

# 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 as follows.

## Systemic Collection and Utilization of Data

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

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

The ISD must establish a plan each year that determines the classrooms to be evaluated. This plan must ensure that at least one third of all classrooms will be evaluated and that every classroom is evaluated at least once every three years. ISDs should consider multiple factors in prioritizing classrooms for evaluation

including (but not limited to) teaching team turnover, continuous quality improvement, ECS coaching assignments, or other circumstances warranting additional support. The following tools may be used singly or in combination to evaluate program quality. At the start of each school year, the Office of Great Start provides information to ISDs about annual contracts.

- **Classroom Coach** by HighScope. The Classroom Coach measures the quality and use of the indoor and outdoor learning environments, teaching and learning routines, adult-child interactions (including interactions that encourage the development of expressive/receptive language, vocabulary, math, literacy, social and emotional skills, executive function skills and conflict resolution skills), evidence-based comprehensive curricula, planning to differentiate instruction based on student interests, ongoing child assessment to monitor learning and adapt/modify learning if needed, and parent engagement activities. **Note: It is a grant requirement that the assigned ECS ensures that all sections of Classroom Coach are completed by the reliable assessor responsible for the End of Year program assessment.** 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 must be entered into myTeachstone, a separate product. To learn more please visit the [Teachstone website](#).

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 a 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 learning priorities;
- Sets measurable goals and objectives to address classroom quality, agency quality, and child outcomes;
- Agrees to eliminate what is not effective or conflicts with grant requirements;
- Addresses whether policies and procedures require revision; and
- Inventories available program resources such as time, money, personnel, technology, curriculum resources, and local training opportunities.

After the end-of-year meeting, the ECS supports meaningful professional learning related to the goals. Action plans, including timeframes for progress monitoring, are developed with teaching teams. The ongoing cycle of continuous improvement moves forward with ECS support for strengthened practices. Measurement strategies are critical because they address accountability to the continuous improvement efforts that are in place. Changes to agreed-upon strategies may at times require an additional team meeting. When progress monitoring is implemented, the result is a strengthened and individualized instructional program. [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 may be 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.

## Follow-up Through Second Grade

It is best practice that subrecipients develop a local evaluation component, such as a follow-up study through second grade. Local longitudinal data collection facilitates communication between 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](#).

## 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.

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

- Is GSRP equitably accessible to 4-year-old children across geographic, racial/ethnic and income subgroups;
- How do different GSRP quality and implementation strategies relate to preschool outcomes;
- What are the academic benefits of GSRP; and
- What are the economic returns to ISDs and comparative cost-effectiveness?

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

## **Passive Consent of Program Evaluation**

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