

# Michigan

## Background

### Michigan Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP)

Michigan's Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) is a part-day and full-day program for at-risk four-year-olds.<sup>1</sup> At least 90 percent of GSRP students must come from a household with a family income under 250 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.<sup>2</sup> The remaining 10 percent of slots may be filled with children from families that do not meet the income eligibility but who demonstrate other risk factors for low educational achievement.<sup>3</sup> Providers that receive Head Start funds may also offer a GSRP/Head Start blend model.

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) administers GSRP. All GSRP funding is awarded through a formula grant to intermediate school districts (ISDs). ISDs can contract with for-profit or nonprofit preschool providers, including public school districts and Public School Academies, a type of charter school.<sup>4</sup>

### Charter schools in Michigan

Local school boards, intermediate school boards, community colleges, and state public universities may become charter school authorizers.<sup>5</sup> Currently, only higher-education institutions and local education agencies serve as authorizers.<sup>6</sup> Most Michigan charter schools are authorized by higher-education institutions.

There are four types of charter schools in Michigan: Public School Academies, Urban High School Academies, Strict Discipline Academies, and Schools of Excellence. Public School Academies, which were the first charter schools in Michigan, are traditional charter schools: state-funded public schools operating under a charter contract. Urban High School Academies are secondary schools in urban areas.<sup>7</sup> Strict Discipline Academies serve suspended, expelled, or incarcerated students.<sup>8</sup>

Schools of Excellence are a special category of charter schools created in 2010 as part of a "smart cap" policy. High-performing charter schools that meet certain criteria may be designated as Schools of Excellence. These schools can be authorized and replicated outside Michigan's 150-school cap on the number of university-authorized charter schools. Schools of Excellence may include (1) replications of high-performing charter schools, (2) cyber schools, or (3) former Public School Academies that have received a designation as Schools of Excellence.<sup>9</sup>



TOTAL SCORE

38/50

Michigan's climate for charter schools to offer pre-K is **somewhat hospitable**

- + There are no state statutory or regulatory barriers to charter schools accessing state funding for pre-K.
- Compared to K-12 funding levels, low pre-K program funding makes offering pre-K less attractive to charters.
- + The size of the pre-K program does not limit charter access to funding.
- + The funding, application, and approval processes do not create barriers to charter access.
- + Automatic enrollment from charter pre-K to kindergarten is not prohibited in legislation or practice.



## Process for Accessing Pre-K Funds

ISDs apply for GSRP slots through the MDE. MDE allocates GSRP slots to ISDs based on a funding formula, which incorporates the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. Individual ISDs determine the process by which they select subrecipients. All subrecipients must be able to achieve at least a three-star rating in Great Start to Quality, the state's quality rating and improvement system for early-childhood programs. GSRP legislation requires that ISDs allocate at least 30 percent of GSRP slots for community agencies other than public schools, such as Head Start grantees.<sup>10</sup>

## Barriers

### Are there any statutory or regulatory barriers to charter schools accessing state funding for pre-K?

**+** **No.** Michigan's charter law explicitly allows Public School Academies to offer pre-K. Public School Academies are eligible to access GSRP slots and provide pre-K services as subrecipients of ISDs.<sup>11</sup> Schools of Excellence can also offer pre-K, but it is not explicitly stated in state legislation.

A significant number of Michigan charter schools have successfully accessed state pre-K funds. At least seventy-six charter schools in the state offer pre-K, and at least thirty-eight of those schools receive GSRP funding. It is possible that many more charter schools in the state offer pre-K through other funding streams or through an affiliated pre-K program, but the state does not centrally track this information.

### Is the funding level of the state pre-K program a barrier to charter access?

**-** **Yes.** Low pre-K program funding, compared to K-12 funding levels, makes pre-K less attractive to charters. Charter schools that offer GSRP receive less than 40 percent of the per-pupil funding amount that charters receive to serve full-day K-12 students.

### Is the size of the state pre-K program a barrier to charter access?

**+** **No.** The size of the program is not a barrier to charters accessing state pre-K funds. The program serves about 25 percent of all four-year-olds in the state.

### Is the application, approval, and/or funding process a barrier to charter access?

**+** **No.** Charter schools must access GSRP funding through an ISD, but they do so through the same process as any other pre-K provider, including traditional school districts and community-based providers. The number of charter schools receiving GSRP funds suggests that the ISD application process is not a significant barrier to access.

### Is automatic enrollment from pre-K to kindergarten prohibited in legislation or practice?

**+** **No.** Michigan legislation does not explicitly allow charter schools to automatically enroll pre-K students into kindergarten. In practice, charters' ability to grant enrollment preference to pre-K students depends on the authorizer.

### Are there any other barriers to charter access?

**-** **Yes.** One policy issue that may impact charter schools' ability to offer pre-K is the inconsistency in how Michigan authorizers approach charter schools that offer pre-K. Some authorizers in Michigan view pre-K as outside of the authorizer's responsibility because it is not funded by the state K-12 grant, while others require charter schools to amend their contract to include pre-K in order to operate a pre-K program. Although this inconsistency does not appear to prevent charter schools from offering pre-K, it may negatively affect charter schools that cannot automatically enroll pre-K students in their pre-K program because of the practices of their authorizer.

## Recommendations

To address these barriers to charter access, Michigan should do the following:

- Increase GSRP funding to cover the cost of delivering a high-quality program. Increasing GSRP funding would enable charter schools to offer the program and increase access to a broader range of providers.
- Revise the charter school legislation to allow charter schools to grant enrollment preference to pre-K students who receive federally funded, state-funded, or locally funded pre-K and who are from a charter pre-K program or affiliated program, as long as students were admitted via lottery and the kindergarten program has more open spaces than interested pre-K students.
- Revise the charter school legislation to clarify authorizers' responsibility for approving and overseeing charter schools to offer GSRP or other pre-K programs.



	Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP)	Charter schools in Michigan
Year created	Launched in 1985 <sup>12</sup>	Charter law enacted in 1993 <sup>13</sup>
Children in state	244,738 three- and four-year-olds in Michigan <sup>14</sup>	1,982,348 school-age children in Michigan <sup>15</sup>
Children served	30,552 children served 0 percent of three-year-olds 25 percent of four-year-olds <sup>16</sup>	141,204 students served 7.1 percent of school-age population 297 charter schools <sup>17</sup>
Charters offering pre-K	At least seventy-six charter schools in Michigan offer pre-K, though the state does not track data on the number of charter schools with affiliated pre-K programs. <sup>18</sup>	Two hundred fifty charter schools in Michigan offer elementary school programs. <sup>19</sup>
Funding	Intermediate school districts (ISDs) receive GSRP slot allocations according to a funding formula, <sup>20</sup> and the allocations amount to about \$3,625 per slot. <sup>21</sup>	Charter schools receive \$9,485 per pupil for K–12 students. <sup>22</sup>

## Endnotes

1 Michigan State Government: School Funding, [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Funding\\_August\\_2014\\_466768\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Funding_August_2014_466768_7.pdf).

2 Interview with MDE representative, February 19, 2015.

3 Michigan State Government: School Recruitment and Enrollment, [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Recruitment\\_and\\_Enrollment\\_August\\_2014\\_466772\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Recruitment_and_Enrollment_August_2014_466772_7.pdf).

4 “Great Start Readiness Program,” Michigan State Government, [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/GSRP-Overview\\_410757\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/GSRP-Overview_410757_7.pdf).

5 National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS), “Measuring Up: Michigan,” <http://www.publiccharters.org/get-the-facts/law-database/states/MI/>.

6 National Association of Charter School Authorizers, “Michigan Charter Authorizers,” <http://www.qualitycharters.org/authorizer-comparison/state-by-state-overviews-michigan.html>.

7 “Michigan Charter Schools – Questions and Answers,” Michigan Department of Education, [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/PSAQA\\_54517\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/PSAQA_54517_7.pdf).

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Michigan State Government: School Funding, [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Funding\\_August\\_2014\\_466768\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Funding_August_2014_466768_7.pdf).

11 “Enrolled House Bill No. 4325,” State of Michigan 96th Legislature, June 21, 2011, <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2011-2012/publicact/pdf/2011-PA-0062.pdf>.

12 W. Steven Barnett et al., “The State of Preschool 2013: State Preschool Yearbook” (New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research, 2013), <http://nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/yearbook2013.pdf>.

13 NAPCS, “Measuring Up: Michigan.”

14 State population data calculated using ACS 2012 five-year estimates; U.S. Census Bureau, “American Community Survey,” [www.census.gov/acs](http://www.census.gov/acs).

15 Ibid., all children in households, three to seventeen years old.

16 Interview with MDE representative, February 19, 2015.

17 NAPCS, “Measuring Up: Michigan.”

18 “Schools/Facilities by Public School Academy District,” Michigan Education Department, [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/PSAs\\_297270\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/PSAs_297270_7.pdf).

19 Ibid.

20 Michigan State Government: School Funding, [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Funding\\_August\\_2014\\_466768\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Funding_August_2014_466768_7.pdf).

21 Interview with MDE representative, February 19, 2015.

22 Larry Maloney et al., “Charter School Funding: Inequality Expands,” Michigan section (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Department of Education Reform, School Choice Demonstration Project, April 2014), <http://www.uaedreform.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/charter-funding-inequality-expands-dc.pdf>.