



# Preschool for All in Maryland

Recommendations of the Task Force on Universal Preschool Education  
Report to the Governor and the General Assembly as Required by HB 1466



DECEMBER 2007



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# Executive Summary

Children's early experiences lay the foundation for their later learning and achievement. The basic cognitive and social-emotional skills that children develop between birth and age five prepare them for the academic demands of formal schooling. A high quality preschool experience enhances children's development of these fundamental skills, as well as provides services to screen children for possible developmental delays and special needs, which may impede their learning. Thus, investing in a high quality preschool program not only has direct effects on children's early learning and development but also increases the effectiveness of later educational investments in primary and secondary school.

Evidence from early childhood research studies show that children who attend a high quality preschool program prior to kindergarten demonstrate greater academic achievement than their peers who do not attend such a program. Other benefits of preschool include lower rates of grade retention, special education services, teen pregnancy, and criminal arrests, and higher rates of high school graduation, employment, and good health. Consequently, the early investment in preschool reduces subsequent government spending on education, criminal justice activities, and welfare services, thus, having a significant economic benefit for the state, and society as a whole.

Over the last decade, a universal preschool movement has swept the nation as states have become increasingly aware of the impact of a high quality early education experience. From Georgia to New York, Illinois to Florida, states around the country are working to provide universal preschool programs that can meet the needs of all four-year-old children, regardless of their economic background. Thirty-eight of the 50 States have some kind of state-funded preschool program, seven of which have preschool for all four-year-olds in place or as a goal. The majority of states (Maryland included) serve only four-year-old children from "economically disadvantaged backgrounds" as well as English

language learners and those who have special needs.

Since 1980, four-year-old children received prekindergarten services at the local school systems' Extended Elementary Education Program (EEEP). With the enactment of the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act in 2002, i.e., legislation which significantly increased state aid to education, all local boards of education were required to provide, by school year 2007-08, prekindergarten to all four-year-olds from "economically disadvantaged backgrounds." MSDE defined eligibility as meeting the income requirement of 185 percent of the federal poverty level, or approximately \$38,000 for a family of four with two parents and two children. This mandate currently defines access to prekindergarten.

In response to the needs of families with young children in Maryland, the General Assembly passed HB 1466 to create a Task Force on Universal Preschool Education in an effort to develop a framework and specific recommendations of how the access to prekindergarten can be extended to all four-year-olds whose parents, regardless of income, would like to have their children enrolled in such a program.

During the 2006-07 school year, Maryland's state prekindergarten program for at-risk children served 31 percent of the nearly 77,000 four-year-olds in the state. During that school year, 76 percent of them were enrolled in part-day sessions (i.e., 2.5 hrs), five



days a week, and for 180 days per year. Twenty-four percent were enrolled in full-day sessions (i.e., 6.5 hrs), five days a week, and for the school year. The prekindergarten sessions are operated at elementary schools, taught by teachers certified in early childhood education, and are implementing the local school system's preschool curriculum. They must also maintain a class size of 20 on average, and a staff-child ratio of 1 to 10. Local boards of education have the option to work with child care or nursery programs to provide prekindergarten as long as the state's prekindergarten standards are followed.

The Task Force recommended that these standards be maintained for the *Preschool for All* initiative, regardless of where children access prekindergarten—either at local elementary schools or child care centers. The Task Force felt strongly that four-year-olds, regardless of their backgrounds, should have access to the same high quality programs which are currently in place for low-income children.

This report summarizes the information presented to the Task Force during public testimonies and invited guest presentations, and outlines the recommendations of the Task Force for the Governor and General Assembly of Maryland. The Task Force recommendations address six goals regarding the implementation of a universal preschool program in Maryland.

### ***Goal 1: Overall Plan to Increase Access to Early Childhood Education***

The Task Force recommends the creation of a voluntary, free, universal preschool program, *Preschool for All*, which will provide early education to all four-year-olds in Maryland by 2014. After a planning year in FY09, the first phase of implementation will begin in FY2010 in targeted areas anticipated to experience a disproportionate increase in early care and education enrollment. Building on the existing funding for prekindergarten, the state will establish a sustainable funding mechanism for the initiative in diverse early education settings, including public schools, nationally or state accredited child care centers, nursery schools, Head Start, and accredited family child care.

Prekindergarten services in programs other than public schools will be integrated as a 2.5 hour to 6.5 hour early education block. MSDE will provide the administration and oversight for the distribution of funds to eligible partners, and will ensure that programs are meeting the high quality standards as outlined by the Task Force. Parents will be given the choice as to where to enroll their children. *Preschool for All* will be characterized by an active partnership between public schools and community-based early childhood partners. The initiative will also develop a plan to include nationally accredited family child care providers into the system.

### ***Goal 2: Indicators of Program Quality***

The proposed preschool program will meet the highest of quality standards. All programs must: (1) have a lead teacher with a state certification in early childhood education; (2) follow the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR)/ Voluntary School Curriculum (VSC) for Prekindergarten; (3) implement a comprehensive curriculum from the state-recommended list or adopt the local school system curriculum; (4) possess national or state accreditation or be governed by a local board of education in order to be eligible to receive *Preschool for All* funds; and (5) implement the modified Work Sampling System (WSS)<sup>™</sup> for Prekindergarten,<sup>1</sup> which is aligned with the VSC and the current MMSR Kindergarten Assessment. While additional funds will be needed to cover the operational costs of the programs, MSDE will redirect existing funding to support the improvement of program quality, such as program accreditation and costs for curriculum implementation and the assessment component.

### ***Goal 3: Professional Development of Early Childhood Staff***

All teachers in *Preschool for All* programs will be required to have a bachelor's degree and be state certified in early childhood education. To address the anticipated shortage of certified teachers in early childhood education, for the first few years of the initiative, Level 6 of the Maryland Child Care Credentialing Program could serve as an alternative for non-public programs. Assistant teachers will be required to have, at a minimum, a high school diploma and opportunities to obtain the Child Development Associate (CDA). Additionally, program directors/site

managers of community-based programs must have, at a minimum, the Administrator IV Credential of the Maryland Child Care Credentialing Program. MSDE will redirect funding to assist staff at child care programs and nursery schools to achieve the required teacher standard, including scholarships and loan repayment programs. There will be a need for 2- and 4-year teacher education programs in Maryland to offer flexible course schedules to accommodate teachers working full-time, including offering courses during evening hours, on-site at child care centers or other community locations, and through distance learning programs. Since certified teachers gain practice in the field by attending professional development school (PDS) schools, MSDE should include all preschool programs that participate in the *Preschool for All* initiative. MSDE should also establish community-based training workshops to prepare students for the PRAXIS examinations. Additionally, MSDE should utilize workforce development dollars to build the professional capacity of limited-English proficient providers, so that they may work towards becoming part of the initiative, thereby supporting English language learners in the prekindergarten programs. MSDE will also develop a state-wide *Preschool for All* salary schedule for teachers in non-public school settings, which will establish defined compensation levels based on education level and years of experience. The base salary for certified teachers will be equal to the average salary for certified teachers across all school systems in Maryland, so that universal preschool teachers in non-public school settings will be compensated comparably to teachers in the public school system.

***Goal 4: Implementation Plan to Engage Business Community and General Public***

The Task Force commissioned the Regional Economics Studies Institute (RESI) from Towson University to conduct a feasibility study on the long-term impacts of high quality prekindergarten in Maryland, and the results were presented to the Task Force. Under the guidance of MSDE, a study will continue to examine the economic impact of *Preschool for All* on the cost of care of families accessing the program and the total benefits for Maryland's economy. The Task Force also directed MSDE to develop a business plan including estimated costs for the expansion of the Prekindergarten Program by December 2008.



***Goal 5: Conceptual Framework for Universal Preschool Program***

The conceptual framework for *Preschool for All* will be based on the National Institute for Early Education Research's (NIEER) 10 Quality Benchmarks for High-Quality Preschool Education. The framework will require: (1) comprehensive curriculum standards; (2) teacher certification; (3) teacher specialized training in early childhood education; (4) an assistant teacher degree of at least a high school diploma and, preferably, a Child Development Associate (CDA); (5) teacher professional development; (6) a maximum class of 20 children for four-year-olds and 16 children for three-year-olds; (7) a staff-child ratio of one staff member per 10 children for four-year-olds or per 8 children for three-year-olds; (8) screening and referral services; (9) one full meal per day for programs longer than 2.5 hours a day; and (10) program monitoring through self-evaluations and site visits conducted twice per year by MSDE.

***Goal 6: Program Evaluation Methods***

*Preschool for All* program quality will be evaluated using the 10 quality benchmarks of the program conceptual framework as an evaluation tool. Additionally, student data from the modified WSS™ for Prekindergarten will be reported annually to the State Board of Education for all children enrolled in the *Preschool for All* program. This data, along with data from the MMSR Kindergarten Assessment, will be analyzed to assess preschool participants' performance. An external program evaluation will be conducted to measure the effectiveness of *Preschool for All*.

# Glossary of Terms

**Abecedarian Project**—A randomized, longitudinal study of a high quality, early educational intervention, which began in 1971 for very high risk families in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. All children, regardless of their treatment status, were provided adequate nutrition, supportive social services, and primary health care. Additionally, the treatment group received an intensive, full-day, year-round preschool program from birth through age five focused on cognitive, motor, social, and language skills. Of the 112 original infants, 104 were followed through age 21.

## **Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools**

**Act**—A Maryland State education act passed in 2002 that significantly increased state funding to local school systems, which were required to use their funds to provide prekindergarten for all economically disadvantaged and at-risk 4-year-old children whose parents enrolled them.

## **Chicago Child-Parent Center (CPC)**

—An intensive early intervention program that began in 1967 and has since served over 100,000 families in Chicago living in high poverty. The program is run by public schools and placed in sites where there are no Head Start programs. The CPC program has a heavy emphasis on parent involvement and basic skills, such as literacy, and includes home visits and field trip activities. The evaluation of the CPC program, the Chicago Longitudinal Study, is the only large-scale, longitudinal, experimental study of an early childhood intervention program. The sample included 1,539 children who were randomly assigned to attend the CPC program from 2 to 6 years of age or to an alternative early education program in kindergarten. The program lasted 3 hours a day, 5 days per week, 9 months per year, and included a 6-week summer program, parent education, and health services. Attendance in the CPC program for 18 months averaged a cost of \$6,692 per child, but generated a return of \$47,759 per participant. Participants were followed over time until age 24.

**Child Development Associate's (CDA)**—A credential awarded through the Council for Professional Recognition to individuals who have completed a set of requirements that verifies their ability to work with Infants/

Toddlers and Preschoolers. Requirements include 120 clock hours of formal child care education training, 480 hours of experience working with children and parents within the past five years, an oral and written assessment, and an observational evaluation. The CDA has been accepted in all 50 of the United States and is the licensing requirement in many states for child care teachers.

**Cost-benefit ratio**—A ratio that equals the present value of the costs of a program divided by the present value of the benefits (e.g., 1:7, or for every \$1 spent on the program, there will be a \$7 return in benefits to society). The values are adjusted according to the interest rate, so that all present and future dollar amounts have the same value. Several states have conducted cost-benefit analyses to determine the future benefits of an investment in early childhood education programs.

## **Early Elementary Education Program**

**(EEEP)**—A Maryland-state-funded prekindergarten program for economically disadvantaged four-year-olds at risk for failure in school. This state-wide initiative expanded the pilot prekindergarten programs in Prince George's County and Baltimore City, which began in 1979. Under the Bridge to Excellence Act of 2002, funding for prekindergarten was further expanded to meet the needs of all at-risk children in the state and was renamed the Prekindergarten Program..

**FARMS**—Free and Reduced Price Meals. Federal nutrition program administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Children whose family income is at or below 130% of the federal poverty level are eligible to receive free meals at their schools; at or below 185% of the poverty level are eligible for reduced price meals. A school's FARMS rate (i.e., the percentage of children in a school who are eligible for FARMS) is often used as a measure of economic need in the school.

## **Guidelines for Healthy Child Development and Care of Young Children**

—A set of guidelines for young children from birth through three years of age that provides information to caregivers about how to promote children's developing physical, social, cognitive, language, and emergent literacy skills. The guidelines are compatible with the Maryland Model for School Readiness and the Voluntary

State Curriculum making them part of a birth to grade 12 learning continuum.

**Maryland Committee for Children**—An organization that works with parents, child care providers, advocates, employers, and policymakers to expand and enhance the early childhood education and child care available to Maryland’s children. [www.mdchildcare.org](http://www.mdchildcare.org)

**Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR)**—A school readiness framework designed to support teachers to improve classroom instruction and assessment, and promote young children’s readiness for school. The MMSR is designed to provide parents, teachers, and early childhood providers with a common understanding of what children should know and be able to do upon entering school. The MMSR focuses on five major components: classroom instruction; assessment; communication with families; coordination with early education programs and initiatives; and integrated staff development activities. All 24 of Maryland’s local school systems, as well as many Head Start and child care centers, have integrated the MMSR into their programs, so that children will be better and more consistently prepared for kindergarten. MMSR’s Framework and Standards incorporate the Voluntary State Curriculum (VSC) content standards for prekindergarten and kindergarten.

**Maryland State Family Child Care Association (MSFCCA)**—A professional organization of family child care providers dedicated to making family child care a visible and respected profession in Maryland. [www.msfcc.org](http://www.msfcc.org)

**Military Child Education Coalition**—A non-profit, world-wide organization that identifies the challenges that face the highly mobile military child, increases awareness of these challenges in military and educational communities, and initiates and implements programs to meet the challenges. MCEC’s goal is to level the educational playing field for military children wherever they are located around the world and to serve as a model for all highly mobile children. [www.militarychild.org](http://www.militarychild.org)

**MSDE School Readiness Data**—Kindergarten teachers must evaluate students’ school readiness using a

modified version of the WSS during the first few weeks of the kindergarten year and report data by the end of November of each year to the state for inclusion in a state school readiness report.

**National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)**—The world’s largest organization working on behalf of young children with nearly 100,000 members. NAEYC works to improve the quality of educational and developmental services for all children from birth through age 8 through its various activities, including public policy, annual conferences, and publications. A central component of NAEYC’s efforts is its accreditation systems. NAEYC accredits programs for young children as well as early childhood teacher education programs at the associate’s, bachelor’s, and graduate degree levels. While membership is open to all individuals interested in early childhood education and development, NAEYC is the leading professional organization for early childhood educators. [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)

**National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER)**—A research institute established at Rutgers University’s Graduate School of Education with a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts. The Institute is part of the Trusts’ strategy to ensure universal, voluntary access to high-quality early education for three- and four-year-old children. The National Institute for Early Education Research supports early childhood education initiatives by providing objective, nonpartisan information based on research. [www.nieer.org](http://www.nieer.org)

**Perry Preschool Project**—A preschool intervention program that began in 1962 with 123 low-income, African American children in Ypsilanti, Michigan. The study followed participants through adulthood until they were 40 years old. At ages three and four, participants were randomly assigned to either a treatment group that attended a comprehensive, high quality preschool program based on the High/Scope learning approach or to a control group that received no intervention. The program ran for 2.5 hours per day, 5 days per week, and included 1.5 hours of home visits each week. A cost-benefit analysis of the program indicated that for every dollar invested in the program, there was a return rate to society of \$12.90 (88% from crime savings;

the remainder from increased taxes and education and welfare savings).

**Pew Charitable Trusts**—An independent nonprofit organization which is the sole beneficiary of seven individual charitable funds established between 1948 and 1979 by two sons and two daughters of Sun Oil Company founder Joseph N. Pew and his wife, Mary Anderson Pew. Pew funds research and public education campaigns that support state and federal policies on voluntary, high-quality *Preschool for All* three- and four-year-olds. [www.pewtrusts.org](http://www.pewtrusts.org)

**Pre-K Now**—A public education and advocacy organization that advances high-quality, voluntary pre-kindergarten for all three- and four-year-olds. Funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts and other charity foundations, and a project of the Institute for Educational Leadership, Pre-K Now supports state-based children’s advocates, educates policymakers about the need for pre-k, and raises public awareness about the need for pre-k for all children. [www.preknow.org](http://www.preknow.org)

**Prekindergarten; Preschool**—The terms “preschool,” “prekindergarten,” and “pre-k” are often used interchangeably; however, some states use specific terms to identify their programs. For example, California and New Jersey both use “preschool,” New York and Texas use “pre-k,” and Wisconsin uses “4-K,” or “4-year-old Kindergarten.” Maryland’s current program is referred to as “prekindergarten,” as it denotes the grade for four-year-olds that precedes the K-12 system. This report refers to “preschool” in terms of a universal preschool program that will serve all four-years-old across multiple early childhood settings (i.e., public schools, child care centers, family child care).

**Professional development school (PDS)**—An institution formed through a university partnership between a teacher education program and local PK-12 schools. The purposes of a PDS partnership are: the preparation of new teachers, the professional development of in-service teachers based on inquiry directed at the improvement of practice, the development of university faculty, and the enhancement of student achievement.

**Universal Preschool**—A voluntary early education

program that is state-funded and serves all children, regardless of economic background, whose parents seek enrollment. Universal preschool programs may serve only four-year-olds (e.g., Georgia’s Bright from the Start program), or three- and four-year-olds (e.g., Illinois’ *Preschool for All* program).

**Voluntary State Curriculum (VSC)**—The document that aligns with the Maryland Content Standards and the Maryland Assessment Program, and defines what students should know and be able to do. The VSC content standards have been incorporated into the MMSR as a framework of early learning standards for prekindergarten and kindergarten in the content areas of: language and literacy; mathematics; science; social studies; personal and social development; the arts; and physical development and health.

**Work Sampling System (WSS)<sup>™</sup>**—A portfolio-based assessment instrument that captures children’s developing skills, knowledge, and behaviors. The WSS is designed to support students’ learning in seven areas: social and personal development; language and literacy; mathematical thinking; scientific thinking; social studies; the arts; and physical development and health. Through observations, teachers gain a better understanding of what children know and are able to do, and the areas in which they still need practice. Teachers use developmental guidelines, work samples, and checklists to rate children’s skills and abilities as “proficient,” “in process,” or “needs development.”



# Charge from the Maryland General Assembly

During the 2006 session of the Maryland General Assembly, HB 1466 was approved with the overall purpose of establishing a Task Force on Universal Preschool Education. The bill served to: (1) improve early childhood education by establishing and appropriating funds for a temporary early childhood education task force to develop a framework to increase access to early childhood education; (2) improve the quality of early childhood learning programs; (3) support the professional and career development of early childhood educators and service providers; (4) educate families about the value of early childhood education; (5) identify funding mechanisms to appropriately compensate early childhood educators; and (6) increase the inventory of available facilities for early childhood education programs.

The appointed Task Force consisting of fifteen members convened throughout 2006 and 2007. Meetings incorporated public testimonies as well as presentations from invited guest speakers, including expert researchers in the field of early childhood education, economists knowledgeable on the economic benefits of universal preschool programs, and state leaders from New York and Georgia who have implemented universal preschool systems in their states. The testimonies and Task Force deliberations addressed the following six goals:

- (1) Propose an overall plan to increase access to early childhood education opportunities for families, which may include incentives, resource development, the need for and availability of infrastructure, and possible funding sources through:
  - (i) The identification of criteria, procedures, and methods for issuing subsidies to parents and legal guardians of children to facilitate their attendance at preschools and early learning programs; and
  - (ii) The development of processes designed to:
    - a. Promote public-private partnerships;
    - b. Create new and expand existing early childhood learning programs;
    - c. Provide needs assessment and planning, including a coordinated data system;
- (2) Develop plans and identify resources needed to improve the quality and services of early childhood learning programs by:
  - (i) Determining performance indicators of quality programs;
  - (ii) Identifying and recommending quality assessment instruments for the purpose of addressing early learning needs in children;
  - (iii) Identifying strategies to expand the number of programs meeting national or State standards of quality through program accreditation;
  - (iv) Proposing incentives and rewards programs designed to increase overall program quality;
  - (v) Using any guidelines developed by the Maryland State Department of Education for preschool and early childhood education as guidelines for program improvement; and
  - (vi) Identifying and promoting State and local coordination;
- (3) Design proposals to support the professional development of early childhood education staff, which may include:
  - (i) Identifying appropriate and desired education levels of staff;
  - (ii) Recommending a compensation plan related to educational levels and experience that recognizes the value of early childhood education;
  - (iii) Promoting mentor relationships in quality programs for educators and aspiring educators who seek to enter or improve the field as an early childhood education teacher;
  - (iv) Identifying incentives and rewards to encourage ongoing professional development; and
  - (v) Expanding access to and the creation of innovative strategies for professional development opportunities;

- (4) Create an implementation plan to motivate and promote the value of and participation in early childhood learning opportunities for parents and the general public, including the business community;
- (5) Recommend to the legislature a conceptual framework, along with proposals for policies and legislation necessary to facilitate and monitor the implementation of that framework; and
- (6) Identify or develop appropriate evaluation methods, including appropriate performance indicators that will allow monitoring, improvement, and accountability of any initiative it proposes.

The following report summarizes the Task Force discussions and their recommendations for the State of Maryland legislature.





# Maryland's Current Prekindergarten Program

Maryland's prekindergarten program began in 1980 as a pilot program in Baltimore and Prince George's Counties and was later expanded as a state-wide initiative under the Extended Elementary Education Program (EEEP). The program serves four-year-old children from families with economically disadvantaged backgrounds (i.e., 185 percent of the federal poverty level as measured by eligibility to receive free and reduced price meals, or FARMS) or who are homeless. The overall goal of the program is to provide learning experiences to help at-risk children develop the basic literacy, cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills necessary for successful school performance.

According to MSDE 2006-07 school enrollment data, there were 25,674 children enrolled in the state prekindergarten program, of which 849 were three-year-olds and 24,825 were four-year-olds. Among the 38 U.S. states with prekindergarten programs, Maryland ranks 9<sup>th</sup> for access to four-year-olds, 21<sup>st</sup> for access to three-year-olds, and 37<sup>th</sup> for the amount of resources invested in prekindergarten per child under EEEP. The total spending per child in 2006 was \$4,663, with \$1,787 per child from state contributions and the remainder from primarily local contributions and some federal contributions.<sup>2</sup>

Currently, all local school systems receive funding for prekindergarten. Most programs are located within the public elementary schools. During the 2006-07 school year, 86 percent of all elementary schools in Maryland had a prekindergarten classroom. Districts may also subcontract with local Head Start and private child care centers meeting state requirements; however, only three school systems are contracting or working with local providers. Under the Bridge to Excellence Act in Public Schools (the "Thornton law") of 2002, by the 2007-08 school year, local boards of education were required to expand existing state prekindergarten programs in order to accommodate all eligible four-year-old children seeking enrollment. This Act has allowed many more low-income and at-risk children to benefit from a high quality prekindergarten experience. However, there are

many other children in Maryland who do not qualify for prekindergarten under the current eligibility requirements.

Parents who are not eligible to place their preschooler in the existing prekindergarten program have several other options as to where to enroll their children, including child care centers, nursery schools, and family child care homes. All three of these options are tuition-based. With the exception of families eligible for child care subsidies, a significant number of families are either not eligible for subsidized early care and education, or cannot afford the existing tuition costs.

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**We're getting more and more concerns from our parents who call and are upset when you tell them that you take prekindergarten kids on the basis of need... we don't offer universal prekindergarten. They are very upset...In the words of these parents... "I'm a tax paying citizen. If it's offered to anyone, it should be offered to me as well."**

*- Dr. Jacqueline Hass, Superintendent,  
Harford County Public Schools*

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In recent years, there has been a considerable increase in costs of child care, which are projected to increase annually through 2011 at a rate of approximately 12 to 16 percent.<sup>3</sup> The average full-time weekly cost of care in Maryland for children three to five years old is \$137.67 for center-based care and \$125.10 for family child care. Rates are even higher for infants and toddlers who require a smaller teacher-to-child ratio in the classroom. In fact, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that in 2006, the cost of child care ranked in the top 3 of major household costs across all 24 counties in Maryland. About 16 to 34 percent of the medium family income is spent on child care (in Calvert County and Baltimore City, respectively), whereas the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that parents not spend more than 10 percent

of their household income on child care. Such high costs have forced many parents to not enroll their children in preschool, even when they recognize the value of early education. These children are either kept home or placed in the care of a relative in often unsupervised and unstimulating environments. While some parents prefer having a relative care for their children, other parents, particularly those who are low-income, illiterate, or speak a minority language, may not know of alternative child care options, or may fear coming forward to request services from the State. According to MSDE school readiness data from 2006, about 20 percent of kindergarteners did not attend any type of preschool or child care program—public or private—before entering school (see Figure 1). Consequently, these children scored significantly lower on the state school readiness assessment when they entered kindergarten than their at-risk peers who attended prekindergarten (see Figure 2).<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, over the past four years, a new age eligibility requirement for entrance into kindergarten has been phased in, which requires all children to be five years old by September 1 (adjusted from the previous November 30 cut-off date). Those children who miss the kindergarten cut-off and are also ineligible for prekindergarten are starting school later than their peers, and either staying at home or in non-parental care longer, thus causing parents to spend more money on child care costs. According to the testimony provided to the Task Force, many parents of these children want to receive public prekindergarten so that their children can develop the school readiness skills they need to be successful in kindergarten.

Moreover, with the recent deployment of many American troops overseas and the instability of military families, expanding access to state prekindergarten programs has

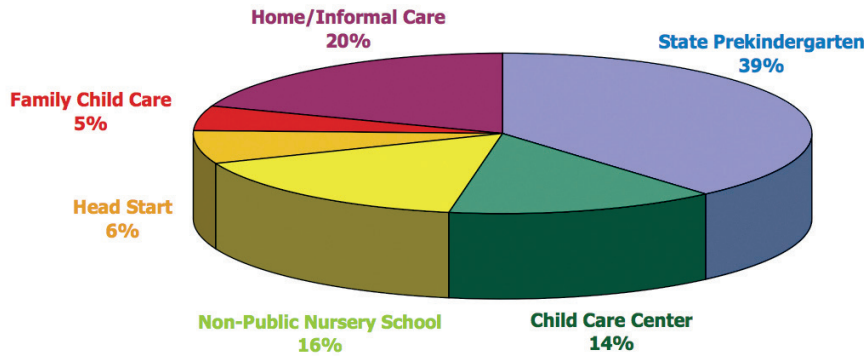


become a national issue. The Military Child Education Coalition has advocated for targeted state prekindergarten programs that serve low-income and at-risk children to grant eligibility status to children of parents who are currently in Active Duty forces or in a mobilized National Guard or Reserve unit.<sup>5</sup> However, basing eligibility on parents' active duty status causes other concerns since military assignments are constantly shifting. A universal preschool program that includes all children regardless of family income and background strengthens the family

support system of the military branches. For instance, families with young children can only access the Army's child care subsidies if their children are enrolled off-base in accredited and high quality early childhood programs. Thus, accredited child care centers with an integrated prekindergarten education block would provide the emotional stability military children need, in addition to a year-round high quality educational experience that all children need to begin kindergarten ready to learn.

**Figure 1. Where Are Maryland's Children Before They Enter Kindergarten?**

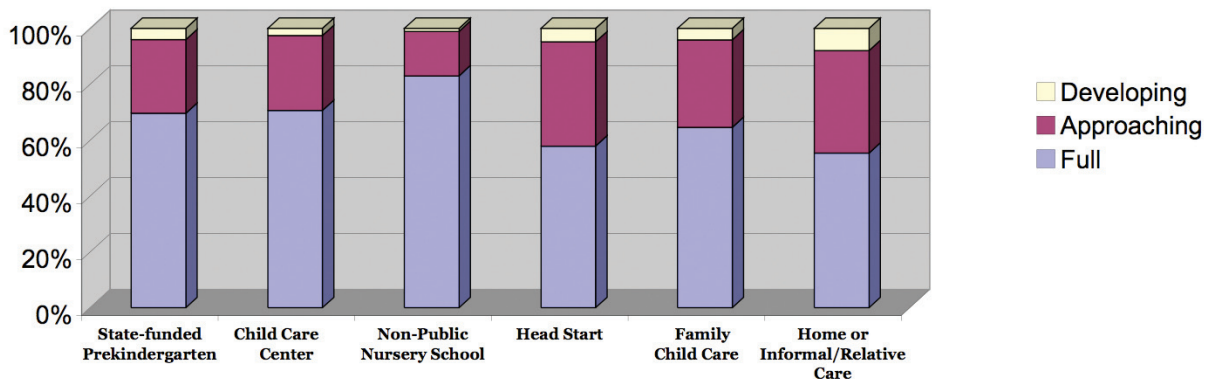
(values indicate percentage of children out of 47,923)



Source: MSDE Maryland School Readiness Information 2006-2007 State Data.

**Figure 2. Kindergarten School Readiness by Prior School Experience 2006-2007**

(values indicate percentage of children out of 47,923)



Source: MSDE Maryland School Readiness Information 2006-2007 State Data.

# Research on Early Childhood Education: Evidence to Support the Investment in a High Quality Universal Preschool Program

The Task Force heard from principal investigators who conducted longitudinal studies, which touted the likelihood of reduced government spending as a result of expanding high quality preschool programs. Longitudinal studies of early childhood intervention programs, such as the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program,<sup>6</sup> the Abecedarian Project,<sup>7</sup> and the Chicago Child-Parent Centers,<sup>8</sup> show that children who experience a high quality preschool program demonstrate greater benefits than children who do not attend the program. Preschool participants have higher gains in cognitive ability, improved child health and well-being, greater high school graduation rates and four-year college attendance, and lower rates of special education, grade retention, teenage parenting, and crime. These outcomes result in fiscal benefits in the school system, the criminal justice system, and health and welfare services, as well as increased tax payments as a result of higher earnings.

## Components of High Quality Early Education Programs

- 1) Highly trained teachers and professional development
- 2) High teacher salaries commensurate with public K-12 teachers
- 3) Small child-staff ratios and class sizes (e.g., 7:1; 14 children)
- 4) Longer duration (full-day, 5 days/week, full-year, and from birth through five)
- 5) High intensity of services (e.g., comprehensive curriculum and services, such as nutrition, health care, and parent education)

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**I think of preschool as an investment... You have to figure out how much you're willing to invest, not how much you think it will cost to do something. So I prefer to say to myself, how much can we afford to spend?"**

*-Dr. Clive Belfield, Professor of Economics, Queens College, City University of New York*

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More specifically, research indicates that for each additional child enrolled in a high-quality preschool program, school districts can save approximately \$2,600 to \$4,400 over the course of the child's educational career, due to reductions in special education costs and teacher recruitment and retention costs.<sup>9</sup> The number of children requiring special education services in Maryland has increased by 29% over the past decade to a rate of approximately 13% of students. The cost per child in special education is almost twice that of a child in a regular classroom. Since the federal contribution is less than \$1,500 per child in special education, it is the State's responsibility to provide adequate services to meet each child's individual needs. Yet, through the comprehensive services of a high quality universal preschool program, all children can be screened for hearing and vision problems, developmental delays, and other special needs, so that they can receive early intervention services before any problem persists to prevent the need for special education services later in school.

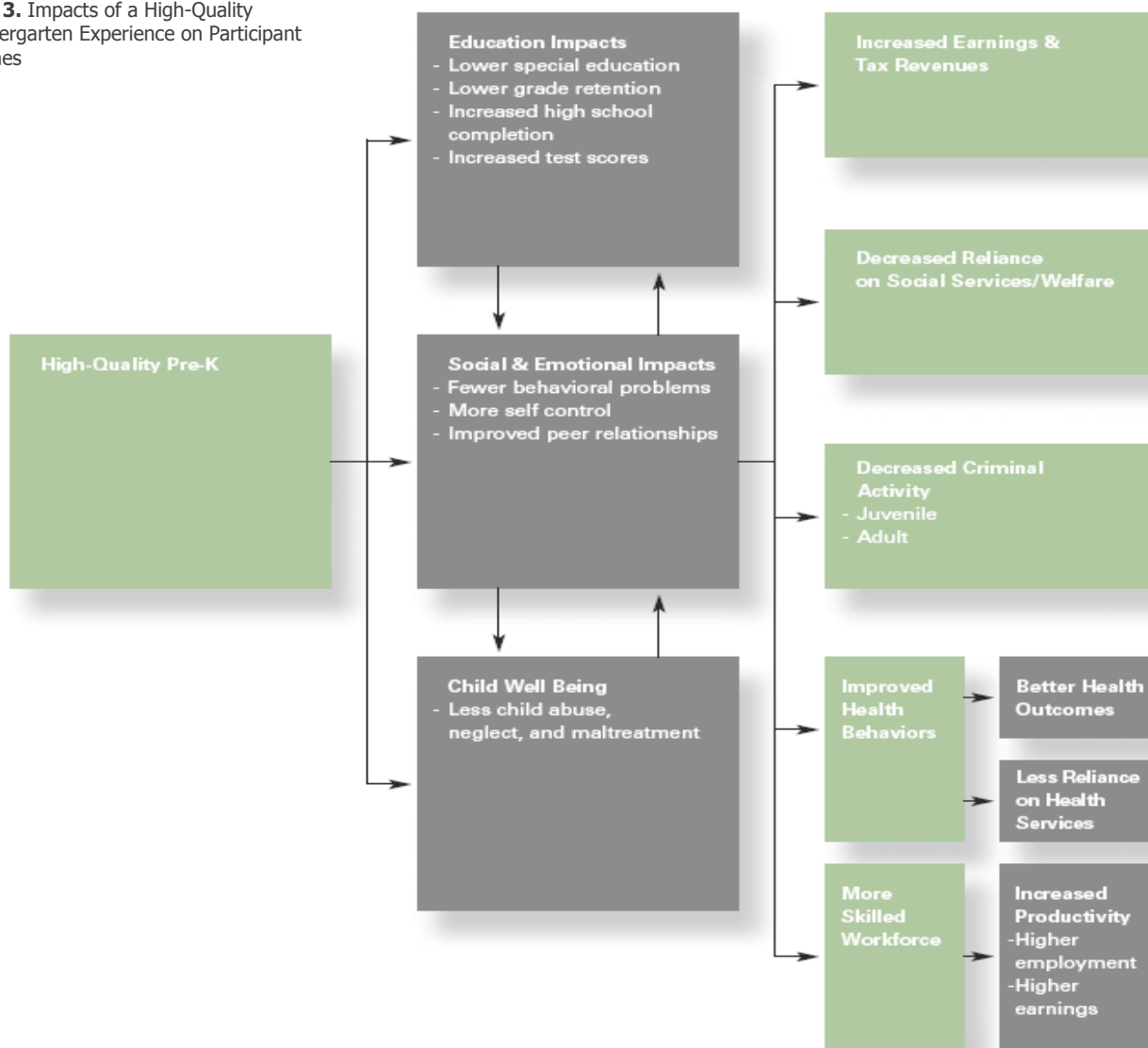
Moreover, high school dropouts tend to make substantially less money than high school graduates, and thus, pay much less in taxes and are more likely to utilize welfare services. High school graduation attainment is also strongly negatively correlated with criminal activity. Even though high school dropouts are less than 20% of the national population, they account for 37% of federal prison inmates, 54% of state prison inmates, 38% of local jail inmates, and 33% of probationers. The cost of one year

of incarceration is approx \$35,000, more than the average salary of a preschool teacher. Thus, a high quality preschool experience can reduce grade retention and increase high school graduation rates, decrease arrests and incarceration rates, and save taxpayer dollars.<sup>10</sup>

According to cost-benefit analyses of the impact of preschool programs in other states (e.g., Arkansas,

Louisiana, Massachusetts, and Ohio), the cost-benefit ratios range from 1:1.5 to 1:3.15.<sup>11</sup> While low-income children demonstrate the largest gains in school readiness skills, a study in California shows that a high quality preschool experience may have positive impacts on *all* children regardless of socioeconomic status.<sup>12</sup>

**Figure 3.** Impacts of a High-Quality Prekindergarten Experience on Participant Outcomes



Source: Wat, A. (May 2007). *Dollars and Sense: A Review of Economic Analyses of Pre-K*. Pre-K Now Research Series. Washington, DC: Pre-K Now. [http://www.preknow.org/documents/DollarsandSense\\_May2007.pdf](http://www.preknow.org/documents/DollarsandSense_May2007.pdf)

# Feasibility Study of the Implementation of Universal Preschool in the State of Maryland

The Task Force commissioned a feasibility study in collaboration with Pre-K Now to determine the costs of universal access for all preschoolers and the long-term benefits of universal preschool for Maryland. Dr. Daraius Irani, professor of economics and director of the Regional Economics Studies Institute (RESI) at Towson University, conducted a cost-benefit analysis to examine

the potential impact on the state economy.<sup>13</sup> The figures below are based on a scaled-up version of the current prekindergarten program, which is a half-day program (2.5 hours/day; 2 sessions daily) that runs on the public school calendar. The child to staff ratio is 10 to 1, with a maximum class size of 20 students. Each classroom has one certified teacher plus one assistant teacher.

Table 1. Program Costs and Benefits for a One-Year Program versus a Two-Year Program

Category	One-year program for all four-year-olds	Two-year program for all three- and four-year-olds
Projected enrollment first year of full implementation	52,294	104,587
Cost per child (in 2007 dollars)	\$5,054	\$10,109
Total costs	\$264,314,100	\$528,628,199
Total costs net current spending	\$156,368,209 (\$2,990 per child)	\$420,682,309 (\$4,034 per child)
Number of years before total benefits exceed program costs	3 years	8 years
Number of years before total federal, state, and local offsetting budget benefits would exceed costs	10 years	24 years
Number of years before Maryland State and local offsetting budget benefits would exceed costs	16 years	36 years
<i>By the year 2052:</i>		
Total Program benefits	\$3,454,000,000	\$7290,000,000
Total net budgetary surplus	\$956,000,000	\$1,123,000,000
Maryland state and local net budgetary surplus	\$541,000,000	\$267,000,000
Budget savings for every \$1 spent	\$4	\$1.70
Increased compensation net of taxes for participants of the program and their guardians in 2052	\$1,377,000,000	\$2,877,000,000
Savings from reduced crime	\$625,000,000	\$1,250,000,000
Cost-benefit ratio for U.S. Society (\$)	1: 10.5	1: 4.8
Cost-benefit ratio for Maryland (\$)	1:8.3	1:3.3

Table 2. Predicted Impacts of Universal Preschool Program on Children in Maryland

Benefits Per Child
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 15.4% reduction in grade repetition</li> <li>● 0.7 years less time in special education</li> <li>● 5.3% decrease in child welfare system costs</li> <li>● 5.3% decrease in tangible costs to child abuse victims</li> <li>● 5.3% decrease in intangible costs to child abuse victims</li> <li>● 0.33 less petitions to the juvenile justice system</li> <li>● 0.33 less petitions for tangible and intangible costs to juvenile crime victims</li> <li>● 0.26 less petitions to the adult justice system</li> <li>● 0.26 less petitions for tangible and intangible costs to victims of adult crimes</li> <li>● 0.33 year increase in higher education attainment</li> <li>● 11.2% increase in receiving a college education</li> <li>● Increased labor force participation</li> </ul>

Table 3. Percentage of Program Benefits Received by Children from Different Risk Groups

Risk Groups	High Risk	Medium Risk	Low Risk
Percentage of children in MD	28%	49%	23%
Percentage of Benefits for 1-year Program (if not otherwise enrolled in preschool)	100%	50%	25%
Percentage of Benefits for 1-year Program (if enrolled in preschool regardless)	50%	25%	0%
Percentage of Benefits for 2-year Program (if not otherwise enrolled in preschool)	100%	85%	70%
Percentage of Benefits for 2-year Program (if enrolled in preschool regardless)	60%	51%	42%

# Universal Preschool: Lessons Learned From Other States

**Our philosophy is that the need for pre-k doesn't end at the poverty line. There are many, many working class and middle class families who cannot afford a high quality pre-k system, and whose children could do so much better if they had that extra boost before they enter kindergarten.**

- Dr. Sara Watson,  
*The Pew Charitable Trusts*

The Task Force heard presentations regarding lessons learned in several states, including Georgia and New York, which have initiated mandates for universal access to preschool. Dr. Sara Watson from The Pew Charitable Trusts, a non-profit organization which funds research and public education campaigns that support state and federal policies on high-quality *Preschool for All*, shared the following 10 lessons learned from other states.

1. Prekindergarten education is a bipartisan issue with both Democrats and Republicans equally supporting the movement.
2. The goal is to provide prekindergarten to all kids; therefore, programs should not be targeted to low-income children. In 2002, Florida passed a ballot initiative to provide prekindergarten to all children, which would not have been passed if it was only for a target group of children.
3. Universal does not mean mandatory. In California, a 2006 ballot initiative did not pass due to a lack of public support for “requiring” three- and four-year-olds to go to school. Instead, a universal program offers parents the choice to enroll their child in prekindergarten, if they want to, free of charge and regardless of socioeconomic status.
4. Universal preschool does not mean that services must be the same for all children. There should be a core program for all plus more support services for children with special needs. Wrap-around services provide the care for children of working parents before and after the core pre-k program.
5. Programs should be delivered in diverse settings, not just in public schools, so parents have a choice as to where to enroll their children. Yet, quality standards should be the same regardless of setting (i.e., public school, child care center, family day care). Support for parents is also an important program component.
6. States should focus on access *and* quality. Children will not get the education and care they need if the program is of poor quality. Quality standards set forth by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) include components such as child-staff ratios, total class size, teacher certification and professional development, comprehensive early learning standards, and vision and hearing screenings. For example, Florida recently initiated a pre-k for all program but lacks high quality standards, whereas Tennessee has a smaller program but scores very highly on quality assessments.
7. Children need other supports in addition to education and care, such as health and nutritional services. In Illinois, there was a \$30 million increase in funding in 2006 as Governor Blagojevich made universal prekindergarten for three- and four-year-olds one of his top priorities. This program also has a health care component for children.
8. Teachers who have a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related field and a teaching certification interact more positively with children. More states are requiring teachers to be “highly qualified” as according to the No Child Left Behind Act.
9. Expanding prekindergarten to meet the needs of transient military families is crucial. Tennessee recently extended their prekindergarten program to military families and other states are adapting their eligibility requirements to accommodate military families.
10. A stable source of funding to ensure program quality is essential. Thirty-six states increased funding for prekindergarten in FY08 with a total invested amount of \$4.8 billion nation-wide. Even Louisiana, which continues to have economic difficulties as a result of Hurricane Katrina, has increased funding each year since, with a 34 percent increase in FY08.



Table 4. National Ratings of State Prekindergarten Programs

State	Percent of 3-year-olds enrolled (National Rank)	Percent of 4-year-olds enrolled (National Rank)	Spending per child (National Rank)	Quality Standards Ranking
Alabama	0	1.7 (38)	\$4,216 (11)	10
Alaska	0	0	0	No program
Arizona	0	5.8 (29)	\$2,296 (33)	4
Arkansas	10.6 (5)	18.2 (15)	\$4,836 (9)	9
California	4.5 (7)	9.9 (24)	\$3,341 (20)	4
Colorado	2.2 (14)	13.5 (20)	\$3,056 (24)	4
Connecticut	3.2 (11)	13.7 (19)	\$7,101 (4)	6
Delaware	0	7.8 (26)	\$6,261 (5)	8
Florida	0	46.5 (4)	\$2,163 (35)	4
Georgia	0	51.5 (2)	\$3,977 (13)	8
Hawaii	0	0	0	No program
Idaho	0	0	0	No program
Illinois	14.4 (2)	23.0 (13)	\$3,298 (21)	9
Indiana	0	0	0	No program
Iowa	1.4 (17)	4.5 (32)	\$2,929 (25)	5
Kansas	0	14.5 (18)	\$2,554 (28)	3
Kentucky	11.0 (4)	29.3 (10)	\$2,398 (31)	8
Louisiana	0	21.6 (14)	\$5,012 (8)	7.8
Maine	0	15.5 (17)	\$1,793 (36)	4
Maryland	1.0 (21)	30.7 (9)	\$1,787 (37)	7
Massachusetts	8.8 (6)	9.8 (25)	\$3,619 (16)	6
Michigan	0	16.2 (16)	\$3,934 (14)	6
Minnesota	1.0 (19)	1.8 (37)	\$7,203 (3)	8
Mississippi	0	0	0	No program
Missouri	2.3 (13)	4.0 (34)	\$2,632 (27)	6
Montana	0	0	0	No program
Nebraska	2.1 (15)	3.6 (35)	\$2,482 (29)	8
Nevada	0.6 (23)	2.1 (36)	\$3,116 (22)	7
New Hampshire	0	0	0	No program
New Jersey	14.8 (1)	24.9 (12)	\$9,854 (1)	8.5
New Mexico	0.6 (24)	6.8 (27)	\$2,269 (34)	4.8
New York	0.5 (26)	28.6 (11)	\$3,512 (17)	5.6
North Carolina	0	12.2 (21)	\$3,892 (15)	10
North Dakota	0	0	0	No program
Ohio	1.0 (20)	4.4 (33)	\$2,345 (32)	4
Oklahoma	0	70.2 (1)	\$3,364 (19)	9
Oregon	2.6 (12)	5.0 (31)	\$7,932 (2)	7
Pennsylvania	1.5 (16)	5.6 (30)	\$5,080 (7)	4
Rhode Island	0	0	0	No program
South Carolina	4.2 (10)	31.0 (8)	\$1,085 (38)	8
South Dakota	0	0	0	No program
Tennessee	0.5 (25)	10.6 (23)	\$4,061 (12)	9
Texas	4.5 (9)	44.3 (5)	\$2,653 (26)	4
Utah	0	0	0	No program
Vermont	14.1 (3)	47.0 (3)	\$2,439 (30)	6.7
Virginia	0	11.1 (22)	\$3,396 (18)	7
Washington	1.4 (18)	6.0 (28)	\$5,886 (6)	6
West Virginia	4.5 (8)	39.9 (6)	\$4,529 (10)	7
Wisconsin	0.7 (22)	32.1 (7)	\$3,108 (23)	5.1
Wyoming	0	0	0	No program

Source: Barnett, W.S., Hustedt, J.T., Hawkinson, L.E., & Robin, K.B. (2006). *The state of preschool 2006: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

## Examples from Two States

The Task Force invited two state administrators who have been implementing universal preschool over the last few years to discuss their programs and experiences. The values reported were based on data available in December 2006.

*Georgia.* Bright from the Start, Georgia's universal prekindergarten program housed under the Department of Early Care and Learning, presently serves 76,600 children across all counties in Georgia, 55 percent of all four-year-olds in the state. This number has continuously grown 2 percent each year. The program has a budget of \$290 million with a cost per child of \$3,919. Parents do not pay anything except for lunch, unless they qualify for FARMS. Bright from the Start operates on the public school schedule of 6.5 hours/day for 180 days/year. Approximately 43 percent of children are served in public schools, 56 percent in private programs, and 1 percent in other public programs (e.g., military bases). Teacher salaries are dependent on education level; however, teachers in public schools get the same base pay as those in the private sector.

Bright from the Start serves children of a variety of racial/ethnic and economic backgrounds, as well as children with disabilities. About 55 percent of children are considered at-risk (i.e., receive WIC, FARMS). Some Head Start programs apply for state funding to offer blended programs with both Head Start and state-funded children, but they must meet both sets of standards. Bright from the Start does not offer health services like Head Start; however, there is a strong parent component.



## Top 10 reasons why Bright from the Start has worked:

1. Commitment of Georgia's political leaders and policy makers.
2. Has an ensured dedicated source of funding. State uses lottery funds for universal prekindergarten and higher education.
3. It is voluntary for parents and providers. Parents choose the setting and the curriculum (multiple types of curricula approved that meet early learning standards). Private providers can choose to participate; they do not have to offer a state prekindergarten program, but if they do, they must follow specific quality standards.
4. Universality removes the stigma of being an at-risk program. When programs include children and families from all socioeconomic backgrounds, it raises program standards.
5. Offered through public/private partnerships which reduces the amount of money needed to build and expand facilities. It offers community buy-in; the program is there to support all existing programs, not to compete. By engaging private programs early on, the partnerships can help with transition and implementation.
6. Emphasizes early childhood education; prekindergarten is not child care. The program clearly links to K-12 content standards to offer seamless educational opportunities.
7. Provides family support services for at-risk families.
8. Cultivated meaningful collaborations with other public/private entities in the early care and education field in Georgia.
9. Implemented a uniform, open financial payment and reporting system for all prekindergarten providers. The program operates under guidelines and providers are reimbursed for payments.
10. Set and required high quality standards, including licensed or approved-safe facilities, credentialed teachers, and an approved curriculum, and supported those standards by providing quality training and professional development for program personnel. Bright from the Start staff members are available to help private providers meet program standards (e.g., assist with the purchase of developmentally appropriate classroom materials). Those programs that fail to meet standards are given a limited amount of time to improve their facilities or else they lose funding. Contracts are renewed each year.



*New York.* New York State's Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) program currently serves 27 percent of all four-year-olds (70,779 of 220,000 in the state) with a yearly budget of \$255 million. While the program's goal is to serve all four-year-olds in the state, insufficient funding has forced school districts to use a random lottery system to select children for enrollment. Moreover, although communities need a full-day program, most can only afford to offer half-day services.

The state funnels the funding through the local school districts, which must use the money for prekindergarten but can decide how to use the money. The UPK program is designed as a public-private partnership and requires collaboration between local school districts and community-based organizations (CBOs). At least 10 percent of funding must be used for subcontracts with Head Start programs, private child care centers, or other CBOs. Yet, in 2005-06, more than half of funding was used for subcontracts with these providers. In some districts where public schools lack the classroom space to accommodate a prekindergarten program, it is more economical to provide services through CBOs instead of expanding public school facilities. This method also saves districts money since prekindergarten teachers in public

schools get paid salaries equivalent to a public school teacher, whereas UPK teachers in CBOs receive smaller salaries set by the CBO.

However, this system has become somewhat problematic. All UPK teachers in public school settings are required to have a bachelor's degree and teacher certification in early childhood education, plus a master's degree within five years. Until recently, UPK teachers in other settings were not required to have the same credentials if supervised by a certified teacher; however, New York is now requiring all teachers regardless of setting to have a teaching certification by 2008. The difference in salaries has forced many certified prekindergarten teachers to leave CBOs for public schools where they can receive higher compensation and benefits.

The experiences of New York highlight the need to provide equal base pay to all teachers, if they hold the same qualifications, regardless of the setting in which they teach. Likewise, it is important to have a reliable source of funding allotted to the program, if the state is to reach its goal of providing high quality prekindergarten to all children.

# Recommendations

## *Goal #1: Plan to Increase Access to Early Childhood Education*

In 2002, the Bridge to Excellence in Public School Act restructured Maryland’s educational finance system, increasing funding for kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade education by a proposed \$1.3 billion over a period of six years. A portion of the state’s investment was used to increase access to full-day kindergarten and prekindergarten. However, the lack of available classroom space was a constant challenge for local school systems.

In 2005, MSDE provided a non-regulatory guidance which offered local school systems several options to meet the law’s requirements. Among the options was the collaboration with community-based providers such as child care, nursery schools, or Head Start programs.

However, in 2007-08, only three local school systems established such arrangements on a limited basis. Concerns about program accountability, coordination, and operational complications were cited by local school systems as barriers. Community-based programs, eager to collaborate with local school systems, expressed concern about the lack of communication or willingness to “test” a fruitful collaboration.

In response, MSDE strengthened the local public school and early childhood partnerships by establishing and maintaining Judy Centers as well as pilot partnership projects. Under these partnerships, community-based child care centers operate public prekindergarten sessions at their sites, adopting the same standards of the existing prekindergarten program in the respective school systems. Testimonies before the Task Force stressed such models



as a way to expand prekindergarten to many more four-year-olds in diverse early education settings. Utilizing the available space at eligible child care providers will also alleviate the facilities shortage and further overcrowding in the schools.

Additionally, partnerships with family child care providers have not yet been developed. The Maryland State Family Child Care Association (MSFCCA), a professional organization that advocates for family

child care providers through educating and advising the public on child care issues, has encouraged the state to include family child care in its universal preschool program. A model established in Illinois' *Preschool for All* program serves as a starting point when integrating family child care, particularly those in rural areas, into the initiative. Building public-private partnerships will allow prekindergarten to be implemented across multiple settings, which will increase accessibility to children and their families.

## Models of Public-Private Partnerships

In 2006, MSDE awarded program enhancement grants with the purpose of promoting partnerships between the local public schools and private community-based child care centers to increase the availability of prekindergarten programs under Bridge to Excellence. Two different models of public-private partnerships are currently being implemented. One model involves bringing a certified early childhood teacher hired by the public school system into a childcare center to teach prekindergarten, whereas the other model involves bringing private childcare staff into a public school to operate a prekindergarten program.

In Worcester County Public Schools, a partnership exists between Showell Elementary School and Friends Forever Learning Center. A certified teacher was hired by the public school system to teach a prekindergarten class in the child care center. This is the second year of program implementation and the arrangement has been very successful. Holding the prekindergarten class in the child care center allows children of working parents to have access to full-day care, including the 3-hour educational block in the morning and wrap-around care in the early morning starting at 7:00am and in the afternoon until 6:00pm. There is one continuous setting all day, so children do not need to transition from one school for prekindergarten to another for child care. Parents value having full-day care, as the prekindergarten classes located at Showell Elementary School are half-day sessions (2 morning sessions; 2 afternoon sessions) with no wrap-around care. The parents know the teachers at Friends Forever very well since many of the children began attending the center when they were two and three years old. Efforts have been made to keep parents at both locations up-to-date on activities at their partnership school. The partnership has also brought Showell closer to the child care community. The biggest challenge to the operation of the program has been adapting to the differences across settings, including learning child care regulations and parameters for the classroom and sharing space and materials within the center.

In Frederick County, a partnership exists between Hillcrest Elementary School and the local YMCA child care program. Hillcrest provides the classroom space for 5 half-day prekindergarten sessions (3 morning sessions; 2 afternoon sessions) for 100 4-year-olds, and a classroom for wrap-around child care for 20 of those children who need child care in addition to their half-day prekindergarten session. The YMCA provides the staff to conduct the prekindergarten program and wrap-around childcare. There is combined staff development for both Hillcrest and YMCA-employed teachers to build communication and collaboration. Many parents like this arrangement, because it helps transition their children into the public school setting where they will attend kindergarten. However, the lack of space is the biggest challenge. Fewer children are being served for the full day to allow more spaces to be available in the half-day prekindergarten program. Many parents need wrap-around child care, but there is only enough space to accommodate 20 children at this time.

## Task Force Recommendations:

1. Establish by law a universal preschool program (working title: *Preschool for All*) to meet the needs of all four-year-old children in the State of Maryland and their families, regardless of financial need. In programs where there are additional available enrollment slots, allow three-year-olds to be included in the program.
2. Establish a sustainable funding mechanism for universal preschool in diverse early education settings, including: local public schools, private child care centers, nursery schools or church-based early care and education programs, and licensed family child care programs, which builds on the capacity of the existing funding streams and establishes a formula-based allocation for the funding support for expansion of the program.
3. Establish specific standards of operation and accountability for the universal preschool program which define the program and incorporate the state's existing prekindergarten sites and include any other public or non-public program which meets these standards.
4. Plan and implement the universal preschool program to serve all four-year old children in Maryland by 2014, including a planning year in FY09, and the first phase of implementation starting in FY2010 in targeted areas anticipated to experience a disproportionate increase in early care and education enrollment.
5. MSDE shall be responsible for the planning, implementation, and funding of the universal preschool program by using and enhancing existing funds for prekindergarten. Existing state aid to education shall remain the primary funding source for prekindergarten. In addition, MSDE shall establish a grant program to provide financial enhancements for eligible universal preschool programs to meet the defined standards of operation.
6. The universal preschool program shall be characterized by active partnerships between public schools and non-public programs which include all licensed child care centers, Head Start programs, approved and exempted nursery schools, and Montessori programs which hold a valid state or national accreditation from accrediting organizations recognized by MSDE.
7. The universal preschool programs shall develop and establish a model program to integrate nationally accredited family child care programs into the universal preschool system.
8. The universal preschool program shall allow parents to choose the preschool setting for their children.
9. Each participating site in the universal preschool program shall provide an educational component operated on the public school schedule, with defined quality standards (see defined standards under (5)). The educational component may be part of the public school program or integrated in an extended early care setting for families of young children who are working or are in school or training. The educational component must be a minimum of 2.5 hours, but no more than 6.5 hours per school day.

## *Goal #2: Indicators of Quality Programs*

### **Indicators of High Quality Programs According to MSDE Early Learning Guidelines**

In order to improve the school readiness of all children, MSDE has developed several documents containing early learning standards that serve as indicators of high quality programs. The Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) is a classroom instruction and assessment framework designed to provide parents, teachers, and early childhood providers with a common understanding of what children should know and be able to do upon entering school. The MMSR focuses on five major components: classroom instruction; assessment; communication with families; coordination with early education programs and initiatives; and integrated staff development activities. The prekindergarten and kindergarten content standards and indicators of the Voluntary State Curriculum (VSC) are fully integrated into the MMSR framework in the areas of: language and literacy; mathematics; science; social studies; personal and social development; the arts; and physical development and health. For young children from birth through 36 months of age, the *Guidelines for Healthy Child Development and Care of Young Children* provide information to caregivers about how to promote children's developing physical, social, cognitive, language, and emergent literacy skills.

In 2006, MSDE created the Preschool Curriculum Project to evaluate comprehensive, research-based curricula as well as supplemental, content-specific curricula in the areas of reading/English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, fine arts, physical education, health education, and personal and social development. A committee selected several curricula that met the state's early learning standards and created a list identifying the recommended curricula. The approved comprehensive curricula include: The Core Knowledge Preschool (ages 3, 4); Houghton Mifflin PreK (ages 3, 4) and Houghton Mifflin K (age 5); The Creative Curriculum for Preschool (ages 3, 4); Opening the World of Learning (age 4); Success for All KinderCorner (age 5); Macmillan-McGraw-Hill *Little Treasures* (ages 3, 4) and *Treasures* (age 5).

By July 1, 2009, any prekindergarten program seeking state or federal funding will be required to do one of the following: (1) select and implement a curriculum from the approved list; (2) implement a curriculum developed by the local school system (in the cases of programs operated by the local boards of education); or (3) seek MSDE approval for an individually developed curriculum to demonstrate its effectiveness and alignment with the MMSR, VSC, and *Guidelines for Healthy Child Development and Care of Young Children* for three-year-olds. Additionally, programs seeking MSDE accreditation will also be required to follow one of the three above mentioned options. These policies, however, do not currently apply to family child care, as family child care providers have not yet been considered qualified vendors in the state prekindergarten program.

### **Quality Assessment Instruments**

The MMSR standards are assessed by a modified version of the Work Sampling System (WSS)<sup>™</sup>, a portfolio-based assessment instrument that captures children's developing skills through teacher observations and documentation of children's skills and behaviors. The checklists for kindergarten, prekindergarten, and three-year-old preschool contain indicators that align with the MMSR framework and standards. Children's skills are rated as "proficient," "in process," or "needs development." The WSS<sup>™</sup> is developmentally appropriate for young children and is widely used among early childhood education programs nationally.

In 2001, MSDE required all kindergarten teachers to report to MSDE incoming kindergarteners' skills on 30 WSS<sup>™</sup> indicators of learning for the first grading period in kindergarten. The assessment information is being reported annually to track the school readiness skills of all kindergarten students. In 2006-07, 67 percent of all kindergarten children had the skills to engage successfully in kindergarten work, as reported by their teachers. The assessment information is being disaggregated for subgroups of children, including their prior care experiences as four-year-olds. Thus, information about their enrollment in prekindergarten as well as other

types of early care can be retrospectively related to their assessment results in kindergarten. MSDE is using the information for programmatic purposes; teachers can use the assessment information to modify their instruction based on individual students' needs, while policymakers and program administrators can use the subgroup information on students to modify existing programs to address the learning needs of a group of children (e.g., language and literacy needs of English language learners.)

Expanding the assessment program to prekindergarten across all prekindergarten sites in Maryland would provide additional information as to children's incoming skills, which would serve the same purpose established for kindergarten. MSDE would have to work with all participating prekindergarten programs to establish a modus of aligning existing assessment protocols used in those programs with the modified WSS™ for prekindergarten. That alignment process takes into account existing assessment guidelines, professional development, data management, and specified assessment protocols, which have already been developed by MSDE.

Moreover, as of fall 2007, all students in the Prekindergarten-12 system will be assigned a permanent, unique student identification number. This student identification system will allow for the creation of a longitudinal database that can track student achievement data over time. The WSS™ data collected from children participating in the *Preschool for All* program may be entered into this student database, and later, linked with students' scores on the Maryland School Assessments (MSAs) and High School Assessments (HSAs), as well as to student variables such as high school graduation status and college attendance.

### **Early Childhood Program Accreditation**

The Task Force determined that program accreditation be the eligibility requirement for accessing *Preschool for All* funds. Accreditation serves as an indicator of program quality. Programs that have achieved accreditation have met a certain level of standards and provide a high quality early learning environment for children. The most common national early childhood program accreditation system is through the National Association for the Education of

Young Children (NAEYC), which holds high standards for classroom quality, curriculum, and teacher qualifications. For example, NAEYC's goal is that by the end of 2007 all early childhood teachers will have a Child Development Associate (CDA), by the end of 2012 all teachers will have an associate's degree, and by 2020, a bachelor's degree. MSDE also has its own state accreditation program for early childhood, which has similar standards to NAEYC. The *Standards for Implementing Quality Early Learning Programs* was developed by MSDE to assist staff in Maryland public prekindergarten and kindergarten programs, as well as center-based child care and Head Start programs, working towards accreditation. Family child care providers are accredited through the National Family Child Care Association (NFFCCA); there is not a state accreditation system for family child care programs. In addition, MSDE recognizes several other national accrediting organizations: Middle States, National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA), American Montessori Society (AMS), and Association Montessori Internationale (AMI).

Currently, 680 early education programs (or 6 to 7 percent of programs in the State) are accredited, 156 of which have NAEYC accreditation. The accredited programs include State Prekindergarten (76), Center-based Child Care (301), Head Start (59), Early Head Start (8), Kindergarten (78), and Family Providers (158).





Each year approximately \$1.5 million of the state budget is spent on accreditation. Incentives and rewards are given to providers to pursue national or state accreditation and for meeting these high quality standards. However, expansion of the number of prekindergarten programs will require broader participation by providers in the accreditation program. Many programs require administrative leadership to overcome high rates of teacher turnover, and an overall feeling of intimidation when going through the accreditation process. It can take a program well over 12 months to proceed through the steps of accreditation from initial application to on-site evaluation of program quality. MSDE has established a new management and leadership program for child care center directors in collaboration with the McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership in Illinois to generate a cadre of strong early childhood leaders in Maryland.

According to current child care policy, when a child care center desires accreditation for its preschool classroom(s), the entire child care center must be evaluated for accreditation, including present infant and toddler classrooms. However, in public elementary schools, accreditation is conducted at the grade level (i.e., across all prekindergarten or all kindergarten classrooms in a school). If a similar process were to occur in private child care centers, more programs would meet accreditation standards; yet, grade-level accreditation would limit the flexibility of the center staff (e.g., a non-credentialed toddler teacher could not substitute for a prekindergarten teacher). While it should be a program goal to achieve accreditation for the entire center, allowing temporary accreditation status to qualified preschool classrooms when a program does not reach full accreditation as a center, would allow more programs to participate in the *Preschool for All* preschool program. The Task Force deferred the development of specific guidelines to MSDE.

### **Incentives and Rewards to Increase Program Quality**

A successful way to increase program quality is to offer state incentives to programs to initiate program improvement efforts and rewards to those programs that meet high quality standards. MSDE is planning on redirecting state and local funds to provide incentives and

rewards to increase program quality.

Offering incentive funds to child care centers to become eligible for the *Preschool for All* program would broaden the pool and likelihood of programs prepared to meet the *Preschool for All* standards. The Quality Improvement grants under the Child Care Development Funds will be designed to improve the learning environment in programs, facilitate program accreditation, and help with the purchase and implementation of preschool curricula. In addition, it could serve in establishing an effective model to integrate family child care networks, supported and mentored by itinerant teachers who are certified in early childhood education.

### **State and Local Coordination**

Maintaining coordination between the state and local providers is key to program success. Each county in Maryland has its own needs and program capacity. In some counties, there may be substantial space within the public schools to accommodate the majority of preschool children, while in other counties where schools are more populated, there may be a heavier reliance on community-based child care providers to provide the facilities and staff to operate a universal preschool program. If funding flows through the local school systems, then the responsibility of establishing school-community partnerships and program monitoring would be given to the local school boards. If instead the state regulates the distribution of funds directly to program providers, then program approval and monitoring would take place at the state level.

The Task Force deferred the resolution of the preferred funding mechanism to MSDE. It advised the Department to develop a business plan, as part of the planning phase, which will define the coordination between the department and the local boards of education with respect to meeting the prekindergarten mandate of the Bridge to Excellence and expanding the program in diverse early education settings. Such a funding mechanism will also define the roles between the state and the local boards of education with respect to the oversight and accountability of *Preschool for All*.

## Task Force Recommendations:

1. Universal preschool programs must follow the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR), the Voluntary State Curriculum (VSC) framework, and the *Guidelines for Healthy Child Development and Care for Young Children*.
2. In order to receive funding, programs must follow one of three options: select and implement a comprehensive curriculum from the state-recommended list; adopt the local school system curriculum; or seek MSDE approval for an individually developed curriculum that aligns with the state's early learning standards.
3. All non-public school programs must possess state or national accreditation to be eligible for participation in the universal preschool system as required under COMAR (Code of Maryland Regulations) for all qualified prekindergarten vendors. Center-based programs may choose to have state or national accreditation or both. Approved accreditation bodies include: MSDE, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Middle States, National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA), American Montessori Society (AMS), and Association Montessori Internationale (AMI). Family child care providers receiving state funding must possess accreditation through the National Family Child Care Association (NFCCA).
4. Universal preschool programs must implement the modified Work Sampling System™ for Prekindergarten, which is aligned with the VSC and the current MMSR Kindergarten Assessment.
5. MSDE will redirect existing funding to support the improvement of program quality as follows:
  - a. Costs of accreditation fees and program quality improvement efforts to achieve accreditation, including pre-validation;
  - b. Costs of purchasing comprehensive preschool curricula and for related curriculum training;
  - c. Costs for professional assessment associated with the prekindergarten assessment system (i.e., MMSR professional development);
  - d. Costs for developing a model for integrating accredited family child care providers into the universal preschool program.
6. In the case where preschool classroom(s) in a child care center meet accreditation standards, but the center as a whole is deferred due to unmet standards in infant and/or toddler classrooms, grant provisional accreditation to the center contingent upon the achievement of full accreditation within one year. However, standards must be met for *all* preschool classrooms in the center to qualify for funding.

### *Goal #3: Professional Development of Early Childhood Education Staff*

#### **Teacher Certification Requirements**

To teach in a state prekindergarten classroom in the State of Maryland, lead teachers are required to have a certification in early childhood education (Pre-K- 3) and assistant teachers must have at least a high school degree. Certification in the State of Maryland is valid for 5 years. To become certified, college students must complete an approved 4-year teacher preparation program, which leads to a certification in early childhood education. Students must pass the Praxis 1 examination, which tests reading, writing, and math. For the required Praxis 2 examinations, two new early childhood tests, which were adopted by the Maryland State Board of Education in February 2007, are required: *Early Childhood: Content Knowledge (0022)*; and *Principles of Learning and Teaching: Early Childhood (0521)*. In addition, as part of

state standards, students in teacher education programs must complete a supervised internship experience in a professional development school (PDS).

A PDS is an institution formed through a university partnership between a teacher education program and local PK-12 schools. To help establish PDS relationships between universities and local schools, \$2 million in state-wide funds have been given to fund PDSs in the state. There are currently (as of 2006), 395 PDSs in Maryland, some of which have early education programs. According to a Towson University study, PDS-trained students have a significantly higher retention rate (94%) after four years of teaching in the local Baltimore school system than did graduates who completed the traditional student teaching experience in a non-PDS setting.<sup>14</sup> This research indicates that a PDS offers unique training experiences that better prepare new teachers for their first years of teaching. Presently, 11 colleges and universities in Maryland have early childhood teacher certification programs. However,



these programs are typically designed for full-time college students and no program currently offers courses during the evenings and weekends to meet the needs of child care providers working full-time and seeking certification.

Some students, particularly those going to school part-time, earn an Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT) degree in early childhood education from a community college before transferring to a 4-year institution to complete their teacher certification requirements. Efforts have been made to align introductory coursework across 2-year and 4-year early childhood teacher education programs to allow for an easier transition from one program to the next. Required courses include: Child Growth and Development, Introduction to Early Childhood Education, Introduction to Special Education, and Process and Acquisition of Reading.

In the case that an uncertified teacher with a bachelor's degree is a part-time student seeking certification, the preparing college typically would not require them to do a practicum in a PDS. Instead, the program would have to ensure that opportunities for practice occur in their coursework, as well as a one semester internship (student teaching) experience.

### **Maryland Child Care Credential**

Unlike state prekindergarten teachers, preschool teachers in private child care centers not receiving public funding are currently not required to hold a teaching certification. Most teachers have a Child Development Associate (CDA), which can be earned by having 120 clock hours of formal child care education training, 480 hours of experience working with children within the past five years, and passing an oral and written assessment and observational evaluation. MSDE oversees the Maryland Child Care Credential, a voluntary credentialing program for child care professionals working in regulated child care settings, which recognizes providers for their education, experience and professional activity. Credentials are issued for one year and may be renewed each year. Teachers are encouraged to go through the credentialing process by the awarding of monetary bonuses (from \$200 to \$1,000) after completing each level.



Credential components consist of: (1) *Core of Knowledge training*—six areas of expected content knowledge: child development; curriculum planning; health, safety, and nutrition; special needs; professionalism; and community; (2) *Professional Activity Units*—expected activities, such as professional association membership or state/national conference attendance; and (3) *Experience*—documented experience working with groups of children in a supervised setting.

There are seven credential levels from entry to advanced.

- Level 1: the basic level that allows teachers working in the child care field into the program without a lot of training
- Level 2: at least 45 clock hours of Core of Knowledge training and 1 professional activity (CDA or college credit accepted at any time; all other training can only go back 5 years)
- Level 3: at least 90 clock hours of Core of Knowledge training, 2 professional activities, and 1 year of experience
- Level 4: at least 135 clock hours of Core of Knowledge training, 3 professional activities, and 2 years of experience
- Level 4+: level 4 requirements plus either 30 credits of coursework or NAFCC accreditation for family child care
- Level 5: Associate's degree with at least 15 credits in Core of Knowledge training, 4 professional activities, and 2 or more years of experience

- Level 6: Bachelor's degree or higher in early childhood education, elementary education, special education, child development, or other related field, plus 5 professional activities and 2 or more years of experience

To qualify as senior child care staff, or head classroom teacher, teachers must be at Level 3. To become a registered family child care provider the applicant must complete 18 clock hours of approved Core of Knowledge training. To remain registered, each year senior child care staff and family child care providers must complete 12 clock hours of approved training (6 clock hours of Core of Knowledge training and 6 clock hours of elective training). The Task Force recommended using Level 6 of the Credentialing Program as the alternative to state teacher certification during the phase-in period of the *Preschool for All* program and sunset it in 2014. This provision is meant to offset the current shortage of certified early childhood teachers.

### **Teacher Compensation**

As teacher certification requirements vary by setting, so do teacher salaries. A state prekindergarten teacher in a public school is paid the equivalent of a kindergarten or first grade teacher, with a minimum starting salary of approximately \$32,000 to \$42,000, depending on the county;<sup>15</sup> whereas, in a child care center, senior staff earn an average of \$20,205,<sup>16</sup> since their salaries depend on children's tuition dollars and not state funding. Assistant teachers make even less—an average of \$12,652 in 2006. Inadequate compensation and benefits have led to high turnover rates in the field of child care, low teacher morale, and poor educational quality. In fact, the child care sector, while expanding the number of child care spaces over the last decade, has lost a significant number of its most qualified teaching corps.

The Task Force felt strongly that any attempt to provide prekindergarten to all four-year-olds in diverse settings, but with the same teacher qualification standards, would require the achievement of parity in teacher compensation. The Task Force discussed two concepts to achieve parity in teacher compensation: (1) establish a

state-wide *Preschool for All* compensation schedule with a base salary for certified teachers equal to the average salary for certified teachers across all counties and Baltimore City, including a requirement for a specified maintenance of effort from the non-public school operator; and (2) establish a compensation schedule which mirrors the ones from each local board of education, thereby offering the same pay as local boards to certified teachers. The Task Force settled on a recommendation which takes both concepts into account. Using the state-wide compensation schedule as a foundation, it would allow local jurisdictions to supplement salaries as desired to adjust for discrepancies between public and non-public school salaries.

### **Teachers with Limited-English Proficiency**

There is the growing number of English language learners from diverse cultural backgrounds living in Maryland. The Task Force responded to the current status that an increasing number of foreign-born, limited-English proficiency (LEP) child care staff is replacing native speakers who have exited the field. More than half of family child care providers in Maryland report speaking another language at home other than English, and 99 percent of child care centers in Montgomery County have bilingual staff, with 81 percent employing Spanish-speaking staff. Currently, the state is accountable for improving the English language skills among young children and those in school. The increasing number of children, among them many English language learners, cared for by staff with limited English proficiency requires targeted efforts to build the professional capacity of limited English providers. The Task Force recommended the use of workforce development funds to improve the English proficiency of non-native speaking staff and employ them as bilingual staff in *Preschool for All* programs that are experiencing a growing number of English language learners under the age of five.

### **Current Financial Assistance Programs**

Under the Workforce Shortage Student Assistance Grant Program, the Maryland Higher Education Commission currently offers several college scholarships to Maryland residents enrolled in an accredited postsecondary

institution in the State. *Child Care Provider Scholarships* are offered to undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in an early childhood education or child development program who plan to enter the child care field. Scholarship recipients must sign a contract agreeing to fulfill their service obligation after graduation and work in a child care center, or as a family child care provider, full-time for one year per each year that the scholarship was received (or work part-time for two years per each year of the scholarship). However, students are not allowed to work in a Maryland public school, and funds may not be available to all eligible candidates.

*Distinguished Scholar Teacher Education Awards* are given to students enrolled in an approved teacher education program in Maryland. Upon graduation, students are required to teach in a Maryland public school for one year for each year of the award, or repay the scholarship with interest. Students who plan to teach in a critical shortage area (i.e., Title I schools) receive priority. However, awards

are based on merit and not available to all eligible students.

Additionally, in the 2007-08 school year, teachers who are working in a Federal Title I school or a school identified as in need of improvement by MSDE, as well as teachers with certification in specialty areas (e.g., English for Speakers of other Languages [ESOL]; special education) are eligible for loan assistance under the *Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program (LARP)*. This scholarship awards recipients up to \$30,000 over the course of three years, depending on their total loan debt. However, this program does not apply to public prekindergarten teachers in non-Title 1 schools, preschool teachers in community-based settings, or Head Start teachers.

In 2007, MSDE issued their plan for the *Early Childhood Career and Professional Development Fund*. This program will provide college scholarships to early childhood educators to increase the number of certified teachers in the State.



### **Task Force Recommendations:**

1. Allow a phase-in period of 4 years (2010-2014) by which time all universal preschool teachers must hold the required degree and certification.
2. All lead teachers in universal preschool classrooms must hold a bachelor's degree and be certified or approved in early childhood education.
3. Assistant teachers must have a minimum of a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential.
4. Directors/Site managers of non-public programs must have, at a minimum, the Administrator IV Credential of the Maryland Child Care Credentialing Program.
5. MSDE and MHEC will collaborate with 2- and 4-year teacher education programs in Maryland to modify the current system to accommodate teachers working full-time, including offering courses during flexible hours (i.e., evenings; weekends), at child care centers or other community sites (in addition to local colleges and universities), and through distance learning programs (i.e., online via the Internet; televised to remote locations), where appropriate.
6. MSDE will expand the Maryland Early Childhood Career and Professional Development Fund to increase the availability of scholarships for early childhood teachers, with a service obligation to teach in the universal preschool program for one year per each year that a scholarship is received.
7. The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) will facilitate access of early childhood teacher candidates to the loan assistance repayment program through MHEC that will assist teachers in universal preschool classrooms with the repayment of their student loans, provided that teachers will remain in their position for the duration of one year for each year of the loan.
8. MSDE, by contract, will create a substitute pool so providers have flexibility to attend meetings or day trainings.
9. MSDE and the Consortium of Community Colleges shall revise articulation between MSDE approved trainers and community colleges.
10. MSDE and MHEC will facilitate increased knowledge of and access to AAT in early childhood education programs to facilitate students' transition from community colleges to 4-year degree programs.
11. MSDE will establish incentives for community-based training workshops to assist college students in early childhood teacher certification programs to prepare for the PRAXIS examination.
12. Award bonuses each year to certified teachers in non-public programs who maintain involvement in continuing education courses and professional development activities.
13. Develop a state-wide universal preschool salary schedule for teachers in non-public school settings, which establishes defined compensation levels based on education level and years of experience, with a base salary for certified teachers equal to the average salary for certified teachers across all counties in Maryland, including the requirement for the maintenance of efforts from non-public school operators, so that universal preschool teachers in non-public school settings will be compensated comparably to teachers in the public school system. Allow jurisdictions to supplement salaries as desired to adjust for discrepancies between public and non-public school salaries and increase teacher retention.

14. Offer all universal preschool staff (lead teachers and assistant teachers) state employee health insurance and retirement programs, and membership in the teachers' credit union.
15. MSDE shall facilitate the expansion and support of professional development school (PDS) networks for preschool teachers across the state. Require universal preschool providers to become a PDS partner and accept interns from teacher education programs who need to complete internship placements.
16. Appoint a group of representatives from the culturally and linguistically diverse, low-income, and special needs communities in the state to work in an advisory capacity with MSDE to create a statewide agenda of priorities for diversity issues as they pertain to early care and education. Utilize workforce development dollars to build the professional capacity of limited-English proficient (LEP) providers, so that they may work towards becoming part of the universal preschool system.
  - Several key components that are unique to these populations include:
    - a. Cultural brokering
    - b. Culturally competent mentoring and peer professional development support
    - c. Transitional training in the native language
    - d. Technical assistance
    - e. Bridge training
    - f. Content-based English as a second language
17. In the current child care system, create Child and Family Network Centers to offer services to LEP families, such as family literacy and ESOL, which could also provide employment to parents as teachers.
18. Allow MSDE to develop a workgroup to design a Birth-Eight Teacher Certification for child care providers with a blended curriculum to include children that are typically developing as well as those with special needs.





## Plans for Workforce Development

There is a current shortage of certified early childhood teachers in the State of Maryland. At the start of the 2007-08 school year, there were 10,708 teachers with early childhood education certification. In May 2007, there were 254 graduates of teacher education programs with a certification in early childhood (Pre-k-3), and approximately 280 students are expected to graduate in 2008. In order to reach the goal of having certified teachers in all *Preschool for All* classrooms, in both public and non-public school settings, there will need to be a phase-in period during which the current workforce of teachers can work towards their required degree and certification.

During the “build-up” phase (recommended to occur from 2010 to 2014), lead teachers in child care, Head Start, and nursery school programs must meet a minimum of Level 6 requirements of the Maryland Child Care Credentialing program in order to teach in a universal preschool classroom. Teachers with lower credentials must devise a professional development plan that outlines the steps they will take to achieve Level 6. Monetary bonuses may be given to teachers when they complete Levels 4+, 5, and 6 in the tiered credentialing system to encourage their efforts to achieve certification. There are currently 445 child care staff (1.6% of all child care staff in Maryland) with a Level 6 credential and 299 child care staff (1.1% of all child care staff in the State) with a Level 5 credential. Other child care staff may have the qualifications to meet these levels; however, they are not currently participating in the voluntary credentialing system.

Additionally, since the family child care system has different regulations and educational requirements, a separate pathway will be created for family child care providers to meet professional development standards to participate in the universal preschool system. Policies will be worked out in the planning phase of the program as to how to train all universal preschool teachers on the MMSR.

### *Goal #4: Implementation Plan to Engage Business Community and General Public*

The economic feasibility study conducted by RESI estimated the costs and benefits of a universal preschool program in the State of Maryland. In efforts to convey to the business community and the general public that universal preschool is beneficial for the state and local economy and society as a whole, a business plan must be developed addressing these costs and benefits. A business plan would attract supporters of the program by demonstrating not only the lasting effects on children’s achievement, but also the impact on the daily

lives of families, including increased family income, which can be invested in the economy, and enhanced parental performance in the workplace. The Task Force directed MSDE to develop a business plan by December 2008, which will offer the rationale for providing access to prekindergarten to all four-year-olds. The plan will include direct and indirect costs associated with its implementation.

### **Task Force Recommendation:**

**Under the guidance of MSDE, develop a business plan addressing the economic impact of the universal preschool program on the cost of care of families accessing the program and the total benefits on Maryland’s economy.**

## Goal #5: Program Conceptual Framework

Each year, the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University examines and rates the quality of state preschool programs across the country. Program quality is assessed on the 10 benchmarks below, which are linked to positive child outcomes in early childhood research. The Task Force recommended that it be a state goal to use the NIEER benchmarks to improve program quality, as they reflect best practices in high quality preschool programs.

1. *Curriculum standards.* The state must have comprehensive curriculum standards that are specific to prekindergarten and cover the domains of language/literacy, mathematics, science, social/emotional skills, cognitive development, health and physical development, and social studies.
2. *Teacher degree requirement.* Lead teachers in both public and private settings must hold at least a bachelor's degree.
3. *Teacher specialized training requirement.* Pre-service requirements for lead teachers must include specialized training in prekindergarten. Kindergarten endorsements and elementary teaching certificates do not qualify.
4. *Assistant teacher degree requirement.* Assistant teachers are required to hold a CDA or equivalent training.
5. *Teacher in-service requirement.* Teachers must be required to attend at least 15 clock hours of professional development per year.
6. *Maximum class size.* Class sizes must be limited to no more than 20 children for both three- and four-year-olds.
7. *Staff-child ratio.* At least one staff member must be present per 10 children in a classroom for three- and four-year-olds.
8. *Screening/referral requirements.* Programs are required to provide both screening and referral services covering at least vision, hearing, and health. Programs must

### Delivering *Preschool for All* to Children in Family Child Care

MSDE will establish networks of family child care homes, which will consist of non-profit organizations as fiscal agents responsible for coordinating by contract a group of family child care providers. The providers must be accredited by the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) and committed to providing services to three- and four-year-old children. The network is defined by contract stipulating the terms of a contract which include, among others, substitute arrangements, required professional development, and a provider membership fee.

The networks will receive funds to recruit a certified teacher in early childhood education who will visit the family child care homes on a regular basis to provide early learning services to eligible children. On occasion, the providers will have group learning experiences at an appropriate location, such as a community center, Judy Center, or other facility. The networks are responsible for providing the services according to the *Preschool for All* standards, including curriculum and support services.

offer, either directly or through active referral, at least one type of additional support service for families of participants or the participants themselves. Types of services may include parent conferences or home visits, parenting support or training, referral to social services, and information related to nutrition.

9. *Meal requirements.* All participants must be offered at least one meal per day. Snacks are not counted as meals.
10. *Monitoring.* Program site visits must be used to assess adherence to state program standards.

## Task Force Recommendation:

Adopt the National Institute for Early Education Research's (NIEER) 10 Quality Benchmarks for High-Quality Preschool Education as a framework for Maryland's universal preschool program, which will include the following criteria:

1. *Curriculum standards.* Universal preschool programs must implement a state-recommended comprehensive curriculum, MSDE- approved individually developed curriculum, or local school system curriculum that aligns with the MMSR, VSC, and *Guidelines for Healthy Child Development and Care of Young Children*.
2. *Teacher certification requirement.* Lead teachers in both public and private settings must meet state certification standards.
3. *Teacher specialized training requirement.* Pre-service requirements for lead teachers must include specialized training in early childhood education. Elementary teaching certificates alone will not qualify.
4. *Assistant teacher degree requirement.* Assistant teachers must hold a minimum of a high school diploma, but preferably a CDA or equivalent training (i.e., Level 4 in Credentialing Program).
5. *Teacher recertification requirement.* Teachers must attend a specified number of hours of approved professional development per year.
6. *Maximum class size.* Class sizes must be limited to no more than 20 children for four-year-olds and no more than 16 children for three-year-olds.
7. *Staff-child ratio.* At least one staff member must be present per 10 children in a classroom for four-year-olds and per 8 children for three-year-olds.
8. *Screening/referral requirements.* Programs must provide both screening and referral services covering at least vision, hearing, speech and language, health and physical development. Programs also must offer, either directly or through coordination with local school systems, local health and social service departments, additional support services for participants, which may include English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) services, parenting support or training, physical and mental health and wellness services, and early intervention for children with disabilities and/or special health care needs, including medical interventions within inclusive settings.
9. *Meal requirements.* All participants must be offered at least one full meal per day if preschool services are offered for more than 2.5 hours, in accordance with the Child and Adult Care Food Program.
10. *Monitoring.* Each year programs, receiving grant funding from MSDE, shall conduct a self-evaluation to assess program quality according to these quality indicators and report performance data to MSDE. MSDE will conduct two site visits each year. Programs not meeting standards and in need of improvement must create a program improvement plan identifying the steps they will take to fulfill each standard. Additional site visits should be conducted to assess improvement and adherence to quality standards.

### *Goal #6: Program Evaluation Methods*

To evaluate the effectiveness of any educational program on participants' achievement, data must be collected from each participant both before and after program implementation. All *Preschool for All* programs will be required to use the prekindergarten version of the modified WSS™ to assess children's skills and behaviors during the first and last quarters of the school year. Additionally, the MMSR Kindergarten Assessment is administered during

the first quarter of kindergarten to all students to measure their school readiness. These data will be entered into the state system according to students' unique student identification number to allow for the tracking of student achievement over time. The Task Force also recommended that MSDE identify an independent evaluator to determine the short-term and long-term effects of *Preschool for All*.

#### **Task Force Recommendations:**

- 1. Use the 10 quality benchmarks of the universal preschool system conceptual framework and the developmental and educational outcomes for children on the WSS™ as the key components of the program evaluation tool.**
- 2. Collect and analyze student data reported annually from the MMSR Kindergarten Assessment on all children enrolled in the universal preschool program.**
- 3. After program implementation, conduct an external evaluation to measure the effectiveness of the *Preschool for All* program.**



## Endnotes

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16. Maryland Committee for Children. (2007). *Trends in child care, 2007*. Baltimore, MD: Author.

As a concept, I absolutely agree that the universal preschool program is most likely to have its benefit on the families and the children that are economically at risk compared to more affluent families in the State of Maryland... But as a parent who is not economically disadvantaged, I think it is important to remember that all children of all families in the State of Maryland should be able to benefit from what we are attempting to do here, which is to get every 4-year-old ready for kindergarten.

*-T. Sky Woodward,  
Parent of preschooler in Baltimore City*

