

# OVERVIEW

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 for GSRP requires adherence to this manual and all standards in the *Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten (ECSQ-PK)*. Both resources are located at [Michigan Great Start Readiness Program](#) website. Other resources critical to implementing high-quality preschool programs are an approved comprehensive curriculum, an approved ongoing and authentic child assessment tool, and an approved program evaluation tool. Additional information about these resources can be found in subsequent sections of this manual.

## Purpose

The GSRP is Michigan's state-funded preschool program for four-year-old children with factors which may place them at risk for low educational attainment. The program is administered by the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Great Start. Research on preschool programs and specific research on GSRP indicates that children provided with a high-quality preschool experience show significant positive developmental differences when compared to children from the same backgrounds who did not attend a high-quality preschool program.

To strengthen learning at home and strengthen positive child outcomes, programs must provide for active and continuous involvement of \*parents in the learning process. Depending on income level, parents may be required to pay tuition, but parents are never charged additional fees for program elements such as transportation or meal service. Through advisory committees, parents 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 preschool 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 can be found on the program website under [Allocations](#).

\*Parent = legal guardian

# FUNDING

Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) are the grantees for the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP). ISDs receive 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. Local agreements detail the process and timeline of how funding is flowed to subrecipients.

ISDs and/or subrecipients may select either July 1 to June 30 or October 1 to September 30 as their accounting period, but their financial records (original budget, carryover budget, general ledger, COFER/FER) must be consistent throughout with the period selected in their MEGS+ application and follow proper fund accounting. Expenditures must be recorded to match the state appropriation period for which they are incurred for subrecipients and the ISD. Revenue is not allowed to be earned on any GSRP funds. State funds are appropriated annually based on an October 1 to September 30 fiscal year so MDE will monitor GSRP based on this fiscal year. ISDs receive an allocation to implement the program and a transportation allocation.

## Grant Eligible Applicants

GSRP is described in Sections 32d and 39 of the current State School Aid Act. GSRP grants are allocated by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to ISDs.

## Requesting and Awarding of the Allocation

The ISD must complete all applications and reports for GSRP in the Michigan Electronic Grants System Plus (MEGS+). 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 MEGS+, is the only person who performs high-level administrative activities within a grant application or give others access to the application.

An ISD intending to implement GSRP submits the Community Needs Assessment and Application (CNA) in the Michigan Electronic Grant System Plus (MEGS+). The CNA is prepopulated with data on the number of children in its area from families living at 250% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) or less, and the number it is estimated Head Start will serve the following year. After decisions made with local partners on the documented need and how it will best be met, the CNA 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 allocation and the amount to be allocated per ~~slot~~ school-day child, the MDE calculates ISD funding levels based on the specifications in legislation. The ISD may serve children in a school-day (1 FTE) part-day (.5 FTE) or GSRP/Head Start Blend (.5 FTE) program option. An email notification is sent to ISD staff with Level 5 authority in MEGS+, 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 serves as notification of funding for audit purposes. Soon after, notification that the Acceptance of Funds is

live in MEGS+ is also done by email announcement. Within the Acceptance of Funds, ISDs indicate the amount of funding to be accepted for implementing programs. Email notification is also sent to Level 5s, business officials and early childhood contacts when the Program Implementation Plan (PIP) is live in MEGS+.

## **Funding**

### **Initial Funding**

The initial allocation to each ISD is the lesser of the sum of the number of children served in a School-day program in the preceding year multiplied by \$7,250.00 per child plus the number of children served in a GSRP/Head Start Blend program or a Part-day program in the preceding year multiplied by \$3,625.00 per child (hold harmless) or the sum of the number of children the ISD has the capacity to serve in a School-day program multiplied by \$7,250.00 per child plus the number of children that could be served in a GSRP/Head Start Blend program or a Part-day program multiplied by \$3,625.00 per child.

### **Subsequent Funding**

Annually MDE will determine a percentage of children served by each ISD by dividing the number of children served 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 60 percent.

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

When all ISDs have been given the opportunity to reach the statewide benchmark, the benchmark may be reset, as determined by the Department, until greater equity of opportunity to serve eligible children across all ISDs has been achieved.

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 but will not receive additional funding under Section 32d for those children.

## **Funding Structure Review**

MDE 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 Spring Collection 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 Spring Collection is considered to "fill" a discrete space. Children who leave the program during the MSDS Early Childhood Fall Collection must be exited with their accurate exit date. Grantees may consider a space "filled" after a child completes participation in at least one preschool session or daily routine during the MSDS Early Childhood Spring Collection. To support service to the highest number of eligible children, grantees are encouraged to use the wait-list to fill vacated spaces.

Example 1:

A child enrolled in September but left the program in mid-October. That child will not count as filling a space as he was not a part of the program during the MSDS Early Childhood Spring Collection Reporting Period.

Example 2:

A child participated in GSRP from October through December before his family moved to reside within a different ISD. The child was "exited" in MSDS with the proper date. As he attended during the MSDS Early Childhood Spring Collection reporting period he was counted as filling a space in the original ISD. The program, funded to serve 18 children, had thus far filled 17 of 18 spaces available. One week later, another eligible family enrolled their child into the program, enabling the grantee to document that all 18 spaces were filled. However, because there were actually only 17 children on the classroom roster, the grantee accepted an additional eligible child two weeks later, bringing the class size up to the cap of 18. The grantee will receive funding for filling 18 spaces; however, all 19 children should be entered into the MSDS as participating in GSRP.

The child who moved was subsequently enrolled into GSRP within another ISD during the Spring Collection Reporting Period and was reported in MSDS, with the correct date of enrollment by that ISD. The child was appropriately counted in both ISDs.

Each child was reported on the GSRP Child and Staff Information Report. All children that withdraw from the program are reported as such.

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

## **Requesting and Awarding of the Transportation Allocation**

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 MDE from each ISD. If the total request from all ISDs is equal to or less than \$10,000,000, each ISD will receive the requested amount. If the total of the projected transportation budgets exceeds \$10,000,000, MDE will prorate the \$10,000,000. 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 transportation allocation for the ISD and/or subrecipients in the MEGS+ 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, parent engagement, communication, record-keeping, staff credentialing, and program and fiscal evaluation. Administrative policies and procedures must also address systematic oversight of subrecipient practices.

## 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. Grant branding must be evident at the ISD, subrecipient, and classroom, and may be formally addressed within written agreements.

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 Infants and Toddlers \(ECSQ-IT\)](#) and the [Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten \(ECSQ-PK\)](#). 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 parent-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 'parent-facing' (e.g., application, newsletters, handbook, meeting minutes, etc.), reports/presentations, films, brochures, flyers, signs, etc. 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 Education.*
- 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 Education.*

## **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. 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 MDE.

Written processes must be in the GSRP administrative files. When systems are implemented well, it is more likely that benefits will occur (i.e., improved quality of learning experiences and, in turn, improved child outcomes). Which portions below are in place or in line with existing practices? How can activities be prioritized to build momentum while systematically strengthening the program? Where is more in-depth evaluation needed to either demonstrate the effectiveness of efforts or to diagnose potential problems and solutions?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Assurances                            | 10. Philosophy                             |
| 2. Child Recruitment                     | 11. Professional Development               |
| 3. Closure Procedures                    | 12. Program Evaluation                     |
| 4. Communication                         | 13. Record Keeping                         |
| 5. Community Needs Assessment            | 14. School Readiness Advisory<br>Committee |
| 6. Community Partnerships                | 15. Sliding Scale of Tuition               |
| 7. Fiscal Policy and Review              | 16. Distribution of Funds                  |
| 8. Monitoring Subrecipients<br>(Program) | 17. Written Agreement                      |
| 9. Parent Advisory Committee             |  |

## 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, MDE 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). MDE 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 Acceptance of Funds, the GSRP Community Needs Assessment and Application (CNA) and the GSRP Implementation Plan in MEGS+.

## 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.



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, parents, 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 parent’s primary or preferred language, for example:

- Newsletters
- Focus groups or surveys
- Parent-teacher conferences
- Open house events
- Local Parent Advisory Committee and School Readiness Advisory Committee meetings and minutes
- Web site
- Children’s progress notes

Communication with local advisory groups and the ISD-wide school readiness advisory committee includes the following information provided on a regular basis:

- Procedures and timetables for program planning
- Policies, guidelines, and other communications from MDE
- 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. Community Needs Assessment and Application (CNAA)**

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 preschool 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 preschool 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.

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 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;
- Inventory requirements;
- Cash management;
- Closeout procedures for subrecipients (FERs, audits, and equipment). See also “3. Closure Procedures” earlier in this section;
- Professional development/training of subrecipients on fiscal components of GRSP;
- 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 development to both the subrecipient fiscal and program staff responsible for GSRP. Fiscal policies will be reviewed by MDE 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:

- Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA), Child Care Licensing Division, including report of violations;
- Participation in Michigan’s Great Start to Quality system;
- Parent engagement, including formal contacts;
- Use of a parent handbook that includes all required elements outlined in the [Classroom Requirements](#) section of this manual;
- The advisory structure including the advisory committee(s), and data analysis team(s);
- Human resources (staff hiring, compliance plans, supervision);
- Adult/child ratio, class size, hours and weeks of operation;
- Professional development for teaching teams, including formal 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;
- Tuition; and
- All program policies identified in the [Classroom Requirements](#) section of this manual.

## 9. Parent Advisory Committee

Legislation requires GSRP sites to provide for active and continuous participation of parents of enrolled children. Keeping in mind that those most in need of quality public education may feel less well-served by the system, the ECC will champion parents as active decision makers in GSRP, ensuring annual training that instills confidence in parents as active members. GSRP administrative files must address design and monitoring of GSRP advisory groups.

The ISD ensures that subrecipients have a local GSRP parent advisory committee with a focus on local considerations, including recruitment/enrollment, program evaluation results and child outcome data. ISDs that direct-run classrooms must also have a local parent advisory. These committees minimally meet twice each program year. Each local committee has one parent representative for every 18 children enrolled in its program, with a minimum of two parents or guardians. The local GSRP parent advisory committee also has representation from the GSRP teaching staff and support of other GSRP administration.

The local GSRP parent advisory committee designates a liaison to the GSC Parent Coalition, working with other committed parents to support early childhood practices in the community. Activities of the GSC Parent Coalition can be shared with the GSRP parent advisory committee in person, virtually (e.g., Skype) or through emailed reports.

Refer to the [Parent Involvement](#) section for more information on parent engagement.

## 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 Pre-Kindergarten \(ECSQ-PK\)](#), yet will provide for local language to addresses social, economic, cultural, and family needs. See the [Classroom Requirements](#) section of this manual for additional information on preschool philosophy statements.

## 11. Professional Development

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

The ECC strengthens local administrative quality by arranging PD for elementary principals, directors of child care organizations, municipalities with early learning initiatives, extended-learning programs, and other community-based organizations. This group is poised for relationship-building and to learn best practices for prekindergarten.

The ECC and the ECS support meaningful PD for teaching teams. The ECS is critical to preschool quality and supports GSRP teaching teams throughout the academic year with expertise in the *ECSQ-PK*, 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 development 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 insures that the ECS is able to attend professional development events, such as curriculum/child assessment training, state sponsored professional learning events and/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 ECC is a leader in the ISD-wide School Readiness Advisory Committee (SRAC), established annually and which operates as a workgroup of the local GSC. One of the tasks of the SRAC is to annually review and make recommendations about:

- Collaboration with and involvement of community volunteer and/or social service organizations in addressing all aspects of educational disadvantage;
- Partnership with the local GSC, Regional Resource Center, and others to build the capacity of local community agencies to take part in GSRP;
- 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;
- The choice of an approved curriculum;
- Nutritional services utilizing federal, state and local food program support as applicable;
- Health and developmental screening process;
- Referrals to community social service agencies, as appropriate;
- Parent involvement;
- Program Evaluation and Child Outcome data;
- Continuous improvement efforts; and
- Transition into kindergarten.

The SRAC will also make recommendations to the GSC regarding other community services designed to improve all children's school readiness.

## 15. Sliding Scale of Tuition

Up to 10% of children enrolled throughout the Intermediate School District (ISD) or consortium of ISDs may be from families above 250% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) with extreme risk for low educational achievement as determined by number or severity of GSRP program eligibility factors. These families must be charged tuition calculated on a sliding scale, based on family income and determined to be a reasonable amount a family should pay toward the cost of GSRP. The pre-calculated fee is a per-child fee, not a per-family fee.

GSRP spaces filled by over-income families are compensated at the current Part-Day or School-Day amount per child. Sliding scale fees are collected in addition to the funded amount provided per child by state school aid funds administered by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE). The [sample tuition sliding scale](#) provided in the resources for this section may be adopted or amended. Alternately, the ISD may create a sliding scale of tuition. The written policies and procedures and the fee scale with current approval by MDE need only be resubmitted if amended. Tuition income and related expenditures will not be reported to MDE, but records must be available for review upon request.

Refer to both the [Recruitment and Enrollment](#) and the [Eligibility](#) sections and the accompanying resources for each section for additional information on prioritization

for enrollment, determining family income and documenting program eligibility factors.

### **Waiver to Serve Additional Children Over the 10% Cap**

If in accordance with GSRP Prioritization requirements the ISD has enrolled 10% of children who live with families with a household income above 250% of FPL and funding remains to serve additional children, the ISD may submit a request for a waiver to serve additional children over the 10% cap. MDE provides the opportunity to submit this request during a designated period each fall.

Any ISD requesting the option to serve more than 10% of children above 250% FPL, must be able to provide documentation of due diligence to identify and enroll all children at or below 250% FPL. At a minimum, ISDs must be able to demonstrate:

1. Geographic location of GSRP classrooms compared to the population of GSRP eligible children and documentation of attempts to place classrooms in areas of high need;
2. Recruitment efforts across the ISD and targeted to areas of high need;
3. Enrollment of all identified eligible children below 250% FPL in GSRP or Head Start or documentation of reasons not enrolled; and
4. Lack of eligible children at or below 250% FPL on waiting lists for both GSRP and Head Start.

In the event that an ISD is approved to serve children up to 300% FPL, all children enrolled with income up to 300% FPL are then considered to be income eligible in terms of the 10% cap. They do however pay tuition according to the established sliding fee scale. That ISD would then be able to serve up to 10% of enrolled children with identified program eligibility factors from families having incomes above 300% FPL.

### **The following policies must be adhered to:**

1. Families whose income falls at or below 250% of FPL pay no tuition for GSRP.
2. The ISD shall establish a fee schedule for families with incomes greater than 250% of the FPL not to exceed value of the space.
3. The ISD shall implement one sliding scale of tuition for all its GSRP subrecipients.
4. Part-Day and School-Day GSRP shall charge tuition to enrolled families over 250% of the FPL and shall charge the GSRP fee only for the portion of the day supported by GSRP.
5. Tuition fees from families must be expended within the grant year that they were collected.
6. Tuition fees must be used to support the GSRP, as defined in the [Budget](#) section of this manual.
7. All Head Start and GSRP policies and regulations are applied to GSRP/Head Start Blend enrollment, with the highest standard from either program adhered to. Head Start language stipulates that a program must not charge eligible families a fee to participate in Head Start, including special events

- such as field trips, and cannot in any way condition an eligible child's enrollment or participation in the program upon the payment of a fee.
8. A program must only accept a fee from families of enrolled children for services that are in addition to services funded by Head Start, such as child care before or after funded Head Start hours. A program may not condition a Head Start child's enrollment on the ability to pay a fee for additional hours therefore, children enrolled into the GSRP/Head Start Blend must not be charged tuition.
  9. Children in foster care, those experiencing homelessness, and children with an individualized education program (IEP) recommending placement in an inclusive preschool setting are automatically eligible for GSRP and must be considered within the lowest quintile (0 – 50% Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for prioritization.
  10. A child with an IEP recommending placement in an inclusive preschool setting prioritized for enrollment within the lowest quintile, with actual family income above 250% FPL, may not be charged GSRP sliding fee scale tuition.
  11. Parents who pay tuition may not incur expenses for other portions of the program, such as meals or transportation.
  12. The number and severity of factors and local prioritization of factors contributing to educational risk must be incorporated into enrollment practices for over-income families. Documentation of the program eligibility factors must be kept in each child's file.
  13. Late payment fees are permitted only to recoup collection costs.
  14. Income and tuition fees are calculated at the time of enrollment. During the academic year, if the family situation changes, families may request a re-calculation of income to determine a lower tuition or potentially qualify as income eligible, thus eliminating remaining tuition due.

### **ISD Responsibilities:**

1. The ISD shall establish written policies and procedures for the implementation of this fee policy.
2. An approvable plan will address educational risk, fees and information for families, including invoicing, collection practices and explanations to families about the reasons for tuition fees, and how confidentiality of family information is maintained.
3. Annually updated copies of the tuition policies and procedures must be included in recruitment materials.
4. The ISD shall require subrecipients to disseminate tuition policies to enrolled families and program staff, at least in their respective parent handbooks.
5. Parents must be notified of any upcoming tuition policy-change 30 days prior to the date the change is to take place.
6. The ISD shall ensure that the fee policy is adhered to by subrecipients.
7. The ISD must adhere to all policies, above. The ISD has discretion with features such as:
  - a. Determining whether tuition payments are collected and retained at the subrecipient level or the ISD. When billing and procurement are



- the responsibility of the subrecipient, how tuition income is reported to the ISD;
- b. Retention of a percentage of tuition income to cover accounting costs;
  - c. Invoicing, including payment schedule, how payments are made and receipt of payment;
  - d. Fee adjustment for advance payment;
  - e. Fee adjustment for two or more enrolled children, absence or hardship. ISDs may assist families in need with alternate funding, scholarships, service agreements, etc.;
  - f. Uses for tuition income, e.g., purchases related to program quality or child development goals, professional development, pooled for ISD distribution as enhanced funds; and
  - g. Who parents should call with questions.

The ISD sliding fee scale and guidance will be reviewed annually as part of the school readiness advisory committee which operates as a workgroup of the local Great Start Collaborative (GSC).

## **16. Distribution of Funds**

Involving the local school readiness advisory committee 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 Community Needs Assessment and Application (CNAA), 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 community-based organizations (CBOs) to serve as GSRP sites in future years. GSRP subrecipients must minimally have three of five stars in the Great Start to Quality (GSQ) system unless operating on an original license. A program with an original license is a newly licensed site and must enter the system as soon as a regular license is issued. The program may receive funding while having original status; however, the ISD must work with the program to see that it will be awarded at least three stars at entry.

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 community-based organizations by provider type, including private for-profit, private non-profit, community college or university, Head Start grantee or delegate, and district/PSA or ISD, the number and proportion of its total allocation awarded to each provider as a subrecipient. ISDs unable to distribute 30% of their allocation to CBOs must demonstrate to MDE 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 preschools are considered LEA subrecipients. If an open-to-the-public preschool is operated by an LEA, this is also considered an LEA subrecipient. Review the LARA 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.

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 preschoolers 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. Are there Focus or Priority Schools in the ISD that have qualifying children but do not have GSRP?
5. How are subrecipient decisions regarding program options and services addressed? (For example, Part-day vs. School-day, transportation, etc.)

6. Are there administrative issues that would prohibit a program from being funded? (For example, licensing, fiscal capacity, pattern of late or incomplete reporting, etc.)
7. Are there specific local issues that will impact the distribution of funding or that could be addressed through the distribution plan?
8. 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 child care 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 preschoolers 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 rating of at least 3 stars?

## 17. 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 development 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 area-wide and local advisory groups, how often the local group will meet each year and how the subrecipient will ensure parent 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.

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 MDE audit.
10. The program option(s) to be implemented must be included: Part-Day, School-Day or 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) is the educational leader and catalyst for continuous quality improvement for each Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP). Through observation and feedback, the ECS supports teaching teams and site administrators to provide high-quality preschool with fidelity to the GSRP model. The ECS confidently advocates for children, families and teachers to ensure appropriate decisions be made about the program. The ECS position is prominently featured in the ISD Program Evaluation policy.

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 early childhood specialist position. The local program administrator may be the ECS, if qualified.

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

- A graduate degree in early childhood education or child development.
- Five or more years of relevant job experience in early childhood education (such as working with young children in a group setting, program planning and implementation, program evaluation, staff supervision/development and program management).

At times, ISDs are unable to identify a well-qualified candidate to fill an ECS position after an extensive search. In that case, the Early Childhood Contact (ECC) should contact the assigned consultant.

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

- Knowledge of the [Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Pre-Kindergarten \(ECSQ-PK\)](#).
- Knowledge of GSRP requirements as outlined in the [GSRP Implementation Manual](#).
- Knowledge of State of Michigan [Licensing Rules for Child Care Centers](#).
- Formal training in the selected approved developmental screener, comprehensive curriculum, authentic child assessment, and program evaluation tool of the classrooms supported. Formal training is defined as comprehensive training in full implementation of a tool, completed by a certified trainer of the tool.
- Status as a Reliable Assessor/Certified Observer in the applicable program evaluation tool(s):

### [Preschool Program Quality Assessment](#) (PQA)

Each ECS without formal training in PQA must complete Online PQA training. ECS successfully completing PQA 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.

### [Preschool Program Quality Assessment-Revised](#) (PQA-R)

ECS successfully completing PQA-R 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 an in-person 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.

The ISD must ensure that those employed or contracted to fill the ECS position are able to perform the following functions for each assigned classroom:

- Support each teaching team to meet grant expectations around the learning environment, daily routine, adult-child interactions and partnership with parents as outlined in the [Classroom Requirements](#), [Curriculum](#) and [Parent Involvement](#) sections of the GSRP Implementation Manual.
- Provide monthly coaching to teaching teams, offering support by observing to provide feedback on techniques or interactions, modeling strategies with children, attending home visits/conferences, meeting with teaching teams to discuss feedback, strengths and needs, plans, etc. Meetings may be in person or through electronic means. However, the ECS must visit each classroom at least once every two months. 'Walkthroughs' that last only a few minutes are not sufficient to meet this requirement.
- Support each teaching team to implement the comprehensive curriculum and ongoing child assessment tool with validity to the exclusion of supplemental curriculums and assessments unless the process for approval by the ISD has been completed and approved. The ECS monitors formal training in the tools for both the lead and associate teacher.
- Monitor quantity and quality of narrative anecdotal evidence entered into the child assessment tool by each teaching team, supporting continuous purposeful analysis of child progress to inform intentional parent partnerships, lesson planning and foster meaningful, intentional whole group instruction, as well as respond to small group and individual child needs.
- 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.
- Administer the selected program evaluation tool, during the time frame established by OGS. Only an ECS who is a Reliable Assessor/Certified Observer completes the observations, interviews and scoring of the program evaluation tools(s). The ECS must be assigned to the classroom that is observed/evaluated/coached. Each ECS 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.
- Use program evaluation results and child outcome data with each teaching teams to set goals for the classroom and identify areas for professional development.
- Ensure each teaching team has access to necessary professional development. The ECS approves early childhood professional development calendars for the lead teacher, associate teacher and support staff.
- If applicable, monitor and support successful completion of compliance plans for lead and associate teachers. The ECS signature is required on each compliance plan. The ECS can provide support by helping to connect teaching staff with an institution of higher education academic advisor who can arrange a schedule of coursework to meet the two-year timeframe, encourage staff through coursework by discussing the new learning and supporting practice of new strategies. The ECS can help to advocate with the subrecipient if release time or financial assistance is needed for courses, fees or textbooks or connect the staff member to the Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H) program at the Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children (MiAEOYC). The ECS contract accommodates the intensive support and additional classroom visits, coaching and consultation that staff members with incomplete credentialing require.

Additional ECS responsibilities may have unique assignment configurations across ISDs. ISD 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 Parent Advisory Committee(s).
- Helping to design annual, data-driven professional development (PD) calendars for teaching teams.
- Facilitating meaningful professional development.
- 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. (See the [Transition](#) of the Implementation Manual for more information.)

- Supporting programs to access resources, including Michigan Department of Education (MDE) sponsored PD, Resource Centers and the Great Start to Quality Rating System.
- Assuring documentation of strong and positive parent engagement, such as completion of formal parent 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.
- Following up with the appropriate administrators, including the ECC, if aware that licensing requirements are not met.
- Attending ISD ECS meetings and professional development.

Additionally, the ISD must ensure that each ECS has support to engage in appropriate professional development 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 MDE sponsored PD, the MiAEYC Michigan Professional Learning Institute and/or the HighScope International Conference and Research Symposium.
- The ECS has opportunities to reflect on the ECS role and responsibilities with peers more than once per year.

Each ISD has a unique system for meeting the requirements of the program. Within those systems, the ECS is the key to ensuring that each child engages in a high-quality preschool experience that has fidelity to the GSRP model. It is this experience that leads to the child outcomes GSRP has been proven to deliver.

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 preschool 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.

It is the responsibility of the ISD to ensure that all ECS requirements are being met. The following documentation must be completed or reviewed by the ECC and kept on file for review during on-site monitoring visits.

- A master calendar for all ECS activities, which aligns with reporting requirements on program evaluation, scheduled professional development calendars and meetings such as ECS peer group, the local parent advisory meetings, school readiness advisory committee, and superintendent/school board meetings.
- Copies of the ISD-provided coaching documentation forms 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 development, etc. All must include a requirement to attend ISD ECS meetings and professional development required for the ECS as well as being available to the ISD or MDE 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.

## **Program Evaluation throughout the Year**

GSRP requires that the program be evaluated to provide answers to a few key questions:

- What is working and what needs to be improved?
- What professional development do staff need to be fully prepared to carry out the program with fidelity? Have teaching teams received professional development on data availability, accessibility and use?
- What experiences need to be added or improved in the classroom for the children?
- Does the program get the results it should for the children?
- How are parents 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 the comprehensive curriculum, 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 here and throughout the Implementation Manual.

### Learning Environment

- In a visual scan of the classroom, the teacher's philosophy of early childhood education should be evident in the room arrangement, materials on the shelves and posting on the walls.
- Ensure that interest areas are clearly defined through strategic placement of furnishings.
- Address classrooms that have a large "learning rug" for used only for whole group instruction and/or have a cluster of tables for group activities such as journaling, penmanship, or worksheets instead of utilizing all available space for interest areas.
- Visual clutter may negatively affect some children's learning. For example, shelves and walls crowded with excessive materials; materials posted above children's eye level or hanging from the ceiling; "teacher areas" with overcrowded surfaces and shelves.
- Items for adults should be posted at adult-eye level and are fine to have in the classroom (i.e., emergency procedures, problem solving steps, etc.). Children's work should be displayed at children's eye level as much as possible and located in a place where children and families can readily see and talk about it.
- The outdoor learning environment is utilized daily. It has adequate space and includes both stationary and portable equipment for various types of play, e.g., climbing, pouring, jumping, pretending, playing alone or with peers, playing with manufactured toys or materials which appeal to multiple senses.

### Daily Routine

- Programs may use different terminology for each portion of the day. Names for each portion of the day should be easily understood by children. Portions of the day must be reflected in the written schedule posted on the wall for adults, on the visual schedule for children, and reflected in the teachers' lesson plans.
- The daily routine must include all required parts with an appropriate amount of time designated. Implementation must follow the written daily routine and must be consistent day to day and week to week throughout the program year with rare exception. For example, the GSRP daily routine should not include weekly "specials" like P.E. or music, or school assemblies. See the [Classroom Requirements](#) section for more detail on parts of the daily routine.
- The ECS should learn if teaching teams work with consistent groups of children for planning time, recall time, small-group time and home visiting, as this tends to strengthen relationships and home-school partnering for child development.

## Adult-Child Interaction

- Together, learner-centered and learner-driven play = playful learning. Adult-initiated GSRP classroom activities include large group, 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.
- This is truly the "heart and soul" of any classroom. It is especially important that ECS regularly observes a range of interactions that happen throughout the day. Consider what adults are doing and saying, how children respond during interactions with adults, and how adults in turn respond to children's statements, observations and questions.
- During regular observations the ECS documents what adults are doing and saying throughout the day. A 'rule of thumb' for analyzing specific interactions: to be considered highest quality, there should be at least three examples positively illustrating the indicator and no negative indicators.
- Be sure to regularly observe all staff. If Teacher A has appropriate interactions consistently and Teacher B does not, the result may be lower quality classroom practices.
- Regularly observe the types of questions the adults ask to determine if questions relate to what the child is doing and are open-ended or if there is a pattern of adults asking many questions or questions with predetermined correct answers.
- Regularly observe when adults make comments to determine if children are consistently encouraged to interact with each other and to determine if children's individual efforts are acknowledged and supported.

## Curriculum Planning and Assessment

- In high quality team teaching, an observer would have difficulty discerning the Lead Teacher from the Associate Teacher. All adults conduct and participate in children's activities; there is not a pattern of one adult leading and another adult playing minor, nonteaching roles such as sweeping floors or wiping tables.
- Similarly, in a quality classroom, curriculum and authentic assessment are seamlessly interwoven, so that children's classroom activities are not interrupted for direct assessment.

- The ECS examines teacher resources for curriculum planning and assessment at the teacher's planning area/desk as well as on shelving and in file cabinets. Curriculum will be visible in the room arrangement, words for the areas of the room, portions of the daily routine, lesson plan/daily activities, Parent Handbook, etc. Note that 'using' the comprehensive curriculum and authentic child observation tool are key; having resources 'available' is insufficient to document high-quality practice.

## **Facilitating Continuous Improvement**

The ECS designs a relevant and useful PD plan each year, taking into account patterns in child data, individual needs of the staff, as well as the overall training needed to address aggregated data. PD is connected to the ECSQ-PK and the curriculum. Participatory child-learning requires intentional teachers; think of this as the 'plan-do-review' sequence for adults! The PD 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 PD days.

Effective approaches to professional development may include establishing professional learning communities (PLCs) among GSRP teaching teams, where the focus is on using data to support the continuum of teaching. In PLCs, teaching teams find support as they hear new ideas, encourage each other and discuss implementation issues on an on-going basis.

Though the PD plan may be created by the ECS, it should be presented annually to the local Advisory Committee for input; this ensures their support of the process. The ECS makes sure all materials needed to meet the goals will be in classrooms in time for the start of the school year, and that all training designated is included in the professional development plan for in-service and the upcoming school year.

ECS facilitate children's smooth transition into GSRP and support a strong and predictable schedule throughout the school year. Before the children's program begins, the ECS works with teaching teams to ensure that planned daily routines and classroom arrangements meet GSRP requirements and reflect the comprehensive curriculum model. This review could occur individually with teaching teams, or within a PLC with members sharing strategies that have been successful for them and conclude with suitable daily routines.

Shortly after the school year has started and the teaching team and children have adjusted, the ECS schedules a visit with each returning teaching team to review the results from program evaluation that was completed the previous spring when the program- and classroom-level goals were developed. An observation centered on those goals takes place. The ECS sets up a time, within two weeks, to meet in a comfortable place with the teaching team without interruptions to discuss the program evaluation results and child outcome data. Depending on the needs of the teaching team, feedback may be discussed as a whole, in part, or by item in one/or multiple meetings. Strengths are discussed first and then areas for improvement. The ECS is objective, factual and keeps the child in the heart of all discussions.

The program evaluation tool is administered for new teachers to establish a baseline. It is especially important for newly hired teachers to receive multiple visits and feedback early in the school year. This will allow the ECS to positively impact classroom environment and habits of routine and interactions. When a new associate teacher is assigned to a classroom, the ECS in partnership with the ECC and program administrator may determine if a baseline program evaluation is necessary.

Early, monthly visits set the stage for a strong collaborative relationship among the teaching team and ECS. Together, and with curriculum resources, a continuous improvement plan is generated to support operating a high-quality classroom. An effective plan will:

- Identify the goal;
- Identify related program evaluation indicator(s) or child outcome objective(s);
- Set strategies and activities to improve teacher knowledge, (e.g., watching a training video together, videotaping with teacher reflection, visit another classroom with teacher reflection, making visual cues, over-the-shoulder coaching or a focus strategy;)
- Supply needed materials;
- Make changes in indoor/outdoor learning environment and daily routine;
- Include specific timelines and a person responsible for each activity; and
- 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.)

Throughout the academic year, the ECS continues to monitor use of the ongoing child assessment tool while also using the program evaluation tool(s) to monitor progress toward meeting the goals. Close attention is provided to ensure valid and reliable child outcome data at each data checkpoint, meeting requirements outlined in the [Program Evaluation](#) and [Child Assessment](#) sections of the GSRP Implementation Manual. Feedback follows the same process as above, documenting strengths and any areas still needing improvement; the continuous improvement plan may be modified.

Between March 1 and May 15, the ECS observes each unique teaching team for one full session to administrate the formal program evaluation tool and document how well classroom grant requirements are met; data are due into the tool's online system on May 31. Following the completion of comprehensive program evaluation in the spring, the ECS and teaching team set classroom-level goals and develop a plan for continuous improvement that may include professional development and modifications to the classroom environment.

The ECS ensures that data are available by classroom. When the end-of-year program evaluation is completed in the spring and beginning and ending child assessment data is aggregated, final progress toward the year's designated goals will be measured. This will provide gain scores which will be used to evaluate the success in meeting the designated program- and classroom-level goals. These data reveal program strengths and challenges to use as the basis to prioritize program

improvement efforts. At this time, the team that analyzes data and sets goals will choose program-wide goals for the following school year and create a plan to reach those goals. The plan could include a facilitated, rich staff discussion around a journal article, or contracting with a trainer from the curriculum or child assessment vendor, and will also include supports for implementation such as observation-feedback, peer modeling, coaching, and self-assessment. Curriculum materials should be available, purchased or readily created to implement the strategies.

Information relating to both the status of meeting the current year's goals and the goals set for the following year is shared with local advisory committees, parents, 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 the success in meeting the designated goals.

\*Use of the term ECS throughout this document refers to a singular ECS or to the multiple members of an ECS team.

# RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT

## 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.

## Intermediate School District as Fiscal Agent

Public Act (PA) 62 of 2011 shifted all revenues to the School Aid Fund and distributed funding to Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) and consortia of ISDs. 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 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.

PA 196 of 2014 included language providing for the cross-ISD enrollment of children. 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 preschool recruitment and enrollment activities. Best practice is to utilize one preschool application for all state and federally-funded programs and share one waiting list. The local Great Start Collaborative should 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* another funded preschool 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 at-risk children as possible benefit from high-quality preschool programs. Therefore, each school readiness advisory committee must approve a collaborative recruitment and enrollment process to assist parents 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:

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

\*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; court records; county, military, or immigration records; doctor or hospital records with sworn statements; certain family records; life insurance policy; or a sworn notarized statement from a parent or 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.)

## Recruitment

A well-developed plan for recruiting the children most at risk of school failure is essential. The local GSRP parent advisory committees and the regional 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;
- 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 sent home with children enrolled in elementary school;
- Informational articles in the local newspaper;
- Door to door census;
- Recruitment tables at local area fairs and festivals;
- Electronic community bulletin boards;
- Information on local cable stations; 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 parents are 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 parents' decisions. 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 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 parent);
- Parent 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 parents 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 wait list. Then, as openings occur, all the children on the list are considered so that the family with the greatest need according to the *Participant Eligibility and Prioritization Guidelines* 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 preschool programs. Refer [Authorization for Requirement to Collaborate](#) in the resources for this section for select sections of the Head Start Act of 2007.

## Enrollment

While the recruitment process begins in the spring of each year preceding the start of the program, prospective grantees are cautioned to delay enrollment until the State School Aid Bill has been signed and allocations/awards have been announced. Parents may be told they are on a waiting list and if expected funding is maintained, will be formally considered for enrollment using the GSRP prioritization process once the funding of the program has been finalized. Please see the [Eligibility](#) section of this manual for information on child eligibility.

### Prioritization

Public Act 60 of 2013 focused eligibility for GSRP on family income. Ninety percent of all children enrolled throughout an ISD or consortium of ISDs must qualify with family income under 250% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Legislation further requires that each applicant be ranked by family's FPL and that programs enroll children with families with the lowest income first following these procedures:

1. As GSRP preschool applications, including income level and other program eligibility factors, are collected, each family's Federal Poverty Level (FPL) is calculated. Follow current guidelines in the [Eligibility](#) section of the GSRP Implementation Manual to calculate the family's income. Poverty level calculators are available online and may be helpful, such as this [Federal Poverty Level Calculator](#). The family income, family size, and exact FPL must be recorded in each child's file, preferably on the enrollment form. The FPL for each child will be reported within the Michigan Student Data System (MSDS).
2. Each child is then placed on a list of applicants from lowest to highest family poverty level. Children whose families are at the same poverty level should be ranked according to other collected program eligibility factors. Any

children who are homeless or in the foster care system or who have an individualized education program (IEP) recommending placement in an inclusive preschool setting must be considered to be in the zero to 50% of FPL quintile. This, along with additional program eligibility factors must be considered when prioritizing children for enrollment. The actual FPL for a family with a child with an IEP will be reported in MSDS while children qualifying because of a foster care placement or homelessness will be reported within the 0 – 50% FPL quintile.

3. Any child eligible for Head Start by income or other factors is referred to Head Start by GSRP following local written protocols, in compliance with the Implementation Manual. The process must be complete before enrolling any Head Start eligible child in GSRP.
4. Once final allocations are posted the ISD notifies each subrecipient regarding the award and when enrollment may begin, according to local policy. Enrollment must begin with children from families between zero and 50% of FPL (who have completed the Head Start referral process) and continue with children from families between 51 and 100% of FPL (who have completed the Head Start referral process), between 101 and 150%, between 151 to 200%, and between 201 and 250%.
5. Finally, if the ISD determines that all eligible children are being served and that there are no children on the waiting list who live with families with a level, the ISD may then enroll up to 10% of children who live with families with a household income above 250% of FPL with extreme risk for low educational achievement as determined by number or severity of existing GSRP program eligibility factors. Careful documentation of the program eligibility factors for these children must be kept in each child's file. These families must also be charged tuition based on the ISD's adopted sliding fee scale. Each fall, MDE provides an opportunity for ISDs to formally request an exception to this requirement. See the [ISD Administration of GSRP](#) section of this manual "15. Sliding Scale of Tuition" subsection, for details.

Refer to the [Participant Eligibility and Prioritization Guidelines](#) in the resources for this section for detail about the specific prioritization process that grantees are required to implement during the recruitment and enrollment process.

Each ISD must utilize a written prioritization process that provides clear direction for all GSRP staff. Based on the required income quintiles explained above, it may also include weighted priority for local considerations such as lead exposure and for special cases such as cross-ISD enrollment, and the enrollment of children with IEPs. It should include impartial guidance for staff on situations where children present with similar income and program eligibility factors. Many programs "hold open" a few spaces, anticipating that some of the most eligible families may apply as the school year is beginning.

## 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 effected 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 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 Preschool 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 preschool 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 are not at risk. When braiding, each classroom would optimally include children who are not at risk along with targeted and at-risk populations. 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, parent 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 at-risk 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 MDE grants.
- Additional children, whether at risk or not eligible, can be enrolled in a GSRP classroom, thus rendering it a braided funding classroom. However, GSRP funding cannot be used for the children who are not eligible. There must be documentation that the tuition charged or other sources of cash and 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). 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

Local districts may determine, through the IEP team that the GSRP is the least restrictive environment for children who qualify for special education services. A child may be placed in a GSRP classroom in two ways:

1. By qualifying for GSRP and receiving additional ECSE services, or
2. Through the blending of programs and braiding of GSRP and ECSE funding.

In any case, the IEP team should have representation of parents and the GSRP teacher as it considers the following questions:

- Do all parties feel that the IEP fully meets the child's needs?
- Does the IEP declare the GSRP as the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)?
- Was the GSRP teacher a part of the IEP team?
- Are consultation meetings between special education staff and the GSRP teaching team written into the IEP?
- Can the child's needs for special services be met in the context of GSRP?
- What additional support or accommodations will be necessary so the child can participate fully in the activities and environment of GSRP?
- What percent of children in the classroom have IEPs? Individual classroom needs and resources are taken into consideration, such as the variety and degree of disability as well as adult/child ratio in a classroom. Best practice for inclusive classrooms limits the percentage of children with IEPs to no more than 25 percent.

Planning for a child to attend both part-day GSRP and part-day ECSE, is not typically supported. If discussed as a possibility, there are many additional considerations. Transition between programs is critical to consider. Is it in the child's best interests to participate in two programs, possibly with different facilities, staff, peers, routines, behavior, and academic expectations? Could the child's needs be met with placement into GSRP and special education services occurring in a play-based setting, within the GSRP classroom? If the child transfers each day between programs, how are his/her lunch and rest period accomplished?

# ELIGIBILITY

## 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 parents who wish to request early enrollment for children who will turn 4 after September 1, but on or before December 1.

Applications for children who will turn 4 years of age between September 2 and December 1 MAY NOT be considered for enrollment until September 1 or later. At that point, their applications are prioritized along with any other remaining applications as enrollment decisions are made. An application for early enrollment for a child who is eligible for Head Start must be referred using the locally agreed upon process.

An assumption is made that parents 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 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.

## Income

Income for each family must be verified before determining that a child is eligible to participate in the program. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) strongly encourages use of the [Income Verification sample form](#), found in the resources for this section, and encourages programs to maintain copies of all eligibility documents along with the eligibility verification form in the child's official record.

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

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; regular payments from Social Security or railroad retirement; payments from unemployment compensation, strike benefits from union funds, workers' compensation, veterans benefits (with the exception noted below), public assistance (including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Supplemental Security Income, Emergency Assistance money payments, and non-Federally funded General Assistance or General Relief money payments); training stipends; alimony, child support, 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), and 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 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 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 one parent is paying any child support to the other parent, the income of the parent receiving the child support should be used for determining income eligibility. If neither parent is providing any child support to the other, the program should count half of each parent's income and the sum of these two should be used by the program in determining income.

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, 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 quintile. In these cases, the family's income is considered to be in the lowest quintile, 0 – 50% FPL and should be reported as such in MSDS. Additionally, a child with an individualized education program (IEP) recommending placement in an inclusive preschool setting who is income eligible



for Head Start must be referred to the local Head Start agency. However, if the child is not eligible for and/or enrolled in Head Start, the family may apply for GSRP and the family's income must be considered to be in the lowest quintile, 0 – 50% FPL in terms of eligibility, but actual income is collected at the time of enrollment and reported in MSDS in the corresponding quintile. This along with additional program eligibility factors must be considered when prioritizing children for enrollment. The ISD or program should have a policy regarding how the child will be prioritized within that quintile. For instance, the policy could state that the family's actual FPL will be used unless it is over 50%; in that case the child will be considered to be at 50% FPL.

When prioritizing a child with an IEP that does not include a recommendation for placement in an inclusive preschool setting, the family's actual FPL should be used. The child is then placed on a list of applicants from lowest to highest family poverty level. Children whose families are at the same poverty level should be ranked according to other collected program eligibility factors, including the existence of a diagnosed disability or developmental delay.

In either case, a child with an IEP from a family with income above 250% FPL, may not be charged GSRP sliding fee scale tuition.

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.

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.

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:

- 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 – disability, group-term life insurance, professional education, ROTC educational and subsistence allowances, uniform allowances, survivor and retirement protection plan premiums.

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, program eligibility factors must be collected and considered before enrolling a child in GSRP.

When deciding whether a situation or condition should be considered a risk factor, the most important question to ask is whether and how the situation puts the child at risk for low educational attainment and how the risk factor 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 a risk 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 risk 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 risk factor prevalence locally and state-wide. When “parent report” can be used as documentation, the interviewer and the parent can sign and date a form indicating which program eligibility factors pertain. Alternately, a note can be included in the file with the staff member’s signature and date indicating WHAT the parent 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. MDE 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 parents 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. Parents 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.

# PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Children who are successful in school have many healthy interconnections between family, school, and community. Parent involvement 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 parent involvement in a variety of ways - from partnering with parents to establish child development goals to sharing anecdotes of children's learning.

Communication and strong relationships are the keys to successful parent involvement. The purpose of frequent and informal interactions is to strengthen the connections between home and school. Staff should use an interested and unhurried manner when talking with parents. Staff and parents should update one another about children's recent home experiences and preschool activities through:

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

Ideas for parent involvement activities include:

- Sharing special interests with children, such as fishing, photography, or sewing;
- Providing recyclables and helping to make play materials;
- Logging books taken/returned from a lending library;
- Creating displays of child-initiated works;
- Attending parent meetings, workshops, and serving on the local and/or the Great Start Collaborative school readiness committee representing GSRP;
- Serving on the local or ISD team to analyze program quality 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 parent newsletter.

Staff support parent involvement at group or parent meetings by:

- Providing child care;
- Arranging transportation;
- Scheduling events at times convenient for parents;
- Orienting parents to the depth and breadth of the role of parents at meetings;
- Making reminder phone calls;
- Distributing agendas or other materials ahead of time;
- Supporting parent-to-parent communication;
- Addressing needs of non-custodial parents;
- Addressing language, culture, and work barriers; and
- Demonstrating that parents' contributions are valued by following up appropriately.

Staff members support parent involvement in the classroom when:

- A plan that outlines the roles of classroom volunteers is included in the GSRP Parent 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;
- A parent's presence (mother, father, or guardian) is invited and welcomed by staff;
- Worthy classroom experiences are offered to parents, for example, assisting in the implementation of the daily routine with children versus assigning parents 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 parents ahead of time;
- Responsibilities are offered that match volunteer's interests, skills, schedules and facilitate children's development; and
- Parents 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 parents of enrolled children. A high-quality GSRP supports parents as active decision makers, both developing and implementing training to instill confidence in parents as active members of an advisory committee.

Each Intermediate School District (ISD) is also required to have GSRP parent representation on the regional Great Start Collaborative (GSC) Parent Coalition; working with other committed parents to support early childhood practices in the community. These GSRP parents, in turn, act as liaisons to local Parent Advisory Committees, sharing ideas and activities in person, virtually (e.g., Skype) 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 parent/teacher 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 parent-teacher 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 parent 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. During home visits and parent/teacher conferences, staff:

- Seek input from parents about the program and its relationship to the child's development;
- Seek input from parents about how they are supporting the child's development at home;
- Partner with parents in setting appropriate child development goals;
- Assist parents to implement child development strategies for home which fit into normal family 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 letter writing and letter identification when children sign their names on a birthday card, etc. (sending home worksheets is not appropriate);
- Work together with parents 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 parents to locate and access special education services needed by the child;
- Work together with parents to write and follow up on referrals for needed family services. For example, staff can provide documentation for parents 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 parent/teacher 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 parent(s). Many programs determine that credentialed Associate Teachers may complete 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 often 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 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 parent and child, family pet(s), home, etc.;
- Leaving photos of staff and classroom;
- Discussing transportation to and from the program;
- Discussing parents' interests and hobbies;

- Discussing the importance of parent involvement and the various opportunities;
- Sharing program philosophy and curriculum information;
- Reviewing results of developmental screening;
- Discussing goals the parents 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 parent is asked for suggestions for an appropriate area within the home to meet. Staff members partner with the parent(s) 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 parent needs. 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 parent 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 parents 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 parents 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 parent 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 parent to ask questions and/or voice concerns.

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

## **Parent/Teacher Conferences**

Parent/teacher conferences should be held in the fall and spring, and when requested by parents. Conferences are scheduled to meet the mutual needs of

parents 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 parent 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 parents' understanding of their child's development. Staff share curriculum strategies for supporting children's development and discuss with parents ways that they can support learning at home using household materials and within ordinary household routines. Staff invite observations and answer questions from parents 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 parent.



# CLASSROOM REQUIREMENTS

## Introduction

Great Start Readiness Programs (GSRP) must comply with Public Act 116 of the Public Acts of 1973, as amended and the *Licensing Rules for Child Care Centers*. Michigan State Board of Education criteria for the GSRP require adherence to the *Great Start Readiness Program Implementation Manual* and the State School Aid Act requires program adherence to all standards in the *Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten* (ECSQ-PK). The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) requires grantees to address program quality in a systematic way utilizing both the applicable program evaluation tool and child outcome data.

Agencies which operate GSRP must comply with state licensing regulations governing child care. GSRPs must receive a certificate of approval/license from the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA), Bureau of Community and Health Systems Child Care Licensing Division. All regular child use areas must be approved for use. Relocations must be completed with the knowledge of the Intermediate School District (ISD). The ISD and a GSRP Consultant must be notified within 24 hours of a special investigation being initiated, a change from a regular to a provisional license, or continued provisional status. For more information contact the [Child Care Licensing Division](#) at 866-685-0006.

This section provides detail and requirements for a high-quality, center-based preschool program that will enhance the development of young children. When even one child in a classroom is funded through GSRP, all GSRP guidelines must be followed: staff credentialing, curriculum, assessment, parent involvement, etc. Children in any classroom may be funded from a variety of sources, but all must attend for the full session. Classroom models below include required components.

When planning the program year, scheduled breaks, half-days, holidays, and possible inclement weather days should be taken into account and sufficient days and weeks scheduled to ensure that the minimum number of full program days and weeks is met. When excessive unexpected closures occur (e.g. inclement weather days) and reduce the number of days/weeks children will attend to less than the minimum required, make-up days must be planned. Classrooms in place for more than one academic year, including relocated classrooms, must have a minimum of 120 days spread over at least 30 weeks. New subrecipients and newly licensed classrooms must operate for a minimum of 80 days spread over at least 20 weeks of classroom sessions, but more are strongly recommended to better support enrolled children to be prepared for a successful kindergarten experience.

## School-Day GSRP

School-Day preschool programs must operate for at least the same length of day as the local school district's/public school academy (PSA)'s first grade program. A classroom that offers a School-Day program must enroll all children for the length of the school day to be considered a School-Day program. If the program operates

five days per week, staff must have paid time for planning, professional development and parent involvement.

## **Part-Day GSRP**

Part-Day preschool programs must provide for a minimum of three hours of teacher/child contact time per day, for at least four days per week. If the program operates five days per week, staff must have paid time for planning, professional development and parent involvement.

## **GSRP/Head Start Blend Classrooms**

An ISD or its subrecipients 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 preschool programming. The funding for the GSRP portion of the day is the same as Part-Day GSRP. See the [ISD Administration of GSRP](#) section of this manual and [resources](#) for that section for more information.

GSRP/Head Start Blend preschool programs must operate for at least the same length of day as the local school district’s/PSA’s first grade program. A School-Day, versus a Part-Day daily routine must be implemented.

All Head Start and GSRP policies and regulations must be applied to the blended classrooms, with the highest standard from either program adhered to. All children funded by the GSRP/Head Start Blend must qualify for and be concurrently enrolled in both programs. Children in the class may be funded from a variety of sources, but all must attend for the full day. Classrooms that include GSRP/Head Start Blend enrollment meet Head Start requirements on days-in-session.

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. If the program operates five days per week, staff must have paid time for planning, professional development and parent involvement.

For classrooms that include GSRP/Head Start Blends and where Head Start has the preponderance of responsibility, Head Start is contracted as the GSRP subrecipient. When the subrecipient delivering GSRP/Head Start 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, administering the program evaluation tool 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 also collaborate on feedback

sessions and goal-setting so that there is a systematic approach with consistent messaging and manageable expectations for teaching teams.

## Program Components

### Philosophy

Administrative and program policies are undergirded with an underlying statement of beliefs about teaching and learning. A philosophy statement is a means of thinking deeply about preschool 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 preschool 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 Parent Handbook. It establishes a framework for program decisions, goal-setting; and is aligned with the ECSQ-PK and grant expectations. The philosophy statement also addresses local, social, economic, cultural, and family needs; and is promoted widely via websites, recruitment materials, classroom newsletters, parent-boards, etc.

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

- Why preschool is important: What is the purpose of preschool? What is the preschool grantee's role?
- Those we serve: How do we support diversity among enrolled children? How do we define our community of learners? What is our relationship with the community, parents, 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.

### Comprehensive Programming

The ECSQ-PK and legislation require comprehensive programming. In partnership with parents, the GSRP provider supports:

- Children's health (mental, oral, and physical), nutrition, and development across domains in responsive environments that celebrate diversity;
- Professional development 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.

### Parent Handbook

Parents are provided with policies and procedures that are easy to read, sensitively written, and brief. Refer to [resources](#) in the *Reporting and Monitoring* section for

additional guidance on developing or reviewing parent 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;
- Parent involvement information, including formal parent contacts, e.g. home visits and parent-teacher conferences;
- An emphasis on the importance of partnership between parents and teaching staff for child development (in school and at home); and
- Opportunities for decision-making activities within the local advisory structure;
- Child recruitment plan that includes procedures for selection and placement;
- 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;
- Exclusion policy must be written to describe short term injury or contagious illness that endangers the health and/or safety of children or others.  
**Children must not be excluded or expelled from classroom programming or transportation services;**
- Weather policy;
- Rest time policy (applies to GSRP/Head Start Blend and School-Day programs);
- Medication policy;
- Health policies and practices on physical activity and nutrition for children;
- Accident and emergency policies, including how parents are notified of emergency events;
- Child discipline/conflict resolution policy, aligned with "Challenging Behavior," below;
- Policy for reporting child abuse/neglect;
- Sliding fee scale of tuition;
- Grievance policy that clearly describes the steps to be taken when a parent has concerns or a grievance; and
- Passive consent notice of program evaluation. See the [Program Evaluation](#) section of this manual for sample language.

## Class Size and Ratio

A 1:8 adult/child ratio must be maintained at all times. A consistent third adult must be present in any classroom where 17 or 18 children are enrolled. Class size must be capped at 18 children with three consistent adults.

Additional staff members must be available to allow all staff time for breaks. Staff assigned to teach double sessions must not be responsible for more than 36 children.

## Staffing

The GSRP staff must have appropriate credentialing and sophisticated knowledge of early childhood education and practice a team approach. Staffing requirements include the necessity of the teaching team, which may include one lead teacher, an associate teacher, and a third adult remaining the same for the entire session, every day the class is scheduled. The classroom teaching team is supported with the active involvement of an ECS.

Refer to the [Early Childhood Specialist](#) section for specific credentials and responsibilities of this position. **One person may not be employed to fill both a lead teacher position and an Early Childhood Specialist position.**

### 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 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.

The option to hire a Lead Teacher who holds a valid Michigan teaching certificate along with a valid CDA is discontinued. The ISD must ensure that written personnel position descriptions and hiring procedures are accurate. Lead Teachers hired between June 25, 2012 and June 24, 2014 and with MDE-approved compliance plans to acquire a CDA may complete the CDA within the approved timeframe and continue to work as a GSRP Lead Teacher. Personnel hired into a GSRP Lead Teacher position with a valid Michigan teaching certificate along with a valid CDA before June 24, 2014 are also 'grandfathered in.' In both instances, MDE 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. MDE 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 9<sup>th</sup> 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 Child Development Associate credential (CDA) equivalency has been discontinued; personnel who currently have a 120 Clock Hour approval letter from the MDE are grandfathered.

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

- An associate's degree (AA) in early childhood education or child development or the equivalent; or

- A valid classroom CDA credential; or
- An existing 120 Hour approval.

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

## **Other Classroom Staff:**

### **Third Staff Person:**

- Is added when the classroom enrolls 17 or 18 children;
- Is a consistent member of the teaching team; and
- Meets the LARA, Child Care Licensing Division requirements as a “caregiver.”

### **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 CDA. Any long-term substitute (more than one month), must meet qualifications for the position being filled.

## **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. Programs that employ staff who do not meet credentialing requirements are in noncompliance status.

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 that are not appropriately credentialed are submitted annually to the ISD who then reports it annually to MDE in the Michigan Electronic Grants System Plus (MEGS+). The written plan must outline educational training and include an

anticipated compliance date. It must be signed by the program's ECS, the ISD Early Childhood Contact (ECC) and the staff member. It is the responsibility of the ECS to monitor the plan throughout the two years to assure compliance will be met within two years of the date of hire with GSRP. When a subrecipient hires staff that is not fully credentialed, the subrecipient and the ISD are in noncompliance status until credentialing is completed.

## **Staffing Noncompliance – Lead Teachers:**

If a program demonstrates to the ISD that it is unable to hire qualified lead teachers, only persons who have **significant but incomplete training in early childhood education**, or child development may be employed. "Significant" early childhood education is defined as within one or two courses of the Early Childhood-General and Special Education (ZS) endorsement on a valid Michigan teaching certificate or within one or two courses of the bachelor degree in early childhood education/child development with a specialization in preschool teaching. Educational training is defined as credit-bearing coursework and/or the field experience/student teaching necessary, according to the work plan established for the endorsement candidate by the college or university.

When GSRP Lead Teachers are employed without proper credentialing, a written compliance plan that includes administrative monitoring should be a condition of hire. ISDs will provide assurance in the GSRP Implementation Plan (formerly "Application") that the compliance plan is on file locally.

The written plan must outline educational training and include an anticipated compliance date that is within two years of the date of hire into the GSRP Lead Teacher position. Progress toward completion of the compliance plan must minimally consist of two credit-bearing courses per calendar year. Minimum GPA requirements may be included in the compliance plan as well as considerations for financial support and release time. It must be signed by whoever signs the GSRP contract for the subrecipient, the classroom's Early Childhood Specialist (ECS), the ISD Early Childhood Contact (ECC) and the Lead Teacher. It is the responsibility of the ECS to monitor the plan throughout the two years and support successful completion. The ECS provides support by helping to connect the Lead Teacher with an institution of higher education academic advisor who can arrange a schedule of coursework to meet the two-year timeframe, encourage the Lead Teacher through coursework by discussing the new learning and supporting practice of new strategies. The ECS can help the Lead Teacher to advocate with the subrecipient if release time or financial assistance is needed for courses, fees or textbooks. As with all teaching staff, the ECS ensures that the new Lead Teacher has formal training in the curriculum, the developmental screener, ongoing child assessment tool and has orientation to GSRP and the position of Lead Teacher.

The ISD must ensure that the ECS classroom ratio/contracts reflect the intensive support and additional classroom visits, coaching and consultation that staffs with incomplete credentialing require.

MDE's Office of Educator Excellence provides a [list of approved early childhood education endorsement programs in Michigan](#).

## **Staffing Noncompliance – Associate Teachers:**

If a program can demonstrate to the ISD that it is unable to employ properly-credentialed staff, the program may employ associate teachers who have minimally completed one course that earns college credit in child development or early childhood education.

Compliance plans for associate teachers must minimally include two courses or 60 clock hours of training per calendar year from an approved training institution or agency, must be completed within two years of the date of employment, and must result in the attainment of the CDA or an associate's degree in child development or early childhood education. Any kind of training that would be considered "individual study" as opposed to "formal training" will not be accepted. An example of this would be video training, where a person simply watches a video followed by a question sheet. Trainings should provide opportunities for the trainee to apply, analyze, and evaluate content related to the early childhood years. Video trainings and other forms of individual study do not foster this kind of experience.

## **Team Teaching**

The ISD and program administrators must ensure that staff implement a 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 parent engagement through home visits, conferences, and parent 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.); and
- All teaching staff conduct and participate in children's activities.

The ISD and program administrators must ensure sufficient time for all staff to participate in planning, professional development, and parent involvement activities. Programs typically operate four days of classroom programming per week, with the fifth weekday set aside for above activities.

## **Teaching Practices**

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. Refer to curriculum guidance, ECSQ-PK and the program evaluation tool for further detail on high-quality indicators of teaching practices.

The curriculum promotes active, participatory learning through all portions of the daily routine. GSRP offers learning experiences personalized for the strengths, interests and needs of each child, in consideration of their family, community, and culture. The following are adhered to:



- Worksheets/workbooks/coloring sheets are prohibited for GSRP classroom use and may not be promoted for use at home.
- Whole-class activities such as 'calendar-time' do not permit children to initiate ideas/actions and are not part of a well-regarded preschool daily routine. However, a valid place for a real calendar is the house area, where children may use a calendar to jot play-themed appointments or in the variety of ways that families use real calendars. Teaching teams subsequently support children at their developmental level, partnering in their play to support emergent understandings in time-sense, literacy and mathematics, etc. For further information and suggestions for alternate practices see [Calendar Time for Young Children: Good Intentions Gone Awry](#)
- A 'letter of the week' practice is not individually meaningful for children, has been shown to be an ineffective method to teach alphabet knowledge and is not acceptable within GSRP classrooms. For research-based strategies to support early literacy see [Essential Instructional Practices for Early Literacy in Prekindergarten](#).
- As with all classroom materials, technology is used with intentionality, which *may thoughtfully include* being used as a tool during play. Teaching staff consider the distinction between active and passive use, recognizing that within active use 'the child's mind is active and deeply engaged with the content' (rather than the machinery). In other words, a child using a device in a physically engaging way does not necessarily reflect active learning. A child must intentionally learn from the experience for it to be active use. For more information, see the 2016 [Early Learning and Educational Technology Policy Brief](#).

## Daily Routine

Required parts of the GSRP classroom schedule are bolded below. Refer to sample daily routines as [resources](#) to this section of the manual. Classrooms may have alternate terms for parts of the routine, as long as names are used daily and are easily understood by children. 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. During one hour of **uninterrupted choice time**, children carry out their plans, making 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 in small groups;
- Engage in discrete **small-group** activities which may be adult-initiated, but not adult-dominated. School-Day and GSRP/Head Start Blend program options offer small group activities every morning;
- 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 this section);
- Have transition times that actively engage them;
- Have **outside-time** where adults intentionally support and extend children's plans. Programs provide equipment and materials for active play. Children are minimally provided thirty minutes of physical activity per day, a combination of both teacher-led and free play, notwithstanding the time needed for adults to support children dressing themselves or transitioning to outdoors, unless prevented by inclement weather conditions such as heat, rain or wind-chill. School-Day and GSRP/Head Start Blend program options offer outside, gross motor activities at least every morning;
- Have an opportunity for **rest** in a full-day program;
- Hear parts of the day regularly referred to by staff; and
- See a daily routine posted at child eye level, that is easily understandable and includes visuals for planning, choice, recall, small-group, large-group, snacks/meals, outside, and rest.

## Challenging Behavior

The structure of the physical environment, daily routine and activities presented, and the adult(s) approach all have a direct influence on child behavior. Research shows young children who struggle with behavioral and emotional problems have a fifty percent chance of continuing to struggle into adulthood.

GSRP providers must not deny enrollment or exclude a child from classroom programming or program provided transportation based on challenging behavior or any disability because of staff attitudes and/or apprehensions, unfamiliarity with the behaviors or disability, the need to access additional resources to serve a specific child or the need for individualized planning and intentional teaching.

There is evidence high-quality early childhood education minimizes challenging child behaviors when it focuses on child-initiated learning activities. In addition, positive behavior support is most effective when offered to children through a system based on positive relationships with children, families, and colleagues; creating supportive learning environments, intentional social-emotional teaching strategies, and mental health consultation involving intensive individualized interventions.

The effective early childhood mental health consultant has appropriate credentials and is familiar with program-centered consultation, where the goal is to build the capacity of staff, families, and program systems to prevent, identify, and reduce the impact of mental health problems in children and families. An ongoing relationship between a mental health professional and early childhood program staff ensures familiarity with the needs of children and teachers, timely consultation, and services.

The discipline or conflict resolution policy must address procedures for adults to support children as they solve problems with materials, do things for themselves, and assist them in resolving conflicts with peers. In the GSRP classroom, adults:

- Encourage children to do things for themselves throughout the day;
- Treat conflict situations with children matter-of-factly;
- Approach children calmly and stop any hurtful actions;
- Acknowledge children’s feelings;
- Involve children in identifying the problem by gathering information from children and restating the problem;
- Ask children for solutions and encourage them to choose one together; and
- Give follow-up support when children act on their decisions.

In December 2016, the State of Michigan adopted new laws restricting the use of seclusion and restraint in schools. As required by the new laws, 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), must adopt and implement a local policy that is consistent with the state policy. Specific distinctions for preschool-age children should be included in the policy consistent with the SBE policy. As GSRP is a state-funded program and as ISDs are the sole grantees for GSRP funding, the local policy adopted by the ISD must be applied to all GSRP classrooms regardless of the entity responsible for implementing the program: LEA/PSA, CBO (public or private), college/university. The ISD must monitor both ISD-run and subrecipient-run classrooms for adherence to the policy.

## “Specials”

GSRP classrooms housed within an elementary school are sometimes offered additional programming referred to as “specials,” such as library, computers, physical education, music, and/or art classes. It is questionable whether a classroom in which the GSRP teacher is implementing a comprehensive program (as required) has need of additional programming. In addition, the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) requires all regular child use areas be licensed, and MDE requires GSRPs maintain staffing guidelines with staff who have significant credentialing in early childhood education. However, teaching staff may make use of other available space, approved for use by licensing, to support children’s learning. The following should also be considered:

- Children who are at risk of academic failure benefit most from developing strong and positive relationships with the GSRP classroom teachers. How would multiple teachers throughout the week affect a child's sense of safety, security, and emotional development?
- When staggered “specials” are in place, what are the effects on the consistent daily routine for children?
- How would “specials” impact the provision of an appropriate amount of time each day for other parts of the daily routine?
- What effects on children will emerge with the additional transitions that will be required of them?
- In following the ECSQ-PK, GSRP classrooms integrate attention to ALL learning domains throughout the day; if this is already in place in the classroom, is there really any need to implement “specials?”

- How can the grantee bring the expertise of the “specials” staff to the classroom as a normal part of the classroom experience? Consider team planning to ensure developmentally-appropriate activities which adhere to the ECSQ-PK. The “specials” teacher could be incorporated into the classroom as the lead for large-group or small-group time(s), assisting out-of-doors, etc. Even in this case, the “specials” teacher should have activities that reflect what is currently going on in the classroom, as opposed to isolated art, music, or physical education lessons.
- How can “specials” staff contribute anecdotes for use in child assessment?

## 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 LARA Child Care Licensing Division. 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. School-Day 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 or special need for individualization. Depending on income level, parents may be required to pay tuition, but parents incur no cost for program elements such as any aspect of meal service, including sending in snacks or meals from home. The program incurs the cost for individualization at meals unless changes are 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 over-stimulation, 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 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.

Subrecipients are evaluated each year on family-style meal service with nutritious food. When the menu includes breakfast pizzas, corndogs, 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 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 Parent Handbook. Include special notation on allergies, a companion list of foods with low nutritional value, potential choking hazards and a contact person for questions.

## 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.

## Flexibility in Meal Service

Multiple conversations with program staff and parents have made it clear that 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 new 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.
- Meal and snack service meeting Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)/National School Nutrition Program (NSNP) requirements must continue to be provided.
- 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.
- Meals and snacks provided by families must also meet CACFP/NSNP 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.
- Families providing their own meals and snacks must sign an agreement stating their intent and their understanding of the requirements. For a sample form, see [resources](#) of this section.

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 requiring heating/warming?
- How will staff manage possible child reactions to their own or other's meals?
- If parents choosing this option do not send in food for their child, 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 parents does not remove the requirement that parents 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.

## 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 [guidelines of the LARA Child Care Licensing Division](#).
- 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) eating family-style with the children. Note that while the CACFP/NSLP/SBP 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 of 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.
- Children may have never experienced a meal served family style. Preschoolers 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. One-quarter and one-half cup 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. 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.
- 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 the same foods children do. Adults typically position themselves in a mid-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 spoonful of beans." Adults provide verbal description 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.
- 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.
- Children choose whether to eat, what to eat, and how much to eat. Have enough food available to meet meal pattern requirements and to allow for seconds.

- 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.
- 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.

## Rest/Quiet Time

Centers that operate five or more hours must have a written rest or quiet time policy. The policy must comply with rest requirements of the LARA, Child Care Licensing Division. The policy should include:

- A time period no longer than one hour, while accommodating for the individual needs of children.
- Provision of alternate activities for children who do not sleep.
- Provision for parents and staff to support the developmentally-appropriate rest/nap needs of each child.
- Details on transition into rest time [e.g., children assist with putting cots out, getting their own blanket(s) and transition item(s); and turning off lights and turning on soft music]. Adults can assist in transition by moving among children in an unhurried fashion, having quiet conversation and providing soothing touch such as backrubs.
- Details on transition out of rest time (e.g., staff turn on soft music, open blinds, turn on lights, and gently awaken children with a touch and conversation). Children can assist in transition by putting away cots, blankets and transition items.

## Parent Involvement

Parent engagement is critical to positive child outcomes. The GSRP provides a variety of opportunities for parents to become involved in the program and regularly seeks input from parents. Refer to the [Parent Involvement](#) section for more information. **Parents must not be required to volunteer in the classroom or participate in group meetings as a condition of enrollment.**

## 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, parents must not be charged transportation fees. GSRP funds may be used to pay for transportation but must meet the guidelines set in the [Budget](#) section of this manual.



LARA Licensing Rules for Child Care Centers include requirements for the transportation of preschoolers. 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 also specific guidelines for public school bus transportation of preschoolers. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommends preschool-age children transported in school buses always be transported in properly secured child safety restraint systems. Grantees must ensure:

- Parents 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.

# 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, training, and supervising 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 preschool and supported by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.<sup>1</sup> 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 teacher-parent 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 Education (MDE) does not identify one 'best' curriculum model, but rather supports preschool curriculum models that meet specific criteria. Approved curriculum models must align with the Michigan [Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten](#) (ECSQ-PK), ensuring horizontal alignment among early learning expectations and preschool 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-PK. The following questions can serve as a tool for guiding curriculum selection:

- 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-PK? 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

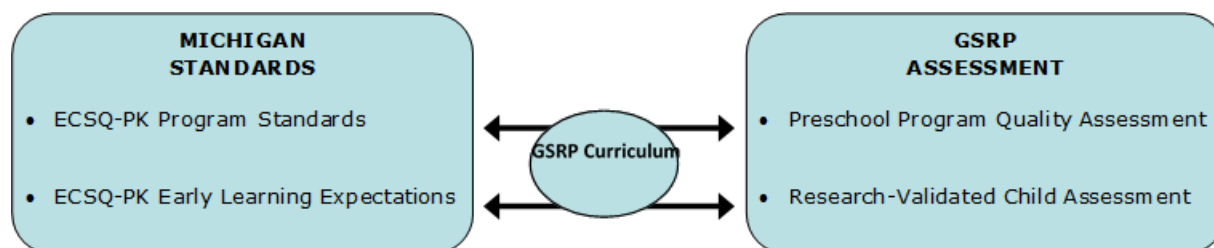
environment to support systematic child observation to assess what children know and can do?

- 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-PK? Are the contents of ECSQ-PK, curriculum model, and child assessments aligned?

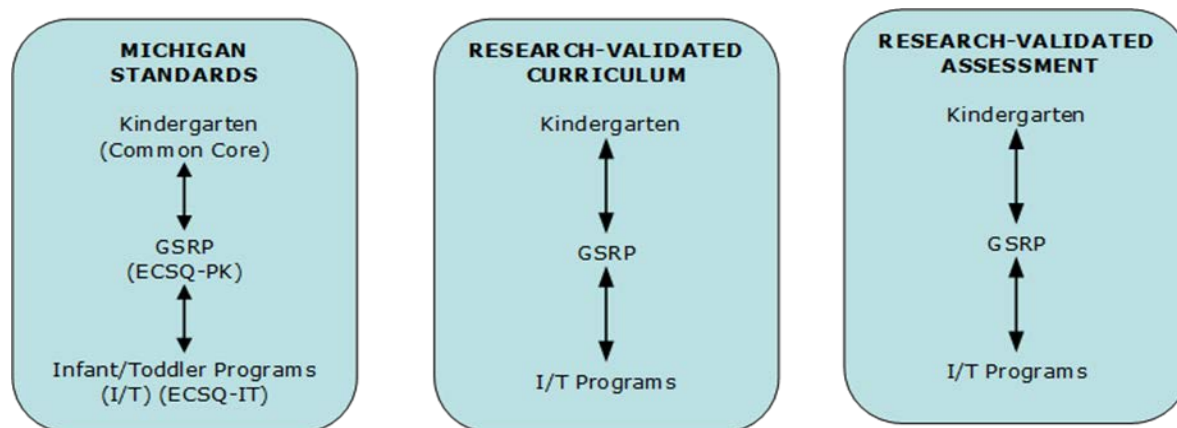
## Alignment

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-PK. 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 *Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Infant and Toddler Programs*, the ECSQ-PK, 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

GSRP grantees are required to use a research-validated curriculum model that aligns with the ECSQ-PK. The following curricula are currently allowed in GSRP classrooms. Descriptions below are adapted from linked websites.

### **Tools of the Mind:**

Tools of The Mind combines a comprehensive early childhood curriculum with an innovative approach to teacher professional development to transform early childhood teaching and learning, and improve child outcomes. Tools instructional interactions are designed to help teachers be more effective in identifying teachable moments, assessing children's development and differentiating instruction. Teachers focus on helping children become intentional and reflective learners. In a Tools preschool classroom, an adaptable play theme unifies the room. Children engage in activities designed to support the development of literacy, math and science skills at the same time as self-regulation and executive functions skills are developed. Most learning takes place in small groups and partnered activities, engaging children in interacting with one another to learn, build social relationships and create a positive classroom culture.

### **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 parents 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. The website offers [alignment](#) between the curriculum and Michigan's ECSQ-PK.

### **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 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.

## **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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent, frequent use of materials and/or activities</li> <li>• Daily routine modified to include activities</li> <li>• Reflected on the daily lesson plan</li> <li>• Materials or activities are done in order and/or in total</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occasional use of materials (books, songs, poems, manipulatives) and/or activities</li> <li>• Incorporated into a daily routine that meets grant expectations</li> <li>• Not regularly reflected on lesson plans</li> <li>• Activities and/or materials are chosen based on strengths, needs, or interests of children</li> </ul>

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 parents 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 learning 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 MDE. Per P.A. 108 of 2017, "If the department objects to the use of a supplemental curriculum approved by an Intermediate School District, the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall establish a review committee independent of the department. The review committee shall meet within 60 days of the department 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 parents. 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.

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 for Prekindergarten (ECSQ-PK)*: social and emotional development, intellectual development, language and early literacy development, creative development, physical development, health; early learning in math, science, social studies; and use of technology.

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 parents, children, staff and other agencies, and contribute to program credibility. The ISD establishes a system of expectations, with timeframes for subrecipient-level and ISD-wide data analysis meetings, 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 training in the chosen tools.

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 parents 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. Definition resource: [Council of Chief State School Officers, Early Childhood Education Assessment Consortium.](#)

The ISD assessment structure addresses developmental screening:

- How staff are trained in use of the screener and how to interpret results with parents;
- How staff are trained to effectively navigate related systems of online/electronic data storage;
- Whether administration is completed as a community event, by parents or with parents 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 parent 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:

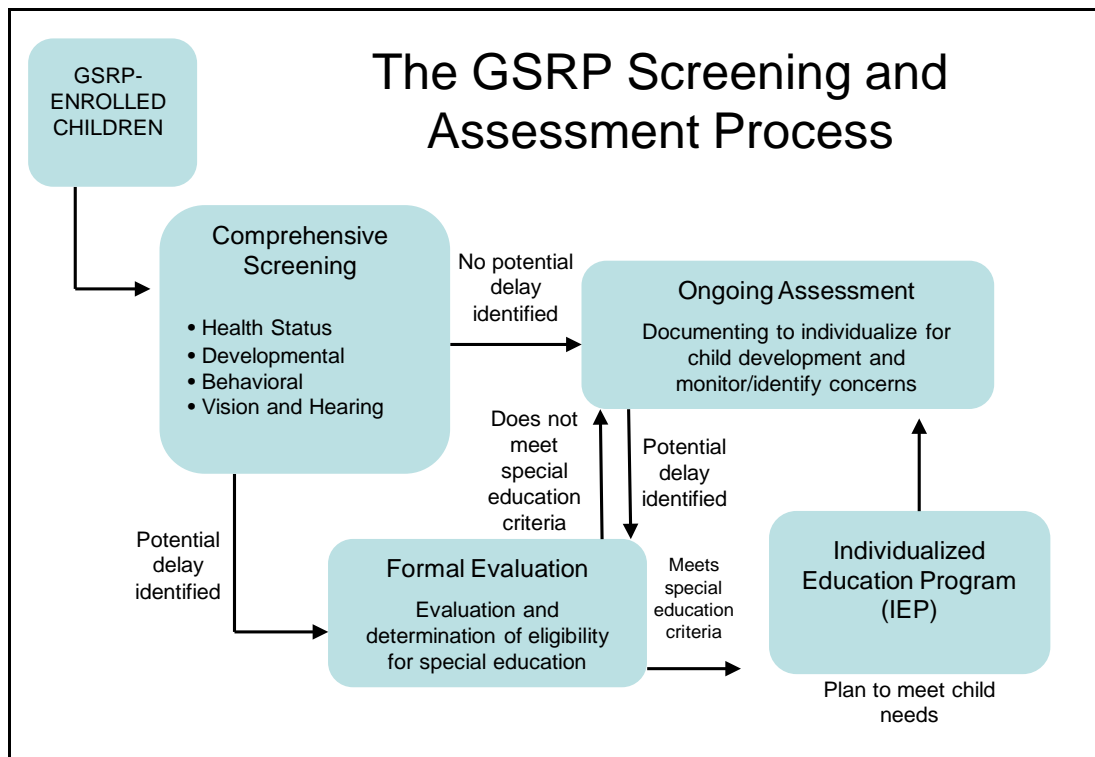
<b>Developmental Screening Is</b>	<b>Developmental Screening is Not</b>
A “snapshot” look at a child’s development, administered within the last six months, or as children are enrolled in GSRP.	An in-depth, exclusive profile of a child’s development.
Intended to identify the need for further assessment 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, parent 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 parental 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, parents, 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.



## Parents 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.

Parents 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.

Parents 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 parents. On the first day, staff and parents meet, and should begin to discuss child development and assessment. Screening must not take place without obtaining consent from the parent. Parents 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 parents' "doorknob concerns," (i.e., "Oh, by the way...").

## **Sharing Screening Results with Parents**

No matter what type of message is being delivered, the staff member meeting with the parent should be prepared, having knowledge of scores from the screening and the parents' input. The parent 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 parent is acknowledged. Parent 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 parents 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 parental concerns, and IF UNSURE, REFER.

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

Let parents 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 parent/child leave(s) the premises.

Remember, participation is voluntary. If parents 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 parent. Report parent(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 parents 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 parent(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 trained in the selected assessment tool.

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 parents;
- 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 check-points 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 parents and teaching staff should inform child assessment. Teaching staff share individual developmental profiles with parents 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 parents 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 Advisory Committee, 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 parents 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, parent, 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.

[Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming System \(AEPS\) for Infants and Children, Second Edition](#)

[COR Advantage](#)

[My Teaching Strategies™ \(MTS\) \(Formerly GOLD®\)](#)

[The Work Sampling System](#)

## Resources:

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). 2006. [Assessing Students with Disabilities: A Glossary of Assessment Terms in Everyday Language](#). Authored by the policy to Practice Study Group of the Assessing Special Education Students (ASES) State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards SCASS. This work builds upon earlier work by the Early Childhood Education Assessment SCASS of the CCSSO and includes a glossary of terms and acronyms.

[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 parent involvement can lead to positive teacher morale, parent support and satisfaction, a great reputation for the program in the community, and improved child outcomes.

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 parents, the Intermediate School District (ISD) early childhood contact, GSRP classrooms, Head Start, Center- and Home-Based early care and education providers, *Early On*<sup>®</sup>, special education, kindergarten teachers, elementary/public school academy administrators, the local Great Start Collaborative, and a representative from the local Great Start Regional 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. It is the responsibility of the local GSRP Advisory Committee to identify a transition coordinator who will facilitate regular implementation meetings to generate ideas for carrying out transition activities, create a timeline, and evaluate and revise the local 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 child 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 parents about the enrolled child.

Parents, like children, come to GSRP with different circumstances and experiences. Programs should develop strategies to communicate with all parents. Some parents 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 parents based on their expressed interests and needs. Refer to the Parent Involvement section for more information.

Before school begins, an initial home visit and an orientation opportunity for the child and parent help 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, notes or phone calls, family events, home visits, and parent/teacher conferences.

Written information should be positive and useful. The parent 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 parents.

A high-quality GSRP employs many strategies to engage parents as decision-makers in all facets of the program. Staff members begin this during the very first contact by asking parents what information they would like to know about the program. A one-page explanation of the role of the local GSRP Advisory Committee, how often it meets, the support available to parents who serve, and the work typically done, might help parents to feel comfortable who would otherwise think special skills are required for participation. For confident and active participation, Advisory Committee 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 parents. 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 parents by connecting with other families who have already made the transition from GSRP to kindergarten, in the format of a panel discussion with past parents. 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 Advisory, transition committee or being a part of an Individual Education Program 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 to individualize transitioning for a child and family. This may include supporting a parent 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. [Transition to Kindergarten Parent Guides](#) is a series of tip sheets on transitioning into kindergarten.

## **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 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 parent 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. Parents 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

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

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

The GSRP is required by legislation to provide for active and continuous participation of parents of enrolled children. Parents partner in child development goals as active decision-makers. Parents discuss data with their children's teachers and understand what the data means for their children, both inside and outside of the classroom. Upon enrollment, parents must be informed that information about their child and family is collected, reported, and analyzed to learn about the effectiveness of GSRP. Confidentiality must be maintained. A [sample announcement to parents](#) on program evaluation can be found in the [resources](#) for this section.

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

## Systemic Collection and Utilization of Data

Programs are required to conduct developmental screening and comprehensive, authentic child assessment. Representing the grantee, the Early Childhood Contact (ECC) collects data on the curricula, screening and child assessment tools used in the area. The ECC supports common measurements and consistent data reporting mechanisms across subrecipients. Only an ECS who is a Reliable Assessor/Certified Observer completes the observations, interviews and scoring of the program evaluation tool(s). The ECS must be assigned to the classroom that is observed/evaluated/coached. The ECS documents evidence about classroom observations and specific classroom-level grant requirements and uses this data for improvement planning.

At the start of each school year, the Office of Great Start provides information to ISDs about annual contracts and reporting expectations for program evaluation.

PA 265 of 2018 determined that multiple program evaluation tools would be available for use. For the 2018-19 school year, MDE determined that the following tools may be used singly or in combination to evaluate program quality.

- **Program Quality Assessment® (PQA)** by HighScope®. As the original, comprehensive program evaluation tool, the PQA measures the quality of the indoor and outdoor learning environments, daily routine, critical adult-child interactions, curriculum and ongoing child assessment, parent involvement, staff qualifications/development and program management. See the [Early Childhood Specialist](#) section of this manual for GSRP requirements on Reliable Assessor status.
- **Program Quality Assessment-Revised (PQA-R)** by HighScope. Revised in 2018, the PQA-R 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 parent engagement activities. **Note: It is a grant requirement that the assigned ECS complete all five sections of PQA-R.** See the [Early Childhood Specialist](#) section of this manual for GSRP requirements on Reliable Assessor status.
- **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 is collected within myTeachstone, a separate product. To learn more please visit the [Teachstone website](#).

Training in the selected tool(s) and Reliable Assessor/Certified Observer costs are approvable grant expenses.

The ECC is responsible to monitor compliance with the program evaluation reporting requirement. 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 an area-wide professional learning plan.

Data are reviewed to guide parent-teacher 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 parents, 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



parents, the program supervisor, representation from teaching teams, and other specialists or stakeholders, as appropriate. A systematic approach brings the team together three times each program year. During the end-of-year meeting, the team:

- Identifies the current level of performance across relevant indicators, evident strengths, and extraordinary accommodations for children/families (e.g., attendance rates, program settings and/or options, language groups, child, family or community risk factors);
- Uses data to establish professional development priorities;
- Sets measurable goals and objectives to address classroom quality, 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. [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 a 3-star rating in [Michigan's Great Start to Quality](#) (GSQ) system. A program whose license is modified to first provisional status at any time is removed from GSQ and reappears in GSQ when the license is renewed to regular status. GSRP sites that are unable to achieve or maintain at least a 3-star rating must not receive continued GSRP funding. ISDs must be aware that such sites are "out of compliance" with GSRP, and sanctions, up to and including recapture of all GSRP funds for those sites, may be implemented. See the [Funding](#) section of this manual for more information on the GSQ.

## Follow-up Through Second Grade

Subrecipients are required to develop a local evaluation component, including a follow-up study through second grade. Local longitudinal data collection facilitates communication between preschool and early elementary grades. Data collected 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 parent involvement. Reflection on longitudinal data provides preschool program staff with insight into the conditions of successful transition from preschool to subsequent grades and should be coupled with other program data to further program quality. See [resources](#) for this section for sample follow-up documentation and the required [Parent Notice of Program Measurement](#).

Local longitudinal efforts are enhanced by participation in the Michigan Student Data System (MSDS). The MSDS is the state education database and includes discrete information about individual children such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, and program participation. Each GSRP-enrolled child must be documented in the MSDS.

## National, Regional, and Statewide Evaluation

Program evaluation results are used annually by MDE for statewide evaluation of the program: to assess the extent to which programs contribute to children's development and readiness for school success. In 1995, the HighScope Educational Research Foundation was awarded a grant by the Michigan State Board of Education to design and conduct a longitudinal evaluation to assess the implementation and impact of GSRP. Reports at kindergarten entry, in the primary grades, at the first administration of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) in 4th grade, in middle school, and after the planned graduation date, have confirmed the initial findings of differences between the program group and the control group. These reports are all available at [detailed findings of longitudinal study](#). The findings of the longitudinal study from 1995-2011 include:

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

## 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 parent-friendly language.

In addition to the MDE 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 MDE, its designated evaluation contractor(s), and any of MDE's other research partners. Cooperation includes, but is not limited to:

- Making classrooms available for observation;
- Providing non-classroom space on site for child assessment;
- Allowing administrators and staff to take time to complete surveys and questionnaires (via telephone, internet, paper, and/or in person; as necessary);
- Returning completed surveys and questionnaires promptly and regularly;
- Providing program information to the contractor, including children's unique identification numbers, as recorded in the MSDS;
- Participating in project informational webinars, conference calls, and in-person meetings; and
- Distributing parent information letters.

# REPORTING AND MONITORING

## Reporting

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has a responsibility to monitor program quality and does this with applications and reports submitted in the Michigan Electronic Grants System Plus (MEGS+) as well as fiscal and program monitoring. Through the submitted applications and reports, the ISD assures compliance with all reporting requirements. If the ISD fails to comply, MDE 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) Community Needs Assessment and Application (CNA) and the GSRP Program Implementation Plan (PIP) in MEGS+.

Programs utilize MEGS+, the Michigan Student Data System (MSDS), and the applicable program evaluation tool for submitting data. ISDs may also be required to submit data to early childhood system data collection efforts such as Child Care Licensing and Great Start to Quality data collection efforts. Due dates for MEGS+ 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	MEGS+	October 15 This application is completed by each Head Start grantee; ISDs sometimes collaborate with Head Start on data entry.
Community Needs Assessment and Application (CNA)	MEGS+	November 30
Acceptance of Funds	MEGS+	July 1
Program Implementation Plan (PIP)	MEGS+	September 15
Child Enrollment	MSDS	Three times annually (Nov., Feb., Aug.) with the Spring Early Childhood Collection (February) serving as the official count of children served by program option for the year.
Preschool Program Quality Assessment (PQA®); Preschool Program Quality Assessment Revised (PQA-R); Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®)	OnlinePQA; PQA-R; CLASS	End-of-Year observations administered between March 1 and May 15, completely entered in the applicable online collection platform by May 31.
Child Information and Staff Report (CISR)	MEGS+	April 1
Final Expenditure Report and Carryover Budget	MEGS+	May 16
Carryover Final Expenditure Report	MEGS+	April 15

## 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 MDE.

### ISD:

- All reports from monitoring with subrecipients including compliance plans if required;
- ISD contracts with subrecipients;
- Individual and total subrecipient budgets, reimbursement requests, final expenditure reports and carryover reports;
- Source documentation (invoices, receipts, etc.) for GSRP expenditures;
- ISD employee contracts/agreements and 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 star rating, interest in being awarded funding, and the result for the upcoming grant year;
- Minutes, agendas and attendance sheets from the area-wide advisory committee convened as a sub-committee of the Great Start Collaborative;
- Student recruitment and selection plans; including copies of flyers, announcements, and enrollment forms;
- ISD-wide program evaluation reports;
- ISD-wide professional development plans including any plans for professional development of a new curriculum; and
- Personnel records for any GSRP staff employed by the ISD.

### Subrecipient:

- Project plan: philosophy statement, curriculum model, and examples of lesson plans;
- Parent involvement records:
  - evidence of parent participation in decision-making activities, such as membership in local and area-wide advisory committees, agendas, and meeting minutes, and
  - records of parent education meetings and 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 to committee,
  - program profiles of child outcome data,
  - program improvement plans, and
  - records of accreditation plans, if applicable;
- Data and analysis of child follow-up information through second grade;

- Documentation of license/approval by the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA), Bureau of Community and Health Systems Child Care Licensing Division including correspondence on compliance and any special investigations;
- Personnel records for the director, early childhood specialist, lead teacher(s), associate teacher(s), and others:
  - staff credential
  - professional development 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 name, address, phone number),
  - evidence of developmental screening,
  - evidence of comprehensive assessment of child's progress in the program, and
  - documentation of date and content of home visits and parent/teacher conferences.

## 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 MDE during either a programmatic or fiscal review. 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 of GSRP](#) section of this manual for additional information.

## MDE Monitoring of ISDs

MDE has a monitoring process which is focused on the ISDs as GSRP grantees. Monitoring covers the programmatic, administrative and fiscal aspects of the ISDs as GSRP grantees and any subrecipients. An ISD risk assessment is completed annually by MDE. Risk assessment features 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 MDE;
- ECC and/or business official change from the prior year;
- Fiscal or program complaints or concerns raised by internal or external partners; and
- The amount of GSRP funds received.

## On-Site Monitoring Visits

An MDE fiscal monitor, consultant, or combined team will conduct on-site monitoring visits to the ISD to ensure compliance with state policies and program requirements as they relate to fiscal and programmatic management of the grant.

Monitoring can be programmatic and/or fiscal and cover the work of the ISDs as GSRP grantees and subrecipients. 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.

A programmatic monitoring visit is a review of compliance with all other requirements. If there are specific concerns regarding ISD operations, an on-site monitoring may be done through a focused review. This type of review is an examination of records that relate to GSRP with a focus, such as reviewing only all subrecipient contracts or all staff credentials.

MDE will use a combination of interviews, electronic and on-site records, MEGS+ applications and reports, and sampling of the ISD's subrecipient program and fiscal documentation to complete the monitoring process. The [resources](#) for this section include several documents which support program and fiscal monitoring.

## BUDGET AND FINANCIAL GUIDELINES

Intermediate Schools Districts (ISDs) receive an allocation to operate the program and a transportation allocation from the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to provide preschool for eligible Michigan children. ISDs may choose to operate in consortium with one or more ISDs, with one ISD assuming the role of fiscal agent. The ISD may have subrecipients, choose to directly run GSRP or have a combination of these options. Whether the ISD directly provides programming or names eligible subrecipients to do so, the ISD has the responsibility to assure (MDE) that allocated funds are used to provide high-quality programming and services that are aligned with the Michigan Early Childhood Standards of Quality (ECSQ) for Pre-K and meet all GSRP requirements.

### Systems Used for Reporting

GSRP reporting is completed using the Michigan Electronic Grants System Plus (MEGS+). MEGS+ is MDE's grants management system that utilizes internet technologies to manage the grant process. This includes 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. MEGS+ interacts with a variety of other State of Michigan systems used for GSRP. These systems include Michigan Education Information System (MEIS), the Grant Electronic Monitoring System/Michigan Administrative Review System (GEMS/MARS), and the Educational Entity Master (EEM).

Each ISD staff person that will work within these programs must have an established MEIS account. In order to access MEGS+ and GEMS/MARS, users must have an active MEIS account and must have submitted a security agreement form. If an ISD has a new agency receiving GSRP funds, each agency is required to have a recipient code. An agency security form must be completed, and the agency information must be entered into the EEM. All security forms can be obtained on the GSRP website. Contact GSRP staff for further guidelines on adding staff and new agencies to MEGS+ and GEMS/MARS.

Fiscal Reports used in MEGS+:

- GSRP Acceptance of Funds
- GSRP Program Implementation Plan (PIP)
- GSRP Final Expenditure Report and Carryover Budget (FER/COB)
- GSRP Carryover Final Expenditure Report (CO/FER)

All applications and reports are in MEGS+. See the [Reporting and Monitoring](#) section for more detail.



## Budget Guidelines

GSRP funds are appropriated annually based on an October 1 to September 30 fiscal year, therefore, all yearly expenditures must be obligated within that expenditure period. ISDs and/or subrecipients may select either July 1 to June 30 or October 1 to September 30 as their accounting period, but their financial records (original budget, carryover budget, general ledger, COFER/FER) must be consistent throughout with the period selected in their MEGS+ application and follow proper fund accounting. Expenditures must be recorded to match the state appropriation period for which they are incurred for subrecipients and the ISD. Revenue is not allowed to be earned on any GSRP funds. 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 (PQA<sup>®</sup>, PQA-R, CLASS<sup>®</sup>) 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 that exceed the contracted salary. See Bonuses and Incentive Payments below.
- Parent involvement activities;
- Transportation for students;
- Health support services;
- Student support services;
- Staff development and teacher/parent training;
- 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/mortgage payment or lien when the lessee and the lessor are two separate legal entities;
- Construction or renovation projects. All construction or renovation projects over \$5,000 MUST BE PRE-APPROVED by the ISD and a GSRP consultant using a completed [Capital Outlay Request](#) form. This form can be found in the resources to this section. For more information on Capital Outlay, see Capital Outlay below.
- Furniture such as shelving and equipment; and
- Up to 4% administrative costs as defined in GSRP legislation is intended to cover expenditures to administer the GRSP program.

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;
- Any state tax, including sales and property tax, when an organization is tax exempt;
- Maintenance, utilities, or any other costs when included in a rental agreement or any other agreement;
- Depreciation or amortization;
- Bonuses and incentive payments that exceed the contracted salary amount, regardless of being coded as a salary (17XX) or a benefit (2XXX);
- Gift cards to make purchases or use as incentive payments for employee or contracted employee use or for parent participation within advisory committees. (According to Section 380.1814 of The Revised School Code Act 451 of 1976, a person shall not use public funds for purchasing gifts.)
- Indirect costs; the 4% administrative costs as outlined in GSRP legislation is intended to cover expenditures to administer the GRSP program.

This list is not all inclusive. Feel free to contact MDE if you have questions.

## **ISD Budget Detail**

The MEGS+ Program Implementation Plan (PIP) includes two budgets; an allocation budget based on the allocation accepted, and a transportation budget to document use of the transportation allocation accepted for the ISD.

It is required that budget descriptions are clearly stated to ensure consistency and faster budget approval. Budget descriptions and amounts pull into the Final Expenditure Reports (FERs). 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, where applicable. Items reported under Purchased Services must clearly identify personnel, materials, or services. Salary and benefit descriptions must include the last name of employee or employees.

## **Subrecipient Budget Detail**

Per legislation, the ISD is the fiscal agent for all GSRP funds. As such, the ISD is required, at a minimum, to receive and keep on file, yearly budgets and FERs for all GSRP funds, including transportation. Individual subrecipient budgets and FERs are required documentation to provide for a fiscal review and must be provided to MDE. Templates and other documents are available in the [resources](#) to this section.

For subrecipients, the ISD is only required to enter a total amount for all object codes in the 400 function codes in the budgets and FERs in MEGS+. Each object code, with the exception of Salaries and Benefits, must be reported on separate lines. Descriptions must be used as below:

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

An example of the reporting requirement for subrecipients is below:

Function Code	Description	FTE/Hours	Salaries 1000	Benefits 2000	Purchased Services 3000, 4000	Supplies & Materials 5000	Capital Outlay 6000	Other Expenses 7000, 8000
411	Total Districts/PSAs	2.0	100,000	50,000				
411	Total Districts/PSAs				100,000			
411	Total Districts/PSAs					50,000		
441	Total For-Profit/Non-Public CBOs				50,000			
441	Total For-Profit/Non-Public CBOs	1.0	50,000	20,000				
441	Total For-Profit/Non-Public CBOs						5,800	
445	Total Non-Profit CBOs, College/Universities, Head Start					2,500		
445	Total Non-Profit CBOs, College/Universities, Head Start	5.0	200,000	55,000				
445	Total Non-Profit CBOs, College/Universities, Head Start				50,000			

Funds transferred out must be entered on separate lines as below:

Function Code	Description	FTE/Hours	Salaries 1000	Benefits 2000	Purchased Services 3000, 4000	Supplies & Materials 5000	Capital Outlay 6000	Other Expenses 7000, 8000
411	Total Districts/PSAs	2.0	100,000	50,000				
411	Total Districts/PSAs				100,000			
411	Total Districts/PSAs					50,000		
411	Funds transferred out to ABC ISD							36,250

Funds transferred in must be entered in the budget detail indicating the designation Transferred In Funds, and with the proper descriptions, function and object codes as below:

[Budget Summary](#) | [Budget Detail](#) | [Capital Outlay](#)

[Budget Summary +/-](#) | [Flagged Budget Detail](#)

\*Select the appropriate Function Code for this budget item:  
 411: Payments to Other Public Schools Within the State of Michigan ▼

Indicate if the budget item represents:  
Transferred in Funds ▼

\*Provide a specific description for this budget item. Do not repeat the Function Code description selected in the drop down menu or the heading(s) of the box(es) used below:  
 [.....]

Function Code	Description	FTE/Hours	Salaries 1000	Benefits 2000	Purchased Services 3000, 4000	Supplies & Materials 5000	Capital Outlay 6000	Other Expenses 7000, 8000
411	Total Districts/PSAs	2.0	100,000	50,000				
411	Total Districts/PSAs				100,000			
410 Outgoing Transfers & Other Transactions								
411	Funds transferred in from ABC ISD used for supplies					3,625		

For more information on entering transferred funds, see the Cross ISD Enrollment section below.

## 4% Administrative Costs

An ISD or consortium of ISDs may retain an amount not to exceed 4% of the total grant amount for administrative services provided by the ISD. Function Codes 23X, 24X, 25X, and 28X are considered administrative. Administrative expenses are required to be designated as such in the budget and FER descriptions, this includes the transportation budget. For example, fiscal administrative costs described as GSRP Director/Supervisor administrative 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 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 rationale 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 the budget 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.

## Bonuses and Incentive Payments

Bonuses and incentive payments that exceed the contracted salary are allowable only for employees who are actively participating with the TEACH statewide scholarship program. A documented percentage or lump sum payment schedule must be established--e.g. 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.

## Outreach and Recruiting

An ISD and/or subrecipients may encumber 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 the budget and FERS.

An ISD or subrecipient(s) can provide the outreach, recruitment and public awareness costs, or these costs can be a collaborative approach between the ISD and subrecipient(s), but the total budget cannot exceed the 2%. ISDs must have a written policy describing the process and who 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.

## Cross-ISD Enrollment

Legislation provides for parent choice to enroll a child into a GSRP of a non-resident ISD. Written agreements are required between resident and educating ISDs, with any of the following scenarios. 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 MSDS.

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

**In all cases, the 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.

ISD's 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.

Funds transferred for cross-ISD enrollment **cannot be "netted."** The resident ISD must send all funds to the educating ISD for all children that are cross-ISD enrolled, this includes transportation amounts. 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 the budgets and FERs in MEGS+. 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 MEGS+ 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 ISD B (*name of ISD*)

If transportation funds were transferred in or out, these are reported in the Transportation budget and FER in same manner.

## 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, 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.

Funding for GSRP includes \$10,000,000 annually 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 MDE from each ISD. If the total request from all ISDs is equal to or less than \$10,000,000 each ISD receives the requested amount. If the total exceeds \$10,000,000 MDE prorates the funds. Any ISD requesting less than the ISD's prorated share receives the requested amount.

The ISD may use any or all of the transportation allocation and must distribute transportation funds as needed across all subrecipients. 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 the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) Child Care Licensing Division may be supported with GSRP funds. This includes school busses 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 of these options necessitate a contract.

The GSRP Implementation Plan in MEGS+ 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. In this way, use of ISD transportation funding is maximized, as these funds are not available for carryover.

## Transportation Funding Considerations for LEAs

Due to funding considerations and supervision concerns, transportation cannot be arranged for individual children in LEAs. Additionally, these funds are not intended to pay for exceptional situations such as transportation of children with special needs, fuel for personal vehicles or reimbursement for taxis, UBER, bus fees, gas cards, etc.

## Transportation Funding Considerations for CBOs

PA 265 of 2018 includes a section specific to reimbursing community-based organizations (CBOs) for costs related to parent or guardian accompanied public transportation. Section 32d.(20) reads as follows:

*Subject to, and from the funds allocated under, subsection (19), the department 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 be a community-based provider and must submit to the department 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.*
- (c) Any other documentation or information determined necessary by the department.*

### Submission Form and Required Documentation

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has developed a standardized form that must be submitted monthly by CBOs seeking reimbursement. The form shall be filled out by the CBO for each child receiving parent/guardian-accompanied public transportation. A documented need for the reason for the use of public transportation must be filled in at the top of each form. Initials and signatures are required from the parent/guardian as well as signoff by an authorized official of the CBO on each form. The CBO shall submit the completed form along with required receipts to their ISD for signoff by an authorized ISD official. Receipts must clearly disclose the public transportation provider, cost, date, time, and location (or MapQuest) of each round trip to/from the CBO. The ISD shall then submit the completed form with attached receipts to MDE for final review.



## **Additional Considerations**

Based on this legislation as written, reimbursement of public transportation through GSRP is currently limited to CBOs. 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. Since GSRP funding is allocated to ISDs, ISDs are responsible for ensuring the form(s) and attached receipts submitted by CBOs include all required components outlined in this guidance before submitting them to MDE. 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.

## **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.

All personnel must have in the budgets and FERs last names in the descriptions. This includes the descriptions in the subrecipient budgets and FERs that are given to the ISDs.

If 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.

## **Use of Federal Food Programs for GSRP**

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Eligibility Manual for School Meals (October 2011), children enrolled in State-funded pre-kindergarten classes using identical or more stringent eligibility criteria than the federal Head Start Program are categorically eligible to receive free meals through the SNP, where applicable.

GSRP students are eligible to participate in the SNP and CACFP where applicable. GSRP students in Michigan are not, however, categorically eligible to receive free meals through these programs due to an income requirement less stringent than

that of the federal Head Start Program. Rather, the subrecipient implementing the Program, is required to retain the appropriate eligibility documentation (i.e., SNP-Free and Reduced Meal Family Application, CACFP-children deemed A, B, or C based on Household Income Eligibility Statements).

***Regardless of which eligibility category children are in, there is no cost to families for snacks or meals.*** 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 National School Nutrition Programs (SNP) and/or the Child and Adult Care Food Program (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. **Any LEA** that chooses to add or continue to use **CACFP** for **snack ONLY** may do so but is not required to do so if participation is cost prohibitive.

CBOs that are eligible and provide breakfast/lunch or breakfast/lunch/snack **MUST** participate in the applicable program. **CBOs** that are eligible, but provide **snack ONLY** may choose to use CACFP, but are not required to do so if participation is cost prohibitive.

A CBO that is deemed not eligible to participate in CACFP will receive a letter from CACFP staff that the center may provide to the ISD documenting the lack of eligibility and the full cost of providing meals/snacks is then 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 NSLP 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. 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.

## **Calculating Meal/Snack Reimbursement**

### **School Nutrition Program (SNP)**

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. The program also bears the full cost of adult meals. Adult meal costs should not exceed the adult meal price established for the district by the LEA.

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.

The cost of snacks should be established annually with ISD approval and should reflect the reasonable average cost of providing an appropriate nutritious snack that meets food program guidelines. Snack reimbursement for programs not using CACFP for snack only 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.

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. 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. GSRP's portion can then be documented with a copy of the CACFP claim 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).

To determine eligibility, call MDE CACFP at (517) 241-5353. A CBO that is deemed not eligible to participate in will receive a letter from CACFP staff that the center may provide to the ISD documenting the lack of eligibility. 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.

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.

## MSDS Reporting

It is the responsibility of the ISD to ensure that each GSRP student is accurately reported in the MSDS. The Center for Education and Performance Information (CEPI) uses the Supplemental Nutrition Eligibility (SNE) component to report the student's status as eligible for free or reduced-price milk or meals through the NSNP. Multiple State of Michigan offices use these data in the determination of sub-groups and as the poverty indicator for districts. If the student is participating in meal services through the SNP, they are to be reported in the SNE field as a part of the Fall General Collection in MSDS. Conversely, if they are *only* participating in meal services through the CACFP, they are *not* to be counted in the SNE field.

## Capital Outlay

Capital outlay refers to costs in excess of \$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 such as the construction of a playground may have a number of individual pieces that cost less than \$5,000 each, but the total cost is over \$5,000 and is carried out as one project. It might include a climber that costs \$4,000 but also has an installation fee and needs groundcover and fencing. The total exceeds \$5,000, thus considered capital outlay.

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. When ISD review and approval is complete, the capital outlay request form must then be submitted to MDE for final approval. **If a portion of any capital outlay item is charged to GSRP, MDE approval is required before the cost is incurred.** The [Capital Outlay Request](#) form can be found in the resources to this section.

## Budget Amendments

Budget amendments 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. At the time that the ISD's FER and CO/FER become live in MEGS+, budget amendments can no longer be permitted. Directions can be found in the training modules within MEGS+. The ECC is required to contact the assigned consultant prior to amending the budget to determine that the proposed amendment is necessary and approvable. The ISD provides the policies and procedures to subrecipients for amending local budgets.

## Payments to Subrecipients

GSRP funding that comes to the ISDs may be forwarded to the subrecipients in several ways. Funding may be sent to the subrecipients as a 1/11<sup>th</sup> payment, on a

quarterly basis, or also 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 MDE review.

## **MDE 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**

At the end of the grant year, ISDs must provide details of actual expenditures in the FERs. All accepted funds must be accounted for either in the FERs or as a carryover amount in the Carryover Budget (COB). All budgeted carryover funds spent are reported in the CO/FER. (See Carryover FER below). Any funds not expended are recaptured.

The final approved budget amounts and descriptions are pulled into the appropriate FERs. The ISD reports in detail and the subrecipient data is entered as total amounts using the 400 function codes. The ISD is required to receive and keep FERs from each subrecipient that details the 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 MDE staff to determine that all expenditures were necessary, reasonable, and allowable. It must also be clear that the administrative cap for the ISD has not been exceeded.

## **Carryover FER**

If the ISD and its subrecipients did not expend all their accepted funds, they may submit a COB, then a carryover FER (CO/FER) is required. The expenditure of carryover funds is reported in MEGS+ and is due 60 days after the close of the carryover period.

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 COB and CO/FER. 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 agreement between the ISD and the subrecipient specifies otherwise. Any carryover funds not accounted for in the CO/FER will be recaptured.

Transportation funds cannot be carried over.