

Subject MDE Early Education Budget and Policy Bill

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Overview

This bill, as amended by H2565A1, is the Department of Education's budget and policy bill for early education programs.

Summary

Section	Description
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1	Distribution of appropriation. [Head Start]
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Allows the state appropriations for Head Start programs to be used for costs associated with program operations, infrastructure, or reconfiguration to serve children from birth to age five in center-based services.

Designates 10.72 percent of the total state appropriation to Tribal Head Start programs and specifies an order in which the state appropriation must be distributed.

2	Age limitations; pupils.
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Provides that a child cannot be admitted to a public prekindergarten program unless the child is at least four years old as of September 1 of the calendar year in which the child seeks admission.

This section is effective July 1, 2025.

3	Length of school year; hours of instruction.
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Provides that the school calendar for a VPK student must include between 425 and 850 hours of instruction in a school year.

This section is effective July 1, 2025.

Section	Description
4	Screening program. Requires a district screening program to include virtual developmental screening for families who request one based on their immunocompromised health status or other health condition.
5	Developmental screening aid. Increases the amount of state aid paid to school districts for each child who is screened prior to or within 30 days of enrolling in public school kindergarten.
6	Grants for Grow Your Own early childhood educator programs. Establishes a Grow Your Own early childhood educator grant program that allows licensed child care programs, and other programs or organizations to apply for a grant to host, build, or expand an early childhood educator preparation program that leads to a credential or degree needed to enter or advance in the early childhood education workforce. Establishes a “Grow Your Own Early Childhood Education program account” in the special revenue fund. Appropriates up to \$175,000 annually to the commissioner to administer and monitor the program. Requires grant recipients to report to the commissioner on their activities under this section, and requires the commissioner to publish a report for the public summarizing the activities and outcomes of grant recipients.
7	Program reimbursement. Allows school districts to receive school breakfast aid for ECSE students who participate in VPK programs.
8	Additional duties. Strikes two requirements to produce recommendations that the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care has fulfilled. Requires that the council review and provide input on the work produced by the Great Start for All Minnesota Children Task Force.
9	Establishment; purpose. [VPK] Allows a school district, charter school, licensed child care center, licensed family child care provider, or Head Start agency that meets specified requirements to establish a VPK program for eligible four-year-old children.
10	Program requirements. [VPK] Specifies the requirements a VPK program provider must meet, including: assessing each child’s progress toward state standards at program entrance and exit; providing program content aligned with the state’s early learning standards; providing between 425 and 850 hours of instruction per year; paying salaries equivalent to the salaries of public elementary school staff with similar credentials and experience for school

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district and charter school programs, and to the extent practicable for Head Start and licensed child care programs; employing a lead teacher who has at least a bachelor's degree in each classroom no later than July 1, 2031; including parents in program decision-making; ensuring that staff-to-child ratios and group size requirements meet specified criteria; and providing professional development, training, and coaching for teachers.

This section is effective July 1, 2025.

11 Mixed delivery program plan. [VPK]

Requires VPK programs within each school district boundary that receive VPK funding to annually submit to MDE a mixed delivery program plan that ensures alignment of all VPK program providers within the school district boundary in meeting the program requirements.

This section is effective July 1, 2025.

12 Funding. [VPK]

Funds school district and charter school VPK programs based on the number of eligible pupils enrolled.

Funds Head Start and licensed child care VPK programs based on a flat dollar per child in fiscal years 2026 and 2027 and based on an adjusted dollar amount per child beginning in fiscal year 2028.

Allows the commissioner to use up to \$4,000,000 in fiscal year 2026 and \$4,500,000 in fiscal year 2027 and thereafter to distribute funds to Head Start and licensed child care VPK programs, including via a third-party administrator.

This section is effective July 1, 2025.

13 Eligibility. [VPK]

Defines an "eligible child" for purposes of a VPK program as a child who: (1) is four years old as of September 1 in the calendar year in which the student will enroll; and (2) meets one or more of the specified criteria.

Provides that an eligible child can participate in a VPK program free of charge. Allows VPK programs to charge a sliding fee for instructional hours that exceed the 850 hours required during the school year, any hours provided before or after school, or any hours for child care provided in the summer. Provides that a child who is not eligible may participate in the same classroom as eligible children and may be charged a sliding fee as long as state funding is not awarded for the child.

Section	Description
	This section is effective July 1, 2025.
14	Participation limits. [VPK] Extends the 4,000 expiring VPK/SRP seats through fiscal year 2025.
15	Financial accounting. [VPK] Directs school districts and charter schools to record expenditures attributable to VPK pupils according to the guidelines prepared by the commissioner of education for a uniform system of records. Directs Head Start and licensed child care programs to record expenditures for VPK pupils according to guidelines developed by the commissioner.
16	Family eligibility. [Early learning scholarships] Increases eligibility for scholarships to include families with income equal to or less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Makes families that have a child who is referred as in need of child protective services or placed in foster care eligible for scholarships regardless of a family's income level. Changes a child's eligibility for scholarships to include all children from birth through age four on September 1 of the current school year.
17	Administration. [Early learning scholarships] Adds children who are younger than four years old and children who have incarcerated parents as priority groups for early learning scholarships. Provides that a scholarship cancels if a recipient has not enrolled in an eligible program within three months, rather than ten months, of receiving the scholarship. Allows extensions if a program is unavailable to a child within the three-month timeline.
18	Early learning scholarship account. Increases the amount the commissioner may use for costs associated with administering and monitoring scholarships, up to \$2,133,000 annually. Allows the commissioner to use money in the early learning scholarship special revenue fund for family outreach and distribution of scholarships.
19	English learner. Qualifies early childhood special education students for English learner (EL) services and revenue and excludes the years of service prior to kindergarten from the seven-year limit on funded services.
20	School of parents' choice. Provides that a parent of a student with a disability who is not yet enrolled in kindergarten and not open enrolled in a nonresident district may elect a school in a

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	nonresident district where the child is enrolled in a Head Start program or a licensed child care program if the child can be served in the same setting as other children in the nonresident district with the same level of disability.
21	Pupil unit. Removes the separate hourly calculation for kindergarten students with a disability and includes these students in the ordinary kindergarten student count of average daily membership. Extends the current VPK pupil counting system for two more years. Creates a new funding pupil count for VPK pupils for fiscal year 2026 and later.
22	Compensation revenue pupil units. Eliminates a cross reference to the VPK program as existing seats are no longer expiring under this article.
23	Declining enrollment aid. Removes an adjustment to declining enrollment aid as existing VPK seats are no longer expiring.
24	Appropriations; Department of Education. Appropriates money for early learning programs.



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