



OFFICE OF GOVERNOR MARK DAYTON

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Early Childhood Education Scholarships

Investing in Early Learning

We know the most important investment our state can make is in the future of our children. That is why Governor Dayton's budget makes a major investment in Early Childhood Education. The Governor's budget provides an additional \$44 million for early learning scholarships that will help 10,000 low- and middle-income kids attend quality child care and preschool whose families otherwise may not have been able to afford it.

Program Background

In 2011, Governor Dayton worked with the legislature to establish Early Childhood Education Scholarships for Minnesota children, ages three through five. Two million dollars was made available for scholarships in 2013 and \$3 million is slated for 2014. To date, 466 children have received scholarships of up to \$4,000. Without an additional investment, just 690 students per year would receive a scholarship to attend preschool in Minnesota.

Investing in Our Youngest Learners

Since 2005, state investments in early childhood education have been essentially flat, and in recent years Minnesota has ranked 39th in access to preschool for 4-year-olds. But Governor Dayton's historic investment in Early Childhood Education Scholarships will expand the state's commitment to our youngest learners, sending 10,000 more kids to quality child care and preschool and dramatically improving access to quality, affordable early learning programs.

» **Minnesota Kindergartners Are Coming to School Unprepared to Learn.** Half of all Kindergartners are entering the K-12 system unprepared to learn. Those who enter Kindergarten prepared to learn are more likely to meet or exceed standards in reading and math by third grade and less likely to require special education or remediation.

» **These Scholarships Will Directly Address Minnesota's Achievement Gap.** Minnesota has one of the nation's most glaring achievement gaps, ranking 49th among the 50 states. Numerous studies show that the best way to close this gap and adequately prepare all children for success in school and life, is through strategic investments in high quality early learning that prepare children for Kindergarten.

» **Investments in Early Learning Deliver a Concrete Return on Investment.** Children's school readiness is a predictor of later outcomes, even life-long outcomes. In fact, economists at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis have found that every \$1 invested in high quality early learning yields a \$16 return on our investment. Most of that cost savings is in education, human services, and justice system savings, as well as increased tax revenue.

Education

Early Learning Scholarships Program

Early Learning Scholarships Program

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) is pleased to announce that the Early Learning Scholarships Program is now available for Minnesota families! The scholarships will increase access to high-quality early childhood programs for three- to five-year-old children with the highest needs in order to improve school readiness for all young children. Priority for scholarships will be given based on family income, child poverty and geographic region. Up to \$5,000 per scholarship will be awarded. MDE estimates that 4,000 scholarships per year will be awarded to families with young children throughout the state. This represents approximately 9 percent of the eligible children in Minnesota.

Eligible children will be able to access the Early Learning Scholarships in one of two ways:

Early Learning Scholarships Pathway I: These Early Learning Scholarships are awarded directly to families who meet eligibility requirements including having a child between the ages of three to four as of September 1 of the current year, and who meet other eligibility requirements as outlined in Minnesota 2013 Session Law Article 8, section 124D.165.

Eligible families will receive an Early Learning Scholarships Pathway I award, and the scholarship funds will be paid to the early childhood program that the family chooses. Scholarships to families may be used in any early childhood program participating in the Parent Aware Quality Rating and Improvement System. The Parent Aware participating programs a family may choose include Head Start, school district prekindergarten and preschool programs, and child care programs. Pathway I scholarships "follow the child" and are awarded to the family for up to 12 months.

Early Learning Scholarships Pathway II: The Pathway II scholarships are awarded to families through an eligible Four-Star Parent Aware rated program. Four-Star Parent Aware rated programs include Head Start, school district prekindergarten and preschool programs, and child care programs within geographic regions identified by MDE. Programs participating as a Pathway II site receive Pathway II scholarship funds for up to 12 months.

- Early Learning Scholarships FAQ

The FAQ document provides answers to commonly asked questions and contact information for local scholarship administrators.

- Map - Geographic Distribution of Pathway I Early Learning Scholarships

Map of Pathway I Early Learning Scholarships which will be awarded to eligible children residing in these identified counties in each of the 13 Governor's Economic Development Regions.

- Minnesota Early Learning Scholarships Pathway II Guidance

Four-Star parent Aware rated school district prekindergarten and preschool programs, Head Start, child care centers and family child care programs within selected school district boundaries are eligible to apply to become an Early Learning Scholarships Pathway II site. This guidance document provides preliminary detail about the Early Learning Scholarships Pathway II application process for eligible programs.

- Geographic Distribution of Pathway I Early Learning Scholarships

Pathway I Early Learning Scholarships will be awarded to eligible children residing in these identified counties in each of the 13 Governor's Economic Development Regions.

- Early Learning Scholarships Pathway II Eligible Sites (Calculations)

This document provides a complete listing of areas eligible for Pathway II scholarships. Early Learning Scholarships are available to families through Pathway II sites. This document includes the formula calculations used by MDE to determine eligibility within school district attendance areas in each of the 13 Governor's Economic Development Regions. Calculated Pathway II scholarship amounts by school district attendance areas is included. Four-Star Parent Aware rated programs (including child care, school district prekindergarten and preschool programs, and Head Start) within a school district attenda

Duluth Public Schools Early Learning Scholarship Application for 2014-2015

We requested:

- Expand the number of days of service at 2 School Readiness sites from 3-4 days.
- Offer a lower child: staff ratio to help increase children's gains on state benchmarks by adding another part-time paraprofessional at 3 School Readiness classrooms.
- Offer a lower child: staff ratio to help increase children's gains on state benchmarks by adding another part-time paraprofessional at 6 Head Start classrooms.
- Partner with Early Childhood Family Education to offer Parent Engagement opportunities through monthly Parent Education groups at 3 School Readiness sites. Parent Education groups will include a light meal, childcare and assistance with transportation.

In addition, we can carryover the EL Scholarship money we have been using this year into next year and do the same type of support to Round-Up and offer Kindergarten Connection programming in the spring of 2015.