
STATE OF MISSOURI



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
MICHAEL L. PARSON

TO: G57

FROM: JAMIE BIRCH, DEPUTY POLICY DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL – EXPANDED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION ACCESS

DATE: JANUARY 18, 2023

Summary

This legislative proposal modifies provisions related to early childhood education programs by:

- Modifying the current funding formula for state aid for early childhood education programs in public school districts and charter schools; and
- Expanding state aid for early childhood education programs in public school districts and charter schools to all four year olds that are eligible for free and reduced lunch.

Overview

Numerous studies have found that participation in a quality early childhood education (ECE) program has a significantly positive impact on a child's overall wellbeing and performance. This includes better academic performance and achievement long-term, fewer behavioral challenges, improved social skills, decreased likelihood of future criminal involvement, reduced utilization of public assistance, and higher earnings in adulthood.¹ A recent study demonstrated that high quality early childhood education program can deliver a 13% per year return on investment for disadvantaged children.² Other studies commonly cite an average of a 3-to-1 return on investment in ECE programs.

In Missouri, currently less than half of all four-year-olds are enrolled in an ECE program. Most public school districts do not offer any state foundation formula-funded Pre-K slots (approximately 67%). Current state foundation formula aid for Pre-K programming in public schools and charter schools is limited to children who qualify for free and reduced price lunch, capped at four percent of the total number of K-12 children in the school district that qualify for free and reduced price lunch and qualified

¹ National Education Association. <https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/action-center/our-issues/early-childhood-education>.

² <https://heckmanequation.org/resource/research-summary-lifecycle-benefits-influential-early-childhood-program/>.

by the overall average daily attendance of the district. The current funding structure significantly limits access to low income children. There are about 185,000 Missouri children who are economically disadvantaged (living at or below the poverty level). Only 12% (approximately) of those children currently have access to an ECE program through a public or charter school (state-funded Pre-K or Title I). Overall, in FY2022 the state foundation formula-funded Pre-K slots provided access to approximately 5,372 students at a cost of \$26,084,588.

While universal, voluntary access to Pre-K for all children – regardless of income – is the ultimate public policy goal, increasing state aid for children in greatest financial need is expected to have a positive impact for all Missouri children. Increasing access to state aid for the Pre-K costs of those in greatest need will inevitably lead to greater access for all children by increasing classroom capacity, reducing program costs for schools, and allowing dedicated local funding for early childhood education to be reallocated to support additional children not already supported by the state. This proposal is expected to provide ECE access to at least 17,000 more children across the state for annual cost of approximately \$124,093,702 (assumes a 70% participation rate of all children eligible for free and reduced price lunch in the year before kindergarten).

Proposal

Relating to early childhood education programs.

163.018. Early childhood education programs, pupils included in average daily attendance calculation, when — standards for early education program, department considerations.

1. (1) Notwithstanding the definition of average daily attendance in subdivision (2) of section 163.011 to the contrary, pupils ~~[between the ages of three and five]~~ who do not otherwise qualify under subdivision (2) of this subsection, are age 3 or 4, and who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch and attend an early childhood education program:

(a) That is operated by and in a district or by a charter school that has declared itself as a local educational agency providing full-day kindergarten and that meets standards established by the state board of education; or

(b) That is under contract with a district or charter school that has declared itself as a local educational agency and that meets standards established by the state board of education; shall be included in the district's or charter school's calculation of average daily attendance. The total number of such pupils included in the district's or charter school's calculation of average daily attendance shall not exceed four percent of the total number of pupils who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch between the ages of five and eighteen who are included in the district's or charter school's calculation of average daily attendance. If a pupil described under subdivisions (1) of this subsection leaves an early childhood education program during the school year, a district or charter school shall be allowed to fill the vacant enrollment spot with another pupil ~~[between the ages of three and five who is eligible for free and reduced price lunch]~~ who qualifies under this subdivision without affecting the district's or charter school's calculation of average daily attendance.

(2) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, beginning in the 2023-24 school year, in addition to any state aid remitted to school districts and charter schools under Section 163.031, the department of elementary and secondary education shall remit to school districts and charter schools an amount equal to the product of the state adequacy target and the dollar value modifier, as such terms are defined in section 163.011, and the average daily attendance of pupils who are eligible for free and reduced price lunch and who attend, in the year prior to their kindergarten enrollment eligibility, an early childhood education program:

(a) That is operated by and in a district or by a charter school that has declared itself as a local educational agency providing full-day kindergarten and that meets standards established by the state board of education; or

(b) That is under contract with a district or charter school that has declared itself as a local educational agency and that meets standards established by the state board of education. This subdivision shall not apply to those pupils receiving services under section 162.700.

2. In establishing standards for any early childhood education program that is under contract with a district or charter school that has declared itself as a local educational agency, the state board of education shall consider:

- (1) Whether a program offers full-day and full-year programming;
- (2) Whether a program has teacher-to-child ratios consistent with reasonable standards set by early childhood education program accrediting agencies;
- (3) Whether a program offers professional development supports for educators and the type of supports offered;
- (4) Whether a program uses appropriately credentialed educators;
- (5) Whether a program uses an early childhood education curriculum that has been approved by the department of elementary and secondary education and whether the curriculum is developmentally appropriate; and
- (6) Any other factor that the state board of education determines to be significant in ensuring that children achieve high levels of kindergarten readiness.

The state board of education shall require that staff members of any early childhood education program that is under contract with a district or charter school that has declared itself as a local educational agency undergo background checks as described in section 168.133.

3. This section shall not require school attendance beyond that mandated under section [167.031](#) and shall not change or amend the provisions of sections [160.051](#), [160.053](#), [160.054](#), and [160.055](#) relating to kindergarten attendance.