Project Summary

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

Two factors that significantly affect outcomes are the quality of the prekindergarten program and amount of time a child is in the program. To be considered high quality, prekindergarten classrooms need to have both structural and process components in place. Structural components may include class size, student-to-teacher ratio, and teacher compensation.

Process components may include quality of teacher-child interactions, teacher instruction, access to stimulating resources, and the types of activities in which a child is engaged. Title 1, Part A ESSA funds may be used to develop structural and process components needed for full-day high-quality prekindergarten. The quality components included in the Project Description section below will offer students access to high quality prekindergarten and support early development of a strong foundation in literacy and math, as well as other areas of development for long term success in school.

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

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

Start-Up Costs

- Curriculum
- Student progress monitoring tool (if the LEA does not want to use the free CLI CIRCLE tool)
- Developmentally-appropriate resources to stimulate skills in math, literacy, science, art, physical and social-emotional development
- Professional development to increase teacher qualifications (if LEA does not want to use free CLI Engage platform)

- Funding for full day program
- Development and implementation of a robust family engagement program
- Teacher assistants
- Technology needs
- Facilities appropriate for prekindergarten
- Transportation
- PEIMS coordinator adequately trained in prekindergarten reporting
Ongoing Costs

- Continued funding for full day program
- Development and implementation of a robust family engagement program – costs dependent on resources used by the LEA to include in Family Engagement Plan
- Teacher assistants
- Professional development and support
- Facilities (if expanding)
- Transportation
- Technology

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

Project Description

A district or campus considering a high-quality prekindergarten program will first want to conduct a needs assessment to determine current assets and gaps in resources in their prekindergarten program. The district or charter school will need to identify an early childhood specialist to help build and maintain the high-quality prekindergarten program. They will want to conduct prekindergarten enrollment in the spring of the previous school year to determine demand for the program and the number of classroom that will need to be equipped with high-quality components.

After the needs assessment, the district or charter school will want to implement each of the high-quality components and continue to evaluate the success of the program to continuously improve. Initial quality components that may be implemented are:

- Class size limit of 22 students
- 11:1 student to teacher ratio
- Teachers with at least a BA and appropriately certified to teach with specialized training in early childhood education
- Assistant teachers with a Child Development Associates
- Use of student progress monitoring tool to assess health & wellness, language & communication, emergent literacy-reading & writing, and mathematics.
- Use of student progress monitoring data to differentiate and inform instruction that is culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate
- Use of a research based curriculum aligned to the Texas Pre-K Guidelines
- Use of instructional coaching or mentoring based on classroom observations, student progress monitoring results and assessment of the quality of teacher interactions
- Family engagement that brings families in as partners in education and equips them with knowledge and skills to support education at home
- Use of a daily routine that offers stimulation across developmental domains and allows for teacher- and student-led scaffolding activities throughout the day
- Full day prekindergarten
- Access to comprehensive services for health and well-being
- Ongoing program evaluation for continuous improvement
- Vertical and horizontal planning to increase alignment and continuity of care across Pre-K and with K-3rd grade expectations.

Goals and Student Achievement Objectives
Expected Outcomes

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

- Increased percentage of children meeting Kindergarten Readiness assessment standard from X% to Y% by Z.
- Increase in student achievement in math and literacy in early grades from X% to Y% by Z.
- Increased number of teachers evaluated as effective or high-quality on annual performance evaluations from X to Y by Z.
- Increased number of families taking part in family engagement activities focused on the education goals of their children from X to Y by Z.

Training and Support TEA Offers

The Early Childhood Education Division at TEA offers support to school districts and charter schools wanting to improve the quality of their prekindergarten programs. Through a partnership with the Children’s Learning Institute, TEA can offer access to free resources and tools to support high quality prekindergarten. TEA offers:

- Webinars
- Phone and email support
- TETNs
- Written resources (toolkits)
- Train-the-Trainer models for ESCs
- Designated staff for specific needs, i.e. access, quality partnerships, etc.
- Support for ESCs

Required Activities or Components

Title I, Part A Sec. 1112(b)(8) requires that the high-quality prekindergarten program must align with an LEA’s Title I plan and provide an assurance that the LEA will, if it uses funds to provide early childhood education, ensure that programs comply with the Head Start education performance standards. Title I, Part A Sec. 1112(c)(7) requires that LEAs must describe in their Title I plans, if applicable, how they will support, coordinate, and integrate Title I services with early childhood education programs at the LEA or school level, including plans for the transition of children to elementary school.

Program Duration, Timeline, or Significant Milestones

Implementation would include the following activities:

- Refine, develop, or adopt a curriculum aligned with the 2015 Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines
- Adopt a student progress monitoring tool from the Commissioner’s Approved Prekindergarten Assessment Instrument list
- Offer full-day prekindergarten that includes a daily routine with opportunities for student- and teacher-led activities, movement, and exploration
- Develop a family engagement plan that includes the six components developed for the Texas high-quality prekindergarten program
- Access to resources that are developmentally-appropriate and stimulate development across domains with an emphasis on early literacy and math skill development
Staffing Requirements for LEAs

Districts looking to implement high-quality prekindergarten may need certified teachers that are trained in early childhood education, an early childhood specialist to offer mentoring and coaching to prekindergarten teachers. They may also need to hire paraprofessionals that have Child Development Associates through a local community college, CLI or their ESC.

Resources

Please refer to TEA’s educator resource page.

TEA Contact Information

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