

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

Indiana successfully launched two state-funded preschool pilot programs with the goal of expanding enrollment of low-income 4-year-old children in high-quality early childhood education. The On My Way Pre-K program was signed into law in 2014 to provide grants to eligible low-income 4-year-old children for qualified early education services. The pilot operated across four counties in 2014-2015. The 2015-2016 school year marked the first full year of the On My Way Pre-K program, and in 2016-2017, the program operated in five counties. During the 2013 legislative session, the Indiana General Assembly enacted the Early Education Matching Grant (EEMG) through 2018. EEMG has now been consolidated with On My Way Pre-K.

**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.** Former Gov. Pence supported the successful creation of the state’s first pre-K program. Once Gov. Pence became Vice-President, current Gov. Eric Holcomb (R) stepped in and has continued support of the program and its expansion. In 2017, the Indiana General Assembly passed new legislation to expand access to preschool to an additional 15 counties by the 2018-2019 school year. The new legislation also makes previously approved EEMG sites eligible to accept On My Way Pre-K grants, adding another eight individual sites in additional counties to the 2018-2019 expansion. Under the new legislation, all pre-K providers must be eligible to accept CCDF funding, providing families with a guaranteed 53-week subsidy period and continuity of care for their child if needed before and after kindergarten if the family remains eligible at reauthorization. In 2016-2017, Indiana pre-K programs served 1,792 children, a 13% increase from the previous year. Even with this expansion, Indiana served 2% of its 4-year-old population in 2016-2017.

Private philanthropy has been directly supporting On May Way Pre-K grants with the required matching funds including Early Learning Indiana and United Way of Central Indiana (UWCI). The Lilly Endowment has partnered with other advocates on such issues as increased accessibility and affordability of high-quality early childhood education for Indiana residents.

**Compelling vision and strong leadership.** On My Way Pre-K is administered through the Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning (OECOSL) which is a division of the Office of the Secretary of Family Social Services Administration (FSSA). OECOSL runs PTQ, CCDF, and child care licensing. Statute requires Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) involvement in the administration of On My Way Pre-K. Additionally, prior to implementation, the State Board of Education must review and comment on the provision of the program.

OECOSL employs more than 65 people, five work on PTQ, and another two on pre-K. There are also financial analysts and other staff who indirectly support Pre-K efforts. In addition, two IDOE staff are assigned to pre-K. IDOE has conducted training and TA sessions for pre-K providers, including public schools, on understanding the ways to access Title 1 and On My Way Pre-K funds to support more children or to extend program hours. IDOE updated its preschool guidance which includes possible scenarios of blending funds, such as braiding funds within the same schools, providing professional development or facility updates, increasing the quality of the program, etc.

**Education and compensation.** Educational requirements are based on requirements of the QRIS Levels 3 and 4. Requirements for Level 3 are that 50 percent of staff has a CDA, equivalent, or higher. Level 4 requires accreditation and programs must meet the education or degree requirements of an approved accrediting body. There are no salary parity policies for pre-K teachers.

**Adult-child ratio and two adults in the classroom.** Pre-K classrooms have a maximum class size of 24 and a staff-child ratio of 1:12.

**Learning time.** Families have a choice of full-day or part-day (4 hours), as well as calendar-year or school-year. Programs can set their schedules individually and may choose to operate on either a school- or calendar-year schedule, as long as the total operating hours and days reaches the minimum required amount of program hours per year (450) and days per year (114). For a program to meet the minimum requirements for both hours and days per year, the program would need to run at least four hours per day. In 2016-2017, 19% of children attended a part-day program.

**Age-appropriate learning standards.** Indiana's Early Learning Foundations (Indiana Foundations) were last revised in 2015. The state infant and toddler standards are included in the Indiana Foundations which are aligned with K-12 standards. Programs receive technical support and coaching from the QRIS coaches to support the Indiana Foundations.

**System that ensures effective curriculum.** Indiana offers guidance on selecting curricula aligned with Indiana Foundations but there is not a list of approved or recommended pre-K curricula and there is not a system to ensure curricula are being implemented with fidelity.

**Support for students with special needs.** There are children enrolled with On My Way Pre-K funding that receive services with an IEP/IFSP but this data is not collected. Inclusion specialists are available to support preschool teachers and/or children.

**Support for dual (English) language learners (DLL).** In 2016-2017, 14.7% of preschool students were DLLs. Indiana does not have specific policies to regulate services for preschool DLLs. In order to meet the

language needs of DLLs, Indiana has adopted the WIDA Early English Language Development Standards (E-ELD).

**High quality teaching.** CLASS observations were not available for review.

**Professional development.** Pre-K teachers are required to complete 20 clock hours of professional development per year. To support the content of the trainings, the Indiana Core Knowledge and Competencies (CKC) (2016) identifies what professionals need to know and be able to do when working with infants, children, youth, and their families. It includes a professional development planning tool to help assess knowledge and skills and includes a planning tool for individualized professional development plans to be created. PTQ coaches are available to all pre-K programs on an as-needed basis. State Licensing Consultants are also available to programs to provide assistance. Programs, not individual teachers, are assigned to coaches, and there are not state requirements as to the number of programs assigned each coach. Coaches are employees of entities under contract with the state and caseloads are addressed within that scope of work.

**Child Assessments.** The required assessment for On My Way Pre-K, Indiana Standards Tool for Alternate Reporting of Kindergarten Readiness (ISTAR-KR), is aligned with the Indiana Foundations. ISTAR-KR measures skills in children from infancy to kindergarten. This web-based instrument is rated by teachers based on their ongoing observations of children engaged in typical daily routines and activities. It is available to all public schools in Indiana and to private early childhood education programs at no cost. Assessment results from ISTAR-KR can be used to determine which skills a child has mastered and to identify the skills a student needs to learn next. This assessment is required to be administered within 6 weeks of beginning and ending programs; but encouraged as needed throughout the year to inform practice. IDOE in collaboration with OECOSL has sponsored trainings on using ISTAR-KR as well as workshops on child assessments and individual lesson planning.

**Data-driven decision-making.** Purdue University annually conducts classroom observations using CLASS in classrooms that students who are part of the longitudinal study. Programs, teachers, and/or classrooms do not receive on-going feedback based on these structured observations of classroom quality; however, the state does receive these results. In addition to CLASS, Paths to QUALITY data are also collected. Purdue University is responsible for the reliability of their staff's CLASS observations; TCC Software Solutions is responsible for the reliability of Paths to QUALITY raters.

Purdue University has been contracted by OECOSL to conduct an evaluation of Indiana's On My Way Pre-K. This evaluation is designed to inform stakeholders on program quality and growth of children's skills, as well as address the effectiveness of the pre-K program in improving children's school readiness, children's early school performance, and parents' school engagement. Evaluators will also examine the impact of part-day vs. full-day and part-year vs. full-year programming on children's learning outcomes.

**Integrated System.** There are elements of Indiana's system that are aligned. The Indiana Foundations are aligned with the ISTAR-KR assessment tool, which are integrated into the PTQ. Even though participating in PTQ is required, private schools can meet eligibility by being accredited by one of IDOE's regionally or nationally approved accredited bodies. However, some of the essential elements are determined at the program level, including curriculum and participation in the coaching program.