

Voluntary Prekindergarten: Q & A for Fiscal Year 2020

Application, guidance and resource materials are posted on the [Voluntary Prekindergarten](#) webpage. There is a single application process for all programs including those renewing, expanding or applying for a new site. Districts and charter schools have been sent the information and links to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 voluntary prekindergarten application process. (Note: School readiness plus funding is scheduled to sunset at the end of the 2018-19 school year, so all questions regarding school readiness plus have been removed from this document.)

This questions and answers (Q & A) includes questions historically received by Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) regarding the voluntary prekindergarten (VPK) application process. The questions are sorted into the topic areas listed below. Within sections, similar questions are grouped together, and the answer is listed at the end of the group of questions.

Questions marked with an asterisk () were added on January 15, 2019.

Questions marked with two asterisks () were added on January 23, 2019.

Questions marked with three asterisks () were added on January 28, 2019.

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Application Process and Supporting Documents

*****If a district elects not to apply for voluntary prekindergarten dollars for FY 19 and FY 20, does that remove the option to apply in FY 21?**

By statute, voluntary prekindergarten has an annual application process. Interested programs have the opportunity to apply for funding each year.

*****Is Line 14 the number of students we would be approved for if we were awarded the VPK grant?**

Line 14 lists the average daily membership (ADM) or pupil units that would be generated by the number of children and length of program (instructional days x instructional minutes). Line 16 lists the total program enrollment (or number of seats) that would be allocated if a district was fully funded.

*****The application asks for information on VPK teaching staff salaries. None of the options state that the teachers are not on the master contract but do have comparable salaries, which is the case with our mixed delivery partner. Which option should we select?**

Please choose the option which most closely matches the situation in your partnership. If no example closely resembles your situation, leave it blank and we will follow up with you during our application review process.

Where are the guidance materials located for the application process? Is there a recorded version of the webinar?

All application, guidance and resource materials including voluntary prekindergarten overview webinars can be found on the [Voluntary Prekindergarten](#) webpage. The FY 20 application process webinar was not recorded, but programs are encouraged to attend the Open Office Hours webinars for support with the application process. Register at the applicable link below:

- [12:30-1:30 p.m., Wednesday, January 9, 2019](#)
Note: This session will begin with a short demonstration of the application.
- [3-4 p.m., Wednesday, January 16, 2019](#)
Note: This session will begin with a short demonstration of the application.
- [10:30-11:30 a.m., Thursday, January 24, 2019](#)

Questions about the application process can be directed to mde.vpk@state.mn.us.

Can I add my email address to the voluntary prekindergarten distribution list to receive regular updates?

MDE maintains a contact list with three contacts for each district or charter school: the superintendent, the business manager, and the early childhood contact listed on the application. We ask that programs distribute information to staff within their district as needed, so additional contacts cannot be added. If you need to replace one of the contacts, please email MDE.VPK@state.mn.us with the updated contact name, email and phone number.

Do currently funded programs need to submit an application?

All programs must submit an application for the 2019-20 school year. Within the application, all programs are asked to submit a *Prekindergarten Site Worksheet* for each site that is requesting funding. Each site-specific worksheet will allow for the: renewal of the original number of seats awarded in 2017 (2016-17), continuation of seats that were added in FY 18 and/or FY 19 as well as request any expansion seats. Requests for **new** sites will require a separate *Prekindergarten Site Worksheet*. This is the best way to assure that any changes in the program calendar, length of day or number of days, are correctly captured for MDE. All programs will also need to sign and upload a 2019-20 Statement of Assurances.

How long is my program funded?

Funding for voluntary prekindergarten programs initially funded in 2016-17 will be renewed for their original number of seats (74 districts and charter schools at 104 sites for 3,160 seats).

Funding for voluntary prekindergarten or school readiness plus programs initially funded in 2017-18 or 2018-19 is scheduled to sunset at the end of the 2018-19 school year without legislative action during the 2019 spring legislative session. Please read the next sentence.

All districts and charter schools, regardless of previous funding status, must file an application to be considered for funding should funds become available during the 2019 spring legislative session.

What happens if my program was previously designated as a school readiness plus (SRP) program?

As part of the application process, on the *Preschool Site Worksheet*, a question will ask you to designate what kind of funding you would be willing to accept—VPK, SRP, or either, should it be made available during the 2019 spring legislative session.

Can a school district create preschool attendance areas that are different from the established elementary school boundaries?

Yes. Since not all schools in the district may be approved for voluntary prekindergarten, the district may choose to broaden the attendance boundaries for each approved prekindergarten program, so that more eligible students who live in the district have the opportunity to attend the program and receive transportation.

My district or charter school is not listed on the drop-down menu in the online application.

The application is pre-populated with all school districts and charter schools. If you do not see your program name, please contact mde.vpk@state.mn.us to have the issue resolved.

We have a school number for the elementary school and a school number for our school readiness program that operates at the same site. Which number should we provide in the application?

Because all these sites are offered in the same location, you should use your elementary school site number because that is the one for which your kindergarten enrollment is generated.

If you intend to offer the program at a different location, such as an early childhood center that is not classified as an elementary school, select **New site** for the program and the district average concentration of kindergarten students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch will be used for the site rankings. However, if you will be primarily serving children from the elementary school attendance area where the early childhood site is located, use that elementary site number so that the site ranking for that school can be used.

****On the *Prekindergarten Site Worksheet*, if we have not been previously funded, would we select New Site or the elementary school that pops up?**

If your voluntary prekindergarten will be located at an existing elementary school, select the elementary school. If your voluntary prekindergarten program will be located within the district at a site that is not an elementary school or at a mixed delivery partner site, select **New Site**. If you are funded, MDE will work with you to get a new site number assigned to the site.

****Our prekindergarten program is located at our middle school, but the middle school does not show up as a location choice. Should we select a new site?**

If your prekindergarten program serves students at the middle school site from only one elementary school attendance area, enter the elementary school name. MDE will work with you later to amend the location of your program.

If your prekindergarten program serves students from multiple elementary school attendance areas, enter **New Site** and MDE will work with you to create a new site number for your program.

Our district has a prekindergarten program that is Parent Aware Star Rated. Does this count in determining eligibility? How will it affect my ranking?

When determining the proximity of school sites to a Three- or Four-Star Parent Aware Rated program, MDE used Head Start and child care programs in the formula but not school-based programs. This is because approximately 90 percent of school districts have a school-based program that is Parent Aware Rated. The intent of the legislation was to increase the access to high-quality programs throughout the state specifically in areas where capacity is limited.

Districts or charter schools with Parent Aware ratings do not lose points. Points will be awarded in the following way for presence or absence of a Three- or Four-Star Parent Aware Rated child care or Head Start (not a school-based) program within the school district or close proximity of the district:

- a. Zero points for school sites with a Three- or Four-Star Rated child care or Head Start within their district or within ten miles of the school site.
- b. Five points for school sites with no Three- or Four-Star Rated child care or Head Start within the district and ten miles of the school site.
- c. Ten points for school sites with no Three- or Four-Star Rated child care or Head Start within the district and twenty miles of school site.
- d. Five points will be awarded to districts and charter schools that have implemented a mixed delivery system.

How many districts will the funds cover? Should my district even apply?

We are encouraging all interested districts and charter schools to apply.

Can our plan be revised in any fashion after submission on January 30, 2019?

MDE has a tight timeline to review and approve applications by March 1. It would be very difficult for MDE to accommodate revisions after the due date and still meet the deadline. A district or charter school could reduce the student seats after the deadline but not increase them.

School districts and charter schools should use their best estimates to fill out their application. If a selected school district or charter school needs to revise their plan after the allocation announcement, they will need to work with MDE to determine the feasibility of any changes.

****If our number of instructional days or hours change later, do we need to amend our application?**

If your calendar already generates .6 ADM (average daily membership) and you will be increasing your calendar, you do not need to inform MDE.

If your calendar generates less than .6 ADM and will be changing, please submit an amended *Prekindergarten Site Worksheet* because this will impact your funding.

***If we apply for two sites but we choose not to have a voluntary prekindergarten program at one of the sites, when do we need to inform MDE?**

Please notify MDE as soon as possible so that these seats can be reallocated to another program that was partially or unfunded during the allocation process. Programs may request an amendment to transfer seats from one allocated site to another allocated site if enrollment warrants the change.

We accidentally clicked on the Submit button too early. Should we start a new application?

No. Applications will be available to edit until 4 p.m. on January 30, 2019. After 4 p.m. on January 30, all submitted applications will be considered final.

Applications will not be reviewed before that time. Therefore, even after your program submits an application, you may go back and make revisions via the unique link provided at the end of the application and in your confirmation email until the due date and time. Please work off of your original application and avoid starting new applications.

How can I get confirmation that our submission was accepted by the system?

A confirmation email is automatically generated after your application is initially submitted and sent to the primary contact listed. If you do not receive this email, please check your spam folder. You may also choose to use your unique link to review your application and download your application. What you have downloaded is what MDE receives.

Can I request a PDF copy of the application so that I can work with staff in my district or charter school to assemble the information before we submit?

There is logic built in to the application, so MDE does not have a PDF copy available. But, you can use the application link to begin your application, click through to view the questions, and then click submit to generate a unique link and a PDF with the list of questions. You can use this link to continue to edit your application until the January 30 deadline. MDE will not be reviewing applications until January 30, so programs may submit as many times as needed to finalize their applications.

You can also download the *Prekindergarten Site Worksheet* to your computer and use the **Save to Complete Later** button to keep revising the worksheet until you are ready to upload.

I am having trouble with the macros in the *Prekindergarten Site Worksheet*.

The macros in the forms will only work in Microsoft Excel. Please make sure you are using Excel and not Google Sheets or a similar program. If you are using Excel and still having trouble, visit the [Microsoft Support page](#) for help with enabling macros. If you continue to have challenges, please contact [Paul Pedtke](mailto:Paul.Pedtke@state.mn.us) (Paul.Pedtke@state.mn.us).

Does our district need to do a separate voluntary prekindergarten application for each site?

No. If you have multiple sites, you need to submit only one application. However, you need to submit a separate *Prekindergarten Site Worksheet* for each individual site being considered. The formula outlined in statute funds programs at the school site level. The application with the worksheets and other attachments is submitted electronically.

Should I only include classrooms to be designated as voluntary prekindergarten on the *Prekindergarten Site Worksheet*?

Programs are encouraged to braid and blend funds. However, the spreadsheet should be filled out only for classrooms for which the school district/charter school are requesting funding and which meet the voluntary prekindergarten statutory requirements.

We have two classrooms that run five full days. Families choose three, four, or five full days. Do we need to do multiple calendars or just one since both rooms do run five full days?

Yes. By statute, voluntary prekindergarten must have a minimum of 350 hours of program delivery. To assure that this is being met in your current system, you should complete one calendar for each of your program options. This would mean one calendar for the three-day, another for the four-day and one more for the five-day program. This would demonstrate accurately the number of hours that each of your program options offer. You will need to estimate the number of children that will be served in each of those calendars on the *Prekindergarten Site Worksheet*.

If we plan to have voluntary prekindergarten students in school readiness programs, do we count all of those classrooms?

If you choose to offer a classroom blending school readiness funding with voluntary prekindergarten funding, voluntary prekindergarten standards must apply to the entire classroom. If the classrooms all operate using the same calendar and offer the same hours of instruction, they can be reported as a single classroom. If there are schedule or calendar day differences, then you will need to use the multiple calendar option and list each classroom according to the calendar and instructional time that is planned. If you combine voluntary prekindergarten funded children with school readiness funded children, you will list only the number of children being requested for funding by voluntary prekindergarten on the application.

****If we were previously approved for 30 seats and we would like to add another class with additional seats, do we fill out the FY 19 Continuation and FY 20 Expansion in Lines 18 and 19?**

The *Prekindergarten Site Worksheet* will automatically populate Lines 18 and 19 based on your prior funding and your enrollment request. Enter your requested enrollment in Line 9 (excluding Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) students), and the worksheet will automatically place these numbers in the correct category.

Can we house these programs only at sites with kindergarten enrollment?

Programs may be housed at other district facilities, such as an early learning center or in the case of a mixed delivery partnership at a Head Start or child care facility. According to statute, a request for funding at a site that also has a kindergarten enrollment will be ranked using the poverty concentration of the kindergarteners in that elementary building. A request for funding at a site that has no kindergarten enrollment, for example a stand-alone early childhood center, will be ranked based on the school district's average poverty concentration of all

kindergarteners or if that site will first serve children from a ranked elementary school, then that school's ranking may be used for that early childhood site.

Our district has an early childhood education center without kindergarten enrollment. Does MDE use the district average free and reduced-price lunch for kindergarten students in determining ranking?

If the program is at a site that does not have kindergarten students with prior year free and reduced-price meal data, the school district average for free and reduced-price meal concentration for kindergarten students (or the multi district average if there is a non-K-12 school site where a program designed to serve more than one district is served) will be used.

If a school site contracts to partner with a community-based provider or Head Start under Minnesota Statutes, section [124D.151, subdivision 3](#), or is an established early childhood center, you may use the concentration of kindergarten students eligible for free or reduced-price meals from a specific school site, as long as eligible children from that area are prioritized and guaranteed services at the site. If the site in your application is close to an elementary school and it will be primarily serving children from that elementary attendance area, then that school's free and reduced-price meal numbers may be used, otherwise the district average will be applied to determine ranking.

Are we allowed to indicate different locations each year?

The formula is based on a program site; therefore funding cannot be transferred to a different site. However, if the assigned program site is being remodeled for use with the same cohort of students, that would be permissible.

Our calendar has 507 hours and the ADM is showing us .6, is this wrong?

The maximum funding a student can generate for voluntary prekindergarten is .6 ADM. Funding for each student is based on the instructional hours for that student, a minimum of 350 hours or up to a maximum of 510 hours for a student. Students receiving 415 hours of instruction for the year will generate .49 ADM and pupil units; students receiving 510 or more hours of instruction will generate .6 ADM and pupil units. Any programs serving students more than 510 hours will still generate .6 ADM and pupil units per student who is enrolled all year.

The question on instructional day allows only whole numbers. One of our programs is 2.5 hours per day. How do we enter this?

Line 11 in the *Prekindergarten Site Worksheet* asks for the average length of instructional day in **minutes**, not hours. You can enter 2.5 hours into this field by entering 150 minutes. Six hours would be 360 minutes.

One of our weeks is longer than the rest. How do we represent that, so it calculates correctly?

The sheet is just looking for total number of scheduled instructional days on Line 10. The extra day(s) can be added to the total.

***Can instructional days include parent days such as conferences?**

No, children must be present and engaged in classroom learning with a classroom teacher for a day to be counted as an instructional day. Parent days and parent-teacher conference days are not counted as instructional days.

***I currently have 40 voluntary prekindergarten seats. Children attend class three days a week. Am I able to change my calendar on this new application so that the same 40 seats would now meet for five days, or would this be considered an expansion?**

Voluntary prekindergarten is funded based on an allocated seat-count, in this case 40. Since the VPK allocation is based on seat count, you may change the calendar (number of instructional days and instructional minutes/day) adjust a previously used calendar within the application. As long as the number of seats remains the same, this would not be considered an expansion. Please note, all calendars must offer at least 350 instructional hours to meet the minimum requirement.

***How should we determine eligible enrollment? Should we look at the 3-year-olds we are serving in the current school year or should we use our census numbers, even though we know that not all of those children will attend our preschool program?**

You may look at the 3-year-old class size or the average size of district or charter school kindergarten classes. The application is capped at .6 of the projected kindergarten class size. You may contact MDE if you believe the kindergarten pupil units (KPU) projected in the *Preschool Site Worksheet* is in error. In designing your classroom, use the best information that you have regarding the number of children in the eligible population combined with the amount of space you have for a program. As you design your classroom with a maximum group size of 20, remember to plan for a percentage of the children who will be referred and qualify for special education services. Students with individualized education programs (IEPs) cannot be included in the capped student enrollment. In other words, if you have at least 20 age-eligible VPK children and you have classroom space for 20 children, assume that one to three of the students may be referred during the first months of school and may receive early childhood special education services. Consider requesting 16 to 18 VPK seats for each classroom on your *Preschool Site Worksheet* so that the classroom can be fully enrolled and inclusive of all children.

Does the “eligible enrollment, exclude ECSE students” (Line 9) refer to the number currently registered or the number of spots available for students?

Line 9 should be filled with the number of prekindergarten students you will serve in voluntary prekindergarten excluding ECSE students who may be served in the program. Distribute the students amongst each of the calendars, if the program will offer more than one schedule to families.

For “eligible enrollment, exclude ECSE students” (Line 9), do we include students with speech-only IEPs?

Exclude all students with IEPs, including speech IEPs.

Why are ECSE children not included in the food program numbers on the application form?

ECSE students generate state aid and meal counts in the absence of voluntary prekindergarten. The application is an attempt to collect the new costs associated with the new program students.

How do I know if I am a Title I school?

If the voluntary prekindergarten is either part of an existing elementary school that is allocated Title I funds or is established as a separate school and allocated Title I funds, the prekindergarten program would be identified as a Title I school on both the prekindergarten program application and on the Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS) A school files.

***For Line 3, how do we know if we our district receives Achievement and Integration?**

The easiest way to learn if your district receives achievement and integration funding is to ask your business manager. A list of the districts that received achievement and integration funding in FY 18 is posted to the [Open Enrollment website](#). However, more districts are now participating. We have aid entitlement reports posted to the [Minnesota Funding Reports \(MFR\) website](#). If your district receives the revenue, there will be an aid entitlement report.

***What should we do if “FY 20 District KGN Pupil Units” in Line 5 and “Maximum Eligible Pupil Units” in Line 6 are not populating on the Site Worksheet?**

Please check the **Information** tab to ensure that you have selected your district, site and program type from the drop-down menu. If you are still experiencing issues, please contact [Paul Pedtke](mailto:Paul.Pedtke@state.mn.us) (Paul.Pedtke@state.mn.us).

Do we need to be a Q Comp school to qualify for voluntary prekindergarten funding?

No. Districts and charter schools do not need to be identified as a Q Comp school to qualify.

How would a district or charter school determine the number of “eligible non-residents” in Line 17?

Programs should estimate this number based on prior years’ history of enrollment trends within your district or charter school.

How would you define “protected class” in Line 22?

Protected class is defined as non-white students.

****For Lines 20 and 21, is this asking for the total number children who will eat breakfast/lunch or is this asking for the number of students that qualify for free and reduced-price lunch?**

For Lines 20 and 21, enter the estimated number of children that will be participating in meals, regardless of their eligibility for free or reduced-price meals.

****For Lines 20 and 21, should this reflect meals that were actually served in prior years or is this an estimate for the upcoming 2019-20 school year?**

For Lines 20 and 21, enter the estimate number of children that will be participating in meals for the upcoming school year. You should use historic data and trends in your program to help you make your estimates, but all numbers entered in Lines 20 and 21 will reflect estimates for 2019-20.

****For Lines 20 and 21, if our sites are designated Community Eligible Provision (CEP) schools, should we enter 100 percent of the students?**

Yes. Please enter the total number of children that will be participating in meals. MDE will follow up with all applications for new programs to request an estimate of the number of students who will be eligible for the free or reduced price meal program.

Please note: Although all students in a CEP site receive a free meal, to be eligible to generate compensatory revenue, the school needs to have a household income certification for each student that is reported on MARSS as eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Certification can be determined by the family completing an *Application for Educational Benefits* or through Direct Certification. For CEP schools, use the *Alternate Application for Educational Benefits*. This household income statement collects the same information as the *Application for Educational Benefits* but excludes free meals as a benefit because the student will get a free meal without completing the application. Without the application or Direct Certification, the student cannot be reported as eligible for the free or reduced price meal program.

***When estimating the number of “protected class” in Line 22, do we count the non-white students in FY 17, FY 19 and what is anticipated next year for FY 20?**

Of the number of students who are expected to be enrolled in the program in FY 20, estimate the number who will be other than white. Protected class also includes students who identify as more than one race/ethnicity even though one of those is white.

What is the process for ranking applications?

All of the voluntary prekindergarten applications received in January will be combined into a single priority list. The process is described in Minnesota Statutes, section [126C.10, subdivision 28.](#)

Applications meeting the program requirements will be divided into four groups as follows:

1. Minneapolis and St. Paul public school districts
2. Other school districts located in the metropolitan equity region
3. School districts located in the rural equity region
4. Approved charter schools

Within each group, the applications will be ordered by rank based on the following criteria:

- a) Concentration of kindergarten students eligible for free or reduced-price meals by school site on October 1 of the previous school year.
- b) For school district programs to be operated at locations that do not have free and reduced-price meal concentration data for kindergarten programs for October 1 of the previous school year, including mixed delivery programs, the school district average concentration of kindergarten students eligible for free or reduced-price meals must be used for the rank ordering. The district can use the concentration of a specific school site if it assures it will prioritize service of those students at the alternate site.
- c) Presence or absence of a Three- or Four-Star Rated Parent Aware rated child care and Head Start program within the school district or close proximity of the district.
- d) Whether the district or charter school has implemented a mixed delivery system.

School sites with the highest concentration of kindergarten students eligible for free or reduced-price meals that do not have a Three- or Four-Star Parent Aware Rated child care or Head Start program within the district or in close proximity of the district shall receive the highest priority, and school sites with the lowest concentration of kindergarten students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches that have a Three- or Four-Star Parent Aware Rated child care or Head Start program within the district or in close proximity of the district shall receive the lowest priority.

Is there an updated document showing school districts’ current ranking by site?

The FY 2018 spreadsheet is available on the [voluntary prekindergarten](#) webpage. It will be updated with FY 2019 numbers as soon as they become available.

If we have a site with documented 100 percent free- or reduced-priced meals, but there is no kindergarten in the building, can we submit documentation of the actual number?

The statute specifies that for sites that do not have free and reduced-price meals concentration data for the previous year, the school district average concentration of kindergarten students eligible for free or reduced-price meals must be used for the priority ranking. Alternatively, if that site will prioritize children from a ranked elementary school, then that school's ranking may be used for that early childhood site.

When will I find out if our program has been selected as an eligible program?

Funded programs will be notified if they are eligible to be considered for funding by March 1, 2019, and notified if they will receive funding at the end of spring 2019 legislative session.

If we are funded through the application process but we determine that revenue from other sources is more effective for our program, can we decline the funding?

Yes, funding may be declined. However, as a reminder, voluntary prekindergarten programs generate general education funding that includes additional funding generated through other sources, such as, compensatory, title, etc. If a program does decline funding, the funding will be reallocated to a school within your statute-identified regional group.

***If we are opting for the Automatic Rating for Parent Aware, where do I find the Parent Aware Participation Agreement? Do I need to submit a Site List?**

The *Parent Aware Participation Agreement* is available within the application. There is a link to download the form within the application. You will not upload a separate *Site List* to the application. Any additional documents that might be needed will be requested after your application has been reviewed.

***On the *Parent Aware Participation Agreement*, who should be listed as the Early Childhood Parent Aware Contact?**

The Parent Aware contact should be the staff member from the district or charter school that currently works with or will work with Parent Aware implementation. For some districts or charter schools, the voluntary prekindergarten program coordinator and the Parent Aware contact may be the same person.

****If we are applying as a new program and our current prekindergarten program already has a Parent Aware rating, should we opt in to the Auto-Rating process in the application or just plan to complete the Parent Aware renewal separately?**

To help districts streamline processes and reduce paperwork, we encourage districts receiving voluntary prekindergarten funding to consider opting into the Parent Aware auto-rating process. We want all districts and charters that would like to opt in, to complete the steps for an auto rating. This may change the timeline of your current rating, but would reduce the future need to go through the Accelerated Pathway to Rating (APR)

process. Please be aware that the auto-rating is only applicable to a district or charter school that receives VPK funding. If not yet VPK funded, you may still choose to opt in for future consideration for an automatic Parent Aware rating should you receive funding.

Note: If your current Parent Aware rating is scheduled for renewal prior to April 1, 2019 you will need to renew that rating through the standard process while your new auto-rating is being processed so that there is not a lapse in your rating.

***Where do I find a copy of the MDE-designed Impact Measurement Plan?**

Please email mde.vpk@state.mn.us to request a copy of the plan.

Charter Schools and Educational Cooperatives

*****We are a public charter school. For Line 17, should we enter the total number of enrolled students as non-residents?**

Yes. All charter students should be entered as non-residents in Line 17.

*****For charter schools, we do not have the option for a lease levy. Should we leave Line 29 blank or put in a zero?**

Charter schools do not need to fill out Lines 23 to 29; these are applicable to districts only. If interested in facilities lease cost funding, charter schools should complete Lines 31-32. If something does not apply, please enter zero or N/A. Any information that is left blank will also be considered a zero or N/A.

Is my charter school eligible to apply?

In order to be eligible for 2019-20 funding, a charter school needs to have a state-recognized early learning program. Charter schools seeking state recognition of an early learning program needed to complete and submit their recognition paperwork by October 1, 2018.

What steps do I need to take to get my charter school preschool recognized by MDE?

The first step to obtaining official recognition of your charter preschool program is to contact your authorizer and complete their process for adding a preschool to your program. Once the charter has satisfactorily addressed the authorizer's requirements, the charter will then submit an *Officially Recognized Charter School Early Learning Program Request* form found on the [MDE Charter School webpage](#).

A charter school's prekindergarten program or other preschool instructional program will be officially recognized by MDE only after the commissioner of education approves an authorizer's supplemental affidavit (pursuant to [Minn. Stat. § 124E.07, subd. 8\(b\)](#)) that clearly describes the charter school's prekindergarten and/or preschool instructional program(s). To learn more about how to receive official recognition for your early

learning program, review the Early Learning Guidance for charter schools on the [Charter School Resources page of the MDE website](#).

How is the geographic area defined for a charter school when calculating the number of Three- and Four-Star Parent Aware Rated programs in the area?

The boundaries for a charter school are the boundaries for the school district in which the charter resides. This is similar to transportation statutes for charter schools that require them to provide transportation to children living within the boundaries of the district in which they are located.

We are a co-op with member districts. Can we apply for voluntary prekindergarten on their behalf?

A co-op can certainly assist member districts in completing the application process, but the application must be signed by the district superintendent, or superintendents, if it is a multi-district site. The student seats and funding will be claimed by the individual districts involved in the program and cannot be claimed by a cooperative.

The application and approval are on a site-by-site basis. A separate worksheet must be submitted for each site proposed to have a program. Recent changes by the Legislature include awarding five additional points to applications that deliver programs through a mixed delivery system. Kindergarten free and reduced-price meals concentration for the site and proximity to other Three- or Four-Star Rated Parent Aware programs will be used to rank the applications. If the program is at a site that does not have kindergarten students with prior year free and reduced-price meals data, the school district average free and reduced-price meals concentration for kindergarten students (or the multi district average if there is a non-K-12 school site where a program designed to serve more than one district is served) will be used.

If a school site contracts to partner with a community-based provider or Head Start under Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.151, subdivision 3, or is an established early childhood center, you may use the concentration of kindergarten students eligible for free or reduced-price meals from a specific school site, as long as eligible children from that area are prioritized and guaranteed services at the site. If the site in your application is close to an elementary school and it will be primarily serving children from that elementary attendance area, then that school's free and reduced-price meals numbers may be used.

Child Eligibility

Are voluntary prekindergarten classes open to any students attending the school? Is it free?

Once awarded, voluntary prekindergarten is free of charge to families of students who are enrolled in the program and meet specific eligibility requirements (see below). Since the enrollment for the voluntary prekindergarten program is capped, some programs may not be able to serve all 4-year-olds in their area. A district or charter school may develop their own admission criteria protocol to best meet the need of families or the capacity of the facility. There is more information provided in this document about open enrollment procedures.

According to statute, a child who is 4 years of age as of September 1, in the calendar year in which the school year commences, is eligible to participate in a voluntary prekindergarten program free of charge at an eligible site.

Two additional student requirements apply to voluntary prekindergarten programs; each eligible child must complete a health and developmental screening within 90 days of program enrollment under sections [121A.16 to 121A.19](#), and provide documentation of required immunizations under section [121A.15](#).

Additionally, school districts and charter schools are capped at 60 percent of their kindergarten adjusted pupil units. Depending on the number of instructional hours, not all children may be served depending on space and capacity of the program.

Do students need to live in the district in order to participate in voluntary prekindergarten?

Students may open enroll in voluntary prekindergarten-funded programs through this initiative, like other open enrolled students. No tuition is charged. The student does not need to reapply to maintain a seat in the district until high school graduation.

Note that the general open enrollment deadline is January 15 for the upcoming school year. However, deadlines are waived for students who move into a district on or after December 1. Deadlines are also waived for situations where either the sending or receiving district has a Minnesota Department of Education-approved Achievement and Integration plan.

As with other open-enrollment situations, districts may cap open enrollment so as to not crowd out resident students or cause crowding issues as the open-enrolled student matriculates. Please note that if more students apply for open enrollment than open enrollment seats are available, the district must hold a lottery that gives priority to siblings of currently open-enrolled students, students coming from other districts where the district has an inter-district school choice plan that is part of its MDE-approved achievement and integration plan and students whose parents or legal guardians are Minnesota residents and employees of your district. Your school board may put caps on open enrollment by grade level as outlined in [Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.03](#).

Please note that the continuance of enrollment applies to voluntary prekindergarten, but does not apply to other preschool options districts operate that welcome out-of-district residents.

Is it permissible to have 5-year-old children participate in the program?

Mixed-age classrooms are permissible. Voluntary prekindergarten program standards must apply to the entire classroom including staff-to-child ratios of one-to-10 and a maximum group size of 20 children. All children, including those with disabilities, are counted as part of the 20 maximum group size. **Only children who are 4 years of age on September 1 and meet the eligibility requirements will generate general education revenue as voluntary prekindergarten students.**

Children who are 5 years old on September 1 are eligible to and encouraged to attend kindergarten which generates a full 1.0 pupil unit of funding and provides children with a full array of comprehensive services to meet their learning needs.

MARSS state aid category 29 is used to report resident children enrolled in voluntary prekindergarten who are not generating funding.

If programs are given limited funds and cannot possibly serve all of the eligible 4-year-olds in the district, how will entrance be determined?

Funding for approved sites will be limited to the number of participants for whom funding is requested in the application. Since the enrollment for the voluntary prekindergarten program is capped, a district may develop their own admission criteria for eligible children.

Four-year-old children who are generating general education revenue as voluntary prekindergarten students may not be charged for the time they are enrolled. MARSS state aid category 29 is used to report resident children enrolled in voluntary prekindergarten who are not generating funding.

What is the attendance policy; how many days can a child miss before they are dropped from the program?

Statute requires students be dropped after 15 consecutive absences. Each week of absence would count as five days toward the 15. If the school has been notified by the family that the student will no longer be attending, the student should be dropped immediately. This is the same process and statute that is used for K-12. The school should attempt to reach the family to understand the situation and offer support where appropriate.

Does every child have to participate in the 350 hours a year or can they choose to come to the program as many days as they want?

The voluntary prekindergarten program needs to provide a minimum of 350 hours, and students need to be enrolled in the full program to be counted as voluntary prekindergarten program pupil units. Children in the shorter length program or whose family chooses to attend only part-time would not qualify for voluntary prekindergarten funding.

Curriculum and Assessment

*****Are we required to use one of the adult-child interaction tools listed in the application? We have extensive evaluations for all of our prekindergarten teachers, is this sufficient?**

Voluntary prekindergarten programs are expected to use a developmentally appropriate measure of adult-child interaction as a tool to provide formative feedback to a preschool teacher. Stated below are the four accepted teacher observation tools:

- Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)
- Danielson Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument
- Marzano Teacher Evaluation Model
- Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) (Only for schools that have completed Pyramid Model training)

MDE encourages programs to use the preschool version of the tools listed. Some tools are more general to teaching at all grade levels and content areas. When using a tool such as this, it is imperative that the person conducting the observation has an understanding of the unique aspects of the way young children learn and best/promising practices in early childhood to enhance learning.

*****Are we disqualified from voluntary prekindergarten funding if we are not currently using one of the approved assessment tools?**

Programs are required to use an assessment tool from the state-approved menu of Kindergarten Entry Profile (KEP) measures. If you are not currently using one of these tools, MDE will work with you to develop a plan to support the transition to choosing and using a new tool.

*****Our district currently uses Danielson for the adult/child interaction tool, but we are in our first year of using the Pyramid Model and are in process with training and using TPOT. Which tool should I report in the application?**

If you anticipate fully using TPOT for the 2019-20 school year, please select that as your adult/child interaction tool.

Do we need to specify the curriculum being used by our program?

Programs will specify their curriculum in the voluntary prekindergarten application. Voluntary prekindergarten statute states that districts and charter schools need to “provide comprehensive program content including the implementation of curriculum, assessment, and instructional strategies aligned with the state early learning standards, and kindergarten through grade 3 academic standards.”

School districts/charter schools are encouraged to use curriculum, assessment, and instructional strategies aligned with the state early learning standards, and kindergarten through grade three academic standards. Parent Aware-approved curricula have already been determined to be aligned. If a district or charter school uses a non-Parent Aware-approved curriculum, they are responsible for demonstrating that their curriculum is aligned to the state early learning standards and kindergarten through grade three academic standards.

If schools plan to blend and braid other funding streams, they may need to be Parent Aware-rated and will need to have a [Parent Aware-approved curricula](#).

Do we need to specify the assessment tool being used by our district?

Programs will specify their assessment tool in the voluntary prekindergarten application. According to voluntary prekindergarten statute, each program must “measure each child’s cognitive and social skills using a formative measure aligned to the state’s early learning standards when the child enters and again before the child leaves the program, screening and progress monitoring measures, and others from the state-approved menu of kindergarten entry profile measures.”

The following are tools approved for use by the Kindergarten Entry Profile (KEP):

- Teaching Strategies Gold (GOLD), produced by Teaching Strategies
- Work Sampling System (WSS), produced by Pearson
- Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP), produced by WestEd

Information on these tools and state-negotiated rates can be found on the [MDE KEP website](#). The tools listed on the menu have undergone extensive alignment testing including alignment to the early learning standards, kindergarten academic standards and early childhood outcomes required by the Office of Special Education Programs.

Is DevMilestones no longer a KEP-approved assessment?

Beginning in school year 2019-20, DevMilestones will no longer be on the menu of KEP-approved assessments. In 2019-20, the menu of KEP-approved assessments will include: the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP), GOLD, and the Work Sampling System (WSS). If you have any questions as you determine the best fit for your program, please visit the [KEP website](#) or contact mde.vpk@state.mn.us.

If contracting with a mixed delivery site, can the school district retain part of the funding to pay for administration costs, or does the district pass through the entire amount generated by the voluntary prekindergarten program student?

It is expected that there will be some costs to the district or charter school associated with contracting with a mixed delivery site. Professional development, coordination of comprehensive services and oversight/monitoring might be among those costs. This is a local determination through a formal agreement.

Facilities

*****Does applying for remodeling or lease funding help or harm your application consideration in any way?**

No, this is not a factor in the scoring and ranking criteria and will not impact your application.

*****What is the difference between the anticipated remodeling costs in Line 23 versus the square footage to be remodeled in Line 24?**

Line 23 asks for the estimated remodeling costs and Line 24 asks for the square footage of the remodel. This information is used to determine if it is a reasonable cost per square foot prior to approval.

Can all applicants request money for renovation or construction? What are the guidelines?

Districts that had an approved VPK application under the original statute, or received VPK approval via the funding reallocations, are eligible for long-term facilities maintenance (LTFM) remodeling levy authority under current law. No additional approvals under LTFM are expected for Pay 21.

What portion of the total amount has been allotted for construction costs?

No specific portion has been allotted specifically for construction costs. School districts approved to participate in the voluntary prekindergarten program may request an increase in LTFM revenue for the cost of remodeling existing instructional space to accommodate prekindergarten instruction. LTFM revenue is funded partly with state aid and partly with local property tax levies. The aid portion will go against the aid limit; the levy portion will not. School districts may also levy for building lease costs; since that is a local levy, it will also not count against the aid limit for the program. Charter school building lease aid may also increase due to added pupil units and/or added space needed by charter schools. The increase in charter school lease aid will count against the aid limit for the program.

While the increases in LTFM and school building lease levies will not directly count against the aid limit for the program, an increase in operating capital aid (offset by an equal decrease in the operating capital levy) was enacted as part of the voluntary prekindergarten legislation to neutralize the estimated overall effect of the program on school levies. This aid increase will occur regardless of the actual increases that occur in LTFM and school building lease levies. Therefore, the cost of neutralizing the levy impact of the prekindergarten program will count against the aid limit for the program.

Will there be funds to help equip new classrooms from existing instructional rooms?

There is no additional funding specifically for equipment costs. Districts can use part of the general education aid and levy revenue generated by the prekindergarten pupil units to purchase equipment for the program like tables and chairs.

***If we are unsure if there are any short or long term plans to remodel, how should we respond?**

School districts with an approved voluntary prekindergarten program under Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.151 are eligible to increase Longer-Term Facilities Maintenance (LTFM) revenue for the cost approved by the commissioner for remodeling existing instructional space to accommodate prekindergarten instruction. A narrative is required describing the scope and cost of the project to remodel existing instructional space to accommodate prekindergarten instruction.

If you are unsure how to report remodeling plans in the *Prekindergarten Site Worksheet*, please email mde.vpk@state.mn.us and describe your district or charter's specific situation so it can be reviewed with school finance staff.

Funding

*****We have a half-day program. Can we offer parents the opportunity to have paid childcare through our community education program for hours that we do not hold voluntary prekindergarten? Essentially, can parents be charged tuition for the .4 ADM that extends beyond the .6 ADM funded by voluntary prekindergarten?**

Yes. Programs may charge a fee or use Pathway I or II or other local dollars for extended or wraparound care that occurs outside of the voluntary prekindergarten schedule. Please note: No parent fees should be collected for any child enrolled in a classroom that generates voluntary prekindergarten funding during the hours of the day designated as voluntary prekindergarten.

*****Does voluntary prekindergarten funding replace Pathway II funding?**

No. Voluntary prekindergarten does not replace Pathway II funding. Programs are encouraged to braid and blend funding sources and can use both funding sources as long as Pathway II funding supplements and not supplants voluntary prekindergarten funding.

*****We are an early childhood center and we collect free and reduced-price lunch applications. As a center, can we be a Title I school?**

No. Title I funding is only available for school districts and charter schools.

*****Can you clarify the formula for ADM in Line 13?**

ADM is calculated by taking the annual instructional hours (Line 10) times the number of scheduled instructional days (Line 11) which equals the total number of instructional minutes. This number is divided by 60 to calculate the total number of instructional hours (Line 12). The annual instructional hours is divided by 850 to calculate the ADM in Line 13. If the ADM is higher than .6, the ADM will default to .6 ADM since that is the maximum ADM allowed by statute.

***What is the funding amount per student for voluntary prekindergarten?**

Funding for the voluntary prekindergarten grade level is based on ADM. Students enrolled in the prekindergarten grade level and designated in MARSS to generate formula will generate all pupil-driven formulas including compensatory and sparsity.

Due to the capped number of students statewide, elementary sites have been approved for a capped number of students and ADM based on the application the school submitted which included calendar information.

- MDE will provide funding estimates of what your district will generate based on the ADM and the demographics of the children submitted on the school's application.

- MDE will provide an estimated enrollment number that is the maximum number of children the school can generate revenue for based on the pupil unit that the approved school calendar generates.
- By law, voluntary prekindergarten students at participating sites can generate up to 0.6 pupil unit.

Funding flows like other K-12 general education revenue streams. Metered payments begin every August 30. The additional aid generated by voluntary prekindergarten students is included in the regular aid entitlements for each program (e.g., general education, special education), and will not be paid as a separate line item.

***For the *Prekindergarten Site Worksheet*, do we need to enter our projected ADM? Do we include special education students in this amount?**

As you fill out the *Prekindergarten Site Worksheet* with the number of children you hope to serve and enter your calendar days and instructional minutes, the ADM number will automatically calculate for you.

ECSE students should not be included in your voluntary prekindergarten seat count (which is one of the numbers used to calculate the ADM). You will want to design your program so that ECSE children can be included in the VPK classroom. The classroom is capped at a maximum enrollment of 20. An example of how to plan the classroom enrollment follows: in a classroom with 20 seats, 16 seats could be applied for as voluntary prekindergarten seats and four seats could be occupied by ECSE children. This allows you to fully maximize the voluntary prekindergarten funding allocated to your program.

Will the funds go to General Fund 01 or would it still be in Fund 04?

Voluntary prekindergarten students generate general education revenue just like kindergarten students. The revenue will be General Fund 01.

What is meant by: all revenue received must be used to supplement not supplant existing state, federal and local revenue for prekindergarten activities?

Programs are encouraged to braid and blend funds. It is not necessary to differentiate classrooms based on funding streams. School readiness, early childhood special education and Title I can be used to supplement the cost of the voluntary prekindergarten program, but the program must meet the voluntary prekindergarten requirements. General education revenue generated by voluntary prekindergarten students must be used to supplement not supplant (replace) existing state, federal and local revenue for prekindergarten activities.

An example of this would be if a district/charter spent \$1,000,000 on prekindergarten activities in FY 19, and receives new voluntary prekindergarten funding in FY 20 of \$200,000, it will need to document that it spent at least \$1.2 million on these activities in FY 20. In other words, that it did not use the \$200,000 to reduce the \$1 million of funding from other sources, but instead increased its spending by at least the \$200,000.

The increase in expenditures over the prior year could include the cost of more intensive or higher cost services for existing students as well as adding new students. Examples include:

- Expanding the number of 4-year-olds served.

- Increasing the time that children were able to spend in school (e.g., increasing instructional hours from 350 to 510 per year, or moving from half-time programs to full-time programs).
- Reducing child to staff ratios below the maximum.
- Increasing the expertise of staff working with the children (e.g., higher proportion of licensed teachers).
- Covering inflationary cost increases (e.g., salaries, fringe benefits, other costs).

Is it possible to have some children within the same classroom who are funded through other sources?

Programs are encouraged to braid and blend funds. It is not necessary to differentiate classrooms based on funding streams. The designation follows the child.

School readiness, early childhood special education and Title I funds can be used to supplement the cost of voluntary prekindergarten, but the program must meet the statutory requirements for funded programs within that classroom.

Only children who are 4 years old on September 1 will generate general education revenue as voluntary prekindergarten students. Since the student seat numbers for the voluntary prekindergarten program is capped, some programs may not be able to serve all 4-year-olds in their area. A district/charter may locally develop their own admission criteria.

MARSS state aid category 29 is used to report resident children enrolled in voluntary prekindergarten who are not generating funding.

Pathway I and Pathway II early learning scholarships cannot be used for the hours determined to be voluntary prekindergarten instructional hours unless a child is not generating general education revenue as a voluntary prekindergarten student. However, scholarships can be used to provide children with additional hours beyond the voluntary prekindergarten program.

Mixed-age classrooms are also permissible. Although children who are not 4 years of age do not generate general education revenue as voluntary prekindergarten students, voluntary prekindergarten standards must apply to the entire classroom including staff-to-child ratios of one-to-10 and a maximum group size of 20 children. All children, including those with disabilities, are counted as part of the 20 maximum group size.

No parent fees should be collected for any child enrolled in a classroom that generates voluntary prekindergarten funding.

Can you please verify that we are not allowed to charge tuition in order to be eligible for this funding?

No parent fees should be collected for any child enrolled in a classroom that generates voluntary prekindergarten funding.

A child who is generating general education revenue as a voluntary prekindergarten student may not be charged any fee or tuition. Since the student seats for the voluntary prekindergarten programs are capped, some programs may not be able to serve all 4-year-olds in their area. Funds from school readiness, Pathway I or II,

Head Start, child care assistance (where applicable), ECSE, or other local funds may be used to support additional prekindergarten children enrolled in voluntary prekindergarten designated classrooms. MARSS state aid category 29 is used to report resident children enrolled in voluntary prekindergarten who are not generating general education revenue.

If we apply for two classrooms of all-day, every-day prekindergarten, can I subsidize the cost with school readiness funds out of 04 if the .6 funding will not cover all costs?

Yes. Programs are encouraged to braid and blend funds. It is not necessary to differentiate classrooms based on funding streams. School readiness, early childhood special education and Title I can be used to supplement the cost of the voluntary prekindergarten program, but the program must meet the voluntary prekindergarten requirements. The general education revenue generated by voluntary prekindergarten students must be used to supplement not supplant existing state, federal and local revenue for prekindergarten activities.

An example of this would be if a district/charter spent \$1,000,000 on prekindergarten activities in FY 19, and receives new voluntary prekindergarten funding in FY 20 of \$200,000, it will need to document that it spent at least \$1.2 million on these activities in FY 20. In other words, it did not use the \$200,000 to reduce the \$1 million of funding from other sources, but instead increased its spending by at least the \$200,000.

We receive school readiness dollars. Can they be allocated to the 3-year-olds and then use voluntary prekindergarten to fund the program for 4-year-olds? Will this be considered supplanting?

This would be considered supplanting if you were serving 3-year-olds previously and did not use new money to expand services. It is supplementing if you have increased your 3-year-old program while serving 4-year-olds with the additional general education revenue generated by prekindergarten students. For example, school readiness money may be used to fund 3-year-olds so that **more** 4-year-olds can be funded using the general education revenue generated by the voluntary prekindergarten students. See the example mentioned above. The same would hold true for this question.

If I have one classroom but three different sessions of preschool that take place throughout the week, could I make only one of the preschool sessions the voluntary prekindergarten program?

Yes. On the application, list the number of scheduled days and instructional hours offered by the classroom designated for voluntary prekindergarten. This classroom must meet the statutory requirements of the program including the 350-hour minimum and teacher: child ratio and licensure/compensation requirements. To help meet capacity issues that sometimes arise in voluntary prekindergarten classrooms when children are referred and receive early childhood special education services, it is desirable to have multiple classrooms meeting voluntary prekindergarten requirements. In this case you could consider spreading your voluntary prekindergarten allocation among the different sessions—if they meet the minimum requirements—so that you can make full use of the allocated voluntary prekindergarten funding.

Are students funded based on the number of instructional hours for each student?

Yes. Funding for each student is based on the instructional hours for that student, up to a maximum of 510 hours for a student. Students receiving 415 hours of instruction for the year will generate .49 ADM and pupil units; students receiving 510 or more hours of instruction will generate .6 ADM and pupil units.

****We are not currently receiving achievement and integration funding, but we will be receiving it next year. Should I enter yes on Line 3?**

Yes. Enter **yes** if you will be receiving achievement and integration funding for the 2019-20 school year.

****How does the number of protected class in Line 22 impact funding?**

The number of protected class students helps MDE calculate the impact to the district's achievement and integration funding.

****If we request 40 seats for two classrooms, is there a possibility we would only be funded for 20 seats in one classroom or would we be denied funding for both?**

Seats will be allocated based on the ranking criteria by region. A site might be partially funded if the site was the final site on the ranking list to be funded and only 20 seats remained out of the total regional allocation. In that case, only 20 out of the requested 40 seats would be funded. If this would happen, the program could split the allocated seats between the two classrooms and have 10 voluntary prekindergarten seats in each classroom and then fill the additional seats with children funded by ECSE, Pathway I or II Scholarships, school readiness funding, etc.

****If we are funded, is there a certain number of children that would receive the benefit of VPK (the number submitted on the *Prekindergarten Site Worksheet*), or do all students receive the benefit if we would happen to be one that receives VPK?**

All voluntary prekindergarten allocations are capped at .6 of a district or charter school's total projected kindergarten enrollment. Programs are allocated a number of seats based on the data submitted in the *Prekindergarten Site Worksheet*. Programs are encouraged to braid and blend other funding sources with voluntary prekindergarten funds such as ECSE, Pathway I or II Scholarships, school readiness funding, etc. so that the program can be customized to meet your community's early learning needs.

Are districts allowed to utilize Pathway II funding with voluntary prekindergarten funding?

A district may receive both types of funds. However, early learning scholarships cannot be used for the hours determined to be voluntary prekindergarten instructional hours for a 4-year-old. Scholarships can be used to provide children with additional hours beyond the voluntary prekindergarten program and for 3-year-old children **or** Pathway II funds may be used to fund children not funded by voluntary prekindergarten funding during program hours. For example, if the class size is 20, 15 students could be funded by voluntary prekindergarten, two funded by Pathway II and three funded by ECSE.

Are voluntary prekindergarten dollars tied to specific children like Pathway II scholarships?

The allocated seat given to a child is similar to the way the Pathway II scholarship is awarded. If that child leaves the program, the seat may be awarded to another child who meets voluntary prekindergarten eligibility criteria.

However, unlike Pathway II scholarships, the funding for voluntary prekindergarten is based on the characteristics of specific children: ADM is calculated based on the enrollment days/hours for specific children who are reported as prekindergarten students in MARSS. The ADM is used to calculate pupil units which drives various funding formulas, such as basic general education revenue, operating capital revenue and referendum revenue. The free and reduced-price lunch eligibility for these specific students as of October 1 determines the compensatory revenue, the race of students' impacts achievement and integration revenue, and the English learner (EL) status of the students determines the EL revenue.

The students generate additional revenue in various funding categories, and the general requirements of those funding categories apply. So basic general education revenue and referendum revenue are part of the district's unrestricted general fund revenue; achievement and integration revenue must be used for the purposes in the district's achievement and integration plan; operating capital revenue has specific uses in law; and the compensatory revenue and EL revenue must be used for the purposes specified for basic skills revenue.

We are a small school district that already offers a prekindergarten program with help from Pathway II scholarship and school readiness funding. Are we eligible to apply?

School districts using school readiness and Pathway II funding (early learning scholarships) may receive voluntary prekindergarten funding. School readiness can be used to supplement the cost of the voluntary prekindergarten program, but the program must meet the statutory requirements of the voluntary prekindergarten program. Pathway II scholarships cannot be used for the hours determined to be voluntary prekindergarten instructional hours. However, they can be used to provide children with additional hours beyond the voluntary prekindergarten program and/or serve 3-year-olds.

Can you give examples of how Pathway II and voluntary prekindergarten dollars can be used in the same classroom?

Pathway II early learning scholarships can only be used in voluntary prekindergarten classrooms for children who are not generating voluntary prekindergarten funds or to extend the day of children receiving services beyond the designated voluntary prekindergarten instructional time.

For example, a Pathway II scholarship could be used for a 4-year-old generating voluntary prekindergarten funding if it is used to provide additional programming to a child beyond voluntary prekindergarten hours of the day. For example, if voluntary prekindergarten is offered in the morning and the child needs afternoon services as well, the scholarship could be used to cover the costs of the additional hours beyond the voluntary prekindergarten hours.

Additionally, if a school offers a mixed-age classroom, and has 3-year-old children enrolled in the class, a Pathway I or Pathway II scholarship could be used to cover the costs for serving the 3-year-old.

Can we continue to use scholarship funds to pay for busing?

School districts are required to provide transportation to students enrolled in the voluntary prekindergarten program for whom they receive general education aid if the student resides two miles or more from school, the same as for K-12 students. 4.66 percent of the basic revenue and transportation sparsity revenue is generated by these students and will cover part of the transportation cost.

If some students attend a scholarship or fee-based program on days not covered by voluntary prekindergarten or before/after the voluntary prekindergarten program and the district has to run an extra bus to accommodate those students, then they could use the scholarship money to cover transportation costs for the added transportation, but not for basic to and from transportation provided to all prekindergarten students in the voluntary prekindergarten program.

If 3-year-old students have been awarded Pathway II dollars, are we required to renew their scholarship?

If a child was using a scholarship at the program prior to the age of 4, and is now enrolled in the voluntary prekindergarten and generating voluntary prekindergarten funding, the Early Learning Scholarships, Pathway I or Pathway II, cannot be used for the hours determined to be voluntary prekindergarten instructional hours. Scholarships can be used to provide children with additional hours beyond the voluntary prekindergarten program.

If the child was previously receiving a Pathway II scholarship to cover the cost to attend the program but now generates voluntary prekindergarten funding, the child could continue using Pathway II funds for hours beyond the funded voluntary prekindergarten hours. The Pathway II funding no longer being used can also be made available for another child meeting eligibility requirements.

You will not be punished for cancelling a child's scholarship if they move to voluntary prekindergarten and do not meet one of the above criteria. You'll simply end the scholarship award.

If a district qualifies for the voluntary prekindergarten program and funds, would they then have to wave all other funding sources?

No. Voluntary prekindergarten is funded as a grade level through general education funding. School readiness and early learning scholarships are funded from separate sources. Programs are encouraged to braid and blend funds. The program must meet the voluntary prekindergarten requirements. Possible funding sources to include are:

- Early childhood special education
- Title I
- Pathway II early learning scholarships
- Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE)
- School readiness
- Head Start

A child enrolled in voluntary prekindergarten may not access school readiness or Pathway I or Pathway II scholarship money for the same hours that the child is enrolled in the voluntary prekindergarten program. A Pathway I or Pathway II scholarship may be used for additional hours beyond the voluntary prekindergarten schedule.

MARSS state aid category 29 is used to report resident children enrolled in voluntary prekindergarten who are not generating funding.

If awarded voluntary prekindergarten funds, is there a way to amend our districts Pathway II scholarship plan?

Yes, districts and charter schools awarded voluntary prekindergarten funding may amend their Pathway II scholarship plan within permissible uses of Pathway II funding.

What will the funding look like per district? Will most districts that apply be awarded?

Voluntary prekindergarten sites funded for the first time in 2016-17 will receive continued funding for their original number of seats; school readiness plus funding is scheduled to sunset at the end of the 2018-19 school year. Preschool program funding decisions will be made during the 2019 Legislative Session. All districts and charter schools interested in funding, should it become available, need to apply by January 30, 2019, at 4 p.m.

Site ranking will be determined on a site-by-site basis. The total number of students awarded for the program, is allocated among four groups, (Minneapolis and St. Paul school districts; metro suburban school districts; non-metro school districts; and approved charter schools) based on the percentage of kindergarten enrollment in each group as of October 1, 2018. Within each group, applicants with qualifying programs will be rank-ordered based on (1) the percent of kindergarten students at the site eligible for free or reduced-price meals as of October 1, 2018, and (2) the presence or absence of a Three- or Four-Star Parent Aware Rated non-school program within or in close proximity to the district and whether a mixed delivery site will be used for program delivery. School district and charter school sites with the highest concentration of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals have the greatest probability of being included in the program.

Does the funding include only the general fund formula allowance, or do we also receive funding from other ADM-driven funding, such as operating levy?

The ADM is used to calculate pupil units which drives various funding formulas, such as basic general education revenue, operating capital revenue and referendum revenue. The pupil units generated by voluntary prekindergarten students who are eligible to generate funding are used in all funding formulas that are driven by ADM or pupil units. The October 1 enrollment of voluntary prekindergarten students who are eligible for funding is used in the compensatory revenue formulas.

What happens if we are too high/low on our estimated predictions? (For example, if one student leaves, it is a 2 to 4 percent increase or decrease).

Sites approved for funding will be funded based on the lesser of the number of ADM estimated in the application or the actual ADM as calculated at the end of the school year. If actual ADM is less than the estimate in the application, funding will be reduced accordingly. If the actual ADM is greater than requested in the application, the funding will be based on the number of ADM in the application, unless additional funds become available, allowing additional students to be funded. Districts may use other funding sources, such as school readiness, general education aid generated by K-12 students or Pathway II scholarships to fund additional students not covered in the application or additional time over and above the maximum 510 funded hours per student for the school year.

Can a district or charter school roll over voluntary prekindergarten funds year to year if all funds are not expended by the end of the fiscal year?

Voluntary prekindergarten students who are eligible to generate funding generate general education revenue and all other related revenue based on actual pupil units served, like general education funding generated by kindergarten students; it is not an expenditure reimbursement formula. There is no separate accounting to track revenues versus expenditures or fund balances for the program. If a district has fewer participants and ADM in the program than expected when the application is made, the aid will be adjusted downward to reflect the actual ADM. If a district's expenditures for the program are less than the revenue generated by the pupil-driven formulas, the district can retain any unspent funds. However, for new voluntary prekindergarten programs beginning in FY 2018, there is a requirement that the new revenue be used to supplement and not supplant existing expenditures for prekindergarten activities. Therefore, it is expected that the funds generated for the program will be spent for the program in the year they are earned. It is not the intention of the department that there will be excess funds to carryover.

What happens if our program plans change from date of submission?

If a school is awarded the funding but decides not to offer voluntary prekindergarten, they should send a letter or email notifying MDE as soon as possible so that the seats can be reallocated to another district or charter school. Please send the email to mde.vpk@state.mn.us.

What is the cutoff date for enrollment for the ADM, October 1?

The program must be in operation for at least 350 hours during the school year. There is no cutoff for individual student enrollment; for example, if a student moves into the district after the school year starts, the student could be enrolled at that time. If some students enroll after the school year begins, they would generate less than the full ADM and pupil units generated by students who enroll at the beginning of the school year, as with K-12 students. Students must be enrolled by October 1 to be included in the compensatory revenue calculations for FY 19 and 20.

Mixed Delivery

****If partnering with a child care center, does it need to be Four Star-rated and not charge fees for the program?**

Mixed delivery partners do not need to be Four Star-rated. Voluntary prekindergarten classrooms in mixed delivery sites are eligible to qualify under the Parent Aware Auto-Rating process, but it is the district or charter school's responsibility to ensure that all statutory requirements are met.

No parent fees should be collected for any child enrolled in a classroom that generates voluntary prekindergarten funding.

What does mixed delivery mean?

A mixed delivery system of services is defined as a district or charter school contracting with a Head Start, child care center, family child care program or community-based organization for delivery of voluntary prekindergarten. Districts or charter schools choosing to contract with a Head Start, child care center, family child care program or community-based organization must have a signed *Statement of Assurances* with their partner site who has agreed to meet all program requirements to be submitted by January 30, 2019, along with the site's application.

Here are some examples of types of mixed delivery program models:

- **Mixed Delivery at a School Site** – the voluntary prekindergarten program will be offered through a contract with a mixed delivery partner and located at an existing elementary school.
- **Mixed Delivery at a New Site Serving an Existing Elementary Site** – the voluntary prekindergarten program will be offered through a contract with a mixed delivery partner, located at a new site but serve the geographic attendance area of an existing elementary school.
- **Mixed Delivery at a New Site** – the voluntary prekindergarten program will be offered through a contract with a mixed delivery partner and located at a new site.

What are the advantages or reasons for a mixed delivery model?

Mixed delivery systems offer parents options in choosing a setting that offers a high-quality early learning environment for their child and meets their needs as parents. Community-based mixed delivery sites can also address district/charter school facilities issues as they often have space customized for early education and care. Mixed delivery sites located in the community also offer greater opportunity to coordinate transitions between various program types. This system also encourages the alignment of curriculum, assessment and instructional practices that can generate data for continuous improvement of early learning opportunities for children.

Can districts partner with community preschool programs that have a church affiliation?

A school district may contract with a community preschool program with a church affiliation for a voluntary prekindergarten site as long as the program meets the requirements listed on the signed *Statement of Assurances* and that only eligible 4-year-old children enrolled in and generating funds through voluntary

prekindergarten may not be charged for the time they are enrolled in the program. It is the responsibility of the school district to ensure the program meets the requirements including transportation, meals and funding.

If a voluntary prekindergarten program is offered in a sectarian building, the school district or charter school must take steps to maintain nonsectarian school facilities in compliance with Minnesota Statutes, section [124E.06, subdivision 3\(b\)](#), such that there are no religious texts, symbols, quotations or subjects displayed in facilities on school days. Additionally, the voluntary prekindergarten program must be available to any 4-year-old meeting eligibility requirements and must not discriminate.

***If there is a new child care center opening in our district this next fall but they are not yet licensed or operating, can we apply with them now as a mixed delivery program? We are already working with them to plan wrap around care, trainings and curriculum support.**

Yes, you may apply and list the new program as your mixed delivery partner. Children will not be allowed to inhabit the new site until the Department of Human Services child care licensing start-up review process has been completed.

***For mixed delivery, are we able to partner with ESCE?**

Since ECSE is a district program, they do not qualify as a mixed delivery partner. Mixed delivery partners include Head Start, child care center, family child care or community organization early childhood program providers. The mixed delivery program may be held at the partner site or at a district facility. The key is that the partner program is not already operated as a district or charter school program.

***Can a mixed delivery partner be a child care program where the staff are funded by the school district?**

If the child care program is funded and operated as a district program, it cannot be considered a mixed delivery program. If the child care program is operated by a nondistrict-sponsored organization and uses district staff to support instructional programming, this could be considered a shared resource and would be listed as a provided resource by the district in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that is required between mixed delivery partners. The MOU outlines each partner's roles and responsibilities so that all voluntary prekindergarten statutory requirements are met.

***Could a program have a mixed delivery classroom and a voluntary prekindergarten classroom at the same site?**

Yes, this could be possible if one classroom is operated by the school district using all school district staff and resources. The second classroom would need to be operated by the mixed delivery partner such as Head Start or a child care organization. Each classroom must meet all VPK statutory requirements. It would be encouraged that staff from these classrooms work together to devise cohesive transition and community interaction practices as well as share professional development activities.

***If we are partnering with a Head Start program for mixed delivery, how do we ensure comparable pay to K-12 teachers if the teacher is a Head Start teacher and paid for by Head Start?**

Comparable pay for voluntary prekindergarten teachers can be demonstrated by showing a comparison between an hourly and a salaried teacher: by showing a salary conversion that calculates an hourly rate of pay (e.g., salary amount divided by the number of duty days divided by 8 hours equals the hourly rate of pay). There may be other considerations to calculate if the preschool teacher works fewer hours per day or fewer duty days per year. Contact mde.vpk@state.mn.us if you have additional questions about salary calculations and comparable pay.

If a district is currently collaborating with a Head Start program or child care center, can the district still apply for the new preschool funding?

Yes. A school may apply for funding and designate a mixed delivery partnership with the Head Start program or child care center they are working with. The district or charter school will need to ensure they have a signed *Statement of Assurances* signed by the director/designated official of the partner agency. The signed document must be uploaded with the application and a signed contract must be in place before the first day of program implementation. The Head Start grantee or child care center and the school will be responsible for ensuring the requirements listed on the statement of assurances, including transportation, meals and funding are met.

Children who are 4 years of age as of September 1, and meet the voluntary prekindergarten eligibility requirements are eligible to participate free of charge.

Our elementary school doesn't have enough space to add preschool. If we partner with a nearby child care center, will we be ranked using the elementary school free and reduced-price lunch average or the district average?

A school site may contract to partner with a community based provider or Head Start, or establish an early childhood center, and use the free and reduced-price meal concentration of students in kindergarten at the school site, as long as those eligible children are prioritized and guaranteed services at the mixed delivery site or early education center.

How do voluntary prekindergarten standards compare to federal Head Start standards?

A crosswalk demonstrating the alignment of the Head Start federal performance standards with the statutory requirements of voluntary prekindergarten is available on the [voluntary prekindergarten](#) webpage.

Can Head Start or child care programs apply directly or should the district apply on their behalf as a partner?

Districts and charter schools with recognized early learning programs are the only entities eligible to apply. Community programs interested in partnering with their local school district to offer voluntary prekindergarten

programming through a mixed delivery system are encouraged to contact their local school district administration as soon as possible.

We offer community education preschool classes for 3-year-olds located in the same school buildings as our voluntary prekindergarten. Is this considered a mixed delivery site?

It would be considered a school site. A mixed delivery site is when school districts and charters offer voluntary prekindergarten by contracting with a Head Start, child care center, family child care program or a community-based organization that meet program requirements. When a school district offers preschool or child care through the district’s community education, this is considered as the braiding or blending of district or charter school resources.

Can districts require mixed delivery community providers to use the same curriculum that the district uses?

School districts or charter schools are encouraged to create coherence in programming for students. Agreed-upon curriculum and assessment tools should be a part of any negotiated contract with a mixed delivery site.

Can a district require a mixed delivery community partner to follow the same admission criteria for voluntary prekindergarten students?

Since the number of students for the funded preschool programs is capped, some programs may not be able to serve all of the 4-year-olds in the district. A district may develop admission criteria. The established criteria for admission would be used regardless of whether the program is offered at a school building or a community location.

I have a preschool program where the district hires all of the staff, but Head Start buys slots. We have a contract covering our arrangement, but it is held at the district schools, taught by district teachers and we bill Head Start for some costs for the slots for Head Start students. Is this a mixed delivery situation?

A mixed delivery site is when school districts and charters offer voluntary prekindergarten by contracting with a Head Start, child care center, family child care program or a community-based organization that meet program requirements. The description provided would not be considered mixed delivery, but if the district was purchasing seats, sharing resources or dividing responsibilities with the partner, it would be considered mixed delivery. Some examples of this include: purchasing slots from Head Start, providing professional development training or coaching, sharing/splitting staff costs and responsibilities; it could be considered mixed delivery.

How do we meet teacher qualification/compensation requirements if the potential partners do not have qualified teaching staff?

Service and funding roles and responsibilities for each organization are outlined in the contract established between the district/charter and community partner. There are two ways that a site can ensure having a

qualified teacher for the mixed delivery site. The community partner could be responsible for hiring the qualified teacher and arranging in the contract to be reimbursed by the district/charter for the wages and benefits of that teacher. The district/charter could also be named responsible in the contract for hiring and providing the qualified teacher.

Voluntary prekindergarten statute requires a highly qualified teacher knowledgeable in early childhood curriculum content, assessment, native and English language programs, and instruction and paid comparably to local K-12 instructional staff.

On June 16, 2017, the Minnesota Board of Teaching (now known as the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board or PELSB) also passed a resolution which allows teachers who are licensed K-12 in the areas of English as a second language (ESL), vocal and instrumental music, physical education and visual art and are assigned to teachers in K-6 grade settings, to also be permitted to also provide subject-specific instruction to students in prekindergarten assignments.

A district may also request a variance for another fully licensed teacher to teach outside of their licensure area if they have advertised and could not find a licensed teacher that met the requirements of the position. A teacher can get up to three variances in a lifetime. After three, the district needs to appeal to the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board for additional variances.

Do we need to have a contract in place with our mixed delivery partners at the time of application, or can we develop these over the summer?

At the time of application (January 30, 2019), districts or charter schools choosing to contract with a Head Start, child care center, family child care program or community-based organization must submit a *Statement of Assurances* that has also been signed by the partner site agreeing to meet all program requirements. If using more than one mixed delivery site, each site will need its own signed *Statement of Assurances* uploaded with the voluntary prekindergarten application. By the first day of contact with children, a contract must be on file between the district/charter school and the mixed delivery site partner.

Can you please describe how a district would supervise a mixed delivery partner?

The roles and responsibilities for each partner will need to be agreed upon during the negotiation process. A useful tool for doing this is the *Statement of Assurances* that is signed by each partner. Using the program requirements that are listed on the *Statement of Assurances* is a good starting place for thinking through roles and responsibilities of each partner. Examples of this include: identification and enrollment procedures for eligible children, determining curriculum and assessment tools, reviewing instructional practices, meeting data reporting requirements, professional development planning based on information from the teacher-child interaction tool, etc. The determination of roles and responsibilities will largely depend on the program practices that are implemented by the mixed delivery partner. Contact mde.vpk@state.mn.us to discuss specific questions about mixed delivery program design.

Reporting

How does the World’s Best Workforce – Ready for School Goal fit into the prekindergarten program responsibility?

The evaluation of your voluntary prekindergarten program will assist you in forming and meeting the [World’s Best Workforce](#) goals for goal area #1 – All children are ready for school. Early Learning Services at MDE has prepared sample goals that are available on the World’s Best Workforce webpage.

Will some of the 4-year-olds be reported both via MARSS and EE Student?

A child enrolled in voluntary prekindergarten will be reported in MARSS, not in Early Education Student (EE Student) Student. If the child is also enrolled in another community education program like ECFE, then they would be reported in EE Student for their enrollment in that program.

Student and Family Services

What would coordination of a successful transition plan with families look like?

Voluntary prekindergarten programs must coordinate their transition plans with parents and kindergarten teachers. Transition activities should include coordination with the families, community-based programs the child may be enrolled in and the kindergarten program. Programs should build relationships between settings and people so that children’s transition from preschool to kindergarten is seamless. Mixed delivery partnerships help create relationships that support the development of comprehensive transition practices.

What does it mean to coordinate services with community-based programs?

Coordination with community-based services includes a variety of agencies and community partners that can support the work of the voluntary prekindergarten program for children and their families. This can include social services, public health, public libraries, etc.; organizations that can support and enhance the work of your voluntary prekindergarten program.

Contracting with a community-based early learning program as part of a mixed delivery system is encouraged to ensure parent choice.

A district or charter school may contract with a charter school, Head Start, child care centers, family child care programs licensed under Minnesota Statutes, [section 245A.03](#), or a community-based organization that meet program requirements to provide eligible children with developmentally appropriate services.

Do we have the option of passing on the English learning (EL) revenue, as we do our assessment in kindergarten?

Children enrolled in voluntary prekindergarten should have access to comprehensive services. Statute indicates that programs are to coordinate with relevant school district programs and services including those for English language learners. Voluntary prekindergarten programs are expected to support the growth and development of the whole child. Programs should work with the English language specialists in their district to determine the best instructional materials and practices to use. If voluntary prekindergarten students are not identified as EL and not served, then they would not generate EL revenue for that year.

Under [Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.59, subdivision 2](#), seven years of EL funding eligibility is based on total ADM in Minnesota (including voluntary prekindergarten), whether the student was served in an EL program in voluntary prekindergarten or not. Since voluntary prekindergarten students will generate a maximum of 0.6 ADM, serving them in voluntary prekindergarten (and collecting EL revenue while they are in voluntary prekindergarten) will not cut off funding for the seven-year cap any sooner than if the students are not served until kindergarten – they will have 6.6 years of ADM after grade five if counted for voluntary prekindergarten, so they will still be under the seven-year cap at the start of grade six. Eligibility will not be cut off in the middle of a year.

Teacher Licensure

What qualification/licensure does the prekindergarten teacher need to have?

Voluntary prekindergarten statute requires a highly qualified teacher knowledgeable in early childhood curriculum content, assessment, native and English language programs, and instruction and paid comparably to local K-12 instructional staff.

On June 16, 2017, the Minnesota Board of Teaching (now known as the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board) also passed a resolution which allows teachers who are licensed K-12 in the areas of English as a second language (ESL), vocal and instrumental music, physical education and visual art and are assigned to a teacher in K-6 grade settings, to be permitted to also provide subject specific instruction to students in prekindergarten assignments.

A district may also request a variance for another fully licensed teacher to teach outside of their licensure area if they have advertised and could not find a licensed teacher that met the requirements of the position. A teacher can get up to three variances in a lifetime. After three, the district needs to appeal to the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board for additional variances.

Transportation

Are we required to provide transportation with voluntary prekindergarten funds?

School districts are required to provide transportation to students enrolled in the voluntary prekindergarten program for whom they receive general education aid if the student resides two miles or more from school, the same as for K-12 students. 4.66 percent of the basic revenue and transportation sparsity revenue is generated by these students and will cover part of the transportation cost.

Miscellaneous

Can summer programming be counted as part of the 350-hour program requirement?

No. The 350 hours for the voluntary prekindergarten program is the number of hours the program runs for all children enrolled in the program during the school calendar for that grade. The voluntary prekindergarten hours must be reported during the fiscal year it is funded. A school year is funded from July 1 to June 30. Any program after June 30 is funded in the next school year.

The general rule for E-12 for school districts is that the school year cannot start before Labor Day. The only exceptions would be if the district is on an approved learning year program, or the district has a construction project of \$400,000 or more that requires a change in the school calendar to accommodate the construction. The same rule would apply to prekindergarten programs operated by a school district. Charter schools are not bound by the Labor Day start rule.

Historically, summer programs are usually run for a couple of weeks in the summer for a set number of children who have limited early childhood education experiences and will be entering kindergarten in the fall. The hours this type of program runs would not be considered voluntary prekindergarten.

Can we include extended-day preschool in our 350-hour minimum as long as it meets the criteria?

No. A voluntary prekindergarten program must have 350 hours in its regular schedule that applies to all students in the program. Extended day is generally defined as a program outside of regular school hours. This would not qualify since it would not be part of the regular prekindergarten schedule for all of the prekindergarten students in the program, and there is no evidence given that the extended-day classroom would meet the requirements for a prekindergarten program.

If our program is free, can we still charge a registration fee?

Four-year-olds who are generating general education revenue as voluntary prekindergarten students may not be charged a fee, including registration fees, for the voluntary prekindergarten program.

Does the length of the instructional day exclude a rest/quiet time?

Voluntary prekindergarten programs that run for more than four hours in a given day may count up to 30 minutes of rest time toward instructional hours.