

**DRAFT & EMERGENT RECOMMENDATIONS
MISSOURI PANEL ON SCHOOL READINESS:
FOCUS ON PRE-KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION
OF THE MISSOURI COORDINATING BOARD FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD**

SEPTEMBER 8, 2008

Pre-K Panel Statement

On the Purpose of Publicly Funded Pre-Kindergarten in Missouri

To ensure that Missouri's young children have access to high-quality early learning experiences that prepare them to succeed in school and in life.

THE EIGHT RECOMMENDATIONS LISTED BELOW HAVE BEEN UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED AS DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS. THEY WILL BE FURTHER REVIEWED AND REFINED BY THE PRE-K PANEL AT ITS NEXT MEETING.

1. By the end of the 2011 Missouri legislative session, statutory authority should be established for publicly funded pre-kindergarten in Missouri. A sliding fee scale or other financial structure should be in place by December 2011 to ensure that program enrollment is accessible and affordable to all age-eligible children, regardless of income.

Rationale.

- Ⓢ Research indicates that children identified as at risk for success in kindergarten benefit most from pre-kindergarten and that these benefits are greatest when they are served in demographically diverse settings.

2. Any center- or family-based program (public, private, for-profit, non-profit, faith-based) that meets the standards established for publicly funded pre-kindergarten programs in Missouri should be able to participate in the State's pre-kindergarten and receive public funds.

Rationale.

- Ⓢ Reliance on a diverse delivery system will
 - help improve the quality of all of the state's pre-kindergarten programs.
 - strengthen and expand the State's existing pre-kindergarten programs and minimize unnecessary duplication.
 - be more supportive of parental choice.
 - likely be more culturally responsive.

3. Enrollment in publicly funded pre-kindergarten should be voluntary for Missouri families.

Rationale

- Ⓢ Children’s participation in pre-kindergarten should be parental/guardian choice.
- Ⓢ Families of young children should be able to choose the programs that work best for them and their children.
- Ⓢ Since kindergarten in Missouri is voluntary, the same should hold true for pre-kindergarten.

4. Enrollment in publicly funded pre-kindergarten should be available to Missouri’s children for two years prior to their entry into Kindergarten. Enrollment in the State’s publicly funded pre-kindergarten should begin in fall 2012, with the expectation that it will expand over time according to a specified plan.

Rationale

- Ⓢ Children need developmental peers for a successful pre-kindergarten experience.

5. All publicly funded pre-kindergarten programs must meet the State’s child care licensing requirements. The Missouri Coordinating Board for Early Childhood should establish guidelines for variances and timelines for rectifying them.

Rationale

- Ⓢ Child care licensing ensures a minimum standard of program safety and quality.

6. All publicly funded pre-kindergarten programs should be held accountable for meeting identified program standards. These program standards should address:

- *Safe environment/ warm relationships,*
- *Child health and mental health,*
- *Learning goals,*
- *Curriculum,*
- *Staff qualifications,*
- *Class size and teacher: student ratio,*
- *Parent/guardian involvement, and*
- *Community involvement.*

The program standards are to be established by the State and should be required of programs at the time of the pre-kindergarten program’s initiation in fall 2012.

Rationale

- Ⓢ All publicly funded pre-kindergarten programs should be held accountable to the same standards.
- Ⓢ Uniform and universal program standards will promote consistency in program quality across settings.

- Ⓢ Research/Evidence-based standards within these domains will ensure a holistic focus on the child, thereby increasing the child’s ability to enter kindergarten prepared to succeed.
- Ⓢ Findings from research indicate meaningful economic benefits for children and society when children participate in high quality pre-kindergarten programs.

7. As soon as feasible, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s data tracking system (MOSIS) should be used to establish a uniform, child-specific (aggregate level) longitudinal measure of outcomes for children participating in the State’s pre-kindergarten program.

Rationale

- Ⓢ Use of MOSIS for this purpose will establish a systematic process for longitudinal tracking program- and child-specific progress, information that can be used for system accountability and for systems change.

8. At the state level, a system of oversight for the State’s publicly funded pre-kindergarten should be established. The system’s functions should include:

- *Coordination and collaboration,*
- *Standards alignment,*
- *Maximization of fiscal resources,*
- *Enforcement of program standards, and*
- *Data collection and analysis.*

Rationale

- Ⓢ A designated system for oversight will ensure
 - that all pre-kindergarten programs perform to the same standard.
 - that children experience early learning environments associated with positive child outcomes.
 - the effective use of state and local resources.

THE TWO RECOMMENDATIONS LISTED BELOW ARE CONSIDERED “EMERGENT” AND IN NEED OF FURTHER WORK AND DELIBERATION.

1. All publicly funded pre-kindergarten programs should be required, at the time of the pre-kindergarten program’s initiation, to use a standardized child assessment process for tracking and monitoring children’s progress. Focused on all domains of child development, the standardized assessment should be used upon pre-kindergarten entry and pre-kindergarten exit/kindergarten entry and the results reported to a central designation at specified intervals.

Rationale

- Ⓢ A centralized and uniform tracking and monitoring system will
 - establish baseline data for pre-kindergarten programs.
 - help determine each child’s and program’s progress.

- help identify children's unmet needs.

2. At the local or regional levels, a system of coordination should be an option for the purpose of promoting local decision-making regarding the implementation of a mixed delivery system.

Rationale

- ⑧ A local/regional system of coordination can promote increased ownership in young children's early care and education at the local/community level, reduce duplication of services, encourage more effective use of scarce resources, respond to diversity among communities, and help effect a more streamlined system.