

Subject Early Education Policy Bill

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Overview

This is the early education policy bill. It merges the voluntary prekindergarten (VPK) and school readiness plus programs and (1) makes changes to the merged program, including splitting the Minneapolis and St. Paul school districts into two groups for purposes of seat allocation; (2) changes the eligibility requirements for early learning scholarships and adds priority groups for the program; and (3) separates the definitions of “kindergarten” and “prekindergarten.” Additionally, the bill clarifies requirements for early childhood special education (ECSE) or “Part C” services.

Summary

Section	Description
1	Kindergarten. Removes the definition of “prekindergarten” that is included in the definition of “kindergarten.”
2	Prekindergarten. Defines “prekindergarten” in the same way it is defined as part of the “kindergarten” definition in Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.05, subdivision 10a.
3	Voluntary prekindergarten program for eligible four-year-old children. Merges the school readiness plus program into the voluntary prekindergarten program (VPK). Modifies the program requirements, including requiring that VPK teachers are licensed. Changes program eligibility to provide that a child must meet at least one specified criterion to be eligible to participate in the program free of charge. Requires that school districts and charter schools use state funding for eligible children and provides that children may participate in the program on a fee-for-service basis if they are not eligible or state funding is not available. Directs school districts and charter schools to adopt a sliding-fee schedule based on family income and waive the fee for a participant who cannot pay. Provides that, beginning

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	<p>in fiscal year 2026, the department must accept and approve applications for program seats every four years rather than every year.</p> <p>Increases the number of groups to which VPK seats are allocated from four to five by splitting the Minneapolis and St. Paul school districts into two separate groups. Ensures that any school sites that received seats in fiscal year 2024 would receive the same number of seats in future years.</p> <p>Makes provisions relating to increasing the number of groups for purposes of allocating VPK seats effective July 1, 2024. Makes provisions related to merging the school readiness plus program into the VPK program effective July 1, 2025.</p>
4	<p>Family eligibility. [Early learning scholarships]</p> <p>For purposes of determining a family’s eligibility for an early learning scholarship, provides that an individual who needs child protection services or is placed in foster care is eligible for a scholarship for the individual’s eligible child.</p>
5	<p>Applications; priorities. [Early learning scholarships]</p> <p>Adds children who are in substance use or mental health treatment programs and children who have an IEP or an IFSP to the list of priority groups for scholarships.</p>
6	<p>Children birth through age six experiencing developmental delays.</p> <p>Modifies terminology and corrects age references for purposes of determining whether a child under seven years of age has a disability.</p>
7	<p>Eligibility for Part C.</p> <p>Clarifies that “eligibility for Part C” means eligibility for infant and toddler services under statute and rules.</p>
8	<p>Requirement. [Special education]</p> <p>Clarifies that the requirement for a school district to conduct and document alternate instruction in a regular classroom prior to referring a child for a special education evaluation applies only to pupils in kindergarten through grade 12.</p>
9	<p>Revisor instruction. [School readiness plus program]</p> <p>Directs the revisor of statutes to remove references to the school readiness plus program in statute. Makes the section effective July 1, 2025.</p>
10	<p>Repealer. [School readiness plus program]</p> <p>Repeals the school readiness plus program. Makes the section effective July 1, 2025.</p>



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