

# Working Group 1

## Early Childhood Education

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### **Policy Area:**

**Early Childhood Education:** Expands high quality pre-K to all low-income four-year-olds and all low-income three-year-olds, and assesses all children to identify those who need supports to be ready to learn

## **Element Detail 1a**

**Element: Expand Pre-K** to all low-income four-year-olds and low-income three-year-olds at 300% poverty or less

### **Design Assumptions:**

1. Research has shown that investing in the early childhood development of disadvantaged children yields a high return to society, offsetting taxpayer costs for poor health, dropout rates, poverty, and crime.
2. The State will expand access to public pre-K to all low-income four-year-olds and all low-income three-year-olds in the State on a 10 year phase-in timeline.
3. Family enrollment in pre-K is voluntary.
4. All participating programs, whether based at public schools or community organizations, should follow State public pre-K standards set forth in the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) and attain at least a level 3 ranking on the public pre-K program EXCELS quality scale with a plan to get to a level 5 within 5 years in order to receive public funding.
5. Provision will include both public school-based pre-K programs and participating community-based pre-K programs.
6. Pre-K programs should be at a minimum 6.5 hours and at least 180 school days.

### **Implementation Decisions:**

1. Priority in expansion of pre-K should be focused on low-income four-year-olds (300 percent poverty or less) before expanding pre-K for low-income three-year-olds (300 percent poverty or less). Expansion efforts in the early years should be focused on making pre-K available for all low-income four-year-olds in half-day slots while half-day slots are being converted into full-day slots. Therefore, by year four, all low-income four-year-olds will be offered full-day pre-K.
2. Full-day pre-K for low-income three-year-olds (300 percent poverty or less) will be phased-in over the 10 year period by 10% per year. Therefore, by year 10, all low-income three-year-olds will be offered full-day pre-K.
3. The State will require that a minimum percent of pre-K slots be provided in participating community-based settings. This requirement will be phased-in over the 10 year period, with a slow ramp up in years one through 4, and remain constant at 50% beginning in year 5.
4. Priority in expansion of pre-K for both low-income four-year-olds and low-income three-year-olds should be given to: (a) special education students,

- regardless of income; and (b) students who are English Learners, regardless of income.
5. Priority in expansion of pre-K should be given to areas and regions where there are less providers and programs available to serve the four-year-old and three-year-old population in the region.
  6. The implementation schedule will use 70-80 percent of families as a target for enrollment of low-income four-year-olds in public pre-K as some families will choose private providers or keep children at home until kindergarten.
  7. The implementation schedule will use 80-90 percent of families as a target for enrollment of low-income three-year-olds in public pre-K as some families will choose private providers or keep children at home.
  8. Public pre-K programs must be required to publish in EXCELS.
  9. There will be a linear sliding scale for a family of four with incomes between \$75,000 (300 percent of poverty) and \$100,000 (400 percent of poverty) whereby for every 1% above \$75,000, the family will receive 1% less in public funding.
  10. The State should prioritize public school construction funding for additional pre-K classrooms, if available.
  11. The State will operate the child care subsidy program so children have access to extended day (before and after care) services that align with parents' working schedules. (Ch. 563 and 564 of 2018 increase State child care subsidies to the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile of child care provider rates by fiscal 2022).

### **Phase-in Timeline Decisions**

1. EXCELS: To receive public funding, a provider must be published at a level 3 with a plan to get to level 5 within 5 years.
2. Minimum Percent of Pre-K Slots in Community-based Settings: Phased-in in 10% increments starting in FY2021, reaching and remaining constant at 50% in FY2025.
3. Expansion of slots:
  - In year 1, all four-year-olds below 300% poverty will have access to half-day slots. 10% of three-year-olds below 300% poverty will have access to full-day slots.
  - In year 4, all four-year-olds below 300% poverty will have access to full-day pre-K. 40% of three-year-olds below 300% poverty will have access to full-day pre-K.
  - In year 10, all four-year-olds below 300% poverty will have access to full-day pre-K. 100% of three-year-olds below 300% poverty will have access to full-day pre-K.
4. Sliding Scale: For a family of 4 with an income between 300-400% poverty (\$75,000 to \$100,000), there will be a linear sliding scale within the income bracket.

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	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30
4 year olds	All below 185% FPL offered ½ day	All below 185% FPL offered ½ day	All below 300% FPL offered ½ day	All below 300% FPL offered ½ day	All below 300% FPL offered ½ day	All below 300% FPL offered full day	All below 300% FPL offered full day	All below 300% FPL offered full day	All below 300% FPL offered full day	All below 300% FPL offered full day	All below 300% FPL offered full day	All below 300% FPL offered full day
3 year olds	None required	None required	10% below 300% FPL offered full day	20% below 300% FPL offered full day	30% below 300% FPL offered full day	40% below 300% FPL offered full day	50% below 300% FPL offered full day	60% below 300% FPL offered full day	70% below 300% FPL offered full day	80% below 300% FPL offered full day	90% below 300% FPL offered full day	All below 300% FPL offered full day
Community-based (3 or 4 year olds)	No requirement	No requirement	Min 10% in Community-based	Min 20% in Community-based	Min 30% in Community-based	Min 40% in Community-based	Min 50% in Community-based	Min 50% in Community-based	Min 50% in Community-based	Min 50% in Community-based	Min 50% in Community-based	Min 50% in Community-based

5. Workforce building for ECE: As the number of slots increase and demand for ECE teachers and staff increase, there will be increased credentialing and capacity building of early childhood educators and staff (Element 1b).

## **Element Detail 1b**

**Element: Capacity building** for new and current programs (tuition assistance for prospective staff; training; support of peer networks; integration with career ladder)

### **Design Assumptions:**

1. Maryland will continue to require lead pre-K teachers (for three- and four-year-olds) to have a BA with ECE certification and will require assistant teachers/aides to have a Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate.
2. The State should encourage pre-K programs to invest in helping teachers to become certified in early childhood education.
3. Maryland should support and expand coaching and technical assistance for private/community providers to improve the quality of their programs to first meet level 3 on the EXCELS public pre-K program scale, and then level 5, with priority on improving providers to meet level 5 in high-need communities first.
4. Maryland should support cohorts of ECE staff in attaining CDA credentials to serve as aides and assistant teachers in these programs. This support should include financial support to help cover course and exam fees and coaching by mentor teachers.
5. Expansion of staffing will need to match the pace for the expansion of pre-K slots. Maryland will continue to require an average staff to student ratio of 1 to 10 with an average of 20 students per classroom.
6. Public pre-K teachers should be part of the Maryland K-12 teacher career ladder. Master pre-K teachers should be a level on the career ladder.
7. Maryland should significantly expand tuition assistance for new pre-K teaching candidates to get BA degrees with specialized training in ECE, as part of its effort to increase the pool of qualified teachers.

### **Implementation Decisions:**

1. The State should implement initiatives developed under MSDE's Master Plan on Professional Development for Teachers and Providers of Early Childhood Education, such as aligning high school early childhood CTE program standards with CDA credential requirements and community college ECE programs; expanding online professional development courses with job-embedded coaching; requiring coursework and clinical work in ECE programs include training in diverse child care environments and working with special needs children; creating pathways that accept prior learning experience; creating an

ECE bachelor's degree program and dual certification programs; and creating a public awareness campaign for ECE teaching staff and quality child care.

2. The State should set targets so that the percentage of teachers certified in ECE and staff with CDA credentials increase and keep pace with the 10 year implementation period. At full implementation of pre-K for low-income four-year-olds and three-year-olds, the State will face an ECE workforce total estimated need of 3700 pre-K teachers and assistant teachers/aides. (estimate 37,000 4 year olds below 300% x 2 (to include estimate of 3 yr olds) = 74,000/20=3700)
3. The State should expand and increase the amount of training vouchers and credentialing bonuses to encourage providers to continue professional development, tiered with the EXCELS level to incentivize movement towards higher quality.
4. The State should provide financial assistance for students who complete the high school early childhood CTE program to take the CDA assessment so the student can work as an aide or assistant teacher. The cost of a CDA exam is \$425.
5. Maryland should expand the coaching infrastructure/model developed by the Child Care Resource Center Network to provide training for private providers to meet public pre-K EXCELS requirements .
6. The State should increase the capacity of MSDE to provide technical assistance to public pre-K programs and community-based providers through EXCELS quality assurance specialists, regional offices, and onsite monitoring and licensing staff at levels to keep pace with the increase in participating providers.
7. The State should identify ECE teachers as a workforce shortage area to enable tuition assistance through the Workforce Shortage Student Assistance Grant Program.
8. The State should create a new full-ride scholarship program for students who become lead pre-K teachers who are certified in ECE and commit to work in high-needs schools for a certain number of years.
9. The State should significantly increase funding for the Child Care Center and Professional Development Fund to support ECE staff in obtaining associate's degrees, bachelor's degrees, and CDA credentials.
10. The State should focus outreach and recruitment efforts so that the ECE teachers and staff mirror the diversity of the community.
11. The State should require that all pre-K teachers have cultural competency training through teacher preparation programs or professional development programs.

12. Public pre-K teachers must meet the same certification requirements as K-12 teachers. Therefore, public pre-K teachers will be incorporated into the State K-12 teacher career ladder developed by Working Group 2.

## **Element Detail 1c**

**Element:** Implementation of **school readiness assessment** for all students entering kindergarten

### **Design Assumptions:**

1. This assessment would be given to all kindergarteners by kindergarten teachers as a census.
2. The State will continue to provide every kindergarten teacher with training or a refresher course on administering the KRA every year.
3. The State will continue to provide professional development funds for jurisdictions that administer the KRA as a census assessment.
4. The assessment tool should provide information for kindergarten teachers to use to plan their lessons and also to enable teachers to identify students who may need additional assistance.
5. The tool will not be cumbersome for teachers to administer and teachers will be given dedicated time to administer the assessment.
6. A protocol will be put in place to enable teachers to use and act on the information produced by the assessment tool, such as referring students for case management or in-class or out-of-class supports.

### **Implementation Decisions:**

1. Local boards of education should have flexibility to administer the KRA either before students enter kindergarten or during the first two months of the school year.
2. The State should require the KRA to be administered to every kindergarten student as a census and not as a random sample to ensure equity and accountability.
3. The State should extend the administration window from October 10 to October 30 to reduce the operational impact of conducting the KRA as census assessment.
4. A survey of kindergarten teachers should be conducted after Version 2.0 of the KRA is fully implemented in fall 2018 to get feedback on the usefulness and usability of the new version of the KRA.
5. The survey should include questions such as the usefulness of the KRA data to inform kindergarten instruction and whether the KRA data enhances a teacher's ability to identify challenges that a student may be experiencing, especially those challenges that indicate that a child may need special education services.



6. The oversight body should review the results of the survey and review Version 2.0 for usefulness and usability and make any recommendations for changes, if needed.
7. The assessment should include a standardized process for reporting a kindergartener's prior care setting.
8. The assessment should be implemented statewide by 2020-2021.

## Element Detail 1d

**Element:** Expand **Judy Centers and Family Support Centers** to provide and coordinate access to education and support services for at-risk young children ages 0-5 and their families

### Design Assumptions:

1. Maryland will expand the number of Judy Centers over time to match the number of Title I elementary schools.
2. Maryland will expand the number of Family Support Centers over time, with the goal of ensuring that every underserved neighborhood has a Family Support Center or similar set of programs and services.

### Implementation Decisions:

1.
  - a. The expansion of Judy Centers will be phased in over 10 years, with priority in opening new Judy Centers going to the neediest communities. MSDE will be required to consider geographic diversity when selecting a Title I school to locate a new Judy Center and coordinate placement of new Judy Centers in order to serve multiple, closely located Title I schools in a high needs area or region.
    - b. There are currently 55 centers and more than 300 Title I elementary schools (a Judy Center costs about \$330,000 annually). The State's goal should be to reduce the gap of 245 by half and scale up the number of centers over time so that one-third (42) of the new Judy Centers open in the first 5 years and two-thirds (80) open in the next 5 years. By fiscal year 2029, there will be 122 new Judy Centers.
2.
  - a. The expansion of Family Support Centers will be phased in over 10 years, with priority in opening new Family Support Centers going to the neediest communities. MSDE will be required to consider geographic diversity when selecting regions to locate a new Family Support Center and coordinate placement of new Family Support Centers in order to serve multiple, closely located counties or areas in need of a Family Support Center. There are currently 9 counties (Calvert, Charles, Garrett, Harford, Howard, St. Mary's, Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester) where there are no Family Support Centers.
    - b. There are currently 25 Family Support Centers (the State contribution towards a Family Support Center costs about \$330,000 annually). The State's goal should be to open 3 new centers a year so that by fiscal year 2029, there will be 30 new Family Support Centers.