

**Task Force of Universal Preschool Education  
Meeting Summary  
September 27, 2007**

**Task Force members in attendance:**

Rolf Grafwallner (Maryland State Department of Education), Sandy Skolnik (Maryland Committee for Children), Chuck Wainwright (alternate for Mark Rosenberg, Maryland State Child Care Association), Patricia Gordon (Maryland Association of Boards of Education), Mary Hunt (College of Southern Maryland), Elisa Klein (University System of Maryland), T. Sky Woodward (parent of child in preschool), Veronica Land Davis and Nadine Owens Burton (Maryland Head Start Association), Janine Bacquie (Montgomery County Public Schools), Gene Counihan (Maryland Chamber of Commerce), Arlene Ennis (Family Child Care), Judy Weisburg (alternate for the Honorable Justin Ross)

**Staff in attendance:**

Michael Cockey (MSDE), Janet Moye Cornick (Maryland Higher Education Commission), Heather See (University System of Maryland)

**Welcome and Introductions:**

Rolf Grafwallner, Co-Chairperson for the Task Force, welcomed the Task Force members and guests. He stated that Sandy Skolnik, Co-Chairperson for the Task Force, will be participating via a conference call. Dr. Grafwallner explained to Task Force members that the meeting would be focused on writing the recommendations for the final report due to the governor on December 1, 2007.

Minutes from last meeting on June 7, 2007 was approved unanimously and without revision. Dr. Grafwallner reviewed the information in the packets of the Task Force members, including information from the Montgomery Works program, which uses workforce development dollars to reimburse early childhood educators for professional development and education courses, and a draft version of the recommendations. Heather See, staff to the Task Force, reviewed the public testimonies and Task Force recommendations. The list of draft recommendations were the basis for discussion at the meeting. Any revisions will become part of a second draft to be sent electronically to Task Force member for sign-off.

Janine Bacquie explained to the Task Force that she brought copies of a letter describing a pilot prekindergarten program in Montgomery County that provides full-day, year-round care with family support services for at-risk children. This program serves 40 children at an annual cost per child of approximately \$17,000. It includes a 6-hour daily instructional period.

Dr. Grafwallner read through the six items of the Task Force Goals and Purposes (in italics) and the proposed recommendations that addressed each item. The Task Force discussed each recommendation individually and suggested revisions. Notes on any discussion pertaining to the recommendations are written in plain text and inserted after the corresponding final recommendation (in bold).

*(1) Propose an overall plan to increase access to early childhood education opportunities for families, which may include incentives, resource development, the need for and availability of infrastructure, and possible funding sources through:*

- (i) The identification of criteria, procedures, and methods for issuing subsidies to parents and legal guardians of children to facilitate their attendance at preschools and early learning programs; and*
- (ii) The development of processes designed to:*
  - a. Promote public-private partnerships;*
  - b. Create new and expand existing early childhood learning programs;*
  - c. Provide needs assessment and planning, including a coordinated data system;*

#### **Task Force Recommendations:**

- 1. Establish by law a universal preschool program (working title: Preschool for All) to meet the educational and developmental needs of all four-year-old children in the State of Maryland and their families, regardless of financial need. In programs where there are additional available enrollment slots, allow three-year-olds to be included in the program.**

Ms. Bacquie discussed that the state should phase in a program that will provide access to all children, but low-income children should be given first priority.

Ms. Hunt expressed concern that some children attend both Head Start and half-day pre-k. She questioned whether children should be allowed to have access to both, or if they should be limited to one to provide access to the greatest number of children. Ms. Davis pointed out that other states with universal preschool collaborate with Head Start, so that all low-income children will be served. Federal money is used first, and then supplemental state prekindergarten money is used to provide extended day child care to children who need it. Using Head Start money first opens up prekindergarten slots to other children not eligible for Head Start.

Ms. Woodward stressed that the Task Force needs to maintain the focus on preschool for all children. As a parent, she would like to see access for all children regardless of socio-economic background to meet the goal to have all children ready for kindergarten. In Minnesota families are given vouchers based on economic need and use that money for preschool; however, parents like herself would never qualify for vouchers. Restricting eligibility based on income defeats the goal of having a universal program.

Dr. Grafwallner stated that there could be a needs-driven phase-in. While the goal of the program is to serve all children regardless of income, there needs to be a phase-in of the program as the system is built up. If income eligible requirements are set, the state would need to address the issue of differences in costs of living across counties. Jurisdictions could determine their own provisions for need based on an income formula.

Mr. Counihan stated that, in the report, the program can be defined as universal, but have a few recommendations that state if funding for universal preschool is not feasible in the beginning, have a phase in period by income level, serving lower-income children first, but all children by 2014. According to Bridge to Excellence, schools already must provide prekindergarten to all low-income children whose parents want it. The income eligibility level could be increased to allow for more children to be included, until all children are served.

In the planning process, the phase-in and funding issues could be decided.

- 2. Establish a sustainable funding mechanism for universal preschool in diverse early education settings, including: local public schools, private child care centers, nursery schools or church-based early care and education programs, and licensed family child care programs, which builds on the capacity of the existing funding streams and establishes a formula-based allocation for the funding support for expansion of the program.**
- 3. Establish specific standards of operation and accountability for the universal preschool program which define the program and incorporate the state's existing prekindergarten sites and include any other public or non-public program which meets these standards.**

Oversight must be provided for programs that receive funds. Accreditation and Work Sampling System for state monitoring is good, but not enough. Program quality must be monitored more closely. Accreditation is every 3 years, but site visits should occur at least twice a year.

The question was raised whether the state should provide monitoring through MSDE (as it is done in Georgia) or should local boards of educations provide monitoring (as done in New York state). There was a general consensus that monitoring at the state level is best to make the program equal across settings.

- 4. Plan and implement the universal preschool program to serve all four-year old children in Maryland by 2014, including a planning year in FY09, and the first phase of implementation starting in FY2010 in targeted areas anticipated to experience a disproportionate increase in early care and education enrollment.**

Mr. Counihan suggested that we amend 2018 to 2014, so that all children being born when the program begins in 2010 will be served by the time they are old enough for preschool. Others liked this idea and agreed to change the data of full implementation by 2014. It was also proposed that “four” in “four targeted areas” be removed as it is too specific.

- 5. MSDE shall be responsible for the planning, implementation, and funding of the universal preschool program by using and enhancing existing funds for prekindergarten. Existing state aid to education shall remain the primary funding source for prekindergarten. In addition, MSDE shall establish a grant program to provide financial enhancements for eligible universal preschool program to meet the defined standards of operation.**
- 6. The universal preschool program shall be characterized by an active partnerships between public schools and non-public programs which include all licensed child care centers, Head Start programs, approved and exempted nursery schools, and Montessori programs which hold a valid state or national accreditation from accrediting organizations recognized by MSDE.**
- 7. The universal preschool programs shall develop and establish a model program to integrate nationally accredited family child care programs into the universal preschool system.**
- 8. The universal preschool program shall allow parents to choose the preschool setting for their children.**
- 9. Each participating site in the universal preschool program shall provide an educational component operated on the public school schedule, with defined quality standards (see defined standards under (5)). The educational component may be part of the public school program or integrated in an extended early care setting for families of young children who are working or are in school or training. The educational component must be a minimum of 2.5 hours, but no more than 6.5 hours per school day.**

In the proposed system, there would be a subsidized 2 ½ hour educational program with before and after care for working parents in child care centers, which they would have to pay for, unless eligible for child care vouchers or a full-day program, as available in some areas. There was some debate over whether the length of time should be longer to accommodate working parents who cannot afford child care. Research shows that children in full-day preschool have better outcomes than children in half-day preschool. Whereas working parents really need full day care, some parents only want a half day program, so requiring a longer length of time would discourage these families. Plus in the public schools, which run two half-day programs, a morning session and an afternoon session, would not have the space to run a full-day program for the same number of children.

Mr. Wainwright discussed his child care center, which runs as a full-day program (7:00am to 6:30pm) with a 2 ½ hour block of an educational component from 9:00am to 11:30 and child care in the early morning and afternoon. The high quality learning environment is provided all day with a learning block aligned with curricular objectives during that 2 ½ hour block. It would be hard for some children to have a longer educational component. Mr. Wainwright stated that Judy Hoyer centers do a good job of implementing a full-day program with early learning activities extended throughout the full day. In several local school systems, full-day prekindergarten is being offered in some locations.

It was decided that eligible programs submit grant applications to receive funding for universal preschool at their sites and include in their applications to MSDE their budget and the hours of a prekindergarten program, based on the need of the families they serve. Programs must include at a minimum 2 ½ hours of an educational component, but may choose to have up to 6 ½ hours of an educational instruction for children, if they can justify the need and expenses in their application. Therefore, this recommendation would assume a range of 2 ½ to 6 ½ hours.

- (2) *Develop plans and identify resources needed to improve the quality and services of early childhood learning programs by:*
- (i) *Determining performance indicators of quality programs;*
  - (ii) *Identifying and recommending quality assessment instruments for the purpose of addressing early learning needs in children;*
  - (iii) *Identifying strategies to expand the number of programs meeting national or State standards of quality through program accreditation;*
  - (iv) *Proposing incentives and rewards programs designed to increase overall program quality;*
  - (v) *Using any guidelines developed by the Maryland State Department of Education for preschool and early childhood education as guidelines for program improvement;*
  - (vi) *Identifying and promoting State and local coordination;*

**Task Force Recommendations:**

- 1. Universal preschool programs must follow the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR), the Voluntary State Curriculum (VSC) framework, and the Guidelines for Healthy Child Development and Care for Young Children Birth to Three.**
- 2. In order to receive funding, programs must follow one of three options: select and implement a comprehensive preschool curriculum from the state-recommended list; adopt the local school system curriculum if that curriculum aligns with the MMSR, VSC, and the Guidelines for Healthy Child Development and Care of Young Children (birth -3); or seek MSDE**

- approval for an individually developed curriculum that aligns with the state's early learning standards.**
- 3. All non-public school programs must possess state or national accreditation to be eligible for participation in the universal preschool system as required under COMAR (Code of Maryland Regulations) for all qualified prekindergarten vendors. Center-based programs may choose to have state or national accreditation or both. Approved accreditation bodies include: MSDE, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Middle States, National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA), American Montessori Society (AMS), and Association Montessori Internationale (AMI). Family child care providers receiving state funding must possess accreditation through the National Family Child Care Association (NFCCA).**

“Achieve” was changed to “possess”. All programs must possess accreditation to be eligible for participation in the universal preschool system. Over 700 early care and education programs are already meeting state accreditation requirements, and with the current funding for accreditation, more programs will be able to meet those standards. Accreditation determines the eligibility requirement. However, programs who used to meet the teacher qualification and other standards (see section (5)) will need additional funding under the universal preschool program. As part of the phase-in period, credentialing level 6 may serve as an alternative teacher requirement.

- 4. Universal preschool programs must implement the modified Work Sampling System for Prekindergarten, which is aligned with the VSC and the current MMSR Kindergarten Assessment.**
- 5. MSDE will redirect existing funding to support the improvement of program quality as follows:**
  - costs of accreditation fees and program quality improvement efforts to achieve accreditation, including pre-validation;**
  - costs of purchasing comprehensive preschool curricula and for related curriculum training;**
  - costs for professional assessment associated with the prekindergarten assessment system (i.e., MMSR professional development);**
  - costs for developing a model for integrating accredited family child care providers into the universal preschool program.**

Policy will be worked out in the planning process as to how to train teachers on the MMSR and the modified Work Sampling System (WSS). Programs using other assessments that align with MMSR/VSC indicators may be eligible for participation as long as the assessment indicators are aligned with the modified WSS.

- 6. In the case where preschool classroom(s) in a child care center meet accreditation standards, but the center as a whole is deferred due to unmet standards in infant and/or toddler classrooms, grant provisional accreditation to the center contingent upon the achievement of full accreditation within one year. However, standards must be met for *all* preschool classrooms in the center to qualify for funding.**

The proposed two years were changed to one year, so that all programs will be high quality and will not delay accreditation. Those accreditation standards that are not met must be fixed within one year, or programs will not receive further universal preschool funding.

*(3) Design proposals to support the professional development of early childhood education staff, which may include:*

- (i) Identifying appropriate and desired education levels of staff;*
- (ii) Recommending a compensation plan related to educational levels and experience that recognizes the value of early childhood education;*
- (iii) Promoting mentor relationships in quality programs for educators and aspiring educators who seek to enter or improve the field as an early childhood education teacher;*
- (iv) Identifying incentives and rewards to encourage ongoing professional development; and*
- (v) Expanding access to and the creation of innovative strategies for professional development opportunities;*

**Task Force Recommendations:**

- 1. Allow a phase-in period of 4 years (2010-2014) by which time all universal preschool teachers must hold the required degree and certification.**

There was some discussion over whether or not 8 years is too long. It was decided to establish a phase-in period of 4 years from FY2010 to FY2014. Since there is a need for more certified early childhood educators in the field, it will take several years to increase the pool of teachers with certification. In the report, there will need to be a workforce development section for the planning phase of the program, which will outline how many teachers there are in the field in each educational category (i.e., how many have an associate's degree, a bachelor's, teaching certification, etc.) and the steps toward getting more teachers certified.

There also needs to be reorganization of the infrastructure in higher education to accommodate students seeking teaching certifications. The University of Maryland's early childhood education program, for example, is rather small, with an average graduating class of 30 students. The program does not have the faculty or resources to accommodate hundreds of early childhood educators seeking certification. In addition, Dr. Klein from UMCP pointed out that students

must have 100 hours of student teaching, which takes 1.5 semesters and cannot be done when working full-time. There needs to be coordinate between MSDE and 2- and 4-year early childhood education programs in the state to increase the availability of resources to hire new faculty and offer courses at convenient times for working teachers. Dr. Klein was asked to check the language in the recommendations to address the concern of higher education.

A separate pathway will be created for family child care providers and built into the system. Teacher certification will not be required. The specifics of such a plan will be decided in the planning and development phase of the program.

**2. All lead teachers in universal preschool classrooms must hold a bachelor's degree and be certified or approved in early childhood education.**

In the workforce development section of the report, it will be suggested to allow teachers with a level 6 credential to teach in the universal preschool system during the phase-in period; however, recommend that all teachers have their certification by 2014. There was a strong sentiment among Task Force members that the recommendations should reflect the Task Force's ultimate goals for the program, and the information regarding phase-in should be left to planning.

**3. Assistant teachers must have a minimum of a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential.**

It was decided that assistant teachers should have more knowledge of child development and education, and thus, should be required to have a Child Development Associate (CDA) instead of just a high school degree. A CDA requires 120 clock hours of coursework and a year's experience working with young children, plus a written and observational assessment. It was also decided that detailed implementation steps be addressed in the planning of the program scheduled in FY09.

**4. Directors/Site managers of non-public programs must, at a minimum, have the Administrator IV Credential of the Maryland Child Care Credentialing Program.**

There was a debate over whether the level IV credential is adequate for the supervision of preschool teachers, or if directors should have more background in early childhood education. Since directors deal more with the business side of running a center, and not as much with classroom teaching, it was agreed that the level IV credential is sufficient. The recommendation was accepted with the "at a minimum" provision.

**5. MSDE and MHEC will collaborate with 2- and 4-year teacher education programs in Maryland to modify the current system to accommodate**

- teachers working full-time, including offering courses during flexible hours (i.e., evenings; weekends), at child care centers or other community sites (in addition to local colleges and universities), and through distance learning programs (i.e., online via the Internet; televised to remote locations), where appropriate.**
- 6. MSDE will expand the Maryland Early Childhood Career and Professional Development Fund to increase the availability of scholarships for early childhood teachers, with a service obligation to teach in the universal preschool program for one-year per each year that a scholarship is received.**
  - 7. MHEC will facilitate access of early childhood teacher candidates to the loan assistance repayment program through the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) that will assist teachers in universal preschool classrooms with the repayment of their student loans, provided that teachers will remain in their position for the duration of one year for each year of the loan.**
  - 8. MSDE, by contract, will create a substitute pool so providers have flexibility to attend meetings or day trainings.**
  - 9. MSDE and the Consortium of Community Colleges shall revise articulation between MSDE approved trainers and community colleges.**
  - 10. MSDE and MHEC will facilitate increased knowledge of and access to AAT in early childhood education programs to facilitate students' transition from community colleges to 4-year degree programs.**
  - 11. MSDE will establish incentives for community-based training workshops to assist college students in early childhood teacher certification programs to prepare for the PRAXIS examinations.**
  - 12. Award bonuses or compensation each year to certified teachers in non-public programs who maintain involvement in continuing education courses and professional development activities.**

Ms. Hunt explained that since the universal preschool program will only allow teachers with a minimum of a level 6 credential, then the recommendations should not discuss teachers with less than a level 6. Thus, the recommendation regarding awarding bonuses to teachers completing level 4+ and 5 credentials should be moved to the workforce development section.

- 13. Develop a state-wide universal preschool salary schedule for teachers in non-public school settings, which establishes defined compensation levels based on education level and years of experience, with a base salary for certified teachers equal to the average salary for certified teachers across all counties**

**in Maryland, including the requirement for the maintenance of efforts from non-public school operators, so that universal preschool teachers in non-public school settings will be compensated comparably to teachers in the public school system. Allow jurisdictions to supplement salaries as desired to adjust for discrepancies between public and non-public school salaries and increase teacher retention.**

Task Force members debated over whether to establish a universal pay scale for all universal preschool teachers in non-public school settings throughout the state, or use the local school systems' pay scales. There was concern that the cost of living varies across counties, so a universal pay scale may not be appropriate. However, if salaries vary substantially by county, teachers may leave their positions for jobs in the counties that pay more. A compromise was to develop a state-wide preschool salary schedule with a baseline/minimum salary that represents the average starting teacher salary across all counties, but allow jurisdictions to supplement salaries as desired to remain competitive with the local school system salaries and retain preschool teachers.

- 14. Offer all universal preschool staff (lead teachers and assistant teachers) state employee health insurance and retirement programs, and membership in the teachers' credit union.**
- 15. MSDE shall facilitate the expansion and support of professional development school (PDS) networks for preschool teachers across the state. Require universal preschool providers to become a PDS partner and accept interns from teacher education programs who need to complete internship placements.**
- 16. Appoint a group of representatives from the culturally and linguistically diverse, low-income, and special needs communities in the state to work in an advisory capacity with MSDE to create a statewide agenda of priorities for diversity issues as they pertain to early care and education. Utilize workforce development dollars to build the professional capacity of limited-English proficient (LEP) providers, so that they may work towards becoming part of the universal preschool system.**
  - Several key components that are unique to these populations include:**
    - 1. Cultural brokering**
    - 2. Culturally competent mentoring and peer professional development support**
    - 3. Transitional training in the native language**
    - 4. Technical assistance**
    - 5. Bridge training**
    - 6. Content-based English as a second language**

Ms. Bacquie suggested adding “transitional” to “training in the native language,” so that teachers will learn English proficiently to teach English to children. In addition to culturally and linguistically diverse communities, add low-income and special needs communities. Also, training in cultural competency and working with special needs children is important.

**17. In the current child care system, create Child and Family Network Centers to offer services to LEP families, such as family literacy and ESOL, which could also provide employment to parents as teachers.**

**18. Allow MSDE to develop a workgroup to design a Birth-Eight Teacher Certification for child care providers with a blended curriculum to include children that are typically developing as well as those with special needs.**

*(4) Create an implementation plan to motivate and promote the value of and participation in early childhood learning opportunities for parents and the general public, including the business community;*

**Task Force Recommendations:**

**1. Under the guidance of MSDE, design a study examining the economic impact of the universal preschool program on the cost of care of families accessing the program and the total benefits on Maryland’s economy.**

An economic feasibility study of implementing a universal preschool program in Maryland was conducted by Dr. Irani from Towson University. The results were presented to the Task Force during the June 7, 2007 meeting. Copies of the draft report were distributed to Task Force members. A final copy will be included in the Task Force report. The document contains estimates of the costs and benefits of a universal preschool program based on current prekindergarten programs for low-income children, which run 2 ½ hours per day according to the public school calendar.

There was some concern that the estimates provided in the feasibility study are considered too low. A full-day pilot program in Montgomery County shows a higher cost including transportation, facilities costs, and the amount of money necessary to train teachers, and provide tuition reimbursement and loan repayment.

*(5) Recommend to the legislature a conceptual framework, along with proposals for policies and legislation necessary to facilitate and monitor the implementation of that framework; and*

**Task Force recommendations:**

1. **Adopt the National Institute for Early Education Research's (NIEER) 10 Quality Benchmarks for High-Quality Preschool Education as a framework for Maryland's universal preschool program, which will include the following criteria:**
  1. ***Curriculum standards.*** Universal preschool programs must implement a state-recommended comprehensive curriculum, MSDE- approved individually developed curriculum, or local school system curriculum that aligns with the MMSR, VSC, and *Guidelines for Healthy Child Development and Care of Young Children*.
  2. ***Teacher certification requirement.*** Lead teachers in both public and private settings must meet state certification standards.

It was suggested that in the workforce development section of the report, the issue of establishing an alternative for teachers in child care and Head Start programs to get to certification will be discussed. All teachers must meet at least a level 6 credential, but will have until 2014, when the proposed program will be fully implemented, to have their certification.

3. ***Teacher specialized training requirement.*** Pre-service requirements for lead teachers must include specialized training in early childhood education. Elementary teaching certificates alone will not qualify.
4. ***Assistant teacher degree requirement.*** Assistant teachers must hold a CDA or equivalent training.

The workforce development section will address the phase-in of the educational requirement, so that assistant teachers must have their CDA by 2014.

5. ***Teacher recertification requirement.*** Teachers must attend a specified number of hours of approved professional development per year.
6. ***Maximum class size.*** Class sizes must be limited to no more than 20 children for four-year-olds and no more than 16 children for three-year olds.
7. ***Staff-child ratio.*** At least one staff member must be present per 10 children in a classroom for four-year-olds and per 8 children for three-year olds.
8. ***Screening/referral requirements.*** Programs must provide both screening and referral services covering at least vision, hearing, speech and language, health and development. Programs also must offer, either directly or through coordination with local school systems, local health and social service departments, additional support services for participants, which may include English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) services, parenting support or training, physical and mental health and wellness services, and early intervention for children with disabilities and/or special health care needs, including medical interventions within inclusive settings.

Ms. Bacquie suggested adding ESOL as a list of family services. Also, Dr. Klein proposed adding “speech and language” to the list of screening and referral services, as young children often have speech problems, unrelated to ESOL.

- 9. *Meal requirements.* All participants must be offered at least one full meal per day if preschool services are offered for more than 2.5 hours, in accordance with the Child and Adult Care Food Program.**
- 10. *Monitoring.* Each year programs, receiving grant funding from MSDE, shall conduct a self-evaluation to assess program quality according to these quality indicators and report performance data to MSDE. MSDE will conduct two site visits each year. Programs not meeting standards and in need of improvement must create a program improvement plan identifying the steps they will take to fulfill each standard. Additional site visits should be conducted to assess improvement and adherence to quality standards.**

It was suggested that a specific number of site visits be conducted each year for all programs, not just programs in need of improvement. It was decided that two site visits was appropriate—one in the fall and one in the spring.

*(6) Identify or develop appropriate evaluation methods, including appropriate performance indicators that will allow monitoring, improvement, and accountability of any initiative it proposes.*

**Task Force recommendations:**

- 1. Use the 10 quality benchmarks for the universal preschool system framework and the developmental and educational outcomes for children on the WSS as the key components of the program evaluation tool.**
- 2. Collect and analyze student data reported annually from the MMSR Kindergarten Assessment on all children enrolled in the universal preschool program.**
- 3. After program implementation, conduct an external evaluation to measure the effectiveness of the program.**

Ms. Bacquie suggested that the Task Force consider including in the recommendations something about transportation. Currently, school systems decide locally how to provide transportation for prekindergarten students; however, with the inclusion of diverse, non-public school settings in the universal preschool program integrated in a full-day/full-year program, transportation becomes more complex since parents drop off and pick up children at various hours.

No other revisions to the recommendations were proposed. Dr. Grafwallner thanked the Task Force members and staff for their participation and assistance. He explained that the recommendations will be revised and emailed to the Task Force members for final approval. A draft of the final report will be sent out as well at the end of October or early November. The final draft is due to the governor on December 1, 2007.

Meeting concluded at 2:40pm.