

**Department of Education**  
**SCHOOL READINESS**  
**Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Request**

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**SCHOOL READINESS**

**Appropriation, Adjustments, and Transfers**  
(dollars in thousands)

Appropriation/Adjustments/Transfers	2023	2024	2025
<b>Discretionary:</b>			
Appropriation	0	0	\$25,000
Total, discretionary appropriation	0	0	\$25,000

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**Authorizing Legislation**  
(dollars in thousands)

Activity	2024 Authorized	2024 Annualized CR	2025 Authorized	2025 Request
Preschool incentive demonstration program ( <i>Proposed legislation</i> )	0	0	To be determined	\$25,000

**SCHOOL READINESS**

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**Preschool Incentive Demonstration Program**

(Proposed legislation)

(dollars in thousands)

FY 2025 Authorization: To be determined

Budget Authority:

<u>2024 Annualized CR</u>	<u>2025 Request</u>	<u>Change</u>
0	\$25,000	+\$25,000

**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

The Preschool Incentive Demonstration Program would expand access to free high-quality preschool for children eligible to attend Title I schools through a mixed-delivery model. The program would make competitive awards to local educational agencies (LEAs) or consortia of LEAs to support the development of new preschool programs and to provide additional preschool seats and classrooms in schools and community-based settings, through partnerships with Head Start or other community-based preschool providers. The program would also support LEAs and participating schools and partners in improving the quality of preschool services within the LEA and partner sites and aligning high-quality preschool with kindergarten and high-quality kindergarten through third grade (K-3) instruction. This includes facilitating transitions from preschool to kindergarten and from kindergarten through third grade that are informed by the science of learning and development. Facilitating a smooth transition to kindergarten is a priority for this demonstration program, along with supporting educational continuity across the preschool to third grade continuum.

The Preschool Incentive Demonstration Program would support LEAs to provide mixed-delivery preschool services by braiding Title I and other federal, state, and local funds to expand access to preschool seats for students eligible to attend participating Title I schools (all students who live in a participating school’s catchment area and other students eligible to attend the school, as identified by the LEA). As required by Title I, grantees would be required to meet, at a minimum, the education performance standards of the Head Start Program Performance Standards, and students must be served by qualified, high-quality educators, with appropriate student-teacher ratios. Applicants would be required to describe how they would sustain services after the grant has ended, and how they would prioritize underserved children and communities in their selection of schools and partners for participation in the program.

Grantees would be allowed to use funds for activities needed to expand access to high-quality preschool for 4-year-olds eligible to attend Title I schools served by the grant and to increase quality of existing preschool services within the LEA and partner programs in the community. This could include, but is not limited to, hiring LEA-level staff with expertise in early childhood education and program development; recruitment and enrollment efforts with mixed-delivery

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### **Preschool Incentive Demonstration Program**

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partners; developing and providing professional development for preschool teachers, school administrators, and other staff in the LEA, Head Start, and other community partners; increased support for multilingual learners; improving early identification of and provision of services and supports under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for children with disabilities and delays in the schools and in community-based programs; modifying data collection and reporting systems to include preschool; and creating or modifying kindergarten transition standards and kindergarten teacher professional development to help transition both the child and family to kindergarten.

At the program level, uses of funds could include, but are not limited to, increasing the number of seats for eligible children in all settings served by the program; modifying classrooms and bathrooms, equipment, and outdoor play areas to be appropriate for 4-year-olds; recruiting, preparing and supporting preschool-certified teachers and support staff with expertise in providing services to 4-year-olds; providing professional development for existing support staff regarding preschool-specific skills; providing services to assist eligible preschool children in funded programs in the transition from the preschool classroom to kindergarten and supporting instructional alignment across preschool through the elementary grades; and other activities necessary to enable the LEA to begin implementing sustainable preschool for 4-year-olds in Title I schools, Head Start, or community-based settings by the end of the grant period.

Applicants will be required to demonstrate how they plan to use Title I and other federal funds (such as IDEA, Title II), as well as state and local funds, to finance this model. Specifically, applicants will have to address how they will braid federal, state, and local funds, including Head Start funding when Head Start funds are present in the local community served by the LEA and where local Head Start partners are available, with Title I funds. Applicants will leverage the local infrastructure of early childhood education as they seek to expand high-quality preschool and, as a result, will deepen investments in that infrastructure.

Braiding with Head Start funds, where applicable, may be accomplished through using grant or other federal, state, and local funds to expand or supplement Head Start programs and services, including funding compensation increases for Head Start educators and staff, or through the initiation of cooperative agreements or subcontracts between Head Start programs and LEAs. For example, school districts can fund existing Head Start grantees to extend the duration of services in Head Start programs and the professional learning, growth, and retention of Head Start educators and staff, including through compensation enhancements. School districts can also offer space to Head Start programs in order to co-locate services for Head Start eligible children within the neighborhood elementary school participating in the preschool program supported by the grant. Funds can also be used to enhance and expand community-based providers participating in the program in these ways. The competition will include a priority for LEAs that serve as Head Start agencies, or that are Head Start delegates.

Grantees would be required to conduct a community needs assessment to assess the supply of preschool services available in Title I schools and their surrounding communities for eligible 4-year-old children, including Head Start and other community-based preschool providers. Grantees will be required to use this assessment to design a plan that builds on the existing supply of preschool services and considers the impact of its proposal on child care (including

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### Preschool Incentive Demonstration Program

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infant and toddler care) and preschool availability, and on Head Start programs and services, and include in its plan how it will support coordinated enrollment, including encouraging and facilitating enrollment in Head Start for children and families that would benefit from Head Start's comprehensive services model. In addition, applicants must demonstrate how they will coordinate to expand access, and not supplant, the delivery of high-quality preschool programs funded under this grant with existing services for preschool-aged children including, if applicable, state preschool programs and programs and services provided under Title I of ESEA, part C and Part B of IDEA, the Head Start Act, Preschool Development Grants, Birth to 5, and Child Care & Development Block grant Act. Applicants would also be required to develop and make publicly available data and progress reports.

The Department would collaborate with the Department of Health and Human Services in the administration of the program.

### **FY 2025 BUDGET REQUEST**

For fiscal year 2025, the Administration requests \$25.0 million for the Preschool Incentive Demonstration Program, first-time funding for this program. The request would support a new competitive Preschool Incentive Demonstration Program to expand access to preschool in school- and community-based settings for children eligible to attend Title I schools through a mixed-delivery model. The program would support smooth transitions to kindergarten and educational continuity across the preschool to third grade (PK-3) continuum.

Expanding access to preschool in Title I schools, and for the students they serve, is critical to the Department's mission to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access. By the time students start kindergarten, students from low-income backgrounds are often well behind their more economically advantaged peers who have had the opportunity to participate in high quality preschool. Schools, then, are already playing catch up to close gaps when students enter kindergarten.

Preschool is an important research-based strategy proven to reduce disparities before kindergarten entry, particularly for children from low-income backgrounds, and lay a path for early school success once aligned with K-3.

Research shows that preschool improves performance in reading and math; reduces placement in special education programs; reduces involvement in the juvenile justice system; and improves post-secondary education outcomes. Full-day preschool, rather than half-day preschool, has been shown to be even more beneficial to students' literacy, vocabulary, and math performance.<sup>1</sup> Research also demonstrates that every \$1 invested in high-quality early

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.colorado.edu/today/2019/09/30/full-day-pre-k-beats-half-day-first-its-kind-study-shows#:~:text=In%20a%20first-of-its-kind%20study%2C%20researchers%20working%20in%20a,classes%20could%20have%20big%20benefits%20for%20their%20learning;and%20https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northwest/askarel/fullday-vs-halfday-preschool.asp>.

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### Preschool Incentive Demonstration Program

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childhood care and education can yield \$3<sup>1</sup> to \$7<sup>2</sup> over the long run, as a result of these improved outcomes.

This proposal is critical to the Department's efforts to improve student performance on reading and math in elementary school. IES research has shown that alignment between preschool and kindergarten can increase the impact of kindergarten for students from low-income backgrounds. The program would support better aligning the PK-3 continuum and lead to greater success in the later grades, including in third grade reading and math, and fourth grade National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores. While this preschool to third grade alignment is a critical strategy, it is currently underutilized.

### PROGRAM OUTPUT MEASURES

(dollars in thousands)

Output Measures	2023	2024	2025
Number of new awards	0	0	4-8
Funding for new awards	0	0	\$24,750
Range of new awards	0	0	\$3,000-7,000
Peer review of new award applications	0	0	\$250

### PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

#### Performance Measures

The Department will establish goals and performance indicators to assess the impact and effectiveness of activities supported through the Preschool Incentive Demonstration Program.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.nber.org/system/files/working\\_papers/w23215/w23215.pdf](https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w23215/w23215.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/705718>