



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL F. RICE, Ph.D.
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 15, 2020

TO: Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents
Public School Academy Directors

FROM: Dr. Scott M. Koenigsknecht, Deputy Superintendent
P-20 System and Student Transitions *SK*

SUBJECT: Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) Guidance for Public Act
(P.A.) 165 of 2020

Public Act 165 of 2020, the state School Aid Act, with total GSRP funding of \$249,600,000, has been signed by Governor Gretchen Whitmer. The Michigan Department of Education's Office of Great Start has begun the process of allocating GSRP funding to intermediate school districts (ISDs). The first round of funding will be based on the fiscal year (FY) 2019-2020 hold harmless served counts of ISDs as entered in the Michigan School Data System (MSDS) 2020 Spring Collection. ISDs are encouraged to move forward with enrollment of children and open classrooms for FY 2020-2021. Expansion funds, resulting from FY 2019-2020, will be offered in typical fashion using the allocation process outlined in section 39 of the state School Aid Act within the next couple months after original allocations are released.

The following guidance is meant to supplement the GSRP guidance released on September 14, 2020 for the FY 2020-2021 program year.

Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP)

Selecting In-Person or Remote Learning

For our youngest learners, whole child education is best delivered in person, and ISDs should keep this in mind when balancing educational needs of children with health and safety. GSRP providers may offer in-person or remote learning through technology-enabled, non-technology-enabled, or fully virtual instruction this year.

When deciding which option is best, ISDs may align their GSRP with the local school district in which the GSRP is located, or may have variations to accommodate the unique needs of preschool-age children and/or the distinction of GSRP as a program with a child care license, or housed within a public or private child care facility. These

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variations may depend on local decisions and/or if GSRP is run by the ISD rather than by local education agencies (LEAs), public school academies (PSAs), or community-based organization (CBO).

Instructional Time

For the 2020-2021 program year only, the hours, days, and weeks specified within the GSRP definitions of part-day, school-day, and GSRP/Head Start blend program options do not apply to ISDs and their subrecipients.

However, for the 2020-2021 fiscal year only, ISDs and their subrecipients shall, at a minimum, provide pandemic learning (as it is termed in [P.A. 165 of 2020](#)) and programming on-site, at a different location, in-person, online, digitally, by other remote means, in a synchronous or asynchronous format, or through any combination that results in an amount of hours, days, and weeks necessary to deliver the educational or course content that would have been delivered in a year in which pandemic learning was not provided and that complies with GSRP requirements developed by the department.

Remote Learning

Programs must provide a purposeful, inclusive remote learning experience through technology-enabled, non-technology-enabled, or fully virtual instruction experience for GSRP. Expectations for remote learning instruction in GSRP must emphasize the continuation of child-centered, developmentally appropriate experiences that incorporate learning objectives across all domains of development. Further, it is essential that remote learning instruction be designed with family needs, connectivity/device limitations, the possibility of quarantine, and children's social-emotional needs at the forefront.

Remote learning must include the following elements:

- Focus on relationships first.
- Include the full teaching team in program planning and implementation, including participating in large group and small group sessions, virtual meetings, and in one-on-one communication with families. Lead and associate teachers may coordinate to facilitate virtual interactions with a small group of children and may establish regular communication with an assigned group of families.
- Provide for learning activities or events:
 - at least four (4) times weekly during implementation of remote learning; and
 - the number of days needs to equal four (4) days weekly in combination with in-person instruction within remote learning programming (hybrid approach).
- Include at least one (1) weekly contact (phone call/email/text/virtual meeting) with every family on remote learning days.
- Establish "office hours" or specific times a family can contact a member of the teaching team.
- Utilize GSRP-approved curriculum resources and goals to ensure the skills, knowledge, and concepts support all domains of learning and development.

- Ensure that the individual and family needs are identified and addressed in culturally sensitive ways.
- Ensure continued assessment of children's development to the fullest extent possible (such as through parent reports, pictures/videos shared by families of children's work or activities, observations/notes from virtual meetings or conversations with children).
- Promote intentional use of ongoing assessment data to identify learning goals and plan for group lessons and individual learning suggestions to families.
- Strive to include activities, outreach, or connections that replicate the child's experience at school. Consider implementing a condensed version of customary daily routines like large group time, music and movement, or small group time, with a suggestion that each child create a plan for something he or she will do before the next connection with him or her.
- Help families create predictable routines for learning and play in whatever way works best for them.
- Provide simple, clear directions for activities and remember that less is more. Families will have greater success facilitating activities that are easily implemented.
- Ensure that activities for children include guidance for families in how to follow their child's lead and ask open-ended questions that encourage critical thinking (e.g. "How did you know that?" "Tell me about your drawing." "How could you figure out...").
- Encourage families to read with their child every day or as often as possible.
- Beginning in spring 2021, include information, activities, and/or resources for children and families to facilitate the transition to kindergarten.

Program Plan for Delivery of GSRP and Start Dates

Enrollment processes for 2020-2021 must also include detailed information for families regarding this year's program plan for delivery of GSRP that is specific to the location their child will attend. Placement in classrooms should be tentative until the family confirms acceptance of the terms of the delivery mode it chooses, including details of days and times that the child will attend in-person instruction or remote learning.

All families must be provided with information regarding the possibility of remote learning through technology-enabled, non-technology-enabled, or fully virtual instruction occurring in the event of a closure. This information must include what GSRP participation requirements will encompass for them and their children during this mode of program delivery. By enrolling, families agree to participate in remote learning, to the greatest extent possible, should it become necessary. Families must minimally engage in a weekly contact with a member of the teaching team for enrollment to continue. See also the section on Child Attendance and Participation in Remote Learning and in the Family Engagement and Communication in this document.

For the 2020-2021 program year only, household income eligibility thresholds requiring household incomes that are equal to or less than 250% of the federal poverty guidelines do not apply for ISDs and their subrecipients. However, for the 2020-2021 program year, ISDs and their subrecipients must enroll children in this order of preference:

- First, in the quintile with the lowest household income first before enrolling the next quintile and must implement the ranking process by first enrolling children from households with incomes that are equal to or less than 250% of the federal poverty guidelines.
- Second, enrolling children from households with incomes that are equal to an amount that is greater than 250% but less than or equal to 300% of the federal poverty guidelines.
- Third, enrolling children from households with incomes equal to an amount that is greater than 300% but less than or equal to 350% of the federal poverty guidelines.
- Fourth, continuing enrollment in an order increasing in percentage from a percentage greater than 350% in relation to the federal poverty guidelines until all available slots are filled or the waitlist is exhausted.

Those families living at 400% of the federal poverty guidelines and above must be charged tuition based on a sliding scale determined to be a reasonable amount a family should pay toward the cost of GSRP. The sliding scale should be submitted to the assigned consultant.

Tracking Instructional Days, Closures, and Interruptions to In-Person Instruction Provisions

Programs must keep a detailed record of dates of instruction, and modes of instruction, for 2020-2021. This includes both in-person instruction and remote learning instruction days.

Remote learning days should be recorded with the reason noted (e.g., technology-enabled planned day, non-technology-enabled planned day, or fully virtual planned day, classroom/program closure due to COVID-19 exposure/case, or regional closure). Records should be maintained electronically, if possible, to facilitate real-time availability and ease of monitoring data by the ISD. Records should be submitted to the ISD at least monthly and kept on file in the event future Michigan Department of Education (MDE) monitoring requires it.

ISDs should refer to [child care licensing guidance](#), the [MI Safe Start Roadmap](#), and any applicable [Michigan Department of Health and Human Service epidemic orders](#) for steps required in the event of a COVID-19 exposure or positive case in a GSRP classroom. Close coordination with the local health department will be critical. Recommendations for classroom or building closure will be determined by the local health department. Should a classroom/program closure be required, the program must immediately inform the ISD. The remote learning through technology-enabled, non-technology-enabled, or fully virtual modes of instruction should be implemented until in-person instruction can safely resume.

ISDs should work with programs for them to have a step-by-step process outlined for how to transition from in-person to remote learning instruction should it become necessary. Since the mode of instruction may change more than once during the school year, planning should include movement from one mode to another. This information should be communicated with families.

Child Attendance and Participation in Remote Learning

Child attendance policies should be reviewed with consideration for how a program will respond to an extended absence due to a required quarantine or illness. In the event a child cannot attend in-person instruction due to quarantine, but is otherwise able to receive remote learning instruction, programs should provide technology-enabled, non-technology-enabled, or fully virtual instruction opportunities as is possible and practical for the teaching team and family.

If parents express concerns about the risk of exposure to COVID-19, programs should provide parents detailed information about the health and safety measures undertaken by the program and encourage continued attendance. If the parent chooses to withdraw their child from in-person instruction, the program and/or ISD should offer participation in a remote learning mode of instruction: technology-enabled, non-technology-enabled, or fully virtual instruction, if available. If the parent does not accept another option, the program should advise the parent that doing so may require the program to disenroll their child and offer their child's slot/spot to another child if a waitlist exists. Programs should consult their ISD early childhood specialist (ECS) and/or their ISD early childhood contact (ECC) for further guidance on working with the family before determining the child is no longer participating in the program.

To consider a child enrolled during remote learning instruction requires the family's commitment to ensuring and facilitating child engagement with the program. This expectation should be communicated clearly with families at the time of enrollment with the understanding that should the family choose not to participate in remote learning instruction, the program may be required to offer their child's slot to another child, if a wait list exists. As remote learning modes of instruction will vary widely, ISDs must work with subrecipients to establish parameters for participation to maintain enrollment. Families are required to make a commitment to remote learning instruction by maintaining minimum weekly two-way communication with the program. Family needs such as parental work commitments, educational needs of siblings engaged in remote learning instruction, illness in the family, and connectivity/device availability must be considered before determining a child is no longer participating in the program.

Fiscal Considerations

For the 2020-2021 program year only, ISDs will be awarded full programming and transportation allocation funding in typical fashion using the allocation process outlined in section 39 of the state School Aid Act. No funds will be recaptured for FY 2020-2021 based on enrollment/served numbers in Michigan Student Data System (MSDS) 2021 spring collection.

The following apply for the 2020-2021 program year:

- Group size and ratio requirements remain unchanged from GSRP's program requirements. Programs may choose to reduce these, keeping in mind that funding will still be based on the amount accepted. ISDs and subrecipients will be expected to work to serve children with all accepted funding, particularly with the waiving of eligibility caps.
- ISDs and their subrecipients must conform to typical expenditures related to the operation of GSRP to ensure the stability of the programs, including, but not limited to, ongoing program and staff costs.
- Any GSRP funding remaining after serving all eligible children, or remaining from other program savings due to pandemic learning, must be used for the betterment of the program and must be approved by MDE. ISDs and their subrecipients may only spend remaining funds if the ISD has demonstrated to the satisfaction of MDE, in a process to be provided by MDE, that no eligible children are on wait lists for the programs operated by the ISD or its subrecipients who can be enrolled.

Transportation funding may continue to be used for delivery of remote learning materials and supplies. ISDs should seek MDE GSRP consultant guidance for COVID-related costs not typically allowed by GSRP.

Please note that hold harmless funding for FY 2021-2022 will be determined based on the 2019-2020 final allocations, not those of FY 2020-2021.

If you have any questions about this memo, please contact Pat Sargent, GSRP Manager, at sargentp@michigan.gov.

cc: Michigan Education Alliance
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