

**STATE OF MINNESOTA
EARLY LEARNING SCHOLARSHIPS PATHWAY II APPLICATION
Narrative Description of Program Expansion or Program Enhancement**

School district or program name: Duluth Public Schools/ISD 709

The application includes the narrative sections below for the program applicant to complete. Provide the information on separate pieces of paper.

13. Statement of Need. Describe the status of early childhood education services delivered in the community/school district attendance area. Description of early childhood education programs should include school-based preschool programs, Head Start and child care. Include in the description in which ways your program partners with other early childhood programs and services, including transition strategies for kindergarten entry. Unmet needs of children with high needs that you serve, including waiting lists, should be explained. Detail how your program will outreach to and serve children with the highest needs, and notify families of the availability of Early Learning Scholarships Pathway II through the early childhood program.

• (Points Possible: 10 Maximum Pages: 1)

The Duluth Public Schools is well poised to utilize Early Learning Scholarships. Currently the Duluth Public Schools is home to Head Start, School Readiness, Early Childhood Family Education, Community Education and Early Childhood Special Education. These district Early Childhood Programs have developed strong collaborative relationships over the past few years. We share trainings, resources and are in the third year of a collaboration that teams regular Early Childhood Education teachers with Early Childhood Special Education teachers. In these collaborative classrooms, children receiving Special Education services attend an early childhood program with their typically developing peers. The children with Special Education plans are being challenged to greater degree than in the past and are making terrific gains alongside their age mates.

Duluth Head Start, School Readiness and Community Education Preschool are 4 Star rated Parent Aware Programs. All programs use a research based reading curriculum; Opening the World of Learning, (OWL) and utilize literacy strategies as well as Parent Aware approved assessments. Duluth Head Start and School Readiness also use the Second Step Social-Emotional curriculum in all of their classrooms.

The Duluth Public Schools recently received notification of acceptance of a \$75,000. Title I matching grant. This grant will provide a 3-day per week, 3 hours per day preschool experience for 3 year olds in one of our elementary schools with the highest percentage of children on waiting lists. Most of our early childhood programs are not specifically targeting 3 year olds although we do have data that shows Head Start children who enter their 2nd year of Head Start will start the year 20% higher than their age mates. We know this opportunity will support our district's plans for children to read well by grade 3.

The Duluth Public Schools has recently made many strides toward alignment from Pre K and grade 3. We have participated in the regional Early Childhood Summits the last few years that resulted in the formation of a work group. This group, led by the principal of Laura MacArthur Elementary School, a priority school, and with financial support from

the Northland Foundation is made up of early childhood and kindergarten teachers and administrators. The main goals are to increase our knowledge and understanding of each other's work with children and families, design a way to share child outcomes which will inform teachers about individual children's growth, strategies to meet their individual needs and better prepare all parties for the transition to kindergarten and beyond. Research suggests this is the type of intentionality it takes to prepare children for school success. We will build a template with the Laura MacArthur Elementary School team that can be used district wide in schools where early childhood programs are co-located with their elementary colleagues but true collaboration does not yet exist. This work will continue through the 2013-2014 school year with continued grant support from the Northland Foundation.

As detailed in the section regarding proposed use of funds, we plan to transform the way our school district transitions children and families to kindergarten. We have easy access to families who are currently enrolled and attending our district's early childhood programs, housed within district elementary school buildings, ensuring we will reach those who meet the income criteria for Early Learning Scholarships.

2. Proposed use of the funds for the Early Learning Scholarships Pathways II. The goal of the Early Learning Scholarships is to increase access to high-quality early childhood programs for children primarily between the ages of three- to five-years in communities throughout the state. Impacting kindergarten readiness of children with high needs is a primary intended outcome for scholarship recipients.

14. In this section, describe how your program intends to use the Early Learning Scholarships. Programs may use the Early Learning Scholarship Pathway II funds for serving additional children with high needs and/or to enhance early childhood education services for participating children receiving scholarships in their early childhood program. If you are expanding services, describe the quality of the services you will provide. If Pathway II funds are used for enhancement of services, detail the use of scholarships for one or more of the enhancement activities.

- a) Expanding the length and/or duration of the program services.
- b) Increasing the intensity and length of instructional content or other curriculum improvements.
- c) Offering smaller class sizes and/or lower child-to-staff ratios to increase children's gains in learning.
- d) Offering comprehensive services that are responsive to children's needs to improve learning outcomes -- with a particular focus on opportunities for family engagement and parenting education.
- e) Incorporating compensatory instructional services to accelerate literacy and language development for participating children.
- f) Coordination of transition to kindergarten and the early grades with the local school district.

Include the expected number of children served, child to teacher/caregiver ratios, type of class offered (if applicable), staffing, etc. Describe strategies used to notify families of the award of a Pathway II scholarship to their child.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Early Learning Scholarship funds used for either expansion or enhancement must not supplant any federal funds used for programs or services. Scholarship funds cannot be used for services otherwise paid for with federal funds. For example, if a child

with special needs is receiving mental health services as part of their Individualized Education Program (IEP), the Early Learning Scholarships should not be used to provide this service.

• **(Points Possible: 50 Maximum Pages: 5)**

The Duluth Public Schools propose to use Early Learning Scholarships to support the coordination of transition to kindergarten and the early grades within our school district as allowed under enhancement activities (F).

To that end, we will transform the way children and families move from Early Childhood settings to kindergarten at seven district elementary school buildings where we currently have 4 Star Rated Parent Aware programming in place.

Duluth's Kindergarten Connection will be held in the spring of the upcoming school year and will provide 4 evening sessions of 2 hours each week for 4 consecutive weeks for children and parents encompassing all aspects of their upcoming transition from Early Childhood to Kindergarten with the last session incorporated into district wide building Kindergarten Roundups which is open to all district families with a child entering Kindergarten. Out of a possible 235 - 4 year old children and their families, we plan to serve 188 or approximately 80% at these evening sessions.

We know from the work we have started with kindergarten teachers and administration that we must do whatever it takes to help children and parents move from Early Childhood programs to Kindergarten with ease and confidence. As we develop and strengthen the transition to Kindergarten, we are keenly aware of the concerns parents have as their children enter Kindergarten. Parents' own negative school experiences may influence the way they feel about the school setting. Our plan will address these concerns and help parents further develop the advocacy skills they learned in pre-k settings. Our plan will require our staffs to ensure that our school buildings are welcoming, inclusive and culturally sensitive to the families we serve. We will invite our district cultural liaisons, the Education Equity committee and school building staff to set a welcome and inclusive tone for the upcoming school year. We view this as a critical piece, particularly when we know the achievement gap between whites and students of color persists.

During two of these sessions, we will include Early Childhood and Kindergarten teachers as well as building principals to interact with families, to start building the relationships that will engage families in this education partnership. Further, Early Childhood and Kindergarten staff at these seven buildings will work together to share data and discuss the progress children have made in their Early Childhood settings by providing a "Data Day" for these staff.

In addition, each child will receive a Literacy Box filled with materials they can use over the summer to help them maintain the gains they made in their Early Childhood setting. Each Literacy Box will contain paper, glue sticks, paints, books and various writing tools.