

Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children
Frequently Asked Questions
Updated 3/23/09

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Each main category has the subcategories listed in the left column to expedite locating content areas. Questions under each subcategory are numbered and will be dated for subsequent postings.

I. Application

Planning **Q1: How does a district start planning a preschool program?**

A: Small school districts need to collaborate with all available community early care and education providers. If the district's only option is to house the program, consideration should be made for full-day child care of the four-year-olds since it is likely children would need full-day care.

Large districts will need to establish a community-wide, collaborative planning process as a first step towards implementation. Larger districts will want to consider neighborhood buildings with available classroom space for preschools and partnering with existing private community providers. As districts begin planning four-year-old programs, a variety of approaches will be developed and the steps necessary for planning will vary.

Q2: What are the criteria for selecting school districts that will receive preschool program funds?

A: School districts will submit an application and required supporting documents to the Department by the due date on the application, following all stipulations in the Application Packet instructions. Applications will be reviewed and scored for content by readers trained by the Department. The specific content and scoring rubrics are included with the Application Packet and Technical Assistance Guidance Manual posted on the Department Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program website.

Q3 Will a district with an existing preschool program be given priority?

A: If the number of requests received exceeds the available funds, the DE will utilize the following criteria to prioritize and determine successful applicants (IAC, Chapter 16.9):

- Priority given to districts with a high percentage of children in poverty at the elementary level and the intent to serve children in poverty;
- Priority given to districts without an existing preschool program;
- Consideration given to school districts seeking to expand preschool access through established, high quality, community partnerships; and
- Consideration given to the size of school districts to promote equitable statewide distribution of preschool program services.

Q4: What is a small, medium, and large school district?

A: The size of a school district is defined by the Basic Educational Data Survey (BEDS, 2007). A school district is categorized based on student enrollment data:

- equal to or less than 399 (small);
- 400 to 2,499 (medium); and
- 2,500 or greater (large).

**Board
Approval**

Q1: How do districts document that board approval was obtained to submit an application for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children?

A: Districts document board approval by the signature of the board president or designee in two places on the application for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program: the Cover Page and Assurances. Districts do not need to submit a copy of the board minutes where approval was received.

Note: All signatures on the original application must be original. No stamps, electronic or copied signatures will be accepted on the original application. The three copies of the application may be created from the original, thus these signatures may be copies.

Collaboration Criteria

Q1: When addressing the criteria (in the application), may school districts use the same evidence when addressing Question 2: “What evidence is provided documenting letters of support from the applicable community partners?” and Question 3: “What evidence is provided that the applicant has had existing relationships with community partners to provide quality preschool programming?”

A: School districts should refer to the Rubric for Scoring Criteria, Community Partners and Collaborative Relationships section to determine how to provide the most clear and compelling evidence of community support and existing relationships. In addition, the district will find the Technical Assistance Guidance Manual useful in providing evidence of community support and existing relationships.

Q2: What are the collaboration requirements for districts in submitting the application?

A: Collaborative requirements encompass the involvement of multiple community stakeholders, including, as applicable, parents; other school districts; accredited nonpublic schools and faith-based representatives; the area education agency; the community empowerment area board; representatives of business, Head Start programs, shared visions and other programs provided under the auspices of the child development coordinating council; center-based and home-based providers of child care services, human services, public health, and economic development programs. The methods by which such collaboration may be demonstrated include providing documentation of the development and maintenance of collaboration with community providers and other community stakeholders, evidence of a public hearing, collaboration agreements addressing operation procedures and other critical measures or assurances (IAC, Chapter 16.4(3)).

The responsibility of the school district is to adhere to the rules and the application procedures in developing collaborative relationships. Districts need to pay special attention to the Criteria for scoring and the Rubric for scoring in the Community Partners and Collaborative Relationships section of the application.

Q3: Can a district contract with a faith-based agency to provide the preschool program?

A: Yes, school districts may contract with faith-based religious preschools for the provision of preschool programming as long as the faith-based agency meets the Preschool Program Standards referenced in sub rule 16.3. In addition, the faith-based religious preschool must ensure the following during the 10 hours of instructional time required for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children:

- Instruction supported by federal, state or local funds is “secular, neutral, and non-

ideological”.

- Children are not compelled to participate in any religious instruction or activity.
- Public funds are not used to support religious instruction.

Q4: May a school district combine with a neighboring district (form a consortium) to submit an application and provide a preschool program?

A: Yes, school districts may form a consortium with one of the districts acting as the applicant and fiscal agent. The district submitting the application will be identified as the applicant and will be accountable for ensuring that all of the preschool requirements and assurances are met, including collecting and reporting data to the Department. It would be advisable for the consortium to develop a written agreement for oversight and partner responsibilities.

Q5: May a school district change the collaborative partners identified in their application?

A: If a school district is awarded the grant for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program, and a community partner chooses not to participate in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program after the application was awarded, the district may develop an agreement with another community partner. However, if the number of eligible children served increases during the initial school year, the funding cannot exceed the amount in the Application based on the number of eligible children. All programs funded through the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Olds must meet the assurances and requirements in the application.

Q6: What are the procedures and requirements for districts that want to add community-based preschool sites that were NOT included in their original application?

A: Districts may add community partners as the district is “growing” their program and to meet the needs identified in their community. However, for the grant applicants awarded funding, districts cannot receive funding for more four-year-olds than the amount requested in the grant application. Those children can be enrolled and counted for the next year’s funding. This would be reported in the October 1 Certified Enrollment Count.

All programs funded through the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Olds must meet the assurances and requirements in the application. The current DE reporting requirements and due dates would apply to any community partners that are receiving Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program funds.

Q7: When additional preschool programs (community or district-based) are added as part of the district’s Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Olds, what are the time frames for meeting program requirements?

A: Districts are encouraged to expand their community partnerships to increase access to quality preschool programs and to meet the needs of the community. As community partnerships increase, additional preschool programs will be receiving funds or have their children counted as part of the Certified Enrollment Count for Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program funds. Preschool programs partnering with

districts are expected to meet the same assurances, requirements and standards as the programs included in the district's original application.

For example, if a district adds a preschool program in their second year, the program should meet program standards, have a certified teacher, and meet all of the requirements and assurances if the district plans to count the children in this program on the Certified Enrollment Count due October 1 for formula generated funding. This would be the same as a district adding a section of first grade, they would meet the district requirements for a certified teacher and other requirements expected of an accredited school district.

Q8: Are the letters of support and evidence of communication listed on the Collaboration: Partners and Commitment form and included in the Appendix required to be from the current school year? (3/6/09)

A: Yes, letters of support and evidence of communication must occur within the current school year in order to count in the scoring rubric for Questions One and Two. The district may include documentation of communication from previous years to indicate the length of the relationship.

Q9: Does the district need to contact all stated partners on the Collaboration: Partners and Commitment Form? (3/6/09)

A: The district is expected to contact all Head Start programs, all accredited nonpublic schools (including faith-based), all licensed child care centers and all registered child development homes located in the district boundaries. To ensure the provision of quality preschool programming, the district should extend an offer to be part of the conversation around Statewide Voluntary Preschool to all applicable community members. Contact information for Head Start and Department of Human Services is located on page 19 of the Technical Assistance Guidance Manual. A listing of accredited nonpublic schools is located in the 2008-2009 Educational Directory at http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=692&Itemid=1506

Q10: Can a district partner with a for-profit preschool? (3/6/09)

A: There is no stipulation in the law to prohibit a district from partnering with a for-profit preschool. As with all partnerships it is important that the district and partner have a clear agreement about the allocation and use of funding to increase quality programming for four-year-olds during the hours being covered by the Statewide Preschool Funding. It is recommended that the district clearly define expectations with all partners in the written agreement.

**Letters of Support/
Dissent**

Q1: Who should write a letter of support to the school district from the Area Education Agency?

A: The letter should be written by someone who has authority to allocate resources (e.g. professional development, consultation), if needed.

Q2: Can DE staff members write a letter of support as evidence of collaboration with Early Childhood Special Education, Head Start, and Shared Visions.

A: DE staff will be reading applications and therefore are not allowed to write a letter of support. Such a request may disqualify a school district's application.

Q3: Should letters of support and/or letters of dissent be included in the application or mailed directly to the Iowa Department of Education?

A: As stipulated in the Instructions for Writing the Application, all letters of support and/or dissent must be noted on the Collaboration: Community Partners and Commitment Form and included in the Appendix. All letters received by the school district, whether in support or dissent, must be included in the application. Letters received by the Iowa Department of Education will not be read or included in the school district application.

Site/Classroom Information

Q1: Does the request for "Estimated number of eligible four-year-olds to be served at this site" refer only to children funded through Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program?

A: On the "Site Information Form (F-1, F-2, F-3)" the request for the "Estimated number of eligible four-year-olds to be served at this site" refers to the number of four-year-old children estimated to be counted to generate the preschool program funds in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children. Report the total number of children to be served at this site (include all classrooms/sessions at this site) who will be counted. Eligible children are children who are residents of Iowa and four (4) years of age on or before September 15 of the school year.

Children attending the following programs are not considered eligible for funding of the 10 hours of instruction of the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program: Head Start, Early Childhood Special Education (children with an IEP that includes Instructional Services), Title I, and Shared Visions. Children in Early Childhood Special Education with an IEP for support services are eligible to participate in and receive funding from the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children.

Q2: Does the request for "Total number of classrooms at this site," refer only to children funded through the Voluntary Preschool program?

A: Yes. On the "Site Information Form (F-1, F-2, F-3)", in the request for the "Total number of preschool sessions serving eligible four-year-olds at this site," provide the total number of sessions that will be participating in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children. For example, a separate "Classroom Information Form" needs to be completed for preschool programs that have a morning and afternoon session of preschool.

Analysis of Preschool Data Form 1 and Form 2

Q1: On the Analysis of Preschool Data form, should we estimate the number of eligible children for each of the programs listed in the last column?

A: No, the analysis is to assist the district in identifying the number of children served in programs during the current school year. On the Analysis of Preschool Data form, there are two columns that require districts to report about the number of four-year-olds. The next to last column requests the Number of Four-Year-olds Attending the Program. The district will contact the preschool program to determine how many four-year-olds are currently enrolled and list that number in this column. The last

column (Number of Eligible Children) should indicate the anticipated number of children who will be considered Eligible Children. (Children attending the following programs are not considered eligible for funding of the 10 hours of instruction of the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program: Head Start, Early Childhood Special Education (including children with an IEP that includes Instructional Services), Title I and Shared Visions) for the application year. The district may use kindergarten enrollment trends in addition to the Number of Four-Year-Olds Currently Attending the Program to anticipate the number of Eligible Children. Districts are encouraged to refer to the Technical Assistance Guidance Manual for additional information.

Q2: On the Analysis of Preschool Data Form, in which category are ECSE children included?

A: The Analysis of Preschool Data Form describes programs that provide preschool for general education and is intended to assist districts in accurately determining the number of eligible children. Children on an IEP that includes Instructional Services are not "eligible children" since they are funded through state and federal funds. They may be included as part of a Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program but may not be counted as eligible children for funding purposes. Children on an IEP that includes Instructional Services would count in determining maximum class size not to exceed 20 children. Children on an IEP that includes support only services (such as speech) are eligible children.

Q3: If you have 4 year olds in a district preschool class, would you list them on the Analysis of Preschool Data Form as tuition based preschool?

A: The Analysis of Preschool Data Form is to help applicants have a clear picture of what is currently being offered to four-year-olds throughout the community so informed decisions can be made about the future of four-year-old preschool. Any four-year-olds in a district run program funded through parent tuition may be included under "Tuition Based Preschool/Child Care."

Q4: In the column "Number of Four-Year-Olds Attending the Program", does the district indicate the number of four-year-old children that are currently enrolled at each site?

A: Yes, the district enters the number of four-year-old children currently attending each site. (It is recommended to consistently use the eligibility criteria of four-years of age on or before September 15 of the school year when counting the number of children.) The data from the Analysis of Preschool Data Form 1 and Form 2 is designed to assist the district in developing a plan that meets the needs of children and families across the community. Through an analysis of current availability and the number of children served in all settings, districts are able to determine preschool needs and address potential partnerships to support the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children.

Q5: Does the district include the kindergarten enrollment from non-public schools in order to determine the kindergarten enrollment trend data on the Analysis of Preschool Data Form 1? (3/6/09)

A: No. The three year trend data for kindergarten enrollment on the Analysis of Preschool Data Form 1 includes only district kindergarten enrollment information.

Q6: Does the district report the kindergarten Certified Enrollment Count or BEDS enrollment on the Analysis of Preschool Data Form 1? (3/6/09)

A: The district reports the Certified Enrollment Count from the years 2006-2007, 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 to determine the trend data and three year average enrollment for kindergarten.

Format

Q1: Regarding the format for the narrative section entitled *Community Assets and Needs for Providing Quality Preschool*, would it be best to address each question or provide a narrative to address questions 8 through 14?

A: The district may choose the format that best portrays the assets and needs of the community. Questions 8 through 15 provide the criteria upon which this section will be scored.

Q2: Does a district need to leave the Iowa Department of Education as the header for each page?

A: The header may be changed to reflect the name of the district applying.

Q3: What is required in the footer for each page?

A: The footer must have a page number. The district number is optional.

Q4: May school districts add additional rows for more than one name in each category to the Collaboration: Community Partners and Commitment Form?

A: Yes, districts may add rows to accommodate additional partners' names on this form; however, the list of community partners represented on the form cannot be altered.

Q5: May the applicant alter the font size on the Analysis of Preschool Data Form and the Preschool Budget Form?

A: In order to meet application format requirements the application must be 12 point font, the only exception would be the Analysis of Preschool Data Form and the Preschool Budget Form. In filling out these forms, you may use the font (9 point) which matches the font size used to design these forms.

Budget Form

Q1: On Preschool Budget Form, Part Two, the estimated budget only addresses three areas of Budget Form, Part One. When completing the table, does the total estimated budget equal the total budget request in Part One?

A: The Preschool Budget Form, Part Two is intended to provide an estimate of the budget allocated to each partner in each of the indicated budget categories. It is not intended to provide an estimate of the total budget reported in Part One. The Total Estimated Budget Allocated to Each Partner would not equal the Total Budget Request in Part One.

Q2: Can an ECSE teacher's salary be reimbursed by the grant if s/he teaches a class that includes children on an IEP with instructional services and children receiving no special education services? (3/6/09)

A: If the class includes children in both general education and special education, the

teacher must be appropriately licensed and endorsed to teach both early childhood special education and early childhood general education. In this case the district may supplement a portion of the teacher’s salary with Statewide funds. The district would include the appropriate percent of the expense on the Preschool Budget Form, Part One on the “Salaries” line.

Q3: How does the school district determine the amounts to include on the Budget Form, Part Two? (3/6/09)

A: Through conversations with potential partners, applicants determine the estimated amount of funds (staff, materials, professional development, etc.) needed for partners to provide a quality preschool program. The district indicates the estimated amount on the Preschool Budget Form, Part Two. The budget amounts required on the form are intended to be estimates and to ensure that conversations between the applicant and partners occurred and collaborative relationships developed.

Scoring

Q1: Districts submit a single application, which may cover a number of different preschool programs within the district and/or different community programs. Will such applications be reviewed and scored as a whole and either accepted or rejected, or is it possible, if there are insufficient funds, that a portion of the programs will be approved?

A: The application is submitted as a whole and districts are awarded funding as a whole. The approval of an application is based on the district as a whole and not approval of individual community sites or programs, thus portions of a district’s proposal are not singled out for awards.

Q2: If the school district is not a successful applicant, will the district need to complete a new application next year?

A: Yes. If the district is not a successful applicant, they will need to apply again in a subsequent year. An applicant may request to receive a summary of the readers’ comments from the DE. Ongoing monthly or quarterly meetings with community partners may strengthen the application for the next year and facilitate collaboration for the implementation of a plan to meet preschool program standards, curriculum, and assessment requirements.

II. Budget/Finance

Intent of Legislation (HF 877)

Q1: What is the intent of this Preschool Program law and can funds be used for children also enrolled in other programs?

A: The intent of Chapter 16, Statewide Voluntary Preschool Programs for Four-Year-Olds is to create high-quality early learning environments for four-year-old children whose families choose to access such programs. The purpose of the program is to provide an opportunity for all young children in the state to enter school ready to learn by expanding voluntary access to quality preschool curricula for all children

(281-16.1, 82GA, HF877). To this purpose, state funds are made available to assist local school districts in the implementation of the voluntary preschool programs. Only those applicants that certify the following assurances (ARC16.9(5)) shall be considered for funding:

- Appropriately licensed teacher
- Sufficient numbers of staff
- Program will be operational by October 1 of the school year for which funding is sought
- Instruction shall be delivered in accordance with the applicant's curriculum and with Iowa's Early Learning Standards

State funding received under this program shall be used to supplement, not supplant, other public funding received by the applicant district as the result of the participation of any eligible children if the program is funded from another state or federal sources. A school district shall certify to the department of education that preschool foundation aid funding received by the school district was used to supplement, not supplant, moneys otherwise received and used by the school district for preschool programming (HF 877, ARC16.11(3,4)).

Based on this guidance from the 2007 Iowa Acts, House File 877 and the Administrative Rules Chapter 16, the school district must be the applicant and as such is held accountable for financial management. The intent of the legislation is that the funding would support a preschool program of high quality while increasing access to that program to all four-year-olds. The funding would then support the program through meeting the assurances and program requirements.

Use of Funds

Q1: May a district use these preschool program funds for other purposes within the school?

A: No, the funds are considered categorical and must be used for preschool program expenditures only.

Q2: May funds be used to provide construction for a local facility?

A: No. Funds cannot be used for facility construction. However, the USDA offers grant opportunities for construction. Additional information can be found at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/>

Q3: May funds be used to remodel a local facility?

A: Funds may be allocated to support the implementation of the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program. This would include: instructional supplies and materials, staff salaries, travel, professional development, necessary equipment and supplies specific to the preschool program, transportation, contracted services, etc. Funds shall not be used for the costs of constructing or remodeling a facility in connection with the preschool program.

Q4: What should the district's focus be when allocating funds for the preschool program for four-year-olds?

A: The focus should be on supporting the implementation of the preschool program. Allocating funds to ensure that districts meet the assurances and program requirements, such as an appropriately licensed teacher, staff to child ratio, and

meeting program standards will increase access and opportunity for four-year-olds to attend quality preschool programs. Children who attend high-quality preschool programs demonstrate increased student achievement. Funds allocated to support the implementation of quality preschool programs will successfully address the purpose of the legislation.

Q5. May the preschool funds be used to purchase of a vehicle if that is necessary to address the transportation barrier for families?

A: Funds shall not be used for the costs of purchasing a vehicle. Funds may be allocated to support the implementation of the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program. This would include: instructional supplies and materials, staff salaries, travel, professional development, necessary equipment and supplies specific to the preschool program, transportation, contracted services, etc.

Q6: Are the supplies that the private preschools buy for the grant property of the school district?

A: Equipment and materials purchased with Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program funds by the district are the property of the district. It is recommended that the purchase of materials and supplies be addressed as part of the contract/agreement developed between the district and the private preschools. If the partner withdraws from the agreement, procedures will need to be described to return purchased materials to the district. Please refer to the Technical Assistance Guidance Manual, pages 40-41 for guidance on developing shared agreements, and pages 42-44 for a sample contract. This would not apply to materials or supplies that are consumable.

Q7: Can the allocation for the voluntary preschool program fund a preschool coordinator position?

A: Preschool program funds are to be used to support the instructional program, necessary instructional materials and to provide staff support. Most districts currently have administrative staff (principals, curriculum coordinators) that oversee instructional programs and provide teacher supervision, therefore use of the preschool program funds for those administrator's salaries would be considered supplanting. Administrative costs are those costs which the agency incurs as a result of operating this program. If the budget indicates administrative costs, a budget justification must be included describing the need for additional administrative time. Costs must represent an actual additional direct cost to the district in order to justify administrative costs.

Q8. If the school or community site currently pays for the operating and maintenance of the room to be used for the preschool program (e.g., clerical support, custodial, heating and cooling expenses, utilities, etc.), can the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Olds fund those expenses?

Operating expenses to maintain the facility (either community or school-based) as mentioned previously are not the intent of the law. The focus of the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program funds are to support increased opportunity and access to high quality early childhood programs for children, thus resulting in children entering school ready to learn and demonstrate increased achievement in school. The maintenance and operating expenses would then be considered in-kind contributions.

Tuition/Fees

Q1: Are there fees or services that school districts may charge for children receiving preschool through the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program?

A: Charging supplemental fees, such as tuition, are local decisions. Planning for the preschool program should occur within the parameters of the local community needs and with the community stakeholders. Parent advisory groups, including community stakeholders and the local school board, can also provide guidance and recommendations regarding the appropriateness of fees and associated costs that may be expected of families.

Q2: May a district charge tuition for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program?

A: This answer may vary depending on the district's Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program plan. Chapter 16, (281-16.1) rules establish the procedures and conditions under which *state funds shall be made available to assist local school districts* (emphasis added) in the implementation of the voluntary preschool programs. It is important that communities receiving Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program funds provide equal and equitable access to preschool programs across settings (community-based and/or district-based programs) for children and families. As such, districts are encouraged to use the following guidelines in developing preschool programs that meet the needs of their communities, families and children and what, if any tuition or fees might be appropriate.

Statewide Voluntary Preschool Programs located in district buildings.

If the district's program is providing more than 10 hours of instruction, and/or extending the day by providing childcare services, tuition fees to cover the remaining portion of the day, but no more than actual costs of the remaining portion of the day, may be considered.

Statewide Voluntary Preschool Programs located in community settings.

When the school district provides a certified teacher to deliver instruction in the community setting, tuition costs associated with the child attending the childcare center may or may not be reduced. In this scenario, the addition of a certified early childhood teacher and quality preschool educational program is an additional benefit to the parent at no additional cost. The local contract or agreement developed prior to the implementation of the preschool program would determine whether or not tuition would be reduced or waived.

Statewide Voluntary Preschool Programs located in district buildings and in community settings.

Districts that are providing Statewide Voluntary Preschool Programs in both school-based settings and partnerships with community settings will need to consider if charging tuition to families promotes equity and consistency, regardless of the attendance center. For example, if a child attends the local school and the program does not charge tuition, the district and advisory group would want to consider how the preschool instructional time is paid for at the community based center. However, districts may not charge tuition in an amount that is more than actual costs.

If tuition is not charged at the school based setting, districts may want to consider developing arrangements with local providers so that the instructional time provided by the certified teacher is also provided to parents at no cost. In this scenario, parents who have a child at a full day childcare center may see a reduction in tuition cost. Financial arrangements would be addressed through the contract or agreement between the local school district and the community center.

Q3: May a district charge a registration fee for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program?

A: Districts may charge a registration fee similar to the fees charged for K-12 students, if the fee is authorized by Iowa Code. District policies regarding fees and waiving of fees should be reviewed to determine if they are appropriate for the preschool program. Most community childcare settings charge a registration fee that all families are obligated to pay when a child is enrolled. Districts will want to consider the number of fees charged and the appropriateness of additional preschool registration fees families may be asked to pay. The local advisory group can assist with determining what (if any) the registration fee should be, and what expenses the fee will cover.

Snack and/or Meal

Q1: May a district charge fees for milk, snacks, and/or lunch?

A: Districts that provide full day child care may assess a lunch fee using the same policies that govern K-12 lunch fees. Reviewing K-12 policies and determining the appropriateness for the preschool program provides an appropriate context for developing guidelines. Preschool programs located in a public school building may participate in the School Breakfast Program (SBP) and/or the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

The SBP and NSLP provide reimbursement to schools for serving meals that meet meal pattern requirements based on the numbers of meals served and the level of eligibility (free, reduced-price or paid).

- Families have the option to complete the Iowa Eligibility Application to help determine the reimbursement the school will receive.
- Schools may not claim meals during the summer unless they operate an academic summer school program.

Information about the National School Lunch Program is located at:

http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/view/369/904/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1235&Itemid=2120

Talk with the local school officials or the food service director to determine if the school is participating in the School Breakfast Program. Information about the School Breakfast Program is located at:

http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/view/369/904/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1235&Itemid=2120

If the preschool program will be located in another building, please call the Bureau of Nutrition, Health, and Transportation Services for additional information (515-281-5356).

Many districts have policies regarding homemade snacks versus individually wrapped, store bought snacks, or the provision of “healthy” snacks. A milk and/or snack fee often supports children receiving snacks of similar quantity and quality which meet nutritional guidelines, and promote healthy eating habits. Districts should refer to the program standards (NAEYC, Head Start, QPPS) for further guidance.

Q2: The preschool program schedule is from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00p.m. Is there any requirement that a meal would need to be provided?

A: According to both the National Association for the Education of Young Children Accreditation Standards and criteria, and the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards, a meal or snack must be served. Standard 5.21 (QPPS) states that the program serves meals and snacks at regularly established times. Meals and snacks are at least two hours apart, but not more than three hours apart.

Funding Sources

Q1: May a district include preschoolers funded by other sources in the preschool program?

A: Yes. A district is encouraged to include Early Childhood Special Education, Head Start, Community Empowerment, Title I and Shared Visions funded preschool programs as long as there is no supplanting of funds. Supplanting of funds means that the same child is counted for two different funding sources for the same amount of time, during the same time of day.

Q2: May the district seek other sources of public or private funding to support a Voluntary Preschool Program, such as low income funding or church scholarships?

A: Yes. It would be a part of the collaborative conversations and meetings the school district would conduct with stakeholders to develop a plan to support implementation and use of various needed funds to support the program. The district may not supplant public funding.

Q3: May a district use the Physical Plant and Equipment Levy (PPEL) to supplement the preschool program funds? PPEL is a property tax driven levy that consists of the regular PPEL (board approved) not exceeding thirty-three cents per thousand dollars of assessed valuation in the district and a voter-approved PPEL not exceeding one dollar and thirty-four cents per thousand dollars of assessed valuation in the district. For more information on PPEL, refer to the Iowa Department of Education Website at http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1424&Itemid=2427 (3/23/09)

A: Yes, if a district has the board-approved or voter-approved PPEL and the current approval includes specific reference to use of funds for prekindergarten and/or preschool use of funds. However, the PPEL funds may only be used to provide equipment, technology, or infrastructure. PPEL funds may not be used for program supplies or other program purposes

Child Count

Q1: Do all districts use the \$5,546 (state average per pupil cost for FY ‘09) for

and Funding

calculating budgets instead of their own specific districts per pupil cost?

A: Yes.

Q2: If a school district does not serve children in four-year-old preschool this year, is the district able to count the children 1.0 when they attend kindergarten?

A: Yes. Children who are attending kindergarten are counted as 1.0 regardless of their participation in the four-year-old preschool program.

Q3: Can younger or older children participate in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children?

A: Yes. If space and other sources of funding are available, a school district approved to participate in the preschool program may enroll a child who is younger or older than four years of age in the preschool program; however, the child shall not be counted for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children funding purposes. This would be a local preschool program decision. Programs receiving Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children must meet the assurances and programs requirements regardless of the ages of the children in the program.

Q4: If we have a student who is not ready for kindergarten and is 5 by September 15th, can we include that student in our count for regular education dollars?

A: A district may choose to include students who are younger or older than four-years old in their Preschool Program; however, the children shall not be counted for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children funding purposes. This would be a local decision based on the program design. The district's advisory group may also decide to charge tuition for three or five-year-olds if they are included. Please see the questions regarding tuition and fees for guidance.

Q5: A child has attended the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program during the current year as a four-year-old; the parents do not feel that the child is ready for kindergarten. Can this child attend the preschool program for another year?

A: A district may choose to include students who are younger or older than four-years old in their Preschool Program however, the children shall not be counted for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children funding purposes. If parents have concerns about their child's development and learning, best practice would recommend that the teacher in partnership with the parents address the concerns and develop plans to meet the child's needs. A teacher may want to consult with the Area Education Agency if additional resources are needed to address the concerns.

Q6: If the application is approved, will this be a permanent funding source?

A: Yes. Successful applicants will not reapply once their application is approved and grant funding is awarded. Funding for subsequent years is based on the district's preschool program's enrollment count as of October 1 of the previous year. For example, "ABC" Community School District was a successful applicant and awarded full funding based on 40 four-year-old children. Their preschool program starts September 1, 2009, and 40 four-year-old children are enrolled. On October 1, 2009,

there were still 40 four-year-old children enrolled. The next school year, 2010-2011, "ABC" CSD will receive funding for 40 slots for a new group of preschoolers based on the preschool foundation aid formula (for 2008-2009 the amount was \$5,546 x .60 per child).

During each subsequent school year the preschool foundations aid formula will flow in the same manner as the school foundation aid formula. For example, if the district has enrolled more four-year-old children in the preschool program, such as 45 children, funding will not be generated for the additional 5 four-year-old children for the first year of funding (the grant year). However, if 45 four-year-old children are reported on the October 1 Certified Enrollment Count that first year, then the following school year the district would receive funding for 45 children. The opposite would be true if there was a reduction in enrollment to 36 four-year-old children. Funding would be reduced for the following school year.

Q7: May districts begin their preschool program in September and receive the full funding or must districts wait until October 1?

A: In order to receive grant year funding (in Fall 2009), successful applicants must start any time prior to and no later than October 1.

Supplement or Supplant

Q1: Would it be considered supplanting if a district that currently charges tuition for a preschool program is awarded a grant and does not charge tuition?

A: No. Since the district stops charging tuition and accesses state dollars, this would not be considered supplanting existing federal or state dollars.

Q2: May a district combine empowerment scholarships with the funds from the Statewide Voluntary Statewide Program for Four-Year-Old Children?

A: Empowerment scholarships are state funds and may be used for preschool scholarships. The Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program funds are also from the state and, therefore, the district would be supplanting or replacing existing state funds. Supplanting funds occurs when funds are used for the same child, at the same time to provide the same services. If the empowerment funds were used to expand the day, it would be considered supplementing not supplanting and would be allowable.

Q3: May districts receive state or federal funds (Empowerment, Head Start, Shared Visions, Title I, etc.) and the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for the same child during the same time period?

A: No. If a preschooler in the preschool program (meeting the requirements of Chapter 16) is supported through other state or federal funds during the preschool program hours, the child may not be counted for Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program funding purposes. A child may not be supported by two funding sources during the same portion of the day.

Q4: The school district has previously operated a preschool program without the use of state or federal funds. If the district is a successful applicant is there a risk of supplanting?

A: No. Supplanting addresses existing state and federal funds. If the district has not used state or federal funds to support their preschool, then they would not be

replacing or supplanting state or federal funds.

III. Enrollment/Eligibility

Eligible Child **Q1: Who may participate in Statewide Voluntary Preschool Programs for Four-Year-Old Children?**

A: A child may participate in the preschool program if s/he:

- Is a resident of Iowa; and
- Is four years of age on or before September 15 of the current school year.

Q2: Does the preschool program need to be available for children with special needs?

A: Yes. Federal guidelines (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act or IDEA-2004) require the general education setting to be considered as the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for every child eligible for special education services. The child may attend the preschool program, and would be included in the staff to child ratio and maximum class size. A child on an IEP that includes Instructional Services may not be counted for funding through the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Olds (supporting funds would be through weighted instructional funds). However, a child on an IEP for support services only (such as speech support) may be counted for funding through the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program.

Q3: Who is the recipient of funding through the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children?

A: The funding is awarded to public school districts only. Funds are provided to school districts but they may contract with nonpublic preschools or child care centers to coordinate community partnerships and preschool classrooms with licensed teachers.

Q4: What should a district do if there are more four-year-old children wanting preschool programming and the district does not have room? Is the district obligated to start an additional preschool program?

A: No. The district is not obligated to begin an additional preschool program. Developing guidelines for registration and enrollment of four-year-olds for the preschool program would be a decision of the district with the advisement of the stakeholder group.

Resident District

Q1: Does the child have to reside in the district which provides the preschool program?

A: No. An eligible child may attend preschool in any district providing preschool programs.

Q2: Does open enrollment apply to this preschool program?

A: No. Open enrollment applies to K-12 students only.

Q3: If a district does not have the space available to serve all children, may a district give priority to children who reside in the district (vs. children who reside in other districts)?

A: This would be a local district decision. It is recommended that eligibility and selection criteria for registration and enrollment should be reviewed by the school board and the stakeholders' advisory committee. This policy should be available to families interested in the program. Iowa's administrative rules define an eligible child as a resident of Iowa and is four-years-old on or before September 15 of the current school year. The Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program funding follows the child, regardless of the home district.

Q4: Is the preschool program voluntary for districts and families?

A: Yes, the preschool program is voluntary for school districts and families. A district does not have to develop a preschool program. A family does not have to enroll their child in preschool.

Q5: If a parent wants to send their child to a preschool program and the district does not offer a program, does the district have to provide a program?

A: No. The district, through collaborative community meetings, may choose to begin a preschool program, may contract with another agency, or may choose to send their child to a preschool program in a nearby district since the child does not need to be a resident of the school district.

**Attendance
Center**

Q1: If a school district has multiple sites (community and/or school-based) does the district or the parent determine where the child attends?

A: A district will want to develop a policy to address the "assignment" of children to Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program sites. An advisory group with community and parent representation could assist to develop and review this policy. Considerations may be neighborhood school, availability of extended care, parent's work place and preference. Additionally, the school district will need to consider maintaining staff to child ratio and maximum class size. The policy and procedures regarding student assignment should be available for public review.

IV. Assurances and Requirements

**Program
Standards**

Q1: May a district combine its preschool program and prekindergarten program?

A: Yes. If the district chooses to combine the pre-kindergarten and preschool program, the program must meet the requirements of the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program.

Q2: What are the appropriate program standards for four-year-old preschool?

A: Three options for program standards include: Head Start Program Performance Standards, Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards (QPPS) and/or the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Standards and Criteria. The district would select one of the three options.

Q3: Is a private provider contracting with the school district required to adopt the same program standards as the school district?

A: This is a collaborative decision made at the local level. One of the three (3) program standards options must be in place or met within one year of award to be considered for the preschool program.

Adult to Child Ratio

Q1: What are the adult to child ratios?

A: There must be at least one teacher present for every 10 children in a classroom during the instructional time described in subrule 16.3(4). A minimum of one staff member and one teacher shall be present when 11 to 20 children are present. Staff members shall have reasonable line-of-sight supervision of all children.

**Calendar/
Instructional
Time**

Q1: What is acceptable instructional time?

A: A minimum of 10 hours per week of instructional time is required in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program. As indicated in subrule 16.3(4) instructional time must be directly related to the program's curriculum and the Early Learning Standards. Instructional time should relate to intentional, planned teaching and learning experiences that would be reflected in the teacher's planning and lessons. Districts are encouraged to contact the AEA Early Childhood Consultant for support regarding instruction.

Q2: When a district has been awarded grant funding, what is the start date for the preschool program? Is it the same date as the district's first day of school for K-12?

A: In order to receive grant year funding (in Fall 2009), successful applicants must start any time prior to and no later than October 1. Districts are encouraged to start their programs within a reasonable time frame comparable to their existing school calendar to allow children to benefit from the preschool program and learning experiences.

Q3: How many hours per day and days per year, does the preschool have to provide?

A: The district must provide a minimum of 10 hours of instruction per week not including recess. The district may choose to provide more hours. The number of days per year must be within the parameter of the school calendar days in session.

Q4: If the school district's four-year-old preschool program is in session half day or full day, what nutrition programs could the children participate in?

A: Participation in a nutrition program may be determined by the location of the preschool program and if it is licensed by the Iowa Department of Human Services. The Bureau of Nutrition, Health, and Transportation Services in the Iowa Department of Education monitors the nutrition programs. Additional information about the National School Lunch Program is located at:

http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1235&Itemid=2120

Teacher/Staff

Q1: Who employs the teacher?

Requirements

A: The teacher may be employed by the district or contracted by the school district with another agency to provide instruction to children in a variety of settings. No matter whether the district employs the teacher or contracts with another agency for the services of a qualified preschool teacher, the district has the responsibility to meet the requirements of 2007 Iowa Acts, House File 877 and Chapter 16, Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program Administrative Rules.

Q2: What qualifications does the four-year-old preschool teacher need to have?

A: Preschool teachers must hold a valid practitioner's license issued by the Board of Educational Examiners under Iowa Code chapter 272 and hold endorsement from the Board of Educational Examiners that includes prekindergarten or kindergarten. There is no requirement that the teacher be an employee of the Applicant; the teacher may be employed by a private provider or other public agency with whom the district has entered into an agreement or contract under Iowa Code chapter 28E. Contact the Board of Educational Examiners for specific teacher information at the following Website: <http://www.iowa.gov/boee/>

Appropriate teaching endorsements are:

- Teacher-Prekindergarten through grade three, including special education;
- Teacher-Prekindergarten through grade three
- Teacher-Prekindergarten through kindergarten; and

NOTE: If a teacher has an Early Childhood Teacher-Special Education 15.2(19) endorsement (also known as #223), s/he may apply to the Board of Educational Examiners for a Class B conditional license in one of the three acceptable teaching endorsement areas.

School districts can post job vacancies and search applicant's resumes on the Teach Iowa Website at: <http://www.iowaeducationjobs.com/>

Q3: If a district contracts with another agency to provide the preschool program, does the district evaluate the teacher? Does Chapter 284 apply?

A: If a district contracts or develops an agreement with another agency to provide the preschool teacher, that agency is responsible for the supervision of the teacher. In such a case, Chapter 284 does not apply.

Q4: If the teacher is an employee of the school district, who evaluates the teacher?

A: The district administrator evaluates the teacher, regardless of where instruction is provided.

Q5: What are the requirements for a preschool teacher teaching in a non-accredited nonpublic school to convert the initial license to a standard license?

A: The administrator of the educational setting will need to verify three years of successful teaching experience on the application to convert the initial to a standard license form. Documentation of mentoring or verification of the eight teaching standards are not required.

Q6: A teacher teaches in an educational setting that is not a public or private

school setting (e.g., a community based preschool or childcare setting). What are the requirements to convert an initial license to a standard license?

A: The administrator/director of the educational setting will need to send a description of the education setting to the Board of Educational Examiners. This letter will need to include the following:

- a) number of students served
- b) the number of hours taught per week
- c) the number of days taught per week
- d) a description of the curriculum that you teach
- e) if there is a requirement for you to hold a teaching license
- f) does your educational setting have a contract with a public school
- g) verification of three years of successful teaching experience.

Upon receipt of this information, the Board of Educational Examiners then determines if this teaching experience can be utilized to convert an initial license to a standard one.

Q7: What collaboration responsibilities does the teacher have?

A: The teacher must:

- **collaborate** with other partners as necessary. Partners may include family support/parent education staff, community child care, Community Empowerment, Head Start, Shared Visions, and others as necessary to adequately meet the needs of the child and family;
- **develop** and maintain a relationship with the child’s family in order to increase the potential of the child and family including collaboration with necessary family service/education providers; and
- **assist** families to identify and access available resources to meet the needs of the child.

Q8: Can the district begin the school year with a long-term substitute in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program classroom? (3/6/09)

A: No, per guidelines established by the Board of Educational Examiners (BOEE), a classroom cannot begin the school year with a long-term substitute.

Q9: What are the educational requirements for staff (teacher assistants/associates) working in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program? (3/6/09)

A: Requirements for teacher assistants/associates can be found at http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=940&Itemid=1279 in the document “Qualifications for Preschool Teacher Assistants” in the 2009-2010 Application Documents and Guidance section.

Curriculum

Q1: What are the curriculum requirements for the preschool program?

A: A district must use a curriculum that is a research or evidence based written framework that is comprehensive, addresses the needs of the whole child, and provides a guide for decision making about content, instructional methods, and assessment. There are several curricula that meet these requirements. Examples include, but are not limited to Creative Curriculum and High Scope. For additional

information, refer to the Technical Assistance Guidance Manual on page 28 and DE website at:

http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=940&Itemid=1279

Q2: What does research or evidence-based mean?

A: Research-based means research that involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs.

Evidence-based means research that can be classified as “promising” under certain conditions. First, if a research design is weak but findings have been consistent across multiple replications, the treatment under study can be said to have promise. Second, if single strategies that have been studied under true experimental conditions are combined with multiple strategies, practices, and routines and the composite then studied with a weaker design with positive results, the findings can be classified as promising.

Q3: Are all classrooms in the district required to use the same curriculum?

A: No, all classrooms are not required to use the same curriculum. However, it is recommended that a district seek their advisory group’s input for selection of one curriculum to be implemented across community partners. Advantages of one curriculum supports consistency of implementation and alignment of professional development training for reporting of program results.

The curriculum must meet the requirements of the identified program standards (National Association for the Education of Young Children Accreditation Standards, Iowa’s Quality Preschool Program Standards, or Head Start Program Performance Standards), must be research or evidence-based and must align with the Iowa Early Learning Standards. For additional information, refer to the Technical Assistance Guidance Manual page 26 and the DE website at:

http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=940&Itemid=1279

Assessment

Q1: What are the assessment requirements?

A: The district must employ a systematic ongoing procedure for obtaining information from observations, interview, portfolios, and tests that can be used to make judgments about the strengths and needs of individual children and plan appropriate instructions. There are many methods of addressing these criteria. Several published assessment tools include, but are not limited to the High Scope Child Observation Record, Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum and/or Work Sampling system. Best practice would suggest using an assessment that is aligned with the curriculum and the Iowa Early Learning Standards. Additional information is available on pages 29 of the Technical Assistance Guidance Manual and the DE website at:

http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=940&Itemid=1279

Reporting

Q1: What is the school district’s reporting responsibilities?

Requirements

A: The district must provide an annual report to the DE regarding program requirements on the forms provided by DE.

The district must collect performance measures data on all the following:

- The number of eligible children participating;
- The number of eligible children participating in a program meeting National Association for the Education of Young children (NAEYC), Head Start or Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards (QPPS);
- The adopted curriculum;
- The child assessment;
- The number of teachers;
- The Kindergarten Literacy Assessment data; and
- An end of year report.

Families

Q1: Do families need to be involved in preschool programming?

A: Yes, family participation is vital to their child's preschool success and is a required component of the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program. The preschool program must include families in at least one home visit, one family night and a minimum of two family-teacher conferences annually. Family involvement is encouraged for classroom volunteers, orientation to the preschool program, parent education, general communication and other activities (ARC 16.3(12)).

Q2: What are the requirements for Family Night?

A: This is a local decision that should be made with the input from the Preschool Advisory Team, including parents if possible. Please see page 14 the Technical Assistance Guidance Manual. Some ideas may include events such as Family Literacy Night, Family Math Game night, Family Art Project Night, cookie decorating night, a literacy tea party, a family picnic, etc. Ideas should be generated based on what the Preschool Advisory Team thinks will work best for their local communities. There are no specific guidelines provided by the Department regarding content of family nights other than at least one per school year is required.

Q3: Does the home visit need to take place in the home? Can the home visit take place in the school?

A: It is preferable to have the home visit in the home. The home visit provides an opportunity for the teacher to become acquainted with and learn from the family about their family structure; their preferred child-rearing practices; and information families wish to share about their socioeconomic, linguistic, racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds. The visit provides an opportunity for staff to learn about the family's priorities and wishes for their child. It also provides an opportunity to learn about the child within the family context.

At times, conditions may not be supportive of a home visit and other settings need to be considered for a family visit. With the prior reviewed purposes in mind, the school setting may not be the preferred setting for conversation and learning about the family. The home visit should occur in a setting in which the family is comfortable or a neutral location may be considered such as a library, coffee house, or even a park.

School districts also need to ensure the safety of their staff in determining the location and timing of the home visit.

Q4: The rules require that a teacher make a home visit at least once a year – can this be combined with a conference at the school?

A: No, conferences are a time for the teacher to share information about the preschool program and the child’s learning and progress. The purpose of the home visit is to help the teacher learn about the child and the family. The location should be where the family is comfortable; this could be the home, the public library, a coffee shop; but preferably not the school setting. The focus of the home visit is to share information, and allow the teacher to understand the child within the context of their family. See question 2 above.

Q5: Should my district develop a parent handbook for preschool?

A: A parent handbook is helpful in clarifying roles and responsibilities for families and the district. Districts may want to consider how their current parent handbook may be edited to include the necessary elements to address the preschool program.

V. Transportation

Q1: Are school districts required to provide transportation for children in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program?

A: No, transportation is not required but districts may choose to provide transportation as one of the comprehensive services defined in the Administrative Rules. Transportation may be identified as a barrier to access and/or in the implementation of high quality preschool and the district may provide transportation to and from preschool. The district would not have to provide transportation for preschoolers from an adjoining district to attend the preschool program. Districts may not however cross district boundaries without the permission of the neighboring district. For additional information, refer to the Technical Assistance Guidance Manual on page 31.

Q2: Do school buses need to have safety restraints for four-year-olds?

A: The DE provides guidance regarding the safe transportation of children. If the school district is planning to implement the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards or the National Association of Education for Young Children Program Standards and criteria, Standard 10, Leadership and Management address transportation. Refer to the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards under Guiding Practices on the DE website at:

http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=681&Itemid=1571 or the National Association for the Education of Young Children at <http://www.naeyc.org/academy/standards/>

VI. Other