

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

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Article 1: Prekindergarten MinneK Program

Overview

Establishes and funds a voluntary half-day prekindergarten program called MinneK beginning with the 2017-2018 school year. Requires participating prekindergarten children to attend the programs for at least 425 hours during the school year in order for the school to be eligible for state funding of the program. Sets a class size ratio of not more than 20 prekindergarten pupils per class and not more than ten prekindergarten pupils per staff person. Requires the teacher of record in each classroom to be appropriately licensed.

- 1 Length of school year; hours of instruction.** Establishes a school calendar for prekindergarten programs, which must include at least 425 hours of instruction for the school year.
- 2 Prekindergarten early learning license; MinneK program.** Requires the Board of Teaching to adopt rules establishing licenses that qualify a teacher to teach in the prekindergarten MinneK program. Requires early learning teacher training and preparation requirements to emphasize play-based learning.

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- 3 **Exceptions; community education programs.** Removes statutory language stating that a license for a community education program instructor should not be construed to bring the instructor within the definition of teacher under of the teacher tenure laws.
- 4 **Revenue amount.** Keeps Qcomp revenue unchanged by lowering the Qcomp allowance so that additional pupil units added by counting qualifying four year olds under section 13 won't result in a Qcomp revenue increase.
- 5 **School facilities improvement revenue.** Creates a new equalized aid and levy to provide facilities revenue to school districts beginning in fiscal year 2017. Limits the revenue to school districts that are not using the lease levy. Sets the formula allowance equal to \$212 per pupil unit. Allows school districts that are members of intermediate school districts to include another \$65 per pupil unit in the facilities revenue. Equalizes the proposed facilities revenue with a levy share based on the lesser of one or the ratio of the district's adjusted net tax capacity per pupil to 125 percent of the state average adjusted net tax capacity per pupil. Makes the facilities aid equal to the difference between the revenue and the levy.
- 6 **Prekindergarten pupil transportation aid.** Creates a new pupil transportation aid equal to the lesser of a district's actual costs of transporting prekindergarten pupils or \$200 per prekindergarten pupil transported beginning in fiscal year 2018.
- 7 **Program reimbursement; breakfast.** Includes in the state supplementary funding for school breakfasts (most of the money for school nutrition programs comes from the federal government) an amount equal to \$1.30 per breakfast for each prekindergarten pupil who does not qualify for free or reduced price breakfasts. Note: breakfasts for prekindergarten pupils who qualify for free or reduced price meals are already fully funded by existing law.
- 8 **No fees; breakfast.** Prohibits a school district from charging any prekindergarten pupil a fee for breakfast.
- 9 **Home visiting program; ECFE.** Encourages licensed classroom teachers to participate in home visiting programs.
- 10 **Digital home visiting; ECFE.** Authorizes a school district to voluntarily participate in a digital home visiting program, which may deliver early childhood family education curricula through text messages, email, and social media. Allows a district to use its own digital home visiting program or a program developed by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE).
- 11 **District advisory councils; ECFE.** Requires a school district's ECFE advisory council to review the district's home visiting program at least every other year.
- 12 **Assistance; ECFE.** Authorizes MDE to maintain a voluntary digital contact list. Classifies the list as education data under the state's Data Practices Act.
- 13 **Revenue; ECFE.** Strikes an obsolete reference.
- 14 **Home visiting revenue; ECFE.** Adds \$20 per capita in state aid to the current ECFE levy of \$1.60 per capita for home visiting services. States that the new funds for home visiting programs must supplement, not supplant, funding for home visiting programs.
- 15 **Establishment; purpose; school readiness.** Allows a school district providing a MinneK program to use its school readiness program to supplement services provided under the MinneK program.

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- 16 Program requirements; school readiness.** Allows a school district providing a MinneK program to use its school readiness program to supplement services provided under the MinneK program.
- 17 Application and reporting requirements.** Clarifies the application and reporting timelines for school readiness programs.
- 18 Eligibility; school readiness.** Allows any child eligible to participate in the MinneK program to also participate in a school readiness program.
- 19 Early learning scholarships.** Broadens eligibility for early learning scholarships to include all qualifying children under the age of five (current law targets the program at 3- and 4-year-old children).
- 20 MinneK program.**
- Subd. 1. MinneK program established.** Authorizes a school district or charter school to establish a voluntary prekindergarten program, called a MinneK program, for all four-year-old children.
- Subd. 2. Program characteristics.** (a) Requires prekindergarten MinneK programs to include:
- (1) compensatory instruction delivered through play-based learning to foster children's social and emotional development, cognitive development, physical and motor development, and language and literacy skills, including the native language and literacy skills of English learners;
 - (2) developmentally appropriate instructional content and child-centered activities to address a child's learning needs;
 - (3) measures of a child's cognitive and social skills when entering and exiting a program;
 - (4) 20 or fewer children in each class;
 - (5) a child to staff ratio of no more than ten children to each one staff person with at least one staff person as the teacher of record;
 - (6) an appropriately licensed teacher of record;
 - (7) collaboration between community-based health and social service agencies;
 - (8) coordinated programs and services, including homeless, English learning, and special education services;
 - (9) parent engagement in culturally and linguistically-responsive activities for prekindergarten through grade 3 students;
 - (10) curriculum, assessment, and instructional strategies aligned with the state's prekindergarten through grade 3 early learning guidelines and academic standards;
 - (11) students with disabilities in the prekindergarten program; and
 - (12) professional development for early learning providers that include adult-child interactions.

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(b) Requires districts to implement and measure prekindergarten programs as part of their world's best workforce plan.

Subd. 3. Child eligibility. Allows a child eligible to participate in the prekindergarten MinneK program if the child is not yet in kindergarten and is at least four years old as of September 1 of that school year. Requires the child to go through early childhood developmental screening and comply with school district immunization standards before enrolling in a prekindergarten program.

Subd. 4. Hours of instruction. Requires school MinneK programs to provide at least 425 hours of service to each enrolled prekindergarten student.

- 21 English learner.** Authorizes a school district to include a prekindergarten pupil in its count of English language learners for the purpose of receiving English learner aid and exempts prekindergarten services from the seven-year limitation on funded services.
- 22 Admission requirements and enrollment; charter schools.** Allows a charter school providing a free prekindergarten program to give enrollment preference to its prekindergarten students who apply for admission to the charter school's kindergarten program.
- 23 Pupil units.** Creates a funding stream for prekindergarten MinneK pupils by counting the pupils in the regular pupil count at 0.6 pupil units as long as the pupil is enrolled in a MinneK program available to all interested prekindergarten pupils in the district and the program provides at least 425 hours of instruction for the year.
- 24 Declining enrollment aid.** Exempts prekindergarten pupils from the pupil count used to determine declining enrollment aid for the next three school years.
- 25 Head Start appropriation.** Increases the Head Start appropriation beginning in fiscal year 2018 so that the appropriation is sufficient to cover any waiting list for Head Start program slots.
- 26 Appropriations; microgrants for digital home visiting programs.** Appropriates funding in fiscal year 2017 for:
- (1) aid to create digital home visiting programs;
 - (2) managing databases for digital home visiting curricula for parents of young children; and
 - (3) facilities aid under section 5.

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Article 2: Higher Education Grants and Loan Forgiveness

Overview

Article 2 includes several proposals to reduce the costs eligible individuals incur in obtaining licenses and credentials to teach early childhood education. These policies include grants to enable district employees to attain a new or a new subject area license, loan forgiveness for MinneK program instructors, and tuition waivers for students attending MnSCU schools.

Article 2 also requires MnSCU to develop a plan to encourage nontraditional students to obtain early childhood educator licenses. This plan must include a tuition waiver for students with unmet financial need. The U of M is requested to implement a similar plan.

1 Grants.

Subd. 1. Program establishment; requirements. (a) Establishes an annual grant program to enable school district employees to attain a prekindergarten early learning teaching license or an additional subject area license in prekindergarten early learning.

(b) Makes grants available to nonlicensed district employees interested in becoming licensed prekindergarten early learning teachers or currently licensed classroom teachers interested in acquiring an additional subject area license in prekindergarten early learning.

(c) Requires participating school districts to agree to support and monitor the progress of grant recipients and to provide student teaching opportunities, teacher mentoring, and other professional development opportunities. Requires grant recipients to agree to work in the school district for at least three school years after attaining their license. Requires the agreement to establish consequences for grant recipients who fail to complete the three years of service but precludes penalizing a grant recipient who is prevented by district action from completing the service period.

Subd. 2. Program funding. (a) Directs the commissioner of education to make grants on a first-come, first-served basis to the extent funds are available. Requires school districts receiving the funds to use the funds to help eligible individuals under subdivision 1 offset their education costs or as compensation during student teaching. Restricts the amount of an individual's grant to no more than actual program or course costs minus any available federal or state grants. Requires school districts to award grants to eligible individuals on a first-come, first-served basis to the extent funds are available.

(b) Requires eligible individuals to enroll and make satisfactory progress in a teacher preparation or other academic program offered by a local or regional teacher preparation institution or program and to annually complete an application for federal student aid.

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(c) Requires school districts to recognize all credits a teacher earns under this program when placing that teacher on the school district's salary schedule.

Makes this section effective beginning in fiscal year 2017.

2 Early childhood loan forgiveness program. Establishes a loan forgiveness program for early childhood educators administered by the Office of Higher Education (OHE).

Subd. 1. Definitions. (b) Defines "qualifying educational institution" as a postsecondary institution eligible for federal student aid programs.

(c) Defines "qualifying position" to mean a licensed teacher teaching in a MinneK program.

(d) Defines "qualifying student loan" as government, commercial, or foundation loans to pay for tuition and reasonable education and living expenses related to attending a qualifying educational institution.

(e) Defines "satisfactory academic progress" as it is used by the state grant program.

Subd. 2. Program established. Establishes a loan forgiveness program for early childhood educators. Stipulates that appropriations to the program do not expire.

Subd. 3. Eligibility. Establishes eligibility criteria for a loan forgiveness applicant. To be eligible, an applicant must be a Minnesota resident, have a qualifying student loan, have worked 12 months in a qualifying position, and have attained, or demonstrate satisfactory academic progress towards attaining a license that qualifies an applicant to teach in a MinneK program.

Makes an applicant eligible for one loan forgiveness award for each 12 months the applicant works in a qualifying position. Limits individuals to receiving two awards.

Subd. 4. Application. Requires applicants to apply to the commissioner in a form and manner specified by the OHE commissioner. Requires recipients to reapply to receive an additional award.

Subd. 5. Amount of forgiveness. Sets the award amount at \$5,000. If an applicant's loan balance is less than \$5,000, the applicant's award equals the applicant's remaining balance.

Subd. 6. Disbursement. Requires the OHE commissioner to disburse a loan forgiveness award directly to a participant's student loan servicer.

Subd. 7. Fund established. Establishes a fund for depositing money appropriated to the program. Stipulates that unused funds do not cancel to the general fund.

3 Increased access to teacher licensure academic programs. (a) Requires the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees to design and implement a plan to increase the number of students who are admitted to and complete an academic program leading to a license that qualifies the individual to teach in a MinneK program.

(b) Requires the board to consult with stakeholders. Requires the plan to enhance enrollment options for part-time, nontraditional, and underrepresented students. Requires the board to

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include in its plan a process to waive tuition and fees for students who have an unmet financial need.

(c) Requires the board to report to the higher education, K-12 education, and early childhood education committees of the legislature on its progress in designing and implementing the plan.

(d) Requests the U of M to develop a plan consistent with paragraphs (a) and (b).

- 4 **Appropriation; prekindergarten early learning teaching license grants.** Appropriates funds for the early learning teaching license grants in article 2, section 1.

Article 3: Bonding for Early Childhood Facilities

- 1 **Early childhood learning and child protection facilities.**

Subd. 1. Grant authority. Adds “renovation” to the list of permitted grant activities that include construction and rehabilitation of facilities for early childhood programs, crisis nurseries, and parenting time centers. Also adds “school-based prekindergarten” to the list of programs the facilities may house, which under current law include Head Start, School Readiness, Early Childhood Family Education, licensed child care, and other early childhood intervention programs.

Subd. 2. Grant priority. Adds access to early childhood programs to the priorities the commissioner of human services may follow in awarding grants for projects.

Effective immediately.

- 2 **Early childhood learning and child protection facilities.** Appropriates \$15 million in state general obligation bond proceeds and \$5 million from the state general fund for the early childhood learning and child protection facilities grant program administered by the Department of Human Services. The general fund appropriation could be used for grants to organizations not eligible for grants made with bond proceeds. Authorizes the sale of state bonds.

Effective immediately.