school year.	1 year
Number of days of programming and number of hours per day: ● Must provide a minimum of 120 days for part day and school day options. ● Must provide a minimum of 180 days for extended program. ● Length of day must be equal to the local first grade day for all program options except part day.	Programs may have: ● Fewer than 120 days for part day and school day options ● Fewer than 180 days for extended program option ● Reduced hours per day for school day and extended day programs. ● Rationale must be provided for each	1 year

Must use an approved curriculum and assessment tool	Within 90 days of contracting with GSRP, the program must identify an approved curriculum and an approved assessment tool that they plan to fully implement by the end of the waiver period.	2 years
Must use an approved screening tool and make referrals as needed	Within 90 days of contracting with GSRP, the program must identify an approved screening tool they intend to implement by the end of the waiver period. The program must begin screenings of and making referrals for all children enrolled in GSRP by the end of the waiver period.	2 years

17. Head Start Program Performance Standards Waiver

PA 120 of 2024 included language giving MiLEAP the authority to allow Great Start Readiness Programs to implement Head Start Program Performance Standards for Quality instead of GSRP requirements for GSRP classrooms.

To expand access to GSRP, Head Start subrecipients may request to implement the Head Start Program Performance Standards for quality as an alternative for existing GSRP policies, regulations, and procedures. To request this allowance from the department, GSRP Head Start subrecipients must:

1. Submit the Head Start Program Performance Standards waiver to their ISD for the allowance.

2. Provide the ISD with the following assurances:
   a. That the child care licenses of all centers operated by the subrecipient to serve GSRP and Head Start children are in good standing and that no child care licenses are suspended or revoked.

b. That the subrecipient has not been suspended by the Office of Head Start or disbarred from any other federal or state agency or disqualification from the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).
c. That the subrecipient will provide GSRP enrolled children with at least the minimum instructional time as required by the department.
d. That the subrecipient participates in this state's quality rating system at a level determined by the department.
e. That the subrecipient uses a developmentally appropriate curriculum.
f. That the subrecipient ensures that all enrolled children receive developmental screening and are referred for appropriate special education support and services.
g. Commits to allow the ISD access to GSRP Head Start classrooms following a mutually agreed upon plan.
h. That the subrecipient commits to participating in program financial review and monitoring by MiLEAP, as needed.
i. Commits to conducting an annual independent financial audit and provide a copy of the annual audit to the department upon request.
j. Commits to submit all financial and program reporting requirements for GSRP as determined by the ISD. ISDs may choose to accept the financial audit as mentioned in (i) in lieu of requiring documentation for expenses.
k. Commits to submit all program reporting requirements for GSRP as determined by the department.
l. Commits to submit all financial and program reporting requirements for GSRP as determined by the department.
m. Commits to participate in the development and implementation of a collaborative recruitment and enrollment in partnership with their local intermediate school district(s).

3. Upon receipt of the request from the subrecipient, the ISD will review for acknowledgement of all commitments listed above. The ISD must forward the request to the department within 10 working days of receiving the request. Included with the request, the ISD will include any concerns that they have that the subrecipient cannot satisfactorily meet the above commitments.

4. Any subrecipient demonstrating to the satisfaction of MiLEAP that they can meet the above commitments and are currently meeting the requirements of the Head Start Program Performance Standards, will receive written notification from MiLEAP that they are approved to implement Head Start national Performance Standards for Quality as an alternative to GSRP policies and regulations. The department will include the ISD on the written response.

Where ISD and Head Start subrecipient budgets have been finalized for 2024-25, this waiver is not intended to require modification of the fiscal agreement in the contract between the Head Start subrecipient and the ISD for 2024-25.

Head Start Waiver for Individual Requirements

Additionally, beginning in 2023-24, legislation provided an option for GSRP/Head Start Blend programs to apply for a waiver to meet Head Start Performance Standards in place of individual GSRP requirements.

A Head Start subrecipient seeking a waiver of individual GSRP requirements must complete the updated GSRP/Head Start Blend Waiver Form and submit it to the ISD. Once reviewed by the ISD, it will be submitted to MiLEAP for approval.

18. Written Agreements

A written agreement is required between the ISD and its subrecipients. The agreement must contain the components that form a binding agreement between two or more parties, including an offer, acceptance of that offer and consideration of what each party gives of value that each would not normally be legally obligated to provide.

Agreement for Services

1. Each document must clearly state that it is a contract/agreement between the ISD and each subrecipient to meet the need for GSRP services.
2. Agreements must address impasse or default for parties that do not complete any portion of the agreement and identify the entity providing the dispute arbiter.
3. The contract will reflect GSRP requirements including:
    a. a plan for how the ISD and subrecipients will partner to ensure high-quality implementation of the GSRP (e.g., monitoring, auditing, orientation, mentoring, and hiring and professional learning of staff);
    b. a list of the developmental screening tool, curriculum, child assessment tool used, and how staff will receive training on the full implementation of each of the tools;
    c. a plan showing partnership in conducting annual program evaluation using the applicable program evaluation tool, with expectations that each program develops annual plans toward earning a high-quality score (as defined for the applicable tool);
    d. an explanation of how the subrecipient will be involved in ISD advisory group(s) and local family participation group(s), how often the local family participation group(s) will meet each year and how the subrecipient will ensure family participation at the local level.
4. The contract will include a general timeline for required GSRP reports and who will be responsible for completion of each report, including

any systems subrecipients are required to utilize such as Michigan Student Data System (MSDS), MiRegistry, etc.

5. The contract will describe the ISD's system to seek information from the subrecipient about, provide oversight on, and evaluate the effectiveness of each of the itemized features in the local contracts.
6. The contract will ensure that administrative funds are not exceeded. It must include a statement regarding the administrative cap for the ISD.
7. It must also specify whether the ISD will keep the 2 percent for a shared outreach and recruitment campaign or allow the funds to be split with subrecipients. If split, the ISD must provide guidance on how the funds may be used.
8. The contract must report the process for flow of funding; e.g., state the process for the ISD to make monthly payments or reimbursements to the subrecipients and how the ISD will track both revenue and expenses.
9. The contract must state which financial records the subrecipient is required to submit to the ISD and which it must retain for monitoring purposes. The ISD will also affirm its responsibility to maintain financial records necessary for MiLEAP audit.
10. The program option(s) to be implemented must be included: Part-Day, 4 day School-Day, 5 day Extended Program, 4 day GSRP/Head Start Blend, or 5 day Extended GSRP/Head Start Blend.
11. The number of spaces to be filled must be included. Any modification to this number must be noted in an addendum.
12. If the ISD is retaining additional funds to support program quality, a strong contract will identify services.
13. The contract must be signed and dated by both parties. Complete titles, including agency name, must accompany each signature.
14. Contracts between the ISD and subrecipients that are continuing from previous years must be in place by October 1, the start of the grant year.
15. Contracts with new subrecipients must meet this deadline if the program starts at the beginning of the grant year.

Other Contracts

A written agreement is also required between the ISD and any other party responsible for any GSRP service. The agreement must contain the components that form a binding agreement between two or more parties including: scope of services, defined compensation, a defined period, and signatures with titles of all parties involved.

Portions of this section were adapted from:

HHS/ACF/ACYF/HSB (2006). *Tips for Establishing an Effective Communication System*.

Kauerz, K. & Coffman, J. (2013). *Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating PreK-3rd Grade Approaches*. Seattle, WA: College of Education, University of Washington.

Language Diversity and Literacy Development Research Group. *Lead for Literacy Initiative Memos.*

EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIALIST

The Early Childhood Specialist (ECS, which throughout this document refers to a singular ECS or to the multiple members of an ECS team) is the educational leader and catalyst for continuous quality improvement for each Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) classroom. Through observation and feedback, the ECS supports teaching teams and site administrators to provide high-quality PreK with fidelity to the GSRP model. The ECS confidently advocates for children, families and teachers to ensure appropriate decisions are made about the program. The ECS position is prominently featured in the ISD Program Evaluation policy. The ISD should allow flexibility for unique program situations such as GSRP/Head Start Blends, by working collaboratively with the Head Start entity to create a coaching plan between the ECS and the Head Start coaching staff.

Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) may employ/contract with qualified ECS to carry out the requirements specific to GSRP or may allow some or all subrecipients to contract with a qualified ECS to carry out the requirements specific to the grant. One person may not be employed to fill both a Lead Teacher position and an ECS position. The local program administrator may be the ECS, if qualified. Please refer to the ISD Administration section of this manual for additional information on determining ECS assignments and other duties.

To be hired or contracted as an ECS, a candidate must have:

Degree	Years of Experience
Graduate Degree in early childhood education or child development	5 or more years of relevant job experience in early childhood education
Bachelor's Degree equivalent to that required to be a GSRP lead teacher	10 or more years of relevant job experience in early childhood education
*Graduate in a closely related field	5 or more years of relevant job experience in early childhood education
*Bachelor's Degree in a closely related field	10 or more years of relevant job experience in early childhood education

*ISD should consult with MiLEAP assigned consultant prior to hiring

Before or immediately after being engaged, the ECS must acquire:

- Knowledge of the ––
  Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Birth to Kindergarten (ECSQ).
- Knowledge of GSRP requirements as outlined in the
  GSRP Implementation Manual.
- Knowledge of State of Michigan *Licensing Rules for Child Care Centers*.

- Training in one or more developmental screener, comprehensive curriculum, and authentic child assessment tools.
- Formal training in coaching and/or adult learning.
- Knowledge of the Key Elements of High-Quality Early Childhood Learning Environments: Preschool.
- Knowledge of the *Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy:* Prekindergarten and Essential Instructional Practices in Early Mathematics*:* Prekindergarten to Grade 3.
- Knowledge of alignment documents between curricula and the ECSQ.
- Status as a Reliable Assessor/Certified Observer in the applicable program evaluation tool(s):

Classroom Coach

ECS successfully completing Classroom Coach training are required to complete reliability testing for two consecutive years and then the reliability test is required every two years (testing required year 1, 2, 4, 6, etc.). Should an ECS have a gap in Reliable Assessor status for any reason, the ECS is required to take the reliability test for two consecutive years before going back to a two-year cycle of testing.

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

A Certified CLASS Observer is a person who has attended a CLASS Observation Training and who has passed a CLASS Reliability Test within the past year. Each ECS using CLASS must be a Certified CLASS Observer. An annual recertification test is required to maintain CLASS Observer status.

Each ECS must be able to perform the following functions for each assigned classroom:

- Develop a collaborative relationship with the teaching team to build trust and set the stage for strength-based coaching.
- Before the children's program begins, work with teaching teams to ensure that planned daily routines and classroom arrangements meet GSRP requirements and reflect the comprehensive curriculum model.
- Implement an induction plan for new teaching staff to provide information about GSRP and the role of the ECS in supporting continuous improvement. It is especially important for new teaching staff to receive multiple visits and feedback early in the school year.
- Visit each classroom when children are present a minimum of three times each school year, ensuring all parts of the day are observed over time, outside of the classroom evaluation observation. 'Walkthroughs' that last only a few minutes are not sufficient to meet this requirement.
- Provide monthly coaching to teaching teams, based on the professional growth plan, which may include offering support by observing to provide feedback on techniques or interactions, modeling strategies with children, attending home visits/conferences, offering classroom or professional

learning resources, meeting with teaching teams to discuss feedback, strengths and needs, plans, etc. Meetings may be in person or through electronic means.

- Support each teaching team to meet grant expectations around the learning environment, daily routine, adult-child interactions and partnership with families as outlined in the *Classroom Requirements, Curriculum* and *Family Engagement* sections of the GSRP Implementation Manual.
- Monitor formal training in the curriculum and ongoing child assessment tool and ensuring exclusion of supplemental curricula and assessments unless the process for approval by the ISD has been completed and approved.
- Monitor quality of narrative anecdotal evidence entered into the child assessment tool by each teaching team. Support the continuous, purposeful analysis of child progress to inform family partnerships and teaching through lesson planning for meaningful, intentional whole group instruction, as well as respond to small group and individual child needs.
- Review child outcome data.
- Participate in consistent documentation of work across the ISD, documenting each coaching session. For example, coaching models offer a system to help ECS to document approaches with unique teaching teams, coaching logs, observation summaries, coaching plans/goal setting, coaching reflections, and follow-up with teaching teams.
- Be available for teaching teams between visits as needed.
- Follow up with the appropriate administrators, including the ECC, if aware that licensing requirements are not met.
- Attend ISD ECS meetings and professional learning opportunities.
- Ensure that the selected program evaluation tool is administered between March 1 and May 30 with entry into the online system completed by June 15.
- Analyze program evaluation results, ECS observations, teaching staff interests, administrative input, and child outcome data with each teaching team to set goals for the classroom and identify areas for professional learning using a strength-based approach. An effective professional growth plan will:
  - Identify the goal;
  - Identify related program evaluation indicator(s) or child outcome objective(s);
  - Set strategies and activities to impact teacher knowledge, (e.g., watching a training video together, videotaping with teacher reflection, visit another classroom with teacher reflection, support from another member of the ECS team, making visual cues, over-the-shoulder coaching or a focus strategy;)
  - Supply needed materials;
  - Make changes in indoor/outdoor learning environment and daily routine;

- o Include specific timelines and a person responsible for each activity; and
- o Determine how progress will be measured (e.g., teacher completion of actionable strategy and reflection form, strengthened program evaluation scores and/or child outcome data.)

- Monitor progress toward meeting the goals throughout the year. Feedback follows the same process as above, documenting strengths and any areas still needing improvement; the continuous improvement plan should be updated and modified as appropriate.

ISD GSRP requirements that **may** be assigned to an ECS, depending on the unique configuration of each ISD:

- Acting as a leader in local or subrecipient-level data analysis team (See the *Program Evaluation* section of the Implementation Manual for more information on the data analysis team).
- Ensuring that program evaluation reports are shared with the GSRP Early Childhood Contact (ECC), subrecipient administration and GSRP Advisory Committee(s).
- Helping to design annual, data-driven professional development calendars for teaching teams.
- Facilitating meaningful professional learning and/or ensuring GSRP staff receive appropriate professional learning.
- Acting as a primary program contact with subrecipient administration.
- Providing input on classroom needs to ensure program funds are used appropriately, particularly using knowledge of classroom needs when recommending approval/rejection of capital outlay requests.
- Supporting alignment of GSRP with K-12 and children's transition into kindergarten and protecting hallmarks of early childhood education such as learner-centered, active, participatory learning and authentic partnership with families in their child's development.
- Supporting teaching teams to understand and implement community, school, and classroom transition plans throughout the year. (See the *Transition* of the Implementation Manual for more information.)
- Supporting programs to access resources, including Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) sponsored professional learning, MiRegistry, Resource Centers and the Great Start to Quality Rating System.
- Assuring documentation of strong and positive family engagement, such as completion of formal family contacts where there is a reciprocal exchange of information about the curriculum and their child's development, with aligned

strategies to promote and extend children's learning at school and at home, as well as partnership on referrals to meet child and/or family needs.

Additionally, the ISD must ensure that each ECS has support to engage in appropriate professional learning opportunities to remain up-to-date with: early childhood education theories and practices; supported developmental screening, ongoing assessment tools, comprehensive curricula; and, coaching and mentoring processes. The ECS attends meaningful, high quality professional development events, such as national early childhood conferences or training, MiLEAP sponsored professional learning, the Michigan AEYC Professional Learning Institute and/or the HighScope International Conference and Research Symposium. In addition, the ISD must provide opportunities for ECS to reflect on the ECS role and responsibilities with peers more than once per year utilizing listservs, webinars, local or regional meetings, etc.

Program-Wide Continuous Improvement

GSRP requires that the ECS along with the ECC and appropriate advisory committee(s) considers each classroom and the program as a whole to provide answers to a few key questions:

- o What is working and what needs to be improved?
- o What support do staff need to be fully prepared to carry out the program with fidelity?
- o What guidelines have staff received about collecting, analyzing and using high quality data?
- o What experiences need to be added or strengthened in the classroom for the children?
- o How is the program demonstrating children's growth?
- o How are families engaged as active decision makers for the program and in an exchange of information around goal setting and progress for their children?

The ECS sets the stage for answering these questions by supporting each teaching team in high fidelity use of an approved comprehensive curriculum and ongoing child assessment tool, and through the administration of an approved program evaluation tool. The ECS also considers how grant expectations are met as outlined throughout the Implementation Manual.

The ECS facilitates a relevant and useful professional learning plan each year, taking into account patterns in child data, individual needs of the staff, as well as the overall support needed to address aggregated data. Professional learning is connected to the ECSQ and the curriculum. The professional development calendar should address program orientation, how new staff members are mentored, developmental screener/curriculum/child assessment training, in-service training, monthly training topics, and contract professional learning days. Though the professional learning plan may be created by the ECS, it should be shared annually with the local advisory committee(s) for input to support their engagement with the process.

Early in the school year, the designated program evaluation tool for each classroom is administered for new teachers to aid in understanding of the tool and process

and to identify the teaching team's strengths and areas for improvement. When the structure of a teaching team changes, the ECS in partnership with the ECC and program administrator may determine if a baseline program evaluation is necessary.

Information relating to both the status of program quality and level of success in meeting the current year's goals and the goals set for the following year is shared with local advisory committees, families, staff, administration, and the school board. Finally, the GSRP ECC leads activities to aggregate all subrecipient data collected by the ECS, and together they evaluate and broadly share program success.

RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT

Intermediate School District as Fiscal Agent

Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) and consortia of ISDs are the grantees of GSRP funding. ISDs may choose to directly administer GSRP classrooms or develop agreements with eligible subrecipients to provide GSRP. Eligible subrecipients are: school districts, public school academies, local governments, and public or private, non-profit or for-profit agencies.

Children who reside within the geographic boundaries of the ISD can be enrolled by any subrecipient. However, it is suggested that each ISD and its subrecipients within the ISD form an agreement regulating the enrollment of children across subrecipient boundaries. This may prevent competition among subrecipients. If the family moves after the child has enrolled, the program may continue to serve the child for the remainder of the program year, with the family providing transportation.

Children may also be enrolled across ISD boundaries. To utilize this provision, before enrolling a child from another ISD, an ISD must enter into a written agreement with the resident ISD. See the subsection, *Cross-ISD Enrollment* in the [Budget](#) section of this manual for details on enrolling, formulating written agreements, and accounting for cross-ISD children.

Interagency Collaboration

GSRP and Head Start programs in Michigan are required to collaborate in PreK recruitment and enrollment activities. Best practice is to utilize one PreK application for all state and federally funded programs and share one waiting list. The local Great Start Collaborative could be asked to facilitate this work to ensure that as many of the community's children as possible take part in a program. If a program enrolls a child who is *eligible for or dually enrolled in* an additional funded PreK program, it prohibits another child from participating in the GSRP who may only be eligible for GSRP. Refer to [resources](#) for this section on collaboration.

Guidelines for Developing a Recruitment, Referral, and Enrollment Protocol

Although GSRP and Head Start are designed to serve two different populations of children/families, both programs share a common goal: to ensure as many children as possible benefit from high-quality PreK programs. Therefore, each school readiness advisory committee must approve a collaborative recruitment and enrollment process to assist families in selecting the program best suited to their needs. A signed collaborative agreement includes the process and procedures, including timelines, for recruitment and enrollment. The ISD monitors to see that the procedures are followed by subrecipient staff.

While each region will create a protocol that is unique to area needs and resources, a strong recruitment, referral, and enrollment protocol will include specific items:

- Contact information for each program including name of person(s) having responsibility for recruitment, title(s), telephone number(s), e-mail address(s), and preferred mode of communication;
- Eligibility guidelines for each program;
- Recruitment and enrollment policies that allow families to learn about each program for which their children are eligible;
- Processes and timelines for mutual referrals among all available programs; and
- Appropriate signatures.

A protocol exhibiting best practice will include a common application. The common application should collect the required information from parents/guardians of each child for later verification of eligibility. In cases of single, separated, or divorced families, access to personal data provided to determine eligibility (e.g., tax forms, pay stubs, etc.) should be restricted to only the parent/guardian that provided that data. See the ISD Administration of GSRP section of this manual for additional information on maintaining and protecting child files and eligibility information. Programs may want to consider including a question on the application regarding permissions for discussing the application with others. Enrollment applications should collect:

- Age of child;
- School district/county of residence;
- Annual income;
- Potential program eligibility factors placing the child at risk of educational failure;
- Health information and proof of immunizations; and
- Parent/guardian permission to share information among programs to determine proper placement.

Recruitment

A well-developed plan for recruiting the children most at risk of school failure is essential. The local GSRP family participation group and the ISD School Readiness Advisory Committee should be involved in drafting the plan. Efforts to connect with families might include:

- Information given to home visit specialists through the ISD and community mental health agencies, translated into languages commonly spoken by families in the community;
- Posters displayed at local health departments, doctors' offices, libraries, post offices, hospitals, and businesses that draw young families such as laundromats, and grocery stores;
- Flyers or publications sent home with children enrolled in elementary school;
- Information in the local newspaper and on local radio and television stations, as well as other media outlets;
- Door to door census;
- Recruitment tables at local area fairs and festivals or events planned for families;
- Electronic community bulletin boards; and
- Displays at kindergarten orientation.

Referral of Head Start-Eligible Children

GSRP legislation requires specific collaboration when a child is eligible for Head Start. **An eligible child must be referred to Head Start.** The referral process within the protocol must identify which program is responsible for contacting families to inform them of the eligibility for Head Start. Once the family is aware of the eligibility, Head Start should contact the family to describe the services available. Families should be guided to make the program choice best suited to their needs. See the Office of Great Start memorandum on family choice in the resources for this section.

The Head Start program should follow-up with the referring GSRP regarding the family's decision. It is not recommended that families be responsible for the completion of a referral form and/or returning a referral form to GSRP.

A referral form from GSRP to Head Start should include:

- Date of referral, date forwarded to Head Start, and date received by Head Start;
- Family contact information: parent/guardian and child names, mailing address, phone number, e-mail address;
- Signatures of sending and receiving program representatives;
- Program placement decision;
- Explanation of family program preference (preferably written by the parent/guardian);
- Parent/guardian signature acknowledging parental choice and repercussions of the decision i.e., if choosing GSRP, their child will be included on a GSRP waiting list until the referral process with Head Start is completed;
- Date returned to GSRP; and
- Signature of Head Start representative.

GSRP enrollment is deferred while the referral to Head Start is completed. The completed referral form is documentation that agreed-upon procedures have been followed and also reports the placement outcome for each family that has been referred. The completed referral may document acknowledgement from program representatives and the parent/guardian that the family is income-eligible for one program and will be enrolled in another. If Head Start does not return the referral form, the GSRP grantee need only retain on file the original dated referral form to meet program requirements.

The protocol should detail the referral turn-around timeframe before a family is removed from the GSRP waiting list. Then, as openings occur, all the children on the list are considered so that the family with the greatest need is contacted first. This critical portion of written protocol helps to ensure common understanding among programs and service to the highest number of eligible children/families.

Head Start Referrals to GSRP

In addition, a protocol that formalizes a strong collaborative relationship among partners will document the Head Start program's steps for referring both applicants that do not qualify for Head Start and qualifying families on Head Start's waiting list to GSRP. Section 642(e) of the Head Start Act of 2007 details Head Start's requirements for collaborating with state-funded PreK programs. Refer to

Authorization for Requirement to Collaborate in the resources for this section for select sections of the Head Start Act of 2007.

Prioritization

Public Act (P.A.) 120 of 2024 in section 32d15 requires that each applicant be ranked by family's federal poverty level (FPL) and that programs enroll children with families with the lowest income first. Please refer to the following prioritization chart for assistance, along with the detailed instructions provided below:

Prioritization Chart:

Month	Action
January 1 – April 30	Before accepting applications, establish the reserved percentage as outlined below.
	Applications are received and eligibility is determined.
	Families whose applications indicate they are eligible for Head Start must be referred to the Head Start program.
	Families indicating homelessness, foster care, or IEPs must be prioritized, up to the reserved percentage.
	Enroll families with incomes at or below 400% FPL, prioritizing based on income and program eligibility factors, up to the reserved percentage.
	If all families with incomes at or below 400% FPL have been enrolled, families with income levels above 400% FPL may be enrolled up to the reserved percentage prioritizing based on income and local demographic data.
May 1	ISDs enroll all families, regardless of FPL, up to the reserved percentage.
August 1	Begin utilizing the reserved percentage to enroll families based on income and eligibility factors, prioritizing families with the highest need first.
August 15	If openings remain from the reserved percentage, enroll any remaining families including those with income above 400% FPL eligibility up to the full allocation.

Each ISD must utilize a written prioritization process based on the required process in this section that provides clear direction for all GSRP staff. The ISD may also include local considerations for enrollment, special enrollment cases such as cross-ISD enrollment, and the enrollment of children with IEPs. It should include guidance for staff on situations where children present with similar income and program eligibility factors.

Step 1: Determining Reserved Percentage

Annually ISDs shall review their local enrollment data from the previous school year to determine the percentage of families at or below 400% who applied for GSRP after September 1. The ISD will reserve that percentage for late enrollment. This reserved percentage for children cannot be filled until August 1 of the current year.

Step 2: Accepting Applications

Beginning January 1, ISDs may begin accepting applications for the upcoming school year (i.e. on January 1, 2026, ISDs can begin enrolling in the 2026-27 school year). It is best practice that families are notified of placement and enrollment status in a timely manner, within 10 business days of determining eligibility. In cases where eligibility cannot be determined within that time frame, it is a best practice to communicate to families acknowledging receipt of the application and advising of next steps and/or estimated timelines to avoid confusion for families. A child is considered "enrolled" prior to the start of programming when eligible families have received confirmation of a placement in programming.

If the family's first choice in location is full, an alternative location shall be provided. If the family declines the alternative location(s), programs may establish a waitlist. Programs are not allowed to put eligible families on a waitlist if there are openings at their preferred location, unless openings account for reserved percentage.

ISDs shall establish a method of tracking application and enrollment data, including date of application, date eligibility was determined, date family was notified of enrollment, if waitlisted, and program/classroom assigned.

Step 3: Head Start Referrals

All applications for families received by the ISD that meet the following criteria, shall be referred to Head Start before considering placement in a GSRP program:

- Income at or below 100% FPL
- Homelessness
- Foster care placement

A child who attended a Head Start program as a 3-year-old may be enrolled in a GSRP Head Start/Blend program without reverifying the family's income following Head Start policy.

The ISD must retain documentation that all above families have been referred to Head Start prior to placement in a GSRP program. Enrollment may occur after the

GSRP and Head Start mutually agreed upon written referral process and timeline has been met. There are no exceptions to this requirement including the use of a centralized enrollment system where families have indicated a preference for a program other than Head Start.

Step 4: Enrollment of Families with income at or below 400% FPL

Once the ISD has calculated their reserved percentage, any applications from families that are NOT eligible for Head Start or that have incomes at or below 400% FPL, shall be enrolled starting as early as January 1, based on the following prioritization process:

- Calculate each family's actual FPL.
- Families who are homeless, in foster care placement, **and** have declined a Head Start placement, **or** have an individualized education program (IEP) are prioritized regardless of income.
- Remaining families are prioritized based on income levels ensuring families with the lowest income are enrolled first

Step 5: Enrollment of Families with income above 400% FPL

By May 1 each year, ISDs should begin enrolling families with incomes exceeding 400% FPL until all slots are filled, with the exception of the reserved percentage. If two or more applications are received simultaneously, the ISD shall prioritize based on income and eligibility factors such that children with the highest need are enrolled first.

Step 6: Using Reserved Percentage

Beginning August 1, ISD may use their reserved percentage. Prioritization must be based on income and eligibility factors, prioritizing families with the highest need first. Beginning August 15, an ISD may enroll any remaining families that apply or are on a waitlist.

If an ISD has reached their enrollment capacity prior to August 1 and receives an application from a family for a child with an IEP, experiencing homelessness, or in a foster care placement, the ISD may use the reserved percentage to enroll the child upon verification of eligibility prior to August 1.

An ISD that has reached their enrollment capacity prior to August 1 should consider requesting additional funding from MiLEAP, if available.

Reporting:

ISDs will report to the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential their enrollment numbers on a regular basis. Enrollment after the start of programming is defined as children who have attended at least one day of programming. Timelines for reporting will be determined by the department and include enrollment data based on income brackets. Additional data, including length

of time between families applying and notification of enrollment may also be requested.

Prioritization includes the following terms as defined below:

Applications	A family's intent to enroll in GSRP using the ISDs method of collecting information on interested families.
Enrollment	Enrollment **prior to** the start of programming is defined as eligible families who have received confirmation of a placement in programming.
	Enrollment **after** the start of programming is defined as children who have attended at least one day of programming.

Considering Child and Family Additional Needs

When reviewing applications and considering children for enrollment, several aspects of child and family need and preference should be considered, including:

Wrap Around Care

As part of the local coordinated recruitment and enrollment process, families should be asked if they have a need for wrap around care. Families identifying such a need must be made aware of, and referred to, GSRP programs that provide before and after school care and summer programming for four-year-olds and their siblings. Within their identified income bracket, families who need wrap around care should receive enrollment priority within programs that offer these services.

No fees may be charged to apply for or become enrolled in GSRP programming. For those programs that offer additional service hours (before/after GSRP hours, holiday care, summer programming), tuition may be charged to families for the programming beyond GSRP hours.

Programs that have currently enrolled children that will be transitioning to their GSRP classroom, may have a prioritization policy to enroll their currently enrolled income eligible children before any new families are enrolled in their program.

CDC Scholarships

Programs offering supplementary tuition-based hours of care must be encouraged to accept CDC scholarships for families with incomes up to 200% of FPL. It is acceptable for programs to receive CDC scholarship funds and/or charge tuition for children enrolled in care before/after GSRP hours, holiday care, and summer programming.

Programs that have currently enrolled children receiving a CDC scholarship and are transitioning to the GSRP classroom, no additional income verification is needed. Documenting the family's approval for the CDC scholarship eligibility is sufficient.

Families falling below 200% FPL, needing supplemental care for their four-year-old or other children in the family and not receiving CDC scholarships should be referred and encouraged to apply.

Head Start

Head Start programs may follow their own grantee enrollment policy and prioritize the enrollment of currently enrolled Head Start children transitioning into blended Head Start/GSRP or grantee GSRP classrooms ahead of enrolling any new children to the program.

Transportation

Families who need transportation services must be made aware of and referred to programs that provide transportation to and from their program. Every effort should be made to enroll families who need transportation in programs offering these services.

Developmental Delays or Diagnosed Disabilities

Throughout the application and enrollment process, please refer to the subsection *Special Education Eligible Children* within this section and the [Child Assessment](#) section for guidance when a child is identified as possibly experiencing developmental delays. Programs should not wait until the child is attending a program to facilitate the referral with the family. Homelessness or Foster Care

Any child experiencing homelessness or foster care must be given priority within this lowest income bracket. Please refer to the eligibility section for more information.

Early Entry Children

Priority for enrollment must be given to four-year-old children, regardless of income, before enrolling children with birthdates after September 1. Children who will turn four September 2-December 1 of the current year, may be enrolled if all eligible four-year-old children have been enrolled, there are no children on the waiting list, and there are additional vacancies within GSRP classrooms. The local prioritization process regarding income bracket and eligibility factors should also be applied to these children. ISDs must include in their policies timelines for enrolling children who will turn four September 2-December 1 based on historical enrollment trends.

Wait List

When all GSRP funded classroom openings are filled, each ISD must establish and maintain a waiting list of eligible children seeking placement when a space becomes available in a classroom. Eligibility of children on the waiting list must be verified and prioritization for possible enrollment determined as indicated in the Prioritization subsection above. Verification and prioritization of new applications remains a critical aspect of ensuring children with the greatest need are served first. Children on the waiting list are enrolled as space becomes available. In addition to children who are enrolled in GSRP, each ISD will enter GSRP-eligible children on the waiting list into the MSDS Early Childhood Spring Collection period.

Data required in MSDS will include date of birth, FPL bracket, and program eligibility factors. Each of these children will be issued a UIC.

Unique Enrollment Situations

Occasionally families with unique situations apply for enrollment in GSRP. When a child's parents are separated, special considerations must be made when calculating the FPL; the [Eligibility](#) section of this manual addresses methods to use based on the specifics of the situation. Enrollment decisions may also be affected when the child spends time with each parent. If parents disagree about the enrollment or if one is unable to transport the child to a mutually agreeable program, program staff are encouraged to work with both parents to support a decision in the best interest of the child. In no case may a child be enrolled in two GSRP classrooms at one time.

Additionally, each year some families will move. When a move is made to a nearby location, even if outside district boundaries, a child may remain in the current program as long as transportation can be arranged. When a family moves farther, every effort should be made to assist the family to enroll in another program based on the availability of space and funding as well as the needs of the child and family and on the appropriate prioritization of families on the waiting list, if any. This includes the transfer of the GSRP application, enrollment file, and screening and assessment data. A family moving to a new program should not be required to complete duplicate enrollment paperwork for eligibility determination. A child found eligible at any point during the program year remains eligible for the remainder of the year.

Combining Eligible and Non-Eligible Children in PreK Classrooms

Many areas in Michigan do not have sufficient numbers of children eligible to offer individual program classrooms but do have enough children in total to offer high quality PreK programs. Some programs have combined Head Start, Title I, and other funding streams to provide viable classrooms. Other programs have accepted tuition paying children through their community education programs to serve children who do not qualify for GSRP or Head Start. When braiding, each classroom would optimally include diverse children. The following issues must be addressed in administering combined programs:

- When even one child in a classroom is funded through GSRP, all GSRP guidelines must be followed: staff credentialing, curriculum, assessment, family involvement, etc.
- The funding for each enrolled child should be clear: Title I funds can be used to supplement GSRP funds, but a child cannot be enrolled in two such programs within the same program year.
- Additional children who meet the GSRP guidelines for eligibility may be enrolled beyond the funded number if the program can accommodate them, but additional funding is not available through Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) grants.
- Additional children, whether eligible or not, can be enrolled in a GSRP classroom, thus rendering it a braided funding classroom. GSRP funding can

be used for materials and supplies for the children who are not eligible. There must be documentation that tuition, other sources of cash, and/or in-kind funding are equivalent to the amount of state funding which supports each GSRP child (i.e., if audited the GSRP must be able to show that GSRP funds were not spent on children not eligible for GSRP, with the expectation of supplies and materials) as specified in the [Budget](#) section. Programs where administration and facilities are provided by the subrecipient as in kind must maintain careful documentation clarifying cost share.

- When braiding GSRP and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), an issue for discussion may be whether the program would generate a full-time equivalent of special education funding; the interface between the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education and the State School Aid Act warrants considerable attention.
- Over age children who are eligible for kindergarten, cannot be enrolled in GSRP, no matter what their individual levels of development might be. This is explicit in the legislation and will require return of the state funding for each over age child served. "Holding out" or "redshirting" of children has not been effective in increasing children's academic performance; children who are "over age" for their grade, no matter the circumstances, tend to do more poorly in school. However, GSRP cannot dictate the parameters around enrolling children with other funding; therefore braided-funding classrooms may include over-age children.

Special Education Eligible Children

A child with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) may be placed in a GSRP classroom in two ways:

1. **IEP Prioritization:** A child with a current IEP must be given first priority for enrollment in a GSRP classroom regardless of actual family income unless the IEP Team has determined that the child's educational needs can only be met in a more restrictive, self-contained classroom setting, (The actual family income must still be collected and reported in Michigan Student Data System (MSDS). or
2. **Blended Programming:** A child with a current IEP who is enrolled in a program such as Head Start or an ECSE classroom that is blended with GSRP. (Program blending requires that the highest licensing and rule requirement of each program be met in the blended setting).

ISDs must have a documented policy addressing both the enrollment process for children with IEPs in GSRP classrooms and guidance for ensuring best practices for inclusion classrooms that provides clear direction for all GSRP staff. Those children that have IEPs must be given priority within this lowest bracket. Actual family income must also be collected and reported in Michigan Student Data System (MSDS).

Federal Guidance on Inclusive PreK Settings

In a [Dear Colleague Letter](#) from September 2017, the Office of Special Education Programs ([OSEP)](#) defines inclusive practices as those delivered *"in the child's*

classroom in the course of daily activities and routines in which all children in the classroom participate (e.g., 'circle time', 'learning centers')." While "*services delivered in other locations that remove the child from the opportunity to interact with nondisabled children would not be considered as being received in the Regular Early Childhood Program. These include, but are not limited to, services delivered in a 1:1 therapeutic setting, or in a small group comprised solely of children with disabilities in another location within the building where the regular early childhood program is located*" (e.g., speech or physical therapy delivered via a time-restricted session two- or three-times weekly).

Additionally, in the Dear Colleague Letter referenced above, OSEP states, "*in determining the educational placement of a child with a disability, including a preschool child with a disability, the public agency must ensure that each child's placement decision is made by a group of persons, including the parents, and other persons knowledgeable about the child, the meaning of the evaluation data, and the placement options…*"

In 2023, the Departments of Education (ED) and Health and Human Services (HHS) jointly released an updated [Policy Statement](#) on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs. In this document they state that all young children with disabilities should have access to high-quality inclusive early childhood programs that provide individualized and appropriate support so they can fully participate alongside their peers without disabilities, meet high expectations, and achieve their full potential.

Enrollment of children with IEPs

An IEP qualifies the child for GSRP regardless of income and allows the ISD to prioritize enrollment within the lowest bracket *but does not guarantee placement in GSRP*. GSRP is often an ideal inclusive general education placement for children with special needs. The intent of this provision in legislation is to create placement opportunities for children with IEPs within high-quality inclusive settings. As with all children, the family must complete an application for GSRP and the collaborative enrollment and prioritization processes must be followed, including referral to Head Start.

GSRP is first and foremost a targeted program for income eligible children at risk for low educational attainment. Statewide, publicly funded general education PreK has previously only been able to serve approximately 60% of the income eligible population. Even with newly available expansion funding, the system *is not yet capable of accommodating every child with an IEP regardless of the complexity of the child's special education needs*. GSRP and special education staff must work closely together to evaluate each child's strengths and needs alongside the family's available resources and supports.

ISD Prioritization of Children with IEPs

The full intent of GSRP statute detailing prioritization of children found within Section 32d (8)(b) must be carefully adhered to (emphasis added for clarity):

The enrollment process must consider income and risk factors, such that children determined with higher need are enrolled before children with lesser need. *For purposes of this subdivision…all age-eligible children served in*

foster care or who are experiencing homelessness or who have individualized education programs are considered to live with families with household income equal to or less than … 400% of the federal poverty guidelines regardless of actual family income and are prioritized for enrollment within the lowest bracket.

Having an IEP qualifies a child for GSRP but does not guarantee placement within a GSRP classroom. The appropriate inclusive PreK placement for a child with an IEP may be GSRP, or could be one of several other program setting types including district run tuition PreK, Head Start, public school academy, or center- or home-based licensed child care. The IEP, as a document, is just one aspect of the process and does not establish guaranteed enrollment in GSRP. The IEP, an application for GSRP, and any additional available information must be considered within the GSRP prioritization process.

It is incumbent upon the ISD administrators to develop a non-discriminatory process for determining GSRP eligibility and prioritization for children with IEPs. It is imperative that the process is effective for both GSRP and special education at the ISD and local levels. The ISD can ensure the process is achievable and clear to all involved by including the ECC and ISD special education leaders, special education partners in local districts, GSRP subrecipient administrators, families, and community advisors in creating or reviewing the process. The written process must include criteria for evaluating each child's prioritization for enrollment.

The prioritization process must be closely tied to a process for determining the placement for any child with an IEP. The ISD must ensure that the placement in GSRP includes a detailed plan for a child with an IEP to receive all of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services included in the child's IEP in order to meet the needs of the particular child. It must also assure that the inclusive setting has policies and practices that enable the child's full participation and success.

Finally, the ISD must monitor carefully the number of children with IEPs (whether the IEP is a Qualifying IEP or not), placed in each GSRP classroom to ensure successful inclusive programming. Individual classroom needs and resources must be taken into consideration, such as the variety and degree of disability as well as adult/child ratio in a classroom.

Placement Considerations

The GSRP prioritization process stands separately from the IEP Team process. When making a placement decision for a child with a diagnosed disability, the IEP team must follow the regulations of [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#) (IDEA) and the [Michigan Administrative Rules or Special Education](#) (MARSE). These rules and regulations ensure a child with an IEP of specific procedural and civil rights. Consider this excerpt from *The Law and Special Education* by Mitchell Yell:

- A student with disabilities has the right to be educated with students in the general education environment. The general education environment is considered the least restrictive setting because it is the placement in which there is the greatest measure of opportunity for proximity and communication with the "ordinary flow" of students in schools.

- The less a placement resembles the general education environment, the more restrictive it is considered. Specifically, a student with disabilities has the right to be educated in a setting that is not overly restrictive considering what is appropriate for that student. Appropriateness entails an education that will provide meaningful benefit for the student. When the educational program is appropriate, a student with disabilities should be placed in the general education environment, or as close to it as is feasible, so long as the appropriate program can be provided in that setting.
- Although placement in the general education classroom may be the least restrictive environment (LRE) for some students with disabilities, it is not required in all cases. The IDEA requires inclusion when the general education classroom setting can provide an appropriate placement.
- The IDEA requires that, when appropriate, students with disabilities be educated in settings with children without disabilities. The law provides that: to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, special schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disabilities is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (IDEA, 20 U.S.C. 14129a)(5)(A)).
- There are two parts to the LRE requirement of the IDEA. The first addresses the presumptive right of all students with disabilities to be educated with students without disabilities. Schools must make good-faith efforts to place and maintain students in less restrictive settings. This presumptive right, however, is rebuttable; that is, the principle sets for a general rule of conduct (i.e., integration) but allows it to be rebutted when integration is not appropriate for the student.
- There are three major placement errors that IEP teams need to avoid. First, placement decisions should not be based solely on factors that are unrelated to a student's actual needs. Examples of such factors include determining a student's placement based on a student's category of disability, the severity of a student's disability, the availability of services, or administrative convenience. Second, a student's placement must not be predetermined. Predetermination of placement occurs when an IEP team decides on a students' placement prior to the actual IEP meeting. This does not mean that the IEP team members cannot come to the meeting with opinions and even a draft IEP, but that a final placement decision cannot be made until the parents/guardians are present and meaningfully involved in that decision. Third, an IEP team should not determine a student's placement prior to developing his or her IEP. The federal regulations to the IDEA require that a student's placement "must be based on the child's IEP" (IDEA Regulations, 34 C.F.R. 300.116[b]).

These rules and regulations are complicated when considering inclusive placements because there is not a universal opportunity for all children in PreK, as there is for children in kindergarten through 12th grade. **However, to meet the applicable rules and regulations for a child with an IEP who may be enrolled in a general education classroom program, either a GSRP or a Head Start**

representative, or both, should be included in the IEP team meeting and included in all conversations and decisions regarding the child's appropriate accommodations, modifications, and placement.

The IEP process should carefully consider all of the following prior to completing an IEP for a PreK-age child.

- Do all parties feel that the IEP fully meets the child's needs?
- Does the IEP include a recommendation from the IEP team that the child be placed in an inclusive PreK setting?
- What is the least restrictive environment in which the child can participate with any needed modifications and/or accommodations?
- What additional support or accommodations will be necessary so the child can successfully participate fully in the activities and environment of GSRP?
- How will special education services be delivered? Best practice for inclusive programming sees services "pushed in" to the regular education setting as indicated by OSEP.
- Does the IEP documentation include with specificity any needed consultation or training supports for staff members to adequately support the child in the least restrictive environment?

Planning for a child to attend both part-day GSRP and part-day ECSE, is not generally supported. Transitions between programs is a critical factor as these often create a burden for families, disrupt service delivery, and may interrupt child progress. If discussed as a possibility, there are many additional considerations such as:

- Is it in the child's best interests to participate in two programs, possibly with different facilities, staff, peers, routines, behavior, and academic expectations?
- If the child transfers each day between programs, how are his/her lunch and rest period accomplished?
- How will teaching teams in both programs communicate the daily needs of the child? Ongoing goals and progress?
- How will programs collaborate and coordinate communication with the family?

Lawrence, S., Smith, S., Banerjee, R., Preschool Inclusion Key Findings from Research and Implications for Policy (April 2016) https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED579178.pdf

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Dear Colleague Letter on Inclusive High-Quality Early Childhood Programs (Jan. 9, 2017) Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) related to Preschool Least Restrictive Environments (LRE) (PDF)

U.S. Department of Human Services & U.S. Department of Education, Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs (Nov. 28, 2023) https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/policy-statement-on-inclusion-11-28-2023.pdf

Yell, M.L. (2019). The Law and Special Education (5th Ed.). NY: Pearson.

ELIGIBILITY

Documenting Eligibility

Grantees should provide annual training to employees responsible for determining and verifying eligibility. All staff must also have clear understanding of effective practices to protect personally identifying information.

Child age, and income for each family must be verified before determining that a child is eligible to participate in the program. Programs must complete a verification form signed by the staff member determining eligibility and the parent/guardian providing documentation. This form should indicate the type of documentation viewed for verifying age and income eligibility, as well as specific detail including the child's date of birth, the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) percentage for the family, and the calculation figures used to determine FPL. An *Income Verification Sample Form* can be found in the resources for this section. The completed verification form should be kept in the child file with copies of the documents used to determine eligibility being certain to black out any confidential information such as social security numbers, parents' birthdates or driver's license information, or other personal information not essential to determining child eligibility. See "Security of Information" in the ISD Administration of GSRP section for more information.

Residency

All children who attend a state-funded Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) must live in Michigan. This includes migrant children during the times they are living in Michigan. Children, who live in bordering states, even if their parents/guardians work in Michigan, are not eligible for GSRP.

Age

The Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) was designed to provide high-quality preschool to children at risk for low educational attainment in the school year before they are regularly eligible for kindergarten. For GSRP, this means a child must turn 4 years of age on or before September 1. However, a provision exists for families who wish to request early enrollment for children who will turn 4 after September 1, but on or before December 1.

An assumption is made that families opting to enroll their child in GSRP early, expect to also use the provision for early entry in kindergarten the following fall. If there is a change to the plan to enroll in kindergarten early, a second year of GSRP is permissible. This requires that the parent/guardian apply for a second year of GSRP and, if still eligible, the child may be accepted based on the ISD's prioritization process and available space.

Documenting Age

The *MDE Pupil Accounting Manual* addresses the documentation of child age as required for local and intermediate school districts under Section 1135 of the Revised School Code (MCL 380.1135). It states:

(1) Upon enrollment of a student for the first time in a local or intermediate school district, the district shall notify in writing the person enrolling the student that within 30 days he or she shall provide to the local or intermediate school district either of the following:

> *(a) A certified copy of the student's birth certificate.*

> *(b) Other reliable proof, as determined by the school district, of the student's identity and age, and an affidavit explaining the inability to produce a copy of the birth certificate.*

The Manual provides examples of "other reliable proof" that may be accepted: baptismal certificate indicating date and place of birth (GSRP may also accept other religious ceremonial certificates such as a Bris certificate or naming certificate); court records; county, military, or immigration records; doctor or hospital records with sworn statements; certain family records; life insurance policy. These alternative proofs need to be accompanied by a signed statement from a parent/guardian. (A district must never deny enrollment or expel a pupil simply because the parent(s), or legal guardian, did not provide a birth certificate.) Through the year, programs should support families to ensure they have the proper documents for enrollment in kindergarten.

Income

Income means total cash receipts before taxes from all sources, with the exceptions noted below. Income includes money wages or salary before deductions; net income from self-employment; railroad retirement; payments from unemployment compensation; strike benefits from union funds; workers' compensation; Emergency Assistance money payments (and non-Federally funded General Assistance or General Relief money payments); training stipends; and military family allotments or other regular support from an absent family member or someone not living in the household; private pensions; government employee pensions (including military retirement pay);regular insurance or annuity payments; college or university scholarships, grants, fellowships, and assistantships; and dividends, interest, net rental income, net royalties, and periodic receipts from estates or trusts; and net gambling or lottery winnings. The *Income Eligibility Guidelines* can be found in the resources for this section.

Grantees may consider the income:

- Of the last 12 months,
- Of the preceding calendar year, or
- At the time of enrollment.

For example, if neither the last 12 months or the preceding calendar year accurately represents the family's situation at the time of enrollment (e.g., because the parent/guardian is recently unemployed) then the GSRP grantee should use its judgment in deciding if it seems likely that the current situation more accurately reflects a family's likely economic status during the period of the child's enrollment.

A family includes all persons related by blood, marriage, or adoption, living within a household who are supported by the income of the parent or guardian of the child enrolling or participating in the program. A parent who is not living in the prospective child's home and is not likely to return to that home at any time in the near future (i.e., during the child's participation in GSRP) should not, however, be included when determining family size (with the exception of a deployed parent). Programs must make individual judgments about whether the absent parent is truly part of the child's family or not and to document, in the child's file, the decision and the reasons for that decision.

For parents who have joint legal custody, the total number of family members for both families are summed and then divided in half, rounding up when necessary. For example, if both custodial parents have remarried and each has a child from this marriage, the family size is 2 custodial parents + 2 spouses + 2 children + GSRP child = 7; divided by 2 = 3.5, or rounding up, 4.

If a child is being raised by another family member (e.g., grandparent, aunt, sibling), who does not have guardianship, GSRP aligns with federal guidance to Head Start grantees. As in every situation, staff begin by gathering as much information as possible about the family situation. Staff should determine if they believe the current arrangement will be temporary or long-term and if a conversation with the child's parents would be both possible and beneficial. If staff determines that the child is, for all intents and purposes, being raised by that family member the program should consider the income of the family member when determining income eligibility.

A child from a family that is receiving public assistance (including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) funding, or Supplemental Security Income (SSI)), a child in foster care, or a child who is experiencing homelessness is eligible for Head Start. If a child in any of these situations has been referred to Head Start, is eligible but is not enrolled, the family may apply for GSRP and is considered to be in the lowest income bracket. In these cases, the family's income is considered to be in the lowest bracket, 0 – 50% FPL and should be reported as such in MSDS.

A child with an individualized education program (IEP) who is income eligible for Head Start must be referred to the local Head Start agency. **IEP Prioritization:** A child with a current IEP must be given first priority for enrollment in a GSRP classroom regardless of actual family income unless the IEP Team has determined that the child's educational needs can only be met in a more restrictive, self-contained classroom setting, (The actual family income must still be collected and reported in Michigan Student Data System (MSDS). or **Blended Programming:** A

child with a current IEP who is enrolled in a program such as Head Start or an ECSE classroom that is blended with GSRP. (Program blending requires that the highest licensing and rule requirement of each program be met in the blended setting).

If a family claims it has no income, the family is also eligible for Head Start and must be referred to the local Head Start agency. If the family is unable to provide income documentation, the program must determine the accuracy of the verbal report of income. Grantees can gather information (i.e., living arrangements, assets, etc.) to make an informed judgment about the family's income status.

A child who attended a Head Start program as a 3-year-old may be enrolled in a GSRP Head Start/Blend program without reverifying the family's income following Head Start policy.

It is recommended that the ISD verify with its local Head Start partner(s) specific information about the factors considered to be automatic qualifiers for Head Start to ensure all children eligible for Head Start are properly referred.

In some cases, a child receiving a Child Development and Care Scholarship to assist with child care expenses may be enrolled in a GSRP classroom at the same center with no further documentation of income required. This is allowable when the ISD prioritization policy allows a child currently enrolled in a tuition classroom at a center to be prioritized for GSRP at the same center. If classroom capacity for GSRP is limited, a determination of exact family FPL may be necessary and income documentation may be required.

Student loans are excluded as income. This is true whether student loans are federally insured or commercially issued. Student grants for tuition/books are exempt from income calculations. However, grants for room/board/living expenses should be used to calculate income. Scholarships, fellowships and grant funds received in cash and not used for qualified educational expenses are also considered income.

Adoption subsidy payments, whether federal, state, or employer sponsored, are excluded as income.

A housing allowance provided to a member of the clergy is not considered income.

If a parent is an active member of the U.S. Armed Forces, certain pay can be excluded from family gross cash income. Please be aware that an adjusted family income may make the family income-eligible for Head Start, and in that case, must be referred to Head Start. The following are NOT included as gross cash income for active duty U.S. Armed Forces personnel:

- Combat Pay - Compensation for active service while in a combat zone.
- Living Allowances – Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) even if BAH is used to pay mortgage interest and taxes; Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS); housing and cost of living allowances abroad; Overseas Housing Allowance (OHA).

- Moving Allowances – moving household and personal items; storage; moving trailers or mobile homes; temporary lodging; dislocation; military base realignment, and closure benefit.
- Travel Allowances – annual roundtrip for dependent students; leave between consecutive overseas tours; reassignment in a dependent restricted status; transportation during ship overhaul and inactivation, per diem.
- Family Allowances – specified educational expenses for dependents; emergencies; evacuation to a place of safety; separation.
- Death Allowances - burial services; death gratuity payments to eligible survivors; travel of dependents to burial site.
- In-kind Benefits – dependent-care assistance; legal assistance; medical/dental care; commissary/exchange discounts; space-available travel on government carriers.
- Other payments – defense counsel services; certain disability pension payments (active members of the military cannot receive more than 60% disability pay) including payments received for injuries incurred as a direct result of a terrorist or military action; disability severance payments; group-term life insurance; professional education; ROTC educational and subsistence allowances; State bonus pay for service in a combat zone; uniform allowances; survivor and retirement protection plan premiums.

Documenting Income

The best documentation of income is a copy of the most recent tax return. Alternate forms of documentation are paycheck stubs (indicate pay period: bi-weekly, weekly, etc.), W-2 forms, written statements from employers, or documentation showing current status as recipients of public assistance. The program's documentation verifying the income calculation must be signed by the staff member and retained in the child's file.

Documenting Program Eligibility Factors

There are seven program eligibility factors. Based on the prevalence data, family income is the main factor in determining eligibility for GSRP. Tiered income eligibility ensures that GSRP finds and provides services to its target population and focuses on those most at risk. However, all program eligibility factors must be collected and considered before enrolling a child in GSRP.

When deciding whether a situation or condition should be considered an eligibility factor, the most important question to ask is whether and how the situation puts the child at risk for low educational attainment and if/how this will have a negative impact on the child's development. If the situation or condition is not something that puts the child's educational future at risk, then it is not an eligibility factor for that child.

The seven program eligibility factors used to determine GSRP eligibility are:

1. Low family income
2. Diagnosed disability or identified developmental delay

3. Severe or challenging behavior
4. Primary home language other than English
5. Parent(s) with low educational attainment
6. Abuse/neglect of child or parent
7. Environmental risk

The same condition or concern should not be counted twice; e.g., a child with severe or challenging behavior should not also be considered as having a developmental delay in the social/emotional domain. Additionally, more than one situation under environmental risk may apply to a child and should be documented; however, environmental risk may be counted as only one eligibility factor.

It is recommended that programs record all program eligibility factors for each child at the time of enrollment; additional program eligibility factors that staff become aware of beyond the enrollment period are also recorded. The documentation is helpful in designing program services for children, making referrals for family members and helping to create summaries of eligibility factor prevalence locally and state-wide. When "parent report" can be used as documentation, the interviewer and the parent/guardian can sign and date a form indicating which program eligibility factors pertain. Alternatively, a note can be included in the file with the staff member's signature and date indicating WHAT the parent/guardian reported; e.g., to document "parent report" of low educational attainment, the following could be noted:

> *8/12/10 - At the intake interview, Ms. Brown reported that she has a GED and the child's father has not graduated from high school.*
> *Julie Smith, Lead Teacher*

The chart, *Program Eligibility Factors*, found in the resources for this section, will help to further define each of the program eligibility factors and suggest possible ways to document them. Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential collects program eligibility factor information on each enrolled child in the Michigan Student Data System (MSDS) Early Childhood Collection and documentation is reviewed during monitoring.

Sensitive Interviewing

Many programs use a brief phone interview to initially screen children to determine whether they might be eligible. A family that seems to have an eligible child should be invited for a more in-depth interview. Giving families a list of questions or factors to fill out on their own is not recommended; many topics are confidential and can be uncomfortable to address. Families should be assured that confidentiality is strictly maintained and that the program carefully protects personal information. Sensitive interviewing techniques help to build the strong relational foundation for helpful and appropriate services for children and families.

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FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Children who are successful in school have many healthy interconnections between family, school, and community. Family partnership in the learning process strengthens learning at home and is directly linked back to positive child outcomes at school. Programs can demonstrate that they value family involvement in a variety of ways - from partnering with families and establishing child development goals to sharing anecdotes of children's learning.

Communication and strong relationships are the keys to a successful partnership. The purpose of frequent and informal interactions is to strengthen the connections between home and school. Virtual meetings are allowable if programs plan carefully to ensure plentiful opportunities for families to see their child in the classroom space and the family has equitable means for access (i.e., language of choice, technology is accessible). Staff should use an interested and unhurried manner when talking with families. Staff and families should update one another about children's recent home experiences and preschool activities through:

- Conversations during drop-off and pick-up times;
- Written notes;
- Telephone conversations; and
- Electronic communications.

Ideas for family involvement activities may include:

- Sharing special interests with children, such as fishing, photography, or sewing;
- Sharing cultural and linguistic practices and helping to ensure that the classroom is a welcoming, inclusive environment;
- Providing recyclables and helping to make play materials;
- Logging books taken/returned from a lending library;
- Creating displays of child-initiated works;
- Attending family meetings, workshops, and serving on the Family Participation Group and/or the Great Start Collaborative School Readiness Advisory Committee representing GSRP;
- Sharing resources and information on how to support and advocate for your child;
- Participate in the periodic formal data analysis meetings to analyze program quality, curriculum and child outcome data;
- Meeting with teachers to set developmental goals and discuss children's progress;
- Supporting children's learning at home; and
- Reading or contributing to a family newsletter.

Staff support family involvement at group or family meetings by:

- Providing child care;
- Arranging transportation;
- Scheduling events at times convenient for families and/or offering a virtual option for participation;

- Providing interpretation and translation in language(s) of choice.
- Orienting families to the depth and breadth of the role of families at meetings;
- Making reminder phone calls;
- Distributing agendas or other materials ahead of time;
- Supporting parent-to-parent or family-to-family communication;
- Addressing needs of non-custodial parents/families;
- Addressing language, culture, and work barriers; and
- Demonstrating that family's contributions are valued by following up appropriately.

Staff members support family partnerships in the classroom when:

- A plan that outlines the roles of classroom volunteers is included in the GSRP Family Handbook. The plan identifies the leader (e.g., teacher, parent liaison, Early Childhood Specialist (ECS)) who will provide ongoing support to volunteers and reinforce how they help advance children's learning;
- Families are invited and welcomed by staff;
- Worthy classroom experiences are offered to families, for example, assisting in the implementation of the daily routine with children versus assigning volunteer minor roles such as wiping tables or cutting out shapes. For example, volunteers might support children at a learning area during choice time or by reading aloud to children;
- Volunteer opportunities are announced to families ahead of time;
- Responsibilities are offered that match volunteer interests, skills, schedules and facilitate children's development;
- Opportunities draw on families' experiences, language and cultural practices; and
- Families are invited to participate in special events such as field trips or program evaluation efforts.

Program Requirements

Advisory Committees

Legislation requires GSRP sites to provide for active and continuous participation of families of enrolled children. A high-quality GSRP supports families as active decision makers, both developing and implementing training to instill confidence in families as active members of an advisory committee.

Each Intermediate School District (ISD) is also required to have GSRP family representation on the regional Great Start Collaborative (GSC) Parent Coalition; working with other committed families to support early childhood practices in the community. These GSRP families, in turn, act as liaisons to local family participation groups, sharing ideas and activities in person, virtually or through emailed reports. Refer to the Intermediate School District Administration of GSRP section of this manual for more information on advisory committees.

Another opportunity involves participation in a school readiness advisory committee convened as a workgroup of the GSC that provides for the involvement of classroom teachers, parents or guardians of program participants, and community,

volunteer, and social service agencies and organizations. The advisory committee annually reviews and makes recommendations regarding the GSRP components. The advisory committee also makes recommendations to the GSC regarding other community services designed to improve all children's school readiness.

Family Contacts

The purpose of home visits and family conferences are to involve families in the children's education at school and to help them provide educational experiences for the children at home. Center-Based programs require a minimum of four family contacts per year, preferably two home visits and two family conferences. When the 2+2 pattern is impossible for a particular family, other arrangements should be made to complete the four required contacts. If a family prefers the visit not take place in the home, a mutual location may be chosen such as a park, restaurant, or a parent's workplace, or the visit may be conducted virtually. During home visits and family conferences, staff:

- Seek input from families about the program and its relationship to the child's development;
- Seek input from families about how they are supporting the child's development at home;
- Partner with families in setting appropriate child development goals;
- Assist families in a culturally and linguistically appropriate way to implement child development strategies at home that fit into normal routines. For example, color naming or classification while sorting freshly laundered socks, practicing counting with meaning when children serve themselves (e.g., carrots/crackers/raisins), practicing writing and symbol identification when children sign their names on a birthday card, etc. (sending home worksheets is not appropriate);
- Work together with families to write referrals for suspected or diagnosed disabilities or other developmental needs of the child. After the visit, staff members follow up by working with the Early Childhood Specialist, district, and families to locate and access special education services needed by the child;
- Work together with families to write and follow up on referrals for needed family services. For example, staff can provide documentation for families to share with providers, staff can make an initial phone call to help arrange an appointment, staff can help families find child care or transportation so they can use community resources; and
- Document each home visit and family conference.

Home Visit General Guidelines

Home visits are planned to last at least 60 minutes, exclusive of travel time, and include both the child and child's family. Many programs determine that credentialed Associate Teachers may complete home visits. Programs should consider providing support to multilingual families during home visits. Where Lead Teachers and Associate Teachers complete individual home visits, each adult often makes home visits with the children that they consistently work with in the classroom, e.g., children in their small group/child planning group/recall group. Where staff safety is a concern, teaching teams may complete home visits in pairs.

Itineraries should be distributed to pertinent staff who should know of the home visitor's location(s). A cell phone should be carried and valuables should be locked in the trunk before arriving at the destination.

It is strongly recommended that the **initial home visit** occur at the child's home or mutually agreed upon location, after the child is enrolled, but before the child begins the classroom program. The main purpose of the initial visit is to create a foundation for the beginning of a positive partnership between home and school. It is designed to ease the transition into GSRP for the child and family. Activities might include:

- Taking photos of family and child, family pet(s), home, etc.;
- Leaving photos of staff and classroom;
- Discussing transportation to and from the program;
- Discussing child/family's interests and hobbies;
- Discussing the importance of family involvement and the various opportunities;
- Sharing program philosophy and curriculum information;
- Reviewing results of developmental screening;
- Discussing goals families have for their child for the year;
- Generating a list of possible activities/discussion topics for the next home visit; and
- Discussing the required enrollment paperwork.

Upon arrival, appropriate introductions are made, and other family members are included in conversation. The family is asked for suggestions for an appropriate area within the home to meet. Staff members partner with the family to modify the environment as necessary (e.g., distractions such as a baby crying, television, pets, etc.)

Second and subsequent visits are designed around the individual child and needs of the family. Staff should prepare by scheduling visits one week to ten days in advance, at convenient times for families, and allow for travel time between appointments. The staff member and family should agree upon beginning and ending times for the visit and discuss what to expect during the visit. The purpose of the visit should be reviewed. Throughout the visit, staff looks for opportunities to encourage families to share their perspective and ideas. The home visit should be personalized to meet the individual needs of each child and family by:

- Eliciting feedback from families regarding the child's interests, concerns, and progress, both at home and in the program;
- Sharing information about community resources;
- Completing any necessary referral forms together during the visit;
- Reinforcing positive parenting;
- Exchanging information about the curriculum and its relationship to the child's development;
- Updating each other about the child's recent experiences;
- Exchanging ideas and materials to support the child's learning and social development at home;

- Engaging the family and child to model a teaching activity (utilizing home materials whenever possible) and sharing learning goals and outcomes of the activity; and
- Allowing time throughout the visit for the family to ask questions and/or voice concerns.

To conclude, the visit is summarized with the family, information is provided about future family activities and staff availability for phone calls and questions. Completed documentation of the visit includes a narrative description of the visit, the date, language preference, and the signatures of both the visiting staff member and the family member.

Family Conferences

Family conferences should be held in the fall and spring, and when requested by families. Conferences are scheduled to meet the mutual needs of families and staff and planned to last a minimum of 45 minutes. This may result in some conferences being held outside of regular work hours.

Staff members use a family friendly report from the approved child assessment tool and discuss the progress of the child across domains, goals for continuous progress, and any additional support which may be necessary. Developmental information should be exchanged in depth and in a relaxed, positive manner. Anecdotal observations and samples of child-initiated work strengthen families' understanding of their child's development. Staff share curriculum strategies for supporting children's development and discuss with families' ways that they can support learning at home using household materials and within ordinary household routines. Staff invite observations and answer questions from families about the program. The conference concludes with ways the family can participate in the program. Staff availability for phone calls is reinforced. Completed documentation of the conference includes a narrative description of the conference, the date, and the signatures of both the staff member(s) and the family.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AND STAFFING

Licensing Requirements

All entities which operate GSRP must comply with state licensing regulations governing child care. GSRPs must maintain a license in good standing from the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP)'s child care licensing division. All regular child use areas must be approved for use. Relocations must be completed with the knowledge and approval of the Intermediate School District (ISD).

The ISD and GSRP assigned consultant must be notified within 24 hours of an incident being reported to licensing, of a special investigation being initiated, a change from regular to provisional license, or continued provisional license.

4-Day School-Day, Part-Day, and 4-Day GSRP/Head Start Blend Option

Classrooms in place for more than one academic year, including relocated classrooms, offering the 4-day school-day, part-day, or 4-day GSRP/Head Start blend option must operate 4 days per week for a minimum of 120 days spread over at least 30 weeks. New subrecipients and newly licensed classrooms offering the 4-day school-day, part-day, or 4-day GSRP Head Start blend option must operate as follows:

Classroom Operational By:	Minimum Number of Instructional Teacher-Child Contact Days:
August 31st	A minimum of 120 days
September 30th	A minimum of 110 days
October 31st	A minimum of 100 days
November 30th	A minimum of 90 days
December 1st – February Spring Collection Close	A minimum of 80 days

5-Day Extended GSRP Program and 5-Day Extended GSRP/Head Start Blend

Classrooms in place for more than one academic year, including relocated classrooms, offering the 5-day extended program option or 5-day extended GSRP/Head Start blend option must operate 5 days per week for a minimum of 180 days spread over at least 36 weeks. To better align with the local K-12 calendar and operations, the GSRP may schedule up to eight (8) days for family engagement including home visits or parent-teacher conferences. Up to five (5) professional learning and/or coaching days of five (5) or more hours may also be scheduled and

counted as instructional days. Also, in alignment with local K-12, the GSRP is allowed up to six (6) instructional days that may be forgiven for inclement weather cancellations. ISDs are responsible for ensuring that program schedules are set before school begins and do not take unfair advantage of these options. Programs should only make use of these options to the extent necessary to accomplish GSRP requirements.

New subrecipients and newly licensed classrooms offering the 5-day extended program must operate as follows:

Classroom Operational By:	Minimum Number of Instructional Teacher-Child Contact Days:	Family Engagement including home visits or parent teacher conferences	Professional learning and/or coaching days of five (5) or more hours
August 31st	A minimum of 180 days	Eight (8)	Five (5)
September 30th	A minimum of 165 days	Seven (7)	Four (4)
October 31st	A minimum of 150 days	Six (6)	Three (3)
November 30th	A minimum of 135 days	Five (5)	Three (3)
December 1st – February Spring Collection Close	A minimum of 120 days	Four (4)	Two (2)

Also in alignment with local K-12, the GSRP is allowed up to six (6) instructional days that may be forgiven for inclement weather cancellations. ISDs are responsible for ensuring that program schedules are set before school begins and do not take unfair advantage of these options. Programs should only make use of these options to the extent necessary to accomplish GSRP requirements.

Specials

Programs implementing the extended program option may consider the use of "specials" to facilitate teaching team planning time, ongoing child assessment, collaboration with other service providers, coaching, and family engagement. During specials, children engage in developmentally appropriate activities such as art, music, literacy, and physical education that may be offered by the local school district or community partnerships such as a yoga instructor, local librarian, or

music instructor. Specials providers should work collaboratively with GSRP teachers.

Specials providers should understand and be guided by the [Early Childhood Standards Quality for Birth to Kindergarten (ECSQ)](). Programs should take care to follow child care licensing requirements around fingerprinting, health and safety training requirements, and the use of approved space with consideration given to bringing specials providers into the classroom or program instead of taking children to another space for that time. If choosing to allow periods of release time for one member of the teaching team during this part of the day, the specials providers will need to complete all licensing requirements to be considered in the ratios. If the specials provider does not meet all licensing requirements to be considered in ratio, then the teaching team members need to be in the room with the children during the programming provided by the specials providers.

4-Day School-Day and 5-Day Extended GSRP

4-day school-day and 5-day extended PreK programs must operate for at least the same length of day as the local school district's/public school academy's first grade program. A classroom that offers a 4-day school-day or a 5-day extended program must enroll all children for the same length of the day to be considered a 4-day school-day or 5-day extended program.

Part-Day GSRP

Part-day PreK programs must provide for a minimum of three hours of teacher/child contact time per day, for at least four days per week.

4-Day GSRP/Head Start Blend and 5-Day Extended GSRP/ Head Start Blend Classrooms

An ISD or subrecipient may partner with Head Start to create a GSRP/Head Start "Blend" within a classroom. This is accomplished by blending GSRP and part-day Head Start funding resulting in a school day of PreK programming. The traditional 4-day Blend classroom operates for a minimum of 120 days; the 5-day Extended Blend classroom operates for a minimum of 180 days. The funding for the GSRP portion of the day in a traditional 4-day Blend is the same as Part-Day GSRP. The funding for the GSRP portion of the day in the 5-day Extended Blend is one half the amount for the Extended Option GSRP. See the [ISD Administration of GSRP]() section of this manual and [resources]() for that section for more information.

4-day GSRP/Head Start Blend and 5-day Extended Blend PreK programs must operate for at least the same length of day as the local school district's/public school academy's first grade program. A 4-day school-day, versus a part-day, daily routine must be implemented. A child may not participate in GSRP for a part-day session in one classroom and then transition to a Head Start part-day session in another classroom.

All Head Start and GSRP policies and regulations must be applied to the blended classrooms, with the highest standard from either program adhered to, except as detailed in the [ISD Administration of GSRP section](#) of this manual. All children funded by the 4-day GSRP/Head Start Blend must qualify for and be concurrently enrolled in both programs. Classrooms that include 4-day GSRP/Head Start Blend enrollment meet Head Start requirements for days in session. Classrooms that include 5-day Extended GSRP/Head Start Blend enrollment meet GSRP 5-day Extended Option requirements for days in session.

For classrooms that include 4-day GSRP/Head Start Blends or 5-day Extended Blends and where Head Start has the preponderance of responsibility, Head Start is contracted as the GSRP subrecipient. When the subrecipient delivering 4-day GSRP/Head Start Blend or 5-day Extended Blend classrooms is other than Head Start, considerations include collaboration on features such as enrollment, attendance, classroom tools and forms, cost allocation for the teaching team and classroom services, comprehensive services, and monitoring of requirements for both programs. The responsibility for each of these program requirements must be addressed in the formal agreement between Head Start and GSRP.

Educational guidance for the teaching team warrants special consideration. As with all GSRP classrooms, the GSRP Early Childhood Specialist (ECS) is the educational leader, ensuring that the program evaluation tool is administered and monitoring child assessment data. The ECS must also collaborate with the Head Start Education Manager as detailed within the written agreement. If both the ECS and the Head Start Education Manager are to support the classroom, they must also collaborate on feedback sessions, goal setting, and professional learning so that there is a systematic approach with consistent messaging and manageable expectations for teaching teams.

Program Year Planning for All Program Options

ISDs are responsible for ensuring that program schedules are set before school begins. When planning the program year, scheduled breaks, holidays, and possible inclement weather days should be considered and sufficient days and weeks scheduled to ensure that the minimum number of program days and weeks is met. When excessive unexpected closures occur (e.g., inclement weather days) and reduce the number of instructional days children will attend to fewer than the minimum required, make-up days must be planned.

All program options, besides part-day, may count partial days of school as a day of instruction as is allowed for K-12 students. For example, a program may schedule an early release periodically to provide teacher planning time or schedule early release for several days in one week to accommodate for family conferences. For classrooms operated by school districts, this may be consistent with the schedule of the local school district.

Waiver for Additional Forgiven Days

When a local school district has been provided up to three (3) inclement weather days forgiven by Michigan Department of Education (MDE), this forgiveness can also be applicable to GSRP classrooms housed within the same buildings. This same allowance may be provided to GSRP Community-based Organization (CBO) partners. The ISD is responsible for developing the application/request form for their partners. Final decision for approving additional forgiven time of up to three days lies with the ISD.

Class Size and Ratio

Up to a 1:10 adult/child ratio must be maintained at all times. Class size must be capped at 20 children.

Before and After School Care and Summer Programming

To support family needs, a program may utilize the GSRP classroom space to provide additional care services to families.

A program that offers GSRP may not charge any additional fees during GSRP hours. Programs that offer before and after school care may charge tuition or receive CDC child care scholarship funds for the hours not included in GSRP. Programs may also charge for care provided during non-school days such as holiday breaks and summer.

Comprehensive Programming

GSRP requires comprehensive programming. In partnership with families, the GSRP provider supports:

- Children's health (mental, oral, and physical), nutrition, and development across domains in culturally responsive and inclusive environments that promote diversity, equity and belongingness.
- Professional learning for staff to make referrals for needed services and to document all follow-up efforts; and
- A team approach toward child-specific plans for goals related to overall health and development.

Philosophy

Administrative and program policies are undergirded with a statement of beliefs about teaching and learning. A philosophy statement is a means of thinking deeply about PreK teaching and the beliefs upon which decisions are made. This is separate from a mission statement, which answers the question, "Why do we exist?" and articulates the PreK purpose both for those in the organization and for the public.

The written philosophy statement is developed and reviewed by administrators, staff, and GSRP advisory groups. It is included in the program's Family Handbook. It establishes a framework for program decisions, goal setting, and is guided by the ECSQ, grant requirements, and expectations. The philosophy statement also addresses local, social, economic, cultural, and family needs; and is promoted widely via websites, recruitment materials, classroom newsletters, the family participation group, etc.

Consider the following as the philosophy statement is crafted or reviewed:

- Why PreK is important: What is the purpose of PreK? What is the PreK provider's role?
- Those we serve: How do we support diversity, equity, inclusion, and a sense of belonging among enrolled children? How do we define our community of learners? What is our relationship with the community, families, teaching colleagues, and administration?
- Approach and content: What are our beliefs about how children learn? How do our beliefs affect our work?
- Program administration: Curriculum selection; instructional strategies AND teacher-child relationships; child assessment; program evaluation; and program improvement efforts for individuals, the classroom, and program.

Staffing

The GSRP staff must have appropriate credentialing, sophisticated knowledge of early childhood education, and practice a team approach. Staff is scheduled to provide the maximum consistency for children from day to day and throughout the year. Additional staff members must be available to allow all staff time for breaks.

The classroom teaching team is supported with the active involvement of an Early Childhood Specialist (ECS). Refer to the Early Childhood Specialist section of this manual for specific credentials and responsibilities of this position. One person may not be employed to fill both a lead teacher position and an ECS position.

Staff Planning and Instructional Time

To achieve maximum consistency for children and allow intentional support for learning outcomes throughout the day, teaching team members are required to implement all facets of the curriculum and program day with children, e.g., music, technology, outdoor/physical activity time, meals and rest time. The ISD and program administrators must ensure sufficient paid time for all staff to participate in instructional planning, child assessment, professional learning, and family engagement activities outside of the child attendance schedule. These activities are time-intensive and valuable and are best accomplished through collaboration of teaching team members.

Thus, programs typically operate four days of classroom programming per week, with the fifth weekday set aside for these activities. If the program operates five days per week, the weekly schedule must still include paid time for instructional

planning, child assessment, professional learning, and family engagement for each teaching team member. The ISD, assigned ECS, and program administrators must collaborate to establish a staff schedule where the Lead and Associate Teachers are in the classroom when children are present and engaged in planned activities and ideally outdoor time and meal/snack time. If teaching team members are granted non-contact time for planning, etc. while children are in program, every effort must be made to schedule this time during rest time.

Credentialing - Lead Teachers:

Lead Teachers must meet the GSRP qualifications upon hire. A Lead Teacher will be considered credentialed for the position with minimally any of the following:

- A valid Michigan teaching certificate and an Early Childhood Education (ZA) or Early Childhood-General and Special Education (ZS) endorsement, Birth-K, or PK-3 endorsement; or
- A bachelor's degree in early childhood education or child development *with a specialization in preschool teaching*. The transcript will document a major, rather than a minor, in child development or early childhood education.

Personnel hired into a GSRP Lead Teacher position with a valid Michigan teaching certificate along with a valid CDA before June 24, 2014, are 'grandfathered in.' MiLEAP requires no further action as long as the person continues to work as a GSRP Lead Teacher in the same or another GSRP. If there is a break in service to GSRP, a 'grandfathered' Lead Teacher must meet new credentialing requirements before working again in the position of GSRP Lead Teacher. MiLEAP will also honor a valid Michigan teaching certificate with PPI/Early Childhood Special Education Approval.

Credentialing - Associate Teachers:

An associate teacher must be added with the 11th child in a classroom. Public Act 62 of 2011 altered credentialing requirements for the position of associate teacher with the GSRP. The provision for 120 Clock Hours as a CDA equivalency has been discontinued; personnel who currently have a 120 Clock Hour approval letter from the MDE are 'grandfathered in.' MiLEAP requires no further action as long as the person continues to work as a GSRP Associate Teacher in the same or another GSRP. If there is a break in service to GSRP, a 'grandfathered' Associate Teacher must meet new credentialing requirements before working again in the position of GSRP Associate Teacher.

Any GSRP associate teacher hired after June 21, 2011, must minimally have one of the following:

- An associate degree (AA) in early childhood education or child development or the equivalent; or
- A valid Center-Based Preschool CDA credential; or
- An existing 120 Hour approval letter (see above).

The AA and the CDA are formal training options that uniformly and systematically prepare staff to be effective team teachers in PreK classrooms.

Other Classroom Staff:

Relief Staff:

Are appropriately oriented and trained in program procedures relevant to their roles (e.g., responsive adult-child interaction strategies, child development, special needs of enrolled children, family-style meals), and receive ongoing supervision.

Substitute Staff:

A substitute teacher should have a minimum of a valid Center-Based Preschool CDA. Any long-term substitute (more than one month) must meet qualifications for the position being filled.

Classroom Volunteers:

A program must ensure licensing rules are adhered to for all adults in the classroom, including volunteers. A program must ensure children are never left alone with volunteers.

Staffing Noncompliance

Gains in a young child's development are increased when the child has meaningful relationships with responsive adults who have a sophisticated understanding of early childhood education. For this reason, it is critical that GSRPs hire qualified teachers.

If a program is unable to hire a qualified candidate for either a Lead or Associate Teacher position following extensive staff recruitment efforts as described below, the most qualified candidate may be hired with a compliance plan. When a subrecipient hires staff who are not fully credentialed, the subrecipient and the ISD are in noncompliance status until credentialing is completed.

Staff recruitment efforts must be documented in local administrative files. Recruitment efforts can include the following: identification of the search and screen committee, including individuals outside the hiring unit to serve as committee members, and should minimally include hiring procedures, position descriptions that include GSRP credentialing requirements, evidence of advertisement(s), form letters and notices, evidence of journals, publications, electronic bulletin boards, institutions, departments, professional organizations, meetings, and personal and professional networks to which advertisements and notices are sent (or offices/individuals with whom contacts are made).

Compliance plans for staff who are not fully credentialed are submitted annually to the ISD and reported within the Staff Information Report to MiLEAP. The compliance plan must outline educational training and include an anticipated

compliance date within required deadlines stated below. It must be signed by the program's ECS, the ISD Early Childhood Contact (ECC), and the staff member. Individuals hired on a compliance plan must complete the plan within three years.

It is the responsibility of the ECS to monitor the plan throughout, to assure compliance will be met within the appropriate number of years from the date of hire with GSRP.

The ISD must ensure that the ECS classroom ratio/contracts reflect the intensive support and additional classroom visits, coaching, and consultation that staff with incomplete credentialing require. MDE's Office of Educator Excellence provides a list of approved early childhood education endorsement programs in Michigan for teachers seeking to add a ZS endorsement to their Michigan certificate.

Compliance plans for staff who are not fully credentialed are kept on file at the ISD.

Staffing Noncompliance – Lead Teachers:

If an existing program demonstrates to the ISD that it is unable to hire qualified lead teachers, persons who have significant but incomplete training in early childhood education, or child development, OR who have five or more years of experience as a GSRP associate teacher, Head Start, or licensed child care center may be employed. Individuals hired in 2023-24 or after with at least 3 years of experience and significant training in early childhood education or child development, based on the recommendation of the intermediate district after a classroom observation may be employed.

When GSRP Lead Teachers are employed without proper credentialing, a written compliance plan must be a condition of hire. Progress toward completion of the compliance plan must minimally consist of two credit-bearing courses per calendar year.

New in 2024-25, any new program with uncredentialed lead teachers are required to create a Preschool Education Preparation Plan (PEPP) to demonstrate the programs commitment to supporting the teacher to obtain the required credentials. The PEPP is created along with a compliance plan and must include:

- The staff member's current status and timeline for a path toward required credentials;

- Availability of financial support via T.E.A.C.H., Michigan Reconnect, MI Future Educator Fellowship or other scholarships or employer benefits;

- A plan for release time for the staff member to complete their credentialing, as needed;

- A progress monitoring plan to be reviewed by the ECS;

- The responsibilities of the staff member and the hiring program;

- Signatures of the staff member, the hiring program, the assigned ECS, and the ISD Early Childhood Contact (ECC).

Compliance plans and PEPPs should be kept on file at the program and the ISD.

Staffing Noncompliance – Associate Teachers:

If an existing program can demonstrate to the ISD that it is unable to hire qualified associate teachers, persons who have minimally completed one course that earns college credit in child development or early childhood education may be employed. Individuals hired in 2023-24 or after who enroll in a child development associate credential with at least 6 months of verified experience in early education and care may be employed.

When GSRP Associate Teachers are employed without full credentialing, a written compliance plan must be a condition of hire. Progress toward completion of the compliance plan must minimally include two credit-bearing courses, 60 clock hours, or an equivalent of training per calendar year from an approved training institution or agency.

Family Handbook

Families are provided with policies and procedures that are easy to read, sensitively written, and brief. Refer to resources for the Reporting and Monitoring section of this manual for additional guidance on developing or reviewing family handbooks. Features specific to GSRP must be included in handbooks: use of grant name, logo and 'funded by' language. GSRP providers must have written policies and procedures that include the following:

- Program overview including a philosophy statement and curriculum, developmental screening, and ongoing child assessment information;
- Family engagement information, including formal family contacts, e.g., home visits and family conferences;
- An emphasis on the importance of partnership between families and teaching staff for child development (in school and at home);
- Opportunities for decision-making activities within the local advisory structure and opportunities to serve on other bodies;
- Child recruitment plan that includes procedures for enrollment and placement. Children must not be denied enrollment or excluded from GSRP programming based on challenging behavior, developmental delays or identified disabilities (e.g., toileting needs, speech, motor function, aggressive behaviors, and cognitive delays);
- Referral policy to meet child and family needs, including follow-up procedures;
- Confidentiality policy;
- School calendar;
- Daily classroom routine that includes what adults and children do during the day. (See resources for this section for sample daily classroom routines);
- Attendance policy;

- Illness or injury exclusion policy written to describe procedure for management of short-term injury or contagious illness that endangers the health and/or safety of children or others. Children must not be excluded, suspended, or expelled from classroom programming or transportation services for behavioral, toileting, or other non-health related needs. Programs should reach out to the ISD for information on mental health supports for children and follow the process set by the ISD to obtain help. (See also the *Seclusion and Restraint* subsection below)**;**
- Weather policy with provisions for temperature (wind chill/heat index) and air quality;
- Meals and snacks policy;
- Rest time policy (applies to GSRP/Head Start Blend and 4-day school-day programs);
- Medication policy;
- Health policies and practices on physical activity and nutrition for children;
- Accident and emergency policies, including how parents/guardians are notified of emergency events;
- Child discipline/conflict resolution policy;
- Policy for reporting child abuse/neglect;
- Grievance policy that clearly describes the steps to be taken when a family has concerns or a grievance; and
- Passive consent notice of program evaluation. See the Program Evaluation section of this manual for sample language.

Seclusion and Restraint

In December 2016, the State of Michigan adopted laws restricting the use of seclusion and restraint in schools. The Michigan State Board of Education (SBE) developed and adopted a state policy in March 2017 regarding the use of seclusion and restraint in the public schools. Not later than the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year, local education agencies, including intermediate school districts (ISD), were required to adopt and implement a local policy that is consistent with the state policy. Specific distinctions for PreK-age children should be included in the policy consistent with the SBE policy. The local policy adopted by the ISD applies to all GSRP classrooms regardless of the entity responsible for implementing the program, e.g. local school districts, public school academies, community-based organizations (public or private), college/university. The ISD must monitor both ISD-run and subrecipient-run classrooms for adherence to the policy.

Transportation

Providing child transportation to and from the center contributes significantly to family access to GSRP, but this service is not required. Where transportation is offered, families must not be charged transportation fees. Programs may use GSRP transportation and/or program funds for transportation costs including parent reimbursement and prepayment of transportation services for families. Use of GSRP funds must meet the guidelines set in the Budget section of this manual.

MiLEAP's Child Care [Licensing Rules for Child Care Centers](#) include requirements for the transportation of PreK children. Licensing rules assure the safety and welfare of children, that children are properly supervised while being transported, and are not confined in a vehicle for long periods of time. Licensing rules apply to both routine and field trip transportation. There are specific rules for center-owned vehicles, vehicles of staff or volunteers, or other private transportation, and specific guidelines for public school bus transportation of PreK children. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommends PreK-age children transported in school buses always be transported in properly secured child safety restraint systems. Grantees must ensure:

- Parents/guardians give permission for their children to be transported;
- Children are escorted by adults to and from vehicles;
- Children are offered adult assistance when entering and exiting vehicles;
- There is one caregiver, in addition to the driver, when there are over 10 three-year-old children, or over 12 four-year-old children on the bus; and
- Children are not to be in a vehicle for more than one continuous hour.

Meals/Snacks

Grantees must adhere to the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)/National School Nutrition Programs [nutritional guidelines](#). In addition, all programs must follow guidelines of the MiLEAP's Child Care [Licensing Rules](#) for Child Care Centers. Foods served should reflect the home and community cultures and be high in nutrients and low in saturated and trans-fat, added sugar, and salt. GSRP requires Part-Day programs minimally provide a snack. 4-day school-day and extended programs operating less than seven hours per day must minimally provide one snack and lunch. All children should eat the same foods unless there is a documented allergy, special need for individualization, or a signed Flexibility in Meal Service agreement is in place (see *Flexibility in Meal Service* subsection below). The program incurs the cost for necessary individualization at meals unless individualization is part of a special education Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

School cafeterias are problematic areas for GSRP to utilize as snack/meal sites due to time for transitioning, size of tables/chairs/serving materials, auditory and visual overstimulation, and the loss of quality time for adult-child interactions. All meals/snacks must occur in space approved for use by licensing and must occur in the GSRP classroom unless there is documented approval from the ISD due to extenuating circumstances. Adults in the classroom sit at the table, eat, or sample the same foods children do, and participate in child-initiated conversation. All GSRP meals/snacks must be delivered family-style, supporting children to do things for themselves. Classroom staff may opt-out of receiving meals. In this case, the program should order and pay for only enough meals so that the adults can sample provided foods alongside the children during meals and snacks to allow for adult modeling of healthy eating, use of utensils, and trying new foods. Adults must not eat outside foods during family-style meals and snacks with children.

Subrecipients are evaluated each year on family-style meal service with nutritious food. When the menu includes breakfast pizzas, corn dogs, French-toast sticks,

etc., and subrecipients question whether foods are creditable or nutritious, a formal request can be made to **not** receive specific items. Subrecipients participating in the School Nutrition Program (SNP) can address concerns with the school district's local wellness committee or reference the local wellness policy that each district is required to implement. Subrecipients can work with school districts and school boards to ensure that the local nutrition plan is written with quality features, e.g., foods that are high in nutrients low in saturated and trans-fat, added sugar, and salt. The Great Start Collaborative, School Readiness Advisory Committee may help subrecipients to advocate that local nutrition plans include quality menus that reflect the home and community cultures.

If food items from home are permitted for classroom celebrations, consider providing a 'nutritious food list' within the GSRP Family Handbook. Include special notation on allergies, a companion list of foods with low nutritional value, potential choking hazards and a contact person for questions.

Flexibility in Meal Service

More and more families are adopting specialized diets or desire food that reflects the home and community cultures, is high in nutrients and low in saturated and trans-fat, added sugar, and salt. Some of these features are not easily met by programs. ISDs and local programs may adopt meal service policies allowing families to provide meals and/or snacks for their children. There are several conditions that must be met:

- Families must not be expected or encouraged to provide food for their child or the program. The program must continue to provide meal and snack service meeting Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)/School Nutrition Program (SNP) requirements;
- Families choosing to provide their own meals and snacks must sign an agreement stating their intent and their understanding of the requirements (for a sample form, see resources for this section);
- When a family has signed an agreement, the program is not required to provide a meal or snack when the family is providing it, however the program must have a plan for addressing times when a meal or snack is forgotten, spilled, or insufficient;
- All licensing requirements for food service must be met;
- In GSRP/Head Start Blend classrooms, the highest standard from either program must be adhered to;
- Family-style meal service must continue. Children of families who provide food intermingle with the rest of the class at snack/meals, sitting and eating with the rest of the class and participating in all other aspects of the family-style meal; and
- Meals and snacks provided by families must also meet CACFP/SNP requirements except when documented food allergies or intolerance or family beliefs prohibit. If inappropriate foods are provided, teaching staff with the support of food service providers, program administrators, and ECS must work with families to meet the requirements or utilize the provided meals.

Programs will also want to consider several situations that may occur if flexibility is offered. These and more should be incorporated into program policies, staff training, and written guidance provided to families.

- Will refrigeration be provided for meals brought from home? Will families be limited to foods that do not require heating/warming?
- How will staff manage possible child reactions to their own or other's meals?
- If families choosing this option do not send in food for their child as expected, how will the program ensure there is sufficient food to provide meals and snacks for that child?
- If a child brings food that does not meet the requirements, will they be allowed to eat it, or will it be replaced? Who will communicate with and advise the family?

This added flexibility for families does not remove the requirement that families must incur no cost for program elements, unless in this case only, they choose to supply their child's food. This guidance also does not remove the requirement to evaluate subrecipients each year on family-style meal service with nutritious food.

Family-Style Meals

Snacks and meals in GSRP are part of the curriculum. Decisions regarding meal service should not be made based on ease and efficiency for adults. Snack and mealtimes provide daily opportunities to demonstrate the program philosophy in a visible way through the practices of participatory learning and authentic conversations that build relationships between children and adults. Below are quality features of family-style meals, where adults and children eat together in the classroom.

Planning for Meals

- Plan enough time for meals and snacks. When children assist with set-up, passing and clean-up, expect meals to take 40-45 minutes. Snacks will take 15–20 minutes;
- Center-based programs must follow MiLEAP Child Care [Licensing Rules for Child Care Centers;](Licensing Rules for Child Care Centers)
- Assure there is enough food for each meal and snack. See the CACFP meal pattern. A sufficient amount of food must be available to provide the full, minimum servings of each of the required food components for all children along with adult(s) sampling foods or choosing to eat full meals family-style with the children. Note that while the CACFP/SNP Preschool meal pattern charts list the minimum required serving sizes for reimbursable meals and snacks, best nutritional practice would be to plan for a bit more vegetables, fruits, and milk;
- Foods served should reflect the home and community cultures and be high in nutrients and low in saturated and trans-fat, added sugar, and salt;
- Children's eating behaviors, food preferences, and willingness to try new foods are influenced by the people around them. Up to 12 experiences can be

necessary for a child to try and then accept a new food! GSRP teachers help by encouraging children to explore and taste new foods; and

- Children may have never experienced a meal served family-style. PreK children love to serve themselves and will easily succeed with some guidance and encouragement. Be prepared to offer intentional support at the start of each school year, with newly enrolled children and after breaks from school, such as long weekends and holidays. Use real food service materials to set up "meal" provisions in the house area, water table and sand table so that children can practice.

The Meal Service Environment

- Meals take place in the classroom, away from high traffic areas. Noises and distractions are minimized or eliminated;
- A non-carpeted surface provides for easier clean-up;
- Children have enough space at the table for serving, passing, and eating comfortably;
- Serving utensils are child-size with comfortable handles. Small scoops, tongs, and spoons may work best. Measuring cups with handles can be ideal for supporting both fine motor and concept development. Use small pitchers with handles and pouring spouts for serving beverages where possible. Bowls with wide lips are most easily handled by young children. Plastic serving bowls are light-weight and don't conduct heat;
- Plates, bowls, glasses, cups, and eating utensils are child sized. Consider using plates with limited patterns and designs so that the focus remains on the food. Consider using smaller lunch or salad plates because dinner plates can be difficult for children to handle; and
- A gallon ice-cream container or sand-pail, along with cleaning cloths, make fine clean-up materials for child use.

Characteristics of Family-Style Meals

- Children assist to prepare for snack or mealtime by assisting with washing and setting tables;
- At the beginning of the meal, children bring food to the table in serving bowls, plates, or baskets that children can use comfortably. There are serving utensils for all food;
- Children choose where they will sit. At least one adult sits at each table where children eat and eats or samples the same foods children do. Adults typically position themselves in a mid-table position, to more easily provide support and have rich conversation with all children;
- Food is passed from one person to another;
- Typically, an adult begins passing each food item, modeling with action and words as they serve themselves. For example, "Today we have yellow string beans. I am taking one spoonful of beans and then I'll pass them to my friend Tamilla. Tamilla, here you go! You might want one or two spoonfuls of beans." Adults provide verbal descriptions as they model how to pass bowls and show children how to use two hands while holding a bowl on the outside

so that their fingers do not touch the food. Adults model how to pour and scoop using appropriate utensils. Adults model conventional table manners, such as waiting for turns, passing foods and saying "please" and "thank you";

- Children are offered each meal component and make their own food choices based on individual appetites and preferences. Children choose whether to eat, what to eat, and how much to eat. Enough food must be available to meet meal pattern requirements and to allow for seconds;
- Rather than acting as servers, adults sit at the tables with children throughout the snack or meal, unless more food is needed from larger or high-temperature containers;
- Everyone serves themselves. Children are encouraged to take a portion of each food component. Family-style meal service affords some latitude in the size of initial servings because replenishment is immediately available;
- Adults offer minimal assistance as needed. In the rare instance where one child needs more help than others, the adult can encourage peer support, and/or the child can be encouraged to sit near an adult at the start of the meal;
- Some food will spill as children serve themselves. Be prepared for this with a nearby pail of soapy water and paper toweling. The adult remains seated as the child (and sometimes peers) is calmly supported to clean up spills, wash hands, and return to the meal;
- Adults participate in child-initiated conversation; and
- Children help clean up by clearing their places at the table, disposing of their leftovers, washing the table, and pushing in their own chairs. Preparation suggestions include having a nearby pail of soapy water and small cloths. If a cleaning bucket is used, it is cleaned after each meal service and cloths are either disposable or laundered after each meal service. Adults do final cleaning/sanitizing after the meal has ended and children have left the table.

CLASSROOM QUALITY

Introduction

Each Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) selects an approved curriculum from the list within the Curriculum section of this manual. Regardless of which approvable curriculum is used, teaching teams implement equitable learning opportunities through a comprehensive, child-focused, constructivist curriculum model for all enrolled children, as is widely espoused for PreK and supported by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Curriculum models are essential to implementing high-quality programs. They guide adults in:

- Determining program content:
  - Skill progression;
  - Knowledge; and
  - Overarching concepts;
- Planning for learning experiences;
- Training and supporting staff;
- Providing high quality environments;
- Creating and maintaining a consistent yet flexible daily routine;
- Engaging in responsive adult-child relationships;
- Supporting development across domains;
- Utilizing intentional teaching practices to support decisions about:
  - Individual learning objectives;
  - Methods to accomplish objectives;
  - Addressing specific child interests through use of emergent curriculum; and
  - Structuring activities that can be adapted to meet the needs of all developing children, including but not limited to dual language learners and children with Individualized Education Plans; and
- Promoting equitable family engagement opportunities.

Classroom staff also attend to Michigan's *Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Birth to Kindergarten* (ECSQ), the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential, Child Care Licensing Division *Licensing Rules for Child Care Centers*, and program and intermediate school district (ISD) philosophies, guidance, and rules for GSRP. This section of the GSRP Implementation Manual is intended to provide an overview of the state-level requirements for classrooms implementing the GSRP model. Support for how to implement any of these high-quality elements should be directed to the program administrator and assigned Early Childhood Specialist. Any teachers acting as the licensing designee should also carefully review the *Program Administration and Staffing* section of this manual for more information on program requirements.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging

The National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) *Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education* position statement recommendations emphasize that early childhood programs are responsible for creating a welcoming environment that respects diversity, supports children's ties to their families and community, and promotes both second language acquisition and preservation of children's home languages and cultural identities. GSRP provides high quality programs that build on cultural background, language, and experiences while supporting adults in their understanding of implicit bias, anti-bias, and equity.

Key Elements of High-Quality Early Childhood Learning Environments: Preschool

The *Key Elements* draw from national and state standards for early childhood and are based on research in child development that exemplifies proven practices in early education. Developed in 2020 and approved by the Michigan Department of Education in 2021, the Key Elements provide a condensed framework for implementing high-quality programs for children and should be adhered to by all GSRP classrooms. Additional GSRP-specific requirements are detailed below.

Key Element #1 High Quality Learning Environments

The environment is designed to promote high quality learning and interactions in all domains throughout the day.

A high quality GSRP classroom embeds all of the requirements listed below.

- Classroom environment must reflect the GSRP approved curriculum being implemented by the program.
- All Licensing requirements are adhered to with fidelity.
- Learning materials and visuals reflect every child's family, local community, abilities, first language, and cultural identity.
- Children have access to varied, plentiful, and open-ended materials that are rotated over time. These items promote independence and include natural elements and real items vs. plastic/toy replicas.
- Interest areas do not have any artificial limits imposed by adults.
- Adult-made displays are relevant to children's interest, topic of study, and essential to the implementation of the curriculum.
- The outdoor learning area allows adequate space to encourage various types of play and activities (e.g., stationary equipment, portable items, and materials to support content areas).

Key Element #2 Consistent Daily Routine

A consistent daily routine is implemented to promote balanced participatory learning through all portions of the day.

Required parts of the GSRP classroom schedule are described below. Refer to sample daily routines in the resources for this section. Classrooms may have alternate terms for parts of the routine, as long as names are used daily and are easily understood by children. A visual daily routine should also be posted at children's eye level, and referred to throughout the day. A consistent daily routine must include appropriate amounts of time each day for children to:

- Participate in a three-part sequence of child planning, choice and child recall. In child **planning**, children indicate their choice time plans to adults, in a variety of ways, and in ways that are consistent with individual developmental levels. Children will have a minimum of one continuous hour of **choice time** to carry out their plans and make many choices about where and how to use materials. Adults support children's efforts by listening, encouraging children's language, imitating children's ideas and words, and commenting on specific attributes of children's work. Children complete the sequence after **clean-up time**, by **recalling** and discussing their choice time activities.
- Engage in discrete **small group** activities which may be adult-initiated, but not adult-dominated.
- Engage in **large group** activities which may be adult-initiated, but not adult-dominated.
- Have **snack or meal time**(s) where staff and children eat together family style and share the same menu to the extent possible. (See *Meals/Snacks* in *Program Administration and Staffing* section of this manual).
- Experience planned transitions that are limited and actively engaging.
- Have **outside time** where adults provide equipment and materials to intentionally plan, support and extend children's activities.
- Have an opportunity for **rest** in a school-day, extended program or GSRP/Head Start blend program that is scheduled for no longer than one hour, accommodates for the needs of individual children, and includes alternate activities for children who do not sleep.

Key Element #3 Adult-Child Relationships

Responsive adult-child interactions promote secure relationships that support learning throughout the day.

The structure of the physical environment, daily routine and activities presented, and the adult(s) approach all have a direct influence on the adult-child relationship.

Required parts of high-quality adult-child relationships in a GSRP classroom are described below.

- Meet children's basic needs by allowing children to use the toilet as needed. Their wet or soiled clothing is changed when uncomfortable or unhealthy for the child. Injuries are attended to promptly with empathy and compassion.
- Support children with sensitivity during transition times throughout the day (arrival, during daily routine, departure). Their feelings are acknowledged, and children are allowed to transition into and out of activities at their own pace.
- Provide a warm and caring environment by focusing on children throughout the day. Adults respond to children with calm and respectful tones and attend to them when they are upset.
- Acknowledge individual children's accomplishments. Adults avoid using praise and rewards by acknowledging children's individual efforts (e.g., repeating the children's words and commenting on what they are doing, allowing the children to evaluate their own work and efforts).
- Use the following strategies that support children's communication skills:
  - Allow the child to initiate conversations, speak first, converse in a give and take manner;
  - Use open-ended questions;
  - Acknowledge and seek children's ideas;
  - Encourage children to talk about what they are doing; and
  - Use children's words and comment specifically on their work.
- Encourage children to interact with one another. Use the following strategies for partnering in children's play:
  - Observe, listen, and follow cues;
  - Assume roles suggested;
  - Imitate and extend their play; and
  - Encourage children to do things for themselves like solving problems with materials and tasks.

Social Emotional Learning

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is crucial to helping children learn to manage their feelings and to interact successfully with others. Research shows young children who struggle with behavioral and emotional problems have a fifty percent chance of continuing to struggle into adulthood. There is additional evidence that high-quality early childhood education can minimize challenging child behaviors when it focuses on child-initiated learning activities and is most effective when offered to children through a system based on positive relationships with children, families, and colleagues.

SEL skills are foundational and categorized into four types: behavioral regulation, friendship skills, emotional literacy, and problem-solving skills. Teachers should spend ample time supporting children's SEL development, especially at the beginning of the year. As the year progresses, and as children begin to develop these skills, teachers should continue to embed these skills into daily routines and classroom learning.

The following instructional strategies have been shown to be effective in promoting positive social interactions.

- Teach children how to regulate their emotions through calm down strategies such as breathing, counting, drawing a picture, etc.
- Embed friendship skills into classroom activities, focusing on how to communicate with others, greet each other by name, and play cooperatively.
- Provide opportunities for children to learn emotions, both positive and negative emotions, role playing the identified emotion and how to navigate those emotions.
- Involve children in resolving conflicts with their peers. The following conflict resolution steps are taught to the children and implemented by the adult:
    o Approach conflict calmly;
    o Acknowledge children's feelings;
    o Gather information from the children on what happened;
    o Restate the problem to the children;
    o Ask children for solutions and encourage children to choose a solution together; and
    o Support children in the implementation of their solution.
- Reference a high-quality framework for teaching social emotional skills that target challenging behaviors, for example, the _National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations_.
- Children must not be denied enrollment or excluded from GSRP programming based on challenging behavior, developmental delays or identified disabilities (e.g., toileting needs, speech, motor function, aggressive behaviors and cognitive delays). Programs should reach out to the ISD for information on mental health supports for children and follow the process set by the ISD to obtain help.

Key Element #4 Intentional Teaching

Adults use intentional teaching practices to support continued growth in all aspects of children's development and learning.

Intentional Teaching is dependent upon adult expertise in fundamental child development and the developmental continuum together with authentic assessment and appropriate observations of each child to establish learning goals and continuously inform instruction.

Intentional teachers rely on all members of the teaching team to affect the on-going assessment cycle by observing and assessing, reflecting, and planning, and implementing instruction.

Intentional Teaching Practices:

- Encompass everything the teaching team does to facilitate children's development, including organization of the indoor and outdoor learning environments, the nature of adult-child interactions, and strategies for transitions and grouping.
- Promote active play through intentional, hands-on learning, using open ended, real materials, during all portions of the daily routine.

- Offer real life learning experiences individualized for the strengths, interests and needs of each child, in consideration of their family, community, and culture.
- Establish and support an inclusive environment, mindful of family, child, and staff unique and diverse situations and needs.
- Use technology with intentionality, which may thoughtfully include being used as a tool during play.
- Select books, music, and materials that reflect not only the culture of the children in the classroom but also the broader community while avoiding stereotypes.

Utilize the following for further details on high-quality indicators of teaching practices:

- Chosen curriculum and resources;
- Early Childhood Standards Quality for Birth to Kindergarten;
- Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy for Prekindergarten;
- Essential Instructional Practices in Early Mathematics: Prekindergarten to Grade 3;
- Key Elements of High-Quality Early Childhood Learning Environments: Preschool;
- WIDA Early Years Michigan Connections for Multilingual Learners; and
- Program evaluation tool (CLASS or Classroom Coach).

The following teaching strategies are not aligned with the *best* teaching practices and should not be utilized in a GSRP classroom:

- Use of workbooks, worksheets, flashcards, and/or other materials that do not engage children's thinking in active learning;
- Whole class extended, rote activity (e.g., calendar);
- Letter of the week; and
- Homework.

See your Early Childhood Specialist (ECS) for additional guidance and support.

Team Teaching Model

In team teaching, each staff person is fully engaged in planning curriculum, implementing curriculum both indoors and outdoors, child assessment, and supporting family engagement through home visits, conferences, professional learning, and family meetings. The work is collaboratively shared and a high-quality GSRP dedicates time for staff to plan on a daily basis:

- All teaching staff participate equally in planning activities; ensuring associate teachers do not play minor non-teaching roles (e.g., wipe tables, prepare meals, etc.).
- All teaching staff conduct and participate in children's activities (for all parts of the daily routine).

- All teaching staff recognize their responsibility for the health and safety, growth and development of all children.
- All teaching staff will be supported with and responsible for appropriate planning, instruction, assessment, and program implementation including needed accommodations to the daily routine, behavior challenges, and family communication for children with IEPs when special education staff are not present.

Key Element #5 Engaging families

The relationship with each family is valued and strengthened by seeking multiple ways to partner in their child's development and learning.

Family engagement is critical to positive child outcomes. The GSRP provides a variety of opportunities for families to become involved in the program and regularly seeks input from families and involves them in decision making for the program. Families must not be required to volunteer in the classroom or participate in group meetings as a condition of enrollment, although all efforts should be examined to engage all families based on their ability and comfort level.

GSRP teaching teams conduct four formal family contacts annually; these typically occur in two home visits and two family conferences. Family conferences can be completed virtually if the family prefers. Refer to the *Family Engagement* section of this manual for more information.

CURRICULUM

Introduction

Curriculum encompasses the full range of the child's experience at school. The term *curriculum model* refers to an educational system that combines theory with practice. A curriculum model has a theory and knowledge base that reflects a philosophical orientation and is supported by child development research and educational evaluation. Curriculum models are essential in determining program content and professional learning, as well as supporting and coaching staff to implement high quality programs. Curriculum models include the skills, knowledge and concepts to be supported, and the plans for learning experiences through which progress occurs. The practical application of a curriculum model includes guidelines on how to:

- Set up the physical environment;
- Make decisions about learning objectives as well as specific methods to accomplish objectives that support specific child interests and/or emergent curriculum;
- Structure activities that are responsive to a variety of ability levels and populations, such as dual language learners and children with Individualized Education Plans;
- Interact with children and their families; and
- Support staff members in their initial training and ongoing implementation of the program.

Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) subrecipients implement a comprehensive, child-focused, constructivist curriculum model for all enrolled children, as is widely espoused for PreK and supported by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.[1] In a constructivist curriculum model, there is an appropriate balance of child-initiated activities and adult-guided active learning. Throughout each classroom session, teaching teams (Lead and Associate Teachers) intentionally interact with children to build on their understandings and enhance learning. Play and peer-to-peer interaction are vital to provide children with opportunities to engage in abstract thinking, develop self-regulation skills, problem-solving and oral language skills. GSRP subrecipients reflect the value of play in a written philosophy statement, the comprehensive curriculum, and family communication. Teaching teams must have training in the curriculum from a certified trainer of the curriculum to implement an appropriate curriculum.

Regardless of which approvable curriculum is chosen, the GSRP indoor physical space is organized into clearly defined interest areas that can be recognized by the children and have enough space for several children to play at once. GSRP classrooms do not have a large portion of the room reserved for whole group instruction and/or a cluster of tables for group activities such as journaling, penmanship, worksheets. Classroom interest areas and materials are labeled and arranged to support the 'find-use-return' cycle. Teachers and children use labels of many types (tracings, photographs, actual objects, words). Materials in all areas are plentiful and carefully selected, predominately open-ended and include many

real/sensory items versus toy/plastic models. Additionally, materials which reflect the lives of enrolled families and the community are integrated into classroom activities. A variety of individual and project work of the children in the classroom is displayed at the child's level; only essential adult-made/commercial displays are present.

Together, learner-centered and learner-driven play = playful learning. Adult-initiated GSRP classroom activities include large–, small group and transition times. During these portions of the daily routine, adults select concepts, activities and materials based on children's strengths and interests. Adults plan possible scaffolding strategies for children at emergent, middle and later developmental stages. Adults comment on what children are doing/saying, imitate and add to children's actions, use materials with children and support children as leaders. Children are engaged as active, participatory learners during adult-initiated activities. Children contribute their own ideas and are involved at their own developmental levels. Children have the highest level of control during uninterrupted child-initiated play, where children make many choices about where and how to use materials and carry out their activities. In this portion of the day, adults are partners in children's play; they observe and listen before entering play, assume roles as suggested by children, follow children's cues about content and direction, imitate children, encourage children to talk about what they are doing, use children's words and comment specifically on children's activities.

The Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) does not identify one 'best' curriculum model, but rather supports PreK curriculum models that meet specific criteria. Approved curriculum models must align with the Michigan
Early Childhood Standards of Quality Birth to Kindergarten (ECSQ), ensuring horizontal alignment among early learning expectations and PreK program standards, practice and assessment, as well as ensuring vertical alignment within Michigan's early childhood and education system and with kindergarten through twelfth grade standards.

Selecting Curriculum

It is important when selecting a curriculum model from those approvable for use in GSRP, not only to refer to the program's student population and philosophy, but to ensure alignment with the early learning expectations and program standards of the ECSQ. The following questions are utilized during the department's curriculum approval process and should be considered when selecting a curriculum from the approved list for program use.

- Is the curriculum model research-based and research-validated? Are elements of the curriculum clearly based on research about the development of young children? Has research demonstrated the effectiveness of the curriculum model in improving comprehensive outcomes or results for children?
- What domains are included? Are there learning experiences and activities in all areas of development outlined in the ECSQ? Does the methodology
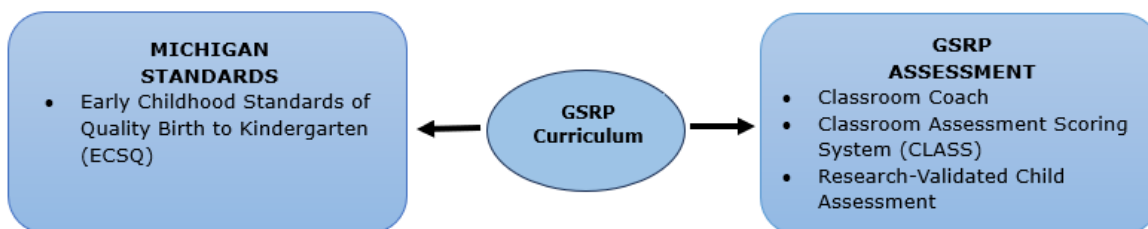
promote important development in "approaches to learning" such as initiative, persistence, and imagination?

- Does the curriculum include guidelines on setting up the indoor and outdoor learning environments? Are materials available throughout the learning environment to support systematic child observation to assess what children know and can do?
- Is the curriculum child-focused, supporting emergent and meaningful curriculum for currently enrolled children? Does the curriculum promote active, participatory learning through all portions of the daily schedule?
- Are the materials for children's use appropriate? Does the curriculum model include or promote many 'real' items in place of 'toy replicas?' Are the materials appropriate for the age and level of development of four-year-old children, including children with special needs and those who may be more advanced in certain areas? Are the materials free of cultural bias? Do the materials reflect the interests and home cultures of enrolled children and the local community? Do the materials represent a balance of the need for teacher planning and child initiation of learning activities?
- Is there a balance of teacher-planned and child-initiated activities? Does the daily routine support a balance between adult-initiated and child-initiated activities? Does the curriculum model encourage teachers to plan topics of investigation based on the interests of the children?
- Is there evidence that authentic assessment (see *Child Assessment* section) for instructional purposes is integral to implementation of the curriculum model? Is there evidence that family engagement is valued and that interaction with families is focused on partnership in their child's development?
- Are the resources for teaching staff sufficient and appropriate? Is there adequate explanatory material on how to make decisions about learning objectives as well as specific methods to accomplish objectives? Is there adequate explanatory material to structure activities that are responsive to a variety of ability levels and populations, such as dual language learners and children with Individualized Education Plans?
- Do the authors or publishers of the curriculum model offer professional learning opportunities to support staff members in their initial training and ongoing, full implementation of the model?
- Horizontal Alignment: Has the publisher provided horizontal alignment with the early learning expectations and program standards of Michigan's ECSQ? Are the contents of ECSQ, curriculum model, and child assessments aligned?
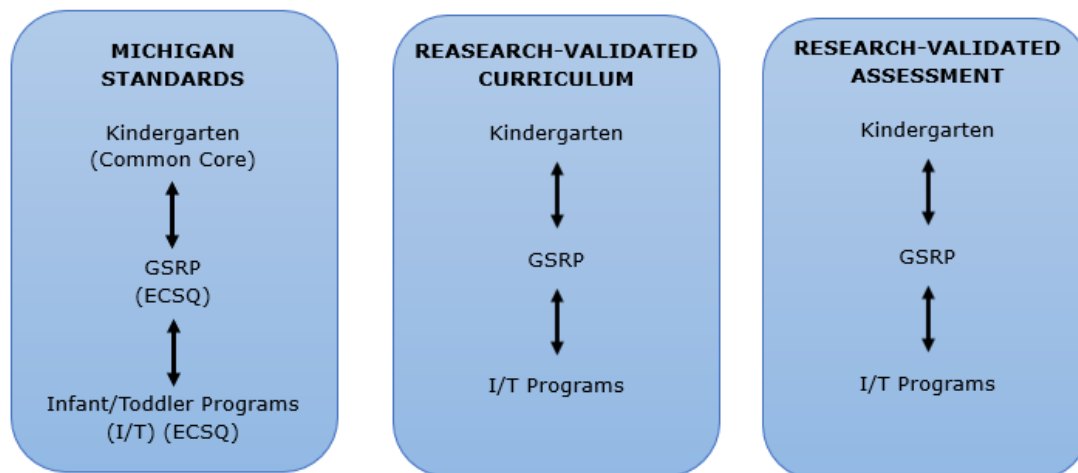
Alignment

Early care and education alignment focuses on the content and format of children's experiences across settings, through age eight. Educators are concerned with both horizontal and vertical alignment.

Horizontal alignment refers to the agreement among standards, curriculum and assessment within a given age or grade level. This alignment defines expectations for children, families, and teachers and ensures that child assessment reflects state-level early learning expectations. Horizontal alignment of program standards and program assessment allows program administrators to measure the quality of the program based on the standards and research-validated curriculum. For GSRP, the research-validated curriculum model, developmental screening and authentic/comprehensive child assessment align with the ECSQ. In kindergarten, there should be alignment among the Michigan curriculum standards for kindergarten, the local kindergarten curriculum and kindergarten assessments.

Vertical alignment refers to the agreement of the standards, curriculum, and assessments between age or grade levels. This ensures consistent expectations and quality from year-to-year for children, families, teachers, and administrators. MDE vertically aligned the ECSQ and the kindergarten curriculum standards. Additionally, some research-validated early childhood curriculum and child assessments have both infant-toddler and prekindergarten versions.

Commonly Used Curriculum Models Validated by Research

Unless on an active MiLEAP approved flexibility waiver, GSRP grantees are required in 32d(4) to use a research-validated curriculum model that aligns with the ECSQ. In order to meet that requirement, MiLEAP requires that programs must select from the following approved curricula for GSRP classrooms. Descriptions below are adapted from linked websites.

Reggio Emilia:

Distinctive traits of the Reggio Emilia approach include collegial and relational-based provocative experiences, the importance of environments and spaces, intense co-participation of families, affirmation of competencies in children and adults, educational documentation, listening and intentional, flexible planning for children. Guiding principles include:

- A strong and optimistic image of the child who is born with many resources and extraordinary potentials.
- Participation values and fosters dialogue and the sense of belonging to a community.
- The flow of quality information via documentation introduces families to a quality of knowing that tangibly changes expectations.
- Research represents one of the essential dimensions of life of children and adults, a knowledge-building tension that must be recognized and valued.

Project Approach:

The Project Approach refers to a set of teaching strategies that enable teachers to guide students through in-depth studies of real-world topics. Projects have a complex but flexible framework within which teaching and learning are seen as interactive processes. When teachers implement the Approach successfully, students feel highly motivated and actively involved in their own learning, leading them to produce high-quality work and to grow as individuals and collaborators. A study may be carried out with an entire class or with small groups of students. Projects typically do not constitute the whole educational program; teachers use them alongside systematic instruction and as a means of achieving curricular goals.

Montessori:

The Montessori curriculum focuses on five areas: practical life, sensory awareness education, language arts, mathematics and geometry, and cultural subjects. Components necessary for a program to be considered authentically Montessori include multiage groupings that foster peer learning, uninterrupted blocks of work time, and guided choice of work activity. In addition, a full complement of specially designed Montessori learning materials are meticulously arranged in an aesthetically pleasing environment. The classroom is prepared by the teacher to encourage independence, freedom within limits, and a sense of order.

HighScope:

The HighScope Preschool Curriculum is based on the principles of active learning and support of a child's positive interactions with adults and peers. The curriculum is a comprehensive model that addresses all areas of development through eight content areas and 58 key developmental indicators (KDIs). Each KDI is connected to and reinforced by scaffolding strategies to support and gently extend children's learning. While learning in content areas prepares children for later schooling, HighScope features methods that promote independence, curiosity, decision making, cooperation, persistence, creativity, and problem solving in young children.

Creative Curriculum:

Creative Curriculum helps teachers create a high-quality learning environment and build a thorough understanding of best practices. Daily Resources help teachers

plan and manage every moment of their day. Through studies, which are hands-on, project-based investigations, The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool and The Creative Curriculum® for PreK helps teachers build children's confidence, creativity, and critical thinking skills, and promote positive outcomes.

Connect4Learning

Connect4Learning (C4L) is a research-based curriculum that is comprised of six units and 32 weeks of learning centers and lessons. It aims to synthesize research-based approaches in four domains of learning: mathematics, science, literacy, and social-emotional development. Connect4Learning uses a project-based approach, in which children work toward a larger goal, such as playing a coral-reef scavenger hunt or converting their classroom into a museum throughout a curriculum unit. Each lesson can be tailored to fit the schedule and requirements of any classroom setting. Observation opportunities and individualized instruction strategies are built into the curriculum.

Early Foundations

Early Foundations is for use only by KinderCare subrecipients if approved by the ISD.

Early Foundations is a curriculum that focuses on the whole child in six domains built on a comprehensive scope and sequence of 120 learning objectives. With an emphasis on executive function skills, the framework ensures development of academic, social, and physical school readiness skills. Teachers use curriculum-based assessment materials to inform their practice and adjust their teaching strategies and methods when needed to meet the individual needs of the child.

Supplementing a Comprehensive Curriculum

When data reveal that many children are presenting differently than expected in any developmental domain, the next course of action is always to ensure staff have focused professional development in the domain in question. The professional development must have strong connections to the comprehensive curriculum and the ongoing child assessment tool. The ECS supports staff as skills are strengthened, practiced, and subsequent data are collected on child development. If, after focused staff support, data show many children are still not making expected developmental gains, a process to approve supplemental curriculum may be implemented.

This usually occurs in one of two ways. The subrecipient may want to utilize resources from a supplemental curriculum or the program may request permission to fully implement a supplemental curriculum. In either case, the GSRP model must be maintained (comprehensive curriculum, daily routine, authentic ongoing assessment, class-size and ratio, etc.).

Using supplemental curriculum as resources in the classroom means occasionally choosing materials (books, songs, poems, manipulatives) from the supplemental for use within the daily routine (at large or small group, in the reading area). In this case, the ECS and ISD must ensure that the resources and teaching practices align

with the comprehensive curriculum and grant guidance. In other words, using the materials of a supplemental curriculum as an occasional resource means that it is not regularly reflected on lesson plans. The following chart and questions can assist ISDs to determine if a program is using a supplemental curriculum or using materials (books, songs, poems, manipulatives, activities) as a resource.

Supplemental Curriculum	Curricular Resource
- Consistent, frequent use of materials and/or activities - Daily routine modified to include activities - Reflected on the daily lesson plan - Materials or activities are done in order and/or in total	- Occasional use of materials (books, songs, poems, manipulatives) and/or activities - Incorporated into a daily routine that meets grant expectations - Not regularly reflected on lesson plans - Activities and/or materials are chosen based on strengths, needs, or interests of children

If the answer to any of these is yes, the program is likely implementing a supplemental curriculum and must go through the approval process described below.

1. Are the activities and/or materials used by teachers with children on a consistent schedule, i.e., every day or more than once per week?
2. Has the daily routine been modified to include time for the use of the activities and/or materials?
3. Are activities and/or materials reflected regularly on the lesson plan?
4. Has the lesson plan format been modified to include use of the activities and/or materials?
5. Are the materials and/or activities used or completed in a specified order?
6. Is there an expectation that all of the activities will be completed?

If use of supplemental curricula strategies/resources go beyond minor episodic use to augment the comprehensive curriculum, then a tiered approach to approve supplemental curriculum may be implemented. A process for preliminary ISD approval of the supplemental curriculum must be completed. A subrecipient using or planning to use a supplemental curriculum must make a formal request to the ISD; the Great Start Collaborative School Readiness Advisory Committee is an appropriate decision-making body for decisions on supplemental curriculum. To be considered for approval, the request must utilize the applicable *GSRP Supplemental Curriculum Request Form*, available as a resource to this section of the manual. It includes features such as:

- Relevant baseline child assessment and program quality data indicating a need for a supplemental curriculum. Approvable program quality data will document that the comprehensive curriculum is implemented at a high-quality level for all children and that grant expectations are met related to daily routine and partnership with families on child development.

Approvable child assessment data will originate from use of the comprehensive and authentic child assessment tool;
- Description of focused training, coaching, subsequent child outcome data, and data analysis expressing educated opinion on why children are still not making expected developmental gains;
- Questions on the process for selecting a curriculum;
- How the requested supplemental curriculum will fit into the typical GSRP classroom daily routine, how it aligns with the GSRP philosophy on active earning and play; and
- An explanation, if the supplemental being requested is not related to the comprehensive curriculum used.

Decisions on supplemental curriculum are reported annually to MiLEAP. Per PA 120 of 2024, "If the department of lifelong education, advancement, and potential objects to the use of a supplemental curriculum approved by an Intermediate School District, the director of the department of lifelong education and advancement shall establish a review committee independent of the department of lifelong education, advancement, and potential. The review committee shall meet within 60 days of the department of lifelong education, advancement, and potential registering its objection in writing and provide a final determination of the validity of the objection within 60 days of the review committee's first meeting".

If the department objection is upheld, the ISD may choose to eliminate use of the supplemental and refocus teaching teams in related curriculum areas, per grant guidance above. In this instance, the ISD may additionally indicate any plans to move forward with data collection in order to justify the use of a supplemental curriculum in the future. Alternately, the ISD may choose to reduce use of the supplemental to a resource as earlier described and refocus teaching teams on specific areas of the comprehensive curriculum. In all instances, ECSs are intimately involved in coaching and mentoring for high-quality foundational curriculum implementation.

CHILD ASSESSMENT

The assessment of young children presents many special challenges. Staff members need to be knowledgeable of children's growth and development. In addition, they need to be aware of the cultural and linguistic diversity among current children and their families. The main purposes for assessment should remain clear: to support learning and development for both individual children and classrooms of children, to identify children who may need additional services, and to aid in effectively communicating progress or concerns with families. In ongoing, authentic assessment staff observe, document, and analyze children's abilities exhibited in the classroom in both child and adult initiated activities as children apply their understandings and skills and integrate what they learn.

Child outcome data is aggregated for each classroom and program-wide to guide grantees in the continuous improvement of the program. It also informs goal setting, the ordering of program materials, and the planning of staff professional development. MDE receives the child outcome data from the tool developers for state level program evaluation.

Authentic assessment combines teaching, learning and assessment to promote higher-ordered thinking, learning and the full participation of children through all portions of the daily routine. The ongoing, authentic assessment of young children enrolled in the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) must provide information across all domains identified in the *Early Childhood Standards of Quality from Birth to Kindergarten* (ECSQ): approaches to play and learning; social and emotional development; physical development and health; communication, language, and early literacy development; creative and expressive arts; mathematics; engineering and technology; science; and social studies.

The Committee on Developmental Outcomes and Assessments for Young Children (2008) affirms that assessments make crucial contributions to the improvement of children's well-being if they are well designed, implemented effectively, developed in the context of systematic planning, and are interpreted and used appropriately.

All GSRP grantees use both an approvable developmental screening tool as the child is enrolled and then, with the start of the program, begin immediate and continuous assessment using an ongoing authentic assessment tool throughout the school year. In other words, the grant will support administration of a developmental screener once per enrolled child. After data from the developmental screener is appropriately processed and the children's program is underway, referrals for outside observation or evaluation are based explicitly on the teaching team's current observations and resulting ongoing, assessment data.

Assessment Structure

Written policies help guarantee consistency over time in dealing with children, families, staff, and other agencies, and contribute to program credibility. The ISD establishes a system of expectations, with timeframes for subrecipient-level and ISD-wide periodic formal data analysis meetings (see *ISD Administration* section for

additional guidance), that aligns with developmental screening and ongoing, authentic child assessment.

The ISD must establish, or support each program to set, clear internal procedures for child assessment. Anyone involved in administering developmental screening or ongoing child assessment, or anyone involved in interpreting results must receive formal training in the chosen tools. Formal training is defined as training done by the publisher of the tool or a person certified by the publisher as a trainer.

Training should emphasize confidentiality and include reports, forms, and documentation that teachers can expect to retain in classroom child files.

Staff should be trained in how information is elicited from families, how results are shared with families, along with strategies for communicating with families who are illiterate or whose native language is not English. In the case of screening, staff should also have knowledge of the local referral protocol and "next steps".

Decisions should be made as to the specific tools used for both types of assessment, personnel roles, and measures of accountability. Decisions are also made with area partners on the time frame for screenings; is the plan to accomplish this during a spring recruitment event? What is the plan for screening children who enter the program later in the year? Specifying a timeline for review of policies and procedures related to assessment will assure that they are updated as needed.

Developmental Screening

Developmental Screening is the use of a brief procedure or instrument designed to identify, from within a large population of children, those who may need further assessment to verify developmental and/or health risks. Developmental screening is standardized and surveys abilities in broad terms: large and small muscle coordination, perception, language, cognitive development, and emotional and behavioral concerns.

The ISD assessment structure addresses developmental screening:

- How staff are trained in use of the screener and how to interpret results with families;
- How staff are trained to effectively navigate related systems of online/electronic data storage;
- Whether administration is completed as a community event, by families or with families at the initial home visit, and how developmental screening is accomplished for late-enrolling children;
- Follow-up on concerns identified by the developmental screener:
- The importance of focusing classroom observation and written anecdotes within the comprehensive child assessment tool on areas of slight concern,

- The importance of focusing classroom observation and written anecdotes within the comprehensive child assessment tool on areas of elevated concern, including procedures to generate and follow up on a referral; and
- How data is aggregated and shared with pertinent stakeholders, such as the Great Start Collaborative and administrators of infant-toddler programs.
- Review of the written policy on child assessment found in each program's handbook. Including a confidentiality statement in the family handbook that refers to the developmental screening process and handling of the results, may make it less worrisome for families and easier to obtain consent. Including information about developmental screening and referral procedures for a suspected developmental delay or disorder will confirm all children are being treated equally and no child is singled out.

Definition of developmental screening:

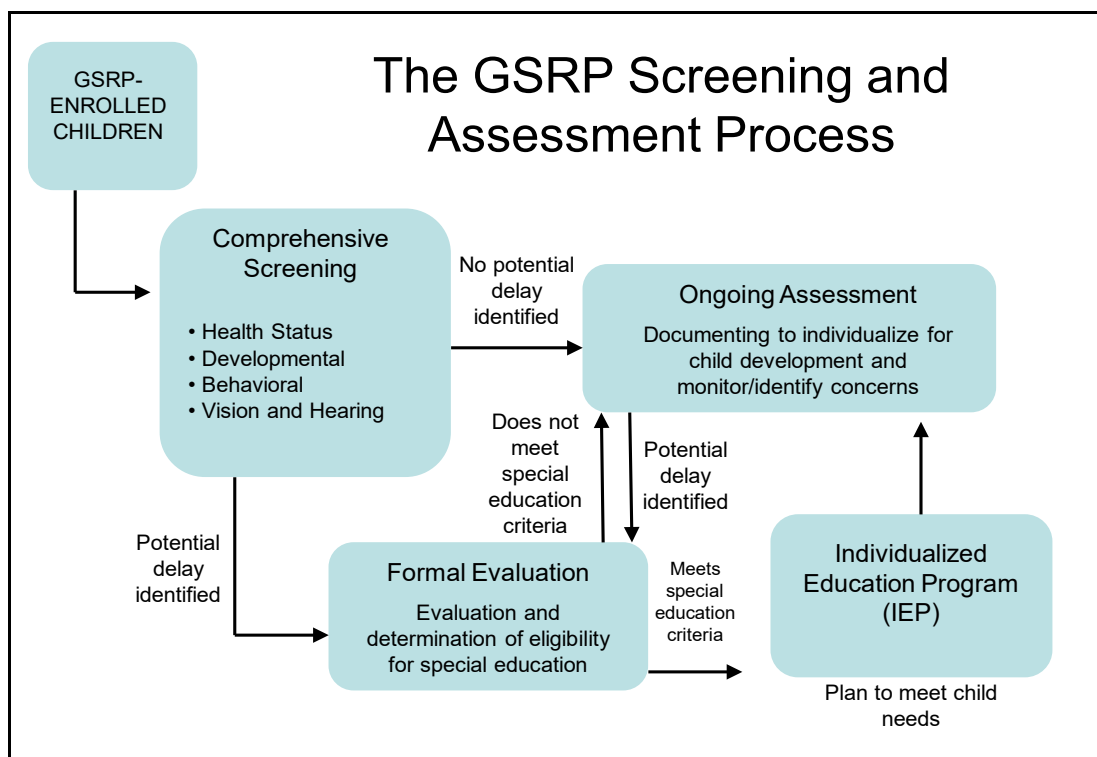| Developmental Screening Is	Developmental Screening is Not
A "snapshot" look at a child's development, administered within the last six months, or as children are enrolled in GSRP.	An in-depth, exclusive profile of a child's development.
Intended to identify the need for further assessment to verify delay in any developmental or health domain.	Used to diagnose special needs.
A data source that should be carefully administered to avoid mistaken judgments about children or the program.	Used to determine individual supports for a child's development.
Part of a larger assessment system including ongoing child assessment, family involvement, and program improvement.	A progress monitoring tool or pre- and post-test for child development.
Implemented with adaptations or special attention to cultural and linguistic variability.	Used to rank, exclude, or label children.
Comprehensive across developmental domains and includes family input.	Restricted to pre-academic domains such as language/literacy or mathematics.

Collaborative, Systematic, and Regional

A well-integrated "Great Start early childhood system" engages many community partners to screen very young children for hearing, vision, and developmental growth during regular health checkups. The local Great Start Collaborative (GSC) School Readiness Advisory Committee (SRAC) can provide leadership as staff, families, and local content experts in health, child development, and mental health, design a collaborative developmental screening approach which is linked to common goals, defined by the SRAC. The screening tool(s) selected address all aspects of child development and health and are aligned with state standards. Provision is made to maintain a database of assessment results, provide for quality assurance and integrity of data, and prepare a variety of reports for audiences and purposes at the family, state, and regional level. The National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force (2007) recommends local school districts/agencies support a high-quality early childhood system by creating opportunities for teachers

and managers to initiate regional dialogue around child assessment, spanning preschool to grade 3, and related data on demographic trends and learning opportunities.

Screening as a Part of the Assessment System

When developmental screening has not occurred within the last six months, it should be implemented within two weeks of enrollment into the GSRP.

The GSRP Screening and Assessment Process

- GSRP-ENROLLED CHILDREN

- Comprehensive Screening
  - Health Status
  - Developmental
  - Behavioral
  - Vision and Hearing

- No potential delay identified → Ongoing Assessment: Documenting to individualize for child development and monitor/identify concerns

- Potential delay identified → Formal Evaluation: Evaluation and determination of eligibility for special education

- Does not meet special education criteria → Ongoing Assessment

- Potential delay identified → Formal Evaluation

- Meets special education criteria → Individualized Education Program (IEP): Plan to meet child needs

Families as Partners

Screening has often been associated with a child's entry into a preschool program, offering reassurance the child is "on track" for achieving typical developmental outcomes. For many families, screening provides the first indication that a disability or health condition may be affecting their child's development.

Families often describe their early experiences with assessment reports as confusing and intimidating. They may have had limited opportunities to state their concerns during well-child visits. They may be fearful of the findings or reluctant to share behavioral or mental health concerns. They may blame themselves if there is a concern.

Families want and expect support on child development issues. Families can benefit when programs learn how to use the screening process as an opportunity to encourage participation in activities which strengthen communication skills, decision-making skills, and advocacy for their children.

Screening can be a foundational opportunity to build a respectful and reciprocal relationship between program staff and families. On the first day, staff and families meet, and should begin to discuss child development and assessment. Screening must not take place without obtaining consent from the parent/guardian. Families should be informed that screening will be a quick survey of the child's abilities in large and small muscle coordination, perception, language, cognitive development, emotional development, and behavior. They should also know their input is needed to help staff more fully understand the child and that information about the child's screening results will be shared as soon as possible. Staff should be prepared to listen for family's "doorknob concerns," (i.e., "Oh, by the way…").

Sharing Screening Results with Families

No matter what type of message is being delivered, the staff member meeting with the family should be prepared, having knowledge of scores from the screening and the family's input. The family should have screening protocol or other relevant material available. The atmosphere is calm, quiet, and allows for confidentiality. The scores are explained, and information supplied by the family is acknowledged. Family concerns and questions are addressed in an unhurried manner.

Since the majority of children will not have developmental issues, most conferences to share screening results will be very brief, reassuring families their child is developing well. Regardless of the screening results, discuss activities that can be done with the child to support continued growth and development, and encourage families to try some activities.

When there is a concern, but data do not suggest there is a delay, explain the findings but specifically express your concerns. Avoid the "*Don't worry, he'll grow out of it*" approach. Assess program eligibility factors and use discretion when deciding it is appropriate to discuss community resources or other services available. Address family concerns, and IF UNSURE, REFER.

When data suggest a potential delay, remember it can be devastating for families to discover there is a concern about their child's development. Reassure families if a delay is suspected; a referral for follow-up evaluation is the first step in helping their child.

Let families know you can help with a referral for further observation or evaluation which will help to answer questions about the child's development. Follow-up appointments could be scheduled before the family/child leave(s) the premises.

Remember, participation is voluntary. If families refuse services at one point, this does not mean they are refusing forever; follow up! If the family refuses to seek additional services, documentation of the referral should appear in the child's file. Include a statement with the date and time of the conference and the information discussed with the family. Report family(s) were not interested in seeking additional services at this time, and sign and date the document. Retain the document in the child's file.

If families seem to need time to process what they heard, offer to phone them in a couple of days with the information. Share details (as you can) about the purpose of the follow-up evaluation, where and when the evaluation will take place, and the role the family(s) will play.

Commonly Used Developmental Screening Tools

- Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ)
- Battelle Developmental Inventory Screener
- Brigance Early Childhood Screens III
- Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning
- Early Screening Inventory-Revised (ESI-R)

Ongoing, Authentic Child Assessment

Ongoing Child Assessment is a process in which the teaching staff systematically observe and record information about the child's level of development and/or knowledge, skills, and attitudes; in order to determine what has been learned, improve teaching, and support children's progress. Programs must use one comprehensive, research validated tool for child assessment and implement authentic assessment across all domains. Teaching teams must be formally trained in the selected assessment tool. Formal training is defined as training completed by the publisher or as a certified trainer by the publisher.

The ISD assessment structure addresses ongoing, authentic child assessment:

- How staff are trained in use of the ongoing child assessment tool, how to use data from the tool to inform daily instruction and how to interpret results with families;
- How staff are trained to effectively navigate related systems of online/electronic data storage and the assorted reports available to assist with focused individualization for children and planning for classrooms of children;
- Establishment of minimally three assessment checkpoints per year, when data is aggregated for subrecipient and ISD-wide analysis;
- Minimally 75% of each domain of the tool is completed at each checkpoint, with ECS oversight of quantity, quality and scoring of entries;
- Review of the written policy on child assessment found in each program's handbook.

Ongoing, authentic, comprehensive child assessment is critical not only to providing data on children's progress and program effectiveness but is absolutely essential to purposeful and intentional teaching practices. Early Childhood Specialists, with the support of the ECC, partner with teachers to ensure sufficient quantity and quality of anecdotes across all domains for each child throughout the school year; these are the foundation of assessment data analysis and use. It is only through requiring and monitoring for the reliable use of a comprehensive tool that the ISD can provide assurance that children are, in fact, benefitting from experiences in all domains of learning and development.

Child assessment data is collected daily across the preschool routine. In addition to standard information including date and time, anecdotes must be observation-based narrative on child actions and behaviors over the course of a typical preschool day rather than responses to close-ended questions or one-on-one testing. The reader should be able to fully visualize the behavior, with identification of the portion of the daily routine, the area of the room, relevant peers or other adults, and materials. Additionally, notes on child-initiated language and behaviors are more likely to demonstrate the highest level of functioning in a domain. High-quality observation records are the evidence for reliable and valid child progress data. It is important to create a plan for how observations will be recorded. What are anecdotes recorded on? Is a camera sometimes used? Are pieces of children's work collected with the child's words about them recorded on the back of each piece? Although a variety of systems could be effective, it is important to think through an approach of recording evidence so the program's choice can be practiced consistently and efficiently. ECS ensure that direct assessment or test-type experiences are not used in lieu of anecdotes as they compromise use and results of the tool.

Observational assessments provide a mechanism for evaluating a wide range of knowledge and skills and show children's growth over time. Data are reviewed for individual children and aggregated at the classroom level to inform daily classroom practice.

Ongoing communication between families and teaching staff should inform child assessment. Teaching staff share individual developmental profiles with families by exchanging information to support children's learning and development at home and at school. This is done both formally through conferences and home visits, and informally during drop-off and pick-up times and other times families are present utilizing notes, e-mail, etc.

Data are aggregated program-wide to provide information for program improvement. Results are shared with the local GSRP family participation group, the school board or governing board of the grantee and the public. This process offers data for accountability and grows program support. See the *Program Evaluation* section of this manual for additional information on continuous improvement efforts.

Supplemental Child Assessment

Supplemental child assessment is unnecessary in a high-quality preschool classroom where curriculum is implemented with fidelity and ongoing, authentic child assessment is used to set the stage for intentional teaching. Supplemental assessment is often direct assessment focused on discrete facts (literacy/math), while authentic assessment is naturally woven into whole-child program learning activities which emphasize higher-level skills. Supplemental, individual child assessment administered during the preschool session interferes with children's full participation in the daily routine. It also effectively removes an adult (often the adult with the most sophisticated understanding of early childhood education) from

the critical role of facilitating meaningful activities, leaving the other adult with full responsibility to support the class.

If review of ongoing authentic child assessment data reveals that **many** children are presenting differently than expected in any developmental domain, a first course of action is always to ensure staff have focused professional development in the domain in question. The professional development should have strong connections to the ongoing child assessment tool and the comprehensive curriculum. The Early Childhood Specialist, as an advocate for authentic assessment, should support staff as skills are strengthened, practiced, and subsequent data are collected on child development. If, after focused staff support, data show many children are still not making expected developmental gains some programs may request ISD approval to supplement their comprehensive child assessment tool with companion assessments to generate further information in a specific domain.

To be considered for approval, the request must include features such as:

- Relevant baseline child assessment and program quality data indicating a need for a supplemental assessment for a classroom of children. Approvable program quality data will document that the comprehensive curriculum is implemented at a high-quality level for all children and that grant expectations are met related to daily routine and partnership with families on child development. Approvable child assessment data will originate from use of the comprehensive and ongoing, authentic child assessment tool,
- Description of focused training, coaching, subsequent child outcome data, and data analysis expressing educated opinion on why children are still not making expected developmental gains,
- The process for selecting the assessment, minimally including the essential components of appropriate assessment as indicated below,
- How the requested supplemental assessment will fit into the typical GSRP classroom daily routine, how it aligns with the GSRP philosophy on ongoing, authentic assessment,
- The plan to ensure that supplemental assessment data is analyzed separately and does not take the place of documentation within the authentic child assessment tool, and
- An explanation, if the supplemental being requested is not related to the comprehensive curriculum used.

ISD decisions on supplemental assessment will be reviewed as part of program monitoring and reports may be requested by MDE.

Essential Components of Appropriate Assessment

GSRP requires adherence to the following guidelines when selecting and utilizing an assessment method. A quality program:

- Uses sound developmental and learning theory to plan and conduct child assessment and looks beyond cognitive skills to assess the whole child.
- Uses a research-validated, reliable assessment tool and process that is ongoing, cumulative, and in the language a child understands.
- Uses children's involvement in ordinary classroom activities, not artificially contrived activities, to gauge children's growth.
- Documents children's growth, development, and learning over time with observation and anecdotal reports, family, provider, and child interviews; products and samples of children's work; standardized checklists; and children's self-appraisals.
- Involves all members of the staff who have regular contact with the children.
- Arranges assessment so it does not bring added stress for children or teachers.
- Uses assessment results as a guide for curriculum and teaching decisions and the need for intervention for individuals and classrooms.
- Uses results to determine the need for specialized screening and/or intervention.

The above components reflect the 2003 Joint Position Statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE) entitled,
Early Childhood Curriculum, Assessment, and Program Evaluation.

GSRP essential components also reflect the National Education Goals Panel, in their document entitled,
Principles and Recommendations for Early Childhood Assessments, February 1998.

Commonly Used Ongoing Child Assessment Tools

Teaching teams need to be provided professional development opportunities in the selected assessment tool. The following tools are approved for use in GSRP.

COR Advantage

Teaching Strategies® GOLD

Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP)

Learning Accomplishment Profile* (LAP)

*It is only when using LAP fully as an observational tool that that it is allowed in GSRP**. Although the LAP, through its design, can be used as a pull-out model of assessment, it may not be done in this manner in GSRP.

Resources:

Head Start Resources

National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education, 2003. *Early Childhood Curriculum, Assessment, and Program Evaluation.*

Principles and Recommendations for Early Childhood Assessments, February 1998.

Snow, C., VanHemel, S, eds., 2008. *Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What and How?* A report of the Committee on Developmental Outcomes and Assessments for Young Children for the National Research Council of the National Academies. National Academies Press. Washington, D.C.

Taking Stock: Assessing and Improving Early Childhood Learning and Program Quality, 2007. A report from The National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force, commissioned by the PEW Charitable Trust, Foundation for Child Development and the Joyce Foundation.

TRANSITION

Transitions into preschool and from preschool into elementary school are important milestones for children and their families. Like other major changes, these transitions can cause children and families to experience many strong emotions such as excitement, anxiety, fear, and/or hope. To lessen the stress for all of those concerned, including teachers, it is important to prepare children and families for the upcoming changes. Strong transition efforts targeting family involvement can lead to positive teacher morale, family support and satisfaction, a great reputation for the program in the community, and improved child outcomes. Additional information can be found in the [Essential Practices for Successful Child Transitions](#).

Great Start Readiness Programs (GSRP) create and implement plans that transition families both into and out of the program. The GSRP transition plan should be an extension of a unique, community-wide effort. An effective transition planning committee has representatives from all early childhood stakeholder groups including families, the Intermediate School District (ISD) early childhood contact (ECC), GSRP classrooms, Head Start, Center- and Home-Based early care and education providers, Early On®, special education, kindergarten teachers, elementary/public school academy administrators, the local Great Start Collaborative, and a representative from the local Great Start Resource Center. The languages and cultures of the community should also be reflected in the team membership. Community transition plans should be evidence-based with a focus on responsive relationships, coordination, and continuity between environments. The transition period is viewed as a reciprocal process for all partners, rather than an event that happens to a child; acknowledging "ready" children, "ready" schools, and "ready" communities (Pianta, Rimm-Kauffman and Cox, 1999; Dockett and Perry, 2001).

Whether transitioning families into or out of GSRP, connections are purposefully created as resources for children: family-school connections, child-school connections, peer connections, and community connections. The appropriate committee within the ISD GSRP Advisory Structure is responsible for overseeing and coordinating the development of a plan for transitions into and out of GSRP. This may be the School Readiness Advisory Committee, or another committee determined by the ISD. Ideally, an ISD GSRP team member is identified to serve as the facilitator for transition plan work. This individual ensures transitions are a regular agenda item, including dialogue and collaboration to generate ideas for carrying out transition activities, creating and monitoring a timeline for transition activities, and evaluating and revising the transition plan as needed. The plan features activities that support children and their families as they move into prekindergarten and from prekindergarten into kindergarten. The plan should differentiate between "orientation to school" and "transition to school," and respect the different perspectives and expectations of families and children.

Transition into GSRP

Children enter GSRP having experienced varying services and environments: home, Early On®, or possibly another early education and care setting. Key to transition is establishing frequent, open, and honest communication between program staff and

family members. Successful strategies for establishing positive communication begin with staff eliciting, valuing, and using information from families about the enrolled child.

Families, like children, come to GSRP with different circumstances and experiences. Programs should develop strategies to communicate with all families. Some families may work two jobs or a night shift, cannot read or speak English, share custody of a child, and/or have had poor school experiences themselves. Meaningful information and opportunities should be provided to families based on their expressed interests and needs. Refer to the *Family Engagement* section of this manual for more information.

Before school begins, an initial home visit and an orientation opportunity for the child and family helps staff and families begin to get to know each other and build trust. This continues throughout the year as formal and informal occasions are utilized to strengthen responsive relationships between all involved. This includes drop off/pick up times, email, texts, notes or phone calls, family events, home visits, and family conferences.

Written information should be positive and useful. The family handbook must include a program overview, school calendar, contact information, and policies regarding attendance, weather, illness, medication, conflict-resolution, emergencies, confidentiality, and grievances. It must also be written in a manner that is understood by families.

A high-quality GSRP employs many strategies to engage families as decision-makers in all facets of the program. Staff members begin this during the very first contact by asking families what information they would like to know about the program. A one-page explanation of the role of the local GSRP Family Participation Group, how often it meets, the support available to families who serve, and the work typically done, might help families to feel comfortable who would otherwise think special skills are required for participation. For confident and active participation, family participation group work should begin with an orientation on topics such as membership, organizational structure, and responsibility.

Transition into Kindergarten from GSRP

GSRP staff members are instrumental to the development of plans that ease the transition of children and families from prekindergarten to kindergarten. Kindergarten transition activities with children should include casual discussions about the differences between prekindergarten and kindergarten, reading of books about going to kindergarten, and possibly taking a fieldtrip to a kindergarten classroom with children and families. Another option is to have a kindergarten teacher visit the GSRP classroom, assist in a large group activity by sharing a book or a song, and relating it to books or songs that may be similar to what children will experience in the kindergarten classroom. Teachers could make a photo book of the classroom, kindergarten teachers, principal, other staff, and other rooms that may be a new part of their school experience (such as the music room).

Staff may plan to assist the transition of families by connecting with other families who have already made the transition from GSRP to kindergarten, in the format of

a panel discussion with past families. They can also support families to create a visual record of the ending celebration of GSRP and provide pictures to each family.

Kindergarten transition activities for GSRP staff may include participation on the local GSRP Family Participation Group, transition committee, or being a part of an Individual Education Program (IEP) Team as a child transitions into kindergarten. GSRP teaching teams may meet with the receiving kindergarten teachers individually or in a regional event where the focus is data sharing to discuss developmental profiles. GSRP staff members are responsible for reviewing children's records to determine what information will be copied and forwarded once a request for records is received. All teaching teams will utilize the final home visit/family conference to individualize transitioning for a child and family. This may include supporting a family in the first few months of kindergarten. Staff may provide families a summer activity guide/calendar that includes information about what the kindergarten experience will be like.

Two Year Kindergarten Sequence: Retention Kindergarten

GSRP exists to ensure enrolled children have a successful transition into, and experience in, kindergarten. Children are entitled to kindergarten when they meet the age eligibility criteria set by the Michigan Legislature. Kindergarten is designed to be a one-school-year program before first grade. There is no "grade" in Michigan titled Developmental Kindergarten, Begindergarten, Young 5s, etc.

When staff and families begin the transition process into kindergarten, a family meeting should take place to sum up the year, discuss transition, and address the aggregate results of the ongoing child assessment tool used in the program. This leads into an opportunity to discuss horizontal alignment within the GSRP and vertical alignment between GSRP and kindergarten. For more information on alignment see the *Curriculum* section of this manual.

Additional discussion should include the research history showing that delay of school entry, placement in extra-year programs, and retention are generally detrimental to a child's overall school success. Families should be objectively informed regarding their rights when enrolling children into kindergarten. STILL Unacceptable Trends in Kindergarten Entry and Placement is a position statement on this issue developed by the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS-SDE) and endorsed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

PROGRAM EVALUATION

GSRP utilizes information from screenings, ongoing observations, program quality evaluations, and insight from staff and families 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.

The GSRP is required by legislation to provide for active and continuous participation of families of enrolled children. Families partner in child development goals as active decision-makers. Families 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/guardians 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 families](#) 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 as follows.

Systemic Collection and Utilization of Data

Programs are required to conduct developmental screening and comprehensive, authentic child assessment. The Early Childhood Contact (ECC) collects data on the curricula, screening and child assessment tools approved for use in the area. The ECC supports common measurements and consistent data reporting mechanisms across subrecipients. Typically, an ECS who is a Reliable Assessor/Certified Observer completes the observations, interviews and scoring of the program evaluation tool(s). The ECS documents evidence about classroom observations and specific classroom-level grant requirements.

The formal end-of-year program evaluation is most often completed by the ECS assigned to the classroom. Any ISD considering the implementation of an alternate classroom evaluation process must engage the assigned GSRP consultant to ensure program requirements will be met and to consider possible ramifications. Documentation of that conversation and the consultant's approval should be kept on file. When the annual formal evaluation is not completed by the assigned ECS, additional attention must be given to the process for communicating the results of the evaluation to the assigned ECS and teaching team.

The ISD must establish a plan each year that determines the classrooms to be evaluated. This plan must ensure that at least one third of all classrooms will be evaluated and that every classroom is evaluated at least once every three years. In determining the one third of classrooms to be evaluated annually, the plan is created in the fall based on the number of classrooms and the various considerations suggested below. If new classrooms are added after the plan has been created, they are incorporated into the plan the following fall and do not require the plan be adjusted to equal the updated one third total. ISDs should

consider multiple factors in prioritizing classrooms for evaluation including (but not limited to) teaching team turnover, continuous quality improvement, ECS coaching assignments, or other circumstances warranting additional support.

The following tools may be used singly or in combination to evaluate program quality. At the start of each school year, the Office of Great Start provides information to ISDs about annual contracts.

- **Classroom Coach** by HighScope®. The Classroom Coach measures the quality and use of the indoor and outdoor learning environments, teaching and learning routines, adult-child interactions (including interactions that encourage the development of expressive/receptive language, vocabulary, math, literacy, social and emotional skills, executive function skills and conflict resolution skills), evidence-based comprehensive curricula, planning to differentiate instruction based on student interests, ongoing child assessment to monitor learning and adapt/modify learning if needed, and family engagement activities.
- **Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®)** by Teachstone®. CLASS® is used to measure and improve teacher-child interactions in the areas of emotional support, classroom organization and instructional support. A Certified CLASS® Observer is a person who has attended an in-person CLASS® Observation Training and who has passed a CLASS® Reliability Test within the past year. All data must be entered into myTeachstone, a separate product.

The ECC is responsible to monitor compliance with the program evaluation reporting requirement ensuring that all sections of the applicable tool are completed by the reliable assessor responsible for the end of year program assessment. The ECC will access, aggregate, and analyze information to support those serving in the ECS role across the ISD, and also inform the creation of a professional learning plan.

See the *Early Childhood Specialist* section of this manual for GSRP requirements on Reliable Assessor status.

Data are reviewed to guide teacher-family decisions about specific child supports, the teaching staff's lesson planning, and administrative decisions about classroom- and program-wide improvement. Effective practices include subrecipient-level aggregation of child assessment data three times per year. Program quality information is shared with families, the ISD, and the community. The subrecipient-level data analysis team is supported and/or led by the ECS, ECC, or a person with experience and skills to effectively execute this program requirement. Program quality data and child outcome data from child screening and authentic 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. A data analysis team includes families, 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. 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 learning priorities;
- Sets measurable goals and objectives to address classroom quality, agency quality, and child outcomes;
- Agrees to eliminate what is not effective or conflicts with grant requirements;
- 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 supports meaningful professional learning related to the goals. Action plans, including timeframes for progress monitoring, are developed with teaching teams. The ongoing cycle of continuous improvement moves forward with ECS support for strengthened practices. 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. The 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 learning. See the *Child Assessment* section of this manual for more information on an effective assessment system. See the *Early Childhood Contact* description in the *ISD Administration of GSRP* section of this manual for additional description of responsibilities of the ECC.

GSRP sites must attain at least an Enhancing Quality level in Michigan's Great Start to Quality (GSQ) system. A program whose license is modified to first provisional status at any time will have their quality level unavailable until the license returns to regular status. GSRP sites that are unable to achieve or maintain at least an Enhancing Quality level 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.

Follow-up Through Second Grade

It is best practice that subrecipients develop a local evaluation component, such as a follow-up study through second grade. Local longitudinal data collection facilitates communication between PreK and early elementary grades. Data collected provides 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 family engagement. Reflection on longitudinal data provides PreK program staff with insight into the conditions of successful transition from PreK 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.

National, Regional, and Statewide Evaluation

Program evaluation results are used annually by MILEAP 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. 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.

This report as well as other GSRP evaluation reports through 2018 are available under Historical GSRP Reports on the GSRP website.

In 2017, Michigan State University (MSU) was awarded the evaluation grant for GSRP. The goals of the team of researchers are to support data-informed decision making and provide scientific evidence of the impacts of the state's investment in GSRP. The study aims to answer four questions:

- Is GSRP equitably accessible to 4-year-old children across geographic, racial/ethnic and income subgroups;
- How do different GSRP quality and implementation strategies relate to PreK outcomes;

- What are the academic benefits of GSRP; and
- What are the economic returns to ISDs and comparative cost-effectiveness?

The findings of the annual studies and a variety of mapping tools are available on the [MSU GSRP Evaluation](#) page.

Passive Consent of Program Evaluation

Families of enrolled children must be notified of program evaluation activities. The following information is often summarized and included in subrecipient handbooks in family-friendly language.

In addition to the MiLEAP reporting requirements such as reporting into the Michigan Student Data System (MSDS), programs may be selected to participate in national, regional, and/or statewide GSRP data collection efforts. If selected, programs must cooperate with MiLEAP, its designated evaluation contractor(s), and any of MiLEAP'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 family information letters.

REPORTING AND MONITORING

Reporting

The Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) has a responsibility to monitor program quality and does this through required applications and reports, as well as fiscal and program monitoring. Through its submitted applications and reports, the ISD assures compliance with all reporting requirements. If the ISD fails to comply, MiLEAP may withhold up to 100 percent of the grant allocation until the ISD meets compliance. All current grant assurances can be viewed in the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) Funding Application, and the GSRP Program Implementation Plan (PIP) in NexSys. All grantees and subrecipients are responsible for meeting assurances.

Programs utilize NexSys, GEMS/MARS, Excel templates, the Michigan Student Data System (MSDS), MiRegistry, and the applicable program evaluation tool [i.e., Classroom Coach (formerly PQA-R) or CLASS®] for submitting data. ISDs may also be required to submit data to early childhood system data collection efforts such as those that may by conducted by Child Care Licensing and Great Start to Quality. To ensure a systemic use of data collected, it is essential that data be accessible and easily connected across multiple systems. The naming conventions that are used in NexSys must be consistent with licensing and used in the other reporting systems required for GSRP as well (see *Program Evaluation* below).

Due dates for NexSys applications are typically six weeks, and reports are minimally four weeks from the date that notification of availability is sent by email. The following table details the required submissions for one complete funding cycle from the initial collection to the final report.

Application/Report	Submission Venue	Target Availability
GSRP Head Start Demographic	NexSys	Mid-October. This application is completed by each Head Start grantee; ISDs sometimes collaborate with Head Start on data entry.
Funding Application	NexSys	Mid-January
Acceptance of Funds	NexSys	July
Program Implementation Plan (PIP)	NexSys	Mid-September
Child Enrollment	MSDS	Three times annually (Nov., Feb., Aug.) with the Fall and Spring Early Childhood Collections serving as the official count of children served by program option for the year.
Classroom Coach; Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®)	Classroom Coach; CLASS® (myTeachstone)	End-of-Year observations administered between March 1 and May 30, completely entered in the applicable online collection platform by June 15.
Staff Information Report (SIR)	MiRegistry	Early April
Final Expenditure Report and Carryover Budget	NexSys	Early August
Carryover Final Expenditure Report	NexSys	Late May

Enrollment Reporting

ISDs will report to MiLEAP their enrollment numbers on a regular basis. Timelines for reporting will be determined by the department and include enrollment data based on income brackets.

Program Evaluation

The following naming conventions **must** be used when creating the hierarchy in Classroom Coach and CLASS®:

- Subrecipient Name is the name on the GSRP Program Implementation Plan (PIP) Breakdown of Accepted Funds page in NexSys
- Site/Center is the Facility Name reported in the GSRP PIP Site Description page which must be the exact facility name as appears on the license
- Duplicative site names should include city after facility name (ABC Childcare-Lansing). If there are still duplicates, the street name should be added (ABC Childcare-Lansing-Allegan St)
- Classroom Name is the license number followed by teacher last name (DC123456789–Last name)

When entering end of year program evaluation data in Classroom Coach online, please ensure that:

- Data is entered in the system that is shared with MiLEAP if an ISD utilizes multiple data collection systems;
- State funded PreK is indicated as the program setting;
- If a classroom is a GSRP/Head Start Blend, indicate that it is also a Head Start classroom; and
- Teaching team last names are entered on the individual assessment where requested.

Michigan Student Data System (MSDS) Reporting

A unique identifier code (UIC) must be generated within MSDS for each child enrolled or waitlisted in GSRP. Refer to this resource (Request for UIC) for requesting a UIC. It is the responsibility of the ISD to ensure that each GSRP student is accurately reported in MSDS. The ISD should pay close attention to the reporting requirements that differ from K-12 reporting, in particular, the program option selection as this will determine the per child funding awarded**.** ISDs may request access to view reports for LEA subrecipients that complete their own reporting within MSDS by completing the CEPI District/ISD/PSA User Application Security Form.

The ISD must ensure that an accurate start date and end date for each GSRP student is entered, including a reason for leaving. When a student leaves mid-year, the ISD should retain documentation on last day of attendance in program. When the same student enrolls in another ISD, each ISD should work to confirm accurate end and start dates for the student that are not overlapping to reduce errors in the Early Childhood Count report so that both ISDs receive credit for filling a space.

Child Assessment Data Collection

GSRP requires the utilization of a child assessment tool to document children's growth and development over time. MiLEAP collects this data for state level program evaluation. To facilitate this process, a child UIC and the site license number must be included within individual child portfolios, created within the chosen assessment tool's online system.

COR Advantage

COR Advantage users will enter the UIC for each individual child in the Student ID line when adding a child. The license number for the site should be entered in the District ID line.

Teaching Strategies® GOLD

Teaching Strategies® GOLD users will enter the UIC for each individual child in the Student ID# line. The license number for the site should be entered in the Identifier line.

Staff Information Report

The GSRP Staff Information Report (SIR) is completed through MiRegistry. Each teaching team member must maintain a current **individual profile** including education credentials, current compensation details, hours worked in GSRP each week, and the number of months worked in GSRP each year. Membership in MiRegistry is highly encouraged, but not required. There is no cost for membership. Staff members seeking membership will be required to submit official college/university transcripts to verify degrees and early childhood credits earned. GSRP funding may be utilized to support staff purchasing transcripts for membership.

Each licensed program operating a GSRP classroom must maintain a current **organization profile** including the name(s) of the classroom(s) serving GSRP children consistent with the naming conventions described above. Each classroom must indicate the lead teacher assigned to the classroom, as well as the associate teacher if applicable. For teaching team members assigned to the classroom, the organization must also include the years of GSRP teaching experience, additional years of PreK teaching experience, the benefits offered to each including the availability of union membership, and whether or not the individual is currently on a compliance plan or a PEPP to become credentialed . If a GSRP classroom has a vacant position, the organization must indicate this and complete information about the vacant position.

Individual and organization information should be maintained regularly, but must be updated at least annually by early March of each year. MiLEAP will generate a statewide export of all GSRP classroom data from MiRegistry annually in late spring. It is ideal for the ECS to include a check on the MiRegistry records for teaching teams and organizations they support each fall/winter to allow time for updates prior to the spring report pull.

Administrative Records

The following administrative records should be kept on file by grantees and/or subrecipients for seven years. Records must be available for monitoring by the ISD or by MiLEAP.

ISD:

- All reports from monitoring of subrecipients including compliance plans if required;
- ISD contracts with subrecipients;
- Individual and total subrecipient budgets, reimbursement requests, final expenditure reports, documentation to support federal drawdowns (reimbursement basis), and carryover reports;
- Source documentation (invoices, receipts, etc.) for GSRP expenditures;
- Financial records with separate accounts for program allocations and carryover for both state and federal funding, as well as state funding for transportation and new curriculum/child assessment tools;
- ISD employee contracts/agreements;
- Rationale for prorated amounts for all employees paid with GSRP funds;

- The ISD plan to recruit community agency partners to serve as subrecipients for at least 30% of the allocation. Include all notifications to potential subrecipients of availability to participate in GSRP, meeting notes, meeting sign-in sheets, and a summary for the specific grant year indicating each licensed center, its Great Start to Quality level, interest in being awarded funding, and the result for the upcoming grant year;
- Minutes, agendas, and attendance sheets from the School Readiness Advisory Committee (SRAC) convened as a sub-committee of the Great Start Collaborative;
- Student recruitment and enrollment plans; including copies of flyers, announcements, and enrollment forms;
- ISD-wide program evaluation reports;
- ISD-wide professional learning plans including any plans for professional learning of a new curriculum; and
- Personnel records for any GSRP staff employed by the ISD.

Subrecipient:
- Family engagement records:
  - evidence of family participation in decision-making activities, such as membership in family participation groups and/or ISD SRAC, agendas, and meeting minutes, and
  - records of family education meetings and/or family activities;
- Financial documents, i.e., budgets, final expenditure reports, and carryover reports and any other financial documents that support GRSP spending;
- Source documentation (invoices, receipts, etc.) for GSRP expenditures;
- Employee contracts/agreements and rationale for proration amounts for subrecipient employees paid with GSRP funds;
- Supplementary child care records;
  - Program evaluation:
  - program evaluation tool reports,
  - program profiles of child outcome data,
  - program improvement plans, and
  - records of accreditation plans, if applicable;
- Documentation of license/approval by MiLEAP, Child Care Licensing Division including correspondence on compliance and any special investigations;
- Personnel records for the director, lead teacher(s), associate teacher(s), and others:
  - staff credentials;
  - professional learning logs; including in-service training, conferences, workshops, classes; and
- Children's records – a single file for each enrolled child must be kept for seven years and include:
  - age documentation (birth certificate or other proof of age eligibility),
  - verification of income eligibility,
  - documentation of program eligibility factors,
  - health and immunization records,
  - family information (parent/guardian name, address, phone number),
  - evidence of developmental screening,

- o evidence of comprehensive assessment of child's progress in the program, and
- o documentation of date and content of home visits and conferences with families.

ISD Monitoring of Subrecipients

The ISD is responsible for monitoring subrecipients for implementation and compliance with written policies and procedures for fiscal and programmatic guidelines. ISDs must develop a systematic approach to monitoring subrecipients for adherence to both fiscal and programmatic GSRP requirements. A written record of such monitoring must be shared with the subrecipient upon completion and made available to MiLEAP during either a programmatic or fiscal review as requested. The written record must include signatures of both the ISD monitor and a representative of the subrecipient and must also be accessible on-site at the ISD. Refer to the ISD Administration section of this manual for additional information.

MiLEAP Fiscal Monitoring and Collaborative Program Reviews

MiLEAP has fiscal monitoring and collaborative program review processes which are focused on the ISD as the GSRP grantee. Collaborative program reviews cover the programmatic and administrative aspects of the ISD as grantee, while fiscal monitoring attends to funding and associated requirements. Both processes address the ISD as grantee, as well as its subrecipients as applicable. A risk assessment is completed annually by MiLEAP to select ISDs for fiscal monitoring; that may include but are not limited to:

- Prior and current single audit findings for Federal grants;
- Time frame for the ISD's PIP to be approved by MiLEAP;
- ECC and/or business official change from the prior year;
- Time since last review/monitoring and accompanying results;
- Fiscal or program complaints or concerns raised by internal or external partners;
- The amount of GSRP funds received.

Collaborative program reviews are determined through a similar examination of ISD data with consultant and ISD input.

Fiscal Monitoring

A MiLEAP fiscal monitor will conduct monitoring, which may include desk and ISD on-site components to ensure compliance with state policies and program requirements as they relate to fiscal management of the grant. A fiscal on-site review is an extensive review of all financial records that pertain to the GSRP funds. All GSRP fiscal reviews are conducted using the Grant Electronic Monitoring System/Michigan Administrative Review System (GEMS/MARS). See the Fiscal Review Process in the resources to this section for more information.

The Collaborative Program Review Process

The Collaborative Program Review Process is essentially a continuous quality improvement process conducted as a partnership between ISDs and MiLEAP to provide readily accessible, high-quality PreK experiences for eligible children within each ISD in the state. Through the development of a partnership between department and grantee, additional goals of the collaboration are to:

- Establish and maintain more frequent communication specific to continuous improvement;
- Ensure mutual understanding of needs and support;
- Ensure high-quality programming compliant with grant requirements and aligned to grant expectations;
- Increase program access;
- Increase program quality; and
- Increase child outcomes.

Collaborative reviews are conducted remotely as desk reviews, or in-person with on-site visits to ISDs and GSRP classrooms. Reviews are focused on a particular component of the program (e.g., recruitment and enrollment, classroom routines, family engagement, etc.). The focus of reviews will be determined annually by MiLEAP. Focusing on a specific program component allows for a deeper examination of the applicable policies, processes, practices, and data affecting the successes and ongoing areas for growth from within the ISD to the state level. Collaboratively, MiLEAP and the ISD will review written and electronic source information, data, and anecdotes gathered through interviews and dialogue, and discuss strengths and areas for improvement. Quality improvement goals will be established with progress follow-ups and ongoing consultant support to ensure the continuous quality improvement cycle continues.

BUDGET AND FINANCIAL GUIDELINES

Systems Used for Reporting

Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) reporting is completed using the grant reporting system known as NexSys. This system provides the full range of activities, including the announcement of grants, access to grant application information, reporting data, and receipt and review of all applications and reports.

To access NexSys, users must have active Michigan Education Information System (MEIS) and MiLogin accounts as applicable and must have submitted a security agreement form. For more information about accessing NexSys, visit the NexSys website.

If an ISD has a new subrecipient receiving GSRP funds, the subrecipient is required to have an agreement number within the Educational Entity Master (EEM). Perform a search of the EEM first to determine if the subrecipient already has a record. If no record is found, complete and submit the "Add New Other Non-School Recipient" form on the EEM website. An agency security form must also be completed. All security forms can be obtained on the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) EEM website. Contact GSRP staff for further guidelines on adding staff and new subrecipients to NexSys.

See the Reporting and Monitoring section for more detail.

Budget Guidelines

GSRP funds are appropriated annually based on the State of Michigan's fiscal year: October 1 through September 30. MiLEAP issues allocations to ISDs based on this fiscal year. ISDs may select an alternate twelve-month period overlapping the State fiscal year in which to expend GSRP grant funds, most typically July 1 through June 30. Of note however, is the inherent risk incurred in beginning expenditures July 1, prior to the start of the State fiscal year during a year in which the School Aid budget is unfinished and GSRP allocations have yet to be issued. A twelve-month "grant expenditure period" is identified in NexSys for every ISD and subrecipient.

There is an exception to the twelve-month period for a startup that chooses to use October 1 through September 30 as their grant expenditure period; a budget and grant expenditure period of up to fifteen months is allowable in the first year of operation only to allow for necessary expenditures to establish the classroom(s) and pay staff prior to October 1, though only twelve months of funding is available. First year use of funding for a startup that will exceed twelve months will need to be documented in the notes section of the budget submitted in the Program Implementation Plan (PIP) in NexSys. For a startup using July 1 through June 30 as the grant expenditure period, business is as usual.

As outlined in Section 32d(8)(d), the ISD must maintain a program budget that contains only those costs that are attributable to the Great Start Readiness Program, and that would not be incurred if the program were not being offered. Eligible costs include transportation costs. Program budgets will be prepared that are clearly attributable to GSRP. GSRP funding may not be used to pay for expenses where federal funding is available as a primary funding source (e.g. federal food and nutrition programs). In those cases, federal dollars must be used to the fullest extent possible before GSRP funds may be utilized.

As outlined in Section 32d(19)(e), **materials and supplies** purchased for GSRP may be used by other activities within an ISD or Community Based Organization (CBO) program facility receiving funding from other state, local, or regional awards. The provision applies to materials and supplies only; equipment purchases, salaries, or other services are excluded. Examples include activities funded by Section 31a or 32p funding, local government funding, or scholarship sources. Materials and supplies purchased for GSRP may not be utilized to supplant federally funded activities.

ISDs are to ensure that revenues and expenses related to services and materials purchased for their respective grant expenditure period are recorded in their accounting system for that same period. ISDs are required to maintain separate ledgers (cost centers) for each allocation of funding accepted by the ISD including program funds, carryover funds, transportation funds, start up grants, and curriculum funds as applicable. General ledger information must align with budgets and final expenditure report information in NexSys. Revenue is not allowed to be earned on any GSRP funding. See the resources for this section for documents to assist with budgeting.

GSRP funds may be used to pay for the following:

- Selected Program Evaluation Tool (Classroom Coach, CLASS®) for each classroom where even one GSRP-funded child is enrolled;
- Instructional materials and supplies;
- The cost for breakfast, lunch and/or snack over and above all reimbursements the program is eligible for from applicable federal food programs (see Use of Federal Food Programs and GSRP below);
- Lead teacher, associate teacher, early childhood specialist, and aide salaries and fringe benefits;
- Bonuses and incentive payments (only in certain circumstances; refer to Bonuses and Incentive Payment section below for further information);
- Family engagement activities;
- Transportation for students;
- Health support services;
- Student support services;
- Staff development and teacher/family training;
- Ordering copies of official transcripts from college/universities to support MiRegistry membership and validation;

- Travel necessary to enable project staff to implement the early childhood program;
- Office supplies and materials;
- Communication;
- Printing and binding of GSRP materials;
- A prorated amount of rent for GSRP space when the lessee and the lessor are two separate legal entities;
- A prorated amount of mortgage payment or lien for GSRP space;
- Construction or renovation projects. All construction or renovation projects over $5,000 are considered capital outlay. If a portion of any capital outlay item is charged to GSRP, approval is required before the cost is incurred. For more information on capital outlay, refer to the Capital Outlay section below;
- Furniture such as shelving and equipment;
- State tax, including sales and property tax, when an organization is for profit;
- Unemployment expenses. If the program is a "contributing employer", costs incurred as a payroll tax may be charged accordingly on an ongoing basis with payroll expenses. If the program is a "reimbursing employer," costs incurred for the layoff of a GSRP staff member may be charged accordingly with documentation to support the charges applicable to GSRP;
- Indirect costs (only allowable for certain subrecipients directly running portions of the GSRP program per Section 32d(13)); and
- Up to 4% administrative costs and 2% for outreach and recruitment costs incurred by the ISD as defined in GSRP legislation (Section 32d(13) and (14)) for administration of the grant. See the 4% Administrative Costs and Outreach and Recruiting sections below.

Great Start Readiness Program funds MAY NOT be used to pay for:

- Existing administrative, educational, or support personnel funded through other sources;
- Costs that should be covered by Special Education;
- Any costs associated with breakfast, lunch and/or snack if the program does not participate in federal food programs for which it is eligible. Exceptions do apply, see Use of Federal Food Programs and GSRP below;
- Supplemental curriculum or materials unless the approval process has been completed and approved by the ISD and kept on file for review;
- Any state tax, including sales and property tax, when an organization is not for profit;
- Maintenance, utilities, or any other costs when included in a rental agreement or any other agreement;
- Depreciation or amortization;
- Gift cards to make purchases or use as incentive payments for employee or contracted employee use or for family participation within advisory committees or family participation groups. (Per Section 380.1814 of The

Revised School Code Act 451 of 1976, a person shall not use public funds for purchasing gifts.); and

- Indirect costs except as noted above per Section 32d(13).

This list is not all inclusive. Please contact MiLEAP if you have questions.

ISD Budget Detail

ISDs will complete a program and transportation budget (if applicable) within the PIP. The program budget should include funding to support transportation to and from school when those costs exceed the transportation allocation. The budget for curriculum funding is reported via Excel templates provided by MiLEAP. Start up grant budget documentation must be maintained locally by the ISD.

Budget descriptions must be clearly stated to ensure consistency and faster budget approval. The ISD must ensure that all expenditures are approvable. Each entry must provide clear information to determine the allowability of planned expenditures. Detailed items must be reasonable for the quality of the project activities proposed, include appropriate function and object codes, and, in total, not exceed the maximum administrative costs allowable, where applicable. Items reported under Purchased Services must clearly identify personnel, materials, or services. Salary and benefit descriptions along with the number of hours/FTEs must be included for each category of employee.

As outlined in Section 32d(8) the ISD must maintain program budgets that contain only those costs that are not reimbursed or reimbursable by a program funded through federal funding, that are clearly and directly attributable to the Great Start Readiness Program, and that would not be incurred if the program were not being offered.

Subrecipient Budget Detail

Per legislation, the ISD is the grantee and fiscal agent for all GSRP funds. As such, the ISD is required at a minimum, to receive, review, approve and keep on file, yearly budgets and FERs for all GSRP funds, including transportation, curriculum, and start up grants. Individual subrecipient budgets and FERs are required documentation for a fiscal review and must be provided to MiLEAP upon request. Templates and other documents are available in the resources to this section.

Reporting Subrecipient Budgets in NexSys

For subrecipients, the ISD is only required to enter a total amount in the applicable 400 function code(s) within the budgets and FERs in NexSys.

All funding should be entered under the 7000-8000 object code. Descriptions must be used as below:

- Function code 411 – Total Districts/PSAs
- Function code 441 – Total For-Profit, Public or Private CBOs
- Function code 445 – Total Non-Profit CBOs, College/Universities, and Head Start

Reporting Funds Transferred In/Out

See the "Cross-ISD Enrollment" subsection below for detailed information on enrollment of children from another ISD.

Funds transferred out to another ISD must be entered on separate lines with a description indicating to which ISD the funds are transferred as below:

- Function code 411 – Funds transferred out to *XXX* ISD

Funds transferred in must be entered in the budget detail indicating the item represents "Transferred In Funds," in the dropdown box (see screenshot below). When Transferred In Funds are to be used by the ISD, they must be budgeted with the proper descriptions, function, and object codes.

When Transferred In Funds are to be used by a subrecipient, they must be budgeted in a separate line in the applicable function code under the 7000/8000 object code. Funds must be designated "Transferred In Funds" in the dropdown box with a description indicating from which ISD the funds are transferred in as below:

- Function code 411 – Funds transferred in from XXX ISD
- Function code 441 – Funds transferred in from XXX ISD
- Function code 445 – Funds transferred in from XXX ISD

4% Administrative Costs

An ISD or consortium of ISDs may retain an amount not to exceed 4% of the total grant amount from program and transportation funds for administrative services provided by the ISD. Function Codes 23X, 24X, 25X, and 28X (with the exception of 282) are considered administrative. Administrative expenses are required to be designated as such in the budget and FER descriptions including the transportation budget. Costs related to Early Childhood Specialists and Early Childhood Contacts are program costs and are not considered an administrative expense subject to the 4% cap. Additional funds should be retained by the ISD for program costs.

Expenses incurred by subrecipients or the ISD for directly running portions of the program shall be considered program costs or a contracted program fee for service and are not subject to the 4% limitation.

There can be instances where an ISD or is at or below the maximum administrative limit and still have excessive administrative costs for a position or service. There can also be instances where an ISD needs to classify an item as a dual benefit cost and in these instances the ISD is permitted to use cost sharing. The ISD must document the allocation of cost sharing. For example, the duties for a local program administrator are split between administrative and programmatic functions. The ISD may permit cost sharing with proper supportive documentation, by using a position description and a spreadsheet that demonstrates the rational for the cost sharing. In this instance, costs must be designated as administrative and/or programmatic. The documentation that justifies cost sharing must be kept on file for a fiscal review.

Before submitting budgets and FERs, the ISD must ensure that detailed administrative items are reasonable and necessary for the quality of the activities proposed, include proper function codes and descriptions, and are properly allocated between administration and program services.

Personnel Rules

Salaries budgeted for personnel must be accompanied by a budgeted amount for benefits even if that amount is "0." Full Time Equivalent (FTE) or hours must be designated for each individual or category of individuals. A 1.0 FTE is viewed as the equivalent of 40 hours/week, whether the individual is contracted to work the full calendar year or the school calendar year. Hours budgeted must equal the total hours of expected work per year. In programs that braid or blend GSRP funding with children who are supported from other sources, budget only the prorated time staff spends with GSRP enrolled children.

ISDs and Subrecipients must include personnel last names in their budget detail descriptions and FERs for monitoring and auditing purposes. This detail does not need to be included in NexSys.

If ISD staff are hired using an agency, any fee paid to the agency for the provision of staff is to be considered an administrative cost and is reported separately in Function Code 283.

Bonuses and Incentive Payments

Bonuses and incentive payments that exceed the contracted salary are allowable only for employees in the following circumstances:

- Staff who are actively participating with the T.E.A.C.H. statewide scholarship program. A documented percentage or lump sum payment schedule must be established, based on hours worked, length of employment, etc., along with an implemented written policy/procedure to ensure consistency of these payments. Bonuses and incentive payments are subject to applicable income taxes.
- A new hire bonus or incentive. This payment is specific and limited to new staff **at the time of hire**.
- A referral bonus to current staff that recruit new hires to the program. The program should have a policy in place outlining the process for distributing a referral bonus.
- Longevity payments provided to recognize returning staff. Payments must be included in the program's personnel policies and contracted salary amount.
- Enrollment incentives for staff responsible for the recruitment and enrollment of children. The program should have a policy in place outlining the process for distributing enrollment incentives.

Other bonuses and incentive payments that exceed the contracted salary amount, regardless of being coded as a salary (17XX) or a benefit (2XXX) are not approvable expenses.

Outreach and Recruiting

An ISD and/or subrecipients may incur costs for outreach, recruitment, and public awareness of the program but the total must not exceed 2% of the total grant amount. Recruitment and enrollment costs must be clearly identified in budgets and FERs.

An ISD or subrecipient(s) can provide outreach, recruitment, and public awareness and incur the costs independently or collaboratively, but total costs cannot exceed the 2%. ISDs must have a written policy describing the process including the entities (ISD and/or subrecipients) that will be providing the outreach, recruitment, and public awareness. Per legislation, outreach, recruitment, and public awareness costs are not considered administrative costs and are calculated separately. Refer to the Recruitment and Enrollment section of this manual.

Outreach, recruitment, and public awareness costs must be entered into budgets and FERs under function code 282.

Cross-ISD Enrollment

Legislation provides for parent choice to enroll a child into a GSRP of a non-resident ISD. A resident ISD is the ISD in which the child resides and an educating ISD is the ISD where the child attends GSRP. In each case, when calculating 'hold harmless' for the following year, the space that the child fills is attributed to the ISD reported as the Fiscal Entity in the Michigan Student Data System (MSDS). Written agreements are required between resident and educating ISDs, with any of the following scenarios.

- Child is served by the educating ISD but is reported within MSDS and NexSys by the resident ISD. The resident ISD is reported as the Fiscal Entity and receives payment from the Department for the child. Funds may or may not transfer between ISDs.
- Child is served by the educating ISD and the educating ISD reports the child within MSDS and NexSys. The resident ISD is reported as the Fiscal Entity and receives payment from the Department for the child. Funds may or may not transfer between ISDs.
- Child is served by the educating ISD using its allocation; the educating ISD reports the child within MSDS and NexSys, is reported as the Fiscal Entity, and receives payment from the Department for the child.

In all cases, the Local Education Agency (LEA) code for the school district the child lives in should be reported as the Resident LEA.

Collaborating ISDs should consider implications on the total percentage of spaces awarded to community-based organizations and whether the need of the grant is met for resident children/families. Resident and educating ISDs must have a written agreement in place, following the rules for contracts found in the

ISD Administration of GSRP section. These agreements must be available for a fiscal review.

If the written agreement includes the provision to transfer funds for cross-ISD enrollment, transferred funds **cannot be "netted."** The resident ISD must send all funds, as applicable, to the educating ISD for all children that are cross-ISD enrolled, this includes transportation amounts only if the educating ISD transports the child to and from the program. For example, ISD A has 10 children that are going to attend GSRP in ISD B's area. And ISD B has 9 children that are going to attend GSRP in ISD A's area.

- ISD A must send the total funding for all 10 children to ISD B.
- ISD B must send the total funding for all 9 children to ISD A.
- The funding **cannot be netted**; where ISD A would only send funding to ISD B for one child.
- The full amount of transferred funds must also be reported in budgets and FERs in NexSys. See below for instructions.

Funds transferred in must be expended within the grant year in which they are received. Transferred in funds cannot be carried over into the next grant year. These funds must also be used to support GSRP classrooms, with the same approvability, allowability, necessity and reasonableness as an ISD's GSRP allocation.

If funds are being transferred between resident and educating ISDs, the resident ISD may retain administrative funds from funds transferred out, limited to the administrative cap as specified in legislation. **Educating ISDs may not retain administrative costs from funds transferred in.**

Funds associated with cross-ISD enrollment must be reported in the budgets and FERs in NexSys in the following manner:

- Transferred in Funds:
- Reported using the proper function and object codes
- Must be described as: Funds transferred in from ISD A for *(specify use, e.g., supplies)*
- Must be marked "Transferred In Funds" in the budget detail
- Transferred out Funds:
- Reported using the 411 function and object codes
- Must be described as: "Funds transferred out to *(name of ISD)"*

If transportation funds are transferred in or out, these are reported in the Transportation budget and FER in the same manner. Funds may not be transferred to the educating ISD unless that ISD is transporting the child from the resident ISD to the educating ISD.

Use of Transportation Funding

Transportation services include costs, either in full or appropriately prorated, for child safety restraint systems, additional or extended bus routes/bus runs/mileage, fuel, vehicle maintenance or modifications, drivers, bus aides and school buses or other costs related to transportation. Depreciation is not an allowable expense for GSRP transportation.

Fiscal year 2025 (FY25) funding for GSRP includes a $28,000,000 set aside that is specifically to be used for the costs of transporting GSRP children to and from school. Each year ISDs are asked to collect projected transportation budgets from subrecipients. An aggregated transportation request is forwarded to MiLEAP from each ISD. If the total request from all ISDs is equal to or less than $28,000,000, each ISD receives the requested amount. If the total exceeds $28,000,000, MiLEAP prorates the funds. Any ISD requesting less than the prorated share receives its requested amount.

The ISD may use any or all of its transportation allocation and must distribute transportation funds as needed across all subrecipients providing transportation. The ISD creates a process to gather pertinent information that will guide decision-making on prioritization of transportation funds. Consideration is given to how collaborative child recruiting and public awareness activities, along with a dedicated transportation allocation, can support the goal to identify and serve children and families who may not otherwise be able to access the program. Other considerations include the number/location of GSRP subrecipients currently providing transportation, the number/residence of GSRP enrolled children receiving transportation, family need by programming option, how well existing transportation costs are met, and areas of unmet need for transportation services. The school readiness advisory committee may be the appropriate venue for data-based decision-making on distribution of the transportation allocation.

Transportation options approved by MiLEAP may be supported with GSRP funds. This includes school buses and contracts with bussing companies. If a public transit system meets licensing requirements, the cost for transportation may be contracted for and paid by the program directly to the transit system _if_ the general public is not being transported with children in GSRP. Ridership and costs may be shared with other programs from the GSRP site. All these options necessitate a contract.

The GSRP PIP in NexSys includes a separate transportation budget to document use of the transportation allocation accepted for the ISD and/or subrecipients. The administrative cap for ISDs also applies to accepted transportation funds.

Use of transportation funds should be monitored throughout the year. If actual expenses are less than planned, transportation funds can be moved between subrecipients as needed.

Parent/Guardian Transportation Funding Considerations

Legislation includes a section specific to reimbursing a GSRP program for costs related to parent or guardian accompanied public transportation. Section 32d(23) reads as follows:

(23) Subject to, and from the funds allocated under, subsection (22), the department of lifelong education, advancement, and potential shall reimburse a program for transportation costs related to parent- or guardian-accompanied transportation provided by transportation service companies, buses, or other public transportation services. To be eligible for reimbursement under this subsection, a program must submit to the intermediate district or consortia of intermediate districts all of the following:

(a) The names of families provided with transportation support along with a documented reason for the need for transportation support and the type of transportation provided.

(b) Financial documentation of actual transportation costs incurred by the program, including, but not limited to, receipts and mileage reports, as determined by the department of lifelong education, advancement, and potential.

(c) Any other documentation or information determined necessary by the department of lifelong education, advancement, and potential.

Required Documentation

For audit purposes, ISDs are responsible for ensuring documentation submitted for reimbursement is sufficient. To ensure compliance with this legislation, MiLEAP recommends review and signoff by an authorized ISD official. A documented need for the reason for the use of public transportation and financial documentation is required. Receipts must clearly disclose the public transportation provider, cost, date, time, and location or map documenting mileage of each round trip to/from the program.

Additional Considerations

Based on this legislation as written, to be considered for reimbursement, a parent or guardian must accompany the child; costs for other passengers accompanying the parent or guardian and child are not reimbursable. The mode of public transportation utilized must comply with applicable state laws.

All transportation services in Michigan (limos, taxis, Uber, Lyft, etc.) are required to complete a criminal background check and a driving history check on employed drivers annually. Uber and Lyft are required to provide insurance coverage at the corporate level, as well as coverage at the personal level (meaning Uber is insuring

the driver's car while the driver is conducting Uber business). Fingerprinting is not required.

These funds are not intended to pay for exceptional situations such as fuel for personal vehicles or episodic reimbursement for taxis, UBER, bus fees, gas cards, etc.

Curriculum Funding

FY25 funding for GSRP includes a $2,000,000 set aside to support GSRP classrooms with the purchase of comprehensive curriculum, ongoing authentic child assessment, or developmental screening tools approved for use in GSRP. Curriculum funding may also be utilized for costs associated with providing professional learning in the tools. Each year, ISDs are asked to submit an aggregated funding request for these materials and/or training, including costs for subrecipients to MiLEAP. If the total request from all ISDs is equal to or less than $2,000,000, each ISD will receive its requested amount. If the total exceeds $2,000,000, MiLEAP prorates the funds. Any ISD requesting less than the prorated share will receive its requested amount.

An ISD may request funding for any or all these purposes:

- To change or update comprehensive curriculum, ongoing authentic child assessment, and/or developmental screening tools approved for use in GSRP;
- To purchase new or updated comprehensive curriculum, ongoing authentic child assessment, and/or developmental screening tools approved for use in GSRP;
- To purchase supplies or materials to support the implementation of the comprehensive curriculum, ongoing authentic child assessment, and/or developmental screening tools approved for use in GSRP; and/or
- To provide professional learning on the implementation of the comprehensive curriculum, ongoing authentic child assessment, and/or developmental screening tools approved for use in GSRP.

When curriculum funds have been allocated, a curriculum budget worksheet will be provided to each ISD by the department. A final expenditure report will be completed within the same worksheet.

Start Up Grant Funding

Public Act (P.A.) 120 of 2024 included additional funding for new or expanded Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) classrooms; see section 32d(29).

FY25 Definitions:

"New classroom" is defined as one that is operating for the first time as a GSRP classroom for 2024-25. "Expanded classroom" is defined as a classroom that did not previously receive a start up grant and is increasing capacity in an existing GSRP classroom by a minimum of 10%.

Eligibility:

A classroom that meets one of the above definitions is eligible. A subrecipient may receive a start up grant for more than one classroom. Classrooms awarded a start up grant in Rounds 1-4 of FY24 are not eligible for an additional start up grant.

Funding:

The FY25 Round 1 start up grant application is being made available in September 2024 for additional new or expanded classrooms scheduled to be open and serving GSRP children by February 19, 2025.

Important information about FY25 start up grants:

- Each eligible classroom will receive a start up grant of $25,000 unless requests exceed available funding. If requests exceed available funding, grants will be prorated.
- Classrooms receiving a start up grant in Round 1 that do not successfully enroll GSRP children by the close of the 2025 Early Childhood Spring Collection reporting window will have remaining funds recaptured.
- Additional rounds of start up grant funding will be made available as funds permit. To assist ISDs with planning, this table indicates the expected timeline:

Planned timelines for FY25 Start-up Funds

		Release	Due	For classrooms that will be opened and serving children by
Current	Round 1	Sept. 26	Oct. 10	Feb. 19, 2025
Proposed	Round 2	Oct. 30	Nov. 6	Feb. 19, 2025
Proposed	Round 3	March 19	April 9	Sept. 30, 2025
Proposed	Round 4	June 18	June 25	Sept. 30, 2025

- Round 1 start up funds must be expended by September 30, 2025. Unspent funds will be recaptured.

- Funding awarded for new or expanded programs must be paid in full to the subrecipient operating the classroom(s) and may be used for the following purposes:
    - Attracting, recruiting, retaining, and licensing required classroom education personnel to staff new or expanded classrooms, e.g., fingerprinting fee, training or additional education, hiring incentives, etc.
    - Facility improvements or purchasing facility space, e.g., costs associated with meeting licensing requirements, replacement of outdated fixtures, flooring, windows, etc.
    - Outreach materials necessary for public awareness and for costs associated with enrolling eligible children in new or expanded classrooms, e.g., recruitment advertisements, promotional materials, etc.
    - Costs in each new or expanded classroom associated with improving a provider's great start to quality rating, e.g., curriculum and assessment materials, required professional development, classroom supplies, materials, and equipment.

Reporting:

Supporting documentation will not be required with the funding request or prior to expending the start up grant. At the end of the grant expenditure period, ISDs will be required to report total spending in each of the allowable categories identified above in the Final Expenditure Report (FER) Excel Template provided. ISDs will also be asked to provide identifying details on each of the classrooms that receive start up grant funding.

- FY25 Round 1 Start Up Grant expenditures will be reported via a Final Expenditure Report (FER) due October 30, 2025. **Carryover of Round 1 start up grants will not be allowed. Unspent funds will be recaptured.**

ISDs will be expected to follow their set policies and procedures regarding the use of GSRP funds. The budget(s) and proof of expenditures for each start up grant must be maintained at the ISD.

Use of Federal Food Programs for GSRP

GSRP students are eligible to participate in the National School Nutrition Programs (SNP) and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) where applicable. GSRP students attending in a classroom operated by a local district or ISD that is housed in a public school building participating in Michigan School Meals, are eligible for free school meals regardless of income. GSRP children receiving meals through CACFP are not categorically eligible to receive free meals through this program due to an income requirement less stringent than that of the federal Head Start Program. All families of GSRP children receiving meals or snacks through a federal food program should expect to complete and return the appropriate eligibility documentation (i.e., SNP-Free and Reduced Meal Family Application, CACFP

Household Income Eligibility Statements). Participating programs must retain this paperwork as required by the applicable food program.

There is no cost to families for snacks or meals provided in GSRP at any time. This is true regardless of family income, or whether a program participates in SNP or CACFP, or is ineligible for a federal food program. See guidance in this section for how the full cost of providing meals and snacks is shared between federal reimbursements and the GSRP budget.

GSRP funds may only be used to cover the costs of providing classroom meals and snacks that are over and above the reimbursement received from the SNP and/or the CACFP as applicable.

Exception:

All LEA GSRP subrecipients are required to take part in SNP for breakfast and lunch or CACFP for all meals/snacks. An LEA may choose to use SNP for meals, and CACFP for snack only, however is not required to do so if participation is cost prohibitive.

CBOs that are eligible, must participate in CACFP, unless participation is cost prohibitive. Participation may be cost prohibitive when a program has only a small number of children who are eligible for free or reduced reimbursement levels, or when a part-day program offers snack only. In these cases, the administrative cost to participate may exceed reimbursement. To assist in determining if CACFP participation would be cost prohibitive, the ISD should work with the CBO partner to complete the GSRP CACFP Application Decision Tree in the resources for this section.

For some CBOs, engaging with a CACFP sponsor may be beneficial. A CACFP sponsor manages the administrative aspects of participation for a nominal percentage of the reimbursement. This may make participation more accessible allowing for the program to benefit from the federal reimbursement with significantly less administrative burden. A CBO interested in sponsorship should contact CACFP at the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) for more information.

Redetermination of the cost/benefit of participation in CACFP should be conducted any time a significant change to the program structure occurs (e.g., a substantial increase/decrease in enrollment, the addition of a GSRP classroom or before- and after-school-care program) that alters the number of eligible children served meals/snacks.

A for profit CBO may be ineligible to participate in CACFP based on the number of free/reduced eligible children enrolled. ISDs are advised to work with for profit CBO partners to complete the GSRP CACFP Application Decision Tree in the resources for this section prior to the CBO applying to participate in CACFP. However, if a CBO

applies and is deemed ineligible, the CBO will receive a letter from MDE that the center may provide to the ISD as documentation of ineligibility. A CBO that is not eligible to participate in CACFP must still provide meals and snacks at no cost to families, with the full cost of doing so attributed to the GSRP budget. See also "Reimbursement to CBOs Not Eligible for CACFP" on the following page.

The reimbursement process between ISDs and subrecipients should not be prohibitive to the SNP and CACFP federal programs that expect children to be provided healthy meal and snack options. The *GSRP Monthly Food Service Invoice* template found in the resources for this section outlines the information required of subrecipients seeking reimbursement who are eligible for SNP/CACFP. Another template is available for those who cannot participate in either food program. Subrecipients are not required to use a template for reimbursement purposes; however, they will be required to provide all the information outlined on the template.

Federal Food Program Disqualification

Programs that have been disqualified from federal food program participation may also be ineligible to continue as or become a GSRP subrecipient. ISDs should confirm existing subrecipients' ongoing participation in the applicable federal food program annually. ISDs should ensure that potential subrecipients are actively participating or have applied to participate in the applicable federal food program and that no existing disqualification is in place prior to entering into an agreement to provide GSRP. In the event of a disqualification, the ISD must notify the assigned GSRP Consultant to determine next steps.

Calculating Meal/Snack Reimbursement

School Nutrition Program (SNP)

LEA subrecipients providing free meals to district K-12 students through Michigan School Meals must also provide free meals to children enrolled in district-run GSRP classrooms. LEA subrecipients that do not participate in Michigan School Meals, must adhere to the provisions below depending on the applicable federal food program.

To receive reimbursement from GSRP funds, LEA subrecipients using SNP must provide the ISD with the School Food Authority (SFA) prices for breakfast and lunch as specified in the LEA's annual SNP contract. These prices consider actual food costs as well as the other costs involved in providing the meals. In K-12 the difference between the SFA price and the reimbursement is the cost of free, reduced, and paid meals normally paid by the children. In the case of GSRP, that cost is billed to the GSRP program instead of paid by the children.

Invoices for meal reimbursement must indicate the total number of meals served during the period for each type of meal (breakfast, lunch) in each reimbursement

category: free, reduced, paid. Totals for each category are then multiplied by the meal free, reduced, and paid amounts as charged directly to children in K-12. This amount will be billed to GSRP and all documentation kept for auditing.

SNP Adult Meals

The program bears the full cost of adult meals when classroom staff eat school meals with children. Adults may choose to bring their own meal to be eaten away from the children during a staff person's lunch period. If one or more classroom staff choose to provide their own meals, the program should pay for at least one adult meal to provide sufficient food for adults to sample foods alongside children. Adult meal costs should not exceed the adult meal price established for the district by the LEA.

SNP Snacks

The cost of snacks should be established annually with an ISD-subrecipient agreed upon amount as applicable for each LEA subrecipient and should reflect the reasonable average cost of providing an appropriate nutritious snack that meets food program guidelines. Snack reimbursement for LEA programs not using CACFP is based on the number of snacks provided in a month multiplied by this amount. Adult snacks are added to the cost of providing snack for children.

SNP Other Food Service Costs

Occasionally, materials and other equipment not included in meal costs are required in the course of providing food service specific to GSRP, such as child-sized serving containers and utensils, storage containers, or additional supplies to be kept in the GSRP classroom. In such cases, these costs may be itemized and billed to GSRP. GSRP owns all equipment purchased with grant funds. If meals/snacks must be delivered to GSRP, and delivery constitutes a service over and above the ordinary service provided to K-12 programs factored into the SFA price for the district, a delivery charge may also be itemized and charged beyond the meal cost itself. Most often, "delivery" refers to the need to transport meals/snacks to an off-site location or building that does not otherwise house K-12 classrooms also receiving meal/snack delivery. All GSRP expenses related to the provision of meals and snacks, for all subrecipients and the ISD, are to be classified under the function code 118.

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

GSRP funds may only be used to cover the difference between the cost of providing classroom meals and snacks and the reimbursement from the CACFP. Regardless of which eligibility category children are in, there is no cost to families for snacks or meals. The full cost of providing snacks and meals is shared between federal reimbursements and the GSRP budget. Qualifying breakfasts, lunches and snacks served to GSRP children must be claimed for federal reimbursement. The cost of meals and snacks provided through CACFP should be established annually with an

ISD-subrecipient agreed upon amount as applicable for each subrecipient and should reflect the reasonable average cost of providing an appropriate nutritious breakfast/lunch/snack that meets food program guidelines. GSRP's portion can then be documented utilizing the *GSRP Monthly Food Service Invoice* template found in the resources for this section (or a similar tool) showing the difference between the full cost of providing meals/snacks for a month and the amount of the CACFP reimbursement. GSRP may be charged for the difference remaining after CACFP reimbursement.

The cost of meals/snacks for the GSRP teaching team members, who are expected to join the children in family style meals, cannot be charged to the teaching team and are included in the GSRP portion of the costs for the provision of meals/snacks.

Occasionally, materials and other equipment not included in meal costs are required in the course of providing food service specific to GSRP, such as child-sized serving containers and utensils, storage containers, or additional supplies to be kept in the GSRP classroom. In such cases, these costs may be itemized and billed to GSRP. GSRP owns all equipment purchased with grant funds. All GSRP expenses related to the provision of meals and snacks, for all subrecipients and the ISD, are to be classified under the function code 118.

Reimbursement to CBOs Not Eligible for CACFP

Private for-profit centers that receive compensation under Title XX of the Social Security Act may qualify to take part in CACFP. At least 25% of the enrolled children or 25% of the licensed capacity must be Title XX beneficiaries or eligible for free (Category A) or reduced-price meals (Category B).

A CBO may be deemed not eligible to participate based on the GSRP CACFP Application Decision Tree in the resources for this section. A CBO may also elect to apply for the program, and if found ineligible, will receive a letter from CACFP staff that the center may provide to the ISD documenting the lack of eligibility. In either case, the full cost of providing meals/snacks is then attributed to the GSRP budget. Programs that are ineligible must still have records to justify the charge for providing meals/snacks to children enrolled in GSRP. Eligibility for participation in CACFP should be redetermined any time a significant change to the program structure occurs (e.g., a substantial increase/decrease in enrollment, the addition of a GSRP classroom or before- and after-school-care program) that alters the number of eligible children served meals/snacks.

Records to maintain for ISD Reimbursement include:

- Menus for foods served for all GSRP enrolled children;
- Meal attendance for all meals/snacks served to GSRP enrolled children;
- Center attendance for GSRP participants (may differ from meal attendance);
- Enrollment forms for GSRP children;

- Receipts for monthly food and non-food expenditures;
- Prorated portion of direct labor costs related to preparing and serving meals; and,
- Claim form (Template available in the resources for this section).

The ISD should specify in writing its process for subrecipient reimbursement. All GSRP expenses related to the provision of meals and snacks, for all subrecipients and the ISD, are to be classified under the function code 118.

Capital Outlay

Capital outlay refers to costs more than $5,000 for equipment, building purchase or renovation project costs. An individual item or a project that totals over $5,000 is capital outlay.

A "project" is considered one purchase, or the sum of several purchases made at the same time that are interrelated in the sense that they would not "stand alone."

Example: A playground purchase that includes a climber, installation, surfacing, and fencing. While each element could be purchased independently and/or from separate vendors over time, when done together, the whole undertaking is considered a "project" that would require both capital approval and a competitive bid if it exceeds the threshold.

In contrast, a bulk purchase of several items that "stand alone" would not be considered a "project" nor require capital approval or a competitive bid unless the cost of a single item exceeds either/both threshold(s).

Example 1: A district purchases 48 Chromebooks @$600 each for 3 classrooms. As the individual items themselves do not exceed either the capital or competitive bid threshold, neither is required.

Example 2: A district purchases 6 sheds @$5500 each for 6 sites. As each shed exceeds the capital outlay threshold of $5000, capital approval is required. However, because they "stand alone," a competitive bid is not required despite the total purchase exceeding the bid threshold.

Example 3: A district purchases 2 busses @ $65,000 each. As both the capital outlay threshold and the competitive bid threshold are exceeded, both are required though this is not considered a "project" as the busses stand alone.

Prior to approval of the request by the ISD, the ECC/ECS must consider the individual circumstances of the subrecipient's program needs and decide as to whether the purchase is reasonable, necessary and recommended. The ISD must refuse a request that the ECC/ECS has not approved and does not meet these guidelines. For subrecipient requests at or below $20,000, the ISD may provide approval with the approved form being kept on file. Subrecipient requests that

exceed $20,000 as well as all capital outlay requests for ISD operated classrooms must first be approved by the ISD, and then forwarded to a GSRP consultant for approval. If a portion of any capital outlay item is charged to GSRP, ISD and/or MiLEAP approval is required before the cost is incurred. The Capital Outlay Request form can be found in the resources for this section.

Capital Outlay items/projects that exceed the Competitive Bid Threshold must follow the ISD/subrecipient competitive bid policy in compliance with MDE requirements (see the Competitive Bid Threshold Memo in the resources for this section). It is the responsibility of the ISD to ensure that bid requirements are met for all subrecipients, supporting CBOs as needed. An LEA or PSA is not required to obtain competitive bids for items purchased through MiDeal, the bulk purchasing program operated by the State of Michigan Department of Management and Budget. Other cooperatives to which a subrecipient may belong or participate in for discounted supplies/equipment may not be utilized in place of the competitive bid requirements.

Budget Modifications

Budget modifications are not always required when the total change to a budget category is expected to exceed 10%; it is dependent upon the status of that year's FERs. When the FER and COFER become live, budget modifications are no longer permitted. The ISD is required to contact the assigned consultant to determine if the proposed modification is necessary and approvable. The ISD provides the policies and procedures to subrecipients for local budgets.

Payments to Subrecipients

GSRP funding that comes to the ISDs may be forwarded to subrecipients in several ways. Funding may be sent to subrecipients as a 1/11th payment, on a quarterly basis, or on a reimbursement basis. The ISD must follow the agreed upon contract which details the flow of funding that is fair and equitable across subrecipients. The subrecipient contract and documentation of these payments are to be kept for MiLEAP review.

MiLEAP Recovery of Funds for Unfilled Spaces

Funding for unfilled spaces will be recaptured. See the Funding section for an explanation of documenting filled spaces in MSDS.

Final Expenditure Reports (FER)

At the end of the grant year, ISDs must provide actual expenditures for program, transportation, and curriculum funding in the FER in NexSys as applicable. Start up grant FERs are reported via an Excel template provided by MiLEAP. All earned program and other allocated funds must be accounted for either in the FERs or as a

carryover amount in the Carryover Budget (COB) if allowed. All budgeted carryover funds spent are reported in the Carryover FER (COFER). See the Carryover FER section below.

Any carryover funds not expended are recaptured. The final approved budget amounts and descriptions are pulled into the appropriate FERs. The ISD is required to receive and keep FERs from each subrecipient that details expenditures. It is required that the ISD monitor expenditures for both the ISD and each subrecipient. The documentation for expenditures should be detailed enough to allow the ISD and MiLEAP staff to determine that all expenditures were necessary, reasonable, and allowable. It must also be clear that the outreach and recruitment, and administrative cap for the ISD has not been exceeded.

Carryover Budgets and FERs

If the ISD and its subrecipients did not expend all program funds earned and/or other funds allocated, a carryover budget may be submitted if allowed, then a carryover FER (COFER) is required. Carryover is allowed for program funds earned, transportation funds, and curriculum funds. The allowability of carryover for start up grant funds is dependent on the round in which funding was received. MiLEAP will provide specific information on allowability with each round. Regardless of the type of funding, any unexpended funds will be recaptured if a carryover budget is not submitted. The expenditure of carryover funds for program, transportation, and curriculum is reported in NexSys. Start up grant carryover expenditures are reported via an Excel template provided by MiLEAP. The carryover period is October 1 to June 30 of the subsequent grant year.

The ISD may allow each subrecipient to budget for carryover but will submit one aggregated COB and COFER to MiLEAP. The subrecipient agreements must specify how carryover can be accounted for by a subrecipient. Subrecipient carryover funds must be used by the subrecipient who had the carryover amount unless the written agreement between the ISD and the subrecipient specifies otherwise. Any carryover funds not accounted for in the COFER will be recaptured.