

## **Prekindergarten Program – Fact Sheet**

### **What are prekindergarten programs?**

Prekindergarten is a program for four-year-old children who are from families that are economically disadvantaged or homeless. The overall goal of prekindergarten is to provide learning experiences to help children develop and maintain the basic skills necessary to be successful in school. The Prekindergarten program provides appropriate experiences that address the needs of young children in the areas of language and literacy, mathematics, social foundations, science, social studies, fine arts, and physical well-being and motor development.

### **Who operates prekindergarten programs?**

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 or an all day session for 6.5 hours a day 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 the Prekindergarten Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards. Qualified Pre-Kindergarten vendors are required to meet the highest levels of quality through accreditation, non-public nursery school approval, and participation in Maryland EXCELS Quality Rating & Improvement System. The qualified vendors must implement a Maryland State Department of Education curriculum.

### **Who is eligible for prekindergarten?**

A child admitted to the prekindergarten program in the public schools must be four years-old or older on September 1 of the school year in which the child applies for entrance. Eligibility for enrollment is extended to four-year-old children who come from families with economically disadvantaged backgrounds or who are 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 the foundational skills, knowledge, and behaviors of the Maryland Prekindergarten College and Career-Ready Standards.

### **What are the long-term effects of prekindergarten?**

The results of an analysis on the long-term effects of Maryland's public prekindergarten programs indicate that enrollment in the program has a positive effect on the participants' school performance through elementary and middle school. The findings also suggest that participation in prekindergarten programs significantly reduces the number of children who were identified as having disabilities or placement in special education.

### **How is prekindergarten funded?**

The Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act in Maryland was fully phased in by FY08. This act significantly increased funding to all local school systems. Local school systems use their General Education dollars to fund the public prekindergarten program.

The Prekindergarten Expansion Act provides \$4.3 million to fund State Pre\_K Expansion to students meeting the income eligibility criteria of 300% or below FPL in a half or full-day setting.

The Federal Preschool Development Grant provided \$15 million to fund ~~Federally~~federally funded Pre\_K Expansion to students meeting the income eligibility criteria of 200% or below FPL in full-day settings.

Both the State and Federally funded programs require an approved Grant application that meets the respective grant criteria in order to receive funding under these funding sources.