



For Immediate Release

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Free Preschool Eligibility Expanded to Help More Families Access Early Education Programming

Regional Preschool Programs Prepare to Welcome more 4-Year-Olds in September

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. – The start of a new school year is often an exciting time for families as kids look forward to connecting with classmates and parents seek relief with school day routines. This year, the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement and Potential (MiLEAP) has worked to expand preschool opportunities by lifting income factors and expanded preschool eligibility for 4-year-olds, helping many more families access free early education programming.

In June, MiLEAP awarded \$8.7 million in [Great Start Readiness Program \(GSRP\) grants](#) to help fund new classrooms, staff recruitment, training and facility improvements, as well as expand access to high-quality preschool to more children as the state makes progress toward its PreK for all goal. Northwest Education Services (North Ed) is one of 56 ISDs across the state working with their local public schools and community-based organizations as they prepare to welcome more young students into their classrooms this September.

As families continue to struggle with affording and accessing quality child care, the state of Michigan has loosened eligibility requirements for GSRP programming, allowing families with a household income of up to [400% of the Federal Poverty Level](#) to become eligible for free preschool. For example, a family of four with a household income of up to \$124,800/year are now eligible for free preschool. Families above this income can still apply and if openings are available, age-eligible students can be admitted based on prioritization of need.

GSRP classrooms are designed to encourage the development of children and prepare them for successful entry into kindergarten using developmentally appropriate practices, guided by research-based curriculum. Children are introduced to math, reading and thinking skills through fun, hands-on activities and gain opportunities to learn how to share, take turns and make friends.

All GSRP classrooms are staffed by highly qualified teachers with early childhood degrees and follow Michigan child care licensing guidelines for health and safety to provide quality learning experiences for students.

“We are excited to see state investments in early childhood education continue to create more opportunities for families to access high-quality programming,” said North Ed Birth to Five Early Childhood Coordinator Tracy Spincich. “Preschool is a magical time for young minds to blossom and these experiences help level the playing field for all children and build a strong foundation for future learning and ongoing student success.”

Children who are 4 years old on or before Dec. 1, 2024, and meet program requirements are eligible for enrollment for the 2024-25 school year. Parents must complete an [application](#) through Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency (NMCAA) and are encouraged to contact their local school district or community preschool service provider to inquire about current availability, as classroom capacity will be part of the enrollment formula. Program providers are required to prioritize eligibility based on classroom space, application eligibility and educational risk factors of each child.

GSRP classrooms are located in local school districts as well as community-based programs in Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska and Leelanau counties. Families will be expected to commit to either a 4- or 5-day program. Program offerings will vary depending on geographic location and operator, and may include options for transportation and fee-based before- and after-school programming.

Northwest Education Services works collaboratively with schools and communities to meet the educational needs of students of all ages in northwest Michigan. By pooling resources and providing support services, North Ed aims to provide exceptional cost-effective educational programming to meet the needs of the students they serve.

For additional support with early childhood education and resources, call the northwest Michigan Help Me Grow coordinator at 231.922.7878, email HelpMeGrow@NorthwestEd.org or visit www.HelpMeGrow-mi.org/Northwest

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