Legislative Language
The 2010 General Assembly included statutory requirements for the use of School Ready (SR) funds. 
Iowa Code, chapter 256I.9
SCHOOL READY CHILDREN GRANT PROGRAM.
  1. The state board shall develop and promote a school ready children grant program which shall provide for all of the following components:
     3. A school ready children grant shall, to the extent possible, be used to support programs that meet quality standards identified by the state board. At a minimum, a grant shall be used to provide all of the following:
        a. Preschool services provided on a voluntary basis to children deemed at risk.
        b. Family support services and parent education programs promoted to parents of children from zero through age five. Family support services shall include but are not limited to home visitation. Of the funding from all sources that an area board designates for family support programs, at least sixty percent shall be committed to programs with a home visitation component.

SF 2376 (2010 enrolled bill) 11. IOWA EMPOWERMENT FUND — PRESCHOOL TUITION ASSISTANCE
b. The amount appropriated in this subsection shall be used for early care, health, and education programs to assist low-income parents with tuition for preschool and other supportive services for children ages three, four, and five who are not attending kindergarten in order to increase the basic family income eligibility requirement to not more than 200 percent of the federal poverty level. In addition, if sufficient funding is available after addressing the needs of those who meet the basic income eligibility requirement, a community empowerment area board may provide for eligibility for those with a family income in excess of the basic income eligibility requirement through use of a sliding scale or other copayment provisions.

Preschool Programming Support for Low Income Families
Early Childhood Iowa Area (ECIA) Boards must not supplant state and federal funds. Examples of state or federal funds that need to be considered include:

- State-administered child care assistance for eligible families;
- State-funded preschool programs (Shared Visions, Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children); and
- Head Start for eligible children.

ECI standard budget templates must include adequate information to ensure all legislative requirements of the funds are met. In addition to the narrative provided, it will be accomplished through the area board’s agreement with assurances included in the budget template.

For the most current HHS Poverty Guidelines go to:
http://www.state.ia.us/earlychildhood/local_system/tools.html.
**Definition of Quality Preschool Programs**

The Early Childhood Iowa State Board strongly recommends that ECIs support the implementation of evidence-based, quality practices and services with proven positive outcomes for children. Boards are also encouraged to use these funds to help families access quality preschool services and to support preschool programs that strive to achieve high quality program standards.

Research offers evidence that a high-quality, research-based preschool program, especially for low-income children, lays the foundation for later school success. Children who attend high quality preschool exhibit stronger language, math, thinking, and social skills. They are better prepared to cooperate in kindergarten and elementary school and their relationships with peers are more positive. Participating children are less likely to need special education services or the service intensity is less. They are also more likely to remain in school. As children continue to develop, they are less likely to be in trouble with the law and, consequently, avoid incarceration.

The following are essential elements that create a high quality preschool program.

1. Early Childhood Standards
   - Preschool program standards -- Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards (IQPPS), National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Head Start Program Standards, National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC).
   - Student Standards and Benchmarks -- The Iowa Early Learning Standards (ELS)
2. Teacher Qualifications
3. Teacher Compensation
4. Assistant Teacher/Paraprofessional Training
5. Maximum Class Size
6. Professional Development
7. Strong Administrative Support and Leadership
8. Family Involvement


More information about quality preschool curriculum, assessment, high quality teachers, professional development, etc. can be found at [http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=940&Itemid=1279](http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=940&Itemid=1279)

Additional measures of program quality are evidenced by having:

- Achieved an average score of 5 (with no subscale scores under 2) on the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale – Revised (ECERSR) or Family Child Care Rating Scale (FCCRS) completed by an outside evaluator with an established 85% inter-rater reliability within six months of the observation, or
- Achieved a Level 3, 4 or 5 on Iowa’s Quality Rating System (QRS).
Outcomes of Quality Preschool Support
ECI RESULT AREA: Children ready to succeed in school.
Indicators:
- Pre-literacy skills
  Definition: Percent of kindergartners with pre-literacy skills as measured by the Dynamic Indicators of Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) or other approved measurement
- Children in Quality Preschool Settings
  Definition: Percentage of children, ages three and four, who have participated in a preschool program that is NAEC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) accredited, and/or meets Head Start program performance standards, or meets a comparable set of standards.

Use of Funds for Preschool Programming and Support for Low Income Families
ECIA boards are to use funds to assist low-income families with children ages three, four and five with access to a quality preschool program. This assistance includes:
- Preschool tuition for children whose families are at or below 200% of poverty; and
- Transportation assistance to and from preschool.

The ECIA board may fund any of the following as a supportive service to preschools, based on the community plan and priorities (i.e., the service must be provided in the preschool setting or for the children attending a preschool program, ages three, four and five, and their families):
- Preschool tuition for children whose families are above 200% of poverty level using a sliding fee or co-pay option;
- Transportation to and from preschool;
- Field Trips;
- Extension of the preschool day;
- Summer kindergarten preparation program;
- Health services (dental, lead services or mental health services);
- Family support and parent education (For further information, See Tool FF);
- Initiatives to meet or maintain quality preschool accreditation or levels/standards (NAEYC, IQPPS, QRS, etc.);
- Preschool coordinator (scholarship processing, quality support to programs);
- Personnel (i.e., staff for inclusive settings, to perform screenings, salaries)
- Child Care Nurse Consultants
- Program enhancements to meet, increase or maintain quality preschool accreditation or quality levels/standards (evidence-based curriculum, materials, etc.);
- Professional development targeted toward quality initiatives and standards (curriculum, assessment, program standards, etc.). Technical assistance and coaching (from a qualified provider) to foster the development of quality initiatives and preschool programming.

Collaboration
ECI is built upon a foundation of collaboration in order to make a difference in the lives of young children and their families. With this foundation in mind, local ECI areas are encouraged to collaborate with local child care centers, preschool programs, child development homes, Head Start agencies, Shared Vision grantees, School Districts (tuition, Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children and/or Early Childhood Special Education programs), Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, Iowa State University Extension, Area Education Agencies, local public health agencies, local...
maternal and child health agencies, community mental health centers, primary care providers, dentists, local transit authority and family support providers.

**Accountability**

School Ready Budget Form:
- Document projected expenditures for the current fiscal year and estimated carry-forward amounts (if applicable) on the SR budget form for Preschool Programming Support for Low Income Families.
- Document through input, output, quality/efficiency and outcome data the required performance measures within the ECIA Annual Report.

Failure to report annually the state required performance measures may jeopardize the Early Childhood Iowa Area’s levels of excellence rating and may trigger the Early Childhood Iowa State Board to enact the Expenditures and Reporting Policy, [http://www.state.ia.us/earlychildhood/files/policies_reports/reporting_policy.pdf](http://www.state.ia.us/earlychildhood/files/policies_reports/reporting_policy.pdf).

**Contractual Agreements with Programs**

The Early Childhood Iowa Area board will determine the contractual agreements at a local level with program providers. They may also require additional performance measures which are not reported to the state. ECIs are strongly encouraged to include in their contracts with program providers the performance measures reporting requirements.

**Technical Assistance Contact**

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