
Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) Enhancements Based on Stakeholder Feedback

Over the past few years, the Michigan Department of Education, or MDE, has taken several steps to design and implement an effective curriculum approval process. This effort began in 2015, when the MDE engaged stakeholders and reviewed the curriculum rubrics and processes from 16 other states to develop a draft curriculum review process that prioritizes clarity and transparency.

The work continued in 2017, when the MDE partnered with Public Sector Consultants to gather feedback from local stakeholders about the curriculum approval process. Stakeholders noted several qualities of an effective, transparent curriculum approval process. Below is a summary of their input and how the updated process addresses that feedback.

Clear, Transparent Process

Stakeholders want to understand how decisions are made and who is involved in the curriculum approval process. They suggested that making the process more open and collaborative would increase buy-in among providers.

The updated process provides multiple opportunities for the MDE to engage with curriculum vendors to ensure a transparent and thorough review. The MDE will host an introductory webinar for vendors interested in learning more about the process before proposals are due and conduct an initial review of materials to ensure that vendors have submitted a complete proposal for consideration.

In addition, the MDE is committed to ensuring other stakeholders understand and can track the process. The approval process, a list of perspectives represented on the curriculum review committee, and the final list of approved curricula will be available to the public.

Regular Process

Stakeholders shared their view that the process should allow for the consideration of new curricula on a more regular basis. They believe that this will allow the state to consider adoption of new and innovative curricula as they emerge in the education field.

Curriculum proposals will now be considered on a every two years.

Robust Rubric

When considering curriculum approval, stakeholders believe that the review process should use a rubric that incorporates qualities of effective, comprehensive curricula. In addition to emphasizing the importance of aligning Michigan's rubric with national standards, stakeholders also recognized the value of building on these best practices with state-specific elements that can address Michigan's unique challenges and opportunities.

The updated process will continue to use the Preschool Curriculum Model Evaluation Rubric, which includes evaluation criteria that meet the Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten and are closely aligned with best practices identified in other states and the guidelines established for early childhood programs by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Qualified Reviewers

Stakeholders agreed that experts in early childhood curriculum; individuals with knowledge of the Great Start Readiness Program, or GSRP; and education professionals who understand early learning and development should participate in the review process. To ensure that experts are eligible to serve in this capacity, stakeholders emphasized the need to develop a more targeted conflict of interest policy that effectively prioritizes a fair and impartial review without unnecessarily barring quality reviewers from participating in the entire approval process.

The updated process includes a new conflict of interest policy designed to strike an appropriate balance between the need to avoid biased decision making and the desire to recruit reviewers with early childhood curriculum and GSRP expertise.

Public Decision with Clear Rationale

Following a collaborative, regular, and fair review process, stakeholders expressed their desire for decisions to be communicated directly to vendors. Stakeholders believe that a clear rationale explaining the decision to approve or reject curriculum proposals will improve transparency and provide vendors with the feedback about how they need to improve their proposals in the future.

The updated process will incorporate these suggestions by providing vendors with a written decision letter and scoring rubric.

Appeal Process

Along with increasing transparency, stakeholders wanted a clear and timely appeal process, with clearly outlined timelines to reduce the burden on applicants and reviewers.

The updated approval process clarifies how a vendor can submit an appeal.

Opportunity to Pilot

Stakeholders reported that piloting new and innovative approaches emerging in the field will provide a valuable opportunity to benchmark and compare outcomes to those of previously approved curricula.

Consistent with past practice, new and innovative curriculum models can receive pilot-approval status. This approach allows for the testing and scaling of new curricula that may lack the rigorous implementation research and outcomes needed to demonstrate their positive impact. Evaluation of these pilots will be critical and will happen frequently to ensure that children participating in the pilot are receiving effective and high-quality preschool programs.