

Minnesota Department of Education (Lead Agency), Preschool Expansion Plan Abstract

Minnesota seeks to work strategically with partners to create a statewide High-Quality Preschool system that promotes and sustains student access, achievement, and family engagement over a continuum from birth through 3rd grade (*i.e.*, birth-3). In doing so, we seek to create a firm foundation for children and communities with the highest needs: low-income 4-year-olds and children of color whose outcomes persistently lag behind that of their more affluent peers and make Minnesota's achievement gap among the worst in the nation.

Toward this end, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) will build on our Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant work, which has accelerated efforts to align standards, expand our Parent Aware Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System, enhance parent engagement, broaden culturally competent practice, and strengthen comprehensive assessments, data-informed practices, evidence-based curriculum, cross-sector B-3 coordination, preschool through 3rd grade alignment (P-3), and professional development (PD), coaching, and technical assistance. Partner Human Capital Research Collaborative will provide PD based on the Child-Parent Center's strong evidence of large and enduring effects on student achievement, high school graduation, and child well-being. World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) will provide training to support effective classroom strategies to support English Learning Language and skills acquisition. Minnesota Reading Corps will provide a literacy innovation that extends the capacity of preschools to laser in on literacy as a key domain, and for which there is strong evidence of accelerating literacy acquisition among struggling readers. Other supporters include the Minnesota Early Learning Council, Minnesota Head Start Association, Child Care Aware of Minnesota, Greater Twin Cities United Way, Start Early Funders Coalition, and the Chicano Latino Affairs Council, McKnight Foundation, and others.

Our RTTT-ELC work has proven that better outcomes are achieved within Transformation Zones that focus on innovations *and* infrastructure development across a vertical slice of the educational system. These Transformation Zones unite administrators, teachers, parents and partners from High-Need Communities to ensure collaboration and effective implementation of a mixed-delivery system and comprehensive supports. In implementing our High-Quality Preschool program, MDE seeks to achieve four goals:

1. Increase Access for Eligible Children. Over four years, MDE will increase the number of Eligible Children served in High-Quality Preschool programs by 5,634, including more than

3,438 (more than 60%) new slots. These slots will be created in High-Need Communities that include a cross-section of Minnesota's greatest challenges: urban, suburban and rural areas, high rates of poverty, low rates of school readiness, low rates of academic performance, high rates of English Learners (ELs), and high rates of children with special needs.

2. Implement High-Quality Preschools. MDE has preliminary agreements subgrantees that are the LEAs in each High-Need Community: Albert Lea, Austin, Columbia Heights, Fridley, Itasca County, Rochester, Minneapolis, St. Paul, and White Earth Reservation. MDE will provide these subgrantees with the management, training, and tools (*i.e.*, Program Criteria, assessments, data systems, standards, policies, coaches, and funding) to create or improve preschool spaces for Eligible Children. MDE will oversee a structured implementation that will extend our state's successful Transformation Zone model to coordinate cross-sector planning, build capacity, implement, improve, and embed a mixed-delivery system of early education enhanced with family engagement, comprehensive services, and school-community partnerships. Each Transformation Zone will have at least one Parent Liaison who is culturally competent and bilingual (if possible) to ensure family engagement, and at least one Community Coordinator to mobilize and ensure the connection of preschool programs to community services.

3. Build Infrastructure for a Birth-3 System. MDE, our subgrantees, the Early Learning Council, and community partners are working to create a continuum of B-3 services and supports. This includes community partners that bring comprehensive services to preschool sites and refer families, home visits and parent education that train parents to support educational transitions, professional learning communities and Building Implementation Teams that align curriculum and practice from preschool to kindergarten, and a P-3 Institute that promotes dialog, alignment, and coordination across the early learning continuum. This will be supported with our longitudinal data system, which will link key data across agencies by 2015.

And *4. Improve Student Outcomes.* MDE's Preschool Expansion Plan seeks to increase the number of Eligible Children served in High Quality Preschool programs and in state preschool programs overall; increase the number and percentage who become school-ready and maintain those skills; improve teachers' competencies to implement evidence based-practices; help ELs accelerate math and reading proficiency; and reduce the number of Eligible Children needing special education assignment K-3. Ultimately, MDE seeks to close Minnesota's achievement gap for the children served in the proposed High-Quality Preschool program.