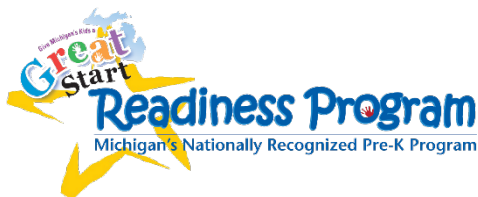


**Michigan Department of Education  
Office of Great Start**

# **Curriculum Approval Process Overview**

**Great Start Readiness Program**



## Letter from the Michigan Department of Education

Dear families, providers, administrators, policymakers, and partners,

Michigan has a rich history of providing high-quality, state-funded preschool to the state's most vulnerable children through the Great Start Readiness Program, known as the GSRP. Since 1985, the Michigan Department of Education—MDE— has worked closely with providers across the state to ensure Michigan offers a high-quality learning experience to all children participating in the GSRP. As the program has improved and evolved, early childhood partners and the MDE have worked together to maintain essential markers of quality.

Curriculum is no exception. The early childhood field is constantly learning and innovating, and the list of state-approved curricula needs to be updated regularly to align with best practices and state standards. This document explains how the state reviews and approves curricula for use in GSRP classrooms. While written primarily to support curriculum vendors as they complete the process, the MDE encourages all partners to review the materials to better understand how the state considers comprehensive curricula.

The MDE updates these materials regularly to ensure clear communications between the department and its partners. If you have questions about the process or have suggestions for improving our materials, please contact [Pat Sargent](mailto:sargentp@michigan.gov) at [sargentp@michigan.gov](mailto:sargentp@michigan.gov), GSRP manager.

Thank you for all you do to improve opportunities and outcomes for young children.

Sincerely,



Richard Lower  
Director  
Preschool and Out-of-School Time Learning  
Office of Great Start

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## Background

Michigan’s Great Start Readiness Program is a high-quality, state-funded preschool program that primarily serves low-income four-year-olds. Although the program is implemented by intermediate school districts, or ISDs; school districts, including local education agencies and public-school academies; and community-based organizations, the Michigan Department of Education has important oversight authority, including the approval of GSRP curricula.

In this role, the MDE must achieve an important balance. It needs to ensure that all curricula meet high standards, specifically Michigan’s Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten, or ECSQ-PK. At the same time, the MDE needs an approval process that responds to new and innovative curricula emerging in the field.

This document describes the curriculum approval process for the GSRP, including how curricula are submitted for consideration, reviewed, scored, and approved. This process was designed using best practices from other states and feedback from Michigan stakeholders.

Note: Vendors interested in submitting a curriculum for consideration should review this document in full.

## Qualities of an Effective, Comprehensive Curriculum

This process is designed to ensure all children enrolled in the GSRP have access to a high-quality curriculum. A curriculum encompasses the full range of a child’s experience at school and is the key to a high-quality learning and developmental environment. A truly effective curriculum successfully blends best practices in theory and practice to support children’s overall development and provide an intentional set of experiences and activities that build on a child’s natural sense of inquiry.<sup>1</sup>

GSRP providers implement a comprehensive, child-focused, constructivist curriculum model for all enrolled children, which strikes an appropriate balance of child-initiated activities and adult-guided active learning. Teaching teams interact with children to build on their understanding and enhance learning. Play and peer-to-peer interaction are vital for providing children with opportunities to engage in abstract thinking and to develop self-regulation, problem-solving, and oral language

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<sup>1</sup> Michigan State Board of Education. March 12, 2013. [Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/ECSQ_OK_Approved_422339_7.pdf) (https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/ECSQ\_OK\_Approved\_422339\_7.pdf). Accessed August 25, 2018.

skills. All GSRP curricula must support the Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy—Pre-K, as developed by the General Education Leadership Network of the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators.

The state does not identify one best curriculum model. Instead, the MDE uses its curriculum approval process and the Great Start Readiness Program Preschool Curriculum Model Evaluation Rubric to assess a curriculum's alignment with Michigan's preschool standards. Michigan's rubric was developed based on a 2015 national survey of state curriculum review rubrics and processes conducted by the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education. This resulted in a review of 16 state responses, and elements to create Michigan's rubric were taken from roughly five of the responses. Missouri's rubric was the primary source from which best practices were pulled.

Michigan's rubric includes five major areas:

- Valid research: Is the curriculum grounded in sound theory and research?
- Evaluation results: What evidence exists that the curriculum is effective?
- Professional development: How does the curriculum support educators' professional learning?
- Developmental appropriateness: Is the curriculum developmentally appropriate for four-year-olds?
- Alignment with state standards: Is the curriculum aligned with Michigan's ECSQ-PK and the General Education Leadership Network's Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy—Pre-K?

For a list of approved curricula, visit the [GSRP website](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Curriculum-ADAUpdated_550561_7.pdf) ([https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Curriculum-ADAUpdated\\_550561\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Curriculum-ADAUpdated_550561_7.pdf)).

Note: This approval process document does not apply to supplemental curricula, which are intended to augment a comprehensive curriculum, generally in a specific content area. In accordance with the state law, an intermediate school district that is a GSRP grantee may approve the use of a supplemental curriculum that aligns with and enhances the age-appropriate educational curriculum in the classroom. If MDE objects to the use of a supplemental curriculum approved by an intermediate district, the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall establish a review committee independent of the department to make the final decision on a supplemental curriculum's approval.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> State of Michigan. 2017. "Public Act 108." [Michigan Compiled Law](http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2017-2018/publicact/pdf/2017-PA-0108.pdf) (<http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2017-2018/publicact/pdf/2017-PA-0108.pdf>). Accessed August 25, 2018.

## Process Overview

The MDE accepts, reviews, and approves curricula every other year. Only curriculum vendors can submit a curriculum for approval. They are called vendors or curriculum vendors throughout this document.

## How to Submit a Curriculum for Review

Vendors must signal their interest in submitting a curriculum for approval by completing the intent to submit form during the curriculum review cycle, which helps the MDE determine how many requests will be submitted as well as ensures reviewers are prepared for the volume of requests.

Vendors must then submit their curricula and supporting materials for review. The MDE requires that vendors provide four full sets of curriculum materials to the department. In addition, the vendor must complete the curriculum alignment rubric to explain how the curriculum meets Michigan's requirements. The department created a checklist and posted it on the GSRP website to help ensure vendors submit the correct materials.

When filing an intent to submit, vendors must also determine whether they are seeking statewide approval or pilot approval. Please see Table 2 for a more detailed discussion of the requirements for a pilot.

Once materials are received, the MDE will review the application to ensure all materials and forms are included. The MDE will follow up with vendors if there are questions about the materials.

## How Curricula Are Reviewed, Scored, and Approved

The curriculum approval process is supported by the MDE; however, the CRC, made up of early childhood experts, will review curricula. This committee includes members representing diverse perspectives and is responsible for ensuring a fair and thorough review of proposals.

## Curriculum Review Committee

### Charge

The CRC's charge is to review, score, and approve GSRP curricula using the Preschool Curriculum Model Evaluation Rubric to assess a curriculum's alignment with the five major elements of effective and quality curriculum design: valid research, evaluation results, professional development, developmental appropriateness, and alignment with state standards.

## Structure

The CRC consists of nine members, each serving for three-year terms. Members represent the following perspectives:

**TABLE 1.**

Perspective	Number of Members	Sample Members
GSRP providers	3	Potential members include administrators with certification in early childhood and relevant experience working with the GSRP from ISDs, school districts, public school academies, community-based providers, and Head Start.
Early learning and education experts	2	Potential members include professionals with expertise across a broad spectrum of early childhood education and development, such as infant and toddler development, child assessments, or developmental screening tools.
Higher education	2	Potential members include university or community college researchers or administrators with expertise in prekindergarten or early education policy, programming, or curriculum.
K–3 educators	1	Potential member is an educator or administrator with certification in early childhood and relevant experience working with GSRP graduates in K–3 classrooms.
MDE	1	Potential member could include staff with expertise in early childhood education and development, GSRP program administration, or curriculum implementation.

While the CRC is currently focused on GSRP curricula, the committee could be expanded in the future to allow consideration of other tools necessary for high-quality programming for children eight years old and younger, including infant and toddler curricula and assessments.

## Appointments

The MDE is committed to identifying highly qualified individuals to serve on the CRC. The MDE will receive recommendations for CRC members, and individuals can submit themselves or recommend a colleague.

Individuals must:

- Demonstrate they represent one or more of the perspectives above
- Demonstrate a strong background in early learning and development
- Commit to three years of service to the CRC

The deputy superintendent of P-20 systems and student transitions will then appoint members from this pool of candidates to represent each perspective.

### **Conflict of Interest**

To avoid any appearance of or actual conflicts of interest, all CRC members must sign an agreement asserting their commitment to adhere to the following statements.

- I agree to review GSRP curricula in an objective manner based on the established rubric and process developed by the MDE.
- I agree to maintain appropriate confidentiality before, during, and after the review process.
- I agree to declare current affiliations with the GSRP and recuse myself from any decision that may present a conflict of interest.
- I confirm that neither I nor any family members have a direct or indirect financial interest in any preschool curriculum model or vendor.
- I agree to recuse myself from the evaluation of any curriculum that will give an appearance of impropriety and in this way compromise the review process, thereby eliminating and avoiding any potential conflict of interest in the review process.
- To further avoid a conflict of interest or the appearance of impropriety, for a period of 12 months after completion of my duties as a reviewer, I will not seek or accept employment from, nor become directly or indirectly financially interested in any newly approved GSRP preschool curriculum publisher.

### **Compensation**

CRC members are not compensated. However, to ensure that a wide range of regional perspectives can participate, the MDE will reimburse members for some expenses when travelling significant distances.

### **Rubric Scoring**

All curricula are considered using the Preschool Curriculum Model Evaluation Rubric. This rubric includes evaluation criteria that are closely aligned with the guidelines established for early childhood programs by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, or NAEYC, and uses a scale of zero to seven to score a submission's alignment with criteria organized in five major areas:



- Valid research
  - Criteria assess the curriculum’s grounding in theory and support from research
- Evaluation results
  - Criteria assess the curriculum’s demonstration of positive effect on key learning and development outcomes in validated studies
- Professional development
  - Criteria assess the curriculum’s inclusion of a significant and high-quality professional development approach
- Developmental appropriateness
  - Criteria assess the degree to which the child assessment, curriculum content, and the promotion of family/school partnerships are developmentally appropriate and in alignment with ECSQ-PK standards
- Alignment with state standards
  - Criteria assess the degree to which the curriculum content aligns with Michigan’s ECSQ-PK and the General Education Leadership Network’s Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy—Pre-K

Each major area contains detailed criteria that will be scored and averaged to determine the area’s composite score.

### **Standards for Approval**

For a curriculum to be fully approved for statewide use, it must receive scores of:

- Five or higher in each of the five major areas
- Five or higher in all criteria related to alignment with the ECSQ-PK
- Three or higher in all non-ECSQ-PK criteria

If information needed to evaluate a criterion is not provided, that criterion will be given a score of zero, which is indicated by the INP designator. This score is averaged with the other criteria in that area.

For a curriculum to be approved for a pilot, it must:

- Meet all requirements related to valid research, professional development, developmental appropriateness, and alignment to state standard categories
- Receive a three or below in evaluation results

# Review Process

Each curriculum proposal will be assigned to three members of the CRC who will independently evaluate and score it based on its ability to meet or exceed the criteria. An average score is then calculated, and a recommendation is made to the full CRC. If there is a disagreement on scoring between the original three reviewers that will lead to a curriculum being approved or denied, those issues will be brought to the full CRC for consideration.

## Decisions

Following CRC review and scoring, a proposed curriculum will receive one of three determinations.

**TABLE 2.**

Determination	Explanation
Approved— Statewide	The curriculum meets all standards for approval and is approved for use statewide.
Approved—Pilot	<p>The curriculum shows promise, but falls below the scoring requirements for statewide use. Pilots are granted for three years and are allowed on a classroom level and may not be used in the majority of classrooms within a site at an ISD grantee. Piloting is required in at least three ISDs that represent different contexts for implementation. Note: Without applying for pilot status, a curriculum can still be considered for this test period if it falls below the scoring requirements for statewide use.</p> <p>To be considered for full approval, the vendor must work with those implementing its curriculum as part of the pilot to implement frequent evaluative strategies to demonstrate effectiveness and the high-quality nature of the curriculum. The ongoing and summative evaluation results and child outcomes data will be reported to the CRC at the end of each program year, with a summative report at the end of the three years upon which a decision will be made.</p>
Denied	The curriculum does not meet the criteria for approval. Vendors may appeal this decision or reapply after the deficiency identified by reviewers has been addressed.

## Communications

Vendors will receive their decision letter and a consensus scoring rubric electronically. The CRC's appeals process for policies and procedures will be included.

Vendors whose proposals are approved for a pilot will also receive additional requirements from the MDE for a pilot, including the implementation plan process that describes the ISDs, site locations, number of classrooms, time frame of piloting status, and evaluation results and outcomes involved.

## Appeals Process

The MDE is committed to identifying high-quality, aligned curricula for use in GSRP classrooms. If a vendor feels the CRC's decision did not accurately reflect their materials submitted originally, a vendor may appeal to the CRC.

The formal appeal process described below is in accordance with the MDE appeals policies and procedures, with clearly outlined eligibility requirements, instructions for submission, and a review process designed to reduce the burden on the vendor and reviewers.

## How to Submit an Appeal

To be granted an appeal, the CRC must receive an intent to appeal letter from the vendor within seven calendar days of decision notification. Then, within 30 calendar days of that notification, the CRC must receive another letter that includes the following elements in accordance with the CRC appeals process for policies and procedures:

- The criteria/subcriteria the vendor believes were not scored correctly
- The documentation in their original proposal that substantiates their claim—no new information may be submitted for an appeal
- A description of how a change in scoring could result in the curriculum reaching the threshold for approval

The intent to appeal and formal appeal documents must be submitted to [Richard Lower](mailto:lowerr@michigan.gov) at [lowerr@michigan.gov](mailto:lowerr@michigan.gov), director for preschool and out-of-school time learning.

## **How Appeals are Reviewed**

The MDE will review each formal appeal to ensure timelines are met and that a change in scoring would result in the curriculum reaching the threshold for approval. CRC members will review the disputed section or sections and develop a revised consensus score. The three CRC members who evaluated and scored the curricula during the initial phase will serve in advisory capacity and the final decision will be made by the remaining members. After an appeal, the CRC's decision is final. If the curriculum does not receive full or pilot approval, the curriculum may be resubmitted for consideration in the next curriculum review cycle along with documentation that the program has been changed or updated to address the previously identified gaps.

## **Communications**

The CRC's final decision letter and updated scoring rubric are provided to the vendor electronically.

## **Approved Curriculum List**

The MDE will publish the list of approved curricula and all GSRP providers must use a curriculum from the approved list during the following school year.

## **Future Updates**

This curriculum approval process document will be reviewed and updated, as needed, in advance of each curriculum review cycle. The document will be publicly available year-round on the GSRP website. Questions about these materials can be directed to [Pat Sargent](mailto:sargentp@michigan.gov) at [sargentp@michigan.gov](mailto:sargentp@michigan.gov), GSRP manager.