



Frequently Asked Questions: Early Learning Program Guidance for Charter Schools and Authorizers

Question 1: What is the range of programs that a charter school may provide? May a charter provide a prekindergarten program or programs such as school-age child care or child care for preschool children?

Answer 1: A charter school's primary focus must be K-12 instruction; however, a charter school may offer a prekindergarten instruction program, provide Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening, and non-instructional child care programs. Section 124D.10, Subdivision 8(f) of Minnesota Statutes, states:

"The primary focus of a charter school must be to provide a comprehensive program of instruction for at least one grade or age group from five through 18 years of age. Instruction may be provided to people younger than five years and older than 18 years of age."

Provided that the school's primary focus is elementary and/or secondary instruction, a charter school may provide instruction to children younger or older than school-age, and provide non-instructional child care programs for infants, toddlers, preschoolers and school-age children. However, all programs conducted by the charter school must be included in the written contract between the charter school board of directors and the charter school authorizer.

Additionally, all early learning instructional programs provided by a charter school must be officially recognized by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) through a new charter school affidavit or a supplemental affidavit approved by the commissioner of education.

An existing charter school's prekindergarten program or other preschool instructional program will be officially recognized by MDE only after the commissioner of education approves an authorizer's supplemental affidavit (Minn. Stat. § 124D.10, Subd. 4(j)) that clearly describes the charter school's prekindergarten and/or preschool instructional program(s).

A new charter school's prekindergarten program or other preschool instructional program will be officially recognized by MDE only after the commissioner of education approves an authorizer's new charter school affidavit (Minn. Stat. § 124D.10, Subd. 4(b)) that

clearly describes the charter school's prekindergarten and/or preschool instructional program(s).

If a charter school does not operate a prekindergarten program or other preschool instructional program but intends to offer Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening Program, the charter school must notify MDE, Division of Early Learning Services at Mde.els@state.mn.us.

Official MDE recognition is not required for non-instructional child care programs for infant, toddler, and preschool-age children or school-age child care programs for elementary students; however, those programs **must** be reflected in an authorizer's contract with the charter school's board of directors to ensure appropriate oversight if provided. Also, the authorizer is responsible for ensuring that the charter school board has demonstrated it will generate sufficient revenue from fees and other private sources to support any non-instructional child care or school-age care programs.

Question 2: What is the difference between an "instructional" and a "non-instructional" preschool or prekindergarten program?

Answer 2: "Prekindergarten instruction" means a program provided by a school district or charter school designed to prepare four-year-old children for entry into kindergarten the subsequent year. The prekindergarten instruction program must include curriculum and intentional instructional practice aligned with:

- 1. Minnesota's early learning standards that are based on early childhood research and professional practice and the kindergarten standards pursuant to section 120B.021, and is focused on cognitive, social and emotional development, physical skills and early literacy.
- 2. Provide an assessment of child's progress in two or more cognitive areas and social and emotional development.
- 3. Have teachers knowledgeable in early childhood curriculum content, assessment, and instruction.
- 4. Coordinate kindergarten transition with parents and kindergarten teachers.

"Preschool instruction" means a program provided by a school district or charter school designed to provide early childhood education and preparation for transition to kindergarten for three- to five-year-old children. The preschool instruction program must:

1. Include curriculum and intentional instructional practice aligned with Minnesota's early learning standards that are based on early childhood research and professional practice and the kindergarten standards pursuant to section

- 120B.021, and is focused on cognitive, social and emotional development, physical skills and early literacy.
- 2. Provide an assessment of child's progress in two or more cognitive areas and social and emotional development.
- 3. Have teachers knowledgeable in early childhood curriculum content, assessment, and instruction.

Question 3: Can a charter school operate a prekindergarten program or other preschool instructional program without MDE's official recognition?

Answer 3: As of July 1, 2014, all prekindergarten or other preschool instructional programs must be officially recognized by MDE.

Question 4: Are charter school eligible to receive state aid for early childhood programs?

Answer 4: Charter schools are not eligible to receive any source of revenue that requires a levy, which includes funding for the Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) and Community Education programs authorized by Minnesota Statutes, sections 124D.13 and 124D.19, respectively. Although it does not require a levy, the School Readiness aid program under Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.15 does not include charter schools because program aid is allocated among residential school districts by population. However, school districts may use School Readiness aid to "...contract with a charter school or community-based organization to provide eligible children developmentally appropriate services that meet the program requirements..." (Minn. Stat. § 124D.15, Subd. 5).

If a charter school has notified MDE that it intends to provide Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening Program (Screening), the charter school is eligible to receive state Screening aid for the children it screens according to the requirements of statute and rule, and for whom the charter school reports Screening (Grade Level PS) student records on the Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS). Additional requirements also apply (see Question 10).

The time that children participate in a school district's or a charter school's prekindergarten program, preschool, child care, or school-age care program for elementary students is not reported on MARSS **and does not generate state education aid**. However, children ages birth through five who are evaluated for and/or are receiving early childhood special education services **are** reported on MARSS, Grade Level EC, and generate state aid like regular K-12 students (see MARSS Procedure 6, "Reporting for Early Childhood and Kindergarten Disabled Students").

Question 5: May a charter school charge fees for prekindergarten instruction programs and for non-instructional child care programs outside the school's K-12 instructional program?

Answer 5: The Public School Fee Law, which charter schools must follow (see Minn. Stat. § 124D.10, Subd. 8(i)) does not prohibit school districts from charging fees for prekindergarten classes, parent education classes, child care programs for preschoolers or school-age child care programs. Section 123B.36, subdivision 6, of the Fee Law states that a board "...may waive any deposit or fee if any pupil or the pupil's parent or guardian is unable to pay for it."

A charter school may charge fees for prekindergarten instructional programs, as well as for child care programs which are outside of the school's K-12 instructional program but which are included in the written charter contract with the authorizer (see Question 1). The exception to this is the Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening Program (Screening). A charter school that provides Screening may **not** charge families a registration or participation fee for the required Screening components.

The charter school board and its authorizer must ensure that the school's primary purpose of providing a free, public program of elementary and/or secondary instruction is not put at risk by the operation of a prekindergarten instructional program or non-instructional child care programs whose participants do not generate state and/or federal education aid.

Question 6: May charter schools use state general education aid or federal Charter School Program (CSP) grant funds, in addition to fees, to provide prekindergarten instruction programs?

Answer 6: School districts and charter schools receive no state education aid for serving prekindergarten children with the exception of children with disabilities age birth to five. However, Minnesota Statutes, section 126C.126 as amended by Laws 2012, chapter 239, Article 1, section 25, allows schools to reallocate general education revenue generated by elementary and secondary pupils to pay for prekindergarten and extended-day kindergarten programs.

Any general education revenue the school board reallocates for prekindergarten must be included in the board-approved budget and may only be expended for a prekindergarten program, which statutes define as any program "...designed for pupils younger than five years of age on September 1 of the calendar year in which the school year commences that prepares pupils to enter kindergarten the following school year..." (Minn. Stat. § 120A.05, Subd. 10(a)).

All revenue and expenditure activity for prekindergarten programs, including General Education revenue the board has reallocated for prekindergarten programs, must be recorded in the Community Service Fund (Fund 04), and close to restricted fund balance, Balance Sheet Account 464 (see Question 8).

Please note: As of July 1, 2014, **only** charter schools with early learning instructional programs officially recognized by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) will be able to reallocate General Education revenue to those prekindergarten instructional programs.

Federal Charter School Program (CSP) grant funds may only be used to support a free, public, non-sectarian program of elementary or secondary education or both, and may not be used to support a prekindergarten program or any other program that requires payment of tuition and/or fees. Charter schools must take care to strictly segregate federal CSP grant activity from any prekindergarten program or other tuition/fee-based program activity (See Question 7).

Question 7: What specific steps must the charter school board take to ensure it meets the requirement that federal Charter School Program (CSP) grant funds are not used for prekindergarten and/or non-instructional child care programs accounted for in the Community Service Fund (Fund 04) that are funded by tuition and participant fees?

Answer 7: Because federal CSP grant funds may only be used to support a free, public, non-sectarian program of elementary or secondary education or both, charter schools must take care to strictly segregate federal CSP grant activity from any prekindergarten instruction program or other tuition/fee-based instructional or non-instructional child care program activity included in the written contract with the authorizer.

The board must ensure all federal CSP grant funds are accounted for in the General Fund (Fund 01). All CSP grant revenue and expenditures must be reported in Fund 01, with Finance Code 859.

Question 8: How does a charter school board record financial activity for programs included in its written contract with the authorizer that are beyond the school's K-12 instructional program?

Answer 8: Minnesota Statues, section 124D.10, Subdivision 8(j), requires charter schools to comply with the same financial reporting requirements as school districts, including the Uniform Financial Accounting and Reporting Standards (UFARS). See the UFARS Manual. (http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/SchSup/SchFin/FinMgmt/UFARS/).

All revenue and expenditure activity related to programs other than the free public program of K-12 instruction must close to the restricted fund balance, Balance Sheet Account Code 464, of the Community Service Fund (Fund 04). All activity reported in Fund 04 must be for programs included in the charter school's written contract with the authorizer. Examples include: child care programs for infants, toddlers and preschoolers; school-age child care programs; preschool programs; Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening; and prekindergarten instruction programs. Detailed information on UFARS coding for revenues and expenditures for these programs is found in the UFARS Revenue and Expenditure Requirements table.

Early Childhood Screening

Question 9: Is a charter school required to have proof that a child has received an Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening (Screening) before enrolling the child in kindergarten?

Answer 9: Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.10, Subdivision 7, states: "A charter school is exempt from all statutes and rules applicable to a school, school board, or school district unless a statute or rule is made specifically applicable to a charter school or is included in this section." The Screening Program statutes (Minn. Stat. §121A.16-19) are not included in section 124D.10, nor have they been made specifically applicable to a charter school; therefore, charter schools are exempt from the requirement in Minnesota Statutes, section 121A.17 that a child receive Screening before enrollment in a public school.

However, it is good practice for all children, wherever they attend school, to receive Screening before entering kindergarten – preferably between the ages of three and four – so that problems that may interfere with a child's ability to learn can be identified and referred for education evaluation or health assessment as early as possible.

Charter school boards may require that entering kindergarten students participate in a Screening program, even if the charter school does not provide a Screening program. To meet this requirement, charter schools can recommend the following options for their incoming students:

- 1. Participate in a Screening program provided by a resident or non-resident school district and provide documentation of the Screening summary results to the charter school.
- 2. Provide documentation of a comparable health and developmental screening provided by a Head Start program, Child and Teen Checkups, or through a health care provider.
- 3. Have parents provide a signed and dated statement that they are a conscientious objector to the Screening program for their child.

Question 10: Are charter schools allowed to provide Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening (Screening) and receive state Screening aid?

Answer 10: Yes. Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.11, Subdivision 6, states that a charter school "is eligible to receive other aids, grants, and revenue according to chapters 120A to 129C, as though it were a district," unless a levy is required to obtain the money. Screening is not a levy program. To receive Screening aid, the charter school must provide Screening according to the requirements and standards of Minnesota Statutes, section 121A.17, and Minnesota Rules 3530.3000-.4310 (See Minn. Stat. §121A.19).

The cost-effectiveness of providing an Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening Program by a charter school should be carefully considered, as the state aid may not cover the full cost of the screening program. Screening programs are required to include developmental assessments, hearing and vision screening or referral, immunization review and referral, height and weight, and other components.

Question 11: How do charter schools that provide Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening (Screening) receive state aid?

Answer 11: To receive state Screening aid, a charter school must report a Screening (Grade Level PS) student record on the Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS) for each child it screens. The charter school must also submit the annual online Early Childhood Screening Annual Report data through the Early Learning Services Data System submission (ED-01611-xx), due July 15.

State aid for Screening is calculated based upon MARSS Grade Level PS student record data. The amount of state Screening aid is based upon the child's age at the time of Screening (See Minn. Stat. §121A.19). No state aid is paid for any Screening that occurs more than 30 calendar days after a student's first day of kindergarten attendance, or if the school screens an enrolled kindergartener who has previously received Screening prior to kindergarten entry.

Question 12: Are all charter schools required to report student records for Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening on the Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS)?

Answer 12: Unless a charter school provides Screening, it is not required to report MARSS PS student records.

Question 13: How does a charter school that provides Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening (Screening) report student records on the Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS)?

Answer 13: A Registration Form for Early Childhood Screening (ED-02390-xx) must be completed for every child the charter school screens. The registration form collects the data required to create a Screening (Grade Level PS) student record on MARSS. Further requirements to receive state Screening aid include the completion of a Screening summary form, consent to screen form, and consent to release individual information to the charter school. All of these forms become part of the student's permanent school record and are considered private data. (See MARSS Procedure 26, Reporting for Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening.)

In order to ensure that entering kindergarten students are assigned a unique MARSS student identification number, all charter schools must search the Student Identification Database to check whether the student has previously been assigned a student ID Number

at Screening or when evaluated for early childhood special education or early intervention services.

Kindergarten Programs

Question 14: How can a charter school finance a free full-day, every day kindergarten instruction program?

Answer 14: State education funding formulas weight kindergarten enrollment (Average Daily Membership) at 0.612 pupil units. However, this does not prohibit a charter school or school district from offering a free, full day of kindergarten instruction. A charter school may pay for the costs of a free full-day, every day kindergarten program by reallocating the general education revenue generated by other pupils (see Minn. Stat. § 126C.126). School sites that generate compensatory revenue may use it to provide full-day, every day kindergarten (see Minn. Stat. § 126C.15, Subd. 1(9)). Federal Title I funds are another revenue source that is available for this purpose.

Question 15: Can charter schools charge tuition or fees to finance a full-day, every day kindergarten instruction program?

Answer 15: Charter schools are public schools and may NOT charge tuition or fees to finance a full-day, every day kindergarten instructional program. Charter schools, like school districts, must comply with the Minnesota Public School Fee Law, which states: "It is the policy of the state of Minnesota that public school education shall be free...." (Minn. Stat. § 123B.35; see also §123B.36-38). A charter school or school district that charges tuition for a full day of continuous kindergarten instruction provided by a licensed kindergarten teacher is not operating in concert with state policy.

Question 16: What options are available to charter schools for providing full-day, every day programs for kindergarteners?

Answer 16: A charter school may not charge tuition to provide a full-day, every day kindergarten instruction program. However, it may provide an optional, fee-based, school-age care program exclusively for kindergarten pupils, which is coordinated with the school's free, half-day kindergarten instructional program. MDE does not consider such coordinated programs to be full-day kindergarten. To avoid confusion, a district should not refer to its optional, fee-based school-age care extended-day kindergarten program as "all-day, everyday kindergarten."

Kindergarten students who participate in a full-day coordinated program—attending kindergarten for one half of the school day and participating in an optional, fee-based school-age care program for kindergarteners during the other half of the school day—are reported on the Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS) under kindergarten schedule G. The complete array of kindergarten schedules is found in the

definition of "Kindergarten Schedule" in the MARSS Instruction Manual, Data Elements – Definitions, posted on the MDE website.

Question 17: May a child younger than five-years-old enroll in a charter school kindergarten program?

Answer 17: Minnesota Statutes require that a child must be five years of age on or before September 1 to be admitted to a public school kindergarten program (See Minn. Stat. § 120A.20, Subd. 1(b)). Minnesota law allows for the admission of younger children if the board has adopted a formal policy for early entrance. The charter school board must develop a formal policy, including the assessments used to determine how children younger than five qualify for kindergarten entrance.

Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.05, Subdivision 10(a) defines kindergarten as "a program designed for pupils five years of age on September 1 of the calendar year in which the school year commences that prepares pupils to enter first grade the following school year. A program designed for pupils younger than five years of age on September 1 of the calendar year in which the school year commences that prepares pupils to enter kindergarten the following school year is a prekindergarten program."

Question 18: Are children in a charter school's officially recognized prekindergarten program or child care for preschoolers assured enrollment in the school's kindergarten program?

Answer 18: No. Entrance into the charter school's officially recognized prekindergarten program does not guarantee access into the charter school's kindergarten program nor may preference be granted. Students enrolled in a charter school's officially recognized prekindergarten program must submit the same application for kindergarten as required of all other interested students. The charter school must conduct a lottery if more applications are received by the application deadline than the number of kindergarten slots available.

Authorizing Prekindergarten, Child Care and School-age Care Programs

Question 19: What specific actions must the charter school board take if it has been operating a prekindergarten program that has not been officially recognized by MDE?

Answer 19: To continue an existing or start a new prekindergarten instructional program, MDE must officially recognize the school's program and the school's authorizer must include the prekindergarten instructional program in the charter contract by July 1, 2014. This recognition process addresses instruction for children younger than five years of age pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.10, Subdivision 8(f).

A charter school that wants to offer a prekindergarten or preschool instructional program that serves children between three years of age to kindergarten entry and gain official recognition by the department as providing instruction for children younger than five years of age pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.10, Subdivision 8(f), must present the school's plans to address the following elements:

- (1) Assess each child's cognitive skills with a comprehensive child assessment instrument when the child enters and again before the child leaves the program, to inform program planning and promote kindergarten readiness.
- (2) Provide intentional instructional practice aligned with the state early childhood learning standards and kindergarten standards and based on early childhood research and professional practice that is focused on children's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical skills and development and prepares children for the transition to kindergarten, including early literacy skills.
- (3) Coordinate appropriate kindergarten transition with parents and kindergarten teachers.
- (4) Coordinate with relevant community-based services.
- (5) Ensure staff-child ratios of one-to-ten and maximum group size of 20 children with the first staff required to be a licensed early childhood teacher.
- (6) Have teachers knowledgeable in early childhood curriculum content, assessment, and instruction.
- (7) Ensure participating children have completed health and developmental screening within 90 days of program enrollment under Minnesota Statutes section 121A.16-19.

Existing Charter Schools:

- 1. A charter school's authorizer must submit a supplemental affidavit to MDE (Minn. Stat. § 124D.10, Subd. 4(j)) that clearly describes the charter school's prekindergarten and/or preschool instructional program. This applies to charter schools currently operating programs they wish to be officially recognized as well as charter schools wishing to add a new officially recognized program. The supplemental affidavit instructions are located on the Charter Schools page of MDE's website (http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/SchSup/SchFin/CharterSch/).
- 2. MDE will review the supplemental affidavit within 30 business days of receipt.
- 3. If the supplemental affidavit is approved, the authorizer will amend the charter contract and submit it to MDE no later than 10 business days after execution.
- 4. If MDE identifies deficiencies in the supplemental affidavit, the authorizer has 20 business days to address the deficiencies.
- 5. If the deficiency response is approved, the authorizer will amend the charter contract and submit it to MDE no later than 10 business days after execution.
- 6. If the deficiency response is not approved, the disapproval is final and the charter school may not operate the prekindergarten and/or preschool instructional program.

New Charter Schools with Approved Affidavits:

- 1. Developing and newly operational charter schools (in the first three years of operation) with approved affidavits that wish to implement or add a prekindergarten and/or preschool instructional program(s) will use the new charter school affidavit process. The school's authorizer must submit a **revised** new charter school affidavit to MDE (Minn. Stat. § 124D.10, Subd. 4(b)) that clearly describes the charter school's prekindergarten and/or preschool instructional program. The new charter school affidavit instructions are located on the Charter Schools page of MDE's website.
- 2. MDE will review the affidavit and reply within 60 business days of receipt.
- 3. If the affidavit is approved, the authorizer will amend the charter contract and submit it to MDE no later than 10 business days after execution.
- 4. If MDE identifies deficiencies in the affidavit, the authorizer has 20 business days to address the deficiencies.
- 5. If the deficiency response is approved, the authorizer will amend the charter contract and submit it to MDE no later than 10 business days after execution.
- 6. If the deficiency response is not approved, the disapproval is final and the charter school may not operate a prekindergarten and/or preschool instructional programs.

Please note: The original approved affidavit will remain in effect even if the charter school's prekindergarten and/or preschool instructional program is not officially recognized.

Developing Charter Schools without an Approved Affidavit:

- 1. Developing charter schools without an approved affidavit that wish to implement a prekindergarten and/or preschool instructional program(s) with the new charter school will include such plans in the new charter school affidavit. The school's authorizer must submit a new charter school affidavit to MDE (Minn. Stat. § 124D.10, Subd. 4(b)) that clearly describes the charter school's prekindergarten and/or preschool instructional program. The new charter school affidavit instructions are located on the Charter Schools page of MDE's website.
- 2. MDE will review the affidavit and reply within 60 business days of receipt.
- 3. If the affidavit is approved, the authorizer will amend the charter contract and submit it to MDE no later than 10 business days after execution.
- 4. If MDE identifies deficiencies in the affidavit, the authorizer has 20 business days to address the deficiencies.
- 5. If the deficiency response is approved, the authorizer will amend the charter contract and submit it to MDE no later than 10 business days after execution.
- 6. If the deficiency response is not approved, the disapproval is final and the charter school may not operate a prekindergarten and/or preschool instructional program.

Question 20: What action must the charter school take if it has been providing Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening (Screening), but the written contract with the authorizer does not reflect the provision of screening program?

Answer 20: Beginning July 1, 2014, the written contract with the authorizer must include the provision of the Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening program to be provided by the charter school. The charter school must also notify the Division of Early Learning Services at mde.els@state.mn.us at MDE that they will be providing a Screening program.

Question 21: What actions must the charter school board take if the written contract with the authorizer does not include all non-instructional child care programs the board has been operating such as child care for preschool children and school-age child care?

Answer 21: To continue an existing child care or school-age program, the charter school board must amend the contract with authorizer, as appropriate. All programs operated by the charter school must be reflected in the charter contract by July 1, 2014.

Lease Aid

Question 22: Can a charter school receive lease aid for facility space used for noninstructional programs including childcare, and preschool and prekindergarten programs not officially recognized by MDE?

Answer 22: No. Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.11, Subdivision 4 states, "When a charter school finds it economically advantageous to rent or lease a building or land for any **instructional** purposes and it determines that total operating capital revenue under section 126C.10, Subdivision 13, is insufficient for this purpose, it may apply to the commissioner for building lease aid for this purpose."

Lease costs and operations/maintenance costs must be prorated between instructional space and time and non-instructional space and time, including a pro-rata share of common areas.

Question 23: Can a charter school receive lease aid for facility space used for preschool or prekindergarten instructional programs that are recognized by MDE?

Answer 23: In order to qualify for lease aid for facility space used for preschool or prekindergarten programs, the school must:

- 1) Have the preschool or prekindergarten instructional program recognized by MDE via a new charter school affidavit or a supplemental affidavit for an existing charter school.
- 2) Include the preschool or prekindergarten instructional program in the authorizer contract.

- 3) Meet all federal, state and local facility requirements applicable to public school districts.
- 4) Include detail of the space used for preschool or prekindergarten instructional programs or non-instructional activities on the school's building schematic in the lease aid application beginning FY 2014.

Question 24: Can a charter school receive lease aid for facility space used for instructional preschool or prekindergarten programs recognized by MDE if a fee is also charged to participants?

Answer 24: Beginning with Fiscal Year 2014 lease aid applications, charter schools will need to provide assurances that the fee charged to participants does not include any allocation of facilities lease costs.

Question 25: Does the facility require additional building code certifications for preschool or prekindergarten instructional programs recognized by MDE?

Answer 25: No, instructional programs are covered by the Educational (Occupancy E) classification.

Question 26: Does the facility require additional building code certifications for non-instructional space used for preschool or prekindergarten programs including childcare?

Answer 26: Non-instructional programs are covered by the Educational (Occupancy E) classification if between 5 and 100 children are participating and the rooms are located on the level of exit discharge and each of the rooms also has an exit door directly to the exterior.

Non-instructional programs not meeting these criteria will require a certificate of occupancy with an I-4 classification.

Question 27: How does a charter school account for and report facility lease costs and revenues for preschool or prekindergarten programs?

Answer 27: Lease costs and operations/maintenance costs must be allocated between K-12 programs and instructional preschool and prekindergarten programs recognized by MDE on a pro-rata space and time basis.

Beginning in Fiscal Year 2014, costs for the preschool and prekindergarten instructional programs must be recorded in the Community Services fund (Fund 4) using a finance code of 348 and the appropriate object codes. Also, beginning in Fiscal Year 2014, the related lease aid revenue must be recorded in the Community Services fund (Fund 4) using a finance code of 348 and source code 211.

Title 1 and Early Learning Programs

Question 28: What is a Title I "preschool program"?

Answer 28: A Title I preschool program is a preschool program for which an LEA or school uses Title I funds, in whole or in part, to improve cognitive, health, and social-emotional outcomes for eligible children below the grade at which an LEA provides a free public elementary education (ESEA section 1115(b)(1)(A)(ii); 34 C.F.R. § 77.1). Such a program is designed to prepare eligible children with the prerequisite skills and dispositions for learning that will enable them to benefit from later school experiences.

Question 29: Will the LEA or Charter School's Title I allocation increase accordingly with additional students being served in prekindergarten instruction programs?

Answer 29: No. Title I funds are generated using the number of students ages 5 - 17 counted in the most current census data, approved by the Secretary of Education.

Question 30: May any Title I LEA or school use Title I funds to operate a preschool program?

Answer 30: Yes. Any Title I LEA or school may use Title I funds to operate, in whole or in part, a preschool program consistent with Title I requirements (ESEA section 1112(b)(1)(K)). A Title I LEA or school makes a determination as to whether to use its Title I funds to operate a preschool program based on the needs of its eligible students and the most effective use of those funds. The use of Title I funds for a preschool program is a local decision.

Question 31: How may an LEA use Title I funds to support a preschool program?

Answer 31: There are several ways in which an LEA may use its Title I funds to support a preschool program:

- School-operated Title I preschool program: A Title I school may use all or a portion of its Title I funds to operate a preschool program for eligible children.
- District-operated Title I preschool program: An LEA may reserve a portion of funds off the top of its Title I allocation to operate a preschool program for eligible children in the district as a whole or in a portion of the district.
- Coordinating with other preschool programs: An LEA may use Title I funds to coordinate with and support eligible children enrolled in other preschool programs, such as Head Start.

If Title I funds are used in whole or in part to operate a preschool program, all Title I requirements apply to the program.

For more information, please view the <u>Part A of the Elementary and Secondary</u> <u>Education Act of 1965, as Amended -- Non-Regulatory Guidance April 16, 2012.</u>