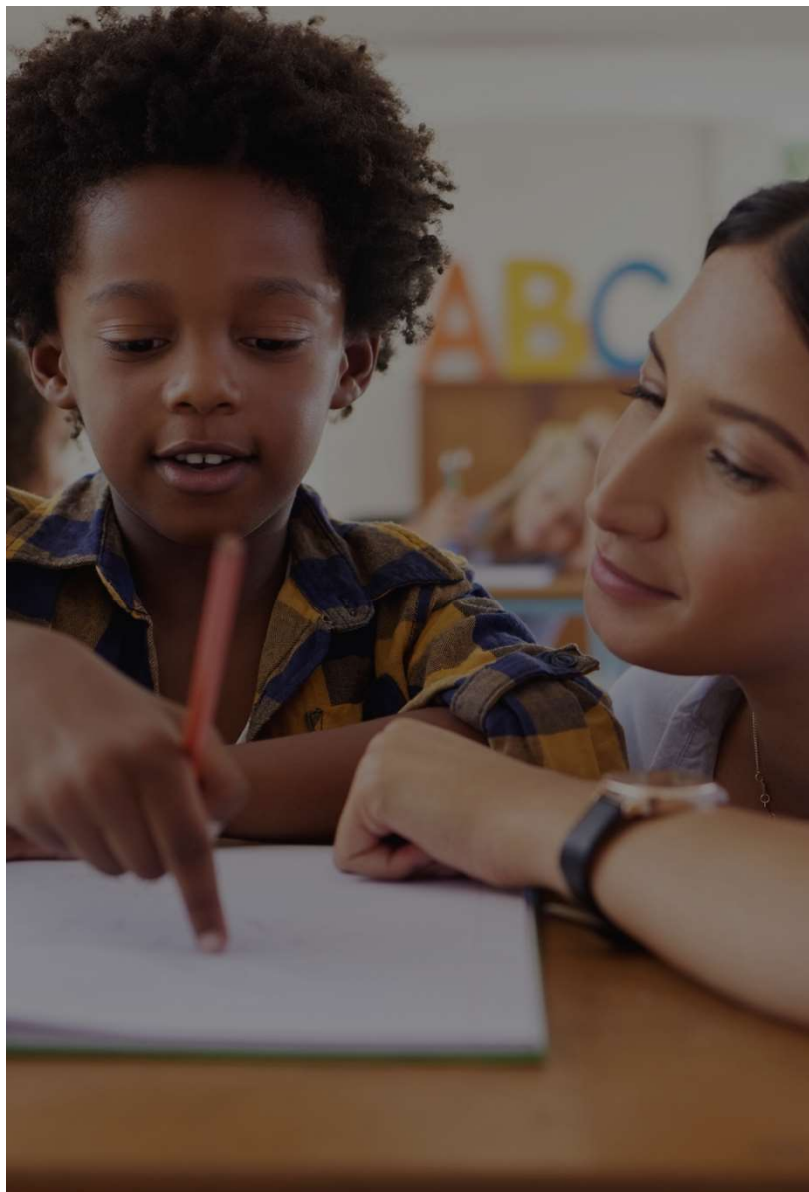




Push to Pre-K: Components of an Educational Program

Division of Early Childhood

October 15, 2025

PRESENTED BY

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Presentation Outline

1. Push to Pre-K Overview
2. Prekindergarten Expansion Grant
3. Components of an Educational Program
4. Definition of High-Quality Prekindergarten/Structural Elements
5. Questions

Purpose

Push to Pre-K to empower child care providers with the tools they need to tap into State prekindergarten grants.

- Push to Pre-K is **not** the grant.
- It is a voluntary support program from the Division of Early Childhood.
- The **Prekindergarten (Pre-K) Expansion Grant** is the funding opportunity. Push to Pre-K helps providers apply for it.
- MSDE Pre-K Specialists give step-by-step guidance to make the grant application process easier.
- Participants receive technical assistance, coaching, and resources to understand and meet grant requirements.
- The goal: reduce barriers so more providers can secure grant funding and offer high-quality prekindergarten and school readiness services.
- Supports Maryland's Blueprint for the Future by expanding early learning opportunities for children and families.

Who is eligible to participate in Push to Pre-K?

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and child care programs that are licensed or registered through MSDE.

Prekindergarten Expansion Grant

Pre-K Expansion Grant

The Prekindergarten Expansion Grant and the Maryland State Prekindergarten Grant are **competitive grant** programs administered by the Division of Early Childhood at the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

These grants provide funding for local education agencies (LEAs) and private providers to administer high-quality prekindergarten and school readiness services throughout the State for 3- and 4-year-old children and their families in alignment with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

Mixed Delivery System

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future aims to increase the number of three- and four-year-old children enrolled in full-day, high-quality Pre-K by growing the capacity of public schools and private providers. Known as the Pre-K Mixed Delivery System, it allows public and private providers to work together to offer high-quality Pre-K education. This system gives families the choice to select the best program for their children, whether it is a public or private provider.

Private Providers

- Child care centers
- Family child care homes
- Head Start programs
- Montessori schools
- Faith-based programs

Components of an Educational Program

Components of an Educational Program

Pre-K grant funds **must be** used to provide an educational program designed to provide high-quality learning experiences for children in Prekindergarten.

- Led by qualified teaching staff meeting the grant requirements
- Implement curriculum that is evidence-based and aligned with the Maryland Early Learning Standards and Maryland College and Career Ready Standards (MCCRS)
- Implement a formal assessment system (formative and summative assessments)
- Developmentally appropriate lesson plans aligned to the Early Learning Standards
- Developmentally appropriate classrooms that are well-equipped to address the needs of ALL children
- Ongoing program evaluation to ensure continuous quality improvement

Qualified Teaching Staff: Lead Teacher

Highly qualified teaching staff includes a **Lead Teacher** that meets one of the following:

- A bachelor's degree in early childhood education, child development, or a related field, or
- A bachelor's degree from another country, verified as equivalent to a U.S. degree and meet the assessment criteria with a minimum score on the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) , or
- A bachelor's degree in an unrelated field, along with experience or qualifications in early childhood education and meet the assessment criteria with a minimum score on the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), or
- 10 years of experience and meet the assessment criteria with a minimum score on the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and, by July 1, 2030, earn an associate degree in early childhood education.

Qualified Teaching Staff: Lead Teacher (cont'd)

The minimum score requirement for the Pre-K CLASS assessment for the lead teacher qualification alternative pathway:

- Emotional Support Domain: 5.00
- Classroom Organization Domain: 5.00
- Instructional Support Domain: 3.00

These scores are consistent with Touchstone and Head Start national averages and the average scores based on Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Maryland EXCELS data. Research also suggests that CLASS scores are linked to both child growth and program quality levels.

Qualified Teaching Staff: Assistant

Highly qualified teaching staff includes an **Assistant Teacher** that meets one of the following:

- Hold a high school diploma; and
- On or before July 1, 2027:
 - Earn and maintain a Child Development Associate (CDA) with a preschool designation; or
 - Hold an associate degree in early childhood education or child development; or
- On July 1, 2024, have documented experience of actively providing early childhood services for a minimum of 15 years for at least 20 hours per week and 180 days per year.

Finding Qualified Staff

- Consider existing staff that may be close to meeting the requirements or willing to get the required degree and/or certifications.
- Network with other ECE programs.
- Reach out to LEAs as there may be additional candidates that were not placed in classrooms.
- Reach out to local colleges and universities to target upcoming or recent graduates.
- Continuous recruitment to create a “pipeline” of qualified staff.
- Offer incentives or a referral program.
- Submit your job opening to the Division of Early Childhood and check the Qualified Teacher Registry.

Curriculum

- Curriculum must be evidence based.
- Must be aligned to the Maryland Early Learning Standards and Maryland College and Career Ready Standards. <https://marylandpublicschools.org/Documents/MD-EarlyLearning-Standards-2024-a.pdf>
- For additional guidance of Early Childhood Curriculum, visit <https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/child-care-providers/early-childhood-curriculum>
- The Pre-K Expansion grant application will ask applicants to describe curriculum training and supports provided for instructional staff.

Note: MSDE no longer provides a list of recommended curriculum. There is guidance forthcoming on how to select an appropriate curriculum.

Assessments

- A High-Quality Educational Program should consist of a process to assess children's learning and progress.
- Assessment helps teachers ascertain whether children are learning the content and skills they're teaching. It helps teachers identify learning gaps and develop strategies to help children achieve their goals.

Formative Assessment

- Formative assessment gauges a child's understanding during the learning process. It provides ongoing feedback and helps preschool teachers adjust instruction to meet each child's needs as they grow and change.

Summative Assessment

- Occurs at the end of a learning period and evaluates cumulative learning. It helps teachers gauge a child's understanding and proficiency after a unit, lesson, or semester.

Developmentally Appropriate Lesson Plans

- Weekly written lesson plans containing specific instructional activities are required for all Pre-K classrooms.
- The lesson plans must align with the Maryland Early Learning Standards and/or MCCRS and include enough details to identify the purpose of the lesson(s).
- The Maryland Early Learning Standards should be documented for all instructional activities. Teachers should also have a plan for transitions throughout the day.
- Lesson plans should reflect differentiated instruction based on the individual needs of each child in the class, including children with disabilities and multilingual learners. Goals and objectives from a child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or extended IFSP should be used when planning instruction.

Developmentally Appropriate Classrooms

- Maryland Prekindergarten Programs should feature busy, active, well-equipped classrooms where teachers work together to foster learning.
- Developmentally appropriate classrooms that are well-equipped to address the needs of ALL children.
- Prekindergarten classrooms should be organized around clearly defined learning centers and interest areas that allow children to experience high quality materials and activities both indoors and outdoors.
- Materials and activities should be changed frequently to meet children's growing developmental needs and reflect children's changing interests.
- Prekindergarten providers must maintain adequate and appropriate equipment, materials, and supplies for each Prekindergarten classroom.
- All equipment must be in good repair.

Program Evaluation and Continuous Quality Improvement

- A high-quality educational program includes ongoing program evaluation to ensure continuous quality improvement.
- The Pre-K grants require programs to measure success consistent with the program's goals and objectives.
- There must be an evaluation plan in place to ensure continuous program improvement.
- The data and instruments used to support continuous quality improvement must be identified.
- A plan must be implemented to inform parents about student progress and areas of concern.
- A program evaluation and report is required annually.

Definition of High-Quality Prekindergarten

Structural Elements of High-Quality Pre-K

Definition of High-Quality Prekindergarten (1 of 3)

- Instructional staff meeting the requirements outlined in [§ 7-1A-08](#) of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.
- Professional Learning for all instructional staff (Lead Teachers and Assistants) - 20 hours per grant year.
- A child to instructional staff ratio of no more than 10:1
- A class size of no more than 20 with, at minimum, one lead teacher in each classroom meeting the staff qualification requirements outlined in the Blueprint
- A full-day instructional program (6.5 hours).
- Ensuring all children have access to and full participation in all activities.

Source: https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/system/files/filedepot/4/definition_of_high_quality_prekindergarten_fy_2023.pdf

Definition of High-Quality Prekindergarten (2 of 3)

Comprehensive Services

- On-site or accessible Comprehensive Services for children and community partnerships that promote families' access to services to support their children's learning and development are required.
- Screening and referral services covering at least vision, hearing, speech and language, health, and physical development are required (grant funds can be used to secure these services).
- Programs must offer, either directly or through coordination with local school systems or local departments of health and social services, additional support services for prekindergarten families. These services may include parenting support or training including those with languages other than English, physical and mental health and wellness services, and early intervention for children with disabilities and/or special health care needs.

Source: https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/system/files/filedepot/4/definition_of_high_quality_prekindergarten_fy_2023.pdf

Definition of High-Quality Prekindergarten (3 of 3)

According to [§ 7-1A-04](#) of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future,

- An eligible prekindergarten provider may not engage in explicitly religious activities during school hours.
- If an eligible prekindergarten provider engages in an explicitly religious activity, the activity shall be:
 - Separate in time and location from any instruction offered by the eligible prekindergarten provider; and
 - Voluntary
- An eligible prekindergarten provider shall make reasonable efforts to make the areas where prekindergarten children spend time during school hours as nonsectarian as possible.
- An eligible prekindergarten provider may not be required to adopt any rule, regulation, or policy that conflicts with its religious or moral teachings.

Questions

Next Sessions

- October 28, 2025 – Grant Writing (Includes Goals and Outcomes for the application)
- November 5, 2025 – Head Start Programs
- November 5, 2025 – Family Child Care Homes (Evening) 6:00 pm
- November 19, 2025 – Faith-based Programs
- November 19, 2025 – Child Care Centers (Evening) 6:00 pm
- December 4, 2025 – Spanish (Evening) 6:00 pm
- December 9, 2025 – Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS®)
- December 10, 2025 – Fiscal Overview (allowable expenses, capital improvements, indirect expenses)

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