



# THE JUDITH P. HOYER EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION ENHANCEMENT GRANT FOR PRESCHOOL SERVICES

## MARYLAND'S PILOT PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS



Maryland State Department of Education



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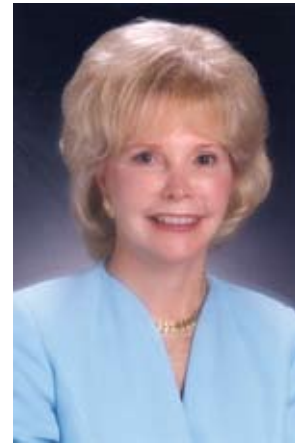
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June 25, 2009

Dear Colleague:

I am pleased to provide with you with this summary report describing six collaborative partnerships to provide prekindergarten services in Maryland. These programs, funded through the Judith P. Hoyer Early Care and Education Enhancement Grant for Preschool Services, highlight the establishment of six public-private partnerships between local education agencies and community-based providers, such as Head Start and private child care centers, each presenting a unique model for implementing a prekindergarten program resulting in positive outcomes for children.

The major results of the report are:

- The partnerships demonstrate various program models through which services are provided, such as an integrated approach, targeted approach, Head Start add-on approach, and Head Start/Prekindergarten blended approach;
- The partnerships used the funding in various ways to enhance program quality while offering a tuition discount to families, with some programs spreading the available funding across the maximum number of children and other programs providing larger discounts and year-round services to a smaller group of children;
- There is a need to expand early childhood programs to three-year-olds in addition to four-year-olds, as the younger children served in the pilot programs are demonstrating the greatest improvements;
- These partnerships have been successful in terms of collaboration, improvements in both classroom quality and the provision of services to children and families, and, above all, positive outcomes for children.

The lessons learned from these public-private partnership projects will have significant implications for the expansion of publicly funded prekindergarten to accredited, non-public child care providers in the community. I encourage you to read this report and work with the community child care providers in your area, so that we may collaborate and combine efforts to best serve the needs of Maryland's children.

Sincerely,

Nancy S. Grasmick  
State Superintendent of Schools

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# Overview of Report

In December 2007, the Task Force on Universal Preschool Education released a report outlining their recommendations to the Governor and the Maryland General Assembly in regards to the expansion of Maryland's targeted prekindergarten program into a *Preschool for All* program, which would serve all four-year-olds regardless of income level whose families sought enrollment.<sup>1</sup> The focus of the Task Force was to explore strategies for expanding high-quality prekindergarten services beyond the operation of the prekindergarten required under the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act.<sup>2</sup> The Task Force recognized the impact of program expansion on the local school systems—many of which have been over capacity since the implementation of full-day kindergarten—and on community-based child care centers and private preschool programs, which typically depend on the tuition dollars from four-year-olds to operate their programs. Accordingly, the Task Force recommended the inclusion of diverse settings in the *Preschool for All* system. Such settings would include private community-based child care and preschool programs, Head Start centers, nursery schools, faith-based preschool programs, and family child care programs. However, regardless of setting, programs would be held to the same quality standards. It was also recommended that the *Preschool for All* program operate as a grant-based program and that MSDE provide the oversight and monitoring of the grants, which would be awarded to local jurisdictions and private providers to implement preschool services.

As a first step to integrate private providers into the public system, MSDE has worked to promote the establishment of partnerships among local public school systems and private providers in the community. In March 2008, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) released a request for proposals for partnership projects under *The Judith P. Hoyer Early Child Care and Education Enhancement Grant for Preschool Services* (a.k.a.

“Preschool Services Grant”), which would serve as pilot projects regarding the recommendations of the Task Force. The grant was available to any state licensed and accredited early childhood program that proposed to use funds to provide prekindergarten in accordance with COMAR 13A.06.02 (Prekindergarten Regulations) and that entered into a collaborative arrangement with a local school system. In order to be eligible, providers were required to meet each of the 10 Benchmarks for High-Quality Preschool Education stated in the Task Force recommendations report. MSDE received thirteen proposals and awarded six grants for FY09 and FY10 for an average amount per site of \$105,000 each year.

This report summarizes the requirements of the Preschool Services Grant and describes each of the six funded partnership projects. Specifically, it examines how the public-private partnerships came to be and the role each collaborator plays in implementing the program. Information will be presented on how the programs are using the grant money to provide prekindergarten services and the benefits of such a partnership. The report will conclude with future directions for this grant project and how data gathered from the pilot sites should be used.





# Description of the Judith P. Hoyer Early Care and Education Enhancement Grant for Preschool Services

The Judith P. Hoyer Early Care and Education Enhancement Grant for Preschool Services (henceforth referred to as “Preschool Services Grant,” Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, Section 5-213) was established to provide funding for the provision of prekindergarten services for four-year-olds attending early childhood programs in non-public settings in collaboration with local school systems. Under the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002, all local school systems are required to provide access to prekindergarten to eligible four-year-old children whose families seek enrollment. Priority is given to children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds or who are homeless. For remaining vacancies, a local school system may enroll four-year-old children who are not economically disadvantaged but who represent a student population that exhibits a lack of readiness in a particular domain of development (e.g., English language learners). Three-year-olds who meet other eligibility requirements may also be enrolled in programs serving multi-age groups when space is available.

The Preschool Services Grant: (1) enables local school systems to partner with qualified vendors—state or nationally accredited child care centers or nonpublic schools approved by MSDE to provide prekindergarten program services—in order to meet this mandate, and (2) allows qualified vendors to collaborate with their local education agencies and receive direct funding from MSDE to serve prekindergarten-eligible children in their centers. All providers are required to meet the standards of a qualified vendor as defined by COMAR 13A.06.02 (Prekindergarten Regulations) in addition to the Benchmarks for High-Quality Preschool Education adopted by the Task Force on Universal Preschool Education. The quality standards include having a teacher state certified in Early Childhood Education, implementing a state-approved curriculum, and providing developmental screenings and support services (as listed on page 3). As such, the grant serves as a pilot project regarding the implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force.

In order to meet eligibility for the grant, programs were required to provide documentation in their proposals of successful completion of national or state program accreditation and evidence of having the capacity to meet the Benchmarks for High-Quality Preschool Education. Additionally, programs were asked to describe the nature of their partnership, how services would be provided as required by state regulations, and how student progress would be monitored and assessed in accordance with the *Maryland Model for School Readiness* (MMSR) assessment component. Based on the grant specifications, prekindergarten services include either a half-day (i.e., 2 ½ hours) or a full-day (i.e., 6 ½ hours) session that meets five days a week in accordance with the official schedule of the school system’s academic year. The grant requires programs to offer families whose children are enrolled in the publicly funded prekindergarten session a tuition discount of at least 20% for a half-day session or 40% for a full-day session. Documentation of how the tuition discount would be applied was required as part of the application process.

Grant funds are allowed to be used for:

- Salaries, wages, and benefits for teaching staff;
- Equipment, materials, and supplies (e.g., classroom furniture, materials of instruction, including the six MSDE recommended preschool curricula, and books for family literacy activities);
- Costs for contracts to administer the screening and intervention services for students;
- Costs associated with assessment and monitoring of students in accordance with the MMSR;
- Costs associated with the provision of professional development activities to support recertification of qualified teaching staff;
- Costs associated with the evaluation and monitoring of the program (not exceed 5% of the total fund request); and
- Indirect costs incurred in operating the program (not exceed 10% of the total fund request).



# Benchmarks for High-Quality Preschool Education

In 2007, the Task Force on Universal Preschool Education recommended that the State of Maryland adopt these 10 quality benchmarks as a framework for Maryland's Preschool for All program. The benchmarks are based on those established by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University. The benchmarks reflect best practices in high-quality preschool programs and are linked to positive child academic and developmental outcomes. Programs that sought funding through the Preschool Services Grant were required to demonstrate how they met each of the 10 benchmarks in order to meet eligibility.

## **1. Curriculum standards.**

Universal preschool programs must implement a state-recommended comprehensive curriculum, an MSDE-approved individually developed curriculum, or a local school system curriculum that aligns with the MMSR, Voluntary State Curriculum (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 teacher certification standards for Early Childhood Education (Pre-K–3).

## **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 Child Development Associate (CDA) or equivalent training (i.e., Level 4 in Child Care 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, or 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 ½ hours, in accordance with the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

## **10. Monitoring.**

Each year programs receiving grant funding from MSDE must 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 will be conducted to assess improvement and adherence to quality standards.

## 2008-2010 Grantees

### THE YOUNG SCHOOL (KINGS CONTRIVANCE) WITH THE HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

The Young School is a privately-owned corporation of early care and education centers that has maintained a long-standing presence in Howard County. In an effort to provide high-quality prekindergarten services to families who cannot afford it, The Young School at the Kings Contrivance location recently partnered with the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) to obtain state funding to subsidize the high cost of tuition for eligible families. Through the Preschool Services Grant, The Young School and the Howard County Early Childhood Office work together to identify and recruit families who have needs not currently served by the public school prekindergarten program. In particular, they are targeting lower-income families who do not meet the income eligibility requirement for the public school program but whose incomes are under 300% of

the federal poverty level (a first threshold proposed in the recent *Preschool for All Business Plan*<sup>3</sup>), as well as English language learners. Recently, Howard County has seen a large influx of families with limited English proficiency, and although HCPSS would like to be able to service children from these lower-income families who are not eligible, the system does not have the capacity to do so. The Young School is able to provide scholarships for these children, so that they may benefit from a high-quality prekindergarten program at a discounted rate.

#### RECRUITMENT

Recruitment for The Young School prekindergarten program has been a collaborative effort between The Young School and HCPSS. Families who were already enrolled at The Young School who were identified as being eligible were referred to the scholarship program and offered financial assistance



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**“Our income is limited.... While we were willing to make the sacrifices necessary to have Lily in a quality program, receiving the scholarship has eliminated much of the burden. Our child care expenses every month are greatly reduced and allow us flexibility in our budget that, in turn, reduces our financial stress.”**

*—Nikki Mitchell,  
parent of grant-funded child*

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when they qualified. During prekindergarten registration, the pilot program was promoted as The Young School was listed among other accredited prekindergarten sites in the county. School administrators were also educated about the eligibility requirements for the new program (i.e., 300% of the federal poverty threshold) and referred families who fit the criteria. The Howard County International Office has also referred families with four-year-olds who are English language learners to The Young School for educational services. Additionally, the grant funding has been used to hire a contracted liaison for The Young School, HCPSS, and other outside agencies in an effort to target outreach efforts and advertise the program through faith-based organizations, crisis intervention service locations, and other community sites where eligible families may learn of the services available.

#### SCHEDULE, TUITION AND ENROLLMENT

The Young School at the Kings Contrivance location operates as a full-day child care program from 7:00am to 6:00pm, five days a week, and currently serves 286 children from birth through kindergarten. The prekindergarten program funded through the partnership is a half-day academic program that runs from 9:00am to 12:00pm. Families receiving scholarships through the Preschool Services Grant may choose to attend only the academic portion of the day, or may enroll for the full day and pay for before- and after-care. This tuition rate for the half-day prekindergarten program is \$105 per week with a 20% discount for grant funded families lowering the total to \$84 per week, or \$336.00 per month. Registration and supply fees are also paid through grant funds for participating families. Income-eligible families may also apply for child care subsidy vouchers<sup>4</sup> to

lessen the costs of tuition. The difference between tuition costs and the voucher amount is typically covered by the scholarship. Currently, 10 families (6 income-eligible and 4 language-eligible) are receiving scholarships. During the FY10 school year, the goal is to serve 20 children in this program. The children receiving scholarships are not enrolled into one separate class, but rather are integrated into one of three preschool “cottages” in the center with full-tuition-paying children, thus allowing them to access all aspects of the center. The goal of The Young School has been to create a seamless integration of this grant; therefore, all children receive the benefits of the added programs and services funded through the grant.

#### CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT AND STAFF

The Young School pioneered what is referred to as the “cottage learning environment,” a patented design that provides a community-based, home-like learning space where teachers and children are active participants and learners. The Young School in Kings Contrivance has infant cottages serving children from 8 weeks through 2 years, and four preschool cottages for children ages 2 through 4 years. Children become part of a cottage when they enter The Young School and remain in the same cottage throughout their time at the school, allowing them to develop close relationships with their peers and teachers. Each preschool cottage consists of a toddler room and two joining classroom spaces for three- and four-year-olds—a great room and a project room. The great room contains learning centers that focus on social-emotional development and cooperative skills, such as dramatic play, a block area, and a loft area where children can climb. The project room is designed to provide children with hands-on learning opportunities



in the areas of art, language, literacy, math, and science. Each cottage has a Cottage Director who supports teachers through training, role-modeling, guiding of behavioral management, and completion of administrative tasks. The preschool area of each cottage has 4 teachers and up to 40 children. There is a “great room” teacher, an art teacher, a language/literacy teacher, and a math/science teacher. The language/literacy and math/science content area teachers are state certified in early childhood education or have a Bachelor’s degree and are completing the necessary requirements for certification. These teachers are hired and paid as full-time employees of The Young School, as they are present in the classroom from at least 9:00am to 3:00pm, and work extended hours as needed. The Preschool Services Grant currently supplements the salaries of the certified teachers (6 total across the 3 cottages) for the prekindergarten session to be comparable to the salary level of a part-time Howard County public school teacher. The grant also covers the cost of fees associated with the Praxis II exam, which is required for teacher certification. Additionally, within each cottage, children are divided into primary care groups consisting of up to 10 children and 1 teacher who serves as their primary caregiver. Although children engage in activities with the different teachers in their cottage throughout the day (e.g., literacy circle, math circle), there is a 45-minute block of time in the afternoon when teachers meet with their primary



care groups to focus on their specific needs. When more than one primary care group is engaged in activities with other primary care groups, the staff-child ratios are never more than 1 adult to 10 children.

#### CURRICULUM

The Young School has a unique prekindergarten curriculum that was approved by MSDE as an individually developed curriculum that meets state learning standards. The teaching philosophy is influenced by the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education, which is rooted in the belief that education should not be taught at a child but should be an interactive and creative process that includes the children, teachers, and families, thus creating a community of learners. The Reggio Emilia approach values the “hundred languages of children.” As described in the school’s advertisements, “Our teachers are trained to see children through many lenses as they express their knowledge in a multitude of ways: through language, dance, clay, fine arts, math, problem solving, writing, physics, social interactions, computers, drama, story telling, blocks, drawing, reading, and the languages continue.” The curriculum is built around six foundation projects, including Light, Water, Reflection; Patterns,



Weaving, and Structures; and Color and Change. The project themes serve as an overall guide, but teachers decide how to approach the projects based on children's developing interests. For example, one classroom that was studying building structures took a field trip to the National Aquarium in Baltimore to study the design of the building and the Baltimore City skyline. They created planned architectural drawings of their observations and later returned to their classroom and transformed their loft space into "an aquarium" and "downtown building" using their drawings as a guide for their artistic creations. The project targeted vocabulary development, knowledge of shapes and measurement, scientific observation and representational skills, and fine motor skills through their drawing and writing.

Children's work is well documented and highly valued, as it is displayed around the school to share with others and to communicate what the children are learning. Projects are documented throughout their development through photographs and teacher observations and reflections, thus providing opportunities for children to revisit the topics they learned. Although the curriculum is child-centered and allows for autonomy and choice, the projects have an overall learning goal and outcome in mind. Additionally, the preschool cottages have integrated the *Let's Begin with the Letter People* curriculum into their program to enhance their literacy activities



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*The Preschool Services Grant currently supplements the salaries of the certified teachers (6 total across the 3 cottages) for the prekindergarten session to be comparable to the salary level of a part-time Howard County public school teacher.*

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and align with the HCPSS prekindergarten language arts curriculum.

#### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Each staff member at The Young School devises a professional development plan which is revised each year. This plan outlines all professional development activities in which the staff member will participate. The Young School currently provides 18 clock hours of Core of Knowledge staff development training per year for all staff. Teachers are also encouraged to use training vouchers from the Maryland Child Care Credential program and funding from the Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund established by MSDE to pursue college coursework. Teachers involved in this grant have the opportunity to attend in-service training and other professional development activities provided by HCPSS. Additionally, HCPSS sponsored three grant teachers to attend the Ready at Five Science Symposium in the fall. Grant funding also supports teachers in pursuing or maintaining their state teaching certification, including taking the Praxis II exams as needed.

Additionally, the collaborating partners are exploring the possibility of providing employee benefits offered through the public school system to participating teachers. This would include health, vision, and dental insurance plans, as well as other benefits that are offered to public school employees. Costs associated with providing such benefits are being negotiated between the HCPSS



and The Young School. At the present time, The Young School offers employee benefits for full-time staff, including group health care and supplemental insurance.

#### SCREENING AND REFERRAL SERVICES

Through communication between The Young School and its partners there was a consensus that The Young School should establish the highest standards of care as a model program for the Preschool Services Grant. Thus, all four-year-olds, not only those who are grant-funded, are receiving hearing and vision screenings through the Howard County Health Department and development screenings completed by their teachers. The HCPSS Office of Early Intervention Services will provide training and technical assistance to teachers on the selected developmental screening tools—*Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)* and *Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional (ASQ-SE)*<sup>5</sup>. With funding through the Preschool Services Grant, The Young School has contracted with PACT:

Helping Children with Special Needs, an affiliate of the Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore, to offer mentoring and one-on-one consulting for teachers who are working with children identified as needing additional support services. PACT also provides training to all staff on working with children with disabilities, as well as education on working with challenging behaviors. This training and information is also available to parents as needed. If additional services are required for identified children, The Young School works with the Howard County Office of Early Intervention Services to arrange for such services. As a result of this community collaboration, the Howard County Health Department has agreed to provide vision and hearing screenings to all incoming prekindergarten children throughout the county, beginning in the near future. Additionally, starting in the fall of 2009, all prekindergarten classrooms in Howard County will implement the ASQ developmental screener, so all children who present a development delay or special need may be identified and referred.



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*PACT also provides training to all staff on working with children with disabilities, as well as education on working with challenging behaviors.*

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#### ADDITIONAL SERVICES FOR FAMILIES

The Young School hosts parent workshops several times a year to provide information to families about school readiness and activities to promote children's learning. In addition to these workshops, families receiving scholarships are also provided assistance in completing all related school forms as well as applications for social and health services, such as child care subsidy vouchers, Maryland Children's Health Program (MCHP), Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC), Healthy Howard Access Plan, and other necessary services. Also, in alignment with the meal requirement under the quality benchmarks, The Young School offers breakfast, afternoon snack, and lunch milk to all children in the school. The Young School has chosen to incorporate the cost of providing a full breakfast for all children into their annual operating budget.

#### TRANSITION PROJECT

The Young School has been selected to be a part of the Howard County Transition Committee, along with HCPSS, Howard County Office of Children's Services, Howard County Head Start, the local Judy Center, Howard County Community College, Howard County Public Library, and other county agencies, child care centers, and community members. The ultimate goal of the transition project is to establish open lines of communication between the private child care community and the public school system, and to develop more standardized methods of data collection and sharing between the prekindergarten programs and

the public school kindergartens. The Committee has also met to share information and establish a consistent message about school readiness to communicate to families in order to create a smooth transition into kindergarten. The Young School is participating as one of several pilot sites for transition activities and procedures established by the Committee. Such activities include maintaining open conversations with public elementary school principals and kindergarten teachers, collecting assessment data on prekindergarten students to give to kindergarten teachers to measure children's development longitudinally, taking field trips to public schools to visit kindergarten classrooms, and offering workshops for parents about the public school system and how to prepare their children for kindergarten. "We want to create awareness for children and parents so they are comfortable with the idea of kindergarten and have the background knowledge they need," noted Randi Albertsen, Project Manager for The Young School's Preschool Services Grant.





## BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM WITH DOWNTOWN BALTIMORE CHILD CARE, INC.

With a rate of low-income children of approximately 80 percent, the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) currently has 210 prekindergarten classrooms, most of which run full-day programs, and two new Regional Early Learning Centers, each of which houses four prekindergarten classrooms. In order to maintain increased access to prekindergarten, the BCPSS has collaborated with Head Start centers and child care centers to open prekindergarten classrooms within high-risk inner city neighborhoods in Baltimore City. Since the fall of 2006, the BCPSS has partnered with the Downtown Baltimore Child Care, Inc. (DBCC) to provide prekindergarten to the most economically disadvantaged, at-risk children in the Mount Vernon community. The program serves four-year-olds in the attendance areas of four Baltimore City elementary schools that have failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). DBCC has served as a model program for other BCPSS-Head Start-child care collaborative programs.

Accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, DBCC is a nonprofit organization that provides full-day (7:30am-5:30pm), year-round early childhood education services to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers through individualized, play-based, and interactive learning in a diverse community. DBCC has a consortium of Baltimore businesses and organizations, including Johns Hopkins University, University of Maryland at Baltimore, and the Law Firm of Miles & Stockbridge, to which it gives preference in selecting children for enrollment in child care. As an integrated prekindergarten program, the BCPSS-DBCC partnership serves eight income-eligible children from the community plus eight tuition-paying children who are recruited by DBCC, thus representing families from diverse backgrounds and socioeconomic levels. The public prekindergarten program is a 6 ½-hour program that runs according to the BCPSS school hours and calendar. In addition, DBCC provides before- and after-care services throughout the school year, child



care on school holidays, and a full-day summer program. The rate of tuition for children enrolled in the program is based upon family income. The Preschool Services Grant is used to fully fund the tuition fees for the 6 ½-hour prekindergarten program, the 3 ½ hours of before and after care, and the full-day summer program for the eight income-eligible children. The majority of the grant funding is used to pay the lead teacher's salary, while DBCC covers the cost of a full-time assistant teacher and a part-time assistant for the afternoons. The cost of materials is split equally between BCPSS and DBCC. Since DBCC does not have to pay for the lead teacher or her benefits (which are covered in-kind by BCPSS) during the academic year, the additional eight children from non-income-eligible families receive a discount on tuition and before and after care. However, these families pay full tuition fees for the summer program, during which DBCC employs and compensates the lead teacher.

Announcements about the program are made on both the BCPSS and DBCC websites in order to recruit eligible families. The four area public schools and the Baltimore City DRU Judy Center Partnership also notify families of openings. Interested families fill out and return an application form, and a Judy Center Service Coordinator conducts intake interviews and forwards notes to the selection committee consisting of a representative from both BCPSS and DBCC. Efforts are made to select children most in need who would benefit from both the high-quality care environment and the extended program hours, such as those with parents who work full-time and/or are in school, or who are homeless.

Children have access to all services and resources afforded to BCPSS students. Screening and referral services are provided at DBCC through the services established between the BCPSS and DRU Judy Center Partnership. These services include: health, vision, hearing, and speech/language screenings; access to a mental health therapist at the University of Maryland Mental Health Systems; referrals

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*The Preschool Services Grant is used to fully fund the tuition fees for the 6 ½-hour prekindergarten program, the 3 ½ hours of before and after care, and the full-day summer program for eight income-eligible children.*

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to Child Find; and early intervention services for children with disabilities. Case management services are provided to screen for eligibility and to determine needed services. Children also participate in the BCPSS lunch program throughout the school year and during the summer program and receive breakfast at DBCC through the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Supervision, training, and evaluation of program staff are part of a collaborative effort between BCPSS and DBCC. The 2008-2009 school year was the first during which John Eager Howard Elementary School served as a liaison between BCPSS and DBCC. The school principal recently added a position out of the school's budget for a consultant to assist with the DBCC program. The consultant comes into the prekindergarten classroom on a regular basis to provide supervision, curriculum support, and technical assistance for the teachers. Daily on-site supervision is also provided by the Executive Director of DBCC, Margo Sipes. Both the lead and assistant teacher participate in training activities provided by DBCC as well as professional development activities provided by BCPSS. The teachers also participate in a mentoring program as one of the primary means of support. They are paired with the John Eager Howard Elementary School and the DRU Judy Center Partnership staff for biweekly prekindergarten team meetings and other BCPSS early childhood education activities. The teachers are evaluated by both BCPSS and DBCC based on classroom observations and staff self-evaluations.

The BCPSS Director of Early Intervention Programs and Services, Dr. Cascelia Burgess, in collaboration with the Executive Director of DBCC, is supervising and evaluating the overall program to ensure effectiveness. The following data elements are being collected and reviewed: (1) number of children enrolled in prekindergarten; (2) characteristics of newly enrolled families; (3) number and percent of families who have remained in the program; (4) hours of instruction and before and after care services; (5) hours of early education service and rate of participation in the summer program; and (6) percent of children attaining a rating of “Proficient” on each standard identified in the Prekindergarten Assessment, a modified version of the Work Sampling System® (WSS). In addition, several instruments are being used to monitor the program and staff performance, including: MSDE accreditation standards and criteria; the Prekindergarten Assessment; the *Open Court* Curriculum Assessment; the *The Creative Curriculum*® for Preschool Developmental Continuum Assessment; the BCPSS Teacher Evaluation Criteria; and the DBCC Staff Evaluation Rubric.

Additionally, at the end of each academic year, BCPSS/DBCC prekindergarten administrators will conduct a parent survey to determine where participating children will be attending kindergarten. Parents will be asked to fill out permission slips allowing BCPSS to access the children’s fall Kindergarten Assessment scores at the school they attend in order to track children’s performance longitudinally. Over the past few years, BCPSS has seen a large increase in the number of children “fully ready” at the start of kindergarten as a result of the expansion of full-day programs. The plan is to track those children currently enrolled to provide evidence of the effectiveness of this pilot program in regards to the implementation of the quality benchmarks.

The partners recommend to other administrators that they be proactive and not reactive in their planning and implementation of such a partnership. It is necessary to have a school administrator who wants to work with partners, to have regular collaboration meetings, and maintain open lines of communication. The local school systems and child care providers often have different philosophical views of early childhood education and how it should look. The BCPSS/DBCC partners advocate building on existing programs and partnerships, such as the Judy Centers, and pulling together all available funding sources and resources in the community to create programs that can serve all of children’s developmental and learning needs.





## CATHOLIC CHARITIES HEAD START OF CARROLL COUNTY WITH CARROLL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Through the Preschool Services Grant, the Catholic Charities Head Start of Carroll County has enhanced its partnership and collaboration with Carroll County Public Schools (CCPS) by extending two of its seven half-day Head Start sessions into full-day Head Start/Prekindergarten programs. The combination program provides a seamless full day of services to children in the greatest areas of need in Carroll County. One classroom is located in Taneytown and serves children in the Taneytown and Runnymede school districts. The other is located in Westminster and serves children in the Westminster, Manchester, and South Carroll areas. Priority is given to low-income families who meet the Head Start income eligibility guidelines and demonstrate a need for full-day services. In the past, eligible families had to choose either Head Start or prekindergarten through the public school system—both of which were half-day programs, which required parents to locate and pay for before and after care. Currently, the 3 ½-hour Head Start session in two classrooms, funded with federal dollars, has been extended by 2 ½ hours with grant funding to create a blended 6-hour session. This schedule better suits the child care needs of working families. No tuition fees are charged to families for the additional hours since Head Start is subsidized by the government and does not charge fees.

Classroom teachers are employed 8 hours per day—5 hours funded with Head Start monies and 3 hours funded by the Preschool Services Grant—with 2 of those hours designated for planning time. A State Supplemental Grant for Head Start has also allowed the program to expand staffing and add an additional part-time assistant to each of the two Head Start classrooms. This has enabled the program to serve more children—from the previous 17 children to 20 children in each class. Since Head Start and prekindergarten are provided at the same location with the same teachers, children experience few transitions and do not need to be transported to a different location for afternoon care. By providing

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**“We’ve seen measurable progress for children..there’s been steady improvement in Work Sampling System scores...The three-year-olds have shown the greatest increases in scores and will benefit from being in the program for two years.”**

—Sister Nancy Stiles,  
Center Director

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services to the neediest children in the county, Catholic Charities Head Start has relieved the demand on the local public schools that were faced with an increased demand for prekindergarten among eligible four-year-olds. Children are identified through the Head Start annual self-assessment and through conversations with officials of the public school system. CCPS refers eligible children in the Westminster and Taneytown School areas to the identified Head Start/Prekindergarten full-day classrooms. These two classrooms serve mostly four-year-olds, but since Head Start is a mixed-age program, some three-year-olds are enrolled.

The MSDE-approved *Creative Curriculum* is used in these classes and is supplemented with materials and activities prescribed in the CCPS prekindergarten curriculum. The *Second Step* anti-violence program has also been implemented in all Head Start and Judy Center classrooms in Carroll County. Initial training and mentoring support was provided for Head Start staff by Judy Center staff. The Judy Center behavior management specialist also provides consultation to Head Start staff as needed in cases of behavior management issues, in addition to the services provided by the Head Start mental health consultant.

The lead prekindergarten classroom teachers, both of whom are state certified in early childhood education and have or are pursuing a Master’s degree, join CCPS prekindergarten

staff for professional development, training, and networking to meet recertification requirements. Professional development includes the Institute for Prekindergarten Teachers/Assistants in June, new teacher training during the summer, and monthly staff meetings to share curriculum ideas and align expectations for children attending both programs. Teachers also have opportunities to observe in other prekindergarten classrooms throughout the year. CCPS and the Catholic Charities Head Start have previously participated in joint trainings through their collaborative relationship at the Judy Center of Carroll County. This partnership has been enhanced as a result of additional grant funding, which has had very positive effects on the program.

The prekindergarten program is in total compliance with Head Start standards. Children receive all appropriate health and developmental screenings, and funding from the grant has allowed the program to expand its mental health and support services for children and families. Health screenings (vision, hearing, nutrition, etc.) are administered in partnership with the Carroll County Health

Department and are mostly completed at the annual Health Fair in August of each year. Catholic Charities Head Start administers the required Head Start initial and ongoing screenings and assessments. The *Ages & Stages Social Emotional Questionnaire* is administered within 45 days of enrollment according to the Head Start Performance Standards. The *Learning Accomplishment Profile—Diagnostic Assessment (LAP-D)*<sup>6</sup> is given at the time of enrollment, which identifies children's individual skill development in four major developmental domains: gross motor, fine motor, cognitive, and language. Early intervention services for children with disabilities and/or special health care needs are provided through referrals to Child Find, the Head Start health and mental health consultants, and with services through the Judy Center Partnership.

Additionally, the county's literacy and math assessments for prekindergarten are administered twice per year. CCPS provides training and technical support for the LAP-D and county assessments, as well as initial MMSR training for Head Start and prekindergarten teachers. Catholic Charities





Head Start provides ongoing training for their staff on the use of the MMSR and the Prekindergarten Assessment, in addition to all Head Start required trainings, such as Child Abuse and Neglect.

Head Start staff collects all student data, which is submitted to CCPS for analysis. The results of the Prekindergarten Assessment are used for instructional purposes and are reported to parents during parent-teacher conferences three times during the program year. Scores from the first grant year indicate large gains from the fall with the majority of four-year-olds “proficient” in all skills. Math and science skills were rated the highest and language development the lowest across the two sites.

Catholic Charities Head Start also conducts an annual self-assessment using the Head Start Performance Standards, the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS)*<sup>7</sup>, and the *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)*<sup>8</sup>. Additionally, two full meals are provided daily, following the guidelines of the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Transportation is provided with Head Start buses, but the Preschool Services Grant subsidizes the additional cost of transportation resulting from the extended day for two classrooms.

ESOL classes and adult education are offered to parents through the Carroll County adult education program, which is administered by Carroll Community College. Other support services, such as parenting support, are offered by Head Start through its parent training program, as well as through the Judy Center Partnership.

The collaboration between Head Start and the Judy Center is demonstrated through the joint participation in program committees. The Head Start Director serves on the Judy Center Partnership Steering Committee; CCPS is always represented on the Head Start Policy Council; and CCPS and Head Start are both members of the Carroll County School Readiness Team and the Early Childhood Leadership Team, sponsored by CCPS. Catholic Charities Head Start also serves as one of the locations of the Judy Center Partnership Summer Camp Program, which operates for 5 weeks during the summer for 4 hours per day. The CCPS Judy Center provides all program materials, meals, and cleaning supplies needed to provide summer camp programming and education in the classrooms, and covers the cost of facilities fees for use of the Head Start classroom space.



## THE CHILDREN'S CENTER GROUP OF WALKERSVILLE WITH FREDERICK COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Children's Center Group, Inc. is an MSDE-accredited, privately-owned, for-profit child care provider that serves children from birth through fifth grade in five locations across Frederick, Howard, and Montgomery Counties. The Children's Center Group of Walkersville (CCG), in partnership with Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS), was awarded a Preschool Services Grant to provide prekindergarten services to eligible children at its center. For more than 20 years, CCG has had an established relationship with FCPS by collaborating with feeder elementary schools to provide a continuum of services as children transfer from child care into kindergarten. The CCG has been actively involved with FCPS through the Interagency Early Childhood Committee, Child Care Choices Advisory Board, and the Local Management Board. The center has also maintained a 10-year collaboration with the Head Start program and provides space and resources to house a half-day Head Start session for eligible three- and four-year-olds. The grant partnership with FCPS has allowed the center to add an afternoon prekindergarten session to its Head Start classroom, so that eligible children may receive a full-day, high-quality program with wrap-around care in an accredited setting.

The center is open year-round from 6:30am-6:00pm. The Head Start session runs from 8:30am to 12:15pm, followed by lunch until 12:45pm. At that point, three-year-old Head Start children are dismissed to go home or are brought to another classroom at the center for child care, while the four-year-olds rest and transition into the afternoon session. The prekindergarten session runs from 1:15 to 3:45pm (2 ½ hours) and is followed by after care services for those children who need it. Both Head Start and prekindergarten are offered to eligible families free of charge. Before- and after-care services are provided at a rate of \$4.90 per hour and are individually contracted based on family needs. For example, a child who is enrolled in both Head

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*The lead prekindergarten teacher is state certified and employed part-time to plan and implement the afternoon prekindergarten session. She is compensated at a rate equivalent to a half-time, 10-month public school teacher in Frederick County.*

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Start and prekindergarten, who needs after care from 3:45pm to 5:45pm (2 hours) five days a week (10 hours), would pay \$49.00 per week.

Since only four-year-old Head Start children remain for the afternoon prekindergarten session, additional spaces are available to children within the community who meet income eligibility requirements for prekindergarten but not Head Start. The prekindergarten class currently has 19 children enrolled, 11 of whom are also in the Head Start program and 8 of whom are from the community. Therefore, those 8 community children come to the center only for prekindergarten and before and after care, if needed. Using the available classroom space at the CCG site relieves the demand for prekindergarten enrollment slots within the local public schools.

The Head Start and prekindergarten programs employ separate teaching staff to implement the respective programs; however, there is overlap in their schedules during the afternoon transition time which provides daily opportunities for joint planning. Moreover, those teams of staff collaborate with the child care staff who provide before and after care in efforts to make a seamless program and to best meet the children's needs. Team building sessions were held before the school year began to bring the teachers together. The grant primarily covers the cost of the lead and assistant teachers' salary and benefits, with the remaining amount



going towards to the cost of materials and facility maintenance fees. The lead prekindergarten teacher is state certified and employed part-time (4 ½ hours per day from 12:00-4:30pm) to plan and implement the afternoon prekindergarten session. She is compensated at a rate equivalent to a half-time, 10-month public school teacher in Frederick County. The assistant teacher is compensated as a full-time, 10-month child care employee as she arrives earlier to eat lunch with the children and provides care before and after the prekindergarten session.

The program implements both the MSDE-approved Creative Curriculum and the Frederick County prekindergarten curriculum to supplement math and language. FCPS has conducted training sessions at the CCG site and the prekindergarten teacher also participates in professional development at FCPS and the local Judy Center. Head Start has a system of assessment tools to monitor the program, staff, and student performance. Children who are enrolled in both Head Start and prekindergarten are assessed by their Head Start teachers using the

Prekindergarten Assessment and the remaining children in the prekindergarten program are evaluated by the prekindergarten teacher; therefore, assessment data are collected from all children. The FCPS prekindergarten teachers also implement *Get It! Got It! Go!*—a literacy assessment developed at the University of Minnesota<sup>9</sup>, and *Avenues*, a language arts resource<sup>10</sup>, which both align with the Prekindergarten Assessment. The program has seen improvements in children’s assessment scores since the start of the grant.

The program utilizes existing tools and services as completed by Head Start to provide health and developmental screening and referrals. Initial screening is conducted within 45 days of a student’s enrollment. Classroom staff take children’s height and weight measurements, after which a Head Start nutritional consultant analyzes the charts and identifies children who are either underweight or overweight. The *Early Screening Instrument-Revised (ESI-R)*<sup>11</sup> screening tool is used to screen for children’s developmental level. Referrals are



made to community resources if warranted by the screening results. A mental health consultant or classroom teacher implements the *Social Skills Rating System (SSRS)*<sup>12</sup> to screen children's social and emotional behaviors, and referrals are made as needed. An initial home visit is conducted for all children to collect information on children's nutrition, health, development, and family. Immunization records are checked and community health resources are made available to families. Health screenings, including dental, hearing and vision, are conducted by Health Department personnel. Additionally, newly identified students are invited to screening days in August at the Health and Community Information Expo, a Frederick County Head Start event held before the fall program begins.

The grant partners, including CCG, FCPS, Head Start, and Child Care Choices, meet on a monthly basis to discuss the grant activities. In addition to providing the facility where the program will take place and wrap-around child care services, the CCG director also provides daily supervision of program staff, a support system and technical assistance for teachers, center-based family involvement activities, ongoing communication with partners, and overall grant management. Frederick County Head Start is responsible for selecting eligible children for the program, conducting health and developmental screenings and referrals, providing staff to participate in joint daily planning, observing and monitoring Head Start teaching staff, and assisting with professional development. FCPS assists with selection of eligible students in the community, recruits, hires and trains staff, provides staff to participate in joint daily planning, observes and monitors teaching staff, and assists with professional development. Child Care Choices/Mental Health Association of Frederick County is the child care resource and referral center for Frederick and Carroll Counties. The agency partners with public and private agencies, organizations, and local governments to provide families with accessible and

affordable child care resources in their communities and to supply training and support for child care providers. Under this partnership, Child Care Choices provides assistance with professional development and outreach for teaching staff. The agency also engages family child care providers by including them in collaborative opportunities offered by the grant partners based on successful past experiences.

Additional support services are available for children and their families. Parent training workshops are held on topics such as the kindergarten transition. Family Literacy Nights and programs such as *Second Step* and *School to Home* are held to help families enhance their children's school readiness. Free resources are also available for families including: *Fitting the Pieces Together*, a curricular guide with information and specific strategies for families; *Sailing Through the System*, a tool that offers families information about FCPS; and *Raising the Sails*, a parent leadership training program sponsored by FCPS. Additionally, CCG assists families with the kindergarten enrollment process at the local elementary schools.



## PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITH GREENBELT CHILDREN'S CENTER

During the past seven years, Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) has partnered with Greenbelt Children's Center (GCC), a private, Tiered Reimbursement Four Star early care and education center accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, to provide high-quality prekindergarten services to low-income children in the community. Given the high number of children eligible for prekindergarten in the Greenbelt area, this partnership has allowed PGCPS to serve an additional 20 children each year. Through this partnership, PGCPS and GCC combine resources to create a full-day prekindergarten program. GCC is opened from 7:00am to 6:00pm and year-round, thus meeting the needs of working parents all within one location.

The Prince George's County Public School Office of Early Childhood reported that, in addition to the convenient hours, participating families like having the option of enrolling their children in a community-based setting rather than the local public school. Children are transported to the center by their parents and not by bus, which has allowed for face-to-face daily interactions between teachers and parents. These opportunities increase parent-teacher communication and parent involvement. Additionally, through book lending libraries and "homework backpacks" containing parent-child activities to complete each day, teachers encourage engagement in learning in the home. The staff hope that parents feel like part of the team, so they will be confident and motivated to join the Parent-Teacher Association in their children's new schools and remain active in their children's learning.

The Preschool Services Grant has supported many disadvantaged families over the past several years. This year's grant provides funding to subsidize the cost of full-day prekindergarten (6 ½ hours/day) for 20 children by 40% for 42 weeks. Tuition equals \$179.00 per week, thus families receiving the subsidy pay only \$107.40 with a discount of

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*Children who present the most risk factors or whose families demonstrate a need for full-day child care are referred to GCC and others are enrolled in one of Greenbelt Elementary's two prekindergarten classrooms.*

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\$71.60 per week. Families who are eligible are encouraged to apply for child care subsidy vouchers through the Department of Social Services to further reduce child care tuition payments. Child care is also provided over the 10-week summer break when the prekindergarten program is not in session; however, the summer program is currently not subsidized through the grant and parents must pay the full tuition amount.

Program recruitment efforts are a shared responsibility. Four-year-old children enrolled at GCC who qualify for grant subsidies are offered placement in the prekindergarten classroom and Greenbelt Elementary School refers eligible families who seek prekindergarten services to GCC. Children who present the most risk factors or whose families demonstrate a need for full-day child care are referred to GCC and others are enrolled in one of Greenbelt Elementary's two prekindergarten classrooms. Families in the community are also recruited through various sources of media: the GCC website, the PGCPS website containing a list of schools and centers that provide prekindergarten, the local newspaper, and flyers that are sent home to parents.

The grant money has also been used to pay for a second assistant teacher. PGCPS fully compensates the lead teacher, while GCC provides funding for one assistant teacher. However, in order to provide individualized, high-quality care for the children enrolled in the program, several of whom have



special needs or challenging behaviors, a second assistant was hired. The grant pays 80% of her salary and GCC covers 20% of the salary amount plus fringe costs. The program administrators have recommended this 3-teacher model to other prekindergarten classrooms serving low-income and at-risk children.

Per grant requirements, a portion of the grant money has been allocated to providing hearing and vision screenings and developmental support services for children as needed. GCC has contracted with the Bowie Therapeutic Nursery Early Childhood Consultative Services, which sends a social worker into the classroom to provide developmental evaluations, consultations with teachers, as well as free counseling sessions with families. The focus of these services is on identifying children with special needs and assisting families with the process of attaining appropriate early intervention services.

The remaining grant money has been allotted for enriching the program's curriculum through book club events, science and social studies instructional materials, field trips, and contracted educational services, including music, Spanish, physical education, technology, and a theater program with teaching artists from the Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning Through the Arts.



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*Data are being collected on the quality of the classroom environment using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), the quality of literacy and language instruction using the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Tool (ELLCO), and parent satisfaction with the program and parent report of their children's development through surveys.*

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The Preschool Services Grant has benefited the center as a whole as it has raised the quality of care and services provided. For example, breakfast was added as a program service this year to meet the meal requirement under the quality benchmarks. Since GCC did not want to serve breakfast only to the 20 students in the prekindergarten classroom, all 60 children in the center now receive breakfast, which is paid for in-kind by GCC. A school nutrition specialist from PGCPs came to the center to make recommendations regarding the selection of breakfast and snack foods, and assisted with the process of getting milk delivered to the center each day—even on the days public schools are closed.

Additionally, an independent evaluator has been hired to conduct an evaluation of the program. Data are being collected on the quality of the classroom environment using the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale* (ECERS)<sup>13</sup>, the quality of literacy and language instruction using the *Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Tool* (ELLCO)<sup>14</sup>, parent satisfaction with the program and parent report of their children's development through surveys, in addition to students' progress using the Prekindergarten

Assessment. The evaluators have provided the results of their evaluation to guide program improvement efforts. GCC has been required to have an outside evaluator conduct the ECERS every other year for tiered reimbursement, but this year the ELLCO was added to provide more specific information on quality of instruction. Additionally, teachers conduct self-assessments to rate their own teaching and classroom quality, and then meet individually with the evaluator to compare and discuss scores. GCC has also utilized the Program Administration Scale (PAS)<sup>15</sup> to measure the overall quality of administrative practices, such as fiscal management, family partnerships, and marketing and public relations.

The program administrators commented that this partnership has been a wonderful and beneficial experience for the children and the child care staff. They have seen an increase in children's assessment scores each year since they began the partnership and have always surpassed the benchmarks they have set for the children, with 80-85% of children "fully ready" last spring 2008. The data identify the skill areas in which children are performing

at a high level and those that are in need of improvement. With this information, teachers are able to individualize the curriculum and target specific skills for each child and for the class as a whole. As a result, the approaches to teaching have improved.

Having a certified teacher from PGCPs in the classroom has offered opportunities for staff learning and professional development, as other teachers observe and emulate her methods. For example, the teacher posts the schedule and learning objectives for each day on the wall as a source of environmental print to guide children's attention. Also, writing has been incorporated into the classroom's daily activities at a more frequent level than before. The prekindergarten teacher attends both child care trainings at GCC and professional development trainings and prekindergarten team meetings at Greenbelt Elementary, which provides an opportunity for her to share ideas from the child care field with the public school, and also bring back information to share with GCC staff. Joint staff meetings have strengthened the partnership and promoted collaboration.



## WORCESTER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITH FRIENDS FOREVER LEARNING CENTER

During the past three years, Worcester County Public Schools (WCPS) has partnered with Friends Forever Learning Center (FFLC) to offer prekindergarten to low-income and at-risk children in the northern and most populous region of the county. The Preschool Services Grant enables WCPS to increase the availability of high-quality prekindergarten for eligible children. Under the grant, FFLC provides a half-day prekindergarten program within a full-day child care setting and collaborates with Showell Elementary School—its neighboring public elementary school—to provide additional services. Since Showell Elementary has been faced with high enrollment rates and waiting lists, the partnership with FFLC has made additional prekindergarten slots available.

FFLC operates as a full-day (7:00am-6:00pm), year-round child care facility for children ages two through four years, and also provides before and after care services for school-age children. Through the support of the Preschool Services Grant, WCPS employs a full-time, state certified early childhood teacher who is placed in FFLC during normal school hours (approximately 8:15am to 3:45pm). She teaches a half-day prekindergarten session from 9:00am to 11:30am, after which she provides after care services for the children in her classroom. The

teacher's salary and benefits are paid through the grant, while FFLC pays the costs for the assistant.

FFLC maintains a small classroom size and staff:child ratio. Due to licensing and space limitations, the prekindergarten classroom has a capacity of 12 children. Currently, only eight children are enrolled in the program, but there is a waiting list for enrollment for next fall. Parents are charged a reduced rate of \$115.00 per week for full-day care consisting of the 2 ½-hour prekindergarten block and before and after care. This arrangement has demonstrated to be very beneficial for working parents who need full-day child care. Moreover, since children are in one continuous setting all day, they do not need to transition from one school for prekindergarten to another for child care. Showell Elementary School offers four half-day prekindergarten sessions—two morning and two afternoon sessions—each 2 ½ hours long. No before or after care is available on site, therefore, children at Showell must be transported elsewhere for child care. Parents at FFLC drop off and pick up their children, which not only relieves parents of the stress of ensuring their four-year-olds get on and off the right bus, but also allows for increased parent-teacher communication, as the teacher sees most parents at least once a day.

Since the prekindergarten teacher is present with the children for the full day, the children at FFLC receive about an extra hour of prekindergarten instruction each day than the children in the half-day program at Showell. For example, the teacher eats lunch with the children family-style, during which they can discuss different topics, and assists children as they write in their journals before rest time. This allows the teacher to use the extra time for addressing individual needs. Additionally, all eight children who are currently enrolled in prekindergarten at FFLC were enrolled in child care there the previous year, with some enrolled since they were two years old. The staff views that continuity as very beneficial. The prekindergarten





teacher already knows most of the children and their families by the time they enter her classroom, and the children are familiar with the center environment, the teachers, and the curriculum; the *Creative Curriculum* is used in both the three- and four-year-old classrooms.

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**“My experience with the prekindergarten program through Showell Elementary and Friends Forever Learning Center has been nothing short of amazing. Having my child at this special location has enhanced his learning by the smaller class size and the longer time period with his teacher.”**

*—Tracy Simpson-Hansford,  
parent of grant-funded child*

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Although eligibility requirements are the same for prekindergarten at FFLC and at Showell, children who are already enrolled at FFLC for child care in the three-year-old classroom are given priority. Registration for both programs is held in the spring at Showell Elementary. During registration, the director of FFLC is present to discuss with parents the benefits of the program at FFLC to encourage other families who need full-day care to apply. Everyone who registers for prekindergarten and is eligible for enrollment receives a slot in prekindergarten; however, the slots at FFLC are reserved first for current FFLC families who are eligible and then for those who demonstrate a need for either full-day care or the small group size.

The collaboration between the FFLC and Showell Elementary School ensures that children enrolled in prekindergarten at FFLC receive the same high-quality services as children at Showell. Children receive screening and referrals for vision, hearing, speech and language, health and physical development, and services for English Language Learners. There is coordination with local Health

and Social Services Department to seek services for children who need them. Parents at FFLC are invited to participate in all PTA events at Showell Elementary School, in addition to parent events at FFLC, while their children participate in all special school events at Showell, such as Career Day, Picture Day, and prekindergarten field trips. Additionally, the prekindergarten teacher participates in grade-level team meetings and faculty meetings at Showell.

FFLC was a pioneer in that it was the first child care center in the area to become state accredited. The center has consistently remained connected with the services in the community, particularly from the Lower North Shore Resources Center, which serves Worcester County along with Wicomico and Somerset Counties, and has benefited from early intervention grants for child care. FFLC was also recently selected to be a DECA (Devereux Early Childhood Assessment) Regional Training Center<sup>16</sup> to offer professional development training and technical assistance to early childhood educators. A DECA behavioral specialist came to the center to provide on-site training, which benefited all teachers in the program.

In addition to funding the salary of the lead teacher and monetary incentives for professional development training, this year’s grant has also offered FFLC an opportunity to improve the quality of its classroom materials, including enhanced technology equipment, and increase the number of parent involvement activities, such as field trips and a family field day picnic. The program has demonstrated positive results in regards to children’s outcomes. Even though communication between the center and the home school was cited as an occasional struggle (e.g., ensuring that the FFLC prekindergarten classroom is counted as part of Showell during special events), the program has been “all-around beneficial,” according to program administrators.



Table: Crosswalk of Quality Benchmarks and Grantee Program Characteristics

Benchmarks and Program Characteristics	The Young School	Downtown Baltimore Child Care	Catholic Charities Head Start
<b>1. Curriculum standards</b>	MSDE-accepted individually developed curriculum, based on Reggio Emilia philosophy and local school system prekindergarten curriculum	Local school system prekindergarten curriculum	State recommended curriculum ( <i>The Creative Curriculum</i> )
<b>2. Teacher certification requirement</b>	Bachelor's degree in ECE or related field; Maryland State Certification in ECE, or working towards certification	Bachelor's degree and Maryland State Certification in ECE	Lead #1: Master's degree in ECE and MD State Certification in ECE; Lead #2: Bachelor's degree in ECE and MD State Certification in ECE
<b>3. Teacher-specialized training in ECE</b>	Pre-service training in ECE	Pre-service training in ECE	Pre-service training in ECE
<b>4. Assistant teacher degree requirement of at least high school diploma, with preference for CDA or Level-4 Child Care Credential</b>	Level 3 Credential and senior staff certification, with professional development plan to pursue additional education or CDA	Level 4 Child Care Provider Credential	Assistant #1: High school diploma plus CDA, 90 hr. ECE Certificate; Assistant #2: High school diploma and in process of obtaining CDA and 90 hr. ECE Certificate
<b>5. Approved professional development training each year to meet teacher recertification requirement</b>	18 clock hours of Core of Knowledge staff development training per year; in-service training through HCPSS; college coursework funded through MSDE Child Care Credential vouchers and Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund	Lead teacher enrolled in Master's degree program; Assistant teacher enrolled in Associate's degree program; both teachers utilizing scholarship funding from MSDE Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund	Preservice summer training and monthly professional development with CCPS prekindergarten staff; Head Start professional development
<b>6. Maximum class size of 20</b>	10 in primary care group; 40 in cottage	16	20
<b>7. Staff-child ratio &lt;= 1:10</b>	1:10	1:8	1:10
<b>8. Screening/referral requirements for vision, hearing, speech and language, health and physical development, and additional support services</b>	Vision and hearing screening through Howard County Health Dept; ASQ and ASQ-SE developmental screeners administered by teachers; Office of Early Intervention Services to service special needs; PACT provides training for teachers working with children with disabilities, special needs, challenging behaviors; parent workshops on school readiness	Screening and referral services through the BCPSS and Judy Center Partnership; access to mental health therapist at University of Maryland Mental Health Systems; Child Find and early intervention services for children with disabilities; case management services provided to screen for eligibility and to determine needed services.	Screenings and support services through Head Start; health screenings administered by Carroll County Health Department; CCPS administers LAP-D at enrollment; ASQ-SE screener; ESOL classes and adult education for parents offered through Carroll Community College; Head Start parenting support and parent training through Judy Center
<b>9. Meal requirement</b>	Breakfast and afternoon snack served daily	DBCC covers breakfast and afternoon snack; BCPSS provides lunches to all children based on FARMS guidelines	Breakfast and lunch served daily
<b>10. Monitoring tools and methods</b>	Prekindergarten Assessment; accreditation self-appraisal; staff and family questionnaires to monitor feedback in terms of program quality	Prekindergarten Assessment; <i>Open Court</i> Curriculum Benchmark Assessments; <i>Creative Curriculum</i> Developmental Continuum; BCPSS Teacher Evaluation Criteria; DBCC Staff Evaluation Rubric; parent surveys to determine location of kindergarten enrollment; data collected on program characteristics and demographics of participating children	Prekindergarten Assessment; CCPS mid-year and end-of-year literacy and math assessments; Head Start Performance Standard; ECERS; CLASS; informal monthly meetings of project directors and teachers to evaluate program and children's progress
<b>Accrediting agency</b>	MSDE	NAEYC	MSDE
<b>Target group served</b>	Children under 300% FPL; English Language Learners	Economically disadvantaged children in inner Baltimore City	Head Start income-eligible children
<b>Subsidized tuition cost</b>	\$84/week for 5 half days	No tuition fees for prekindergarten program or before and after care; full-day summer program also provided at no cost to eligible children	No tuition fees
<b>Lead teacher salary</b>	\$43,012 (base pay in-kind from TYS plus supplemental salary from grant)	\$45,516 (covered by grant)	\$23.86/hour (covered by grant)

The Children's Center Group of Walkersville	Greenbelt Children's Center	Friends Forever Learning Center
State recommended curriculum ( <i>The Creative Curriculum</i> ) with math and language arts supplements	State recommended curriculum ( <i>Houghton-Mifflin PRE-K</i> ) along with local school system prekindergarten curriculum	State recommended curriculum ( <i>The Creative Curriculum</i> ) along with local school system prekindergarten curriculum
Bachelor's degree and Maryland State Certification in ECE	Bachelor's degree and Maryland State Certification in ECE	Master's degree in ECE and Maryland State Certification in ECE and Elementary Education
Pre-service training in ECE	Pre-service training in ECE	Pre-service training in ECE
High school diploma, 90-hour early childhood course, and Level 4 credential	High school diploma plus CDA	High school diploma; enrolled in community college ECE program
Participation in FCPS staff meetings and professional development; daily opportunities for joint planning with educational professionals from Head Start program	6 credits of college coursework for renewal of teaching certificate; 24 hrs clock hours of professional development for teaching staff	3 credits of college coursework for recertification; MMSR local training; DECA professional development training in social-emotional development
19	20	12
1:10	1:7	1:6
Screening and support services through Head Start; Frederick County Health Department conducts health screenings; teacher conducts ESI-R to screen for developmental delays; mental health consultant and classroom staff complete SSRS to screen social-emotional behaviors; teacher measures height and weight; nutritional consultant identifies nutrition problems; family workshops to enhance school readiness	Vision and hearing screenings by Maryland Vision and Hearing Testing, Inc.; speech and language by lead teacher using DIAL 3 assessment tool; Family Lending Library, homework backpacks and other learning supports for families	Screening and referrals for vision, dental, speech and language, hearing, and special education through Showell Elementary School nurse and Special Education Department; mental health services through Worcester County Health Department
Breakfast and lunch served by Head Start program; afternoon snack in Pre-K program	Breakfast, milk at lunch, and afternoon snack served to all children in center	Breakfast, milk at lunch, morning and afternoon snacks served to all children in center
Prekindergarten Assessment; <i>Get It! Got It! Go!</i> literacy assessment; contracted mental health provider conducts mental health assessment; program quality assessed with observational checklists, child outcomes data, program self-assessment, and teacher evaluation	Prekindergarten Assessment; C-PALLS; program self-assessment using Benchmarks; PGCPs conducts classroom observations quarterly; external evaluator conducts ECERS-R, ELLCO, parent survey	Prekindergarten Assessment; ELLCO; DECA; ECERS-R; accreditation self-appraisal; monthly staff meetings; PAS, student attendance; parent attendance during parent activities; family survey; staff surveys
MSDE	NAEYC	MSDE
Head Start income-eligible children given priority and then children meeting FARMS criteria	FARMS eligible/Below 185% FPL	FARMS eligible/Below 185% FPL; children with special needs and risk factors
No tuition fees; \$4.90/hr for before and after care	\$107.40/week for 5 full days	\$115/week for 5 full days
\$23,700 for half-day (equivalent to \$47,400 full-time, 10-month) (covered by grant)	\$48,841 (in-kind from PGCPs)	\$53,692 (covered by grant)

\*See Glossary on page 28 for explanation of acronyms used in this chart.

## Summary and Future Directions

This report presented a summary of the programs funded during the pilot year of the implementation of the Benchmarks for High-Quality Preschool Education through the Preschool Services Grant. The results of these public-private partnership projects will have significant implications for the expansion of publicly funded prekindergarten to accredited, non-public providers in the community. The Prekindergarten Assessment data gathered from the pilot sites as well as the MMSR Kindergarten Assessment data from participating students will be analyzed and compared to students from other prior care settings to test for differences in performance. Data will also be compared to those of previous cohorts of prekindergarten students to determine whether adherence to the quality benchmarks is related to improvements in student outcomes. With the use of unique student identifiers, students will also be followed longitudinally through school to determine improvement in academic achievement as a result of participation in a high-quality prekindergarten program.

The partnerships currently funded demonstrate various program models and mechanisms through which services are provided at a reduced cost to families. The models include:

- (1) an “integrated approach” in which eligible grant-funded children are placed in child care classrooms with tuition-paying children from the community (e.g., The Young School and DBCC);
- (2) a “targeted approach” in which income-eligible and high-needs children are placed in a single classroom and provided full-day child care services with a prekindergarten curriculum focus at a reduced rate (e.g., Greenbelt Children’s Center and Friends Forever Learning Center);
- (3) a “Head Start add-on approach” in which a half-day prekindergarten session is added to a half-day Head Start session to create a full-day program for eligible Head Start children and a half-day program for some additional children from the community who are eligible only for prekindergarten (e.g., The Children’s Center Group of Walkersville); and
- (4) a “Head Start/Prekindergarten blended approach”

in which Head Start and prekindergarten funding are blended to provide a seamless full-day program for Head Start eligible children, including some three-year-olds (e.g., Catholic Charities Head Start of Carroll County).

The funded programs also implemented the required “tuition discount” to families in various ways, with some programs spreading the available funding across the maximum number of children and other programs providing larger discounts to a smaller group of children. For example, The Young School provides “scholarships” to up to 20 eligible families to reduce the cost of the half-day prekindergarten portion of the day. It is the only program to specifically target English language learners and families who do not meet income eligibility requirements for public school prekindergarten but who make under 300% of the federal poverty level. Greenbelt Children’s Center provides a 40% discount to 20 families on the total cost of tuition, while Friends Forever Learning Center offers a half-day prekindergarten session with full-day child care at a set discounted rate of 20% to all eight families enrolled. The Children’s Center Group provides a half-day prekindergarten session free of charge to up to 20 eligible families with a set rate per hour for before and after care. Catholic Charities Head Start does not charge any tuition fees for the 40 children in the Head Start/Prekindergarten blended classrooms (but no additional child care is offered on site). Lastly, Downtown Baltimore Child Care provides a full-day, year-round program at no cost to eight income-eligible families and at a discounted cost for eight non-income-eligible, tuition-paying families.

Overall, the partnerships have reported success in terms of collaboration, improvements in classroom quality, teaching, and the provision of services to children and families, and child academic and social outcomes. Some challenges include transportation for children as a result of extended program hours, fitting in rest time and transitions for children in full-day programs that run on the public school day schedule, and compensating the lead teacher more than other center-based staff. These and other lessons learned will be important to consider as an increased number of partnerships are created in the future.

# Endnotes

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# Glossary

***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.

***Prekindergarten*** — Maryland's Prekindergarten Program is a state-funded program for four-year-old children who are from families that are economically disadvantaged or homeless. The Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act requires local school systems to enroll all income eligible four-year-old children whose parents or guardians seek to enroll them. After the initial enrollment of these children, local school systems may fill any remaining vacancies by enrolling children who exhibit a lack of readiness in personal and social development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, the arts, or physical development and health. Local school systems are required to develop their own policies and procedures for implementing prekindergarten program in accordance with state regulations. Under these regulations, a prekindergarten site typically operates a morning and afternoon session five days a week for a minimum of 2.5 hours daily per session consistent with the local school system calendar. Each session has an average of 20 students and is staffed with one state-certified early childhood teacher and a qualified full-time assistant. Local school systems are required to implement prekindergarten content standards, and many local school systems use the MSDE prekindergarten quality standards that define program management, the quality of early education in the classroom, staff development, and procedures for communication with kindergarten teachers.

***Preschool for All*** — A state-funded early education program proposed by the Task Force on Universal Preschool Education that would serve all four-year-olds and also three-year olds in Maryland, regardless of economic background, whose parents seek enrollment. The program was conceptualized as having the highest quality standards, including state or national accreditation, state certified early childhood teachers, and state-approved curriculum. The program would be operated by MSDE and being implemented in diverse early childhood settings, including public schools, child care centers, Head Start centers, and family child care programs.

***Program accreditation*** — A process by which early care and education programs can significantly improve the quality of the services they provide. In this process, a program voluntarily pursues self-study, program improvement, and external program review in order to achieve and publicly confirm that it meets national or state quality standards. Program accreditation implies that services must move beyond mere licensing and regulatory requirements. Program accreditation standards represent the highest quality and reflect research-based, best practices in early childhood education. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) accredits early childhood programs through its own accreditation process and also recognizes 11 other regional and national accreditation programs through the MSDE Early Childhood Accreditation Project, which helps programs become accredited by providing technical assistance and direct support services.

See [http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child\\_care/early\\_learning/Accred](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/early_learning/Accred) for further information.



**Task Force on Universal Preschool Education**—A task force approved during the 2006 session of the Maryland General Assembly under HB 1466 with the overall purpose of addressing the establishment of a universal preschool program in Maryland. The appointed Task Force consisting of fifteen members convened throughout 2006 and 2007. Their final recommendations were published in the report *Preschool for All in Maryland: Recommendations of the Task Force on Universal Preschool Education to the Governor and the General Assembly as required by HB 1466*.

**Work Sampling System (WSS) ®**—A portfolio-based assessment instrument developed by Samuel Meisels and colleagues and published by Pearson Education, Inc. that captures children's developing skills, knowledge, and behaviors. The Prekindergarten Assessment and MMSR Kindergarten Assessment are customized versions of the WSS. 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. Assessment information is collected from public prekindergarten and kindergarten programs at least three times each year. State-wide data on all kindergarten students are available for the first quarter of the kindergarten year.

*\*The following acronyms are specific to the chart on pages 24 & 25.*

**ASQ** = *Ages and Stages Questionnaire* (Squires & Bricker, 2009)

**ASQ-SE** = *Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional* (Squires, Bricker, & Twombly, 2009)

**CLASS** = *Classroom Assessment Scoring System* (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008)

**C-PALLS** = *CIRCLE Phonological Awareness, Language, and Literacy System* (Center for Improving the Readiness of Children for Learning and Education)

**DECA** = *Devereux Early Childhood Assessment* (LeBuffe & Naglieri, 1998)

**DIAL 3** = *Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning* (Mardell & Goldenberg)

**ECE** = Early Childhood Education

**ECERS-R** = *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale- Revised* (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 2005)

**ELLCO** = *Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation* (Smith, Dickinson, Sangeorge, & Anastasopoulos, 2002)

**ESI-R** = *Early Screening Instrument-Revised* (Meisels, Marsden, Wiske & Henderson, 1997)

**FARMS** = Free and Reduced Meals

**FPL** = Federal Poverty Level

**LAP-D** = *Learning Accomplishment Profile-Diagnostic* (LAP-D) Assessment (Nehring et al., 1992)

**MSDE** = Maryland State Department of Education

**NAEYC** = National Association for the Education of Young Children

**PAS** = *Program Administration Scale* (Talan & Bloom, 2004)

**SSRS** = *Social Skills Rating System* (Gresham & Elliot, 1990)

**WSS** = *Work Sampling System* (modified version used as public Prekindergarten Assessment)

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