

## IMPLEMENTING 15 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR HIGH-QUALITY PRE-K: Michigan

Michigan’s state-funded preschool program, the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP), was established in 1985. Since its inception, the program’s goal has been the same, to provide preschool to at-risk four-year-olds. Prior to 2013-2014, 75% of families in the program had to be at or below 300% of the FPL. Starting in the 2013-2014 school year, 90% of families had to be at or below 250% FPL. The remaining 10% of families with income over 250% of the poverty threshold are required to pay a fee based on a locally determined sliding scale.

GSRP is not required to be offered by all the school districts; however, all districts that choose to offer the program will receive funding. Approximately two-thirds of districts do offer the program. Over two-thirds of the children are enrolled in public schools, and the rest are in Head Start and other community-based organizations. GSRP legislation mandates at least 30% of funds must go to private organizations.

### Essential Elements

Fifteen Essential Elements clustered in three categories—Enabling Environment, Support for Educators and Young Learners, and High-Quality Instruction—have been identified among exemplary pre-K programs (Minervino, 2014). Note that practice in the field may vary so as to be either better or worse than might be expected based on specific policy or guidance. Consistency or quality of practice across large-scale programs is more difficult to assess than policy.

Enabling Environment		Rigorous, Articulated Early Learning Policies								Strong Program Practices				
Political Will	Strong Leaders	BA + comp	Class size	Two Adults	Hours/ Dosage	EL Standards	Effective Curriculum	Special Ed	DLL support	HQ Teaching	PD	Child Assessments	Data Driven	Integrated System
●	●	–	●	●	●	●	●	—	—	ND	●	●	●	●

Key: ● Fully Met    ○ Partially Met    – Not Met    ND Not determined

**Political will.** Gov. Rick Snyder (R), in his second and final term, is seen as an advocate for quality early childhood education. With Gov. Snyder coming from the business world, and the business community taking note, key players worked with the Governor and Legislature to continue to invest and expand access. Michigan is rich in philanthropic foundations. The W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the Frey Foundation, the Skillman Foundation, the Colina Foundation, and the Kresge Foundation, among others, have invested in early childhood policy and programs over the years. A foundation liaison position was implemented in the Governor's office, under Gov. Granholm, and has been kept in place under Gov. Snyder. The liaison, along with a couple staffers detailed from foundations, help coordinate foundation supports across the early childhood system, as well as other investments that are priorities for the Governor. In addition, there are highly engaged advocacy groups, including Michigan’s Children and Fight Crime: Invest in Kids. They work together to leverage foundation contributions.



For 2013-2014 and 2014-2015, Michigan invested an additional \$65 million each year in GSRP, increasing the number of slots available, yet per-slot funding was only increased in the first year by \$225. In both budget increases, 2% of funding was specifically earmarked for recruiting and increasing public awareness of GSRP. Funding for the 2016-2017 remained flat from the previous year after a \$4.3 million increase in 2015-2016, including \$300,000 allocated for ongoing statewide evaluation activities. In 2016-2017, 38,371 children were enrolled in GSRP; 33.4% of the state's 4-year-olds.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** The Office of Great Start (OGS), Preschool and Out-of-School Time Learning is responsible for GSRP. OGS was developed by Gov. Snyder in 2011 as a division within the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) that could coordinate across state government and across early childhood up to age 8. OGS is led by a Deputy Superintendent, a position that elevates OGS' relevance within the department and education system. As part of a recent expansion, three GSRP staff positions were added, reflecting a need for administrative support. There are now four content experts, a dedicated fiscal monitor, and two analysts, one working with allocations and the other data collection/dissemination and grant systems management. Beyond the core team, there is management and some administrative support. In total, there are 8.325 FTEs responsible for GSRP.

**Education and compensation.** Lead teachers in both public school and nonpublic must have a BA and either certification with an Early Childhood endorsement or a degree in Early Childhood Education or Child Development with specialization in preschool teaching. There is no salary parity for GSRP teachers.

**Adult-child ratio and two adults in the classroom.** GSRP has a maximum class size of 18 for 4-year-olds and requires a staff-child ratio of 1:8.

**Learning time.** Children attend GSRP for a minimum of three hours per day, four days a week for 30 weeks per year. It is allowable for new grantees or newly licensed sites to operate for 20 weeks during the first year, however, subsequent years must be 30 weeks per year. It is a locally determined decision to convert part-day slots to full-day. For school-day and GSRP/Head Start Blend classrooms, the formal partnership requires 6.5 hours per day, four days per week for 30 weeks. In Michigan, 6.5 hours per day is considered a school-day and extended-day (wrap-around) would constitute a minimum of 10 hours. In 2016-2017, 14% of children attended a part-day program.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** Michigan's Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten, last revised in 2013, are comprehensive and aligned with the Head Start Outcomes Framework as well as Michigan's infant/toddler standards, K-3 standards, and the college and career ready standards for the early grades. Michigan provides professional development opportunities to support use of ELDS.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** The state offers guidance on selecting curricula aligned with ELDS and has developed an approved curriculum list that includes Creative Curriculum; Connect4Learning, HighScope; Montessori; Reggio Emilia; Tools of the Mind; and Project Approach. GSRP providers are required to be trained directly by a certified trainer of their chosen curriculum. SEA monitors ISDs that are required to provide oversight and monitoring of sub-recipient practices, such as local policies/procedures related to all aspects of fidelity of implementation of the curriculum. Each

classroom also has a classroom coach (Early Childhood Specialist) to provide observation and feedback directly to teachers.

**Support for students with special needs.** In 2016-2017, 16% of GSRP students received special education services. However, there are no state policies related to providing supports for preschool children who have special needs enrolled in inclusion classrooms in GSRP.

**Support for dual (English) language learners (DLL).** The number of DLLs enrolled in GSRP is unknown; however, DLL is a program eligibility factor. Transitional bilingual programs and dual language immersion classes are permitted.

**High quality teaching.** Michigan uses the Program Quality Assessment (PQA) to measure quality annually in each classroom. HighScope developed the PQA around the Michigan Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Pre-K, and has since published and used it nationally and internationally. PQA scores are not available for review.

**Professional development.** Teachers must complete 16 clock hours of professional development per year. Lead teachers who are certificated in public school settings must also complete six credit hours or an equivalent of continuing education units (CEUs) every five years to keep their teaching certification current. Newly certified lead teachers must complete even more training to renew the certificate for the first time.

All classrooms are assigned an Early Childhood Specialist (ECS), a master's level coach. Each ECS is in regular contact with the teaching teams and conducts regular visits that vary based on differentiated needs of teachers. ECSs are typically in the classroom anywhere from weekly to monthly depending on the needs of each teaching team. Classrooms with new lead teachers and lower Program Quality Assessment (PQA) scores or other concerns receive more frequent visits.

**Child Assessments.** GSRP programs may choose tools that comprehensively assess children according to the Early Learning Expectations in the Michigan Department of Education Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten. Approved assessments that are used throughout the year include Teaching Strategies GOLD, Work Sampling System, and HighScope COR. Teachers are required to have formal training in using the assessment and using results to inform daily practice and for reports for conferences with parents. The state allows supplemental tools to be used by grantees following a specified process for selection.

**Data-driven decision-making.** All programs are assessed using the PQA more than one time per year and receive the results of their observations. To ensure the reliability of the assessments, annual inter-rater reliability certification by the tool publisher, HighScope, is required for all Early Childhood Specialists. ECS certification is reported to SEA in order for PQA data to be accepted for the observed classroom. Starting in 2018-2019, the SEA is legislatively required to conduct a process for determining at least two classroom assessments.

Beginning in the 2013-2014 grant year, MDE created a new monitoring tool and cycle for the ISDs as GSRP grantees. MDE monitoring includes a sampling of data from the ISD's sub-recipient program, and administrative and fiscal documentation. An MDE auditor, consultant, or combined team conduct on-



site monitoring visits to the ISD to ensure compliance with state policies and program requirements as they relate to fiscal and programmatic management of the grant.

**Integrated System.** The state promotes a cohesive approach and has aligned the early learning standards; GSRP program standards including staffing and professional development requirements; licensing regulations; and the QRIS system. In addition, the early learning standards are aligned with the approved GSRP curricula and formative child assessment. To support the implementation of these components, there is a differentiated coaching system.