

# Public Preschool Programs in Maine: Current Status and Characteristics

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

At the request of the Maine State Legislature, the *Maine Educational Policy Research Institute* (MEPRI) undertook a study of public preschool programs in Maine, with the goal of addressing three broad questions:

- (1) What are the general operational characteristics of public preschool programs in Maine?

For example, to what degree are programs full- or half-day? To what degree are programs operated directly by a school district versus contracted to a community agency? What are the characteristics of children being served?

- (2) To what degree do programs currently meet the proposed Chapter 124 standards,

including areas such as teacher training, adult-to-child ratios, class enrollment limits, space requirements, and various service and curricula components?

- (3) What are the projected one-time start-up or expansion costs associated with

implementing universal public preschool for all four-year-old children in Maine? What is the projected annual operating cost associated with statewide universal public preschool?

To accomplish this, two surveys were conducted during the fall and winter of 2014. These surveys targeted Maine superintendents and public preschool teachers. Survey data were further informed by supplemental data available in the *State Longitudinal Data System* (SLDS). The final survey samples consisted of 83 superintendents representing a total of 104 districts serving 2,792 preschool students, and 99 preschool teachers representing 81 different schools serving 2066 preschool children. In comparison, state enrollment data suggests that there are approximately 5,004 students enrolled in public preschool programs throughout Maine. A comparison of SLDS data for districts included in this study to non-participating districts suggested that respondents tended to be larger districts with lower free and reduced lunch rates. They were also more likely to have a preschool program – and more likely to have a larger preschool program – than non-responding districts.

## **GENERAL OPERATIONS AND STUDENT ENROLLMENT**

More than half (58%) of responding superintendents reported that their district operated a preschool program either alone (47%) or in partnership with a community agency (11%), while 12% indicated that their district entirely contracted out preschool services to a partner agency. In contrast, 16% of responding superintendents indicated that their district had no preschool program, but was in the process of planning for one; with the balance indicating that their district had no preschool program and no current plan to add one.

For districts working with partner agencies, superintendents reported an average direct annual payment of \$69,802 to their partner, increasing to \$118,701 when other district costs were included. However, multiple superintendents report that it was difficult or impossible to definitively differentiate partner versus district costs due to factors such as fundamental overhead expenses, in-kind support, or existing district services that the partner was able to leverage.

Preschool teachers reported that nearly all (90%) programs operate four or five days per week. Two-thirds of teachers (68.4%) reported that their preschool was a half-day program, versus a full-day program. With some schools offering two half-day sessions each day, this translated to 80.3% of the preschool students attending half-day programs.

## **PROGRAM STATUS RELATED TO PROPOSED CHAPTER 124 STANDARDS**

The surveys and analysis also examined the current status of public preschool programs in relation to specific areas targeted within the proposed Chapter 124 standards.

**Class Size.** Section 3.01 of the proposed Chapter 124 standards sets a maximum class size of 16 children. Currently, teachers reported that 29.5% of their classrooms included more than 16 students; however, given that larger classes also serve more students, this translates to 38.2% of children being enrolled in a preschool classroom with more than 16 students.

**Adult: Child Ratio.** Section 6.01.A.(1) of the proposed Chapter 124 standards sets a maximum adult-to-child ratio of 1 adult to 8 children. Overall, 32.4% of the teachers reported that their class did not have one adult for every eight children. This resulted in 38.4% of the preschool children being in a classroom with more than 8 children per adult.

**Curriculum.** Section 4.01 of the proposed Chapter 124 standards requires the use of an evidence-based written curriculum aligned with the *Early Learning and Development Standards*. Nearly all responding preschool teachers (98.9%) indicated that their current curriculum does in fact align with these standards. In addition, section 4.02 identifies a variety of activities that need to be included in preschool programs, with activities ideally held in the classroom in order to minimize transitions. However, half of teachers indicated that their program did not participate in art, while over 40% did not participate in music or physical education, and one-third did not involve students in library activities.

**Screening.** Section 4.03.A.(1) of the proposed Chapter 124 standards requires that all children receive a valid and reliable research-based screening tool within the first 30 days of the school year. Nearly all preschool teachers in the sample (90.5%) reported that their program currently satisfies this goal, with 36.8% screening children during the summer or spring prior to the start of preschool.

**Assessment.** Similarly, Section 4.03.B of the proposed Chapter 124 standards calls on programs to provide periodic and ongoing research based assessment of children's learning and development. Currently, 79.8% of responding teachers reported conducting such assessments.

**Teacher Training.** Section 7.01 requires that teachers hold an *Early Childhood 081 (B-5)* endorsement and be enrolled in the *Maine Roads to Quality* registry. Nearly all teachers in this sample had either a full (77.5%) or conditional (16.9%) *Early Childhood 081 (B-5)* endorsement; however, only 36.7% were registered with *Maine Roads to Quality*.

**Assistant Teachers.** Section 7.01.B requires that assistant teachers hold a minimum of an Educational Technician II Authorization and be enrolled in *Maine Roads to Quality*. Teachers reported that most assistant teachers were an Ed Tech II (25.7%) or an Ed Tech III (61.4%), although only one-in-four (26.0%) were enrolled in *Maine Roads to Quality*.

**Meal and Transportation Services.** Sections 8.01 and 14 of the proposed Chapter 124 standards address meal and transportation services. To a large degree, whether preschool programs offered transportation was related to whether the program was operated by the district itself or whether it was contracted out through a partner agency. For example, while

superintendents reported that 72.7% of district-operated public preschool programs offered transportation (at an average annual cost of \$36,381), they reported that transportation was offered by only 10.5% of programs operated by a partner agency. A similar, albeit weaker trend, was observed for meal services. While meals were provided by 57.1% of programs directly operated by a school district (at an average annual cost of \$6,930), meals were provided by only one-third (33.3%) of programs operated by a partner agency.

**Classroom Physical Size.** Section 9.01 of the proposed Chapter 124 standards establishes a minimum classroom space of 35 square feet per child. Based on teacher surveys, 16.3% of classrooms serving 21.0% of preschool students in this sample do not currently meet this standard.

**Indoor Space and Accessibility.** Section 9.01 calls for preschool classrooms to be accessible to all children and designed to allow proper monitoring at all times. Over 93% of teachers reported that their classroom was accessible to children with disabilities, had an accessible bathroom located in or within 40 feet of the classroom, had a water source available in the classroom, and was structured so that staff can supervise children by sight and sound at all times.

**Outdoor Space.** Section 9.02 addresses accessibility and related developmental features of the outdoor play space. While 90.7% of teachers reported that their outdoor space was accessible to children with disabilities, one in five (20.6%) indicated that this space was not protected by a fence or natural barrier, which can raise safety issues for younger children.

**Transition Planning.** Section 13.02 of the proposed Chapter 124 standards requires a transition process between four-year-old and the kindergarten programs. At this time, 78.5% of preschool teachers reported that their program included this type of formal process for student transitions.

## **STATEWIDE EXPANSION: OPERATING COSTS**

Responding superintendents estimated that preschool program operating costs were approximately \$4,204 per student, with salary and benefits constituting two-thirds of this amount. This information was combined with data in the *State Longitudinal Data System* in order to estimate the total statewide operating cost if public preschool was expanded universally across Maine. The number of *potential* preschool students was estimated to be 13,448 preschool

children (including 5,004 already enrolled). The number of potential preschool programs was estimated using two approaches: A *school-based model*, which assumed that every school currently offering kindergarten would also offer public preschool for all four-year-old children in the local community, and a *district-based model*, which assumed that every district currently offering kindergarten would also offer preschool at a capacity that would serve all four-year-old children in the district (although not necessarily in every elementary school). An inverse function was used to estimate per-student operating costs in order to reflect the higher per-student costs observed in smaller programs, with costs “leveling off” for larger programs.

**School-Based Model.** Analyses estimated that if every school currently offering kindergarten also offered preschool at a capacity that could serve all four-year-old children in the local community, the annual operating costs for Maine would be approximately \$50,194,206. Of this amount, approximately \$31,986,459 reflected costs associated with new or expanded programs and \$18,207,747 reflected costs associated with existing preschool programs.

**District-Based Model** Analyses estimated that if every district currently offering kindergarten also offered public preschool at a capacity that could serve all four-year-old children in the district, the statewide operating costs would be approximately \$47,267,868. Of this amount, approximately \$29,116,288 reflected costs associated with new or expanded programs and \$18,151,580 reflected costs associated with existing preschool programs.

## **STATEWIDE EXPANSION: START-UP / EXPANSION COSTS**

Expansion cost estimates were based on per-student expansion costs reported by those superintendents currently planning to expand their preschool programs (\$1,036 per additional student). Three-fourths of this expansion cost reflected “hard” renovations, such as moving structural walls, wiring, or plumbing. Unlike operating costs, this value was fairly consistent regardless of program size, and so the mean per-student expansion cost was used in analyses. As with the operating costs, expansion costs were estimated using both a school-based model and a district-based model.

**School-Based Model.** The estimated one-time expansion/start-up cost required to expand public preschool to every Maine school currently offering kindergarten was \$9,260,483. This was

based on each of school having the capacity to serve all four-year-old children in the local community.

**District-Based Model.** The estimated one-time expansion/start-up cost required to expand public preschool to every school district in Maine that currently offers kindergarten was \$8,846,995. This was based on each district having the capacity to serve all four-year-old children in the district boundaries.

### **EXPANSION COST ESTIMATES: LIMITATIONS**

While these extrapolations were (1) based on superintendent-reported estimates of expansion and operating costs for existing preschool programs, and (2) incorporated the higher costs associated with smaller programs, there are several reasons to suspect that if universal preschool was fully implemented in Maine the ultimate costs may be greater than these estimates. First, the proposed Chapter 124 standards may lead to higher operating and expansion costs. For example, programs may need additional space or features, and larger programs may need to hire additional staff in order to satisfy smaller class size requirements. Second, given districts are not required to offer public preschool programs, one may anticipate that schools with higher expansion costs (e.g., requiring extensive new physical space, etc.) would be less likely to have already undertaken such work. This may also lead to underestimating costs. Finally, while the model used to estimate operating costs is weighted by program size, survey respondents were disproportionately from districts with larger preschool programs than non-responding districts. Consequently, actual per-student costs in small districts may be greater than those estimated in this report.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

At the request of the Maine State Legislature, the *Maine Educational Policy Research Institute* (MEPRI) undertook a study of public preschool programs in Maine. This was in part related to two legislative / administrative activities: (1) Resolve 2014, Chapter 114, which established a commission to strengthen the adequacy and equity of certain cost components of the school funding formula, and (2) the proposed Chapter 124, Basic School Approval: Public Preschool Program Standards. Specifically, under Resolve 2014, Chapter 114, the commission was tasked with estimating the cost of expanding public preschool services statewide. This was to include initial start-up or expansion costs, such as renovation and construction, as well as ongoing annual operating costs. The commission was also tasked with conducting an analysis regarding the current status and potential impact of quality and consistency changes related to the proposed Chapter 124 rules. The latter information has value beyond the commission's work in helping policy makers, the Department of Education, and local school officials understand the impact and implications of these changes.

The work for this project was conducted in the fall and winter of 2014-2015, with the goal of addressing three general questions:

- (1) What are the general operational characteristics of public preschool programs in Maine? For example, to what degree are programs full- or half-day? To what degree are programs operated directly by a school district versus contracted to a community agency? What are the characteristics of children being served?
- (2) To what degree do programs currently meet the proposed Chapter 124 standards, including areas such as teacher training, adult-to-child ratios, class enrollment limits, space requirements, and various service and curricula components?
- (3) What are the projected one-time start-up or expansion costs associated with implementing universal public preschool for all four-year-old children in Maine? What is the projected annual operating cost associated with statewide universal public preschool?

To accomplish this, the research team conducted two online surveys during the final quarter of 2014. The first survey targeted Maine superintendents, while the second survey was directed toward preschool teachers identified by these superintendents. In some instances the survey findings were further informed by supplemental analyses of data available in the *State Longitudinal Data System* (SLDS).

This report summarizes the findings of these surveys and analyses. It begins by describing the methodology used in developing and administering the superintendent and preschool teacher surveys. The findings are then divided into four areas. The first summarizes the sample characteristics of the superintendents and preschool teachers who completed the online surveys, including information regarding how their schools compared to other schools and preschool programs in Maine. The findings for each of the three previously described general questions are then presented<sup>1</sup>. The report concludes with a summary and interpretation of key findings.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the material on projected start-up and operational costs of universal, statewide preschool was also included in the *Report of the Commission to Study the Adequacy and Equity of Certain Cost Components of the School Funding Formula*.

## METHODS

The study involved three components: (1) A statewide survey of Maine superintendents regarding preschool offerings in their district, (2) a follow-up survey of preschool teachers regarding their classroom settings and practices, and (3) supplemental analyses using the *State Longitudinal Data System* that examined current preschool enrollment patterns.

### METHODOLOGY FOR SUPERINTENDENT SURVEYS

In fall 2014, MEPRI conducted an online survey of Maine superintendents regarding preschool offerings by their district. The purpose of the survey was to gather information regarding the cost and capacity of public preschool programs in Maine. The survey was designed with input from Department of Education staff and pilot tested by four superintendents. Based on feedback from the pilot study, a final version of the superintendent survey was developed and posted online. The Commissioner of Education announced the survey in the weekly Commissioner's newsletter, and included a link for superintendents to access the online form. Following the Commissioner's announcement, a cover letter and link to the survey was also emailed to all superintendents in Maine. Follow-up reminders were subsequently emailed to all superintendents who did not complete the survey, with additional follow-up emails sent by both the Department of Education and the Maine School Management Association.

The request to superintendents specifically noted that the survey should be completed for *every* district in Maine—even if there was no preschool program—in order to obtain an accurate estimate of public preschool activity statewide. It was also noted that if a district had no preschool program, completing the survey would take less than 5 minutes.

At the end of the process, surveys were completed by 83 superintendents representing a total of 104 districts – with some superintendents reporting on multiple districts (e.g., AOS's). For simplicity in language, the following results will refer to “districts” even though in certain cases a response covered multiple districts within an AOS.

## **METHODOLOGY FOR PRESCHOOL TEACHER SURVEYS**

As part of the superintendent survey, superintendents were asked to identify preschool teachers in their district and told that these teachers would be contacted directly and asked to complete a separate survey assessing their classroom environment. This survey assessed the training and experience of teachers and teacher assistants, the physical space and characteristics of the preschool classroom, the children served in the preschool program, the curriculum used, services, schedules, student screening and assessment, and professional development activities.

An initial draft version of the survey was designed with input from Department of Education staff and incorporated feedback from the superintendents who assisted in the superintendent pilot study. The draft tool was pilot tested with four preschool teachers. After modifications based on feedback from the pilot study, a final version of the preschool teacher survey was developed and posted online. A cover letter and link to the survey was then emailed to all teachers identified in the superintendent survey. In addition, several preschool teachers in public programs that were operated by partner agencies (and not directly operated by the school district) were identified through other means and also asked to complete the survey. Follow-up reminders were subsequently emailed to all non-respondents, with surveys ultimately completed by 99 preschool teachers.

## **METHODOLOGY FOR STATE LONGITUDINAL DATA SYSTEM ANALYSES**

Finally, aggregate statewide data regarding enrollment in public preschool and kindergarten programs for 2013 – 2014 was obtained from the State Longitudinal Data System. Data were aggregated at the school-level and used to compare response rates for survey participants with statewide enrollment totals, as well as to extrapolate expansion cost estimates to the entire state.

## **FINDINGS PART I: SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS AND GENERALIZABILITY**

The review of survey findings begins with a summary of the sample characteristics, including information regarding how participating schools compared to other schools and public preschool programs in Maine.

### **Superintendent Survey**

As noted previously, surveys were completed by 83 superintendents reflecting a total of 104 districts – with some superintendents reporting on multiple districts (e.g., AOS's). For simplicity in language, the following results will refer to “districts” even though in certain cases a response covered multiple districts within an AOS.

Responding superintendents indicated that their programs served a total of 2,792 students, which is slightly more than half of the 5,004 preschool students identified in the *State Longitudinal Data System* (SLDS) enrollment data. As a data-quality check, superintendent reports of the number of preschool students in their district were compared with official counts appearing in the SLDS. As expected, no significant difference was found between superintendent and SLDS reports of the number of preschool students served<sup>2</sup>.

In order to identify potential factors that may impact the generalizability of the findings, additional analyses used SLDS data to compare those districts for which the superintendent completed the survey with districts in which the superintendent did not complete the survey. First, while the request to superintendents specifically noted that a survey should be completed for every district and would take less than 5 minutes for districts with no preschool program, respondents were more likely to have a preschool program (67.5%) than were non-responding districts (52.2%). Second, responding districts tended to be larger (mean n=1443 students) and have lower free and reduced lunch rates (45.3%) than non-responding districts (mean n=644 students, free and reduced lunch rate=51.5%). Finally, responding districts with preschool

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<sup>2</sup> One district did have a relatively large difference between the two sources; however, this may simply reflect differences in enrollment between the official reporting date for state data and the current number of students at the time the superintendent completed the survey.

programs tended to have higher preschool enrollment (mean n=56.3 students) than preschool programs in non-responding districts (35.3 students).

## **Preschool Teacher Survey**

Teachers for the preschool survey were recruited through the superintendent survey, and so the representativeness of their schools and districts is largely on par with that of the superintendent data. Nevertheless, some of the preschool teachers identified by their superintendent did not complete the teacher survey. Ultimately, surveys were completed by 99 preschool teachers reflecting a total of 81 different schools and 2,066 children.

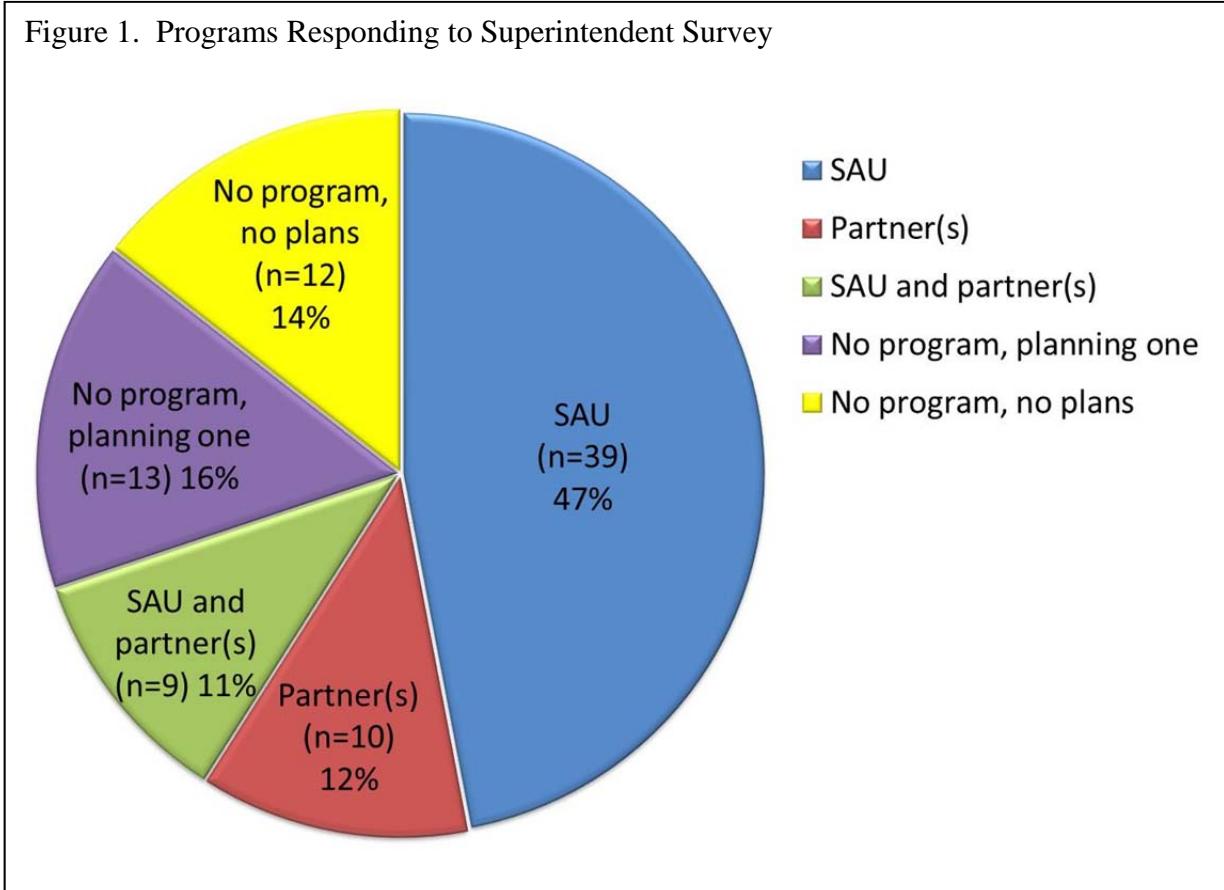
## FINDINGS PART II: GENERAL OPERATIONS AND STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Part II of the review summarizes the administrative operation of participating public preschool programs, including operational schedules, partner agency roles, and student characteristics. While this material is not directly connected to the proposed Chapter 124 standards, it provides important general information for understanding preschool programs and preschool expansion in Maine.

### ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATION

As illustrated in Figure One, 70% of responding superintendents reported that their district had a preschool program. In the majority of these (47%) the program was entirely operated by the district, while 11% of districts operated a preschool program in an active partnership with an

Figure 1. Programs Responding to Superintendent Survey



outside agency. Twelve percent of superintendents indicated that their district entirely contracted out preschool services with a local community partner. In contrast, 16% of responding superintendents reported that their district had no preschool program, but was in the process of planning for one; and the balance indicated that their district had no preschool program and no plans to add one at this time.

## **PARTNER AGENCIES**

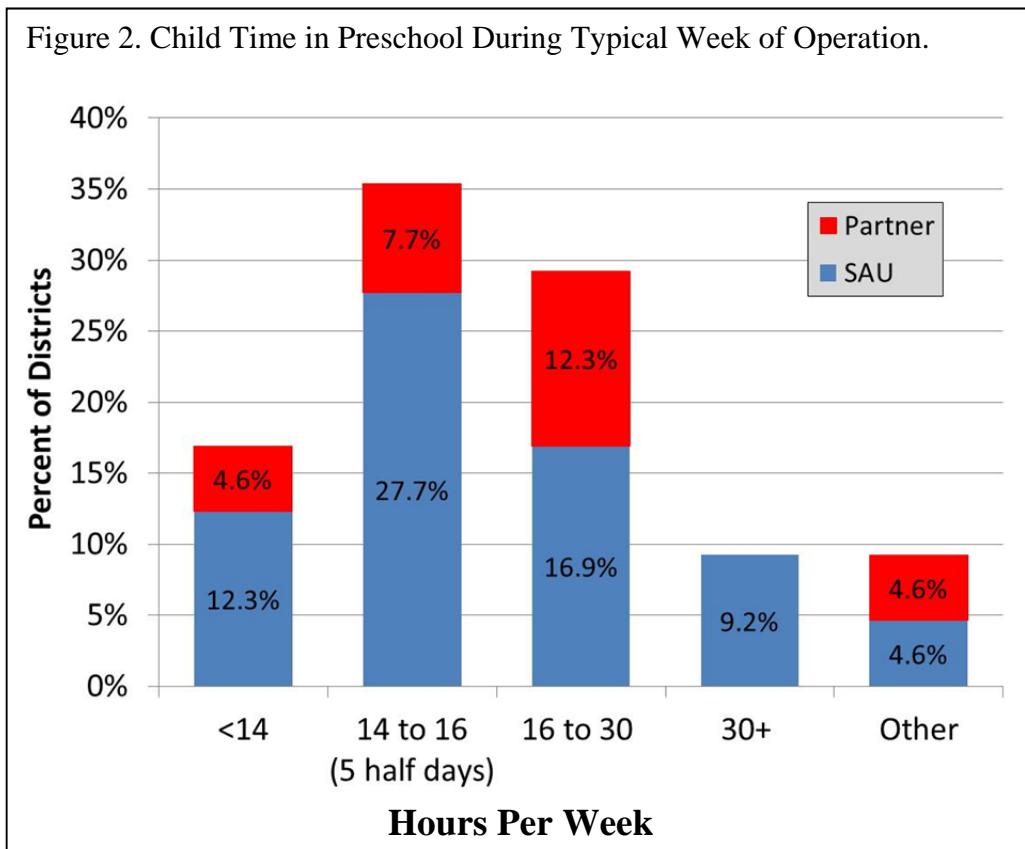
Superintendents whose districts contracted out preschool services were asked to estimate their preschool-related payments and costs to partner agencies. Multiple superintendents reported that it was difficult or impossible to clearly differentiate costs and supports provided to their partners, due to certain fundamental overhead costs provided by the district, as well as in-kind support or existing services that the partner was able to leverage or build upon. As such, only half of the responding superintendents whose districts partnered with community agencies provided an estimate of payments and supports to those agencies (n=11).

Based on these reports, the mean direct payment to partner agencies averaged \$69,802, with a median payment of \$20,000. When other district costs and supports were included, the estimated mean level of support for the partner agency was \$118,701, with a median of \$23,916. Eight superintendents simply noted that they have another, more complicated financial support structure in place than is captured here.

## **OPERATIONAL HOURS**

Preschool teachers reported considerable variability in the amount of class-time each week, with differences noted based on whether the program was operated directly by the district or through a partner agency. As seen in Figure Two, over one-third of preschool programs involved children for 14 to 16 hours per week—the equivalent of five half-day sessions. Of these, the majority were district-operated programs. In contrast, nearly 30% of preschool programs involved children from 16 to 30 hours per week, with these nearly evenly divided between those operated directly by a school district and those operated by partner-agencies. Slightly less than 10% of programs, all of which were operated directly by school districts, involved children for more than 30 hours in a typical week. A similar percentage of preschool programs operated on a more

complicated schedule. These were programs that involved a combination of preschool with before or after school care, or programs with varying schedules.



As summarized in Table One, while 90% of preschool programs met 4 or 5 days per week, a few programs met as infrequently as twice per week. Consistent with this, 93.6% of children enrolled in public preschool programs offered by these schools attended preschool four or five days per week.

Table 1. Percentage of Programs Holding Class, by Days per Week.

	<b>Two Days</b>	<b>Three Days</b>	<b>Four Days</b>	<b>Five Days</b>
Percentage of Preschool Classes Operating 2 to 5 Days per Week	4.3%	5.4%	45.2%	45.2%
Percentage of Children Attending Preschool 2 to 5 Days per Week	4.2%	2.1%	45.7%	47.9%

Together, this reflected 68.4% of teachers reporting that their preschool program was a half-day, versus a full-day, program. However, because multiple half-day programs can be offered on the same day, the proportion of preschool students attending half day programs is considerably more: 80.3% (see Table Two).

Table 2. Percentage of Students in Full-Day and Half-Day Programs.

	Full Day	AM Sessions	PM Sessions
Total count of students served by responding teacher's classrooms	406	942	718

## STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

On average, teachers reported that the preschool students in their programs were not dissimilar from those of the overall K-12 population in Maine. Participating preschool teachers reported that 5.8% of their students were identified as having limited English proficiency (median=2.0%), 15.6% were identified as having special needs (median=10.0%), and 48.1% were identified as being eligible for free or reduced lunch (median=51.5%). Not surprisingly, these numbers varied considerably from school to school. For example, one-in-four preschool teachers reported that 75% or more of their students were eligible for free or reduced lunch (see Table Three). Similarly, while half of preschool teachers indicated that 10% or fewer of the children in their classrooms were identified as having special needs, one-quarter of preschool teachers reported at least 23% of the children in their classrooms had been so identified.

Table 3. Characteristics of Students in Public Preschool Programs.

Percentage of Students in a Class with...	Median		
	25% of classes had <i>less</i> than	percentage of students was	25% of classes had <i>more</i> than
Limited English	1.00%	2.00%	6.00%
Special Needs	5.00%	10.00%	23.00%
Free/Reduced Lunch	19.50%	51.50%	75.00%

## **FINDINGS PART III: PRESCHOOL PROGRAM QUALITY RELATED TO PROPOSED CHAPTER 124 STANDARDS**

Part III of the findings summarizes the information related to several specific sections within the proposed Chapter 124 standards. These involve classroom size and adult to child ratio, the curriculum and comprehensive assessment system, the quality of education personnel, meals and transportation, and school facilities.

### **CLASS SIZE AND ADULT TO CHILD RATIO**

#### **Class Size (Section 3.01)**

Section 3.01 of the proposed Chapter 124 standards sets a maximum class size of 16 children. As summarized in Table Four, based on preschool teacher reports, the median classroom size for full-day or half-day programs is 15 children, which would meet this new policy. Overall, teachers reported that 29.5% of their classrooms included more than 16 students. Given that larger classes also serve more students, this translates to 38.2% of children being enrolled in a preschool classroom with more than 16 students.

Table 4. Classroom Enrollment Counts.

<b>Students per classroom</b>	<b>Full Day Programs</b>	<b>AM Sessions</b>	<b>PM Sessions</b>
25% had <b>fewer</b> than....	11.5 Students	14 Students	13 Students
Median size was....	15 Students	15 Students	15 Students
25% had <b>more</b> than....	17 Students	17 Students	16.75 Students

#### **Adult to Child Ratio (Section 6.01)**

In addition to overall child enrollment numbers, Section 6.01.A.(1) of the proposed Chapter 124 standards establishes a maximum adult to child ratio of 1 adult to 8 children, with a minimum of one teacher with appropriate certification and any support staff possessing a minimum of an Educational Technician Authorization II. As detailed in Table Five, preschool teachers reported

that the median adult to child ratio closely approached this limit, varying from 7.5 children per adult to 8.0 children per adult. Overall, 32.4% of the teachers reported that their class did not have one adult per eight children, which represented 38.4% of preschool children in these schools being in a classroom that did not satisfy the 1:8 adult to child ratio.

Table 5. Adult: Child Ratios.

<b>Number of Children per Adult</b>	<b>Full Day Programs</b>	<b>AM Sessions</b>	<b>PM Sessions</b>
25% had <b>fewer</b> than....	5.67 Students	7 Students	6.5 Students
Median was....	7.5 Students	8 Students	7.5 Students
25% had <b>more</b> than....	8.75 Students	9 Students	8.5 Students

## CURRICULUM AND COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

### Curriculum (Sections 4.01, 4.02)

Teachers reported having an average of \$636 for their curriculum budget each year, which translated to \$35.86 per child, though as expected, there was considerable variability across programs with some having significantly more funding for their preschool curriculum. As summarized in Table Six, programs funded at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile (i.e., their curriculum budgets are greater than 75% of responding preschool programs) had curriculum budgets two-and-a-half times that of programs funded at the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile.

Table 6. Preschool Program Curriculum Budgets.

	<b>25% of classes had <i>less</i> than</b>	<b>Median percentage of students was</b>	<b>25% of classes had <i>more</i> than</b>
Curriculum Budget for Class	\$ 312.50	\$ 500.00	\$ 781.25
Budget <b>per Child</b>	\$ 14.78	\$ 21.43	\$ 36.46

Section 4.01 of the proposed Chapter 124 standards requires the use of an evidence-based written curriculum aligned with the *Early Learning and Development Standards*. Nearly all responding

preschool teachers indicated that their current curriculum is already in alignment (98.9%). Beyond the *Early Learning Guidelines*, most preschool programs also reported using a math and/or literacy curriculum that was part of a series that aligned with their district's K, 1, 2, etc. curriculum (69.7% for math, 67.1% for literacy).

Section 4.02.A of the proposed Chapter 124 standards identified a variety of specific activity areas that need to be addressed by preschool programs, with Section 4.02.C.(4) noting that

activities, including school “specials”, should be scheduled so as to minimize transitions for students (e.g., held within the classroom versus moving children from room to room). The preschool teacher survey specifically asked about several of these (see Table Seven), with the results suggesting that many

**Table 7. Preschool Program Activities.**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Does Not Participate</b>	<b>Held in Classroom</b>	<b>Held in Other Space</b>
Art	50.0%	25.5%	24.5%
Music	46.3%	20.0%	33.7%
Physical Educ	41.5%	12.8%	45.7%
Library	33.7%	9.5%	56.8%

programs do not currently address all of the topics in the proposed standards. For example, based on preschool teacher reports, half of all programs did not offer art – either in the classroom or in other school space. Over 40% of programs did not provide music or physical education, and one-third did not involve preschool students in library activities (33.7%).

### **Screening (Section 4.03.A)**

Section 4.03.A.(1) of the proposed Chapter 124 standards requires that all children receive a valid and reliable research-based screening tool within the first 30 days of the school year. Nearly all preschool teachers in the sample (90.5%) reported that their programs currently satisfy this goal, with 36.8% of programs conducting screening during the summer or spring prior to the start of preschool. Half of the responding teachers indicated that they conducted screenings themselves (49.5%, see Table Eight), with 28.3% reporting that screenings were conducted by CDS and 24.2% indicating that screenings were conducted by Head Start staff<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Note that this and Table CCC7 sum to more than 100% due to some programs having multiple sources for screenings.

### **Assessment (Section 4.03.B)**

Similarly, Section 4.03.B of the proposed Chapter 124 standards calls on programs to provide periodic and ongoing research based assessment of children's learning and development. Currently, 79.8% of teachers indicated that they conduct such assessments, using a wide-range of assessment tools throughout the year. No single instrument was used by a majority of programs, with "home-grown" measures developed by the district, school, or individual teacher the most commonly used approach (25.3%, see Table Nine). *Brigance* was the most extensively used professionally developed measure (21.2% of classrooms), followed by *Teaching Strategies Gold* which was used in 19.2% of classrooms.

Table 8. Screening Providers.

<b><u>Screening is Performed by....</u></b>	
CDS	28.3%
Preschool Teacher	49.5%
Head Start Staff	24.2%
Other	14.1%

Table 9. Student Assessments Used by Responding Preschool Programs.

<b><u>Student Assessment Instruments</u></b>	
District/School/Teacher Developed	25.3%
Brigance	21.2%
Teaching Strategies Gold	19.2%
Developmental Continuum (Creative Curr)	14.1%
Child Observation Record	10.1%
Devereux	7.1%
PALs PreK	6.1%
Other-In addition to one of the above	22.2%
Other-Only use some other instrument	11.1%

Note: Values sum to more than 100% due to some programs using multiple instruments.

Expanding on this, Section 4.03.B.(3) of the proposed Chapter 124 standards clarifies that programs must communicate with families regularly regarding these assessments. In their narrative description of program activities and feedback to parents, 69.7% of teachers specifically noted providing feedback from assessments as part of their parent-teacher

conferences, with half of these noting that they hold multiple formal conferences each year. Nearly forty percent (39.4%) also reported providing parents with feedback through various forms of reports and mailings, while 11.1% specifically noted conducting home visits either as part of their regular program activities or as needed.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PERSONNEL

### Teacher Training and Experience (Section 7.01)

Responding superintendents reported an average of 2.09 FTE preschool teachers and 2.00 FTE preschool aides or paraprofessionals districtwide. As expected, there was considerable variability in both numbers, with half of responding superintendents indicating their district employed 1.00 FTE or less for both preschool teachers and preschool aides/paraprofessionals. Costs to districts averaged \$132,895 (median=\$75,025), with an average of \$35,724 for fringe expenses (median=\$23,307).

In terms of teacher training and certification, Section 7.01 of the proposed Chapter 124 standards requires that teachers must hold a Maine Department of Education *Early Childhood 081 (B-5)* endorsement and be enrolled in the *Maine Roads to Quality* registry. Over three-quarters of preschool teachers in this sample indicated that they had an *Early Childhood 081* endorsement (77.5%). As summarized in Table Ten, most of those without a full endorsement nevertheless possessed a conditional endorsement. Beyond early childhood, more than half of these preschool teachers also possessed either a conditional or full endorsement for *K-3*, *K-8*, and *282 (Teacher of Children with Disabilities: Birth to School-age Five)*.

However, only 36.7% were registered with *Maine Roads to Quality*.

Experience in the classroom varied among responding preschool teachers. On average teachers reported working

Table 10. Certification of Public Preschool Teachers.

Teacher Certification	No Endorsement	Conditional Endorsement	Endorsement
Early Childhood 081	5.6%	16.9%	77.5%
K-3	41.9%	9.3%	48.8%
K-8	26.7%	3.3%	70.0%
282	47.7%	2.3%	50.0%

6.4 years in a preschool classroom, although this value was skewed by a few teachers with extensive experience. Half of the responding teachers had less than 4.75 years' experience in a preschool classroom, while 20%—one in five—had two years' experience or less.

When asked to report on professional development, teachers indicated that on average they had received 72.3 hours of professional development during the previous three years, with a median of 55 hours. As this suggests, the data regarding the amount of professional development preschool teachers received were fairly skewed, with one-quarter reporting that they received more than 99 hours of professional development in the last three years. This was often associated with the teacher enrolling in additional college courses. However, a similar proportion of teachers reported receiving fewer than 30 hours of professional development during the same three-year period.

As part of the teacher survey, preschool teachers were also asked to identify possible professional development approaches or topics that they would find useful. Nearly three out of four teachers took this opportunity to specifically note that an annual state conference for preschool teachers would be valuable, as would joint training for preschool and kindergarten teachers. Almost 60% of teachers indicated that, in addition to statewide training, face-to-face, in-district professional development provided by the Maine Department of Education would also be valuable, which is nearly double the number of teachers suggesting webinar trainings (see Table Eleven).

Table 11. Professional Development Topics of Interest to Preschool Teachers.

<b>Teachers Indicating the Following Support Would be Useful</b>	
Webinars on specific topics	33.30%
Face-to-face in-district training	59.60%
In-classroom technical assistance	20.20%
Annual conference for preschool teachers	73.74%
Joint training for PreK and K teachers	69.70%

## **Assistant Teachers (Section 7.01)**

Section 7.01.B of the proposed Chapter 124 standards requires that assistant teachers hold a minimum of an Educational Technician II authorization and be enrolled in *Maine Roads to Quality*. At this time, slightly more than two-thirds of responding preschool teachers (68.7%) indicated that they had an assistant teacher in their classroom. Most of these assistant teachers were an Ed Tech II (25.7%) or an Ed Tech III (61.4%). Half of these assistant teachers (50.7%) had two-year college degrees or more in early childhood education / development, while one in four (24.7%) had no college training in early childhood education / development. As with the preschool teachers themselves, relatively few assistant teachers (26.0%) were enrolled in *Maine Roads to Quality*.

## **MEALS AND TRANSPORTATION (SECTIONS 8.01 AND 14)**

To a large degree, whether preschool programs offered transportation was related to whether the program was operated by the district itself or whether it was contracted out through a partner agency. Based on superintendent reports, while 72.7% of district-operated public preschool programs offered transportation, it was offered by only 10.5% of public preschool programs operated by a partner agency. A similar, albeit weaker, trend was observed for meal services. While meals were provided for 57.1% of programs that were directly operated by the district, meals were provided by only one-third (33.3%) of programs operated by a partner agency.

For preschool programs directly operated by the district, superintendents were also asked to estimate the cost of transportation and meal services. In their comments, multiple superintendents reported that it was difficult or impossible to separate the preschool component of these services from other K-12 delivery. Consequently, only two-thirds of superintendents estimated transportation costs and only half estimated meal expenses. For programs providing these estimates, the mean transportation cost was \$36,381, with a median cost of only \$7,000. In essence, programs that were able to use existing transportation for their preschool program were able to offer it at minimal additional cost, while the cost could be very large for programs that needed additional transportation runs. Similarly, the mean cost for meal service was \$6,930, with a median cost close to zero – indicating that half felt that meal service could be provided for their preschool students at essentially minimal additional cost.

## SCHOOL FACILITIES

### Classroom Physical Size (Section 9.01)

As part of the preschool teacher survey, respondents were asked to calculate the physical size of their classroom. On average, teachers reported a mean classroom size of 746 square feet. A few large classrooms skewed the results slightly, resulting in a median classroom size of 702 square feet. However, classroom physical size alone is less relevant than the amount of space available per child in the classroom. Section 9.01 of the proposed Chapter 124 standards therefore establishes a minimum of 35 square feet per child. Using area per child as a metric, the results found that the median classroom size was 50 square feet per child, with one-quarter of classrooms having less than 36.7 square feet per child, and one-quarter of classrooms providing more than 64.3 square feet per child. As summarized in Table Twelve, this varied slightly based on whether programs were full-day or half-day, with full-day classrooms generally providing more square footage per child.

Table 12. Classroom Square Footage per Child, Based on Full or Half-Day Program.

<b>Sq. Footage Per Student</b>	<b>Full-Day Programs</b>	<b>Half-Day Programs Only</b>
25% had <b>less</b> than....	43.8 Sq. Ft. per child	35.9 Sq. Ft. per child
Median size was....	56.3 Sq. Ft. per child	48.9 Sq. Ft. per child
25% had <b>more</b> than....	98.8 Sq. Ft. per child	60.0 Sq. Ft. per child

Overall, 16.3% of classrooms serving 21.0% of preschool students did not satisfy the minimum of 35 square feet per child.

### Accessibility and Design: Indoor Space (Section 9.01)

Beyond physical space, Section 9.01 of the proposed Chapter 124 standards also calls for preschool classrooms to be accessible to all children and designed to allow proper monitoring of children at all times. Nearly all preschool teachers who responded to the survey indicated that their current classrooms satisfied these expectations: 94.8% reported that their classroom is

accessible to children with disabilities, and 96.9% indicated that an accessible bathroom is located in or within 40 feet of the preschool classroom. Furthermore, 93.8% reported that a water source was available in the classroom for children, and 97.9% stated that their classroom environment is structured so that staff can supervise children by sight and sound at all times.

### **Accessibility and Design: Outdoor Space (Section 9.02)**

Beyond the classroom, Section 9.02 requires outdoor space used by preschool children to incorporate features that reflect their younger age and social/behavioral developmental level. While generally positive, results of the teacher survey were slightly more mixed in this regard. For example, one in five programs (20.6%) indicated that their outdoor space was *not* protected by a fence or some natural barrier, as called for in the new standards. This can potentially raise safety issues for younger children who developmentally may find it more difficult to stay within less well-defined boundaries. Accessibility is currently less of an issue, with 90.7% of participating preschool teachers reporting that their outdoor space is accessible to children with disabilities, and most teachers – 85.6% – reported that outdoor space was available to preschool children at a time separate from other children.

### **TRANSITION PLANNING (SECTION 13.02)**

Section 13.02 of the proposed Chapter 124 standards requires that programs include a transition process between four-year-old and kindergarten programs. At this time, 78.5% of preschool teachers reported that their program includes a formal student transition between preschool and kindergarten. This suggests incorporating transition planning is an area that nearly one-quarter of programs may need to address in order to meet the proposed standards.

## FINDINGS PART IV: EXPANSION PLANNING

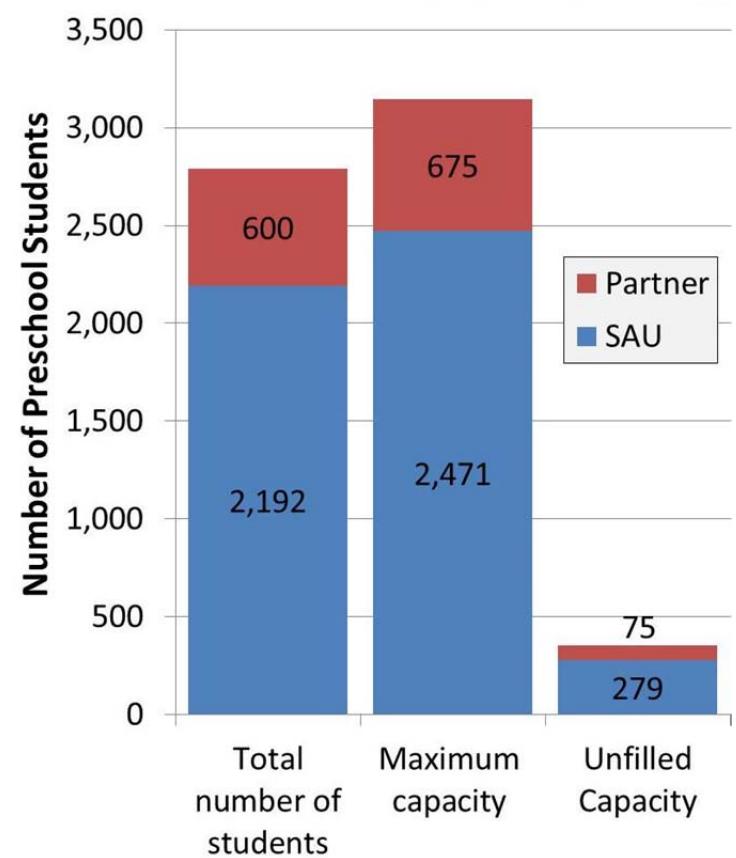
Finally, Part IV of the survey findings summarizes the current preschool expansion plans reported by participating districts, as well estimates projected operational and one-time expansion / start-up costs for a statewide expansion of public preschool in Maine<sup>4</sup>.

### CURRENT PLANNED EXPANSIONS BY REPORTING DISTRICTS

Superintendents reported a total enrollment of 2,792 preschool students, with a maximum capacity of 3,146 students (see Figure Three). While this suggests some limited existing unfilled capacity for growth, superintendents were not asked to consider the new proposed state guidelines of 16 students per classroom or a 1:8 adult to child ratio when making these estimates. Actual unfilled capacity is likely less if these proposed changes are implemented.

Given this, it is not surprising that nearly half of the responding districts (47.0%) indicated that they planned to expand public preschool programs — with one-third of these reflecting entirely new programs in districts not currently offering preschool, and two-thirds reflecting districts increasing the capacity of an existing program (note: 46.4% of existing programs indicated that

Figure 3. Preschool 2013/2014 enrollment as reported by superintendents.



<sup>4</sup> Information reported in this section was also included in the MEPRI report “Report of the Commission to Study the Adequacy and Equity of Certain Cost Components of the School Funding Formula”

they were expanding their current capacity). These superintendents reported that their expansion plans would add 87 classrooms or class-sessions, and would allow these districts to serve up to 1,695 additional students. On average, superintendents estimated that the cost of these expansions would be \$44,480 per district, or \$1,036 per new potential student. Given that three-fourths (78.2%) of these expansion plans involved using existing district space, estimated costs would likely have been higher if more schools required major renovations or new construction.

It should be noted that these cost estimates are in line with recent (i.e., last 5 years) preschool expansions reported by the participating superintendents. Twenty-nine superintendents reported initiating or expanding their preschool programs in their district during the last five years at an average district-wide cost of \$51,814. This included costs such as renovation, construction, purchasing, and leasing space. Consequently, the median estimated start-up cost for these 29 districts was only \$12,000, reflecting significantly lower costs for districts that were able to start or expand their program using existing space and little construction or renovation.

## **OPERATING COSTS**

On average, superintendent estimates of the operating costs for their preschool program was approximately \$4,204 per student (median = \$3,215), with staff salary and benefits constituting approximately two-thirds of this amount. For districts offering transportation (approximately three-fourths of district-operated programs), transportation was the next largest expense. This was particularly true for districts that were not able to incorporate preschool students into their existing transportation operations. These estimates were combined with information in the *State Longitudinal Data System* in order to estimate the total statewide operating cost if public preschool was expanded universally in Maine.

## **Estimating Enrollment**

An estimate of the number of *potential* preschool students was based on students enrolled in public kindergarten in 2013/2014. This suggested that there were approximately 13,448 potential preschool children, including the 5,004 already enrolled in programs. The number of *potential* preschool programs was estimated using two approaches: A school-based model and a district-based model.

**School-based model.** This approach assumes that every school currently offering kindergarten will also offer public preschool at the same enrollment numbers as observed in its kindergarten classroom(s). For example, a school with 20 kindergarten students and no preschool program would be estimated to have 20 potential preschool students. Alternatively, a school with 25 kindergarten students and a preschool program with 10 children enrolled would be estimated to have 15 additional preschool students that would be covered under universal public preschool.

**District-based model.** This approach assumes that every district currently offering kindergarten will also offer preschool at a capacity that would serve all four-year-old children in their district, although preschool may not be offered in every elementary school. For example, under the district-based model, cost estimates for a district with more than two elementary schools would be based on public preschool being offered at one school, but at a capacity-level that would serve all children in the district.

**Per-student operating costs.** Operating cost estimates were based on per-student operating costs reported in the superintendent's survey. While superintendents reported a mean operating cost of \$4,204 per preschool student, the average per-student cost was greater for small programs and leveled off in larger programs. Therefore, several statistical models were explored to weigh per-student operating costs by the size of a program (e.g., simple mean, linear function, power function, inverse function, etc.). Based on these analyses, an inverse function was chosen. An inverse function has the benefit of accurately reflecting the higher per-student operating costs observed in smaller programs, while “leveling off” for larger programs.

### **Statewide Operating Costs (School-Based Model)**

The estimated statewide operating costs for the school-based model (i.e., every school currently offering kindergarten also offers preschool) was calculated by multiplying the number of potential preschool students in each school by the per-student operating cost for that school. The result was the estimated per-school operating costs for a fully-enrolled preschool program. Schools that did not currently offer kindergarten were assumed to not offer preschool as part of a statewide expansion, and thus had preschool counts and operating costs equal to zero. The per-

school operating costs were then summed across all schools in Maine resulting in the statewide operating costs for the school-based model.

Using these analyses, it was estimated that if every school currently offering kindergarten also offered preschool at a capacity that could serve all four-year-old children in their community, the total annual operating costs for Maine would be approximately **\$50,194,206**. Of this amount, approximately **\$31,986,459** reflected costs associated with new or expanded programs and **\$18,207,747** reflected costs associated with existing preschool programs.

### **Statewide Operating Costs (District-Based Model)**

The estimate for the district-based model (i.e., every district currently offering kindergarten also offers universal preschool within their district, but not necessarily at every elementary school) was calculated by multiplying the number of potential preschool students in each district by the per-student operating cost for that district. The result was the estimated per-district operating costs for a fully-enrolled preschool program. It was assumed that if a district did not currently offer kindergarten it would not offer preschool as part of this expansion, and so had preschool counts and operating costs equal to zero. The per-district operating costs were then summed across the all districts in Maine resulting in the statewide operating costs for the district-based model.

Using these analyses, it was estimated that if every school district currently offering kindergarten also offered preschool at a capacity level that would allow them to serve all four-year children in their district, the total annual operating costs for Maine would be approximately **\$47,267,868**. Of this amount, approximately **\$29,116,288** reflected costs associated with new or expanded programs and **\$18,151,580** reflected costs associated with existing preschool programs.

### **Possible Factors Impacting Actual Operating Costs**

While these extrapolations have the benefit of (1) being based on superintendent-reported estimates of operating costs for existing pre-school programs, and (2) incorporating the higher costs associated with smaller programs, there are several reasons to suspect that if universal preschool was fully implemented the final actual operating cost may be greater than these

estimates indicate. First, as suggested throughout the *Findings-Part III* section of this report, the proposed Chapter 124 standards may lead to higher per-pupil operating costs in the future. For example, larger programs may need to hire additional staff in order to satisfy lower child: adult ratios or smaller class sizes. Second, while the model used to estimate per-pupil costs is weighted by program size, a disproportionate number of responding superintendents were from districts with larger preschool programs than non-responding superintendents. Consequently, actual per-student costs in particularly small districts may be greater than those estimated here.

Finally, districts are currently not required to offer public preschool. Therefore, the districts that choose to do so may also be those for which the operating costs are lowest. Districts projecting higher operational costs may be less inclined to offer preschool programs at this time. If so, the per-pupil operating costs based on existing preschool programs may underestimate the operating costs when implemented statewide.

## **START-UP / EXPANSION COSTS**

Results from the superintendent surveys were similarly combined with information in the *State Longitudinal Data System* in order to estimate the initial start-up /expansion costs required to offer public preschool to all four-year-old children in Maine. This includes expanding existing programs so that they have the physical capacity to serve all four-year-old children in their community, as well as initial start-up costs for schools or districts that currently do not offer public preschool. For simplicity, both will be combined and labeled ***expansion costs*** given it is the cost of expanding preschool programs to all children in Maine (i.e., expanding services from the approximately 5,004 children currently in public preschool to an estimated 13,448 children). As with the operating costs, expansion costs were estimated using both a school-based model and a district-based model.

### **Estimating Per-Student Costs**

Expansion cost estimates were based on per-student expansion costs reported in the superintendent's survey. On average, superintendents who indicated that they were currently planning to expand their preschool program reported a mean cost of \$1,036 per additional student served, with three-fourths of this expansion cost reflecting "hard" renovations, such as

moving structural walls, wiring, plumbing, new sinks or toilets, etc. Unlike operating costs, this value was on average fairly constant regardless of the program size. Consequently, while several statistical models were explored as ways to weight per-student expansion costs based on the size of a program, the overall mean per-student expansion cost was used in subsequent analyses.

### **Statewide Expansion Costs (School-Based Model)**

The estimate for the school-based model (i.e., every school currently offering kindergarten either starts a preschool program or expands their existing program so that it can serve all four-year-old children in the local community) was calculated by multiplying the potential *increase* in preschool student enrollment in each school by the per-student expansion cost. Schools that did not currently offer kindergarten were assumed to not offer preschool as part of this expansion and thus had no expansion costs. The per-school expansion costs were then summed across all schools in Maine resulting in the statewide expansion cost for the school-based model.

Using these analyses, it was estimated that the cost to expand public preschool to every school in Maine currently offering kindergarten would be approximately **\$9,260,483**. This is based on creating the capacity within each of school to potentially serve all four-year-old children in its local community.

### **Statewide Expansion Costs (District-Based Model)**

The estimate for the district-based model (i.e., every district currently offering kindergarten also offers preschool with the capacity to serve all four-year-old children living in the district) was calculated by multiplying the number of potential preschool students in each district by the per-student expansion cost. If a district did not offer kindergarten, it was assumed they would not add a preschool program and thus had no expansion costs. The per-district expansion costs were then summed across all districts in Maine resulting in the statewide expansion cost for the district-based model.

Using these analyses, it was estimated that if every district offering kindergarten also offered preschool with the capacity to fully enroll all four-year-old children in the district, the total expansion cost for Maine would be approximately **\$8,846,995**.

## **Possible Factors Impacting Actual Expansion Costs**

As with estimates of operating costs, there are two possible factors suggesting that if universal preschool were fully implemented in Maine, the final expansion cost may be higher than what is reported here. First, as with operating costs, the proposed Chapter 124 standards may lead to higher per-pupil expansion costs than superintendents anticipated when answering the survey. Second, given districts are not required to offer public preschool programs, one may anticipate that those with higher start-up or expansion costs (e.g., requiring extensive new physical space, etc.) would be less likely to have already undertaken such work. If true, the expansion costs based on existing programs may underestimate the actual costs that would occur if programs were expanded statewide.

## **DISCUSSION**

As described in the previous sections, during the fall of 2014, MEPRI surveyed superintendents and preschool teachers in Maine in order to learn more about public preschool programs in the state. In part this was driven by *Resolve 2014, Chapter 114*, which called for an estimate of the costs to expand public preschool services statewide, as well as questions regarding the current status of programs in relation to guidelines included in the proposed *Chapter 124, Basic School Approval: Public Preschool Program Standards*.

The final survey samples consisted of 83 superintendents representing a total of 104 districts serving 2,792 preschool students, and 99 preschool teachers representing 81 different schools serving 2066 preschool children. Seventy percent of participating superintendents indicated that their district had a preschool program, operated by the district, a partner agency, or combination of both. Two-thirds of preschool teachers (68.4%) reported that they offered a half-day program, rather than a full-day program, with these half-day programs serving slightly more than 80% of preschool children.

### **PROGRAM STATUS RELATED TO PROPOSED CHAPTER 124 STANDARDS**

The impact of the proposed Chapter 124 standards is a significant unknown factor facing both existing preschool programs and future programs that may be offered if public preschool is expanded in Maine. The project therefore sought to identify areas in which the majority of existing public preschool programs are currently satisfying these new standards, as well as areas that may require additional resources or attention.

For example, as required under the proposed Chapter 124 standards, nearly all participating preschool programs already use an evidence-based curriculum aligned with the *Early Learning and Development Standards*. Similarly, most programs currently conduct the screening and assessment called for under the proposed standards, and nearly all teachers and teacher assistants meet the endorsement and authorization requirements (although relatively few indicated that they are registered with *Maine Roads to Quality*). Finally, in terms of the classroom environment over 90% of teachers reported that their classroom was accessible to children with disabilities, had an accessible bathroom located in or within 40 feet of the classroom, had a water source

available in the classroom, and was structured so that staff can supervise children by sight and sound at all times.

In contrast, setting a maximum class size of 16 children would result in nearly 30% of participating preschool classrooms exceeding this limit. These classes serve 38.2% of preschool children in this sample and would need to be divided or have their enrollment capped and children transferred to different classes or sessions. Similarly, nearly one-third of classes did not meet the one adult to eight children ratio and would similarly need to limit enrollment or hire additional staff. The full impact of satisfying these requirements is unclear, but would need to be addressed by a significant number of schools with some degree of increased annual expense.

Similarly, the proposed Chapter 124 standards establish a minimum classroom space of 35 square feet per child. Based on teacher surveys, 16.3% of classrooms serving 21.0% of preschool students in this sample do not currently meet this standard. Doing so would require either a reduction in the number of students in these classrooms until the 35 square foot per child requirement was satisfied, or an expansion of the classroom physical space.

Finally, many preschool programs would also need to incorporate curriculum / activity changes in order for to cover activity areas identified in the proposed standards. Specifically, half of the preschool teachers surveyed indicated that their program did not participate in art, while over 40% did not participate in music or physical education, and one-third did not involve students in library activities.

## **STATEWIDE EXPANSION: OPERATING COSTS**

Superintendents estimated that the operating costs for their preschool program was on average \$4,204 per student, with higher per-student costs observed in smaller programs and costs “leveling off” with larger programs. When combined with information in the *State Longitudinal Data System*, analyses estimated that if every school currently offering kindergarten also offered preschool at a capacity that could serve all four-year-old children in the local community, the total annual operating costs statewide would be approximately \$50,194,206. Of this amount, approximately \$31,986,459 reflected costs associated with new or expanded programs and \$18,207,747 reflected costs associated with existing preschool programs. Estimates were slightly lower if preschool programs were offered at a district-level, in other words, if a district

offered universal preschool for all four-year-old children living within the district, but not necessarily at every elementary school (i.e., children may need to attend preschool at a different location than where they will attend kindergarten). In this scenario, the total statewide operating costs would be approximately \$47,267,868, with \$29,116,288 reflecting costs associated with new or expanded preschool programs and \$18,151,580 reflecting costs for existing programs.

### **STATEWIDE EXPANSION: ONE TIME EXPANSION / START-UP COSTS**

Per-student expansion cost estimates were based on values reported by those superintendents currently planning to expand their preschool program (\$1,036 per additional student). When combined with information in the *State Longitudinal Data System*, analyses estimated that the expansion / start-up costs required for every school currently offering kindergarten to also offer public preschool at a capacity that could serve all four-year-old children in the local community was \$9,260,483. As with operating costs, estimates were slightly lower if preschool programs were offered at a district-level, rather than in every school. Using that model, the estimated start-up cost needed to expand public preschool to every school district in Maine was \$8,846,995.

While these extrapolations were (1) based on superintendent-reported estimates of expansion and operating costs, and (2) incorporated the higher operating costs associated with smaller programs, there are several reasons to suspect that if universal preschool was fully implemented in Maine the ultimate costs may be greater than these estimates. First, the proposed Chapter 124 standards may lead to higher operating and expansion costs. Programs may need additional physical space or features in order to satisfy space requirements; and larger programs may need to hire additional staff in order to satisfy smaller class size requirements. Second, given that districts are not required to offer public preschool, one may expect that those that have already chosen to do so may have lower start-up and operating costs than districts that have not yet implemented public preschool. This may also lead to underestimating costs. Finally, while the model used to estimate operating costs is weighted by program size, responding superintendents were disproportionately from districts with larger preschool programs than non-responding superintendents. Consequently, actual per-student costs in particularly small districts may be greater than those estimated here.

## **APPENDIX I. SUPERINTENDENT SURVEY**

## **Maine Public Preschool Program Survey Superintendent Form**

Please fill out this form for existing or planned preschool programs

Thank you for taking the Maine Public Preschool Program information survey! At the request of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) is conducting this survey in order to learn more about the costs and capacity for public preschool programs around the state. This survey has been commissioned by a cross-agency workgroup tasked with meeting the regulatory requirements of two laws recently passed by the Maine Legislature. The survey results will be used in discussions about possible expansion of public preschool programs.

To fully describe costs and capacity, the survey covers a range of topics and requests administrative data about expenditures and enrollment. We recommend that you access the PDF or DOCX file listing the questions so that you can compile the requested information before entering the survey. The survey itself can be completed in 10-20 minutes depending on whether you currently operate a program. The time needed to gather the data will vary depending on the size and complexity of your program. We recommend completing the survey on a computer rather than a mobile device to maximize readability.

This survey will ask for information on the physical space and capacity, implementation and operational costs for new or existing preschool programs, and expansion plans. The survey is divided into four sections

- District contact and program information (including plans for expansion)
- SAU operated programs
- Programs operated by partner agencies
- Initial Costs for implementing programs

Please contact Craig Mason, PhD, at [cre@maine.edu](mailto:cre@maine.edu) if you have any questions or problems regarding the survey.

**Question 1. Please provide contact information for your School Administrative Unit (fiscal agency):**

Name of SAU: \_\_\_\_\_  
First Name of SAU Administrator: \_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name of SAU Administrator: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 2. Does your SAU currently have a preschool program, operate one with a partner agency, or plan to implement one in the future?**

- There is a program run by the SAU
- There is a program run by one or more partner agencies
- There are both programs run by the SAU and one or more partner agencies
- There is NOT a public preschool program currently, but one is being planned
- There is NOT a public preschool program currently, and there are no plans to implement one

If answer Q2 with “There is NOT a public preschool program currently, and there are NO plans to implement one”:

**Question 2a. Why are there no plans to implement a public preschool program in your SAU?**

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**[SKIP TO END]**

If answer Q2 with “There is a program run by the SAU” or “There is a program run by one or more partner agencies” or “There is a program run jointly by both the SAU and one or more partner agencies”

**Question 3. Do you intend to add a program or expand your existing program if possible in future years?**

- Yes
- No

If answer Q3 with "No"

**Q3a Why are there no plans to expand your existing program in future years?**

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If answer Q2 with "There is NOT a public preschool program currently, but one is being planned" or answer Q3 with "Yes"

**Question 4. Please provide the following information about your estimated costs for starting up or expanding your program:**

- (a) How many preschool classrooms would you like to add in your district?
- (b) How many total students could be enrolled in these new or added classrooms?
- (c) Please estimate the cost of "Soft" renovations (e.g., painting, new flooring, new lighting, etc.)?
- (d) Please estimate the cost of "Hard" renovations (e.g., moving structural walls, wiring, plumbing, new sinks or toilets, etc.)?
- (e) If this requires leasing new space, what is the cost of leasing this space -- if not included in the above?
- (f) How many of the classrooms reported in (a) will be located in existing space within SAU school buildings?

## Preschool Classrooms Operated by Your District

[This section was only administered to superintendents who indicated that they had a preschool program either operated solely by their SAU or jointly by their SAU and a partner agency]

**Question 5. Please indicate the number of preschool classrooms operated by your SAU this year, as well as your best estimate of the number planned or expected next year:**

	Total Number of Classrooms Operated by Your SAU	Number of these classrooms in or adjacent to a school building (i.e. shared with other grades)	Number of these classrooms located in an offsite location	Total number of students enrolled in these classrooms	Maximum capacity for student enrollment in these classrooms
Prior Year, 2013-14					
Current, 2014-15					
Planned, 2015-16					

**Question 6. How much time do your preschool students spend in the program each week?**

- 30 hours or more (the equivalent of 5 full school days)
- More than 16 and less than 30 hours
- 14-16 hours (the equivalent of 5 half days)
- Less than 14 hours
- It's more complicated than that. (please describe below) \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 7. Please indicate the total number of Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) classroom teachers and paraprofessionals who were employed directly in the preschool program, during the 2013-14 school year. To compute FTE personnel, a full-time teacher is counted as 1.0 and a half-time teacher would be counted as 0.5.**

Total number of teachers (in FTEs)

Total number of classroom aides/paraprofessionals (in FTEs)

**Question 8. What were the total expenditures on these classroom personnel in 2013-14?**

Salary: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Benefits: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 9. Please indicate whether your SAU provided transportation and/or meals for preschool students in 2013-2014, and if so, the associated cost.**

	Did your SAU provide this for preschool students in 2013-2014?		If yes, what was the cost to your SAU for providing this service in 2013-2014? (Minus any payments by families or federal funding)
	Yes	No	
Transportation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Meals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

**Question 10. Please estimate and describe the nature of any additional costs of operating your preschool program that have not already been asked in the previous questions.**

Costs not already reported for 2013-14

Description of these additional operating expenses

## Preschool Classrooms Operated by Partner Agencies

[This section was only administered to superintendents who indicated that they had a preschool program either operated solely by a partner agency, or jointly by their SAU and a partner agency]

**Question 11. Please indicate the number of preschool classrooms operated by a partner agency this year, as well as your best estimate of the number planned or expected for next year:**

	Total Number of Classrooms Operated by a Partner Agency	Number of these classrooms located in or adjacent to an existing school	Number of these classrooms located in an offsite location	Total number of students enrolled in these classrooms	Maximum capacity for student enrollment in these classrooms
Prior Year, 2013-14					
Current, 2014-15					
Planned, 2015-16					

**Question 12. How much time do your preschool students spend in the program each week?**

- 30 hours or more (the equivalent of 5 full school days)
- More than 16 and less than 30 hours
- 14-16 hours (the equivalent of 5 half days)
- Less than 14 hours
- It's more complicated than that. (please describe below) \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 13. What were the total payments for preschool programs to partner agencies in 2013-14?**

**Question 14. Did your partner agency provide the following for preschool students in 2013-14?**

	Yes	No
Transportation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Question 15. For programs administered by a partner agency and located in an SAU owned building, which choice best describes your financial arrangement for facilities and maintenance costs (such as janitorial services, bathroom supplies, and minor maintenance repairs)?**

- The agency provided facilities and maintenance services; their costs were billed to us and are reflected in the total above (payment to partner agency).
- The district provided facilities and maintenance services; costs are not included in the payment to partner agency. The cost of these services to the district was:
  
- It is more complicated than that, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Initial and One-Time Operating Expenditures**

[This section was administered to all superintendents who indicated they had a preschool program]

**Question 16.** If, in the past five years your SAU has needed to acquire, build, lease, renovate, or adapt classrooms for use in a public preschool program, please complete the following table indicating the number of public preschool classrooms affected and the associated costs. (Please include all work to meet necessary to meet minimum requirements such as appropriate bathrooms, accessibility, addition of water sources, playground modifications, etc.)

	Number of Classrooms Affected	Cost
No Renovation Needed		
Renovation		
Construction		
Purchase		
Lease (annual cost)		

**Question 17.** Please briefly describe the renovations indicated above.

**Question 18.** Please describe any additional one-time start-up costs not listed in the previous questions.

Amount : \_\_\_\_\_  
Explanation : \_\_\_\_\_

## Teacher Follow-Up Survey

[This section was administered to all superintendents who indicated they had a preschool program]

**Question 19.** We will be sending a follow-up survey directly to your preschool teachers in order to gather information directly related to their individual preschool classroom sessions, such as hours, curriculum, and classroom practices, and/or schedule. Given that this needs to be collected for each preschool classroom session that your SAU offers, it is most efficient to gather this information directly from the preschool teaching staff. Therefore, please provide the following contact information for preschool teachers in your program, including those that work for partner agencies.

	First Name	Last Name	Email
Teacher #1			
Teacher #2			
Teacher #3			
Teacher #4			
Teacher #5			
Teacher #6			
Teacher #7			
Teacher #8			
Teacher #9			
Teacher #10			

**Question 19a.** If your program has more than 10 teachers, please list all of the teachers you could not fit in the above table in the space provided below. Be sure to include email addresses.

## **APPENDIX II. PRESCHOOL TEACHER SURVEY**

## **Maine Public Preschool Program Survey Preschool Teacher Form**

Thank you for taking the Maine Public Preschool Program information survey! At the request of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, the Maine Education Policy Research Institute (MEPRI) is conducting this survey in order to learn more about public preschool programs around the state. This survey has been commissioned by a cross-agency workgroup tasked with meeting the regulatory requirements of two laws recently passed by the Maine Legislature. The survey results will be used in discussions about possible expansion of public preschool programs.

Your superintendent identified you as a preschool teacher who can provide valuable information regarding your classroom and program. The survey covers a range of topics and can be completed in 10-20 minutes. We recommend completing the survey on a computer rather than a mobile device to maximize readability. This survey will ask for information about training and experience for you and any teacher assistants in your classroom, the physical space and characteristics of your classroom, the children you serve, your curriculum, screening and assessment, and professional development activities you have had or would find valuable.

Please contact Craig Mason, PhD, at [cre@maine.edu](mailto:cre@maine.edu) if you have any questions or problems regarding the survey.

## YOUR INFORMATION

**Q1 Please provide your contact information:**

First Name  
Last Name  
Phone Number

**Q2 How many years have you been in your current position? Enter a numerical value (e.g., "5.5" for five and a half years).**

**Q3 Which school administrative unit is associated with your preschool classroom?**

**Q4 If your preschool classroom is located in a school, please enter the name and address of the school. If not, please enter the name of the agency (e.g., "Head Start") and physical address for the location of the classroom.**

School or agency name  
Street address  
City  
Zip code

**Q4a If you are an employee of a Partner Agency and not the school district, please specify the name of the agency.**

**Q5 Please use the drop down lists to indicate your status for the following endorsements (i.e., endorsement, conditional endorsement, or no endorsement)**

	No Endorsement	Conditional Endorsement	Endorsement
ME DOE Early Childhood 081 (B-5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ME DOE K-3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ME DOE K-8	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ME DOE 282	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other, please specify	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q6 Are you a Maine Roads to Quality Registry Member?**

- Yes  
 No

## ASSISTANT TEACHERS WORKING WITH YOU

**Q7 If you have an Assistant Teacher(s), please provide the following information for each assistant teacher working with you. Leave blank if you have no assistant teacher. Enter a numerical value only for years of experience (e.g. "3" for three years of experience, "5.5" for five and a half years' experience)**

	Last Name	First Name	2+ year degree in EC	Some EC college courses	No EC college courses	Current Position	Total	Ed Tech II	Ed Tech III	Other	None	Registered in Maine Roads to Quality
#1			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
#2			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
#3			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
#4			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
#5			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>			<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## YOUR CLASSROOM AND FACILITY

**Q8 If the physical classroom space that you teach in is operated by a partner agency (not the School District), please specify the name of the agency that operates the space.**

**Q9 Please answer these questions about the physical space of your preschool class**

	Yes	No
Is the classroom accessible to children with disabilities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is there a water source in the classroom?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is a restroom with accessible toilets in or within 40 feet of the classroom	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is the environment designed so staff can supervise children by sight and sound at all times?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is the outdoor space available to your class protected by fences or natural barriers?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is the outdoor space accessible to children with disabilities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do preschool children use outdoor space at a time separate from other children?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q10 What is the square footage of indoor usable space for your preschool class (Enter a numerical value only (e.g., "600" for 600 square feet)**

**Q11 What days are your preschool class in operation? (Check all that apply)**

- Monday
- Tuesday
- Wednesday
- Thursday
- Friday

**Q12 For those days you hold class, how many hours per day is your preschool class in operation?**

- Full Day (5 or more hours)
- Half Day (between 2.5 and 5 hours)
- Other, please specify number of hours per day \_\_\_\_\_

**Q13 For your preschool class...**

How many weeks per year does it operate? Enter a numerical value (e.g., "36" for 36 weeks)  
Is there anything unique about the schedule?

**Q14 For those days in which your preschool class meets, how many total children on average are served in morning, afternoon, or full-day sessions? Enter numerical values only (e.g. "12" for twelve students).**

	Students per session
Full day session	
AM session	
PM session	

**Q15 Drag the bars to represent what percentage of children enrolled in your preschool class(es)**

- have limited English proficiency?  
 have special needs?  
 are free and reduced lunch eligible?

## YOUR CURRICULUM

**Q16 Approximately what amount is budgeted yearly to support curricula materials, books and other learning materials for your classroom? Enter numerical values only (e.g., "1200" for \$1200)**

**Q17 What curriculum(s) do you use?**

**Q18 Please elaborate on your curriculum**

	Yes	No
Does the curriculum align with Maine's Early Learning Guidelines?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If you use a specific math curriculum, is it part of a series that aligns with k, 1, 2, etc.?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If you use a specific literacy curriculum, is it part of a series that aligns with k,1,2, etc. ?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q19 Do the preschool children participate in the following “specials”?**

	Do not participate	Held in classroom	Held in other designated space
Art	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Physical education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Library	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## **SCREENING AND ASSESSMENT**

**Q20 In general, when do incoming preschool children receive developmental/health screening?**

- Spring before they start preschool
- Summer before they start preschool
- Within 30 days of starting preschool
- Children are not screened

If "Children are not screened" is selected, skip to Q24

**Q21 Who does the screening?**

- CDS
- Public preschool Teacher
- Head Start staff
- Other, please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

**Q22 Which instruments are used for the screening?**

- |                  |         |
|------------------|---------|
| Developmental    | : _____ |
| Social/emotional | : _____ |
| Hearing          | : _____ |
| Vision           | : _____ |
| Health           | : _____ |
| ELL              | : _____ |
| Other            | : _____ |

**Q23 Please describe how screening and, if necessary, referral information is shared with parents:**

**Q24 What child assessments do you use throughout the year? (Check all that apply)**

	We use this assessment
Teaching Strategies Gold	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child Observation Record (COR)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developmental Continuum (Creative Curriculum)	<input type="checkbox"/>
PALs Prek	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brigance	<input type="checkbox"/>
Devereux	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q25 Please describe when and how assessment and development information is shared with parents.**

**Q26 Does your program have a process to provide transition between preschool and kindergarten?**

- No
- Yes, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Q27 Please elaborate on your recent professional development for the past 2-3 school years, listing the name of the PD in the left column.**

	Content area	Year	# of hours	Provider (school, district, state, etc.)
PD 1				
PD 2				
PD 3				
PD 4				
PD 5				
PD 6				
PD 7				

**Q28 What professional development would you find helpful? (Check all that apply)**

	Would be helpful
Webinars on specific topics	<input type="checkbox"/>
Face-to-face training in my district/region	<input type="checkbox"/>
In classroom technical assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>
Annual conference for preschool teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training for preschool and kindergarten teachers together	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q29 List the professional development topics in which you are most interested**

**Q30 How often do early childhood staff at your program receive formal observation with feedback?**

**Q31 Who does the observations and provides feedback?**

**Q32 What tool is used for evaluation? (What educator effectiveness tool has your school administrative unit adopted?)**

- The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) Five Core Propositions and Indicators
- TPEG rubrics created by the Maine Schools for Excellence
- The Framework for Teaching, by Charlotte Danielson
- The Marzano Art and Science of Teaching Framework.
- Marshall Teacher Evaluation Rubrics
- Other, (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Our school administrative unit has not adopted an educator effectiveness tool

## **FEEDBACK TO MAINE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**Q33 In what ways can the Department of Education support your program?**

**Q34 What else would you like to tell us about your preschool program?**

**APPENDIX III. CHAPTER 124: BASIC APPROVAL  
STANDARDS: PUBLIC PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS**

**Chapter 124: BASIC APPROVAL STANDARDS: PUBLIC PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS**

**SUMMARY:** This rule establishes school approval standards governing the school administrative units which are implementing public preschool programs and adopts procedures for ascertaining compliance with all applicable legal requirements, as authorized by Title 20-A, Maine Revised Statutes, Chapters 203 and 206. By July 1, 2017, all preschool programs must comply with the program standards contained in this rule. Any new public preschool programs implemented for the 2015-2016 school year must be approved prior to opening.

**Section 1. GENERAL OBJECTIVES**

- 1.01 This rule establishes the substantive school approval standards pertaining to school administrative units which operate a public preschool program. Its intent is to provide a framework for planning and growth with local flexibility as influenced by local conditions. This rule establishes procedures for comprehensive reviews of school administrative units which operate a public preschool program by which the Commissioner will determine compliance with applicable standards and methods of enforcement for ensuring compliance.
- 1.02 School administrative units may operate a public preschool program or provide for children to participate in such programs in accordance with 20-A §4271 and shall meet all school approval requirements of Title 20-A, Maine Revised Statutes (20-A MRSA), other statutes, and rules applicable to the operation of public preschool programs, and the requirements of this rule.

**Section 2. DEFINITIONS**

- 2.01 Administrator: "Administrator" means any person certified by the Commissioner as an administrator and employed by a school administrative unit in an administrative capacity.
- 2.02 Assessment: "Assessment" means an educational instrument or activity designed to gather information on a child's knowledge and skill to make instructional decisions.
- 2.03 Commissioner: "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of the Maine Department of Education or a designee.

2.04 Curriculum: "Curriculum" means the school administrative unit's written document that includes the learning expectations for all children for all domains of development as indicated in the Early Learning and Development Standards.

2.05 Department: "Department" means the Maine Department of Education.

2.07 Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS): "Early Learning and Development Standards" means what should children know and be able to do at kindergarten entry.

2.08 Elementary school: "Elementary school" means that portion of a school that provides instruction in any combination of grades pre-kindergarten through grade 8.

2.09 Essential Programs and Services: "Essential Programs and Services" means those programs and services, as defined by the State Board of Education or adopted by the Legislature, that a school administrative unit offers for each student to have the opportunity to meet the content standards of the system of Early Learning and Development Standards/Learning Results.

2.10 Instructional day: "Instructional day" means a school day during which both students and teachers are present, either in a school or in another setting.

2.11 Instructional time: "Instructional time" means that portion of a school day devoted to the teaching-learning process, but not including extra-curricular activities, lunchtime, or recess. Time spent on organized field trips related to school studies may be considered instructional time, but the instructional time counted for extended field trips shall not exceed a normal school day for each day of the field trip.

2.12 Kindergarten: "Kindergarten" means a one or two-year instructional program aligned with the system of Learning Results, immediately prior to grade one.

2.13 Parent: "Parent" means the parent or legal guardian of a student, or the student if of majority age.

2.14 Provisional Approval: "Provisional Approval" means an approval for a specified period of time during which a school administrative unit must take corrective action to the public preschool program to comply with this rule.

2.15 Public Preschool Program: "Public Preschool Program" means a program offered by a public school that provides instruction to children who are four years of age by October 15th.

2.16 School: "School" means an individual attendance center within a school administrative unit including any combination of grades pre-kindergarten through 12. In this rule, an

educational program located in or operated by a juvenile correctional facility, an educational program located in the unorganized territories and operated by the Department of Education, the Maine School of Science and Mathematics, and the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing shall be considered schools.

2.17 School administrative unit: "School administrative unit" means the state-approved unit of school administration and includes a municipal school unit, school administrative district, community school district, regional school unit or any other municipal or quasi-municipal corporation responsible for operating or constructing public schools, except that it does not include a career and technical education region. Beginning July 1, 2009, "school administrative unit" means the state-approved unit of school administration and includes only the following:

- A. A municipal school unit;
- B. A regional school unit formed pursuant to chapter 103-A;
- C. An alternative organizational structure as approved by the commissioner and approved by the voters;
- D. A school administrative district that does not provide public education for the entire span of kindergarten to grade 12 that has not reorganized as a regional school unit pursuant to chapter 103-A;
- E. A community school district that has not reorganized as a regional school unit pursuant to chapter 103-A;
- F. A municipal or quasi-municipal district responsible for operating public schools that has not reorganized as a regional school unit pursuant to chapter 103-A;
- G. A municipal school unit, school administrative district, community school district, regional school unit or any other quasi-municipal district responsible for operating public schools that forms a part of an alternative organizational structure approved by the commissioner; and
- H. A public charter school authorized under chapter 112 by an entity other than a local school board.

2.18 School calendar: "School calendar" means the schedule of school days adopted in advance of the school year by the school board.

2.19 School day: "School day" means a day in which school is in operation as an instructional day and/or a teacher in-service day.

2.20 School personnel: "School personnel" means individuals employed by a school administrative unit or under contract with the unit to provide services to the children enrolled in the schools of the unit.

2.21 School year: "School year" means the total number of school days in a year as established by the school administrative unit.

2.22 Screening. "Screening" means utilizing a standard or norm-referenced screening tool designed and validated to identify a child's level of performance overall in developmental areas (i.e., cognition, fine motor, gross motor, communication, self-help/adaptive, and gross motor skills). The screening is a brief check (10-15 minutes) of the child's development and is not diagnostic or confirming in content.

2.23 Student records: "Student records" means those records that are directly related to a student and are maintained by a school or a party acting for the school.

2.24 Teacher: "Teacher" means any person who is regularly employed for the instruction of students in a school and who is certified by the Commissioner for this position.

2.25 Teacher in-service day: "Teacher in-service day" means a school day during which a majority of teachers and professional staff report for work, but students are not present for instruction. These days may include days devoted to in-service educational programs, administrative meetings, parent-teacher conferences, record-keeping duties, curriculum preparation, and other similar activities related to the operation of school programs, and may take place in a school in the school administrative unit.

### **Section 3. CLASS SIZE**

3.01 Maximum class size: 16 children

### **Section 4. CURRICULUM AND COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM**

4.01 Each school administrative unit shall have an evidence-based written curriculum aligned with the Early Learning and Development Standards. The school administrative unit shall inform parents and students of the curriculum, instructional expectations, and assessment system.

4.02 Public preschool programs must demonstrate curriculum practice that aligns with the Maine Early Learning and Development Standards and is appropriate for the age and

developmental level of the students. Teachers must organize space and select materials in all content and developmental areas to stimulate exploration, experimentation, discovery and conceptual learning.

- A. A variety of activity areas are offered every session including, but not limited to: block building, dramatic play, writing, art, music, science, math, literacy, sand/water play, manipulatives, gross motor activities and mealtime routines , which allows teachers to eat with children.
- B. Equipment, materials and furnishings are available and are accessible to all children, including children with disabilities.
- C. A daily schedule is posted that includes:
  - (1) Opportunities for individual, small group and whole group activities. The amount of time spent in large group, teacher directed activity is limited to short periods of time – 10-20 minutes depending on the time of the year.
  - (2) Opportunities for physical movement, fresh air and access to drinking water are provided to the children.
  - (3) Opportunity for rest in a full-day program (more than 5 hours) is provided for the children. Cots or mats are provided for each child.
  - (4) The schedule and program activities minimize the transitions that children make from one classroom space to another, including school “specials” especially during the first half of the school year. Most special supports or therapies are provided in-class to minimize transitions for children with disabilities.
  - (5) Program development and services to any and all English learners are overseen by an English as a Second Language-endorsed teacher.

#### 4.03 Screening and Assessment

##### A. Screening

- (1) All children must receive a valid and reliable research-based screening tool within the first 30 days of the school year (or prior to school entry) which includes: early language and literacy/numeracy/cognitive; gross and fine motor; personal/social; social/emotional development- to identify those who may be in need of additional assessment or to determine eligibility for special education services unless the child has an existing Individualized Education Program-IEP). All children must receive a

hearing, vision, and health screening upon entry to the public preschool program. The health screening must include information pertaining to oral health and lead poisoning awareness. If hearing, vision, and health screening has been done in the public preschool, the screenings do not have to be redone in kindergarten, unless there is a concern.

- (2) Each preschool program shall develop a written Child Find referral policy consistent with the State of Maine Unified Special Education Rules 05-071 Chapter 101 Section IV. 2(D)(E).
- (3) Administration of a home language survey is undertaken to identify possible English learners.

B. Assessment. Programs provide periodic and ongoing research based assessment of children's learning and development that:

- (1) Documents each child's interests, needs and progress to help plan instruction, relying mostly on demonstrated performance of authentic activities.
- (2) Includes: children's work samples, observations, anecdotal notes, checklists and inventories, parent conference notes, photographs, video, health screening reports and referral records for support services.
- (3) Communicates with families regularly to ensure connection between home and school, including providing interpreters and translators, as needed.
- (4) Aligns with the Early Learning and Development Standards and are used to inform curriculum and instruction.
- (5) Is informed by family culture, experiences, children's abilities and disabilities, and home language.
- (6) Is used in settings familiar to the children.
- (7) Informs activities to support planning for individual children.

4.04 Child Development Reporting. Parents shall have the opportunity to meet individually with their child's teacher about their child's development at least twice during each school year using the research based assessment (providing interpreters and translators as needed).

## **Section 5. INSTRUCTIONAL TIME**

5.01 School Year. A school administrative unit shall make provision for the maintenance of all its schools for at least 180 school days. At least 175 school days shall be used for

instruction. In meeting the requirement of a 180-day school year, no more than 5 days may be used for in-service education for teachers, administrative meetings, parent-teacher conferences, records' days and similar activities.

5.02 Public Preschool Instructional Time. Instructional time for public preschool program shall be a minimum of 10 hours per week for 35 weeks and shall not include rest time. Public preschool programs shall schedule within the 175 school days that the school administrative unit has designated as instructional time, but does not have to use all days, allowing flexibility as to numbers of days per week. Extended public preschool program Day: A school administrative unit is encouraged to schedule public preschool for more than 10 hours per week to improve child outcomes and to reduce the risk of later school failure.

## **Section 6. SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT ORGANIZATION AND SCHOOL SIZE**

### **6.01 Personnel Ratios**

#### **A. Classroom student-teacher ratios**

- (1) Maximum adult to child ratio is 1 adult to 8 children
- (2) Ratios include, at a minimum, one teacher holding appropriate teacher certification from the Maine Department of Education (as per current statute) and a support staff with a minimum of an Educational Technician Authorization II from the Maine DOE. These ratios are maintained during both indoor and outdoor activities and during mealtimes.

## **Section 7. QUALITY OF EDUCATION PERSONNEL**

### **7.01 Specific Requirements**

- A. Teacher degree requirement: Teachers must hold (as per current statute) the required Maine DOE Early Childhood 081 (B-5) endorsement.
- B. Assistant teacher requirements: An assistant teacher must hold (as per current statute), at a minimum, an Educational Technician II Authorization from the Maine DOE who obtains a Level 4 status on the Maine Roads to Quality Registry within 3 years.
- C. All preschool staff must join the Maine Roads to Quality Registry.

## **Section 8. NUTRITION**

8.01 General Requirements. The program shall serve well-balanced meals and/or snack that follow the U.S. Department of Agriculture guidelines in all programs.

- 8.02 Specific Requirements.
- A. The program shall serve at least one meal and/or snacks at regularly established times. Meals and snacks are not more than three hours apart.
  - B. Each child is given sufficient time at mealtimes and snacks to eat at a reasonable, leisurely rate.
  - C. Classroom ratios will be maintained during mealtimes.
  - D. Meals and or snacks are culturally responsive to participating families.
  - E. The meal and snack time offers opportunities for interactions between adults and children.

## **Section 9. SCHOOL FACILITIES**

9.01 Indoor: Minimum requirement shall be 35 square feet per child. Areas not to be calculated as usable space include but are not limited to: hallways, lockers, cubbies, door swings, closets, supply cabinets, corridors, bathrooms, teacher spaces, food preparation areas and offices.

- A. All classroom spaces must be accessible to all children, including children with disabilities.
- B. There shall be a water source in the classroom for hand washing, and drinking water is readily available to children throughout the day.
- C. The indoor environment shall be designed so staff can supervise children by sight and sound at all times. Supervision for short intervals by sound is permissible, as long as teachers check frequently on children who are out of sight (e.g., independent toileting).
- D. Toilets, accessible for use by all participating children, must be within 40 feet of the indoor areas that children use. It is preferable to have them within the classroom.
- E. Electrical outlets in public preschool classrooms shall be protected by safety caps, plugs or other means.
- F. Natural light must be present in any classroom used for four-year-old program activities.
- G. Easily accessible and individual space shall be made available for children's outside clothing and personal possessions.

9.02 Outdoor: The program must have access to an outdoor play area with at least 75 square feet of usable space per child and with equipment of a size suitable to the age and needs of four-year-old children as dictated by the National Safety Standards for playgrounds in public schools.

- A. The outdoor play area must be protected by fences or natural barriers.
- B. Surfaces used under climbers, swings and at the bottom of slides are energy-absorbing materials such as mulch, sand or bark. Concrete or asphalt shall not be used.
- C. Outdoor play areas provide both shade and sun.
- D. There are established protocols for emergencies.
- E. The playground areas and equipment are accessible to all children.
- F. Preschool classrooms schedule outdoor time by themselves, with other preschool classrooms, or with kindergarten children.

## **Section 10. FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

10.01 Programs identify how they will engage in a process of partnership-building with families to establish mutual trust and to identify child strengths, goals, and necessary services and supports.

10.02 Programs have written policies and procedures that demonstrate intentional practices designed to foster strong reciprocal relationships with families, including, but not limited to: application information, family orientation, parent conferences, parent education-specifically around literacy and numeracy, newsletters, PTA participation, home visits, family events, program evaluations, and these policies and procedures are to be translated in a language understandable to parents/guardians.

## **Section 11. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Programs establish relationships with community-based learning resources and agencies, such as libraries, arts education programs, and family literacy programs.

## **Section 12. COORDINATED PUBLIC PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS**

12.01 Any school administrative unit that wishes to develop an early childhood program for children 4 years of age must submit a public preschool program implementation plan for children 4 years of age for submission to and approval by the department. Evaluation of the proposal must include consideration of at least the following factors:

- A. Demonstrated coordination with other early childhood programs in the community to maximize resources;
- B. Consideration of the extended child care needs of working parents; and

C. Provision of public notice regarding the proposal to the community being served, including the extent to which public notice has been disseminated broadly to other early childhood programs in the community. [20-A MRSA §4502(9)]

D. Demonstrated coordination with Child Development Services.

12.02 Schools offering a public preschool program in partnership with a community agency must submit a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), signed by all involved parties, on a yearly basis. The elements of the MOU shall, at a minimum, include:

- A. Roles and responsibilities of each of the partners;
- B. A budget, including the amount of resources that each partner will provide for the implementation of the plan;
- C. Describe the organizational capacity and the existing infrastructure of the SAU and the partners to deliver a high quality program;
- D. The methods and processes for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational);
- E. How the partners will coordinate, but not supplant, the delivery of the public preschool program with existing services for preschool –aged children including, if applicable, programs and services supported through Title I of ESEA, the Head Start Act, and Child Care Development Block Grant;
- F. How the partners will coordinate with Child Development Services (under Part B, Section 619 of IDEA) regional site to ensure access for CDS for conducting its statutory obligations under IDEA and Maine law/regulations; and
- G. A description of the responsibilities and process of sharing child records that meets Section 16 of this chapter.

12.03 Beginning with 2015-16 school year the Commissioner may provide start-up funding as set forth in 20-A MRSA §4271 to school administrative units to implement or expand public preschool programs for children 4 years of age as required by 20-A MRSA §4502(9).

## **Section 13 TRANSITION**

13.01 Enrollment transition into the public preschool program. Public preschool programs will have a process for enrollment transition from home and or other early childhood programs. The process will involve parents/legal guardians, including parental consent for transition of the pertinent educational records.

13.02 Public preschool to kindergarten transition. Public preschool program will have a process to provide transition between four-year-old programs and the kindergarten program. This includes links, by the elementary school, with other area Head Start and early childhood programs serving young children who will be entering kindergarten. The process will involve parents/legal guardians, including parental consent for transition of pertinent educational records.

## **Section 14 TRANSPORTATION**

14.01 If a school transports public preschool children, it is recommended that the standard of care offered to public preschool students meet the standard of care as defined by “Guideline for the Safe Transportation of Preschool Age Children in School Buses,” which is provided by the National Highway Transportation Safety Agency, as follows:

- A. Children should be in a child safety restraint system appropriate for the age, weight and height of the student.
- B. There should be at least one aide on board the bus to assist with loading, unloading, correct securement and behavior/emotional support.
- C. There will be training, communication and operational policy items for drivers, aides, parents, students and routes.

NOTE: Pursuant to 20-A MRSA §5401(3-A) school administrative units are not required to provide transportation for public preschool children.

## **Section 15. RECORDS AND REPORTS**

If the public preschool program operates within the school administrative unit (SAU), the SAU addresses these provisions within the basic school approval. If the public preschool program operates in an external facility and/or under a contract with the SAU, the contract between the SAU and the contractor must address the provisions of this section.

15.01 Student Records. Each school board shall adopt a policy in accordance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) that establishes the procedure for changing a student record by adding or removing items, and for controlling access to records.

- A. Each school administrative unit shall maintain accurate and up-to-date education records on each enrolled student. Education records shall be defined as in FERPA and shall include academic records, disciplinary records, and other information including directory information.

- (1) Academic records include information relating to the student's educational performance including student performance on the local assessment system and on other assessments as may be required for an individual student.
  - (2) Disciplinary records include, but are not limited to, a record of suspensions and expulsions, and other violations of the Student Code of Conduct adopted by the school board.
- B. Records shall be entrusted to designated personnel who shall be knowledgeable about the confidentiality provisions applicable to the records. All records shall be safeguarded from unauthorized access. Either student records will be kept in fireproof storage at the school or a duplicate set will be kept off site.
- C. Upon request of the parent or school officials, a student's education records, including special education records, shall be forwarded to any school in which the student is enrolled or is intending to enroll. The school administrative unit shall notify parents that all records, including disciplinary records, must be sent to a school administrative unit to which a student applies for transfer.
- D. Parental Access Rights: Confidentiality. Each school administrative unit shall adopt a policy describing the access rights of parents, students, and educational personnel to student records and the applicable confidentiality rights of parents and students. Student records shall be made available to the parents, or to the student of majority age, for inspection and copying. A copy of the policy shall be posted in each school and parents shall be notified annually of the policy. The school administrative unit shall maintain records in accordance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

## **Section 16. PUBLIC PRESCHOOL APPROVAL**

### **16.01 Approval Procedures**

- A. A school administrative unit shall obtain approval from the Commissioner prior to opening a new public preschool program. All new public preschool programs implemented in the 2015-16 school year must be approved prior to opening. By July 1, 2017 all public preschool programs implemented before 2015-16 must comply with programs standards contained in this rule.

B. A school administrative unit seeking approval status for any public preschool program shall make this intention known to the Commissioner in writing at least nine months prior to the school year. School units that have received school construction approval from the State Board of Education shall be deemed to have met this notice requirement.

C. An Implementation Plan for initial approval status shall be made on forms provided by the Commissioner and available on the Maine Department of Education Public Preschool website. The superintendent of the school administrative unit is responsible for supplying all information necessary for a determination that the school is entitled to approval. The implementation plan application form must be signed by the superintendent of the school administrative unit in which the school is located, certifying that the form contains information that is accurate at the time of reporting. Prior to receiving approval from the Commissioner, the facility shall be approved for safety by the State Fire Marshal or local municipal fire department official, and certified as sanitary by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

D. Two months prior to the initial opening the applicant school must arrange for an on-site inspection by a representative of the Commissioner.

E. Approval status shall be awarded when the Commissioner determines that the school is likely to comply with all approval standards.

F. Upon obtaining approval by the Commissioner, the school administrative unit shall be entitled to operate the public preschool program and to receive state subsidy aid to which it is otherwise entitled.

G. Six weeks after student occupancy, representatives of the Commissioner shall visit the public preschool program while it is in session to determine if all applicable school approval standards are being met. If school approval standards are not being met, approval status shall continue until compliance is demonstrated or until the end of the school year, whichever is the earlier date.

## 16.02 Provisional Approval

A. Any public preschool program that is determined by the Commissioner not to comply with applicable school approval standards shall be placed on provisional approval.

Failure to submit School Approval Reports, other than financial reports, in a timely manner, in accordance with Section 15.05 of this rule, shall result in provisional approval

status. Failure to submit financial reports in a timely manner shall result in a withholding of state subsidy in accordance with Section 16.03.B.

B. When placing a school on provisional approval status the Commissioner shall take the following action:

- (1) The Commissioner shall notify, in writing, the superintendent responsible for any public preschool programs placed on provisional approval status and shall include a statement of the reasons for provisional approval status.
- (2) Representatives of the Commissioner shall meet with the superintendent and shall determine a reasonable deadline for achieving compliance with school approval standards.
- (3) A school or school administrative unit on provisional approval status shall be required to file with the Commissioner an acceptable written plan of corrective action.
- (4) Failure to file a required plan of corrective action shall result in enforcement action by the Commissioner, pursuant to Section 16.03 of this rule.

C. The Commissioner shall restore full approval status upon the Commissioner's determination of compliance with school approval standards.

### 16.03 Enforcement Measures

#### A. Notice of Failure to Comply

The Commissioner shall give written notice of pending enforcement action to the superintendent of any school or school administrative unit that fails to comply with school approval standards by the established deadlines in statute or in the plan of corrective action established in Section 16.02.B.(3). Such notice shall include a statement of the laws and regulations with which the school or school administrative unit fails to comply. School administrative units failing to comply with school approval standards shall be given notice and the opportunity for a hearing.

#### B. Penalties

The Commissioner may impose the following penalties on school administrative units until compliance is achieved:

- (1) Withhold state subsidy and other state funds from school administrative unit;

- (2) Refer the matter to the Attorney General, who may seek injunctive relief to enjoin activities not in compliance with the governing statute or seek any other remedy authorized by law; or
- (3) Employ other penalties authorized in statute or authorized or required by federal law.

## **Section 17. PRESCHOOL PROGRAM MONITORING**

17.01 Public preschool programs, including partnerships, will complete the electronic Public Preschool Program Annual Report online and submit to the Maine Department of Education no later than 30 days after the end of the school year.

17.02 Each public preschool program, including partnerships, will receive a site visit by the Department no less than once every three years.

17.03 The review will utilize observational instruments, implemented by qualified individuals with demonstrated reliability, that assess:

- A. Compliance with the program standards,
- B. Classroom quality, and
- C. Multiple dimensions of teacher-child interactions that are linked to positive child development and later achievement.

17.04 The results of this classroom evaluation will be shared with the teacher and principal and a plan for training and technical assistance will be developed.

## **STATUTORY AUTHORITY: 20-A MRSA §4271(4)**

## **EFFECTIVE DATE:**