

## High-Quality Pre-Kindergarten Partnerships

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

### Project Summary

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

Although many LEAs across Texas understand the value of offering high-quality early learning, they often experience limited facilities or classroom space and cannot expand programs. Thus, ESSA funds may be used to support the start-up costs of developing prekindergarten partnerships that expand access to public prekindergarten. Partnerships are legal agreements in which an LEA and a high-quality childcare provider share resources, such as professional development, facilities, and staff, to offer high-quality prekindergarten to eligible three- and four-year-old children. In addition to expanding access, the coordination involved in partnership programs also increases quality, alignment between private and public prekindergarten practices, and alignment to K-3 educational standards.

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

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

#### Start-Up Costs

- Curriculum aligned to the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines, such as those on the Instructional Materials Current Adoption Bulletin
- Hiring of teachers with BA degree and EC-6 certification (if teachers in private provider classrooms are not already credentialed)
- Professional development to increase teacher qualifications (if LEA does not want to use free CLI Engage platform)
- Student progress monitoring tool (if the LEA does not want to use the free CLI CIRCLE tool)
- Legal cost of developing contractual agreement for partnership
- Kindergarten readiness assessment (if the LEA does not want to use the free TX-KEA tool)

### Ongoing Costs

- Continuation of instructional coaching and technical assistance for continual improvement of teaching practices
- Continuation of evaluation of teacher-student interactions
- Continuation of professional development
- Continuation of legal partnership agreement

\* *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

From 2016 to 2018, TEA administered a grant that supported eighteen LEAs, as they developed public-private partnerships in their own communities. From this work across the state, TEA identified six different partnership models and documented the implementation milestones for each model.

Although certain components of each model differ based on the context of the partnership, each partnership involves the creation of a legal agreement between the LEA and the childcare provider. This agreement ensures that the classroom at the childcare provider is aligned to the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines, so that eligible three- and four-year-old children enrolled in the classroom may generate ADA (or average daily attendance) funding for the LEA. An agreed-upon percentage of that ADA is then passed to the childcare provider. The agreement also outlines which resources, such as staff, facilities, classroom tools, and professional development, may be provided or shared.

### Goals and Student Achievement Objectives

Partnerships between the LEA and Texas Rising Star (TRS) 4 or nationally accredited private providers benefit several stakeholders:

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

### Expected Outcomes

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

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

## Training and Support TEA Offers

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

## Required Activities or Components

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

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

## Program Duration, Timeline, or Significant Milestones

Implementation would include the following activities:

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

## Staffing Requirements for LEAs

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

## Resources\*

### *TEA Resources*

TEA is creating a toolkit, which will provide step-by-step guidance for LEAs for the following:

- Determining if a partnership will be sustainable in the LEA's context;
- Deciding which partnership models best fit the LEA's community;
- Certifying, training, and/or evaluating partnership staff;
- Attendance and accounting measures required for ADA funding; and
- Sample partnership contracts for several different models.

### *Building Partnerships*

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

### *Childcare Provider Quality*

- The [DFPS Child Care Minimum Standards](#) must be followed by all potential childcare provider partners.
- [Texas Rising Star](#) is a rating and improvement system for childcare providers receiving subsidy. A childcare center is qualified to partner with an LEA, if the center has a TRS 3-Star or TRS 4-Star rating.
- A childcare center may also be qualified to partner with an LEA, if the center is approved by [NAEYC](#) or [TEPSAC](#).
- A childcare center may also be qualified to partner with an LEA, if the center has participated in [Texas School Ready](#).

*\* TEA is offering the following information or link for reference purposes only, and TEA's provision of the information or link does not in any way constitute an endorsement by TEA.*