

TEA Strategic Priority:	#2—Build A Foundation in Reading and Math
Statutorily allowable use of funds:	Title I, Part A: Improving Basic Programs— <i>Schoolwide Programs</i> allows LEAs to offer preschool programs to improve educational outcomes for eligible children from birth to Kindergarten and includes activities to engage families and improve transition from Pre-K–Kindergarten entry.

### Project Summary

Early childhood is a critical period of learning and development that lays the foundation for future success in school and life. Research consistently shows that high quality early learning is especially beneficial to children from low-income homes, English language learners and others at risk for school failure. Children who attend high quality early learning programs are less likely to need special education services, be retained, and are more likely to graduate from high school, go to college and succeed in their careers. Improving access to high quality early childhood education is aligned with TEA’s strategic priority #2: Building a foundation of reading and math, as much of the achievement gap starts before a child enters the K-12 system.

Although school districts and charter schools across Texas understand the value of offering high quality early learning, they are often unable to expand programs due to a lack of facilities or classroom space. Thus, ESSA funds may be used to expand access to public prekindergarten by school districts and charter schools choosing to collaborate with a TRS 4 or Nationally accredited private provider or community organizations to offer prekindergarten and other early learning services to eligible three and four-year-old children. By expanding access through public-private partnerships, school districts and charter schools will also increase transition planning and alignment to K-3rd educational standards.

### LEA Financial Commitment (start-up and annual costs) \*

There are many potential costs involved in starting a high-quality prekindergarten program. Although many resources are offered free by the state, a school district or charter school will need to review their current assets and find gaps in both structural and process components. Some initial costs that may be associated with a high-quality prekindergarten program include, but are not limited to, start up and annual costs.

#### Start-Up Costs

- Curriculum
- Hiring of teachers with BA degree and EC-6 certification (if teachers in private provider classrooms are not already credentialed)
- Professional development to increase teacher qualifications (if LEA does not want to use free CLI Engage platform)
- Student progress monitoring tool (if the LEA does not want to use the free CLI CIRCLE tool)
- Legal cost of developing contractual agreement for partnership

#### Ongoing Costs

- Instructional coaching and technical assistance for continual improvement of teaching practices
- Regular assessment of teacher-student interactions (use of CLI tool, CLASS or other tools designed to assess teacher interactions with young children)

- Kindergarten readiness assessments

*\* When possible, TEA staff has estimated costs by major expenditure categories used in the ESSA Consolidated Application and the Expenditure Reporting (ER) System. Costs, such as locally-determined salaries, benefits, and wages, could not be estimated.*

## Project Description

A district or open-enrollment charter considering the development of a partnership with a TRS 4 or Nationally accredited private provider will first want to conduct an assessment to determine whether the provider meets the quality needs of the LEA as well as the teacher certification requirements of the state. If the provider employs teachers who have BA degrees but not EC-6 certification, the LEA may seek designations that allow for flexibility in the hiring of credentialed teachers, such as a District of Innovation status or a District Charter agreement.

After identifying a private partner who is interested in creating a partnership and meets the quality needs of the LEA, as well as identifying the partnership structure that meets the credential flexibility needs of the private provider, the LEA and private provider will draft a legal agreement specifying the services offered by each party. The private provider delivers instruction of eligible 3- and 4-year-old students, who are reported as students of the district or charter. The LEA then receives ADA funding generated by the attendance of those students, passing an agreed upon percentage to the private provider. The LEA may also provide curriculum aligned with the practices in the LEA, professional development, instructional coaching, a student progress monitoring tool and other resources to the private provider.

## Goals and Student Achievement Objectives

Partnerships between the LEA and TRS 4 or nationally accredited private providers benefit several stakeholders:

- **Families:** Eligible 3- and 4-year-old children will have an increased number of opportunities to find a prekindergarten program that fits the needs of the family, based on location, program duration, and other factors. Because of increased commitment from both the LEA and the private provider to increasing quality, families will also have increased access to quality prekindergarten.
- **Districts/Charters:** The LEA will be able to increase capacity and serve more eligible 3- and 4-year-old students without the financial burden of building new facilities. Because a greater number of children can be served, the number of children who are ready for Kindergarten also increases.
- **Private Providers:** Partnerships open new sustainable streams of funding for private providers. In addition, they open communication between LEA's and providers, increasing the resources shared and the practices that can be aligned so that children have greater continuity of expectations from prekindergarten to kindergarten.
- **Early Childhood Education Community:** Partnerships increase the ease of transition from prekindergarten to kindergarten because of greater alignment in classroom practices possible through increased coordination. In addition, partnerships build relationships and greater understanding among those in the early childhood education community, leading to a stronger community of practice.

## Expected Outcomes

The list below offers a sample of expected outcomes from successful partnerships formatted as SMART goals (the percentage of \_\_\_\_\_ will increase from X% to Y% by Z (target date) or the number of \_\_\_\_ will increase from X to Y by Z):

- Increased percentage of children meeting Kindergarten Readiness assessment standard from X% to Y% by Z.
- Increase in student achievement in math and literacy in early grades from X% to Y% by Z.

- Increased number of teachers evaluated as high-quality on annual performance evaluations from X to Y by Z.
- Increased number of families taking part in family engagement activities focused on the education goals of their children from X to Y by Z.

## Training and Support TEA Offers

The Office of Early Childhood Education at TEA offers support to school districts and charter schools wanting to partner with private providers to expand prekindergarten programs. TEA has reviewed existing partnerships to develop different partnership models and resources to support the creation of these models. These resources include, but are not limited to, an instructional webinar, an interactive tool for selecting and learning about different partnership models, and a detailed implementation guide. In addition, TEA is giving districts and charters with ongoing, one-on-one communication to guide development of these partnerships.

## Required Activities or Components

Under several federal education programs, an LEA may use funds to offer or expand access to quality early learning consistent with applicable program requirements. LEAs may do so in public schools or in preschool centers ran by the LEA, as well as in community-based preschool programs. However, an LEA that chooses to use allowable ESSA funds to offer prekindergarten and other early learning services for children in a community-based preschool program may only do so as long as the following conditions are met:

- 1) The LEA offers the preschool services directly or jointly with the community-based preschool provider (e.g., the LEA may not directly transfer ESAA funds to a community-based provider, for instance, by paying tuition, but instead must use funds to expand or supplement services).
- 2) The LEA meets all the requirements of the applicable program and other applicable federal laws and regulations (e.g. ensuring that the use of funds is reasonable and necessary and allowable per program requirements (Title III funds, for example must be used to supplement, not supplant, other federal, state and local funds)).
- 3) The LEA maintains control of the federal funds and title to materials, equipment, and property bought with those funds, and ensures that funds are not used for religious purposes.

## Program Duration, Timeline, or Significant Milestones

Implementation would include the following activities:

- Creating a letter of intent between the LEA and private provider for developing partnership
- Finding which partnership model suits the needs of the LEA and private provider and ensuring that necessary steps to address teacher credential flexibility are taken
- Creating an agreement between the LEA and private provider that specifies what percentage of ADA funding is passed through to the private provider
- Giving curriculum, a student progress monitoring tool, and other classroom resources to the provider such that the LEA and provider are aligned in classroom practices
- Offering professional development, instructional coaching, and technical assistance to provider staff
- Evaluating of private provider after partnership has begun to ensure that practices are aligned

## Staffing Requirements for LEAs

Districts looking to partner with private providers or organizations may need to hire a staff person within the school district or charter school to manage the development and maintenance of these partnerships.

## Resources\*\*

### *Building Partnerships*

- Chrisanne Gayl and Albert Wat's [Beyond the School Yard: Pre-K Collaborations with Community-Based Partners](#). The Pew Center on the States. July 2009.
- [About Head Start Collaboration](#). U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. October 2016
- John W. Gasko and Kaitlin Guthrow. [Community-Based School Readiness Integration Partnerships: Promoting Sustainable Collaborations](#). Children's Learning Institute and TECEC.

### *Family Engagement*

- The [ED-HHS Policy Statement on Family Engagement: From the Early Years to the Early Grades](#) offers guidance and recommendations to early childhood systems and programs on family engagement practices from the early years to the early grades. Family engagement refers to the systematic inclusion of families in activities and programs that promote children's development, learning, and wellness, including in the planning, development, and evaluation of such activities, programs, and systems.
- [Parenting Matters: Supporting Parents of Children Ages 0–8](#) from the National Academy of Science, Engineering, and Medicine examines the State of the science with respect to parenting knowledge, attitudes, and practices that support positive parent-child interactions and healthy development of children ages 0–8; strategies for supporting parents and helping them engage in parenting practices associated with healthy child development; barriers and facilitators to strengthening parenting capacity and parents' participation in effective programs and services; and gaps in research on parenting. The report is intended to serve as a roadmap for the future of parenting and family support policies, practices, and research in the United States.
- [Two Generation Approaches](#), prepared for the Department by Jobs for the Future, that considers the needs of both vulnerable children and parents, together, in the design and delivery of services and programs to support improved economic, education, health, safety, and other outcomes that address the issues of intergenerational poverty.

### *Language/Literacy*

The [Early Learning Language and Literacy Series](#) of professional development modules on early literacy learning from birth to kindergarten is designed to support the work of early education initiatives across the 50 States and the territories to support the language and literacy development of young children.

- [Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade](#) Practice Guide. This practice guide gives four recommendations for teaching foundational reading skills to students in kindergarten through third grade. Each recommendation includes implementation steps and solutions for common obstacles.
- [Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children](#). This National Academy of Science, Engineering, and Medicine study offers a summary report that examines research findings to give an integrated picture of how reading develops and the importance of high-quality preschool and kindergarten environments and their contribution to providing a critical foundation to facilitate children's acquisition of essential reading skills. ED and HHS created tip sheets for families, caregivers, and early learning educators.

- The "Talk, Read, and Sing Together Every Day" resources can help enrich a child's early language experiences by offering research-based tips for talking, reading, and singing with young children every day beginning from birth.

### *Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)*

- The "[Let's Talk, Read, and Sing about STEM!](#)" resources offer fun, concrete resources and recommendations for families, caregivers, and infant, toddler, and preschool educators on easy ways to incorporate Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) concepts and vocabulary into everyday routines.
- The book, [Mathematics Learning in Early Childhood: Paths Toward Excellence and Equity](#), gives information about the critical areas that should be the focus of young children's early mathematics education, explores the extent to which they are being incorporated in early childhood settings, and identifies the changes needed to improve the quality of mathematics experiences for young children. This practice guide, [Teaching Math to Young Children, from the Institute of Education Sciences](#), offers educators specific, evidence-based recommendations that address the challenge of teaching early math to children ages 3 to 6.

### *Neuroscience*

- [From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development](#), from the National Academy of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, presents evidence about "brain wiring" and how kids learn to speak, think, and regulate behavior. It examines the effect of climate—family, child care, community—in which the child grows.

### *Quality*

- [Lessons from Research and the Classroom: Implementing High-Quality Pre-K that Makes a Difference for Young Children](#), a series of research papers commissioned by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in 2012, address whether pre-K programs produced gains in student achievement that persisted into the early elementary grades; whether high-quality programs could be cost sustainable; and what program features contribute to strong interactions between teachers and children, the central ingredient in high-quality programs. The research was iterative; therefore, conclusions about the components of high quality—including the importance of bachelor's degrees for lead teachers—evolved based on new information.

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