

OFFICE OF CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER
Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Items
Consent Agenda
May 17, 2018

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION AND READING

C. Approval of methodology to award competitive grants to Early Learning Collaboratives to support Pre-Kindergarten programs

Background and Purpose: The purpose of these grants is to provide funding to support high-quality Pre-Kindergarten programs as established through the Early Learning Collaborative Act.

Eligibility: Applications will be accepted from early learning collaborative councils. An early learning collaborative is a district or county-wide council comprised of a public-school district and/or a local Head Start affiliate (if available), private or parochial schools, or one or more licensed child care providers. Agencies or organizations working with young children and their families to provide resources and coordination may also be included. Early learning collaborative councils eligible to be selected must:

- Use state-adopted early learning standards;
- Use evidence-based curriculum;
- Use age-appropriate assessments;
- Plan to serve students with disabilities as indicated under IDEA; and
- Meet all program criteria established by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) in the Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines for Classrooms Serving Three- and Four-Year-Old Children.

Funding Source: State funds. Grant awards are subject to availability of funds contingent upon legislative appropriation.

Basis for Awarding the Grants: Competitive

Funds will be awarded based on a community's capacity, commitment, and need. Evidence of existing strong collaboration of early education stakeholders must be provided. Early learning collaborative councils with the highest number of points demonstrating the capacity to facilitate the implementation of Pre-Kindergarten programs will be awarded grants, until available funds have been expended. Funding will be awarded at the rate of \$2,150 for a full-time student and \$1,075 for a part-time student.

Recommendation: Approval

Back-up material attached

Miss. Code Ann. § 37-21-51

Copy Citation

Current through the 2017 Regular and 1st Extraordinary Sessions

Mississippi Code of 1972 Annotated TITLE 37. EDUCATION CHAPTER 21. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION EARLY LEARNING COLLABORATIVE ACT

§ 37-21-51. Definitions; legislative findings; Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013; implementation of voluntary prekindergarten program; application for and use of program funds; criteria for awarding funds; funds to be appropriated on phased-in basis

(1) As used in this section:

(a) "Preschool or prekindergarten children" means any children who have not entered kindergarten but will have obtained four (4) years of age on or before September 1 of a school year.

(b) An "early learning collaborative" is a district or countywide council that writes and submits an application to participate in the voluntary prekindergarten program. An early learning collaborative is comprised, at a minimum, of a public school district and/or a local Head Start affiliate if in existence, private or parochial schools, or one or more licensed child care centers. Agencies or other organizations that work with young children and their families may also participate in the collaborative to provide resources and coordination even if those agencies or organizations are not prekindergarten providers.

(c) A "prekindergarten provider" is a public, private or parochial school, licensed child care center or Head Start center that serves prekindergarten children and participates in the voluntary prekindergarten program.

(d) A "lead partner" is a public school district or other nonprofit entity with the instructional expertise and operational capacity to manage the early learning collaborative's prekindergarten program as described in the collaborative's approved application for funds. The lead partner serves as the fiscal agent for the collaborative and shall disburse awarded funds in accordance with the collaborative's approved application. The lead partner must facilitate a professional learning community for the teachers in the prekindergarten program and lead the collaborative. The lead partner ensures that the collaborative adopts and implements curriculum and assessments that align with the comprehensive early learning standards. The public school district shall be the lead partner if no other qualifying lead partner is selected.

(e) "Comprehensive early learning standards" are standards adopted by the State Board of Education that address the highest level of fundamental domains of early learning to include, but not be limited to, physical well-being and motor development, social/emotional development, approaches toward learning, language development and cognition and general knowledge. The comprehensive early learning standards shall also include standards for emergent literacy skills, including oral communication, knowledge of print and letters, phonological and phonemic awareness, and vocabulary and comprehension development.

(f) A "research-based curriculum" is an age-appropriate curriculum that is based on the findings of current research and has been found to be effective in improving student learning.

(2) To ensure that all children have access to quality early childhood education and development services, the Legislature finds and declares the following:

(a) Parents have the primary duty to educate their young preschool children;

(b) The State of Mississippi can assist and educate parents in their role as the primary caregivers and educators of young preschool children;

(c) There is a need to explore innovative approaches and strategies for aiding parents and families in the education and development of young preschool children; and

(d) There exists a patchwork of prekindergarten entities but no coordination of services and there needs to be a coordination of these services.

(3) (a) This subsection shall be known and may be cited as the "Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013."

(b) Effective with the 2013-2014 school year, the Mississippi State Department of Education shall establish a voluntary prekindergarten program, which shall be a collaboration among the entities providing prekindergarten programs including Head Start, licensed child care facilities and licensed public, parochial and private school prekindergarten programs. This program shall be implemented no later than the 2014-2015 school year. Enrollment in the prekindergarten program shall be coordinated with the Head Start agencies in the local areas and shall not be permitted to cause a reduction in children served by the Head Start program. Under this program, eligible entities may submit an application for funds to (i) defray the cost of additional and/or more qualified teaching staff, appropriate educational materials and equipment and to improve the quality of educational experiences offered to four-year-old children in early care and education programs, and/or to (ii) extend developmentally appropriate education services at such programs currently serving four-year-old children to include practices of high quality instruction, and to (iii) administer, implement, monitor and evaluate the programs, and to (iv) defray the cost of professional development and age-appropriate child assessment.

(c) Subject to the availability of funds appropriated therefor, the State Department of Education shall administer the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the voluntary prekindergarten program, including awards and the application process.

(i) The department shall establish a rigorous and transparent application process for the awarding of funds. Lead partners shall submit the applications on behalf of their early learning collaborative.

(ii) The department will establish monitoring policies and procedures that, at a minimum, will include at least one (1) site visit a year.

(iii) The department will provide technical assistance to collaboratives and their providers to improve the quality of prekindergarten programs.

(iv) The department will evaluate the effectiveness of each early childhood collaborative and each prekindergarten provider. If the State Department of Education adopts a statewide kindergarten screening that assesses the readiness of each student for kindergarten, the State Department of Education shall adopt a minimum rate of readiness that each prekindergarten provider must meet in order to remain eligible for prekindergarten program funds. Each parent who enrolls his or

her child in the prekindergarten program must submit the child for the statewide kindergarten screening, regardless of whether the child is admitted to kindergarten in a public school.

(d) Prekindergarten program funds shall be awarded to early childhood collaboratives whose proposed programs meet the program criteria. The criteria shall include:

- (i)** Voluntary enrollment of children;
- (ii)** Collaboration among prekindergarten providers and other early childhood programs through the establishment of an early learning collaborative;
- (iii)** Qualifications of master teachers, teachers and assistants, which must conform to guidelines in Section 37-21-3;
- (iv)** At least fifteen (15) hours of annual professional development for program instructional staff, including professional development in early literacy;
- (v)** The use of state-adopted comprehensive early learning standards;
- (vi)** The use of a research-based curriculum that is designed to prepare students to be ready for kindergarten, with emphasis in early literacy, and is aligned with the comprehensive early learning standards;
- (vii)** The use of age-appropriate assessments aligned to the comprehensive early learning standards;
- (viii)** Teacher/child ratios of one (1) adult for every ten (10) children with a maximum of twenty (20) children per classroom and a minimum of five (5) children per classroom;
- (ix)** The provision of at least one (1) meal meeting state and federal nutrition guidelines for young children;
- (x)** Plans to screen and/or refer children for vision, hearing and other health issues;
- (xi)** Parent involvement opportunities;
- (xii)** Plans to serve children with disabilities as indicated under IDEA;
- (xiii)** The number of instructional hours to be provided, which shall equal no less than five hundred forty (540) instructional hours per school year for half-day

programs and one thousand eighty (1,080) instructional hours per school year for full-day programs; and

(xiv) A budget detailing the use of funds for allowed expenses.

Participating child care centers shall: (a) meet state child care facility licensure requirements unless exempted under Section 43-20-5, Mississippi Code of 1972, and (b) select and utilize a nationally recognized assessment tool, approved by the State Department of Education, designed to document classroom quality, which must be in place not later than July 1, 2016, as certified by the State Department of Education.

Within the prekindergarten program, a prekindergarten provider must comply with the antidiscrimination requirements applicable to public schools. A prekindergarten provider may not discriminate against a parent or child, including the refusal to admit a child for enrollment in the prekindergarten program, in violation of these antidiscrimination requirements. However, a prekindergarten provider may refuse to admit a child based on the provider's standard eligibility guidelines, provided that these guidelines do not violate the antidiscrimination requirements. Consistent with the Legislature's recognition of the primacy of a parent's role in the education of a preschool-age child and the related recognition of the state in assisting and educating parents in that role, if the State Department of Education adopts a statewide kindergarten screening that assesses the readiness of each student for kindergarten, the State Department of Education shall recognize each child's unique pattern of development when adopting a minimum rate of readiness that prekindergarten providers must meet in order to remain eligible for prekindergarten program funds. Each parent who enrolls his or her child in the prekindergarten program may submit the child for the statewide kindergarten screening, regardless of whether the child is admitted to kindergarten in a public school.

The State Department of Education may add program criteria not inconsistent with these requirements and shall develop policies and procedures to implement and enforce these criteria.

(e) The State Department of Education shall ensure that early learning collaboratives provide each parent enrolling a child in the voluntary prekindergarten program with a profile of every prekindergarten provider participating in the collaborative's geographic catchment area. The State Department of Education shall prescribe the information to be included in each profile as well as the format of the profiles. At a minimum, the profiles must include the prekindergarten provider's services, curriculum, instructor credentials and instructor-to-student ratio.

(f) A teacher, assistant teacher or other employee whose salary and fringe benefits are paid from state funds under this act shall only be classified as a state or local school district employee eligible for state health insurance benefits or membership in the Public Employees' Retirement System, if the person's employer is already an agency or instrumentality of the state, such as a school district, and the employee would be eligible for such benefits in the normal course of business.

(g) Funding shall be provided for this program beginning with the 2014 fiscal year subject to appropriation by the Legislature as provided in paragraph (h) of this

subsection. The department shall make an annual report to the Legislature and the Governor regarding the effectiveness of the program. The PEER Committee shall review those reports and other program data and submit an independent evaluation of program operation and effectiveness to the Legislature and the Governor on or before October 1 of the calendar year before the beginning of the next phased-in period of funding.

(h) (i) The Legislature shall appropriate funds to implement the Early Education Collaborative Act of 2013 on a phased-in basis as follows:

- 1.** The first phase shall be based on an annual state appropriation of not more than Eight Million Dollars (\$ 8,000,000.00) and shall serve approximately three thousand five hundred (3,500) children through five (5) to eight (8) early learning collaboratives and their prekindergarten providers;
- 2.** The second phase shall be based on an annual state appropriation of not more than Sixteen Million Dollars (\$ 16,000,000.00) and shall serve approximately seven thousand (7,000) children through ten (10) to fifteen (15) early learning collaboratives and their prekindergarten providers;
- 3.** The third phase shall be based on an annual state appropriation of not more than Thirty-three Million Nine Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$ 33,950,000.00) and shall serve approximately fifteen thousand (15,000) children through twenty (20) to twenty-five (25) early learning collaboratives and their prekindergarten providers.

(ii) Future phases shall be based on interest in the program and the effectiveness of the program as determined by the school readiness of participants. Each phase shall last for at least three (3) years but no more than five (5) years. The State Department of Education shall determine when to move to a new phase of the program, within the timeline provided herein.

(iii) Funding shall be provided to early learning collaboratives on the basis of Two Thousand One Hundred Fifty Dollars (\$ 2,150.00) per student in a full-day program and One Thousand Seventy-five Dollars (\$ 1,075.00) per student in a half-day program proposed in the collaborative's approved application. Once an early learning collaborative's plan is approved and funded, the collaborative and/or its prekindergarten providers shall receive funds on an ongoing basis unless the collaborative and/or its prekindergarten providers no longer meet the criteria to participate in the program.

(iv) Early learning collaboratives shall match state funds on a 1:1 basis. Local matching funds may include local tax dollars, federal dollars as allowed, parent tuition, philanthropic contributions, or in-kind donations of facilities, equipment and services required as part of the program such as food service or health screenings.

(v) The State Department of Education shall reserve no more than five percent (5%) of the appropriation in any year for administrative costs. Funds remaining after awards to early learning collaboratives and the department's administrative needs are met may be carried over in the following year. In the first year of implementation of the program, the department may delay the awarding of funds until the 2014-2015 school year should time not be sufficient to establish the program's operation prior to the 2013-2014 school year.

(vi) In the initial phase of implementation, the State Department of Education shall award state funds under the Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013 based on a community's capacity, commitment and need. To determine capacity, commitment and need, the State Department of Education shall require evidence of existing strong local collaborations of early education stakeholders. Such evidence shall include, but not be limited to, collaborations resulting from any of the following:

1. Participation in Excel By 5;
2. Participation in supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids (SPARK);
3. Participation in the Gilmore Early Learning Initiative (GELI); or
4. Participation in the Mississippi Building Blocks.

In determining community need, the department shall consider low academic achievement within the public school districts participating in an applicant early learning collaborative and the number and percentage of children without quality prekindergarten options.

(vii) All authority granted to the State Department of Education to establish program rules is subject to the public processes established in the provisions of the Mississippi Administrative Procedures Law, including, but not limited to, filing notice of the proposed rules, public hearings and any economic impact statement with the Office of the Secretary of State before presenting such information to the State Board of Education for final approval. SOURCES: Laws, 2000, ch. 510, § 1; Laws, 2007, ch. 440, § 1; reenacted and amended, Laws, 2009, ch. 345, § 27; Laws, 2013, ch. 493, § 1, eff from and after July 1, 2013.