



Children of the Rising Sun Early Childhood Institute, Detroit, MI. Photo courtesy of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago.

Making the Vision a Reality: A Roadmap for Implementing *PreK for All*

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Executive Summary

In January 2023, Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced *PreK for All*, a bold goal to provide every four-year-old in Michigan with access to free PreKindergarten (PreK) by 2027.

To develop the plan for expansion, a *PreK for All* Action Team guided a set of recommendations based on input from over 4,200 Michiganders, the latest research, and findings from other states and localities with robust PreK systems. The recommendations focused on several key areas, including building the state's PreK capacity, strengthening the workforce, supporting robust enrollment, and coordinating *PreK for All* with other programs and initiatives within the state's birth-to-five early learning and care system.

The recommendations are guided by five non-negotiable principles:

1. Children from less advantaged families must be served first.
2. Programming is high quality, based on research on how young children learn best.
3. Families can choose the setting they prefer, including schools and licensed child care settings.
4. PreK teachers receive the same compensation as kindergarten teachers.
5. Child care and three-year-old preschool programs are strengthened and the PreK program aligns with and leverages the high-quality early childhood infrastructure Michigan has created.

Estimating the Capacity Needs of *PreK for All* Expansion

States with the highest PreK enrollment have a participation rate of just under 70 percent.¹ *PreK for All* aims to enroll 75 percent of four-year-old children, which would make Michigan the top-enrolling state in the country.² This ambitious goal means that the state must plan to serve a total of 88,500 of the state's 118,000 four-year-old children in publicly funded programs by 2027.

Michigan's four-year-old children currently receive early learning and care in various settings.³ Forty-one percent (nearly 49,000 children) are enrolled in publicly funded early learning settings, including Head Start, the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP), and Young Fives.⁴ To meet the *PreK for All* goal, the state must sustain enrollment in these programs and expand to serve nearly 40,000 more children. The expansion will involve enrolling children from Michigan's private-pay settings⁵ and children who are currently not enrolled in any early learning setting.

Defining Michigan's *PreK for All* Capacity Needs

In addition to the nearly 49,000 children who are enrolled in Michigan's publicly funded early learning settings, it is estimated that these programs have the capacity to immediately enroll at least 6,800 additional children. This means that the current programs could serve nearly 55,800 children.⁶ Accordingly, to meet the goal of 75 percent enrollment, the state must enroll an additional 32,000 children. At current GSRP classroom ratios, *PreK for All* will require at least 1,700 additional lead teachers, 3,400 associate teachers, and 1,700 more classroom spaces.⁷

Achieving the *PreK for All* Vision

Recommendations are offered in four areas to support the successful implementation of *PreK for All*. The recommendations work to:

1. Increase the number of high-quality spaces available for *PreK for All*;
2. Recruit, train, and retain an effective PreK workforce;
3. Support robust enrollment; and
4. Connect *PreK for All* to the overall early learning and care system.



Strategies to Increase the Number of Seats Available for PreK for All

The state will need to expand quickly to enroll 32,000 more children, adding the needed 1,700 additional classrooms. The following three strategies, working together, will maximize the use of current four-year-old classrooms and build the supply of *PreK for All* learning spaces.

Offer existing early learning and care providers a new pathway to participate in *PreK for All* and support them in providing high-quality programming.

Across Michigan, nearly 20 percent of four-year-old children are cared for in child care programs either in community-based organizations (CBOs), or public schools, where families pay tuition for their child's early learning and care.¹¹ With space and staff limiting *PreK* expansion, these private-pay settings can be part of an immediate solution. To build capacity, CBOs and public schools serving private-pay families should immediately be eligible to participate in *PreK for All* under the condition that they meet minimum quality standards now, and fully meet all *PreK for All* standards over a specific timeframe (shown in **Table ES.1**).

Table ES.1: Recommended Minimum Quality Standards for Initial Participation in <i>PreK for All</i>	
Safety	Meet state health and safety standards; be a licensed child care provider.
Learning Time	Provide the minimum days required by GSRP and commit to participate in program financial review and monitoring.
Teaching & Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in Great Start to Quality. Implement a Professional Educator Preparation Plan (PEPP) for educators not meeting <i>PreK for All</i> teacher credentialing standards. Use an observation-based early childhood assessment and developmentally appropriate curriculum. Conduct developmental screening and referral. Commit to implement an approved GSRP curriculum within two years.
Commitment to Quality	Commit to implementing the full standards within three years with technical assistance.

A certain number of home-based early learning providers that meet the quality standards in Table 1 would be invited to opt-in to *PreK for All* as part of a home-based early learning provider pilot. Recognizing their smaller size, mixed-aged environment, and other unique features, the pilot would help the state determine the structure, capacity, final quality benchmarks, and supports necessary to implement *PreK for All* successfully in those settings. Including home-based early learning providers in *PreK for All* would further solidify Michigan's position as a national leader in *PreK* programming.⁸

To support new providers that wish to be a part of *PreK for All* but may need additional financial assistance to meet the requirements over time, start-up grants should be offered. The start-up funding could be used for recruitment bonuses, curriculum materials and other classroom supplies, training, or other expenses associated with the start-up of a *PreK for All* classroom.⁹

In order to give additional technical support to new providers, Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) should identify a start-up coordinator¹⁰ dedicated to conducting outreach and providing technical assistance. ISDs should be provided increased flexibility and additional funding to support new *PreK for All* providers.

If all center-based and tuition-based early learning and care programs participate, and assuming that 25 percent of home-based programs eventually participate, Michigan can enroll 11,700 more children and lower costs for families quickly. Simultaneously, the effort will raise quality standards in more early learning settings across Michigan, benefiting infants, toddlers, and school-age children.

Allow a 1:10 teacher-to-child ratio in *PreK for All* classrooms.

Currently, GSRP classrooms are required to maintain at least a 1:8 teacher-to-child ratio. To increase capacity, *PreK for All* should allow a 1:10 teacher-to-child ratio, which still adheres to the national standard of best practices in PreK programming.¹¹ This change would allow current PreK classrooms to enroll more children and provide additional revenue per classroom (assisting with other goals such as improved compensation). Practically, this means that rather than teaching 16 children in a class with two teachers, a classroom could expand to 20 children, effectively enrolling four additional children and reducing the number of assistant teachers required to support *PreK for All*. If all current GSRP classrooms enroll four more children, the program could immediately serve an additional 10,000 children.¹²

Open new classrooms in partnership with schools and early learning and care providers.

By inviting private-pay programs to join *PreK for All* and increasing ratios, the program can quickly enroll more children. However, the expansion will still need to find space to serve ~10,000 more children (~500 more classrooms).

To do this, ISDs and the state should partner with public schools to identify empty classroom spaces and work with them to convert those spaces into *PreK for All* classrooms. Michigan should also conduct regional PreK facility needs assessments across the state, with a focus and prioritization on counties with low enrollment in PreK and higher concentrations of lower-resourced families.¹³ The needs assessments should include identification of unused space in public schools and consideration of whether these classrooms could become a part of *PreK for All* immediately or would require upgrades or renovation. The needs assessments should act as a guide for investments in public schools or CBOs to expand or open new PreK classrooms.¹⁴ To provide technical assistance to support the expansion or opening of new classrooms, the state should support community development financial institutions (CDFIs) and increase the capacity of the Child Care Licensing Bureau to expedite PreK program licensing approval to bring new classrooms online.



Strategies to Recruit, Train, and Retain an Effective *PreK for All* Workforce

The top concern shared by Michigan stakeholders was recruiting, training, and retaining *PreK for All* educators. Every state, including Michigan, is facing workforce shortages, high rates of turnover, and mental health issues within the workforce.¹⁵ One cause of these challenges is poor compensation across the early learning field. The salaries of Michigan's current PreK teachers fall well below those of K-12 teachers, with even lower pay for PreK teachers in CBOs compared to schools.¹⁶ Accordingly, improving compensation, supporting positive workplace environments, and building a stronger workforce pipeline will be imperative to the success of *PreK for All* expansion. Michigan is fortunate to be building on strong momentum in recent years where the state has already invested heavily in recruiting and training future educators, including by investing in Grow Your Own programs and establishing the MI Future Educator Fellowship.¹⁷

Make progress toward compensation parity.

PreK for All should work toward compensation parity between PreK and K-12 teachers. Michigan should pursue a “compensation-first” strategy where parity is initially determined by educator role. This means *PreK for All* lead teachers would be paid the same salary as K-12 lead teachers in the respective school district with a plan and commitment to meet the *PreK for All* teacher credential requirement.¹⁸ Michigan should also use existing tools and Michigan-specific research to assess whether pay parity with K-12 teachers is adequate to support the recruitment and retention of PreK teachers.¹⁹ Recognizing that pay is only part of a compensation strategy, the state should also explore providing a state-backed benefits package that could include health insurance, paid time off, and/or dental insurance for the PreK workforce.

Intentionally invest in compensation mechanisms.

To achieve its compensation parity goals, Michigan will need to implement funding strategies that either create a separate pay equity fund or offer a larger per-child allocation to *PreK for All* providers.²⁰

Create multiple affordable pathways to achieve PreK teaching credentials.

PreK for All requires a robust workforce pipeline that will support a diverse *PreK for All* workforce. Michigan must prioritize building a diverse workforce through targeted recruitment efforts and scholarships. Furthermore, the state should partner with Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs) to define multiple, alternative pathways to achieving a credential. These pathways should build off the foundation of registered apprenticeships and the Future Proud Michigan Educator Grow Your Own programs.²¹ Further, every effort should be made to significantly reduce and/or eliminate the cost to educators of achieving *PreK for All* credentials by expanding and marketing programs such as the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Scholarship Program and MI Future Educator Fellowship.²² Finally, GSRP compliance plans should be converted to Preschool Educator Preparation Plans (PEPP). A PEPP provides a feasible pathway for teachers to achieve the *PreK for All* credentialing requirements and identifies financial and other supports based upon individual needs. A maximum of six years may be provided to achieve the required credentials with a realistic timeline determined for each teacher on an individual basis.



Strategies to Support Robust Enrollment

To achieve the 75 percent enrollment goal, *PreK for All* must be designed to meet the diverse needs of Michigan families. Families have a variety of needs and preferences, including values about how their children are educated, specific educational needs of their children, and the need to have PreK support work schedules.²³ *PreK for All* can support robust enrollment by increasing eligibility while working to accommodate the preferences, needs, and work schedules of Michigan families.

Allow all families to enroll regardless of income in 2024-2025.

By immediately removing the income eligibility cap, all families in Michigan will be eligible to enroll in *PreK for All* by fall 2024. ISDs would continue to work with new and existing *PreK for All* providers to prioritize children from less advantaged families and ensure families are properly referred to the program that best fits their child's needs, such as Head Start.

This strategy simultaneously dispels any perceived stigma attached to enrolling in a program that has historically been for children from low-income families, allows local leaders to leverage clear messaging to recruit families, removes complicated application processes and barriers to enrollment, and ensures classrooms are operating at full capacity.

Meet families' diverse needs and preferences.

Michigan families have different needs and preferences for the education and care of their four-year-old children. The state can meet these diverse needs by:

- Offering PreK in a variety of settings by continuing partnerships with Head Start, ensuring ISDs and CBOs are supported, and by making sure that administrative burden is not a barrier to provider participation in *PreK for All*.
- Strongly encouraging and incentivizing five-day-a-week programming. For the first time, the FY24 budget included additional funding for programs to offer five-day-a-week programming.²⁴ This funding provides a strong foundation on which to base additional future investment. The state should increase this funding and provide guidance on effective implementation of a five-day-a-week program, including how best to leverage community partners to expand programming through "specials" such as art or music.
- Ensuring access to before- and after-care and summer programming by clarifying that providers can charge tuition for wrap-around and summer programming and by creating a resource guide for parents and grantees that helps identify and access wrap-around and summer child care services.
- Continuing investment in transportation services across the K-12 and PreK system and creating a cross-sector workgroup to identify opportunities to support improved transportation options.²⁵

Meet the needs of all children.

To ensure that all children are supported in PreK classrooms, *PreK for All* must focus on serving children with disabilities and developmental delays in inclusive classrooms and provide support for the state's youngest multilingual learners. *PreK for All* should start with a policy statement that sets expectations about inclusion and provides an overview of the legal and research foundations for inclusion in *PreK for All* programs. *PreK for All* should continue to reference, support, and expand on the work and recommendations included in Michigan's Preschool Inclusion Collective Action Plan, with particular focus on collaborating with the Preschool Inclusion State Leadership Team.²⁶

PreK for All should also provide the appropriate supports and services specifically designed for young children who are multilingual learners.

Finally, *PreK for All* should invest in strategies that provide the workforce adequate support, skills, and knowledge to implement inclusive practices and work with multilingual learners, such as:

- Conducting a review of early educator competencies and a review of higher education coursework that supports inclusive and culturally and linguistically appropriate practices;
- Investing in and promoting access to professional development opportunities; and
- Funding inclusion specialists at each ISD that implement the Inclusive Classroom Profile and provide practice-based coaching based on profile scores.^{27,28}



Strategies to Connect *PreK for All* to the Overall Early Learning and Care System

PreK programming is only one component of a comprehensive birth-to-five early learning and care system, which operates at the intersection of the early education and K-12 systems. To best support children and families, *PreK for All* must work seamlessly within the early education system, as well as coordinate with and leverage other services within the system. In addition, the state must work to ensure that *PreK for All* supports the strength of the entire birth-to-five system.

Be aware of the potential impact on infant and toddler care.

PreK for All implementation must be aware of the impact that PreK expansion can have on the supply of infant and toddler care in Michigan. Creating a strong PreK program with higher compensation and more supports could drive infant and toddler teachers to PreK, further exacerbating the capacity issues the state is experiencing with infant and toddler care. As such, the state must focus on building infant and toddler capacity and supporting infant and toddler teachers while expanding PreK. For example, the state can work toward increasing compensation for infant and toddler teachers by utilizing the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) for infant and toddler contracts that can support CBOs in paying teachers more.

Build strong partnerships between *PreK for All* and other early education services and programs.

PreK for All will need to connect to other services that support its teachers, parents, and children, including but not limited to: infant and early childhood mental health consultants, the Child Development and Care program, Help Me Grow Michigan, and early childhood special education.

Align PreK with kindergarten.

PreK for All programming must work to facilitate the transition from early learning and care into kindergarten. *PreK for All* should implement best practice PreK-to-kindergarten-transition strategies, including data sharing, joint professional development, and curriculum alignment.

Introduction

In January 2023, Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced *PreK for All*, a bold goal to provide every four-year-old in Michigan with access to free PreKindergarten (PreK) by 2027. The announcement was followed by a \$254.6 million increase in funding for the state's PreK program, the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP), to expand eligibility to children from families with incomes up to 400 percent of the federal poverty level.¹

Governor Whitmer's decision to champion *PreK for All* was driven by the importance of early learning, the success of GSRP, and the desire to provide families with financial relief from the high cost of preschool and child care. Numerous studies have shown that a high-quality PreK program can positively impact children's language, literacy, numeracy, and math skills,² and that specific subpopulations of children—such as children from majority Black school districts—make the largest gains.³ Studies specific to Michigan's PreK program show that children who have participated in the program perform better on state assessments in third grade compared to their peers, and that economically disadvantaged children and children who speak a language other than English at home make strong gains.⁴

Equally important, Michigan's PreK program provides a safe place for children to be while families work and helps to offset some of the high costs of child care. A 2022 survey with over 5,000 respondents found that 87 percent of families participating in GSRP found it "very or somewhat helpful" in allowing them to work, and nearly 90 percent paid nothing for the program. Researchers estimate that GSRP saves Michigan families a total of \$150.6 million annually in child care costs.⁵

Roadmap Objectives

Making the Vision a Reality: A Roadmap for Implementing PreK for All provides recommendations on how best to expand the benefits of PreK to every Michigan family with a four-year-old child. The recommendations are guided by five non-negotiable principles that work to center equity, offer a range of settings from which to choose, and sustain the impact of quality early learning.

The Five Guiding Principles of *PreK for All* Implementation

1. Children from less advantaged families must be served first.
2. *PreK for All* programming is high quality, based on research on how young children learn best.
3. Families can choose the setting they prefer, including schools and licensed child care settings.
4. *PreK for All* teachers receive the same compensation as kindergarten teachers.
5. *PreK for All* strengthens child care and three-year-old preschool programs and aligns with and leverages the high-quality early childhood infrastructure Michigan has created.

The Roadmap addresses three questions that are critical to the success of *PreK for All* expansion.

1. How does Michigan build *PreK* capacity to meet the demands of expansion?

To successfully expand PreK, the state must build the capacity of the program, particularly around two key areas: (1) finding or creating additional spaces and (2) hiring highly qualified *PreK for All* teachers and associate teachers.

2. How does Michigan support robust participation of children and families?

Michigan has an ambitious goal to make *PreK for All* the top enrolling PreK program in the country. Achieving this goal will require that the program meet the diverse needs and preferences of families with four-year-old children.⁶ *PreK for All* programs must be convenient for families to access, transportation must be provided as necessary, and the experiences offered to children must support their learning and development in a way that reflects their culture. Equally important, the program must serve as a safe place for children to be while parents work, covering the hours of parental employment to the extent possible and connecting to "wrap-around" child care services that are easily available and accessible.

3. How does Michigan seamlessly embed PreK for All within the broader birth-to-kindergarten early learning system?

PreK for All is one part of a bigger birth-to-kindergarten early childhood system, and to effectively meet the needs of children and families, it must work within the context of the other early learning programs. *PreK for All* must leverage other system components to support its success. At the same time, it will be important for the state to support other components of the birth-to-kindergarten system to ensure a robust system for all children, families, and providers in the state.

Process

The Roadmap was guided by the *PreK for All* Action Team. The Action Team and support staff met monthly from May through November of 2023 and considered several sources of information, including:

- GSRP program standards, operations, and enrollment trends;
- GSRP teacher compensation data across GSRP settings in comparison to K-12 settings;
- Demographic data on GSRP teachers in comparison to children enrolled in GSRP;
- Enrollment data by county (Appendix A);
- Lessons learned from 10 localities across the U.S. that have robust PreK systems (Appendix B); and
- Stakeholder input from over 4,200 Michigan parents, practitioners, and policymakers through a series of interviews, 12 in-person and virtual input sessions, and an online feedback form. Responses on the feedback form were received from all 83 counties. Appendix C-Appendix G detail the community input process and findings.



Grand Rapids Community College, Grand Rapids, MI. Photo courtesy of First Steps Kent

While not exhaustive of every issue that needs to be addressed as *PreK for All* expands, the Roadmap identifies the highest priority areas that require immediate consideration, through the guidance of the Action Team.

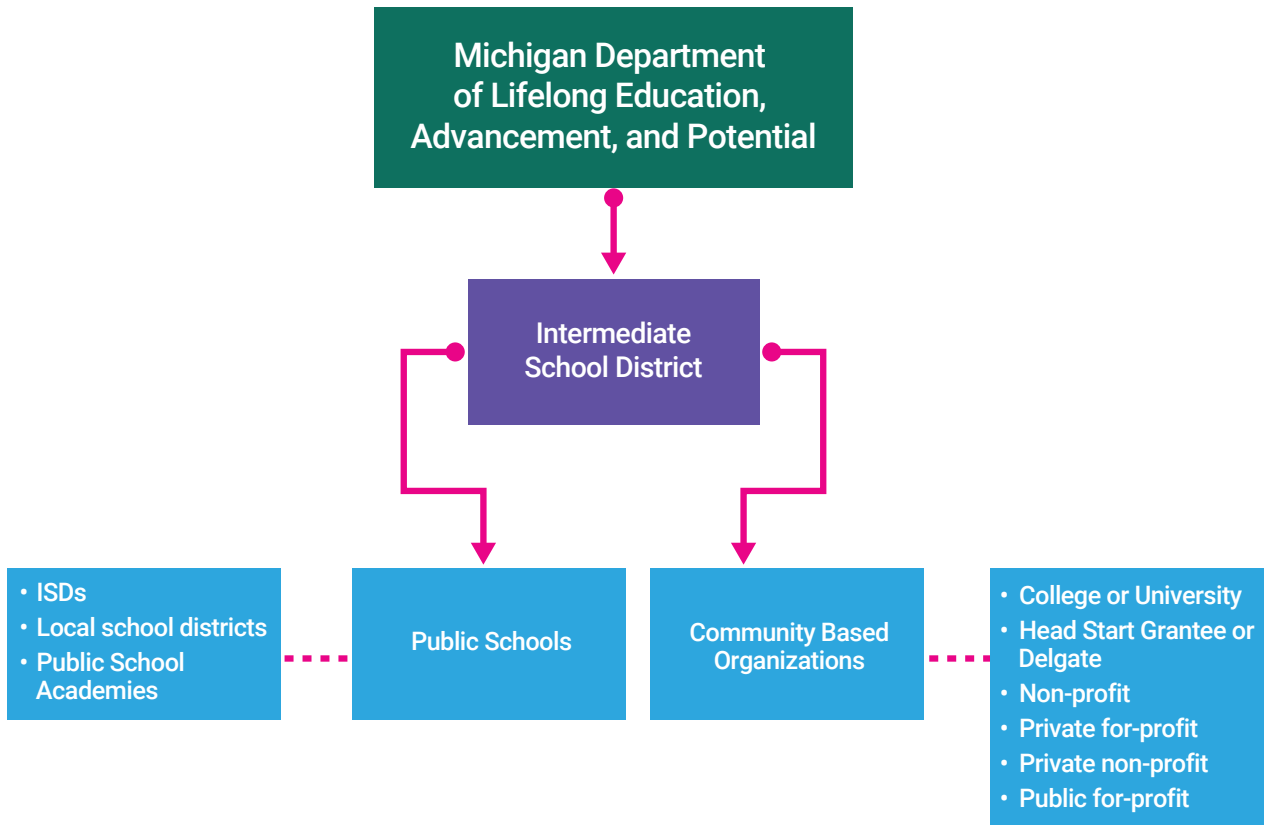
Building on a Strong Foundation: Michigan's Great Start Readiness Program

Michigan's PreK expansion is building upon GSRP, which provides a robust organizational infrastructure and well-defined, rigorous program standards. The program is funded annually through an appropriation within the School Aid budget.

Figure 1 shows the overarching organizational structure and flow of PreK funding from the state to PreK programs. Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) serve as fiscal agents for the program, and are responsible for the selection, support, and monitoring of grantees, which include both public schools and community-based organizations (CBOs). Some ISDs also provide PreK services directly to children. GSRP programming takes place in a variety of early learning and care settings, including non-profit early learning centers, for-profit early learning centers, and Head Start programs. Faith-based programs are also eligible as long as prayers and religious instruction are kept separate from the GSRP classroom.⁷

It is legislatively mandated that 30 percent of PreK programs are community-based early learning and care settings, making GSRP an excellent example of what is referred to as a "mixed delivery" PreK model.^{8,9} The use of a mixed delivery model is a strength in that it provides increased capacity and offers families access to PreK programs that match their goals and/or work and family schedules.¹⁰ Under the current model, home-based child care providers are not eligible to participate in GSRP.

Figure 1: Flow of GSRP School Aid Funds



Comprehensive Therapy Center Playgroup, Grand Rapids, MI. Photo Courtesy of First Steps Kent and Isabel Media Studios

Another important strength of GSRP is high program standards. GSRP is nationally known as a high-quality PreK model and is one of only five state PreK programs nationally that meets all 10 PreK Quality Standards Benchmarks set by the National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER).¹¹ To receive GSRP funding, programs must meet standards that define teacher credentials, curriculum, ratios, support services, and other critical program characteristics. A snapshot of key standards of the GSRP model is provided in **Table 1**.¹²

Table 1: Michigan PreK Quality Standards

Curriculum	Michigan maintains a list of approved curriculum models that may be used in PreK classrooms. ¹³ The early childhood specialists (ECS), hired by the ISD, provide support in the implementation of curricula.
Lead Teaching Credentials	<p>Bachelor's degree in early childhood education or child development with a specialization in preschool teaching or an elementary teaching certification with an early childhood endorsement.</p> <p>If lead teachers do not meet the required credentials, they may be placed on a compliance plan and complete the plan within three years. To be eligible for a compliance plan, lead teachers may be hired if they have at least five years of experience as a GSRP associate teacher, Head Start teacher, or teacher at a licensed child care center, and have completed "significant but incomplete training in early childhood education or child development." Most recently, the statute allows for the 2023-2024 grant year that a lead teacher with at least three years of experience, significant training in early childhood education or child development, and a recommendation from their ISD with a classroom observation may also be eligible to enter into a compliance plan.¹⁴</p>
Associate Teaching Credentials	<p>Center-based preschool child development associate (CDA) or an existing 120-hour approval or associate degree in early childhood education or child development.</p> <p>If associate teachers do not meet the required credentials, they must have finished at least one course in child development and enter a compliance plan.</p>
Professional Development	All teachers are required to complete 16 hours of professional development annually. Early childhood specialists are hired by the ISD and provide coaching to classrooms monthly throughout the year.
Maximum Class Size	18 children
Teacher-to-Child Ratio	1 teacher per 8 children (1:8)
Screening & Referral	GSRP provides a list of assessment tools approved for use. Developmental screening is required to identify a child who may require additional support for their development or health.

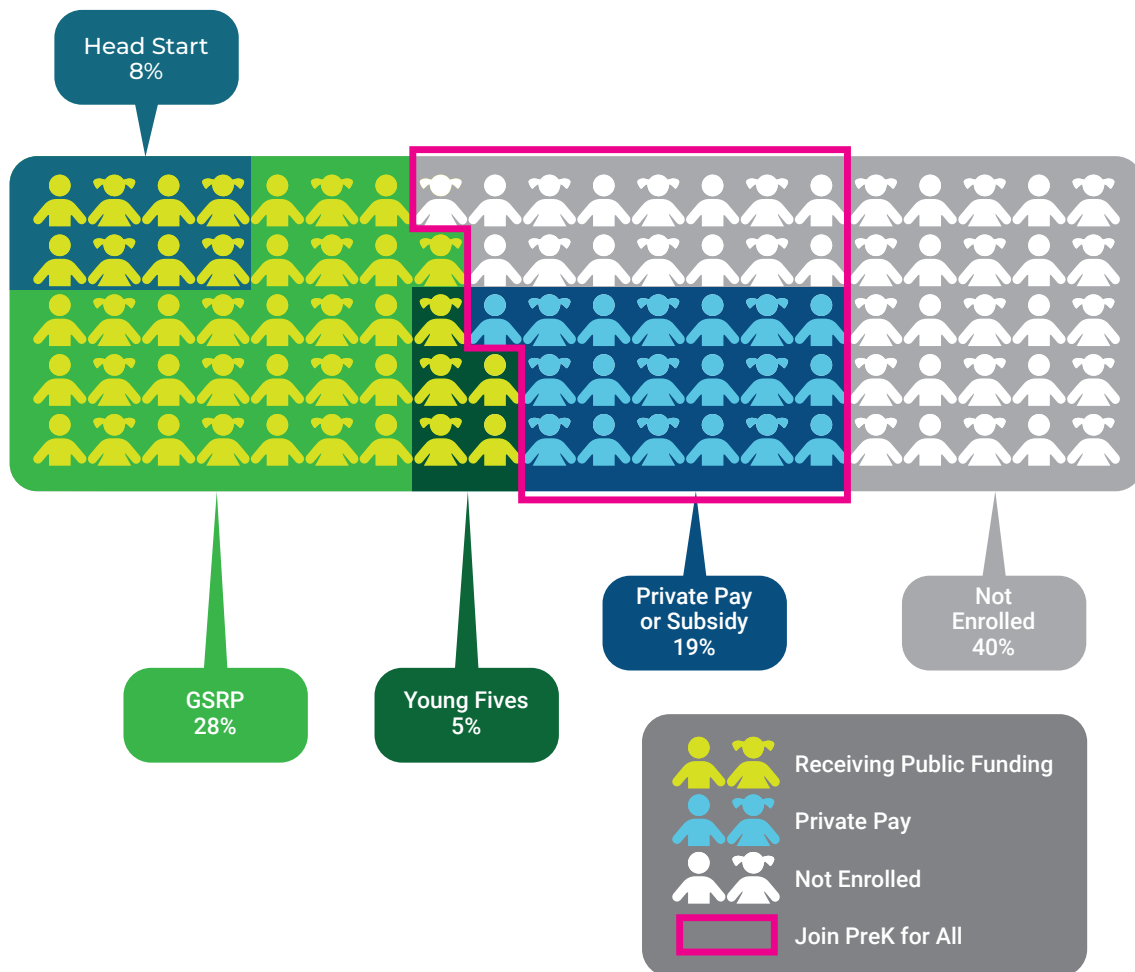
GSRP's robust organizational structure and rigorous program standards are two key factors in the program's ability to close achievement gaps, improve kindergarten readiness, and support parents' ability to work.¹⁵

Estimating the Capacity Needs of *PreK for All* Expansion

States with the highest PreK enrollment have a participation rate of just under 70 percent.¹⁶ *PreK for All* aims to enroll 75 percent of four-year-old children, which would make Michigan the top-enrolling state in the country.¹⁷ This ambitious goal means that the state must plan to serve a total of 88,500 of the state's 118,000 four-year-old children in publicly funded programs by 2027.

Figure 2 shows where Michigan's four-year-old children currently receive early learning and care.¹⁸ Forty-one percent (nearly 49,000 children) are enrolled in publicly funded early learning and care, including Head Start, GSRP, and Young Fives.¹⁹ To meet the *PreK for All* goal, the state must sustain enrollment in these programs and expand to serve nearly 40,000 more children (indicated by the pink box in **Figure 2**). The expansion will involve enrolling children from Michigan's private pay settings²⁰ and children currently not enrolled in any early learning setting (shown in gray).

Figure 2. Current Early Learning and Care Settings of Four-Year-Old Children in Michigan*

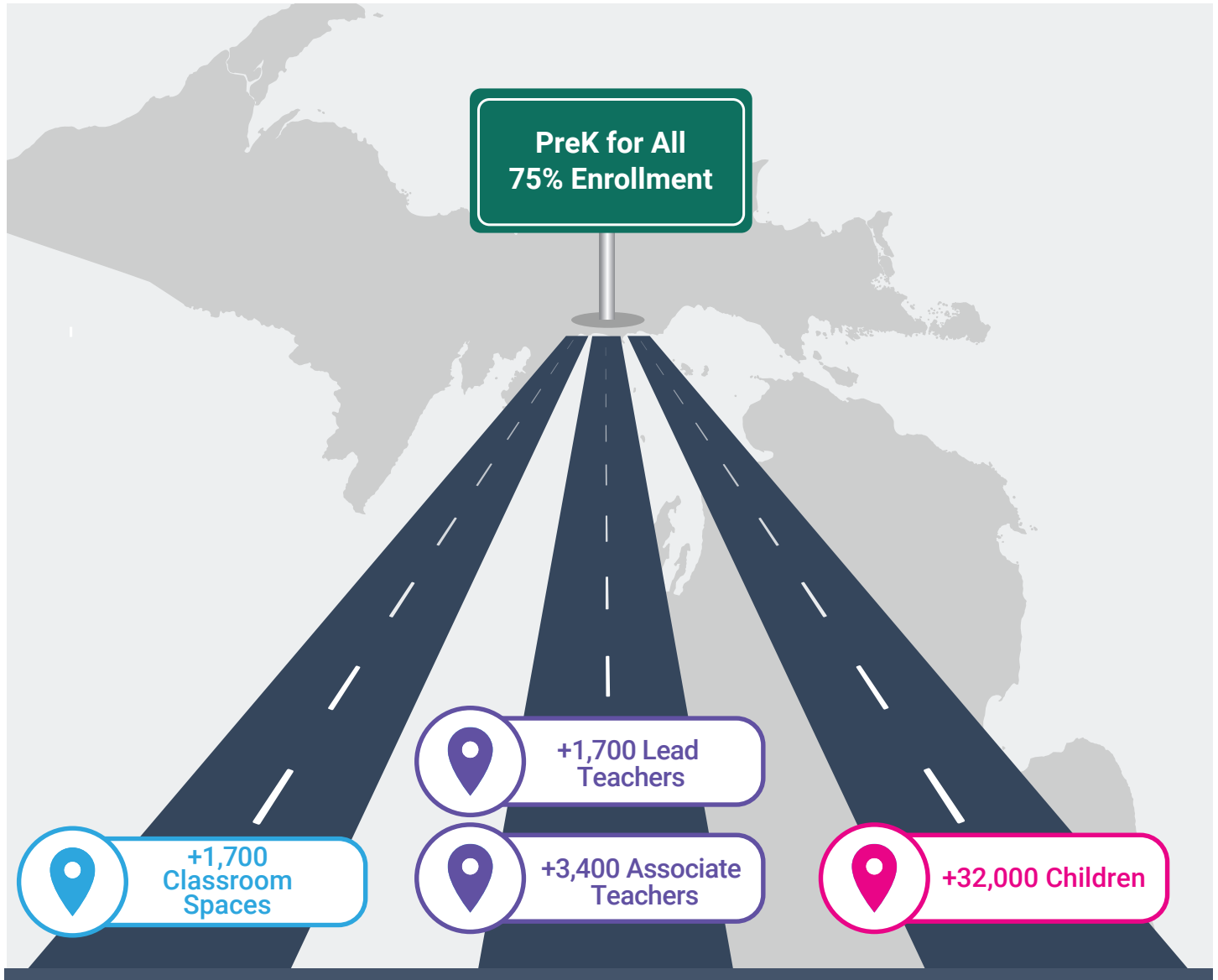


*The pink box illustrates the number of children who will need to be served by *PreK for All*. While robust participation of private-pay early learning providers is a goal, it is not anticipated that every private-pay provider will choose to participate in *PreK for All* or meet the minimum quality requirements (See Table 2 on page 15).

Defining Michigan's *PreK for All* Capacity Needs

Nearly 49,000 children are enrolled in Michigan's publically funded early learning settings, and it is estimated that Michigan has the space to immediately enroll at least an additional 6,800 children. This means that the current programs could serve nearly 55,800 children.²¹ To meet the goal of 75 percent enrollment, the state must enroll an additional 32,000 children. At current GSRP classroom ratios, *PreK for All* will require at least 1,700 additional lead teachers, 3,400 associate teachers, and 1,700 more classroom spaces (Figure 3).²²

Figure 3. What Is Needed to Achieve *PreK for All*



Achieving the *PreK for All* Vision: Recommendations

The recommendations outlined below are intended to meet the demands of *PreK for All* expansion by building off Michigan’s strong PreK foundation. The recommendations retain the state’s current organizational infrastructure and use the rigorous program standards of GSRP as the goal for all new *PreK for All* providers to meet over time. Four sets of recommendations are offered to address the core questions of *PreK for All* expansion and are designed to:

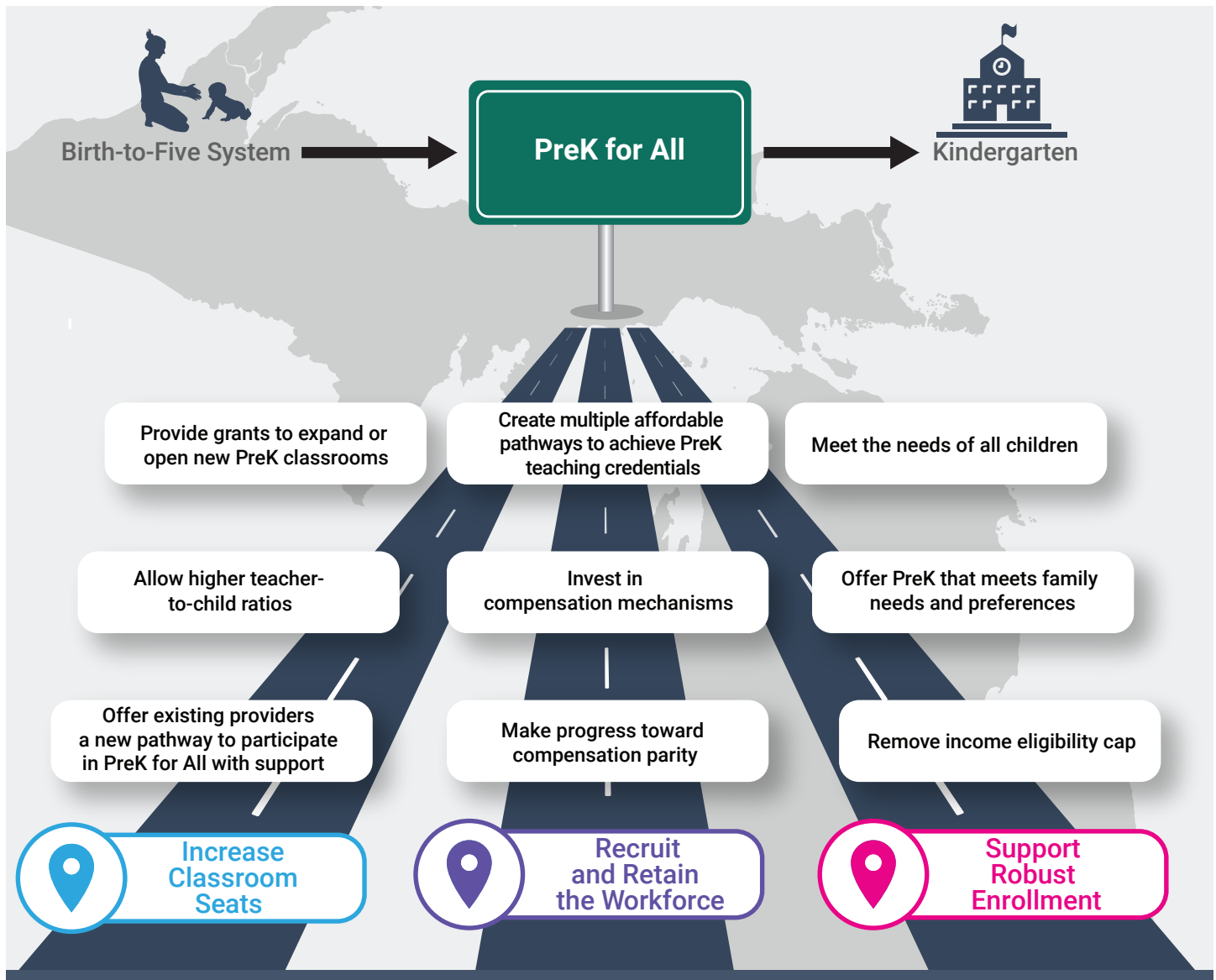
1. **Increase the number of high-quality spaces available for *PreK for All*.** Recommendations in this section focus on how best to leverage existing early childhood spaces, create new spaces, and provide options for investments in early care and education facilities to meet the demands of expansion.
2. **Recruit, train, and retain an effective *PreK* workforce.** These recommendations focus on how to develop and hire qualified lead and associate teachers to support the expansion while avoiding a “zero-sum” scenario where staff are pulled out of other early childhood programs to serve *PreK for All*.
3. **Support robust enrollment.** These recommendations work to ensure all families with four-year-old children can successfully access and enroll in a *PreK for All* setting that meets their needs. Families have different schedules, preferences, and values, and these recommendations focus on ensuring families can access the PreK setting they prefer through *PreK for All*. Additionally, the recommendations in this section focus on how *PreK for All* can serve all children well, including children with disabilities or developmental delays and children who are multilingual learners.
4. **Connect *PreK for All* to the overall early learning system.** PreK programming is only one component of a comprehensive birth-to-five early learning and care system, which operates at the intersection of the early education and K-12 systems. The recommendations in this section work to embed *PreK for All* seamlessly within the early education system and help the program coordinate with and leverage other services within the system.

Each recommendation section below begins with a set of considerations drawn from community input, research, and findings from other states and localities. Strategies are then presented to support *PreK for All* implementation (**Figure 4**).



Squiggles & Giggles Child Care, LLC., Detroit, MI. Photo courtesy of Aly Darin Photography.

Figure 4. The Roadmap to Achieve *PreK for All*



1. Increase the number of seats available for *PreK for All*

Goal

To meet the demand for *PreK for All*, the state will need to identify or create an additional 1,700 classrooms.

Considerations

Many four-year-old children are enrolled in early care and education settings. As shown in **Figure 2** above, almost 20 percent of Michigan four-year-olds are enrolled in private-pay early learning settings. One of the most common themes in the community input sessions was the importance of allowing early learning and care providers to continue to serve four-year-old children as part of GSRP’s robust mixed delivery system. This offers families more options that meet their needs and supports a strong child care system. Because of the higher teacher-to-child ratio, the revenue generated by enrolling four-year-old children is critical to the sustainability of child care businesses and is often what allows child care providers to serve infants and toddlers (where an adult can serve fewer children at a time) at a price that families can afford. One tuition-based program based in southwest Michigan summarized this challenge by saying: “We don’t have a GSRP program....”

I'm really concerned about what this is going to mean for my tuition-based preschool families. And if I lose those preschoolers to a program that can support a *PreK for All* program, how can I stay open with just infants and toddlers?"

Home-based providers are an untapped resource. Licensed, home-based providers are not currently eligible to participate in GSRP but were vocal during the community input sessions about their potential value to *PreK for All*. A home-based provider attending a virtual input session shared: "If we're going to expand GSRP, and we want to do our best to not affect the early education sector ... home programs, whether family or group, who have actively participated with GSQ [Great Start to Quality], and have actively shown that they are high-quality programs, should be considered for the expansion.... There are so many home providers who have early education degrees and elementary education degrees, and they put their heart and soul into their program." Home-based providers are also an important aspect of preserving family preferences. Parents who are low-wage earners, work nontraditional hours, or identify as non-white are more likely to use home-based care.²³ Because home-based providers also serve multiple age groups, their inclusion can help the state retain infant and toddler care capacity and support families that rely on the flexibility that this form of care can provide. Currently, 24 states have PreK programs where home-based providers are eligible to participate.²⁴ However, the actual participation of home-based providers remains small within these programs, with two notable exceptions: San Francisco and Oregon Preschool Promise.²⁵ Including home-based early learning providers in *PreK for All* would align with the state's guiding principle of allowing families to identify the setting they prefer, would support the birth-to-five early learning system, and would further solidify Michigan's position as a national leader in PreK programming.

High-quality learning spaces benefit teachers and children. A PreK setting is the professional workplace for an early childhood educator and the environment in which children develop and learn. A high-quality space can support staff morale and encourage family engagement. It is often referred to as "a child's third teacher" for the role it can play in fostering independence, learning, physical and mental health, and even self-care practices.²⁶ In interviews, some public school stakeholders pointed out that while lower K-12 enrollment across the state has freed up space within schools, the space that is available can be of lower quality, in need of significant renovation, and not designed to readily comply with child care licensing regulations. As one public school superintendent stated, "The space that's freed up [in K-12 spaces] is typically the buildings that are in the worst shape ... for our most vulnerable learners ... [and] that's not a model for success." ISDs and K-12 staff members shared that finding enough space for four-year-old children was one of their top concerns about the expansion. Early learning and care providers echoed these concerns, along with apprehension about needing to compete against K-12 school districts for the same spaces.

Transforming current spaces or creating new PreK spaces will require new investment. During PreK expansions in other parts of the country, localities made one-time capital investments to renovate existing spaces to serve as PreK classrooms. While physical infrastructure will not be the primary cost driver of *PreK for All* expansion, it will still require an upfront investment.²⁷ Renovations will likely range from lead remediation and painting to new plumbing, lighting, and walls. For example, in a needs assessment of facilities conducted by the Detroit Public Schools Community District, the estimated average cost of converting the District's current spaces into PreK classrooms would be a little over \$107,000 per classroom.²⁸ While the amount will undoubtedly vary from community to community based on the current condition of classroom stock, Michigan must be prepared to invest in facilities renovation or expansion in both schools and community-based settings. Funding will need to be made available for the renovation and to build the technical assistance infrastructure necessary to support the creation or renovation of developmentally appropriate PreK spaces.



Photo courtesy of Children of the Rising Sun Early Childhood Institute, Detroit, MI.

It is important to avoid a licensing bottleneck during *PreK for All* expansion. New *PreK for All* classrooms are currently required to be licensed to ensure that the space meets health and safety standards. Licensing is a multi-step process that consists of an application, documentation, and inspections, all guided by a child care licensing consultant. Early learning and care providers recounted bureaucratic challenges with the licensing process, sharing that it can be highly burdensome, expensive, and time-consuming. Data from Michigan’s Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) indicates that the current caseload of licensing consultants averages 89 facilities,²⁹ which is significantly higher than the level recommended by the National Association of Regulatory Administration (50-60 facilities).³⁰ Without addressing licensing capacity, these ratios will only increase as the *PreK for All* expansion occurs, further adding to delays.

Recommendations

1.1 Offer existing early learning and care providers a new pathway to participate in *PreK for All* and support them in providing high-quality programming.

Michigan has a long history of including community-based providers in PreK. While Michigan requires a minimum of 30 percent of its GSRP classrooms to be in community-based settings, the percentage varies widely across different regions of the state. To ensure there is enough classroom capacity to enroll *PreK for All* children, community-based and public school-based providers serving private-pay families should be offered a new pathway to participate in *PreK for All*. Providers that join *PreK for All* would be required to adhere to a set of minimum quality standards and to fully meet all *PreK for All* standards over a specific timeframe (shown in **Table 2**). This strategy maintains Michigan’s longstanding commitment to high-quality PreK programming while ensuring new providers can participate and meet the required standards in an achievable time frame, recognizing that they may require significant technical assistance and support.

Table 2: Recommended Quality Standards for Initial Participation in *PreK for All*

Safety	Meet state health and safety standards; be a licensed child care provider.
Learning Time	Provide the minimum days required by GSRP and commit to participate in program financial review and monitoring.
Teaching & Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in Great Start to Quality. Implement a Professional Educator Preparation Plan (PEPP) for educators not meeting <i>PreK for All</i> teacher credentialing standards. Use an observation-based early childhood assessment and developmentally appropriate curriculum. Conduct developmental screening and referral. Commit to implement an approved GSRP curriculum within two years.
Commitment to Quality	Commit to implementing the full standards within three years with technical assistance.

To support any new early learning providers that may wish to be a part of *PreK for All*, the state should offer start-up grants to new providers and increase the capacity of ISDs to support new providers.

Provide start-up grants: New and expanding sites may require financial assistance to initiate *PreK for All* programming, which may be necessary for facility renovation, equipment, and other start-up expenses. These start-up grants can be modeled off the state’s recent \$35 million funding opportunity to build out new classrooms in the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years.³¹ Larger grants should be considered to allow new and expanding providers to renovate classrooms, offer recruitment bonuses, purchase curriculum materials and other classroom supplies, trainings, or address other expenses associated with the start-up of a new *PreK for All* classroom.³²

Increase capacity of ISDs. Inviting additional providers to join *PreK for All* will increase the workload of ISDs as the fiscal and oversight agents. Community input consistently shared that the experience of subgrantees is dependent on the capacity of the ISD and the relationship between the ISD and the subgrantees. Further, ISDs shared that they must balance their role of providing oversight with subgrantee administrative burden. To address these overlapping challenges and ensure that new providers have the technical supports necessary to offer *PreK for All*, ISDs should be provided the funding to hire a start-up coordinator dedicated to conducting outreach and providing technical assistance to new and expanding subgrantees, with a particular emphasis on the needs specific to community-based organizations. The role of the start-up coordinator could also be sub-granted to a trusted partner in the community that already interfaces with local child care providers on a regular basis. ISDs could create a start-up coordinator ‘community of practice’ to facilitate a peer learning network and sharing of ideas and resources.

In addition to having a dedicated start-up coordinator, Michigan could convene a workgroup of ISDs that have had the most success onboarding and supporting new providers, especially community-based organizations, to identify best practices for balancing oversight risk while limiting administrative burden. The workgroup should be charged with creating a deliverable that provides guidance on best practices to help navigate the additional capacity requirements of supporting more subgrantees.

Implement a home-based *PreK for All* pilot. A certain number of home-based early learning providers that meet the quality standards in **Table 2** should be invited to participate in *PreK for All* as part of a home-based early learning provider pilot. Recognizing their smaller size, mixed-aged environment, and other unique features, the pilot would help the state determine the structure, capacity, final quality benchmarks, and supports necessary to implement *PreK for All* successfully in those settings. The pilot should have specific parameters in place to test and understand what supports would be necessary for the successful scale of home-based PreK. Michigan could refer to national resources or partners for support in development of the pilot.³³

If all eligible center-based, tuition-based, early learning and care programs participate, and assuming that 25 percent of all home-based programs eventually participate in *PreK for All*, and are provided with support to succeed, Michigan can enroll 11,700 more children and lower costs for families quickly.³⁴ Simultaneously, the effort will raise quality standards in more early learning settings across Michigan, benefiting infants, toddlers, and school-age children.

Policy Consideration for a Home-Based *PreK for All* Pilot

Leverage current infrastructure: Michigan has established Family Child Care Networks (FCCN), which build and support the administrative capacity of home-based providers. Using this infrastructure, the state could model the pilot after successful home-based PreK initiatives in other localities like San Francisco.* In partnership with ISDs, the networks could also be responsible for coordinating vision, hearing, developmental screenings, and home visiting, and home-based providers could receive curricula and assessment support from the ISD ECS. These networks could also serve as “communities of practice” for home-based providers in the pilot to learn from and mentor each other.

Maintain high-quality standards: While in some cases the application of high-quality standards may look different in home-based programs compared to centers, it is important that these providers are held to the same high-quality standards. Most home-based providers within the FCCN will need support meeting the standards and these supports must be built into the pilot (e.g., ensure that professional development opportunities have a specific focus for the home-based environment utilizing a quality improvement plan and support the purchase of curricula and provide adequate staff training for implementing it).

Compensation and benefits: Compensation and benefits should be provided to home-based providers in the pilot as part of the larger *PreK for All* compensation effort. Home-based providers typically provide longer day and year-round programming, like other CBOs, and this should be accounted for within the compensation and benefits structure.

Consider at the outset ways to reduce administrative overlap: Leveraging the new coordinated administrative structure of MILEAP, the state should look for ways to implement a single process to monitor home-based providers on licensing standards and the requirements of the *PreK for All* pilot.

*Garver, K., Weisenfeld, G. G., Connors-Tadros, L., Hodges, K., Melnick, H., & Plasencia, S. (2023). State preschool in a mixed delivery system: Lessons from five states. Learning Policy Institute. <https://doi.org/10.54300/387.446>

1.2 Allow a 1:10 teacher-to-child ratio in *PreK for All* classrooms.

Currently, GSRP classrooms are required to maintain at least a 1:8 teacher-to-child ratio, which exceeds the quality standards benchmarks set by NIEER. Community input was mixed about increasing classroom ratios. Some educators expressed concern about increasing the ratio, given the increase in behavioral issues among children since the onset of the pandemic. They worried about the added burden it would place on already overwhelmed teachers. Others shared encouragement about increasing ratios, and would even prefer it, because it would allow providers the ability to enroll more children and increase the revenue brought in by the classroom.

Given the community input, Michigan should give *PreK for All* providers the option to utilize a 1:10 teacher-to-child ratio. Practically, this means that rather than teaching 16 children in a class with two teachers, a classroom could expand to 20 children, effectively allowing four additional children per classroom and reducing the number of associate teachers required to support *PreK for All*. Allowing the option for a 1:10 teacher-to-child ratio also still adheres to the national standard of best practices in PreK programming while recognizing that some programs may wish to maintain a 1:8 ratio.³⁵

If all current GSRP classrooms enroll four more children, the program could immediately enroll an additional 10,000 children.³⁶

1.3 Open new classrooms in partnership with schools and early learning and care providers.

By inviting private-pay programs to join *PreK for All* and increasing ratios, *PreK for All* can quickly enroll more children. However, the expansion will still need the space to serve ~10,000 more children (~500 more classrooms). Opening new classrooms will rely on three processes: determining where the classrooms need to be opened, funding their renovation/creation, and ensuring that providers have the technical support to renovate/build high-quality, developmentally appropriate spaces in a timely manner. Michigan should pursue a series of regional needs assessments to determine priority areas for opening new classroom spaces, invest the funding, and simultaneously work to ensure that it has the proper

technical assistance support to renovate or build out new spaces.

Conduct regional facility needs assessments.

Currently, Michigan does not have a clear picture of the overall capacity or condition of facilities that could be used for *PreK for All*, or how the anticipated demand for *PreK for All* programming would map to currently available space. This assessment can start by reviewing data and reports that have already been done, such as the Detroit Public Schools Community District Facilities Master Plan.³⁷ Using those reports as a model, the state can support local ISDs, in partnership with Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), to collect information on the anticipated number of slots that will be needed in a specific area, the availability and condition of existing classrooms, and the level of effort and

“I think that if we could move to a 1:10 ratio, we could still maintain a very high-quality program. I don’t think 1:8 is necessary. I think it is wonderful, but I think it’s unrealistic. I think we are going to run out of physical spaces in the state of Michigan to fit all these four-year-olds.... I think doing 1:10 would be helpful. It would alleviate a lot of the space issue.”

—Virtual Community Input Session
Attendee, Central Michigan



Photo courtesy of Gretchen's House, Inc., Ann Arbor, MI.

funding necessary to meet the anticipated demand. The University of Michigan has identified high-need counties that could also be used as a guide for prioritizing facility needs assessments.³⁸ Allowing more licensed early learning and care providers to immediately participate in the program (with specific commitments and conditions met) should alleviate a good deal of the facilities demand and provide time to conduct a facility assessment in high-need communities.

Fund new classroom spaces. The findings of the regional facility needs assessments will provide important information to determine the funding that will be necessary to offer safe and developmentally appropriate spaces to meet the demand of *PreK for All* expansion. With this information, the state should:

- Use and expand existing programs like the child care facilities fund supported through Caring for MI Future.
- Allocate funding for technical supports provided by CDFIs to assist with *PreK for All* facilities projects.
- Partner with local school districts and provide technical support for utilizing currently existing K-12 School Aid funding to support the renovation of *PreK for All* classrooms.

Build the capacity of CCLB. The state licensing agency, the Child Care Licensing Bureau (CCLB) at MiLEAP, is key to ensuring subgrantees can open PreK classrooms. To avoid the bottleneck in licensing discussed above, it will be important to build the capacity of CCLB by providing funding for additional licensing consultants to reduce caseloads to be more in line with best practice levels. This will work to expedite the licensing process for all PreK classrooms.



2. Recruit, Train, and Retain an Effective *PreK for All* Workforce

Goal

A high-quality PreK program is dependent on high-quality teachers—individuals who can successfully foster positive interactions with children and engage in effective pedagogical practices that include content-rich instruction.³⁹ To increase the number of four-year-olds served in PreK, Michigan will need an additional 1,700 PreK lead teachers and between 1,700–3,400 associate teachers. The number of associate teachers will ultimately depend on the teacher-to-child ratio allowed by the state for *PreK for All* (see recommendation above). The GSRP model also requires early childhood specialists (ECS) to serve as coaches to PreK teachers. *PreK for All* will also require significantly more ECS staff to support the expansion.

Considerations

The challenge confronting *PreK for All* is that the initiative is taking place at a time when every locality across the U.S., including Michigan, is facing early childhood staffing shortages, high rates of turnover, and mental health issues within the workforce.^{40,41} These staffing challenges are the result of the demanding nature of the work, low pay, limited benefits, and an underappreciation of the profession despite its critical importance.^{42,43} Since 2001, Michigan's early learning workforce shrank by nearly 27 percent, equating to 29,000 early educators leaving the field.⁴⁴ Given this context, it is not surprising that a large majority of ISDs/K-12 staff (73 percent) and early learning and care providers (62 percent) indicated through the *PreK for All* feedback form that staffing was their top concern for the expansion. Similarly, the workforce shortage was the most frequently cited challenge across the community input sessions.

Solving this challenge will require implementing several initiatives, including improving teacher compensation, creating accessible pathways to achieving teacher credentials, and building a teacher workforce that reflects the demographics of the four-year-old children they serve. Staffing concerns are a primary reason why leveraging existing space (by expanding adult-to-child ratios and creating new participation pathways for tuition-based programs) is such a critical part of the expansion.



Photo courtesy of Children of the Rising Sun Early Childhood Institute, Detroit, MI

PreK teachers are poorly compensated compared to their peers in the K-12 system.

The first major challenge facing the early learning and care workforce is inadequate compensation.⁴⁵ One community input attendee summarized: “[There is] a huge staffing shortage, which is attributed to lack of livable wages; we need to pay early educators better to attract more talent to the field.” Overall, the salaries of Michigan’s PreK lead teachers are 31 percent less than the salaries of Michigan’s K-12 teachers.⁴⁶ This disparity widens if a lead teacher works in a community-based setting rather than in a school-based setting: the median salary for a school-based PreK lead teacher is \$42,984, whereas the median salary for that same lead teacher in a community-based setting is \$35,472.⁴⁷ In addition, the pay for PreK teachers in Michigan also varies widely by geographic region. For example, depending on where in the state an associate teacher works, they may earn anywhere from \$16,400 to \$25,000 annually.⁴⁸

Access to benefits also varies widely.⁴⁹ Associate teachers generally have fewer benefits than lead teachers, and overall, teachers working in school-based PreK classrooms are offered a more extensive range of benefits compared to community-based PreK providers such as disability insurance, health insurance,

and retirement plans.⁵⁰ The result of these disparities is that programs are competing for the same diminishing pool of educators. Smaller and/or community-based PreK programs are struggling to compete even more, as they are typically more limited in their resources.

Improving compensation and benefits for *PreK for All* lead teachers and associate teachers, which ultimately results in compensation parity with K-12 educators, will be imperative to the success of the expansion.

PreK providers are having a hard time finding qualified teachers amid a shrinking workforce pipeline.

The PreK workforce shortage is also influenced by a limited pipeline of credentialed teachers. This is tied to inadequate pay: when compensation and benefits are low, there is a limited return on investment to become credentialed to work in a PreK classroom, no matter how passionate or committed the individual. Unfortunately, these two interlinked challenges contribute to a diminishing pipeline of educators at the PreK and K-12 levels.

Early learning professionals at the input sessions shared that they have a strong desire to work with other committed, high-quality staff in preschool programs. However, the required PreK credentials are contributing to the workforce pipeline shortage, especially lead teachers who must have at least a bachelor’s degree. One educator from central Michigan stated: “Where are we getting the staff that are qualified? We can’t take the current professionals ... because they don’t have the bachelor’s degree with a teaching certificate. But they have all these years of experience, and they have decided at this point to stay in early education.” Another GSRP provider from the Upper Peninsula shared: “At what point does your experience and your high-quality teaching

“The other nuance that we are up against is we might have a bachelor’s degree teacher in early childhood, but now they are jumping over into the public schools because they can get into a fast track and become a certified teacher within a year and they’ve got full benefits, they’re making probably double what their salary was before.”

—Virtual Community Input Session
Attendee, Southern Michigan



Jen's Child Care, Grand Rapids, MI. Photo courtesy of First Steps Kent and Isabel Media Studios

mean that you could go to the next level? I am not saying that a bachelor's degree is not important—it is. But an associate degree and 20 years of experience sounds extremely qualifying to me too.”

While educators are seeing the shortage play out in their programs, finding qualified staff is impacting GSRP implementation statewide: from 2021–2022, 14 percent of lead teachers were on compliance plans⁵¹ (i.e., not meeting the credentialing requirements), and 25 percent of associate teachers were on compliance plans. Furthermore, the program experienced vacancy rates of 4 percent for lead teachers and 6 percent for associate teachers.⁵²

Michigan must continue to invest in and expand on policies that offer flexible, low-cost, and achievable pathways to acquire the *PreK for All* teaching credentials.

Having a more diverse teaching workforce improves outcomes for children. Across the field of early education, educators are disproportionately women of color. This is an incredible asset to the field as child demographics shift toward a more diverse population. Research suggests that children of color often benefit from teachers who share their race, ethnicity, and language and that all children—regardless of race—experience positive outcomes from being in classrooms led by diverse educators.⁵³

However, there is more work to do to ensure the state's PreK workforce reflects the communities they serve. During the 2021–2022 school year, non-white GSRP teachers were underrepresented (in other words, there was a lower percentage of non-white teachers compared to non-white children) in 85 percent of ISDs in Michigan. In contrast, the proportion of white teachers is on par with, or above, the proportion of white preschoolers in all ISDs.⁵⁴ Furthermore, only 17 percent of GSRP lead teachers identified as non-white, compared to 28 percent of associate teachers, for whom qualification requirements (and compensation rates) are lower.⁵⁵ Given this discrepancy, racial gaps in the GSRP educator workforce may be tied to the lead teacher credentialing requirements combined with the barriers that make it more difficult for educators of color to access and complete higher education.

Michigan must prioritize policies and investments to recruit, support, and retain a diverse, well-prepared, and well-resourced PreK workforce.

Michigan has been working to improve the early educator pipeline.

Michigan has laid some foundational groundwork to expand its educator pipeline through a range of scholarships, grants, and alternative pathways to complete a skill certificate or degree. For example:

Lowering the cost of earning a certificate or degree. Michigan has prioritized lowering the cost of college through programs like the Michigan Achievement Scholarship or Michigan Reconnect, which provide financial aid to students regardless of their career goals. In addition, potential *PreK for All* educators may be eligible for scholarships that are specifically designed to recruit and train educators, such as:

- MI Future Educator Fellowship provides up to \$30,000 for individuals to pursue a teaching certificate, including educators committed to serving children from birth through kindergarten.⁵⁶
- MI Future Educator Student Teaching Stipend pays student teachers \$9,600 per semester.⁵⁷
- T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Michigan Scholarship Program helps current early educators take the next step in their career by providing scholarships to earn a CDA, associate degree, or bachelor's degree.⁵⁸

Expanding the pathways available to future educators. Michigan has joined other states across the country in rethinking how educators may be trained. For example:

- Registered Apprenticeships. Caring for MI Future provided \$4 million for the start-up and expansion of early education registered apprenticeship opportunities in Michigan.⁵⁹ Registered apprenticeships are a collaboration between a sponsoring organization, employers, employees, and higher education to support an employee in receiving on-the-job learning that counts toward the achievement of a credential and wage increase. In Michigan, early education apprentices can receive a CDA or an associate degree at the culmination of their apprenticeship.⁶⁰
- MI Grow Your Own. MI Grow Your Own (GYO) encourages and supports local school districts in developing programs that make it possible for individuals who are currently not certified teachers to become educators. Eligible candidates may include paraprofessionals employed by the district or even an interested community member. Districts implement GYO programs by fostering partnerships with local or regional teacher preparation programs. Models of GYO programs are specifically cited for their focus on creating more equitable pathways for diverse candidates.^{61,62}
- PME LAUNCH. PME LAUNCH is part of a broader initiative to expand career and technical education (CTE) opportunities for high school students interested in a teaching career. PME LAUNCH is a pathway for a high school student to earn a CDA by graduation.⁶³

These programs must continue to act as foundational elements in which *PreK for All* invests and supplements.



Photo courtesy of First Steps Kent, Grand Rapids, MI

Recommendations

2.1 Make progress toward compensation parity between *PreK for All* and K-12 teachers.

PreK for All must invest in improving pay and benefits for lead teachers and associate teachers with the goal of compensation parity with K-12 teachers. To recruit and retain a talented workforce, Michigan should pursue a “compensation-first” strategy.⁶⁴ Using this strategy, *PreK for All* would initially determine parity with K-12 teachers based on educator role and experience rather than credential, with a commitment from teachers and a plan to meet the *PreK for All* teacher credential requirements over a specific period of time.⁶⁵ The goal of this approach is to stabilize the workforce as the first step to moving educators to higher credentials. In Louisiana, a statewide effort to provide lead teachers with a tuition-free credential had low rates of completion despite a financial reward after obtaining the credential. Researchers concluded that teachers were leaving the field due to the low overall compensation levels, despite the free opportunity to achieve a credential.⁶⁶ As such, requiring *PreK for All* staff to achieve higher credentials must be preceded by increased compensation.

For *PreK for All* positions without an analogous wage category within the K-12 system, compensation levels could be derived from a recently published proposed wage scale for early childhood educators.⁶⁷ If a lead or associate teacher initially does not meet the required credential, then the educator must commit to following a preschool educator preparation plan (PEPP)—discussed in greater detail below—which includes a commitment, timeline for acquiring the required credential, and a plan for achieving it.

In addition to providing immediate compensation support, Michigan should explore how to help all *PreK for All* providers offer a competitive benefits package. Smaller employers may need support providing health insurance, retirement plans, and/or paid time-off that is accessible to PreK teachers in school-based programs. This would ensure *PreK for All* staff have more consistency and equity in access to benefits they receive.

2.2 Intentionally invest in compensation mechanisms.

To ensure Michigan’s *PreK for All* teachers are paid adequately, the burden must not be placed solely on PreK providers to find the funds. Michigan has made significant steps to improve payments to GSRP programs and ensure annual increases align with the K-12 foundation allowance. More is needed. Outlined below are three different funding mechanisms that could be considered to support pay parity:

- A Pay Equity Fund: Michigan could appropriate funding specifically to support pay equity within both schools and CBOs. The fund would be tied to the final wage standards determined by the state. Washington, D.C., has implemented a similar pay equity fund that provides early educators a minimum payment amount based on their role and credential level.⁶⁸
- Higher Per-Child Allocation: Michigan may also consider increasing the PreK per-child allocation with the additional funding intended for PreK teacher salaries. Currently, the per-child allocation is \$9,608 and additional money could be offered to fill the equivalent gap for teacher salaries. This is the approach taken by New Jersey’s PreK expansion: they provide increased but differentiated per-pupil allocations. The differentiated rates are meant to account for the cost requirements that may be dependent on provider type and/or geographic location (county). For example, the per-child allocation for New Jersey’s school-based PreK programs ranges from \$13,175–\$14,416, whereas community-based PreK programs have a per-child allocation that ranges from \$15,116–\$16,204. This approach recognizes that the cost of providing high-quality PreK cannot be a one-size-fits-all strategy and that there are smaller economies of scale in a community-based setting versus a school-based setting.⁶⁹
- A Per-Classroom Allocation: Providers would receive the most stable funding if the school-aid funding model could be modified to use a per-classroom payment structure. Right now, PreK providers are paid on a per-child basis. For example, if only 14 children are enrolled in a classroom with a capacity for 20, the program would only receive funding for those 14 children. However, early learning providers incur roughly the same costs regardless of how many children are enrolled in a classroom. Fixed costs include classroom equipment and learning materials, curricula, facilities and maintenance, and overall operations costs for the whole program. Additionally, for a classroom of 14 children, a program would still need to pay wages and benefits for two teachers to comply with ratio requirements.



Comprehensive Therapy Center Playgroup, Grand Rapids, MI. Photo courtesy of First Steps Kent and Isabel Media Studios

With universal eligibility, *PreK for All* does not need to fund programs based on a per-child allocation. Instead, programs could be funded at the classroom level, guaranteeing that the fixed costs of a high-quality PreK experience are covered regardless of fluctuations in enrollment. This would simultaneously allow *PreK for All* providers to have more fiscally sound budgets and greatly reduce administrative burden for both providers and ISDs. This approach would include accountability processes to ensure that programs enroll as many children per classroom as possible.

2.3 Create multiple affordable pathways to achieve PreK teaching credentials.

To retain qualified teachers and bolster the workforce pipeline, Michigan should pursue policies that both diversify the pathways for educators to achieve their credentials and provide future educators the financial support and time they require to meet the credentialing requirements. Building on Michigan's existing infrastructure, *PreK for All* can implement the following approaches:

Preschool Educator Preparation Plans (PEPP) Currently, GSRP provides options for skilled educators to serve as lead teachers even if they have not yet met the credentialing requirements. Teachers who do not meet all GSRP's educational requirements are placed on three-year "compliance plans," which serve as a pathway to becoming a fully certified PreK teacher.⁷⁰ While compliance plans are intended to ensure credentials are met by the three-year deadline, community input indicated that some compliance plans need to be extended or renewed beyond the three-year deadline. Under *PreK for All*, the compliance plan concept should convert to six-year preparation plans for teachers who do not meet the educational standards. These plans should be tied to financial support such as a T.E.A.C.H scholarship or a MI Future Educator Fellowship. The PEPP should include clear steps and a timeline for earning a degree that accounts for the individualized needs of the teacher. The PEPP can be modeled after the Head Start individualized professional development plan.⁷¹ In tandem with a compensation-first strategy, the PEPP is intended to ensure that all educators have support to achieve the credential and stay within the profession.

Measuring competencies High-quality PreK teachers share a set of observable, measurable competencies that include engaging in positive interactions with children and demonstrating effective pedagogical practices that include content-rich instruction.⁷² While this skillset can be developed through formal education experiences like degree programs, some educators are able to reach the same level of competence through other pathways including years of applied experience in an early childhood setting, on-the-job training/professional development, and/or effective coaching or mentoring. Another way to recruit and retain a high-quality teaching workforce is to establish competency-based criteria that can be used to directly assess whether an educator is engaging in high-quality teaching practices, regardless of whether they meet proxy measures such as teacher certification, degree requirements, or a certain threshold of training hours. Given the number of qualified teachers required for successful *PreK for All* expansion in the context of structural barriers that make higher education difficult for many to access, the exploration of alternative ways to meet credentialing requirements is warranted. A competency-based credentialing pathway may be a more efficient, cost-effective way to benefit from the experience of the incumbent early education workforce.

Expand degree pathways. Michigan has already invested in programs that intentionally ease the burden of achieving higher credentials, including registered apprenticeships and GYO programs. These are imperative first steps. The work must continue to expand these programs and further strengthen partnerships with colleges and universities. Working with colleges and universities, Michigan can collaborate to further diversify pathways and reduce barriers to entry. For example, Colorado has recently piloted a place-based bachelor's degree program for early educators. The program is individualized and based on the competencies of the student entering the program, and, per its name, supports in-house learning at the place where the student is employed.⁷³ Michigan may consider piloting similar programs in collaboration with higher education partners.

To continue to support a diverse workforce, programs must also continue to be as universally accessible as possible, accounting for different preferences such as virtual learning versus in-person, and taking into consideration the times of day that are conducive to a PreK teacher's full-time work schedule. Scholarships and credentialing programs must also offer coursework, materials, and applications in multiple languages and formats. Similarly, Michigan must be intentional about its communication strategy and outreach to communities. Outreach about scholarship or training opportunities should be conducted in multiple languages and messaging should be disseminated by trusted community partners and/or in community gathering places such as libraries or faith-based settings.



3. Support Robust Enrollment

Goal

The state has set the goal of enrolling 75 percent of Michigan's four-year-old children in *PreK for All* by 2027. To meet this goal, *PreK for All* programs must be easily accessible, be designed to meet the diverse learning needs of children, and align with the preferences and child care needs of Michigan families.

Considerations

During the community input sessions and through the feedback form, families expressed a strong desire to see *PreK for All* come to fruition. Families not in publicly funded PreK programs overwhelmingly indicated that they would enroll in *PreK for All* if eligible. Families noted that the high cost of early care and education is a financial burden, and that *PreK for All* will help in alleviating some of this burden. Indeed, families currently enrolled in GSRP reported that one of the biggest benefits of the program—in addition to supporting kindergarten readiness for their children—was the help it provided financially.

While families expressed strong support for universal eligibility, there was consensus that *PreK for All* should not be “one-size-fits-all.” To achieve the goal of enrolling 75 percent of Michigan's four-year-old children, *PreK for All* must be designed to meet the diverse needs of Michigan families, including values around how their children are educated, how a program supports their language and culture, and how the program can also support the child care needs of working families.⁷⁴ Key considerations that will affect *PreK for All* enrollment are outlined below.

Families have different preferences and needs

for PreK programs. Families discussed the importance of having access to a wide range of PreK program types including faith-based, Montessori, and nature-based programs. Families with children already enrolled in an early learning program expressed a desire to keep their child with their current provider. One parent expressed: “Free preschool would be a huge benefit as the cost of full-time care is so expensive. We’d be open to considering other options, but we’d love it if there was an option to subsidize existing daycare centers so we wouldn’t have to change locations.”

Program accessibility is essential to robust enrollment.

Families shared that a program’s proximity to home or work is important to being able to access PreK. Parents or guardians with multiple children preferred being able keep their children at the same program to avoid coordinating multiple pick-ups or drop-offs. In addition, numerous stakeholders across input sessions expressed concerns about transportation. This discussion focused on access to transportation for *PreK for All*, especially for the highest risk families and in rural areas. Families currently enrolled in GSRP shared that access to transportation was one of their biggest challenges. It is important to note that this challenge is not specific to PreK, as ISDs and school districts across Michigan have experienced a shortage of bus drivers.⁷⁵

PreK serves a dual role as early learning and child care. Most children in GSRP (76 percent) attend a four-day-a-week program.⁷⁶ To ensure robust enrollment, it will be important that *PreK for All* programming cover the work schedules of Michigan families to the extent possible. This means having PreK options that are open five days per week and that offer, or coordinate with, before- and after-school care. While PreK programs that operate five days a week are beneficial for working families, GSRP staff in community input sessions expressed concern that this could overburden educators. In four-day-a-week programs, GSRP staff in all settings (ISDs, public schools, and community-based programs) shared that they use the one day of the week that children are not in attendance for lesson planning, administrative tasks, and to conduct required home visits with families. There were concerns about how these program requirements would be done in a five-day-a-week program without extending the hours worked by PreK staff.

PreK for All must meet the learning needs of all children. During the community input sessions, participants emphasized the need to provide better support for children with disabilities and developmental delays. Participants explained that because the systems supporting children with disabilities can be challenging to navigate, the responsibility often falls to overburdened teachers: “If the child’s not getting services, the classroom teachers are trying to fill in the gaps... It becomes a really vicious cycle,” explained one participant in southern Michigan. Community-based PreK programs may experience added obstacles to connect children to services because they are reliant on public schools to provide them with early childhood therapists and developmental specialists. Unfortunately, these therapists and specialists often have large caseloads and are also experiencing a workforce shortage.⁷⁷ Despite these challenges, stakeholders recognized that *PreK for All* provides an exciting opportunity to improve preschool inclusion across the state.

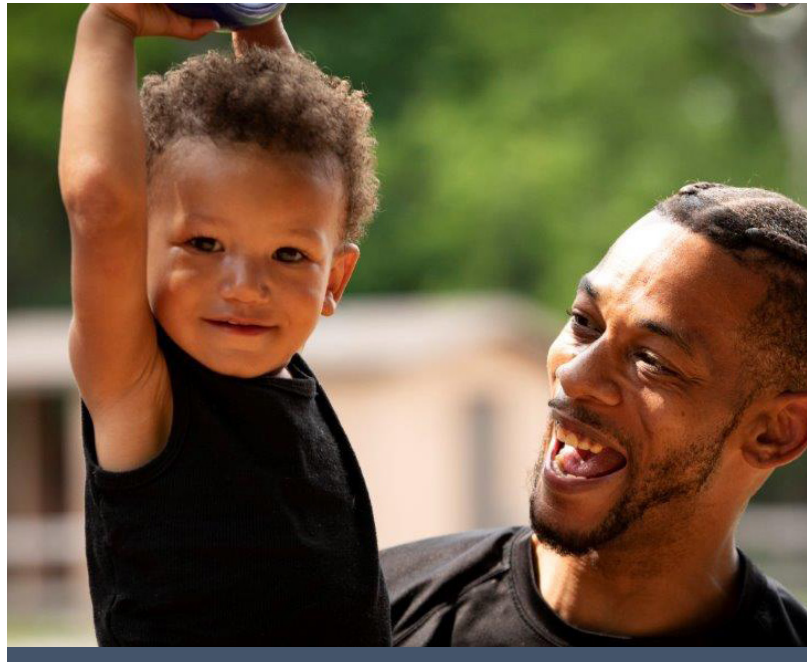


Photo courtesy of First Steps Kent, Kentwood, MI

“GSRP in Lansing is Monday-Thursday 9-4. I work full time and am a single parent. I’d like to enroll but they have no system for after care or Fridays. It might be more practical to pay to send her somewhere full time instead of having to figure out additional care for odd hours.”

*—Participant from
Online Feedback Form*

Stakeholders also discussed the importance of supporting the learning and growth of multilingual learners in PreK. Children across Michigan speak a range of languages other than English, with Spanish and Arabic being the most prevalent, followed by German, Chinese, and Bengali.⁷⁸ Children who are multilingual learners can demonstrate strong gains from high-quality early learning programs, but generally enroll in early learning programs at lower rates than their peers.⁷⁹ It will be important to further explore the needs of multilingual families to ensure that they have equitable access to programs and that their preferences and values are honored in their child's education.

“[Keep] allowing for unique, diverse, communities to participate: [PreK] programs should reflect [a child's] culture”

*—Community Input Session Attendee,
Grand Rapids, Michigan*

The lowest resourced families need to be the highest priority. Across input sessions and feedback form responses, there was an emphasis on ensuring that *PreK for All* is implemented in an equitable manner. For example, as the program builds to full capacity, stakeholders strongly emphasized that under-resourced communities should be prioritized in terms of outreach, messaging, access, and enrollment. Continually analyzing enrollment data will be important to better understand whether the program is achieving its goal of equitable access, and how outreach and enrollment strategies may need to shift over time.

Michigan is already working on several initiatives that will support robust enrollment. Michigan has implemented initiatives to make programs more accessible and to align programming with family work schedules. For example:

- Funding to support five-day-a-week programming. Understanding that PreK acts both as an educational opportunity for young children and as child care for working families, Michigan's legislature invested funds to increase the per-child allocation for providers who wish to operate five-days-a-week, 36 weeks a year.⁸⁰ This initial funding must be continued and increased to allow more providers who offer extended-day and extended-week programs. *PreK for All* will also need to support families who require before- and after-school and summer care; this will require additional investments, paired with policies that expand the availability and supply of wrap-around services.
- Dedicated funding for transportation. Michigan has increased transportation funding across the PreK–Grade 12 system. In the last fiscal year, Michigan's legislature invested an additional \$18 million to support transportation costs of PreK.⁸¹ As PreK expands, these investments will need to be increased to support access to PreK programs.
- Michigan's Preschool Inclusion Collective Action Plan. In 2020, a coalition of experts convened to develop a collective action plan with the intention of progressing toward a “high-quality, equitable, and inclusive preschool system to benefit every child in Michigan.”⁸² This collective action plan, focused on supporting children with disabilities or developmental delays, should serve as a guiding document for *PreK for All* implementation. The Preschool Inclusion Collective Action Plan recommended the creation of a statewide leadership team to support and direct the work of preschool inclusion. This team has already identified the need for a workgroup focused on building more infrastructure for practice-based coaching to support early education teachers.⁸³ The Collective Action Plan and its leadership team will be an important asset and partner with whom to coordinate throughout *PreK for All* implementation.
- Inclusion Builders. Michigan has at least one successful model of coaching for inclusionary practices in preschool classrooms: “Inclusion Builders.” The program created inclusion support specialists at the ISD level. The inclusion support specialists work to provide coaching to classroom staff both in individual and group settings on the implementation of evidence-based practices that promote preschool inclusion.⁸⁴ The Inclusion Builders project also facilitated an ISD community of practice to support each other and share ideas. The participating ISDs stated in an evaluation report that the program could serve “as a catalyst for moving preschool inclusion efforts forward.” Building off the lessons learned from the Inclusion Builders project will also be a valuable opportunity for *PreK for All*.

Together, these efforts are significant, but *PreK for All* champions will need to continue advancing policy and funding efforts to ensure that all families of four-year-olds can access and enroll in PreK services that meet their needs and preferences.



Grand Rapids Community College, Grand Rapids, MI. Photo courtesy of First Steps Kent

Recommendations

3.1 Allow all families to enroll regardless of income in 2024-2025.

Michigan is on an ambitious path to expand access to families over the next three years. To make it easier for families to enroll and continue momentum to open new classrooms, Michigan should allow all four-year-olds to enroll in *PreK for All* in fall 2024—regardless of their family’s income.

This strategy simultaneously dispels any perceived stigma attached to enrolling in a program that has historically been for children from low-income families, allows local leaders to leverage clear messaging to recruit families, removes complicated application processes and barriers to enrollment, and ensures classrooms are operating at full capacity with sufficient resources to support quality.

It is possible that the number of families interested in enrolling will exceed available space during the expansion. Michigan will need to be vigilant in ensuring that lower-resourced families and the children at highest risk for development delays are prioritized for enrollment. ISDs should continue to follow existing prioritization guidelines for enrollment while simultaneously ensuring that families are properly referred to the program that best fits their child’s needs, such as Head Start.⁸⁵

“Every four-year-old is just as important as the next one. I believe eliminating the income level is going to give every child that same opportunity, which is really what we need because they’re the future of our state.”

*—Virtual Community Input Session
Attendee in Northern Michigan*

3.2 Offer a range of PreK options to meet Michigan families' diverse needs and preferences.

A major benefit of Recommendation 1.1, which would offer existing early learning and care providers a pathway to participate in *PreK for All*, is that it ensures a variety of PreK types will be available to meet the diverse needs and preferences of Michigan families. To further support families, *PreK for All* will need to focus on:

- 1) Partnering with Head Start;
- 2) Strongly encouraging, incentivizing, and supporting five-day-a-week programming;
- 3) Ensuring access to wrap-around care and summer care for *PreK for All* families; and
- 4) Making additional investments in transportation services for four-year-olds.

Strengthen the partnership with Head Start. In 2022, 15 percent of GSRP children were served in GSRP/Head Start blended classrooms, and in some regions of the state, Head Start grantees administer over 60 percent of the GSRP slots.⁸⁶ As the eligibility threshold for PreK is removed, the state should continue to work closely with Head Start programs through a partnership with the Michigan Head Start Association. This partnership can leverage Head Start rules that allow 10 percent of children to be over the income eligible threshold (to create mixed-income Head Start settings) as well as Head Start's deep ties to families within their communities as a means to support enrollment. In addition, this partnership can help with *PreK for All*–Head Start program coordination as required both by the Head Start program and GSRP.

Strongly encourage, incentivize, and support five-day-a-week programming. *PreK for All* should provide additional funding for five-day-a-week programming and offer clear guidance on best practices for implementation.

Additional funding. Additional investments to support extended programming could be implemented in the following ways:

- 1) Continue to offer a higher per-child allocation to support providers that offer five-day-a-week programming.
- 2) Prioritize five-day-a-week programs for *PreK for All* funding during the expansion.
- 3) Clarify, in plain language, rules related to using *PreK for All* funding to support community partnerships that may provide specials such as art, music, or other content to increase the program hours of *PreK for All*.
- 4) Offer community partnership grants to five-day-a-week programs to fund community partners that could provide art, music, and other “specials.” This would allow *PreK for All* teaching staff the time to do lesson planning, conduct home visits, and meet other requirements.

Implementation support. In addition to funding, stakeholders discussed needing additional operational support to implement five-day-a-week programs. To respond to this need, Michigan should convene a diverse working group of ISDs and early learning providers from a variety of regions with a track record of effectively supporting and implementing five-day-a-week programs. Together, they should be charged with formulating comprehensive technical assistance aimed at five-day-a-week PreK implementation. The guidance should consider policies and practices (such as blending funding sources, creating staffing patterns, leveraging community partners) that PreK providers have been using to implement five-day-a-week programs without overburdening staff.



Comprehensive Therapy Center Playgroup, Grand Rapids, MI. Photo Courtesy of First Steps Kent and Isabel Media Studios

Coordinate access to before- and after-care and summer care programs. Providing *PreK for All* families access to before- and after-care will require partnerships across the birth-to-five system. *PreK for All* programs will need to support families in identifying wrap-around services, and when families are eligible, sources to help pay for those services.

Support ISDs and providers in offering care. The state should start by clarifying the parameter around *PreK for All* providers charging tuition for wrap-around and summer programming. *PreK for All* is publicly funded so that families do not have to pay for PreK programming. However, the current funding level is not sufficient to support providers in offering free before- and after-care and summer care. *PreK for All* should be clear that providers can charge parents tuition for wrap-around and summer care. *PreK for All* providers should utilize cost-of-quality models as a guide for what would be appropriate to charge for wrap-around and summer care services.⁸⁷

Support families' access to wrap-around care. For many families, navigating the early learning system is challenging. To make it easier on families, the state should have clear information about which *PreK for All* providers offer before-, after-, and summer care. This support could include creating an annual resource guide for parents and grantees that is distributed regionally or statewide. As *PreK for All* implementation progresses, it should continuously assess the needs of families and adjust policies and investments to support wrap-around services as necessary.

Provide additional investments in transportation services for four-year-olds. Families may require access to transportation to and from the program. To support transportation, three approaches should be implemented in tandem:

Convene a *PreK for All* transportation working group. Transportation is its own system that crosses multiple areas of expertise, policies, and regulations. Further, it is impacted by multiple funding streams. While this can be complicated, it can also be a source of innovation and collaboration. For example, one community input session attendee asked if public bus routes could be re-routed to do pick-up and drop-off near PreK programs. Therefore, the state should convene a cross-sector workgroup that identifies partners that may not usually be considered early learning stakeholders, but that could help inform recommendations on blending and braiding transportation funding opportunities to better support families with their pick-up and drop-off needs.

Clarify the use of *PreK for All* transportation funds. In legislative statute of the School Aid Act (Section 388.1632d Sub-section 32d(20)), there is language that allows families to be reimbursed if they use “transportation service companies, buses, or other public transportation services.”⁸⁸ It is unclear to what extent ISDs, providers, or families are aware of this allowable use of funds under statute. As part of *PreK for All* implementation, guidance should be disseminated that clarifies the use of transportation funding, including for families who may need to pay for ride-sharing services.

Increase transportation funding. While the state has recently made investments in the PreK-12 transportation system, *PreK for All* implementation and the 75 percent enrollment goal are dependent on continued and dedicated investments in PreK-12 transportation and its workforce. Michigan should actively identify opportunities that support improved transportation options.

3.3. Meet the needs of all children.

PreK for All programming must work toward being responsive to children with disabilities and developmental delays and children who are multilingual learners. Every *PreK for All* provider must be able to meet the needs of students in inclusive and culturally and linguistically diverse settings. The recommendations below seek to achieve this goal.

Develop a *PreK for All* policy statement on inclusion. This statement would set expectations and provide an overview of the legal and research foundations for high-quality inclusion in a *PreK for All* program. This policy statement could build off the work of the Preschool Inclusion Collective Action Plan and/or the federal joint policy statement from the Department of Education and Department of Health and Human Services that was released in November 2023.⁸⁹

Fund inclusion specialists. Michigan has successfully piloted a model to support inclusion using a practice-based coaching model.⁹⁰ Expanding this program by hiring more practice-based inclusion coaches across the state will provide ISDs more capacity to support least restrictive environment enrollment in *PreK for All*. Expanding the number of inclusion coaches should be implemented while accounting for lessons-learned from the evaluation of the Inclusion Builders

program, especially as they pertain to coordinating with the other PreK coaches (early childhood specialists) and the use of research-based tools such as the Inclusive Classroom Profile. Additionally, any coaching infrastructure should continue to reference, support, and expand on the work and recommendations included in Michigan's Preschool Inclusion Collective Action Plan, with a particular focus on collaborating with the Preschool Inclusion State Leadership Team.⁹¹

Create a *PreK for All* policy statement on multilingual learners.

Recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce will be one of the most important activities to support multilingual PreK students. *PreK for All* should develop a policy statement that defines expectations and provides an overview of the legal and research foundations for high-quality supports and services for young children who are multilingual learners. In drafting a *PreK for All* statement, Michigan should reference the joint policy statement from the Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Education that outlines recommendations for supporting children who are dual language learners attending early childhood programs.⁹²



Jen's Child Care, Grand Rapids, MI. Photo Courtesy of First Steps Kent and Isabel Media Studios

Provide the *PreK* workforce with adequate support, skills, and knowledge to include and educate multilingual learners. *PreK for All* should invest in strategies that build the skills and knowledge of the workforce to implement inclusive practices and work with multilingual learners, including the following:

- Review early educator competencies that the state deems necessary to be successful in an inclusive environment and with children who are multilingual learners.
- Review and incentivize coursework in higher education programs that supports inclusive and culturally and linguistically appropriate practices; and
- Invest in and promote access to professional development specifically designed for understanding how best to work with children with disabilities in an inclusive environment and that provides strategies to support multilingual learners in PreK classrooms.



4. Connect *PreK for All* to the Overall Early Learning and Care System

Goal

PreK for All must work seamlessly in the early education system, as well as coordinate with and leverage other programs and services within the system.

Considerations

PreK programming is only one component of a comprehensive birth-to-five early learning and care system, which operates at the intersection of the early learning and care and K-12 systems. A frequently discussed concern about *PreK for All* was the impact that expansion would have on the broader birth-to-kindergarten system, with a particular emphasis on reducing the capacity of care for children birth through age three.

PreK expansion could negatively impact the supply of infant and toddler care. Community members, through input sessions and feedback forms, consistently expressed profound concerns about potential negative consequences of the expansion. Private-pay child care providers expressed apprehension that they may be forced out of business or that

the birth-through-age-three care market may be destabilized. One virtual input session attendee from Central Michigan stated: “I think that everybody needs to understand that it is greatly going to impact daycare centers and daycare homes, group daycare homes, and something needs to be done to support them.” This concern is warranted based on research on PreK expansion in other localities.⁹³ Three interconnected issues drive this concern.

First, there is apprehension about the extent to which the full spectrum of early learning and care providers would be able to participate in *PreK for All* and what will happen to those who cannot or are not interested in participating. Since infants and toddlers are typically served in community settings rather than school-based programs, barriers to participation may lead to the loss of four-year-olds to the public school system or participating PreK providers. Without four-year-olds to subsidize the high costs of infant and toddler care, community-based providers not in *PreK for All* may be forced to close—consequently reducing the supply of infant and toddler care available across the state. This concern is motivation for the earlier recommendation to open *PreK for All* to a range of private-pay providers while building in supports to fully meet the standards over time.

Second, even with a pathway to *PreK for All* participation, the consistent and stable funding public PreK provides can incentivize delivery of care to four-year-olds at the expense of care for younger children.⁹⁴ Because the cost of providing care to infants and toddlers is so much higher than the cost of providing education and care to four-year-old children, *PreK for All* may function as an incentive to expand classrooms for four-year-old children while unintentionally incentivizing providers to decrease their space to serve infants and toddlers.

Finally, the creation of a strong PreK program with higher compensation and more supports could drive infant and toddler teachers to PreK, further exacerbating the capacity issues the state is experiencing with infant and toddler care.⁹⁵ Relatedly, the increased compensation of *PreK for All* could have disproportionate impacts on community-based settings because “providers may be reluctant to increase salaries only for certain PreK teachers, while being unable to increase salaries for other teachers, some of whom may be doing equivalent work, have equivalent qualifications, or may even have significantly greater tenure and experience, yet earn much less.”⁹⁶

Families interact with the early education and care system, not one program at a time. Through community input, it is evident that families find it challenging to navigate the multiple services and programs they need. Stakeholders expressed an increased need for mental health supports for children and the comprehensive set of services families need to stabilize and thrive physically, mentally, and financially. Further, a significant theme centered on the question of “trust” between families and their experience interfacing with the broader early learning and care system. *PreK for All* presents an important opportunity to improve partnerships with other early learning and care services and programs and to promote smoother transitions between programs (e.g., before- and after-care and special education services) while simultaneously connecting families to comprehensive child and family services.



Bright Beginnings Playgroup, Photo Courtesy of First Steps Kent and Isabel Media Studios, Grand Rapids, MI

Recommendations

4.1 Be aware of the potential impact on infant and toddler care.

The implementation of *PreK for All* must carefully monitor its impact on the availability of infant and toddler care. Michiganders should determine the adequacy of its current infant and toddler subsidy reimbursement rates through cost-of-care modeling. The state could also explore initiatives to build the capacity of infant and toddler care like other states that have expanded PreK. For example, Colorado created an action plan that resulted in expanding infant and toddler care through family child care. This was accompanied by recommendations for operational supports, professional development, child care licensing, regulation, and policy review.⁹⁷ In a different approach, in Multnomah County, Oregon, the Infant and Toddler Slot Preservation Fund provides additional payments to incentivize providers to keep infant and toddler slots.⁹⁸

In addition to supporting providers in covering the cost of quality care for infant and toddlers, the state must continue to address workforce concerns across the early learning and care system. Michigan is already using federal child care funds to implement infant and toddler contracts, and this policy can support providers in paying infant and toddler teachers more. As an initial step, Michigan may consider expanding this approach. Michigan should also continue to engage early childhood stakeholders as policy partners to identify deficits across the early care and education system. Resources such as the proposed wage scale, needs assessments conducted through the Regional Child Care Planning Grants, and the community-based efforts of family child care networks will all be important assets.^{99,100}

These challenges cannot be ignored as *PreK for All* is implemented or Michigan risks a common pitfall of public policy: solving one problem by creating a new one.

4.2 Build strong partnerships between *PreK for All* and other early education services and programs.

A universal program like *PreK for All* can connect families to other programs that help children meet their milestones and thrive. This could include additional support for healthy social emotional development (and infant and early childhood mental health consultants), connections for child care, referrals to early childhood special education, and family-specific supports (such as help applying for public assistance or connecting with state scholarship programs). Michigan can consider approaches such as conducting an inventory of the services and programs available to young children and families to understand how to incorporate better alignment, reduce redundancies, and create a more cohesive approach. User experience approaches such as journey or experience mapping with providers and families can also uncover pain points and opportunities for better alignment, guidance, and policies.¹⁰¹ *PreK for All* should be connected to other services to support a seamless experience for teachers, parents, and children.

4.3 Align PreK with kindergarten.

PreK for All programming must work to facilitate the transition from early learning and care into kindergarten. *PreK for All* should implement best practice PreK-to-kindergarten transition strategies, including data sharing, joint professional development, and curriculum alignment.¹⁰² From a state-level perspective, improving connections between PreK and K-12 data can provide important context to answer policy questions about whether the state is meeting goals for kindergarten readiness.¹⁰³ While Michigan has made strong progress in tracking linked data between public PreK and Head Start, it cannot



Grand Rapids Community College, Grand Rapids, MI. Photo Courtesy of First Steps Kent and Isabel Media Studios

link student-level public PreK data to its K-12 data system.¹⁰⁴ When elementary schools and PreK programs are able to share data on incoming kindergarten students, it can ease the transition experience.¹⁰⁵ For example, educators have useful data to tailor instruction immediately, rather than spending time at the beginning of the year formally and informally assessing student strengths and areas for additional support.

Similarly, joint professional development offers opportunities for PreK and kindergarten staff to share information, receive consistent messaging through training to apply in their environments, and think about how to enhance alignment—all of which supports smoother transitions for young children.

Finally, aligning curriculum and other instructional practices avoids disruption by building on children’s prior learning in an integrated manner. Strong transition activities support consistent experiences for children and build on the foundation of a high-quality PreK experience.

“I raised my family in Michigan and when it was time for [my kids] to think about having their own families, they were very selective about where they wanted to move. They looked at what family supports were available, what the preschool was, and what the child care situation was before they decided to set up their adult professional lives. I think PreK for All is an awesome opportunity to hopefully reverse some of the people who are leaving our state and convince them to stay here and put down roots and help us rebuild.”

— Community Input Session Attendee, Northern Michigan



What’s Next?

Making the Vision a Reality: A Roadmap for Implementing PreK for All outlines urgent, practical steps leaders can take at the local, regional, and state level to meet the goal of 75 percent of four-year-olds enrolled in *PreK for All* by 2027. The Action Team recognizes that the document does not outline every strategy for a high-quality early learning and care system. Rather, the Roadmap prioritizes changes that can have an immediate impact on behalf of children and families and the educators, programs, and leaders that serve them. During implementation, *PreK for All* stakeholders will continue to identify needs, gaps, and policy challenges that this Roadmap does not contemplate. Michigan already conducts a regular evaluation of the GSRP program and should continue to do so with a focus on the continuous improvement of *PreK for All* implementation. As the expansion evolves and grows, so too should the Roadmap, remaining grounded in its five guiding principles.

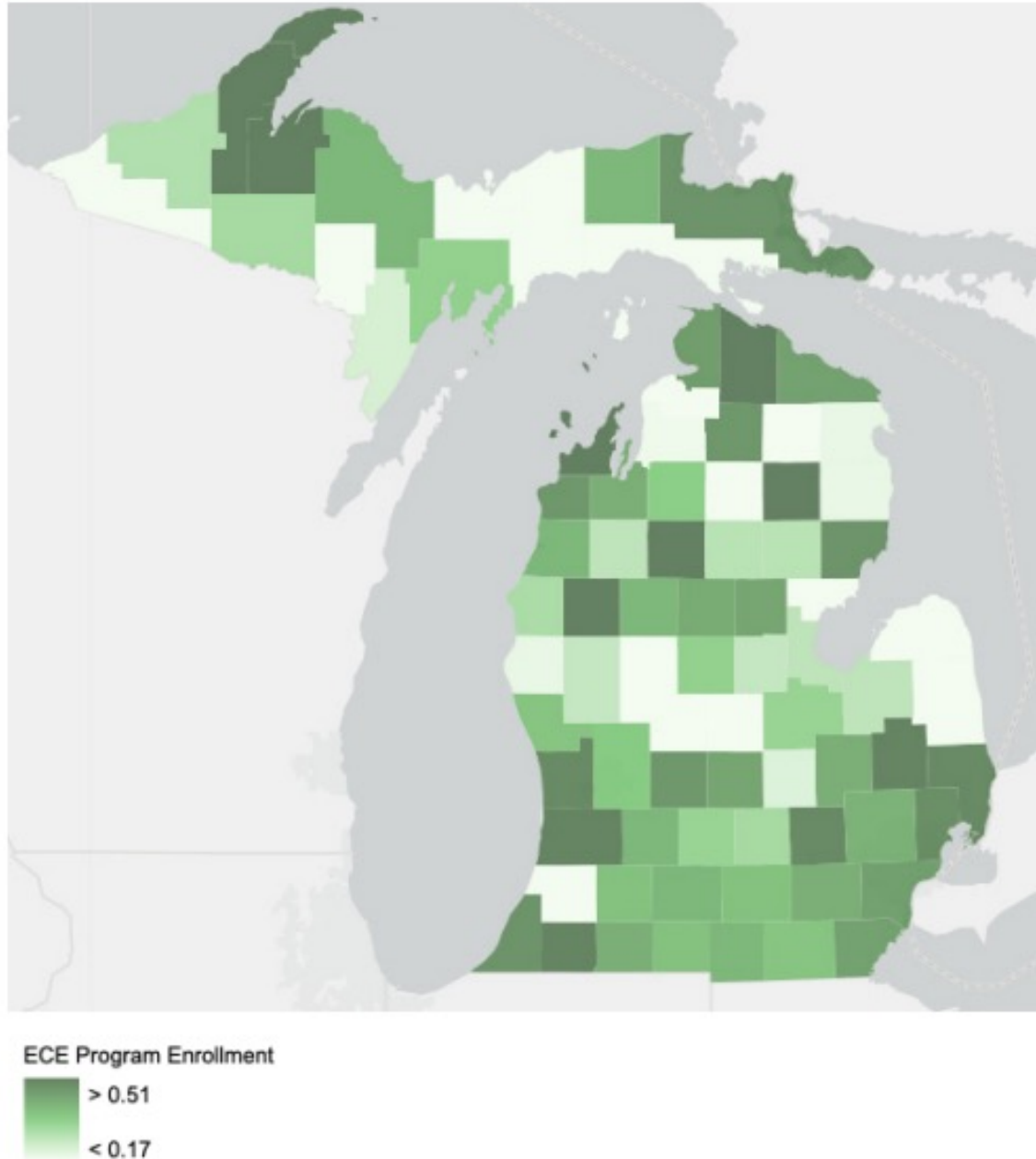
From the beginning, one message has been clear from the input of over 4,200 Michiganders who participated in this process: *PreK for All* is a benefit to children and families across the state. One respondent summarized the sentiment: “Providing an affordable preschool foundation for our children that helps foster a love of learning and success in their primary educational environment, and beyond, should be a priority for Michigan.” While the expansion will require a good deal of work, *PreK for All* champions across Michigan are ready to meet this challenge on behalf of children and families, understanding that the expansion will require an “all hands on deck” approach.

What lies ahead is an exciting journey that will shape the future of PreK and early learning and care in Michigan.

Appendix A.

Map of the Proportion of Michigan's Four-Year-Olds Enrolled in Any Kind of PreK, 2020-2021

Figure A.1: Proportion of Michigan four-year-olds enrolled in any kind of PreK in 2020-2021, at the county level¹⁰⁶



A team of researchers with the University of Michigan examined PreK enrollment across Michigan. They found that enrollment in any PreK option at age four varies across Michigan as shown in **Figure A.1** above, “with proportionately few children enrolled in some counties (light colors) and very high levels enrolled in others (dark colors).” Interactive maps were also provided to exhibit regional variations: <https://arcg.is/1HLyOz>.¹⁰⁷

According to the research team’s note on this figure on page 9 of their report: “Map illustrates the share of 4-year-olds enrolled in the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP), Head Start (HS) programs, GSRP/HS blended programs, Transitional Kindergarten programs, and licensed child care programs in SY 2022-23.” Data sources are explained in Appendix B of the researcher’s report.¹⁰⁸

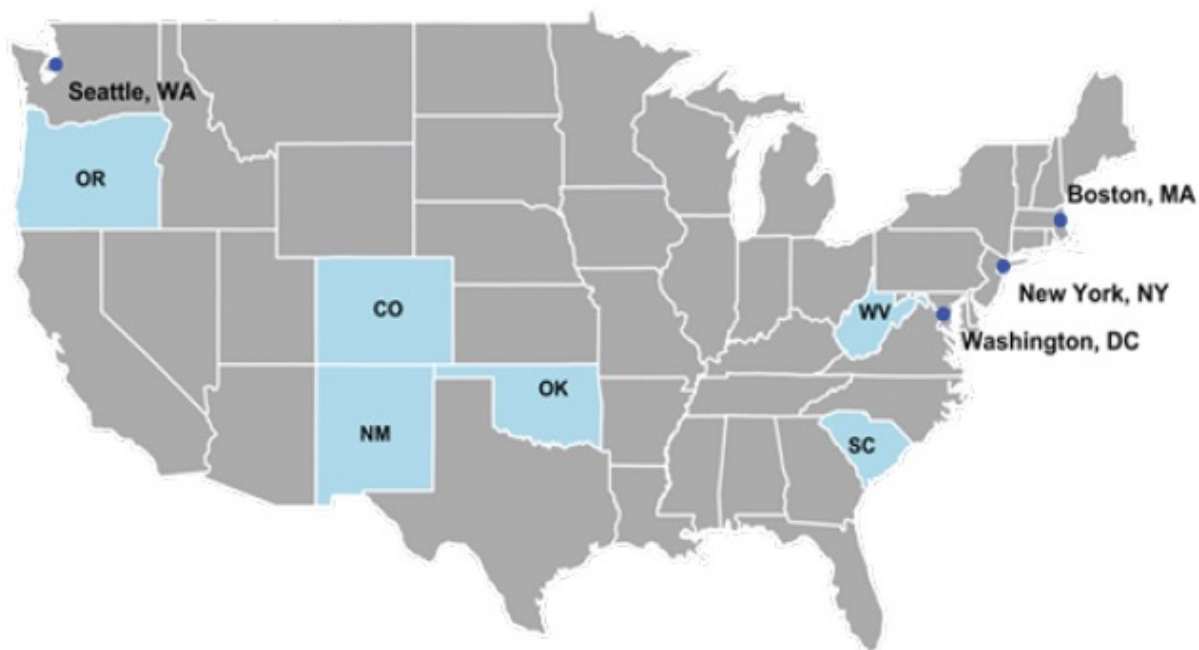
Appendix B.

Summary of Lessons Learned from 10 Localities Across the U.S.

A team of researchers from the University of Michigan conducted background interviews with leaders involved in 10 different large-scale PreK systems.¹⁰⁹ Localities included are shown in **Figure B.1**. They explain that they chose localities to balance a number of factors that affect program success, such as pace and timing of scale-up, quality, number of children served, urbanicity/rurality, and demographics.

The background interviews “included questions on lessons learned, successes, and challenges regarding PreK expansion and implementation, particularly around important decision points such as enrollment strategies, workforce, mixed-delivery systems across public schools and community-based programs, inclusion, program design elements (curriculum, ratios, coaching, other professional development, etc.), and governance.”¹¹⁰

Figure B.1: Localities included in background interviews in Weiland et al., 2023¹¹¹



The themes from their report can be found on pages 36-37 of Weiland et. al. 2023 and are quoted below:¹¹²

“Workforce education and training: Localities have generally used PreK expansions as opportunities to increase the educational and training requirements of the teaching workforce. More concretely, this tends to entail a BA minimum for lead teachers, consistent with the recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences and the National Institute for Early Education Research.

Pathways for educators: Raising the bar on teacher education and training has also required new investments and innovative thinking on pathways to a BA and beyond for both current preschool teachers and the next generation of pre-school teachers.

Compensation: Many localities have used PreK expansions as opportunities to raise teacher pay, and to pay PreK teachers with the same credentials as their K-12 counterparts with parity. Ensuring benefits parity across all PreK settings has proven even more challenging. Pay is seen as critical to recruiting and retaining a high-quality workforce.

Mixed-delivery approach: As cited in our report, nearly all states with public PreK programs use a mixed-delivery approach with classrooms in public schools and community-based centers. This approach has many benefits, like expanded choice for parents, faster scale-up, and stabilization of the 0-3 workforce. Ensuring equity across settings has been challenging in large-scale programs but is essential for delivering on high-quality experiences for all children.

Inclusion: Increasing the inclusion of preschoolers with disabilities alongside their typically developing peers has been a priority in many PreK expansions, requiring specific investments and policy changes.

Importance of piloting and evaluation: The research and practice base for early education is expansive, but it does not cover all the important policy and practice issues that localities must grapple with when implementing expanded high-quality PreK. When faced with uncertainty around a particular decision point, localities tend to pilot and carefully test programmatic element options.

Facilities: Localities tend to make one-time capital investments where needed during PreK expansions. Facilities tend to be a minor cost driver at start-up, relative to other investment categories, and especially over time. Facilities are not usually a major barrier to expansion, though specifics of needed investments depend on mixed-delivery policies and variation in the respective capacities of public schools and community-based programs."

Appendix C.

Summary of Findings from Community Engagement Process

The findings from the community engagement process are a summation of responses from over 4,200 individuals across Michigan. Data was gathered from 18 interviews, 12 community input sessions, and over 3,000 respondents on an online feedback form. These findings, discussed below, are based on an analysis of all three data gathering methods, and were shared in a separate, hour-long presentation with the Action Team in addition to monthly summaries beginning in July 2023. A summary of the protocols used and subsequent data analysis are described in further detail in Appendices D-G.¹

Benefits/Opportunities of *PreK for All*

Stakeholders universally shared that *PreK for All* benefits children and families in Michigan. Data from the feedback form and community input sessions showed three perceived benefits of PreK expansion for children and families:

1. PreK prepares children for kindergarten.
2. PreK supports social and emotional growth of children.
3. PreK assists families in need of support due to employment or financial challenges.

Parents that had enrolled children in the GSRP program discussed these benefits and their positive impacts on the family at length. Further, both Intermediate School Districts (ISDs) and current GSRP providers frequently discussed the exceptional quality of the program, as evidenced by the outcomes for children. Early childhood stakeholders—including tuition-based programs not currently part of GSRP—thought that access to publicly funded PreK was a positive benefit for families, especially for those in need of work support or financial relief.

Additionally, current GSRP providers shared that the per-child allocation was predictable, economically benefiting the program. ISDs expressed that the high quality standards of GSRP made an expansion of the program a worthwhile endeavor.

Opportunities

Communities also saw potential opportunities in the proposed expansion. Three recurrent themes were that *PreK for All* may be an opportunity to:

- Raise wages for the early education workforce in addition to conferring more respect on the profession of early education.
- Improve coordination of services for families, particularly for children with disabilities or developmental delays.
- Attract more young families to Michigan as a tool for economic and community redevelopment.

Challenges/Concerns about *PreK for All*

While Michiganders largely agreed that children and families would benefit from the expansion, they also identified numerous challenges. Three significant challenges identified across the feedback form and community input sessions are:

Recruiting and retaining a PreK workforce. The challenges facing the early education workforce were by far the number one concern raised by stakeholders in Michigan. Across the community input sessions, the most frequent concern written on the “challenge notecards” centered on finding staff for early learning classrooms. This was further corroborated by responses from the feedback form. The early education community made it abundantly clear that the success of the expansion is dependent on addressing the early childhood workforce crisis.

Impact of a PreK expansion on the birth-to-five system. Another frequent concern expressed in community input sessions and on the feedback form was the potential impact of the expansion on the birth-to-five system. Specifically, communities shared concern that *PreK for All* would transition four-year-olds away from tuition-based early learning

¹ A technical appendix is available upon request.

providers, who cannot stay in business only serving infants and toddlers. Communities worried that the implication of this would be two-fold: 1) tuition-based providers would go out of business if they were not invited to join the expansion, and 2) the supply of infant and toddler care in Michigan would suffer.

Ensuring *PreK for All* meets the needs of families in Michigan. There was concern that the PreK expansion would not ultimately meet the needs of Michigan families. This finding was based on feedback and questions about how families interact with—or are unable to access—various systems in Michigan including but not limited to GSRP and Head Start, mental health services such as Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH), early childhood special education, and transportation.

In addition to these top three challenges, there were additional topics that were also mentioned frequently, but with slightly less urgency. These included (in no particular order):

- **Facilities (classroom space).** Communities were concerned about how and where an expansion would find enough developmentally appropriate, high-quality classroom space. This concern was driven by public schools, Head Start, and community-based providers. This was also raised during a licensing discussion, in a community input session, about the time it takes to get a PreK program licensed and operational. Public schools shared additional frustrations about the requirement to undergo a licensing process for a GSRP classroom when they are already approved for kindergarten children.
- **Enrollment.** Communities wanted assurance that the lowest-resource families would be served first in a GSRP expansion. This was a topic that came up with some frequency across all three methods of data collection (community input sessions, interviews, and feedback forms).
- **Quality.** ISDs, policymakers, and current GSRP providers expressed their appreciation for the high-quality standards of the GSRP program, but stated that any expansion would need to find a way to maintain quality as the program grows.
- **Home-based providers.** The role of home-based providers was a significant topic at every community input session. Currently ineligible, home-based providers shared their interest in being invited to participate in the program. Current GSRP providers and administrators that attended community input sessions generally viewed home-based providers as a viable option and way to support the expansion.
- **Autonomy in implementation.** GSRP providers and ISDs all stated that the implementation of the program could be administratively challenging. This was a common concern shared by public school staff. Further, tuition-based providers expressed reluctance to join because they wished to retain autonomy over their program curricula and operations.

Other Concerns

- **Divergent perspectives on five days a week.** Families and GSRP providers offered contrasting opinions about the duration of *PreK for All*. Working families preferred five-day-a-week programming that would align with their Monday-through-Friday work week. While GSRP providers acknowledged and agreed that working families required care for their children five days a week, they also shared why implementation would be challenging. The fifth day provides staff important time to plan lessons, engage with families, conduct home visits, and complete the administrative requirements of the program. Without stronger support for teachers or breaks built into the rest of their week, implementing PreK five days a week would be a challenge to teachers and program directors. GSRP staff at ISDs, schools, and early learning centers also shared hesitation about whether five days a week was developmentally appropriate for four-year-old children.
- **Early educators are considered “babysitters” rather than experts in their field.** Broadly, early educators across the birth-to-five system expressed frustration that their work is not taken seriously and pointed to their low wages as proof of the adage, “a budget reflects your values.” Their major ask was that their professional expertise be valued. Specific to *PreK for All*, current GSRP providers in school-based settings expressed concern that many school administrators had limited understanding of what it is like to operate a PreK classroom and that school policies may

not always be developmentally appropriate for four-year-old classrooms. Community-based settings shared that the administrative rules, especially around materials procurement, were stringent and difficult to operationalize, driven by a compliance-focused mentality. Instead, educators across settings expressed a desire to be viewed as partners and experts in their field rather than one more aspect of a program to oversee.

- **Relationships, trust, and autonomy.** Across input activities, respondents reiterated the importance of trust and relationships as an anchor for successful PreK expansion and sustainability. Early learning and care subgrantees discussed the ease with which the program functioned when there was mutual trust between programs and the ISD. ISDs and GSRP providers expressed a desire for greater autonomy and flexibility. Finally, families also discussed challenges pertaining to their interactions with larger systems intended to serve them, including but not limited to the early childhood system. Continuing to cultivate trusting relationships between all stakeholders will be critical.

Appendix D.

PreK for All Community Input Process

To inform Michigan's *PreK for All* implementation, Policy Equity Group and Southern Imaginations¹⁰⁹ collaborated to engage in several activities to learn from over 4,200 early childhood stakeholders in Michigan: families, educators, providers, local program administrators, local and regional early childhood leaders, state-level early childhood program administrators, early childhood advocates, and community members.

Community input activities were designed to provide an understanding of how GSRP is currently implemented and its impact on providers, administrators, and families. Community input also functioned to forecast potential challenges that need to be pre-emptively addressed in the *PreK for All* Roadmap, as well as opportunities that could be expanded upon.

The team engaged in three types of data collection activities to gather information from a robust set of voices across Michigan and its early childhood system: structured interviews and focus groups, community input sessions, and an on-line feedback form. Table D.1 provides an overview of the purpose and participation rates of each activity. Further detail on participants is available in Appendix E.

Table D.1. Activity, Purpose, and Participation Overview

Activity	Purpose	Participation
Structured Interviews and Focus Groups	Learn about key considerations for PreK expansion from the perspective of a variety of stakeholders in the ECE system: state administrators of early childhood programs (PreK, child care), Head Start, special education. Inform development of community input session topics and areas in the feedback form.	18 interviews and focus groups
Community Input Sessions	Learn about challenges, opportunities, and preferences from ISDs, public schools, families, providers, and others across the state who self-identified as impacted by the early learning system.	386 attendees
Online Feedback Form	Collect information about challenges, potential solutions, and preferences from families, providers, and others in the early learning system.	3,882 individuals

Community Input Participants

The three activities reached a large number of individuals in Michigan representing different stakeholder perspectives, including parents, early educators, child care business owners, public school leaders, and other stakeholders as seen in **Table D.2**. Community input sessions and the feedback form elicited feedback from Michiganders across the state, offering geographic diversity in perspectives. The feedback form received responses from all 83 counties in Michigan. Further, community input sessions were held in multiple regions of Michigan. Appendix F includes a map of each community input session.

Table D.2. Community Input Participation, by Stakeholder Group

Stakeholder Group	Total		Community Input Session	Feedback Form
Parent or Guardian	1,696	=	23	1,673
Early Care and Education Provider (Center-Based, Head Start)	982	=	173	809
Home-Based Child Care Provider	94	=	68	26
ISD/K-12 Staff, Admin, Educator	635	=	49	586
Other (e.g. grandparents, retired educators, and concerned citizens)	436	=	58	378
Community Business Leader or Elect- ed Official	31	=	6	25

Appendix E.

Interview Protocol

Interviews and focus groups were held from May 2023 through July 2023 via Zoom or by phone call and lasted approximately one hour. Informed consent was obtained verbally.² Interview questions sought to understand interviewees' perspective on how to:

- Build the capacity of the state's early childhood system to successfully implement the expansion (e.g., classroom space, participation of child care providers, considerations for meeting special needs, multilingual learners, technical assistance needs);
- Align and leverage other early childhood initiatives taking place in the state to support the expansion (e.g., Head Start, the Child Development and Care program, home visiting, Tri-Share, apprenticeships, regional child care planning grants, family child care networks, transitional kindergarten, facilities funding);
- Implement strategies to make sure newly eligible families take advantage of GSRP (who is more/less likely to participate; barriers to participation; communication strategies); and
- Learn from innovations that are taking place in communities that may support GSRP expansion.

The majority of questions were the same across interviews, with added questions tailored to the specific perspective of the interviewee (e.g., how ISDs provide technical assistance, how Head Start grantees blend and braid GSRP and Head Start funds). Interview responses also provided a baseline to inform an understanding of Michigan's early learning and care eco-system, potential barriers and opportunities with PreK expansion, and areas to explore further in community input sessions and the feedback form.

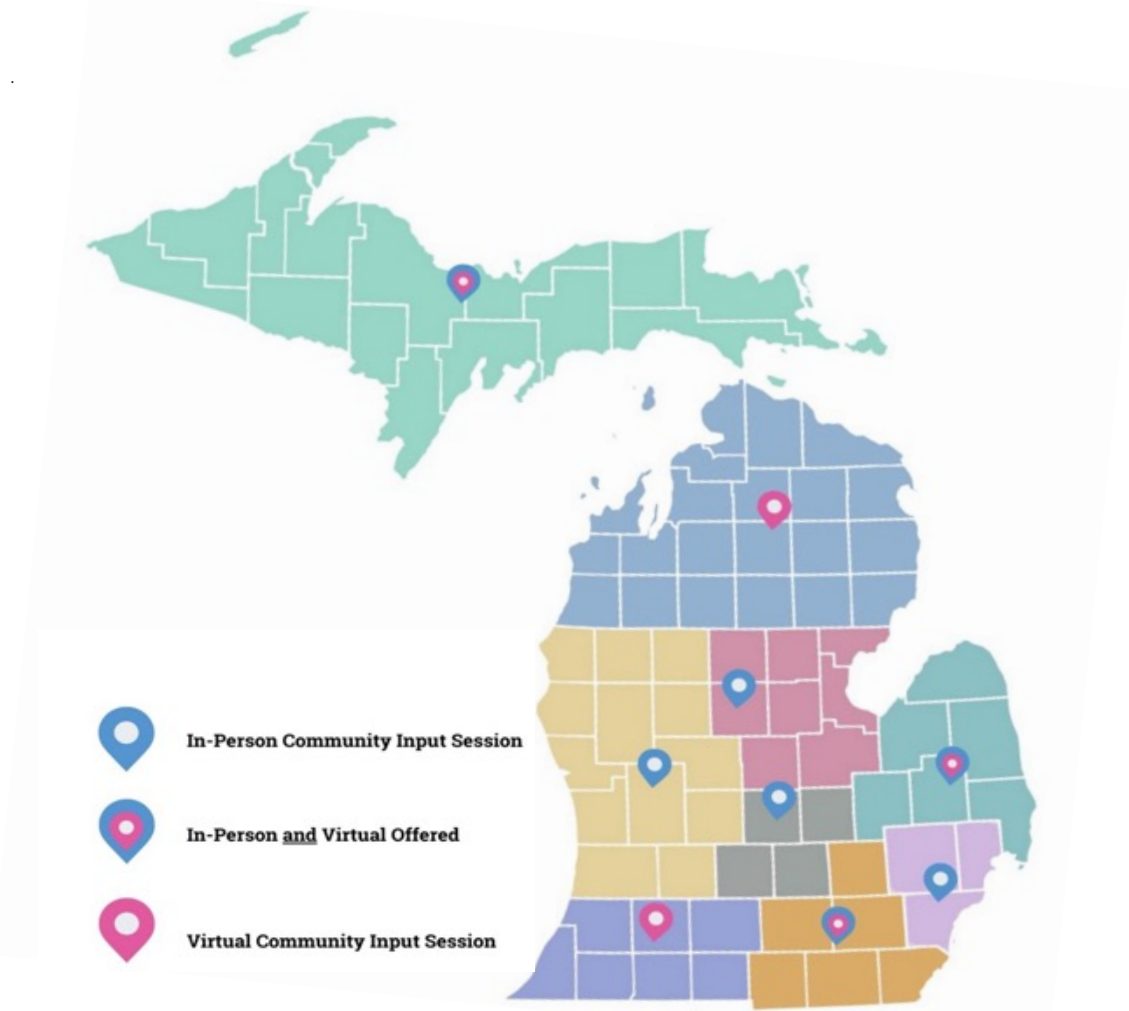
² One interview was held in October 2023 in response to a need for further information on special education and PreK.

Appendix F.

Community Input Session Overview and Protocol

Community input sessions were held to elicit the experiences and insights of Michiganders about *PreK for All* from across the state. Figure F.1 shows the regions of Michigan and location of the input sessions. Michigan regions are defined by the Michigan Association of Superintendents & Administrators (MASA).¹¹³ Policy Equity Group and Southern Imaginations partnered with a trusted institution in the region to host each session. These are organizations that have trusted relationships with the early learning community. The Policy Equity Group and Southern Imaginations team worked with the regional partners to identify a meeting location that would be comfortable and accessible to community members so that they could understand the community context, engage in outreach, and make the event a welcoming and inclusive space.

Figure F.1: Regions of Michigan Where Community Input Sessions Were Hosted



While most regional community input sessions were held in person, two regions (1, 7) directed community members to their region-specific virtual session because it would be difficult for individuals to attend an in-person session (e.g., long driving distance). To support access for those who could not attend in-person, five virtual sessions were conducted by region (Southern Michigan; Western, Eastern, Central Michigan; Upper Peninsula; Southwest Michigan; Northern Michigan), but participants were welcome to join from anywhere. To register for an event, individuals were directed to a Michigan *PreK for All* website (developed and maintained by Policy Equity Group) where they could click on a link to register for the regional input session they wanted to attend. Registration was managed through Eventbrite. Registrants received reminders the day before and the morning of the session.

Community input sessions—in-person and virtual—lasted approximately 1.5 hours and followed similar agenda and protocol, described below.

- **Welcome, Agenda, and Level Setting.** The facilitation team initiated the session by welcoming participants, reviewing the agenda, and providing contextual information on *PreK for All*.
- **Individual Reflection on Challenges and Opportunities.** Participants were tasked with reflecting individually on their motivations for attending, challenges related to *PreK for All*, and opportunities tied to the program. In the case of in-person sessions, participants used notecards (green for motivation to attend, blue for challenges, and yellow for opportunities). This allowed for thoughtful reflection and generated data for the Policy Equity Group and Southern Imaginations team’s analysis. Virtual participants reflected silently and then provided feedback in the chat, which was saved and served as a data source for the Policy Equity Group and Southern Imaginations staff.
- **Pair and Share (in-person).** In face-to-face sessions, participants engaged in discussions with the person next to them about their reflections.
- **Full Group Discussion.** The Policy Equity Group and Southern Imaginations facilitated a discussion among all participants, organizing comments into categories based on broad themes that had repeatedly been mentioned during the interview process: facilities, recruiting and retaining staff, administrative burden, children and family experiences, maintaining quality and expansion, and mixed delivery. For in-person sessions, Policy Equity Group and Southern Imaginations staff summarized participant comments on large sticky notes displayed around the room, and categorized them. Online conversations utilized various methods such as Google Jam Boards, Alchemer surveys, and Zoom chat. Methods were adapted as sessions progressed for participant ease.
- **Small Group Topical Conversations.** To support more in-depth conversations, input sessions had participants select one of the seven category areas for more in-depth discussions.³ Facilitated by the Policy Equity Group and Southern Imaginations staff, these 30-minute sessions involved exercises to discuss what success would look like, necessary changes for success, what was working well, and who needed to be involved. Notes were recorded based on group consensus.
- **Raffle.** In-person participants received a raffle ticket at sign-in, and Policy Equity Group and Southern Imaginations staff selected three prize winners (two \$50 Visa cards; one \$100 Visa card). Virtual sessions randomly selected one attendee through an online name generator to receive a \$100 Visa card.
- **Next steps.** Staff concluded the session with an opportunity to provide final comments. In-person participants left their notecards in the meeting room, which were then collected by Policy Equity Group and Southern Imaginations staff.

The note-taking template consisted of the following questions, with space for the facilitator to write notes and summaries.

[Regional Name] PreK for All Community Input Session Notes	
Breakout Session Topic:	
Facilitator:	
What would success look like when this challenge is solved?	
To reach success, what needs to change (e.g., policies, communication, resource allocation, etc.)?	
To reach success, what’s important to continue (i.e., what’s worked well)?	
Who needs to be involved, and how, to make this happen?	
What relationships need to be made or tended to?	

Data from community input sessions included notecards (in-person; n=492 “challenge” cards; n=253 “opportunity” cards), virtual input session transcripts from audio recording and chat conversation (n=5 transcripts; n=5 chat text), sticky note summaries (in-person; n=40 sticky notes), and note-taking forms (in-person and virtual; n=42). These documents were analyzed using a coding scheme developed by Policy Equity Group staff.

³ If attendance was smaller, the full group conversation continued and facilitators focused on specific topic areas.

Appendix G.

Feedback Form Structure, Overview, and Description of Analysis

The online feedback form explored respondents' hopes, challenges/concerns, required resources, and preferences for PreK with the goal of informing the *PreK for All* Roadmap. Participants self-selected the category that they felt best described their perspective for taking the survey: parent/guardian, ECE provider/staff, family friend/neighbor care provider, ISD/K-12 staff, concerned citizen, elected official, business leader, or "other." Respondents then received questions tailored to their specific perspective within Michigan's PreK system via programmed skip logic. The survey explored various aspects related to the PreK system, seeking insights from different stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive understanding of different experiences. Questions covered a range of topics, including individual PreK preferences, challenges encountered when receiving or administering care, supports and guidance needed to expand PreK, and more.

The form remained open on the Alchemer survey platform from June 30, 2023 to October 27, 2023. Outreach efforts were undertaken through various channels, including:

- Multiple announcements from Governor Whitmer's office;
- Distribution by community partners through the Michigan Early Childhood Community of Practice, a community of organizations and advocates from the regions of Detroit, Kent County, Grand Rapids, and other communities that work to align and coordinate policy opportunities in the field of early childhood;
- Sharing among Michigan's Great Start Collaboratives; and
- Distribution to individuals who registered for or attended an input session to share with their networks.

Upon closing the survey, a Policy Equity Group staff member with expertise in quantitative analysis cleaned and conducted descriptive analyses of the data using Stata 15.1. Open-ended survey questions and data from interviews were stored in Excel.

Endnotes

Executive Summary

¹The states with the highest enrollment rates across the US are Florida (68 percent) and Oklahoma (65 percent). Washington, DC has an enrollment rate of 83 percent. Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett, W. S., Hodges, K. S., Garver, K. A., Weisenfeld, G. G., Gardiner, B. A., & Jost, T. M. (2023). *The State of Preschool Yearbook 2022*. National Institute for Early Education Research. <https://nieer.org/the-state-of-preschool-yearbook-2022>

²Ibid.

³See graphic on page 10 of the report. Numbers in this graphic are derived from quantitative estimates completed by Weiland et al. (2023). Their document states the following: “The population of 4-year-olds in Michigan in SY 2022-23 is based on the number of 3-year-olds in an estimate from the 2021 American Community Survey, specifically 118,000 4-year-olds. Head Start enrollment is from the 2022-23 Head Start Program Information Report. GSRP, GSRP/HS blend, and TK enrollment are from administrative student records in SY 2022-23 from the Michigan Education Research Institute (MERI). TK enrollment is from MERI student data in SY 2021-22. Not all school districts with TK report student-level TK enrollment. For districts that do not report TK enrollment, we infer enrollment based on grade progression patterns as explained in Appendix B. The fraction of children in subsidized licensed childcare is from the Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services Fiscal Year 2020. Enrollment in private pay licensed child care is the difference between total child care enrollment (calculated from the 2015-2019 5-year American Community Survey) and estimated enrollment in publicly funded and subsidized licensed childcare” (p. 6). Weiland, C., Chaudry, A., Shapiro, A., Berne, J., Hyland, K., Hamp, N., & Taylor, A. (2023). *An Evidence-Based Path to Expanding High Quality Pre-K in Michigan*. University of Michigan. https://edpolicy.umich.edu/sites/epi/files/2023-12/MI%20Pre-K%20for%20All%20Report_v8_0.pdf

⁴Michigan’s state-funded transitional kindergarten (TK) program—Young Fives—provides an optional extra year of prekindergarten for children who turn five between June 1 and September 1. Each school district in the state has the discretion to administer a TK program. Shapiro, A., Garcia, K.C., Jacob, B., Musaddiq, T., Owusu S., and Weiland, C. (2023). *Michigan Transitional Kindergarten: A First Look at Program Reach and Features*. University of Michigan. <https://edpolicy.umich.edu/research/epi-policy-briefs/michigan-transitional-kindergarten-first-look-program-reach-and-features>

⁵Private-pay programs include home-based providers, as well as non-profit and for-provide early learning and care centers. These also include public schools that run private-pay programs within their school districts. Some of the private-pay programs also accept the child care and development fund subsidies.

⁶The numbers are based on quantitative estimates originally provided by Weiland et. al (2023). The numbers included in this report are larger as they do not include an assumption about how expansion dollars from 2023 may have expanded capacity of the GSRP. Given the number of factors at play, including the rate at which 2023 expansion dollars are being drawn down, it is difficult to calculate a precise estimate. All estimates have been rounded. Weiland, C., Chaudry, A., Shapiro, A., Berne, J., Hyland, K., Hamp, N., & Taylor, A. (2023). *An Evidence-Based Path to Expanding High Quality Pre-K in Michigan*. University of Michigan. https://edpolicy.umich.edu/sites/epi/files/2023-12/MI%20Pre-K%20for%20All%20Report_v8_0.pdf

⁷These estimations assume a maximum class size of 18 children in current GSRP standards.

⁸Harmeyer, E., Weisenfeld, G., & Frede, E. (2023). *Including Family Child Care (FCC) Programs in Publicly-Funded Pre-K: Conditions for Success*. The National Institute for Early Education Research. <https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/HomeGrown-NIEER-FCC-Report-final.3.31.pdf>

⁹This recommendation was inspired by the city of Boston, which also provided start-up grants to community-based organizations. City of Boston. (2023). *Steps Taken to Increase Availability of Variety of Preschool Seats for Boston Families*. [Press Release]. <https://www.boston.gov/news/steps-taken-increase-availability-variety-preschool-seats-boston-families>

¹⁰This role could also be a subgrant to trusted community partners.

¹¹Given the criteria for participation in Table 1, 60 percent of all private-pay center-based providers and 43 percent of home-based providers that participate in Great Start to Quality will immediately be eligible to join *PreK for All* (Great Start to Quality, 2023). As shown in Figure 1, private-pay programs serve 19 percent, or 22,420, of Michigan’s children. On average, home-based providers are serving 19 percent of preschoolers in care (Office of Child Care, 2022). In other states, PreK participation by home-based providers is low (Harmeyer et. al., 2023). Therefore, we made a conservative assumption that 25 percent of all home-based programs will join the *PreK for All* pilot, and assumed all eligible centers will join. Together, this would mean a little more than half the children already in private-pay programs could join *PreK for All* immediately. Great Start to Quality. (2023). *Great Start to Quality Participation Data*. Early Childhood Investment Corporation. <https://greatstarttoquality.org/great-start-to-quality-participation-data/>; Office of Child Care. (2022, May 24). *FY 2020 Final Data Table 13—Average Monthly Percentages of Children in Child Care by Age Category and Care Type* [Data Table]. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/data/fy-2020-preliminary-data-table-13>; Harmeyer, E., Weisenfeld, G., & Frede, E. (2023). *Including Family Child Care (FCC) Programs in Publicly-Funded Pre-K: Conditions for Success*. The National Institute for Early Education Research. <https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/HomeGrown-NIEER-FCC-Report-final.3.31.pdf>

¹²Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett, W. S., Hodges, K. S., Garver, K. A., Weisenfeld, G. G., Gardiner, B. A., & Jost, T. M. (2023). *The State of Preschool Yearbook 2022*. National Institute for Early Education Research. <https://nieer.org/the-state-of-preschool-yearbook-2022>

¹³Calculation based on state evaluation that says GSRP had 2,524 classrooms (Wu et. al., 2023). Currently, class sizes are capped at 18 children with a third adult present; however, the average class size is closer to 15 children based on the number of classrooms and teachers available from 2022-2023 data and enrollment numbers from the 2022-2023 school year (Wu et al., 2023). For simplicity, it is assumed each classroom enrolls 16 children and could add 4 more children. Wu, J., Herbowicz, T., Van Egeren, L. A., & Akaeze, H. O. (2023). *Great Start Readiness Program State Evaluation 2021-22 Annual Report*. Michigan State University. <https://cep.msu.edu/upload/gsrp/GSRP%20Annual%20Report%202021-22.pdf>

¹⁴Weiland, C., Chaudry, A., Shapiro, A., Berne, J., Hyland, K., Hamp, N., & Taylor, A. (2023). *An Evidence-Based Path to Expanding High Quality Pre-K in Michigan*. University of Michigan. https://edpolicy.umich.edu/sites/epi/files/2023-12/MI%20Pre-K%20for%20All%20Report_v8_0.pdf

¹⁵This grant process could be modeled after the Caring for MI Future Facilities Improvement Fund. IFF. (2023). *Caring for MI Future: Facilities Improvement Fund*. <https://caringformi-fif.org/>

¹⁶Elharake, J. A., Shafiq, M., Cobanoglu, A., Malik, A. A., Klotz, M., Humphries, J. E., Murray, T., Patel, K. M., Wilkinson, D., Yildirim, I., Diaz, R., Rojas, R., Cohen, A. K., Lee, A., Omer, S. B., & Gilliam, W. S. (2022). Prevalence of Chronic Diseases, Depression, and Stress Among US Childcare Professionals During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Preventing Chronic Disease*, 19. <https://doi.org/10.5888/pcd19.220132>; Cobanoglu, A., Gilliam, W., & Hamm, K. (2023). Call for Papers: Early Childhood Education (ECE) Workforce Well-being. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. <https://www.journals.elsevier.com/early-childhood-research-quarterly/call-for-papers/early-childhood-education-ecce-workforce-well-being>

¹⁷Wu, J., Herbowicz, T., Van Egeren, L. A., & Akaeze, H. O. (2023). *Great Start Readiness Program State Evaluation 2021-22 Annual Report*. Michigan State University. <https://cep.msu.edu/upload/gsrp/GSRP%20Annual%20Report%202021-22.pdf>

- ¹⁸ The Michigan legislature appropriated money in both FY23 and FY24 toward a variety of initiatives to support the workforce pipeline. Mullen, J. & Benson, N. (2023). School Aid Summary of FY2023-24 Enacted Public Act 103 of 2023 (Senate Bill 173, Article1). https://www.house.mi.gov/hfa/PDF/Summaries/23s173_SchAid_Summary_Enacted.pdf
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Roadmap

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- ¹³ The six curricula are listed below and are discussed further in-depth in the GSRP Implementation Manual:
1. Reggio Emilia
 2. Project Approach
 3. Montessori
 4. HighScope
 5. Creative Curriculum
 6. Connect4Learning
- Michigan Department of Education. (2023). GSRP Implementation Manual. https://www.michigan.gov/mde/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/gsrp/implementation/implementation_manual.pdf?rev=5c49224721f84ac08caaf6f57da42f74&hash=8F61D9E5078EEE414F6E1DD42EA5C9C3
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- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Numbers in this graphic are derived from quantitative estimates completed by Weiland et al. (2023). Their document states the following: “The population of 4-year-olds in Michigan in SY 2022-23 is based on the number of 3-year-olds in an estimate from the 2021 American Community Survey, specifically 118,000 4-year-olds. Head Start enrollment is from the 2022-23 Head Start Program Information Report. GSRP, GSRP/HS blend, and TK enrollment are from administrative student records in SY 2022-23 from the Michigan Education Research Institute (MERI). TK enrollment is from MERI student data in SY 2021-22. Not all school districts with TK report student-level TK enrollment. For districts that do not report TK enrollment, we infer enrollment based on grade progression patterns, as explained in Appendix B. The fraction of children in subsidized licensed childcare is from the Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services Fiscal Year 2020. Enrollment in private pay licensed child care is the difference between total child care enrollment (calculated from the 2015-2019 5-year American Community Survey) and estimated enrollment in publicly funded and subsidized licensed childcare” (p. 6). Weiland, C., Chaudry, A., Shapiro, A., Berne, J., Hyland, K., Hamp, N., & Taylor, A. (2023). *An Evidence-Based Path to Expanding High Quality Pre-K in Michigan*. University of Michigan. https://edpolicy.umich.edu/sites/epi/files/2023-12/MI%20Pre-K%20for%20All%20Report_v8_0.pdf
- ¹⁹ Michigan’s state-funded transitional kindergarten (TK) program—Young Fives—provides an optional extra year of PreK for children who turn five between June 1st and September 1st. Each school district in the state has the discretion to administer a TK program. Shapiro, A., Garcia, K.C., Jacob, B., Musaddiq, T., Owusu S., and Weiland, C. (2023). *Michigan Transitional Kindergarten: A First Look at Program Reach and Features*. University of Michigan. <https://edpolicy.umich.edu/research/epi-policy-briefs/michigan-transitional-kindergarten-first-look-program-reach-and-features>
- ²⁰ Private-pay programs include home-based providers, as well as non-profit and for-profit early learning and care centers. These private-pay programs also include some LEAs that run private-pay programs within their school districts.

²¹ The numbers are based on quantitative estimates originally provided by Weiland et al. (2023). The numbers included in this report are larger as they do not include an assumption about how the expansion dollars from 2023 may have expanded capacity of GSRP. Given the number of factors at play, including how the rate at which the 2023 expansion dollars are being drawn down, it is difficult to calculate a precise estimate. All estimates have been rounded. Weiland, C., Chaudry, A., Shapiro, A., Berne, J., Hyland, K., Hamp, N., & Taylor, A. (2023). *An Evidence-Based Path to Expanding High Quality Pre-K in Michigan*. University of Michigan. https://edpolicy.umich.edu/sites/epi/files/2023-12/MI%20Pre-K%20for%20All%20Report_v8_0.pdf

²² These estimations assume a maximum class size of 18 children in current GSRP standards.

²³ Harmeyer, E., Weisenfeld, G., & Frede, E. (2023). Including family child care (FCC) programs in publicly-funded pre-K: Conditions for success. National Institute for Early Education Research. <https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/HomeGrown-NIEER-FCC-Report-final.3.31.pdf>

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²⁸ In Detroit, the per-classroom cost estimates ranged from \$50,000 to \$150,000. The lower end of the range reflected classrooms that needed minimal renovations, such as paint, lead remediation, adding a sink, and other small changes. The higher end of the range reflected classrooms that needed major upgrades ranging from installing new plumbing to new lighting. For the overall cost estimate and number of classrooms, see DPSCD Board meeting minutes. Detroit Public Schools Community District. (2022, May 10). *District Facility Master Plan 2022*. Regular Board Meeting. <https://go.boarddocs.com/mi/detroit/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=CE43NU07BD45>

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