



# Minnesota

## *Minnesota School Readiness*

Minnesota School Readiness is a funding stream without specific preschool program requirements, although many school districts use funds to provide preschool programs. School districts receive entitlement funds based on a formula, but there is tremendous flexibility at the local level. Part-day preschool programs are one option, and most of these services are delivered in the schools. School readiness funds are also used to provide a range of services in the community, including consultations to parents and child care providers, home visits, educational materials, transportation to pre-kindergarten services, professional development, and kindergarten transition activities.

### **Eligibility**

**Income:** none

**Age:** at least 3 years old and in kindergarten, although localities have the option of including younger children

**Priority:** children identified as developmentally delayed or experiencing risk factors that could impede school readiness

### **Length of Program**

**Hours/day:** determined locally

**Days/year:** determined locally

### **Eligible Providers**

School districts, public or nonprofit organizations through sub-contracts with school districts

### **Number Served<sup>1</sup>**

38,063 (2002-03): 21,606 in preschool programs of at least five hours per week

### **Total Annual Budget**

\$14 million (2003-04): \$9.5 million from the state general fund; \$3.5 million from parent fees; \$1 million from other sources, including federal funds

### **Monitoring**

Program standards are determined by the local school board, but they must consider program goals listed in the statute. There are no state curriculum standards, but programs are encouraged to follow Minnesota's voluntary Early Learning Standards. Districts are required to submit data annually on all services provided, children in preschool slots, average hours of participation, parent fees, and referrals. Districts submit a plan update report biannually to the Minnesota Department of Education and the Department of Health. In addition, local programs must keep records on each participating child.

<sup>1</sup> For updated figures on the program budget and number served, please see the NIEER State Preschool Yearbook at: <http://nieer.org/yearbook/states/>

## Governance

### **How are state pre-k programs integrated into community-based settings?**

Decisions regarding whether to sub-contract with community-based providers are made at the local level by the school board, advised by the local school readiness council. Sub-contracting is authorized, but not mandated. The statute states:

A district is encouraged to contract with public or nonprofit organizations to provide eligible children developmentally appropriate services that meet the program requirements. A district may also pay tuition or fees to place an eligible child in an existing program. A district may establish a new program where no existing, reasonably accessible program meets the program requirements. Services may be provided in a site based program or in the child's home or both.

### **Are there requirements to integrate the state pre-k and subsidized child care programs at the state or local level?**

At the state level, there is no mandated relationship between the department of education and the child care administration over the administration of the School Readiness funds. School district plans must be submitted to both the department of education and health, and both review the plans. At the local level, School Readiness Advisory Councils advise the school board, but have no decision-making authority. Councils must include members of the child care community, such as child care providers, and resource and referral agencies.

## Procedures and Supports for Community-based Providers

### **What are the rules/guidelines for notifying and selecting pre-k providers?**

Local school districts are entitled to School Readiness funds and determine the process for notifying and selecting providers for preschool programs. Local advisory councils and district boards are responsible for conducting outreach to ensure School Readiness services have "community-based staff, including interpreters, who represent the racial and ethnic diversity of the participating children."

### **What resources are available to help providers become eligible to deliver pre-k services?**

There are no resources specifically targeted for this.

### **Do teachers working in community settings earn comparable wages and benefits once they obtain the same credential as teachers in school-based settings?**

Salaries are determined by the local school district.

## Supports for Working Families

### **Is there any explicit discussion in the legislation or regulations of extending the day, coordinating with the child care subsidy program, or helping working families?**

No.

### **What policies help working families access pre-k and other supports?**

Programs must also include a comprehensive plan to meet family needs. This includes providing the following:

- Transportation—the district may use School Readiness funds for transportation to and from school-based programs, and may do so for children attending programs housed in non-school based settings if funds are available. Most school districts do not provide services that would extend outside existing bus routes due to the increased costs.
- Evening parent-child classes
- Home visits to families to deliver pre-k services
- Assistance in securing and maintaining eligibility for child care, health insurance, family support, and other social services.

## Funding

### **What is the per-child payment for the pre-k program?**

There is no per-child payment. School districts receive funds from the department of education equal to a percentage share of the total appropriation, and based upon the district's 4-year-old population and K-12 free and reduced-price lunch count. The School Readiness dollars are allocated by districts to a variety of purposes with no predetermined per-child amount.

### **How does the state pre-k funding affect other potential sources of funds for a provider?**

Funding from other sources has no impact on School Readiness funding since there is no per child allocation. School Readiness funds already are extremely flexible and may be combined with other funding streams.

## Sources

- Interview: 6/30/2004, DebbyKay Peterson

For information about national trends, read CLASP's *All Together Now: State Experiences in Using Community-Based Child Care to Provide Pre-kindergarten* at [http://www.clasp.org/publications/all\\_together\\_now.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/publications/all_together_now.pdf).