

**A Study of the Curriculum, Design, and Standards
for Florida's Voluntary
Universal Prekindergarten Education Program (UPK)**

The State Board of Education
November 2003

OVERVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT AND SENATE BILL 1334

In November 2002, through the approval of Amendment 8 to the Constitution, Florida's citizens voted to provide free universal prekindergarten on a voluntary basis to all four-year-old children. Article IX of the State Constitution was amended to read:

Section 1. Public Education. –

(b) Every four-year-old child in Florida shall be provided by the State a high quality pre-kindergarten learning opportunity in the form of an early childhood development and education program which shall be voluntary, high quality, free, and delivered according to professionally accepted standards. An early childhood development and education program means an organized program designed to address and enhance each child's ability to make age appropriate progress in an appropriate range of settings in the development of language and cognitive capabilities and emotional, social, regulatory and moral capacities through education in basic skills and such other skills as the Legislature may determine to be appropriate.

(c) The early childhood education and development programs provided by reason of subparagraph (b) shall be implemented no later than the beginning of the 2005 school year through funds generated in addition to those used for existing education, health, and development programs. Existing education, health, and development programs are those funded by the State as of January 1, 2002, that provided for child or adult education, health care, or development.

To implement this constitutional amendment, the 2003 Legislature passed Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 1334, Senate Bill 534, and Senate Bill 360 (CS/CS/SB 1334). This legislation required the State Board of Education to conduct a study on the curriculum, design, and standards for the voluntary universal prekindergarten education program and submit a report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House by October 1, 2003.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION'S UPK EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

To assist in the development of recommendations for the implementation of a high quality prekindergarten learning opportunity, the State Board of Education established the Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) Education Advisory Council on April 15, 2003. The Council, chaired by Lieutenant Governor Toni Jennings, included representatives from the early childhood community and public and private schools. The Council conducted nine meetings and conference calls from June through October 2003 to develop recommendations and options. Each meeting included a

review of relevant research and presentations by national experts. The *Report* of the UPK Education Advisory Council was accepted by the State Board of Education at their October 21, 2003, meeting.

THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION'S RECOMMENDATIONS AND OPTIONS

Senate Bill 1334 requires that the State Board of Education identify recommendations or options on the following elements of the universal prekindergarten (UPK) program:

- curriculum and standards
- high quality learning opportunity
- quantity of instruction
- delivery system
- assessment and evaluation
- funding
- best practices to improve outcomes of local coalitions and providers.

The State Board of Education's recommendations are organized by these elements and listed below. Implementation of these recommendations will require the review and revision or repeal of existing Florida Statutes and administrative rules currently assigned to the Agency for Workforce Innovation (Florida Partnership for School Readiness) and the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

While it is imperative that the State have a vision of what the universal prekindergarten program eventually should look like, the State Board's recommendations focus on what must be available beginning in 2005-06 to all of Florida's four-year-old children to meet the constitutional requirement of a "...high quality prekindergarten learning opportunity...delivered according to professionally accepted standards."

CURRICULUM AND STANDARDS

"Developmentally appropriate curriculum and standards that provide children a high-quality prekindergarten learning opportunity. These curriculum and standards must be designed to:

1. Address and enhance each child's ability to make age-appropriate progress;
2. Provide early childhood development of language and cognitive capabilities;
3. Provide education in basic skills and other appropriate skills; and
4. Deliver early childhood development and education according to professionally accepted standards." [SB 1334 (2)(a)]

CURRENT STATUS

- The Florida Partnership for School Readiness Board adopted performance standards for three-, four-, and five-year-old children that describe age appropriate understandings related to what young children should know and be able to do.
- The performance standards for three- and four-year-old children are cross-referenced to the Head Start Performance standards; performance standards for five-year-old children are cross-referenced to the Sunshine State Standards.
- These performance standards were presented to the State Board of Education in 2000.

HIGH-QUALITY LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

“Quality standards that provide children a high-quality prekindergarten learning opportunity. These quality standards must include specific recommendations or options for the expected outcomes of the voluntary universal prekindergarten education program.” [SB 1334 (2)(b)]

Current Status

- Section 411.01, Florida Statutes, provides the statutory authority for School Readiness Programs. Minimum elements established in law for school readiness programs include, but are not limited to, developmentally appropriate curriculum, a character development program to develop basic values, and a resource and referral network to assist parents in making informed choices.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Department of Education should work with the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) to review the *Florida School Readiness Performance Standards for Three-, Four-, and Five-Year-Old Children 2002* to propose additional content to emphasize early literacy and oral language skills. The State Board of Education should adopt these revised standards for use in Florida’s Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) program.
2. Curricula used in UPK programs should be aligned with the expected child outcomes (standards) as adopted by the State Board of Education. The Department of Education should work with FCRR and other experts in the area of early childhood to develop standards for these curricula and to identify curricula that meet these standards. The Legislature should provide the State Board of Education the necessary authority to adopt these standards and provide for a mechanism for the DOE to approve additional curricula.
3. The Legislature should provide the State Board of Education the necessary authority to adopt rules identifying the indicators for when children are “ready for school.” These indicators, at a minimum, should include:
 - knowledge of print
 - oral language ability
 - phonemic awareness.
4. The outcome for Florida’s UPK program should be that 100% of all children enter kindergarten ready for school by 2012. The Department of Education should establish annual intermediate targets and report these results annually.

QUANTITY OF INSTRUCTION

“Standards for the quantity of instruction to be provided as voluntary and free for every child in the state who is 4 years of age. These standards must include specific recommendations or options for each of the following elements:

1. Hours per day; and
2. Days per year.” [SB 1334 (2)(c)]

CURRENT STATUS

- Section 411.01(5)(c)1b, Florida Statutes, requires that the school readiness program, “... provide extended day and extended year services to the maximum extent possible to meet the needs of parents who work.”

- Funding through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) for kindergarten through grade three is based on twenty hours per week of instructional time.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

5. The Legislature should fund the UPK program for a four-hour per day program for a total of 180 days. Payments for UPK programs should be consistent across the state and provide for an incentive to achieve positive outcomes.

DELIVERY SYSTEM

“Standards for providers in order to deliver children a high-quality prekindergarten learning opportunity. These standards must include specific recommendations or options for each of the following elements:

Appropriate range of settings, including both public and private providers, with consideration of

1. The capacity in each available setting;
2. Licensing or regulatory requirements for providers;
3. Health and safety requirements for providers; and
4. Parental choice.” [SB 1334 (2)(c)]

Current Status

- Section 402.305, Florida Statutes, entitled “Licensing standards for child care facilities,” establishes a staff to child ratio of one child care staff person for every 20 four-year-old children.
- Since 1996, licensed child care facilities have been required to have one child care staff member with a Child Development Associate credential (CDA), or an equivalent or greater credential, for every 20 children.
- Florida has currently approved 105 CDA preparation programs that are considered equivalent to the national CDA credential.
- Classroom training requirements for a CDA consist of a minimum of 120 clock-hours of training (some equivalency programs exceed this amount). Content areas of the training are specified and training must be age specific (*e.g.*, infant/toddler or preschool). The required number of contact hours is 480 hours of work with children in a child care setting within the past five years. An observation of the CDA candidate working with children in a child care setting is also required prior to the award of the credential.
- In 2002-03 approximately 1,700 individuals in Florida were awarded a CDA equivalent credential.
- There are currently eleven accrediting agencies that are recognized for the purpose of designating a Gold Seal Quality Program. Those accrediting entities include, but are not limited to, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the Association of Christian Schools International, the Montessori School Accreditation Commission, and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).
- 944 of the state’s licensed child care facilities (representing over 16% of the currently licensed facilities), 293 of the state’s licensed family child care homes, and 648 public school programs are accredited through the Gold Seal Program
- Programs that have the Gold Seal designation receive a higher rate of reimbursement per child through the School Readiness program.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

6. The State Board of Education should assess the state's capacity to provide high quality universal prekindergarten education programs by 2005 and thereafter. This plan should specifically address the capacity needs of each county and be developed in partnership with local governments, businesses, community and faith-based organizations, and postsecondary institutions.
7. The Legislature should provide the State Board of Education with the necessary authority to adopt rules establishing licensing standards for providers of UPK programs. These standards must include:
 - applicable state and federal requirements related to health, sanitation, safety, and physical surroundings
 - meeting the Gold Seal Standards by 2006-07 provided that there is capacity to meet the state's needs
 - a minimum instructional staff to child ratio of 1:10 beginning in 2005-06, with the minimum credential requirement for such staff being a national Child Development Associate (CDA) or a Florida Equivalent CDA; a second staff member is required for classes of 11-20 children, also with the minimum of a CDA or a Florida Equivalent CDA by 2006-07
8. The Department of Education should conduct a review of all currently approved CDA equivalent programs and any corresponding state requirements. The Legislature should provide the State Board of Education with the necessary authority to adopt rules identifying the standards for the approval of such programs and for the renewal of the CDA credential.
9. The State Board of Education should assess the capacity of the state's trained workforce for the provision of high quality instruction in UPK programs. This plan should be developed in collaboration with the Agency for Workforce Innovation, community colleges, and vocational/technical centers, and should include a mechanism whereby current child care providers who demonstrate the competencies required by CDA programs are provided opportunities to earn the appropriate credential.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

"Methods for measuring the performance of the voluntary universal prekindergarten education program. These methods must include specific recommendations or options for each of the following elements:

1. Assessment of age-appropriate progress for each child;
2. Evaluation of outcome measures for each provider in each setting; and
3. Evaluation of school readiness coalitions." [SB 1334 (2)(e)]

CURRENT STATUS

- Beginning in the 2002-03 school year, all kindergarten students entering public school participated in the School Readiness Uniform Screening System. This screening process includes the administration of a developmental screening instrument (Early Screening Inventory-Kindergarten) and a social/behavioral screening instrument (either the Work Sampling System or the Ready-for-School Behavioral Screener).

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

10. The Legislature should retain the requirement for the screening of all students entering public kindergarten to determine their level of readiness for school.
11. The Legislature should provide the State Board of Education with the necessary authority to adopt rules requiring local coalitions to implement a consumer protection system that
 - identifies appropriate outcomes for purposes of accountability and funding local programs
 - establishes meaningful consequences for poor performing programs
 - provides information that can lead to program improvement
 - provides information to parents on the progress of their child in meeting the expected child outcomes.

FUNDING

"Estimated cost per full-time-equivalent child of the recommended curriculum, design, and standards. This cost estimate must consider funding for each of the state board's recommendations or options for each of the program elements described in this subsection." [SB 1334 (2)(f)]

CURRENT STATUS

Funding – Current Status 4-Year Old Population Estimates¹

Year	Total Estimated Number of 4-Year Olds	Number at 70% Participation Rate
2004	213,501	149,451
2005	217,140	151,998
2006	219,691	153,784
2007	221,441	155,009
2008	222,734	155,914
2009	223,920	156,744
2010	225,341	157,739

¹ Office of Economic and Demographic Research, February 21, 2002.

Children Ages 0-5 Served by Funding Sources for FY 2002-2003¹

	Age 0 to 2	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	Total 0-5
School Readiness ²	50,543	24,560	28,757	13,732	117,592
Public School Funded ³	3,705	5,801	14,333	444	24,283
Total State	54,248	30,361	43,090	14,176	141,875
Head Start Program ⁴	2,636	9,989	18,465	2,325	33,415
Total State & Head Start	56,884	40,350	61,555	16,501	175,290

¹ Children may receive services from more than one program

² School Readiness includes children served for FY 2002-03 including Even Start and HIPPIY programs

³ Public School Funded from Survey 2, October 2002, as of August 7, 2003

⁴ Head Start data from enrollment counts in December 2002 by the Head Start State Collaboration Office

Funding – Current Status Current Cost of School Readiness Services for 4-Year Olds

Type of Current Program	Current Cost Per Day at 6-10 hours	Est. Cost Per Day for 4 Instruct. Hours	180 Days at 4 Instruct. Hours (720)	Estimate for 91,000 Additional* Children
Gold Seal Settings	\$23.67	\$16.00	\$2,880	\$262.1M
Average of All Programs	\$20.23	\$13.50	\$2,430	\$221.1M

For comparison, the cost of an unweighted K-3 FTE

Average of All School Districts	\$23.33	180 days, 720 instructional hours per year	\$4,200
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*Current expenditures for 4-year old children in school readiness programs excluding Head Start = approximately \$190M.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

12. The estimated cost of a high quality UPK program is approximately \$2,880 per year. This cost estimate is consistent with the funding allocated to current Gold Seal programs.
13. The Legislature should consider appropriating funds in 2004-05 to
 - implement a plan to assess the capacity of the state's private and public providers
 - implement a plan to assess the capacity of the state's workforce for the provision of high quality instruction.

BEST PRACTICES TO IMPROVE THE OUTCOMES OF SCHOOL READINESS COALITIONS AND PROVIDERS

"The report must also include the state board's recommendations or options for best practices to improve the outcomes of school readiness coalitions and providers." [SB 1334(3)]

CURRENT STATUS

- There are currently 50 local coalitions providing most of the state's school readiness programs. Local school boards are responsible for the provision of appropriate services to children with disabilities, ages three-five; children of teenage parents; and prekindergarten children funded by Title I.
- Section 411.01(5), Florida Statutes, specifies the duties and the composition of the local coalitions.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

14. The Legislature should maintain a local governance structure with the following modifications to strengthen the local coalitions' efficiency and to address conflicts in membership and operation:
 - consolidate administrative functions to minimize the number of local coalitions, while assuring that program planning, service coordination, and fund allocation address the specific needs of each county
 - specify local coalition functions regarding financial and programmatic oversight and accountability to include general accounting principles, reporting of expenditures, statewide reporting, monitoring of provider's compliance with the UPK standards and with applicable state and federal requirements, accountability for the quality of the UPK program, and the provision of assistance to providers
 - revise current membership requirements to include representation from postsecondary education providers, programs for children with disabilities ages 3-5 and programs for infants and toddlers with disabilities under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, consumers/parents, and family child care homes; authorize local coalitions to submit nominations for membership for consideration
 - require that financial decisions of local coalitions must be "non-conflicted." A voting majority of local coalition members should be persons who do not have a substantial financial interest in the design or delivery of school readiness services in Florida.

STATE GOVERNANCE

CURRENT STATUS

- School Readiness Programs are administered by the Agency for Workforce Innovation through the Florida Partnership for School Readiness and local school readiness coalitions.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

15. The Legislature should transfer school readiness programs (for children ages birth to kindergarten entry age and after school programs), effective 2004-05, to the Department of Education under a separate Chancellor for Early Learning.
16. The Department of Education should organize a steering committee to guide the development of an implementation plan for the UPK program and to assist in the transition of school readiness programs to the Department. The Department should also ensure that providers of school readiness programs, local coalitions, agencies, and early childhood advocates are provided with frequent and consistent information regarding these activities and opportunities to provide input.