

CHAPTER 256C

STATEWIDE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM FOR FOUR-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN

Referred to in §135.173A, 256.11, 256.146, 256.163, 257.16, 285.1, 298A.2, 299.1A

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256C.1 Definitions.

As used in [this chapter](#):

1. “*Approved local program*” means a school district’s program for four-year-old children approved by the department of education to provide high quality preschool instruction.
2. “*Department*” means the department of education.
3. “*Director*” means the director of the department of education.
4. “*Preschool program*” means the statewide preschool program for four-year-old children created in accordance with [this chapter](#).
5. “*School district approved to participate in the preschool program*” means a school district that meets the school district requirements under [section 256C.3](#) and has been approved by the department to participate in the preschool program.
6. “*State board*” means the state board of education.
[2007 Acts, ch 148, §1](#)

256C.2 Statewide preschool program for four-year-old children — purpose.

1. A statewide preschool program for four-year-old children is established. The purpose of the preschool program is to provide an opportunity for all young children in the state to enter school ready to learn by expanding voluntary access to quality preschool curricula for all children who are four years old.
2. The state board shall adopt rules in accordance with [chapter 17A](#) as necessary to implement the preschool program as provided in [this chapter](#).
[2007 Acts, ch 148, §2](#)

256C.3 Preschool program requirements.

1. *Eligible children.*
 - a. A child who is a resident of Iowa and is four years of age on or before September 15 of a school year shall be eligible to enroll in the preschool program under [this chapter](#). If such a child is enrolled under [this chapter](#), the child shall be considered to be of compulsory attendance age as provided in [section 299.1A, subsection 3](#).
 - b. If space and funding are available, including funding from another school district account or fund from which preschool program expenditures are authorized by law, a school district approved to participate in the preschool program may enroll and pay the cost of attendance for a younger or older child in the preschool program; however, the child shall not be counted for state funding purposes.
2. *Teacher requirements.*
 - a. An individual serving as a teacher in the preschool program must meet all of the following qualifications:
 - (1) The individual is either employed by or under contract with the school district implementing the program.
 - (2) The individual is appropriately licensed under [chapter 256, subchapter VII, part 3](#), and meets requirements under [chapter 284](#).
 - (3) The individual possesses a bachelor’s or graduate degree from an accredited college or university with a major in early childhood education or other appropriate major identified in rule by the department.
 - b. A teacher in the preschool program shall collaborate with other agencies,

organizations, and boards in the community to further the program's capacity to meet the diverse needs of the children taught by the teacher and the families of the children, such as needs for early care, health, and human services. In addition, a teacher in the preschool program shall work to maintain relationships with each child's family in order to enhance the child's development in all settings by collaborating with providers of parent education and family support opportunities.

3. *Program requirements.* The state board shall adopt rules to further define the following preschool program requirements which shall be used to determine whether or not a local program implemented by a school district approved to implement the preschool program qualifies as an approved local program:

a. Maximum and minimum teacher-to-child ratios and class sizes.

b. Applicable state and federal program standards.

c. Student learning standards.

d. Provisions for the integration of children from other state and federally funded preschools.

e. Collaboration with participating families, early care providers, and community partners including but not limited to early childhood Iowa area boards, head start programs, shared visions and other programs provided under the auspices of the child development coordinating council, licensed child care centers, registered child development homes, area education agencies, child care resource and referral services provided under [section 237A.26](#), early childhood special education programs, services funded by Tit. I of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and family support programs.

f. A minimum of ten hours per week of instruction delivered on the skills and knowledge included in the student learning standards developed for the preschool program.

g. Parental involvement in the local program.

h. Provision for ensuring that children receiving care from other child care arrangements can participate in the preschool program with minimal disruption due to transportation and movement from one site to another. The children participating in the preschool program may be transported by the school district to activities associated with the program along with other children.

4. *School district requirements.* The state board shall adopt rules to further define the following requirements of school districts implementing the preschool program:

a. Methods of demonstrating community readiness to implement high-quality instruction in a local program shall be identified. The potential provider shall submit a collaborative program proposal that demonstrates the involvement of multiple community stakeholders including but not limited to, and only as applicable, parents, the school district, accredited nonpublic schools and faith-based representatives, the area education agency, the early childhood Iowa area board, representatives of business, head start programs, shared visions and other programs provided under the auspices of the child development coordinating council, center-based and home-based providers of child care services, human services, public health, and economic development programs. The methods may include but are not limited to a school district providing evidence of a public hearing on the proposed programming and written documentation of collaboration agreements between the school district, existing community providers, and other community stakeholders addressing operational procedures and other critical measures.

b. Subject to implementation of [chapter 28E](#) agreements between a school district and community-based providers of services to four-year-old children, a four-year-old child who is enrolled in a child care center or child development home licensed or registered under [chapter 237A](#), or in an existing public or private preschool program, shall be eligible for services provided by the school district's local preschool program.

c. A school district shall participate in data collection and performance measurement processes and reporting as defined by rule.

d. Professional development for school district preschool teachers shall be addressed in the school district's professional development plan implemented in accordance with [section 284.6](#).

5. *Department requirements.*

a. The department shall implement an application and selection process for school district participation in the preschool program that includes but is not limited to the enrollment requirements provided under [section 256C.4](#).

b. The department shall track the progress of students served by a school district preschool program and the students' performance in elementary and secondary education.

c. The department shall implement procedures to monitor the quality of the programming provided under the preschool program.

d. The state board, in collaboration with the department, shall ensure that the administrative rules adopted to support the preschool program emphasize that children's access to the program is voluntary, that the preschool foundation aid provided to a school district is provided based upon the enrollment of eligible students in the school district's local program regardless of whether an eligible student is a resident of the school district, and that agreements entered into by a school district for the provision of programming in settings other than the school district's facilities are between the school district and the private provider.

[2007 Acts, ch 148, §3](#); [2007 Acts, ch 215, §100](#); [2008 Acts, ch 1032, §42](#); [2008 Acts, ch 1181, §67, 74](#); [2010 Acts, ch 1031, §303, 304](#); [2013 Acts, ch 78, §1](#); [2015 Acts, ch 140, §30, 58, 59](#); [2017 Acts, ch 153, §12, 14, 15](#); [2023 Acts, ch 19, §2553](#)

Referred to in [§256C.1, 256C.4](#)

Subsection 2, paragraph a, subparagraph (2) amended

256C.4 Funding provisions — enrollment.

1. General.

a. State funding provided under the preschool program shall be based upon the enrollment of eligible students in the preschool programming provided by a school district approved to participate in the preschool program.

b. A school district approved to participate in the preschool program may authorize expenditures for the district's preschool programming from any of the revenue sources available to the district from the sources listed in [chapter 298A](#), provided the expenditures are within the uses permitted for the revenue source. In addition, the use of the revenue source for preschool or prekindergarten programming must have been approved prior to any expenditure from the revenue source for the district's approved local program.

c. Funding provided under the preschool program is intended to supplement, not supplant, existing public funding for preschool programming.

d. Preschool foundation aid funding shall not be commingled with the other state aid payments made under [section 257.16](#) to a school district and shall be accounted for by the local school district separately from the other state aid payments. Preschool foundation aid payments made to school districts are miscellaneous income for purposes of [chapter 257](#). A school district shall maintain a separate listing within its budget for preschool foundation aid payments received and expenditures made. A school district shall certify to the department of education that preschool foundation aid funding received by the school district was used to supplement, not supplant, moneys otherwise received and used by the school district for preschool programming.

e. Preschool foundation aid funding shall not be used for the costs of constructing a facility in connection with an approved local program. Preschool foundation aid funding may be used by approved local programs and community providers for any purpose determined by the board of directors of the school district to meet standards for high-quality preschool instruction and for purposes that directly or indirectly benefit students enrolled in the approved local program, including but not limited to professional development for preschool teachers, instructional equipment and supplies, material and equipment designed to develop pupils' large and small motor skills, translation services, playground equipment and repair costs, food and beverages used by children in the approved local program, safety equipment, facility rental fees, and for other direct costs that enhance the approved local program, including by contracting with community partners for any such services. Preschool foundation aid funding may be used by approved local programs for the costs of transportation involving children participating in the preschool program. The

costs of transporting other children associated with the preschool program or transported as provided in [section 256C.3, subsection 3](#), paragraph “h”, may be prorated by the school district. Preschool foundation aid funding received by an approved local program that remains unexpended and unobligated at the end of a fiscal year beginning on or after July 1, 2017, shall be used to build the approved local program’s preschool program capacity in the next succeeding fiscal year excluding that portion of such unexpended and unobligated funding that the school district authorizes for transfer for deposit in the school district’s flexibility account established under [section 298A.2, subsection 2](#), if the statutory requirements for the use of such funding are met. For purposes of determining whether a school district has authority to transfer preschool foundation aid funding for deposit in the school district’s flexibility account established under [section 298A.2, subsection 2](#), the school district must have provided preschool programming during the fiscal year for which funding remains unexpended and unobligated to all eligible students for whom a timely application for enrollment was submitted.

f. The receipt of funding by a school district for the purposes of [this chapter](#), the need for additional funding for the purposes of [this chapter](#), or the enrollment count of eligible students under [this chapter](#) shall not be considered to be unusual circumstances, create an unusual need for additional funds, or qualify under any other circumstances that may be used by the school budget review committee to grant supplemental aid to or establish a modified supplemental amount for a school district under [section 257.31](#).

g. For the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2015, and each succeeding fiscal year, of the amount of preschool foundation aid received by a school district for a fiscal year in accordance with [section 257.16](#), not more than five percent may be used by the school district for administering the district’s approved local program. Outreach activities and rent for facilities not owned by the school district are permissive uses of the administrative funds.

h. For the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2015, and each succeeding fiscal year, of the amount of preschool foundation aid received by a school district for a fiscal year in accordance with [section 257.16](#), not less than ninety-five percent of the per pupil amount shall be passed through to a community-based provider for each pupil enrolled in the district’s approved local program. For the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2015, and each succeeding fiscal year, not more than ten percent of the amount of preschool foundation aid passed through to a community-based provider may be used by the community-based provider for administrative costs. The costs of outreach activities and rent for facilities not owned by the school district are permissive administrative costs. The costs of transportation involving children participating in the preschool program and other children may be prorated.

2. *Eligible student enrollment.*

a. To be included as an eligible student in the enrollment count of the preschool programming provided by a school district approved to participate in the preschool program, a child must be four years of age by September 15 in the base year and attending the school district’s approved local program.

b. The enrollment count of eligible students shall not include a child who is included in the enrollment count determined under [section 257.6](#) or a child who is served by a program already receiving state or federal funds for the purpose of the provision of four-year-old preschool programming while the child is being served by the program. Such preschool programming includes but is not limited to child development assistance programs provided under [chapter 256A](#), special education programs provided under [section 256B.9](#), school ready children grant programs and other programs provided under [chapter 256I](#), and federal head start programs and the services funded by Tit. I of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

2007 Acts, ch 148, §4; 2008 Acts, ch 1181, §68, 74; 2010 Acts, ch 1031, §305; 2012 Acts, ch 1138, §23, 42; 2013 Acts, ch 121, §10, 42, 103, 108; 2015 Acts, ch 140, §31, 58, 59; 2016 Acts, ch 1132, §8; 2017 Acts, ch 153, §13 – 15; 2017 Acts, ch 154, §1

Referred to in [§256C.3](#), [256C.5](#)

256C.5 Funding formula.

1. *Definitions.* For the purposes of [this section](#) and [section 256C.4](#):

a. “Base year”, “budget year”, “regular program state cost per pupil”, and “school district” mean the same as defined or described in [chapter 257](#).

b. “Eligible student” means a child who meets eligibility requirements under [section 256C.4](#).

c. “Preschool budget enrollment” means the figure that is equal to fifty percent of the actual enrollment of eligible students in the preschool programming provided by a school district approved to participate in the preschool program on October 1 of the base year, or the first Monday in October if October 1 falls on a Saturday or Sunday.

d. “Preschool foundation aid” means the product of the regular program state cost per pupil for the budget year multiplied by the school district’s preschool budget enrollment.

2. *Preschool foundation aid district amount.*

a. For the initial school year for which a school district approved to participate in the preschool program receives that approval and implements the preschool program, the funding for the preschool foundation aid payable to that school district shall be paid from the appropriation made for that school year in [section 256C.6](#), Code 2011, or in another appropriation made for purposes of [this chapter](#). For that school year, the preschool foundation aid payable to the school district is the product of the regular program state cost per pupil for the school year multiplied by sixty percent of the school district’s eligible student enrollment on the date in the school year determined by rule.

b. For budget years subsequent to the initial school year for which a school district approved to participate in the preschool program receives that initial approval and implements the preschool program, the funding for the preschool foundation aid payable to that school district shall be paid from the appropriation made in [section 257.16](#). Continuation of a school district’s participation in the preschool program for a second or subsequent budget year is subject to the approval of the department based upon the school district’s compliance with accountability provisions and the department’s on-site review of the school district’s implementation of the preschool program.

3. *Aid payments.* Preschool foundation aid shall be paid as part of the state aid payments made to school districts in accordance with [section 257.16](#).

4. *Administration and oversight.* Except as otherwise provided by law for a fiscal year, of the amount appropriated for that fiscal year for payment of preschool foundation aid statewide, the department may use an amount sufficient to fund up to three full-time equivalent positions which shall be in addition to the number of positions authorized for the fiscal year, as necessary to provide administration and oversight of the preschool program.

[2007 Acts, ch 148, §5](#); [2008 Acts, ch 1181, §69, 74](#); [2011 Acts, ch 131, §91, 101](#); [2012 Acts, ch 1023, §35](#)

256C.6 Phase-in — appropriations. Repealed by its own terms; [2007 Acts, ch 148, §6](#).