INVESTING IN THE FUTURE:

A BALANCED APPROACH TOWARD PRESCHOOL EXPANSION IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

March 27, 2009

The Montgomery County Universal Preschool Implementation Work Group

Appointed by the Montgomery County Council

MEMBERSHIP
UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL IMPLEMENTATION WORK GROUP

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On July 22, 2008, the County Council adopted Resolution No. 16-664 establishing the Universal Preschool Implementation Work Group. Building on the December 2007 Preschool for All Report generated by the Maryland State Task Force on Universal Preschool Education, the County Council established the Work Group to develop recommendations for implementing a countywide program that provides all County four-year olds the opportunity to participate in a high-quality preschool program. The countywide program envisioned by the Work Group will be referenced in this report as the Preschool for All program.

The Work Group developed its recommendations understanding that the following program components recommended by Maryland State Task Force would be required in the delivery of Preschool for All services: (1) comprehensive pre-kindergarten curriculum standards covering multiple domains; (2) lead teachers certified in early childhood education; (3) assistant teachers with high school diplomas with preference for teachers with the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or equivalent training; (4) annual teacher participation in approved professional development; (5) class size limited to an average of 20 children consistent with Maryland law; (6) a classroom maximum ratio of one staff member for every 10 children; (7) the provision of support services including general screening and referral services; (8) the provision of at least one full meal per day if services are offered for more than 2.5 hours; and (9) program quality assessment and performance reports.

A substantial body of research supports the conclusion that early childhood education programs can produce lasting improvements in the life outcomes of children. Programs like the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program and the Abecedarian Project demonstrated lower participation in special education, higher graduation rates, lower involvement in the criminal justice system, and higher employment rates for those students who participated in a high quality preschool program. This research concludes that high quality early childhood programs are cost effective and generate savings many times over the original investment by avoiding future public costs related to incarceration, special education services, public assistance, and increasing taxes generated from higher earnings.

In FY2009, there are approximately 13,500 four-year-olds who reside in Montgomery County, and out of this total approximately 3,969 are entitled to public preschool services based on family income. These programs are only reaching about 2,645 income eligible students, a small number of whom are three-year-olds. Thus, more than 1,324 four-year-old children eligible to receive publicly funded preschool services have not accessed them. Currently, publicly funded preschool services offered by the Montgomery County Public Schools and private community-based programs are operating at or above capacity with wait lists for some services. The County has reached the point where the demand for publicly funded preschool education services exceeds the current funded capacity to deliver these services.

In exploring the critical issues to address in implementing Preschool for All in Montgomery County, the Work Group considered information from a variety of sources. The Work Group participated in informal discussions with community groups and parents, hosted

two public forums, conducted an online parent survey, collaborated on a higher education needs assessment survey, and received briefings from early childhood and child care experts at numerous meetings between September 2008 and March 2009.

During this process, all families reported the desire for high quality, affordable preschool programs that will prepare their children for success in school and meet individual family needs, culture, and values. Low income families expressed particular need for services that provide transportation or are accessible through public transportation and services that are offered during parent work hours.

The long term vision of the Work Group is to provide access to voluntary, quality preschool services in a variety of settings that meet the diverse needs of all four-year-old children and their families. Expanding preschool education options should be one component of how the County strengthens early childhood services to improve the school readiness of very young children from birth to age five across all developmental domains, e.g., language, literacy, physical, social, emotional, and cognitive.

Acknowledging that the implementation of Preschool for All in Montgomery County will be heavily influenced by the roll out of the State program, the Work Group makes the following recommendations for the County to:

- Maintain full funding for existing early childhood services from birth through age five;

- Sustain the existing requirement under the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002 to enroll four-year-olds from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (185% of the Federal poverty level);

- Engage all types of preschool and childcare providers in efforts to expand preschool opportunities for children;

- Create a local review panel to provide countywide coordination of preschool services;

- Initially expand Preschool for All services to children whose family income is at or below 300% of the Federal poverty level and communities with the greatest need;

- Conduct a community needs assessment prior to expansion in specific communities;

- Provide transportation as a component of program expansion because many families cannot access preschool services if transportation is not available;

- Grow the pool of high quality preschool providers using a variety of support services (e.g., training, technical assessment, scholarships, English language development), targeting child care providers at all levels;

- Give preference for expanded professional development funding to providers serving high needs areas, center-based staff closest to certification, and family child care providers closest to national accreditation;

- Encourage the State and higher education institutions to develop a higher education system that meets the needs of the County's early childhood workforce;

- Develop a pilot model for delivering Preschool for All services through family child care providers that aligns with the State requirements;

- Monitor the progress and success of program participants using a student assessment tool and assess other programmatic aspects that reflect on high quality care and education;

- Develop a rigorous communication and outreach plan to educate the community about the importance and effectiveness of preschool programs and enlist the participation and support of businesses and other organizations; and

- Fully utilize any funding made available for Preschool for All services and make local resources available to the extent necessary to access State, Federal, or private funding and ensure the delivery of high quality Preschool for All services with adequate infrastructure support.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. AUTHORITY AND SCOPE

On July 22, 2008, the County Council adopted Resolution No. 16-664 establishing the Universal Preschool Implementation Work Group (Appendix A). Building on the December 2007 Preschool for All Report generated by the Maryland State Task Force on Universal Preschool Education, the County Council established the Work Group to develop recommendations for implementing a countywide program that provides all County four-year olds the opportunity to participate in a high quality preschool program.

The Council directed the Work Group to develop a report that assesses: (1) the population of four-year old children who would qualify for services; (2) existing public and nonpublic programs serving the four-year old population; (3) preschool program costs and available funding streams that may be used to support the program; (4) standards and processes to determine the quality of preschool programs; (5) how and to what extent the capacity of existing high quality providers can be expanded; (6) how informal programs that families use can improve the quality of their services; (7) what is required for professional development and compensation to assure an adequate and qualified workforce; and (8) strategies to educate and engage businesses and community members.

B. METHODOLOGY

Over the past seven months, the Work Group held numerous meetings and solicited information from a variety of sources including presentations from experts, informal discussions with parents, public forums, and surveys of parents and early childhood teachers as follows:

- **Meetings:** The work group began meeting on September 4, 2008 and has held thirteen meetings.

- **Presentations:** The Work Group heard presentations from a variety of experts and community organizations including representatives from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), professional child care associations, family child care providers, center-based child care providers, public and private higher education institutions, and Preschool for All pilot sites. Appendix B provides a complete list of presenters.

- **Public Forums:** The Work Group held two public forums and heard from a total of 27 speakers, who addressed issues related to their experiences as parents or family members, advocates, child care providers from centers, nursery schools,

faith-based programs, Montessori programs, and family child care homes. In addition to oral testimony, the Work Group received written comments from three individuals.

- **Parent Meetings:** Work Group members and staff attended parent meetings in the community sponsored by organizations including Centro Nia, IMPACT Silver Spring, Families Foremost, and Montgomery Child Care Association. Information was also solicited from the Head Start Parent Policy Council. Appendix C includes summaries of these discussions.

- **Parent Survey:** The Work Group solicited a parent survey to seek input from parents on how a universal preschool program should be implemented. The survey was widely disseminated in the community through networks including the Montgomery County Child Care Resource and Referral Center (MCCCR&RC), MCPS Early Childhood Community Partners, and Montgomery County PTAs. Approximately 1,465 parents from diverse backgrounds completed the survey and expressed a wide range of preferences related to the delivery of preschool education services. Appendix D provides a summary of survey responses.

- **Higher Education Need Assessment Survey:** The Work Group, in conjunction with the MCCCR&RC, developed a survey to assess: (1) the educational status of child care teachers; (2) teacher interest in obtaining advanced degrees in early childhood education; and (3) the level of support needed by teachers to complete the higher education requirements of Preschool for All. Appendix E provides a summary of survey responses.

C. ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

Part II – Background: This section provides overview information about the benefits that accrue from early childhood education programs and the work of the Maryland State Task Force on Universal Preschool Education.

Part III – Preschool and Child Care Services in Montgomery County: This section provides demographic and service information on young children in Montgomery County and the programs that currently serve them.

Part IV – Training and Professional Development for Child Care Professionals: This section summarizes information on licensing and credentialing requirements for child care professionals and discusses the educational status of the current workforce. The section also summarizes the education and training needs of child care professionals and the results of a higher education needs assessment for child care teachers.

Part V – Family Needs Assessment: This section summarizes input from parents about their needs and concerns related to implementation of a Preschool for All program.

Part VI – Costs Associated with Delivering Preschool for All in Montgomery County: This section assesses the costs for developing Preschool for All in Montgomery County and describes the assumptions underlying cost projections.

Part VII – Work Group Recommendations: This section details the recommendations of the Work Group for implementing Preschool for All in Montgomery County.

D.   ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Universal Preschool Implementation Work Group received extensive information and assistance from State officials, County Government and MCPS employees, representatives of higher education institutions, child care providers, nonprofits serving children and families, and parents. The Work Group would like to express appreciation to all of the individuals who took their time to speak and write to the Work Group.

II.   BACKGROUND

A.   RESEARCH ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

A substantial body of research has explored the benefits that high quality preschool programs provide for young children. For example, a study conducted by Steve Barnett and Clive Belfield found that the benefits of high quality preschool programs break the link between parental behaviors and child outcomes in areas such as crime, welfare, and teen parenting.[1] According to the study, the most effective early childhood preschool programs were intensive programs with high quality teachers and small class sizes.

Such standards can be found in programs like the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program and the Abecedarian Project which demonstrated lower participation in special education, higher graduation rates, lower involvement in the criminal justice system, higher employment rates and higher median annual earnings than control group members who attended no preschool program. Thus, existing research supports the conclusion that early childhood education programs can produce lasting improvements in the life outcomes of children, especially disadvantaged ones.

These studies have also demonstrated the cost effectiveness of high quality early childhood programs. The public earned back its original investment many times over in savings from lower incarceration rates, lower special education costs, increased taxes from higher earnings, and savings in public assistance costs. A cost-benefit analysis commissioned by the Maryland State Task Force on Universal Preschool Education concluded similarly that the State would realize a substantial return for a voluntary universal preschool program; for every dollar invested in a one-year pre-kindergarten program, the State would receive $4.85 in net benefits.

The conclusions reached by studies examining the benefits of high quality early childhood education programs are consistent with existing State efforts to ensure high standards for early childhood education services; coordinate early learning programs, services, and resources; and focus on school readiness as a strategy to improve student achievement.[2] MSDE has developed and implemented a detailed early childhood educational program to increase the number of children entering kindergarten ready to learn and has centralized all early childhood education programs under one agency.[3] The State is continuing its efforts to expand high quality preschool opportunities through a request for proposal for Preschool for All pilot pre-kindergarten programs released in

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[1] Barnett, Steven.W. and Clive R. Belfield.(2006). Childhood Development and Social Mobility. *The Future of Young Children, Opportunity in America*, vol. 16, number 2, fall 2006, p. 73.

[2] Maryland Educational Initiatives: Early Childhood Education. Maryland State Department of Education. 2007

[3] Id.

February 2009. There will be grants awarded across the entire state, with grant funding ranging from $75,000 to $100,000 for each proposal.

Because of the cost-effectiveness of these high quality early childhood educational programs and the positive outcomes that these programs have for participants and society as a whole, the Work Group believes that investment in high quality early childhood preschool programs is an important strategy to increase life opportunities for all of Montgomery County's preschool children, with the greatest benefits to children highly impacted by poverty, mobility, and limited English proficiency.

B.   MARYLAND TASK FORCE ON UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

In 2006, the Maryland General Assembly established a Task Force on Universal Preschool Education to develop a plan to increase access to high quality early childhood education opportunities. The Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002 mandated local school systems in Maryland to provide pre-kindergarten to all four-year-olds from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (i.e., from families at or below 185% of the federal poverty level) or who are homeless.

The Task Force issued a report "Preschool for All in Maryland" in December 2007 which recommended the creation of a voluntary, free, and high quality pre-kindergarten program available to all four-year-olds regardless of family income. The Preschool for All report recommended adopting the National Institute for Early Education Research's Ten Quality Benchmarks for High Quality Preschool Education as a framework for the Maryland universal preschool program. Programs that adhere to these and state guidelines would be required to:

- Have comprehensive curriculum standards specific to pre-kindergarten and cover the domains of language/literacy, mathematics, science, social/emotional skills, cognitive development, health and physical development, and social studies;
- Have lead teachers with state certification in early childhood education;
- Have assistant teachers with high school diplomas with preference for teachers with the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or equivalent training;
- Require teachers to attend approved professional development annually;
- Limit class size to no more than 20 four-year olds or an average of 20 children consistent with COMAR;
- Require at least one staff member for every 10 children in a classroom;
- Provide support services and vision, hearing, and speech and language screening and referral services;
- Offer at least one full meal per day if services are offered for more than 2.5 hours; and
- Assess program quality and report performance to MSDE.

Although the Preschool for All report recommended development of a program by 2014, State officials have since suggested that completion will be delayed because of the current economic recession.

The Task Force charged MSDE with developing a business plan. MSDE released its Draft Business Plan in October 2008. Some key provisions in the Draft Business Plan include:

- Preschool for All would be a supplement to the existing Bridge to Excellence in Public School Act of 2002 mandate for pre-kindergarten.
- MSDE would have oversight of and be accountable for implementing Preschool for All; responsibilities would include budgeting, grants management, monitoring and accountability.
- Funding for Preschool for All would be shared by state and local governments with 70% of total costs to be borne by the State and 30% by local governments.
- Accredited child care centers, nursery schools, Head Start programs, family child care networks, and local school systems will be eligible to develop proposals to operate pre-kindergarten programs.
- Local jurisdictions will select a local review panel to provide countywide coordination of the program, review and approve grant applications, and potentially serve in an advisory capacity to applicants.

Because the Draft Business Plan has not been finalized, changes to what has been proposed may yet occur and additional direction on specific aspects of the plan, e.g., family child care networks, may evolve.

III. PRESCHOOL AND CHILD CARE SERVICES IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY

A. PUBLICLY FUNDED HEAD START AND PRESCHOOL SERVICES

The County supports a range of early childhood education programs based both in MCPS and in the community. The County has long had two primary programs for early childhood education services: Head Start and pre-kindergarten programs. For the most part, County-funded pre-kindergarten and Head Start programs have been operating at or above capacity during FY09. The MPCS pre-kindergarten program has been operating significantly over capacity during this period because of the Bridge to Excellence requirement that jurisdictions serve all low-income children needing services.

In the past, County-funded programs that have been operating with excess capacity have been targeted for either funding cuts or redistribution. The County has reached the point where the demand for publicly funded preschool education services exceeds the current funded capacity to deliver these services.

MCPS estimates the number of four-year-olds potentially eligible for the Free and Reduced Meals program (FARMS) to be approximately 3,969. During School Year 2008-2009, approximately 2,645 children from income eligible families, of which a small number were three-year-olds, accessed publicly funded preschool education programs. Thus, more than 1,324 four-year-old children eligible to receive publicly funded preschool services did not access them.

- **MCPS Pre-Kindergarten:** MCPS has allocated funds to serve 1,885 children in the MCPS pre-kindergarten program and as of February 2009 is serving 42 additional students for a total of 1,927 students. MCPS is providing services to these additional students to comply with the requirements of the Bridge to Excellence Act of 2002. The program consists of a 2.5 hour educational component and health and social services. The estimated average cost per child is $5,077 for school year services.

- **MCPS Traditional Head Start:** DHHS administers the Head Start program, which is funded primarily with Federal funds and can serve 648 children. MCPS serves 618 of these children in the schools in full and part day programs. The traditional program consists of a 3.25 hour educational component including health and wrap around social services at a level that is mandated by federal Head Start grant regulations. The average cost per child for these MCPS-based services is approximately $7,288 for school year services.

- **MCPS Full Day Head Start:** MCPS is in its second year of offering a full day Head Start model with 13 classes at 10 Title I schools. The schools selected for this program are among the highest in eligibility percentages for Free and Reduced Price Meals

(FARMS) in MCPS. The full day model includes daily whole and small group instruction in literacy and mathematics; music and movement; project work with an emphasis on oral language development; personal-social skills development; and choice centers.

MCPS is using $899,387 in Federal Title I funds to support the full day model, increasing the teacher allocation from 0.6 to full time and the paraeducator allocation from 0.6 to 0.875. The marginal cost per child of the full day model over the regular Head Start rate listed above is approximately $3,270, resulting in a $10,558 total per child cost for the full day model for school year services and a summer program.

The Board of Education has recommended for the FY10 Operating Budget to include a total of $553,466 in additional Title I dollars in anticipation of additional funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to increase full day Head Start from 13 to 21 classes and from 10 to 18 schools.

- **Community-Based Head Start:** DHHS operates two community-based Head Start sites, serving a total of 29 children with a capacity to serve 30 children. The child care provider is responsible for the educational component, and DHHS provides general contract support for costs such as space, staff support, substitutes, and materials. The cost per child of these community-based programs ranges from $9,741 to $15,742 for full year services and includes the costs of wrap-around child care services. Participation in child care subsidy programs is required for wrap-around services.

- **Community-Based Pre-Kindergarten -- Centro Familia:** In FY06, the Council shifted $250,000 and 60 enrollment slots from MCPS to implement a community-based Pre-K program. The program uses a pre-kindergarten aligned curriculum and serves 15 four-year-olds and 15 three-year-olds. The program consists of a three-hour educational program and support services. Wrap-around child care is not provided at the site. The average cost per child of this model is $8,670 for full year services

- **Community-Based Pre-Kindergarten -- Centro Nia:** For FY09, Centro Nia received $424,000 from the County to provide a comprehensive, community-based, full year pre-kindergarten program for up to 11 hours daily for 40 three and four-year-olds. The program uses a pre-kindergarten aligned curriculum. The average cost per child of this model is $8,154[4] for full year services.

MCPS special education services are also publicly funded with services ranging from periodic therapy sessions to full day special education classes. In the beginning of the 2008-2009 School Year, 1,380 children at the pre-kindergarten level received MCPS special education services; some of these children attended another publicly funded pre-kindergarten option as well. 543 of these children participated in daily special education

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[4] This figure does not reflect other public and private funding leveraged by the program

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preschool classes. As special education services are Federally-mandated, the number of children served increases throughout the year.

In addition, 361 non-income eligible, four-year-old children receive a preschool classroom experience through the MCPS High School Early Childhood Development program. This program is designed to expose high school students to career opportunities in early childhood education.

The Work Group notes that the funding formulas for Head Start and pre-kindergarten services do not cover the costs of services being provided to income eligible students that the County is required to serve. MCPS has continued to fill in this funding gap.

B. PRIVATE EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION PROVIDERS

According to the Child Care Demographics 2009 (Appendix F), Montgomery County currently has 1,451 licensed child care programs that have the total capacity to serve 34,501 children between the ages of birth to 12 years old. Of the total number of licensed programs, 1,013 are family child care homes and 438 are center-based programs, which include nursery schools, faith-based programs, and Montessori schools.

Additional data provided by the Montgomery County Child Care Resource and Referral Center in October 2008 (Appendix G) indicate that the overall capacity to serve children two to four years of age in child care programs is 22,440, including 15,559 in center-based programs and 6,881 in family child care programs.

Licensing and Accreditation

All child care programs that provide service at least once a week for any number of hours must be licensed by the state; however, religiously approved programs can receive an exemption from licensing. Family child care providers must have a license if they care for a child more than 20 hours a month on a regular basis in their home.

Child care programs can demonstrate higher quality standards by becoming accredited by an outside accrediting body. MSDE and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accredit child care centers. The National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC) accredits family child care providers. The American Montessori Society or Association Montessori International accredits Montessori programs.

In Montgomery County, 12.8% of center-based programs have received state or national accreditation, and only 1.6% of family child care homes are accredited. The numbers of accredited programs by accrediting body are as follows:

- 16 Family Child Care providers by NAFCC accreditation;

- 8 centers by MSDE accreditation;
- 39 centers by NAEYC accreditation;
- 2 Montessori schools by American Montessori Society; and
- 6 Montessori schools by Association Montessori International.

All accredited family child care providers in Montgomery County received accreditation support services from the MCCCR&RC. The MCCCR&RC's accreditation project was funded by MSDE through a Judith P. Hoyer enhancement grant.

IV. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR CHILD CARE PROFESSIONALS

A. CHILD CARE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

For licensing purposes, child care professionals are required to satisfy pre-service and ongoing training requirements. MSDE has also developed the Maryland Child Care Credential, which is a voluntary career ladder system for child care professionals to receive financial incentives for improving their educational qualifications through training, college credits, and professional activities.

In recent years, MSDE has implemented more rigorous training requirements for State licensing and credentialing in accordance with its Division of Early Childhood Development Strategic Plan. These training requirements for licensing and credentialing are provided at Appendix H.

B. CREDENTIALING AND EDUCATION LEVELS OF CHILD CARE PROFESSIONALS

Child care professionals in Montgomery County have varying levels of education. Of the 331 family child care providers who provided information on their education levels for the LOCATE: Child Care database, 56% have a degree, and 12% of County family child care providers have a college degree (associates, bachelors, or higher) in early childhood education. Of the 1,309 center-based staff who provided information on their education levels for the LOCATE: Child Care database, 75% have a degree, and 36% have degrees in early childhood education.

Montgomery County reports that 466 individuals (12% of the child care work force) currently participate in the Maryland Child Care Credential program. Of the 3,005 participants in Child Care Resource Center training, 88% earned "Core of Knowledge" credit towards the Maryland Child Care Credential. In Montgomery County, 19% of center-based staff have Maryland Child Care Credentials and 11% of family child care providers have credentials.

The chart below shows the number of child care professionals in either a family child care setting or a center-based setting and what level credential they have obtained.

Credential Level	Family	Center	Total
1	31	105	136
2	17	41	58
3	30	118	148
4	16	19	35
4+	8	4	12
5	4	18	22
6	2	53	55

Currently, there are a total of 124 individuals credentialed at level 4 or above. Approximately 11% of the workforce is credentialed, assuming a workforce of 4,000 employees in licensed or registered child care programs.

C. TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT SERVICES IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Montgomery County supports and encourages higher education courses leading towards a Child Development Associates credential, Associates degree, or a Bachelors degree, which are indicators of qualified staff. The MCCCR&RC provides a variety of services that support the ability of child care providers to deliver quality services including child care training, technical assistance related to licensing and accreditation requirements, scholarships for higher education courses, English language development programs, and curriculum training in conjunction with MCPS.

Private organizations in the County also educate providers and offer courses to help providers obtain the necessary course work to achieve credentials. There are over 80 MSDE-approved agencies and individuals that provide training to the child care community.

Two examples of organizations who presented to the Work Group are:

- Montgomery Child Care Association Training Institute: The services offered by the organization range from pre-service courses required for licensing to a Child Development Associate preparation course to a 45-hour child care director course. The organization trains on an annual basis approximately 2,000 child care professionals including aides, teachers, directors, and family child care providers.

- Centro Familia: The organization provides assistance to family child care providers in the Latino community. The organization has developed an Early Child Care and Education Career Ladder for Latino limited English proficient family child care providers to assist them in moving through the MSDE credential ladder and achieving accreditation from the NAFCC. The organization is in direct contact with 67 family child care providers that are able to serve 187 children between the ages of three to five years.

D. HIGHER EDUCATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In March 2009 the Montgomery County Child Care Resource and Referral Center surveyed 229 child care providers interested in pursuing higher education opportunities. Participants included staff from both center-based and home-based settings. The vast majority (93%) is experienced in working with preschool age children and most (75%) have also worked with infants and toddlers and/or school age children. Participants'

commitment to continue working in the field is extremely high with 50% planning to stay in the field for 10 years or more and 29% planning to stay 5-10 years.

Of respondents who work directly with children, 49% currently have a degree from an institution of higher education including 7% with a Masters degree, 27% with a Bachelor's degree in a field other than early childhood, 9% with a Bachelors degree in Early Childhood, and 6% with an Associates degree. Approximately 1 in 4 individuals with a degree reported having earned the credential outside of the country. Most of the remaining staff indicated they have completed some college coursework (17%), the Child Care Development Associates (CDA) Credential (18%) or a high school diploma (10%).

While the vast majority of current scholarship recipients in the County are pursuing an Associates degree or CDA Credential, those surveyed had a wide range of educational goals. Those with teaching responsibilities were highly interested in the following credentials (listed in order of preference): Early Childhood Education 1 year Certificate (22%), Early Childhood Teacher Certification (21%), CDA Credential (18%), Masters Degree (16%), and Associates of Arts Degree (16%).

Overall, 96% of participants stated if a degree program were available that met their interests and needs they would be interested in pursing a higher education degree. If a higher education program were offered, respondents said it would be very important to them that the type of program offered was aligned with their goals. In addition, other factors they considered important include: schedule/time of classes, cost/financial assistance, and location of the program. The vast majority need financial assistance with 58% requiring full assistance and 28% partial financial assistance. They also want classes to be scheduled on weekday evenings and/or weekend mornings. The most popular locations include Rockville, Gaithersburg, and a Virtual Campus (online courses).

V.   FAMILY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Montgomery County is one of the most populous and diverse counties in the state of Maryland. For the 2008-2009 School Year, MCPS projects that 13,500 four-year-olds reside in the County, and that out of this total approximately 3,969 are eligible to participate in the Free and Reduced Meals Program based on family income. Currently, public preschool services are only reaching about 2,645 income eligible students, a small number of whom are three-year-olds. An additional 543 children attend daily special education preschool classes. According to the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, minorities account for a higher share of youths than adults living in Montgomery County; 51% of children are minorities compared to 43% of adults.

To understand the importance of a preschool education, and the factors that contribute to the selection of preschool programs by parents, the Work Group solicited parent input by hosting two Public Forums, attending various parent group meetings, and conducting an online survey. Through these different outreach mechanisms, the Work Group was able to hear from parents from all parts of the County, across a broad range of socioeconomic categories, and representing many different ethnic and cultural groups.

The responses of parents span the spectrum of potential responses. However, some general conclusions can be drawn from the input including the following:

High Quality Programs

- Parents value high quality child care for their four-year-old children.

- The definition of high quality is viewed differently among individual parents.

- In defining highly qualified teachers, parents place great weight on experience in working with young children and personal attributes of teachers. They also associate college degrees in early childhood education and certification with highly qualified teachers.

Program Choices

- Parents appreciate different options for preschool education that meet their individual family needs, culture, and values. Parent responses included a wide range of preferences including culturally competent, bilingual, religious, play-based, and cooperative programs.

- Key factors that contribute to a parent's selection of preschool options include: highly qualified staff, educational curriculum, a location close to work or home, program accreditation, affordability, and hours of operation.

- Low-income parents need accessible high quality programs. Factors that contribute to accessibility for low-income families include hours of operation and access to wrap around child care, affordable programs that limit the parent contribution for wrap around care, and transportation access and location of services in the community or near work.

- Important services identified by parents that should be part of a universal preschool program include: developmental screening services, parent involvement opportunities, and health, mental health, and nutrition services.

Outreach to Families

- Parents use a variety of methods to find out about preschool or child care opportunities for their young children including child care locator services, places of worship, advertisements, and internet research. By an overwhelming amount, parents rely on word of mouth information from friends, family and neighbors to find out about these opportunities.

VI. COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH DELIVERING PRESCHOOL FOR ALL IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Significant resources will be needed at the state and local levels to realize the vision of universal preschool. The State's Preschool for All Draft Business Plan includes cost estimates for expanding the program. The State estimated that expansion of Preschool for All to households with incomes at or below 300% of the Federal poverty level could cost $20 million[5], and expansion to all four-year-olds expected to matriculate to public kindergarten could cost $120 million statewide.

In developing the total cost projection, the State developed a cost per student calculation that combines the base costs for operating pre-kindergarten classrooms and enhancement costs to meet the improved quality standards under Preschool for All, including parity in compensation for state certified teachers. Using a representative sample, the State estimated that the cost per student at nonpublic facilities is $2,700 for a half day program and $5,300 for a full day program.

Using the State's methodology of calculating per student costs for Preschool for All, Tables 1-3 below show the derivation of costs for a full-day (6.5 hour) Preschool for All program in Montgomery County. Tables 4-6 show the derivation of costs for a half-day (2.5 hour) program.

Table 1: Calculation of Full Day Preschool Tuition Costs in Montgomery County

Average Annual Preschool Tuition in nonpublic facility	$11,368[6]
Public funding (State and local) for 6.5 hour program	$6,480[7] per child

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[5] The State currently requires under the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002 that Montgomery County provide pre-kindergarten services to all four-year-olds from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (i.e., from families at or below 185% of the federal poverty level) or who are homeless.

[6] Montgomery County Child Care Demographics, Maryland Committee for Children, 2009

[7] The total cost per child was derived by taking 57% of the average annual preschool tuition. 57% is percentage used in the State's Draft Business Plan to reflect the portion of the child care day that would be used for a Preschool for All Full-Day Program.

Table 2: Enhancement Costs Calculation for Full Day Program in Montgomery County
(The Costs of Meeting Improved Quality Standards under Preschool for All)

Required Quality Standard	Accredited Child Care	Preschool for All	Difference
Curriculum Standard	$0	$1,500	$1,500
Teacher Standard	$24,110	$46,410	$22,300
Fringe & Benefits 35%	$8439	$16,244	$7805
Assistant Teacher Standard	$18,000	$18,000	$0
Teacher Recertification	$600	$0	($600)
Screening/referral	$0	$1,000	$1,000
Monitoring	$0	$600	$600
Total per Classroom	$51,149	$83,754	$32,605
Total per Child (20 per Classroom)	$2,557	$4,188	**$1,631**

Table 3: Total Per Child Costs for Full-Day Program with Enhanced Services

Per Child Tuition Costs for 6.5 hour Program	$6,480
Per Child Enhancement Costs	$1,630
Total Per Child Costs for Tuition and Enhanced Services required by Preschool for All	**$8,110**

Table 4: Calculation of Half Day Preschool Tuition Costs in Montgomery County

Average Annual Preschool Tuition in non-public facility	$11,368
Public funding (State and local) for 2.5 hour program	**$2,501 per child[8]**

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[8] The total cost per child was derived by taking 22% of the average annual preschool tuition. 22% is percentage used in the State's Draft Business Plan to reflect the portion of the child care day that would be used for a Preschool for All Half-Day Program.

Table 5: Enhancement Costs Calculation for Half Day Program in Montgomery County
(The Costs of Meeting Improved Quality Standards under Preschool for All)

Required Quality Standard	Accredited Child Care	Preschool for All	Difference
Curriculum Standard	$0	$1,500	$1,500
Teacher Standard	$12,055	$23,205	$11,150
Fringe & Benefits 25%	$3,014	$5,801	$2787
Assistant Teacher Standard	$9,000	$9,000	$0
Teacher Recertification	$600	$0	($600)
Screening/referral	$0	$1,000	$1,000
Monitoring	$0	$600	$600
Total per Classroom	$24,669	$41,106	$16,437
Total per Child (20 per Classroom)	$1,233	$2,055	**$822**

Table 6: Total Per Child Costs for Half Day Program with Enhanced Services

Per Child Tuition Costs for 2.5 hour Program	$2,501
Per Child Enhancement Costs	$822
Total Per Child Costs for Tuition and Enhanced Services required by Preschool for All	**$3,323**

The estimated per child costs reflected in the calculations above for Preschool for All Services in Montgomery County are $8,110 for a 6.5 hour program and $3,323 for a 2.5 hour program. The County's share (30%) of the 6.5 and 2.5 hour programs would be $2,433 and $997, respectively, and the State's share (70%) would be $5,677 and $2,326. See Table 7.

Table 7: Total Per Child Costs By Funding Source (State and County)

	Full Day	Half Day
State – 70%	$5,677	$2,326
County – 30%	$2,433	$997
Total	**$8,110**	**$3,323**

In developing this calculation, the Work Group used the following assumptions: (1) the average cost of care is based on child care center programs; (2) the average cost of

care is not restricted to accredited programs; (3) fringe and benefits are calculated at the same rate for both the child care center and the Preschool for All program; and (4) the amounts for teacher recertification, screening/referral, monitoring, and curriculum standard are taken from State calculations.

Assuming that Preschool for All will serve the remaining number of four-year-olds (10,312[9]) who are not being served by publicly funded preschool programs in full and half time programs of equal proportion, the County can anticipate spending $17.7 million in tuition and enhancement costs to roll out Preschool for All.[10]

It is important to note that the $17.7 million figure does not take into account other costs associated with expanding preschool programming in the County and ensuring the quality and accessibility of high quality programming including:

- Costs for transporting children to and from programs;
- Costs to provide wrap around child care for families that cannot afford quality care but do not qualify for child care subsidies;
- Costs to reduce co-payments from parents participating in child care subsidy programs to no more than 10% of a family's income;
- Costs to increase professional development opportunities to the whole community of child care providers of children birth through age five, including scholarships, accreditation, licensing, and credentialing support;
- Costs for implementing an outcome and assessment system and training providers in the use of that system; and
- Costs to increase infrastructure to support implementation.

Although increased costs for screening and referral services are factored into the total cost figure, the Work Group notes that there may be additional costs associated with other auxiliary services recommended by the Work Group.

The cost estimates represent a preliminary effort to quantify the scope of the Preschool for All initiative.[11] There are a number of factors driving program costs and the County's contribution that have not yet been finalized by the State. A more developed understanding of the total local funding required to support this program will require additional information about a number of outstanding issues, including the specific requirements of the State program and the demand for higher education opportunities of early childhood education and care providers.

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[9] The remaining number of four-year-olds (10,312) is derived by taking the sum of income eligible children receiving preschool services (2645) and children receiving daily special education preschool services (543) and subtracting the resulting number from the total number of four-year-olds in the County (13,500).

[10] The total effort is based on current dollars and does not take into account the increase in program costs and the time value of money when the program is fully implemented.

[11] This cost estimate is based on all four-year-old children in the County. The Work Group has not estimated a cost specific to children whose family incomes are under 300% of the federal poverty level in this report because it did not have access to a reliable estimate of County four-year-old children in this demographic group.

The Work Group received information about public and private resources that may be available to support the effort of expanding Preschool for All services in Montgomery County. Appendix I provides a list of resources that have been used to support early childhood services; however, it is unclear to what extent these resources will be available to support efforts to expand preschool services given the current economic recession and budget deficits at State and local levels.

VII. WORK GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

A. LOCAL REVIEW PANEL

MSDE's Draft Business Plan provides for each local jurisdiction to designate a Local Review Panel (LRP) to provide countywide coordination. The LRP will review and approve all applications made by providers interested in delivering Preschool for All services and forward its recommendations to the MSDE.

The Work Group recommends that the LRP:

- Include representatives of the organizations included in this Work Group.

- Include at least two parent representatives.

- Include representatives of umbrella organizations appropriately representing the faith-based community, nursery schools, and private child care providers including Montessori programs.

- Include technical experts who have in-depth knowledge of quality early childhood education and care programs.

- Publish findings from each community needs assessment as a part of the Request for Proposal process. (See the discussion of community needs assessment in the following section on Program Expansion.)

- Hold technical assistance meetings for potential Preschool for All applicants to clarify application processes, local requirements, and considerations for priority funding.

B. PROGRAM EXPANSION

The long term vision of the Work Group is to provide access to voluntary, quality preschool services in a variety of settings that meet the diverse needs of all four-year-old children and their families. The Work Group believes strongly that expanding preschool education options should be one component of how the County strengthens early childhood services to improve the school readiness of very young children from birth to age five across all developmental domains, e.g., language, literacy, physical, social, emotional and cognitive. **Existing services for the youngest children birth through age three should not be adversely affected (e.g., reduced funding or scope of services) for the sake of providing expanded Preschool for All services for older children.**

Although the expansion of Preschool for All services in Montgomery County will be heavily influenced by the roll out of the program at the State level, the Work Group makes the following recommendations related to expanding publicly funded preschool services in Montgomery County:

- **Target initial expansion in areas of greatest need:** Because the scope of implementing Preschool for All in Montgomery County and the State will require enormous costs and multiyear logistical challenges, the Work Group has developed recommendations for initially expanding Preschool for All services, understanding that the goal of the program is to eventually reach all four-year-olds whose parents want services. **The Work Group recommends first focusing on areas with the greatest concentration of poverty rates as indicated by school FARMS rates.** Using this single criterion simplifies the process of targeting expansion areas and is highly correlated to other risk factors including limited English proficiency and mobility.

- **Public funding to support children at or below 300% of the federal poverty level:** The Work Group recommends that public funds will initially support students whose family income is at or below 300% of the federal poverty level. This is consistent with the State's Draft Business Plan proposal. Currently, jurisdictions are mandated under the Bridge to Excellence Act to provide preschool services to all children whose family incomes are at or below 185% of the federal poverty level.

- **Preference to children in targeted school attendance/cluster areas:** The Work Group recommends that preference for services at community-based expansion sites should go to children who live in the designated school attendance/cluster areas. Each expansion site must maintain the minimum number of income-eligible children as required by the State, and only income-eligible children will be supported with public funding.

  The Work Group felt it important to: (1) treat community members consistently in targeted communities, (2) allow child care providers to integrate the Preschool for All framework into existing child care programs which include private pay slots, and (3) reduce attempts to bypass the order of expansion by families who live in other neighborhoods not yet targeted for Preschool for All services. Acknowledging that it is in the interests of the program to fill all slots and that needy children live in areas all over the County beyond the areas initially targeted for expansion, **the Work Group recommends that providers may move beyond the specified community for income eligible applicants after first reasonably exhausting efforts to serve children in the school attendance/cluster area.**

- **A measured approach to expansion in targeted areas:** The Work Group recommends growing capacity in individual communities at a gradual pace. This approach is recommended to avoid having unused capacity in Preschool for All programs. The Work Group believes that a paced approach maximizes the ability to fill publicly funded preschool slots. It also allows child care providers to adapt to the changing needs of the population and thus avoids sudden negative and unforeseen consequences to both providers and families.

- **Perform a community needs assessment in each area of expansion:** Prior to soliciting applications for delivering Preschool for All services, the Work Group recommends that the LRP conduct a needs assessment that assesses for the community (1) the existing capacity of accredited providers and the local school system, (2) the capacity of accredited providers and the local school system to expand services in the targeted area, (3) the quality of existing child care programs, (4) the available inventory of public and private space for delivering programming, (5) feedback from parents, and (6) cost

considerations for parents related to different program options. The information collected by the LRP will ultimately inform the selection of qualified Preschool for All providers and ensure that programs meet the needs of parents and the community.

The community needs assessment will lead to the development of a menu of services to be targeted for expansion and a strategy for growing the capacity of quality preschool services for each community. The menu may include options for full day or part day programs, wrap around child care services, faith based programs, and center-based, school-based, or family child care programs. The Work Group has reviewed research that shows benefits from both full and half day programs and has heard from parents about their interest in having a full range of programmatic options. The Work Group recognizes the need to have full day programs with wrap around child care to allow children whose parents work full time to access Preschool for All services.

The community needs assessment will also be used to determine where additional services are needed. For example, the Preschool for All program structure proposed by the State is consistent with the school year program of 180 days. For summer months, families will be linked to existing programs with their current preschool providers or with other service providers in the community. However, if extraordinary circumstances require, the LRP could identify the need for a longer program.

- **Work with the whole community of qualified providers:** The Work Group recommends that the LRP work with the whole community of qualified preschool providers to meet the demand for high quality services. Expanding services to all four-year-olds whose families request them will require working with qualified providers in diverse settings. The effort may require innovative programming and collaborative partnerships among different organizations. The LRP should explore and encourage all options, including partnerships that will contribute to providing quality services to preschool children.

C. AUXILIARY SERVICES

The State requires screening and referral services covering vision, hearing, speech and language, health and physical development. Other auxiliary services must be offered, but the State leaves the determination of specific services to local jurisdictions. Work Group members have noted that the requirements related to support services and their funding continue to be developed at the Federal and State levels.

In identifying auxiliary services that should be made available to families, the Work Group makes the following recommendations:

- **Offering parent involvement opportunities should be a requirement of each Preschool for All program.** As a part of the application process, programs should demonstrate how they will keep parents engaged and involved. Parent involvement has been shown in research to contribute to student success in the early grades.

- **Preschool programs should be required to provide or arrange for general screenings to all four-year-olds, consistent with State Preschool for All requirements, sufficient to identify children who need additional services and to refer them to appropriate service providers.**

- **Preschool programs must demonstrate how they would deliver or link children and families with auxiliary services.** Services are not required to be provided on site, but programs should be required to refer families to appropriate services. The provider may demonstrate an established relationship or affiliation with an auxiliary services provider or a means of accessing services.

- **Training resources are needed to help preschool providers link families to appropriate services.** Providers will need (1) to understand how to conduct or arrange for developmental screenings; (2) to navigate social service systems and understand what services are available for families in the community and how to make referrals for services; (3) to use existing services/resources like InfoMontgomery and ChildLink; and (4) to be able to identify families who need support services. Although there is training available to providers to conduct developmental screenings, additional funding may be required and could be provided through enhancements grants under Preschool for All.

- **There is a need for increased funding to keep up with the demand for auxiliary services generated by Preschool for All programs.** The Work Group anticipates that funded services such as developmental screening and other program supports will be in greater demand as program providers are encouraged and trained to refer families for services. **The Work Group recommends that an assessment be completed to determine what level of additional funding will be needed.**

- **Service providers that have the capacity to provide or connect a broad range of students (e.g., special needs, bilingual, etc.) with services should be given some preference in the application and selection process.**

D.   TRANSPORTATION

Although the State does not require transportation for preschool services under COMAR, the Work Group recommends that the County develop a transportation plan for Preschool for All Services as a long-term goal. **As a matter of policy, the Work Group believes that access to transportation should be a component of quality programs and recognizes that many families would not access preschool services without transportation.**

Recommendations related to a transportation system are as follows:

- **Transportation service should follow the same priority rollout as the Preschool for All program. Children whose family income falls below 300% of the federal poverty level should not be required to pay for transportation service.**

- The system could include fee collection from participants whose household income exceeds 300% of the federal poverty level.

- In designing a transportation system, the Council and the Executive Branch may want to explore the costs of and different options for providing transportation services, assess the local transportation infrastructure, and examine how transportation is provided in other jurisdictions to deliver universal preschool services.

E. PROGRAM MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The State will have the primary responsibility to monitor and collect evaluation information from programs that participate in Preschool for All. Nevertheless, the Work Group recommends that as a policy, **the County monitor the progress and success of program participants using a student assessment tool and assess other programmatic aspects that reflect on high quality care and education. Additional support will be needed for training and implementation.**

F. TEACHER COMPENSATION

The State Draft Business Plan proposes a salary schedule for teachers participating in Preschool for All which is based on an average of the first five years of a public school teacher's salary across all jurisdictions in Maryland. The State has suggested that programs will be required to pay their teachers this base salary or higher based on experience and education. The State has said that local jurisdictions may add additional funding to raise teacher compensation to be consistent with local public school salaries and benefits if the local average is higher than the average across all Maryland jurisdictions.

The Work Group makes the following recommendation regarding teacher compensation[1]:

- **Work with MSDE to advocate for the adoption of a regional system of market-based pay and benefits, as the agency has for child care subsidies.** For Montgomery County, a regional system is preferable to a statewide average, which would not recognize the added costs of living and teaching in our area.

- **If the State is unable to adopt regional pay formulas, the County Government should consider supplementing State-provided enhancements for qualified Preschool for All teachers to bring compensation up to the average compensation of MCPS teachers in their first five years.** The Work Group recommends the increase in order to retain Preschool for All teachers in their positions and programs and allow teachers to reside in Montgomery County.

- **Any system of pay and benefits should be based on equal pay for comparable education and professional certification levels.** Considerations of equity suggest the need to pay teachers on a scale comparable to that of public school teachers. Paying

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[1] Any implementation program would honor and comply with current collective bargaining agreements, as applicable.

preschool teachers less than public school teachers will affect the program's ability to recruit and retain high quality teachers. The State's Draft Business Plan suggests that there will be a phase-in period during which certification requirements may be waived for teachers delivering Preschool for All services. In this case, the Work Group believes that compensation should be tiered based on actual education and certification levels achieved.

G.   BUILDING A PRESCHOOL FOR ALL TEACHER WORKFORCE

In order to achieve the vision of Preschool for All and an integrated network of services for all young children, the Work Group emphasizes the need to build on the existing professional development system for early childhood professionals. The Work Group advocates for a holistic approach to increasing the ability of providers across all levels to deliver quality preschool services. In addition to increasing accessible and affordable training opportunities, the system should provide supports that allow professionals to access training opportunities, ensure sufficient outreach to make opportunities known to the provider community, and accommodate the cultural and linguistic diversity of professionals. Training and professional development opportunities should be available to move professionals up the ladder beginning at the lowest level, to the educator beginning a four-year degree, up to and including certified teachers.

- **Grow the pool of high quality preschool teachers by increasing funding to programs that support professional development, credentialing, certification, and accreditation.** Additional funding is needed for scholarships, technical assistance, child care substitutes, and program enhancements including equipment and supplies. **Existing professional development and scholarship funds for individuals serving all age groups should be maintained and not be supplanted in favor of supporting those who serve primarily four-year-olds.**

- **Give preference for the use of expanded professional development funding to child care teachers serving in high needs areas, with priority for child care teachers closest to certification for center-based programs and family child care providers closest to national accreditation.**

- **Explore the use of incentives to attract and retain qualified Preschool for All teachers serving high needs areas.**

- **Advocate for increased State funding to support provider training and professional development:**
  - Set aside a portion of Hoyer professional development grants to support regional trainings on curriculum use and Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR).
  - Support for an early education cohort through higher education providers in Montgomery County.
  - Increase state resources to allow expedient accreditation, credentialing, and training.

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H.   CERTIFICATION WAIVER AND HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Higher education teacher training programs in Montgomery County that satisfy the requirements of Preschool for All do not address the full developmental range required for teachers working in child care classrooms. Teacher education programs that cover pre-kindergarten through 3rd grade do not address center-based child care or Early Head Start providers' work with children from birth through age three. The County also lacks availability of flexibly-scheduled or on-line early childhood courses and student teaching opportunities with children under age 5.

During the course of Work Group discussions, significant issues arose regarding the ability to address the higher education needs of the local child care workforce. The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), an organization key to moving forward the recommendations of the Work Group, was not a participant in these discussions. Consequently, the Work Group recommends that the Council establish communication with MHEC regarding the concerns raised by the Work Group.

- **Encourage MHEC, MSDE, and higher education teacher training institutions to develop a higher education system that meets the needs of the County's early childhood workforce**, including college coursework that is flexibly scheduled (e.g., weekend or evening coursework, on-line opportunities, accelerated formats, etc.) and provides opportunities for teachers to pursue four-year degrees related to early childhood education and development. The system should also address barriers related to articulation for existing course work and associate degrees and options for student teaching practica in viable settings (e.g., child care centers). **Local funding may be required to support the development of and accessibility to programs that help motivated, under-qualified teachers achieve qualified status.**

- **Encourage higher education institutions to work with MSDE to collaboratively develop a certification for teachers working with children from birth through age five and clarify the practicum and professional development school expectations for teachers working with this age group.**

- **Encourage the higher education system to explore the possibility of awarding alternative credits that can be counted toward higher education degrees or certification.** It may be that experienced providers can receive credits for demonstrated competence in delivering quality early childhood education over a defined period of time or receive credit retroactively for early childhood coursework that was previously designated non-credit.

- **Allow a time-limited waiver of certification requirements with clear deadlines to teachers delivering Preschool for All services consistent with State requirements.** Certification should ultimately be required for teachers delivering Preschool for All services to ensure the quality of services to children. The length of the waiver period should be based on an analysis of responses to the Higher Education Needs Assessment Survey that would consider (1) the number of certified providers able to deliver Preschool for All Services, (2) the demand of children who need Preschool for All

services, (3) the demand for higher education services, (4) the feasibility of providing higher education programs that are tailored to the needs of the workforce, and (5) the accessibility of programs for teachers.

- **Designate a group to follow up on issues related certification waivers and developing higher education opportunities.** The group should include representatives from the Universities at Shady Grove, Montgomery College, Columbia Union College, MCCCR&RC, MHEC, MCPS, and MSDE. The group would be responsible for analyzing data generated by the Higher Education Needs Assessment, exploring the development of programming that meets the needs of existing providers, and evaluating the costs of programming. The group should solicit input on their planning efforts from existing providers.

I.   CRITERIA FOR SELECTING PROVIDERS

The Work Group recommends the following criteria for selecting providers of Preschool for All services:

- **Requirement for meeting national or state accreditation standards;**

- **Demonstrated ability to meet MSDE requirements identified in the Preschool for All Report that are aligned with COMAR 13A.06.02;**

- **Quality of proposed services and their responsiveness to the needs of the community as identified in the Request for Proposal;**

- **Capacity of the program to deliver services; and**

- **Cost effectiveness of services proposed.**

The Work Group also recommends that some preference in the selection process be given to providers who demonstrate the ability to work with diverse populations, e.g., English Language Learners and children with special needs.

J.   FAITH-BASED PROGRAMS

The Work Group recognizes that the faith community represents an important segment of the preschool provider community. **The Work Group recommends making explicit the eligibility of faith-based programs to participate in Preschool for All and requiring that faith-based programs comply with all Preschool for All requirements.**

K.   FAMILY CHILD CARE NETWORKS

The State Task Force included networks of family child care providers in its proposed system of delivering Preschool for All services. The Work Group supports the development of

family child care networks or other models that ensure the delivery of quality programming by family child care providers.

The concept of family child care networks is in the development stage at the State, and additional guidance from MSDE on the following topics is appropriate: What are the minimum requirements for family child care providers to deliver universal preschool services? How must family child care networks be structured, and what functions must they perform?

In the absence of specific mandates related to family child care networks, the Work Group makes the following recommendations:

- **The County should develop a pilot model for delivering Preschool for All services through family child care providers that aligns with State requirements.** Opportunities to provide instruction in the home environment and to have mentors support providers with technical assistance should be incorporated into the pilot. Additional research into the delivery of preschool services through family child care networks in other jurisdictions may be useful in developing a local pilot program.

- **Family child care providers delivering Preschool for All services must be nationally accredited through the National Association of Family Child Care.**

L.   COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH PLAN

The Work Group emphasizes the need for the Council to develop a rigorous communication and outreach plan, which will educate: (1) the community about the importance and effectiveness of preschool programs; (2) child care providers about the opportunities and requirement for delivering Preschool for All services; (3) parents about opportunities and eligibility for services; and (4) businesses about the impact of child care opportunities on their workforce and the opportunities to participate in and support this initiative.

The following points summarize the group's recommendations related to a Communication and Outreach Plan:

- Designate the Early Childhood Congress (ECC) to help deliver the message regarding Preschool for All.

- Use existing outlets and technology (e.g., websites, youtube, podcasts, cable TV, radio, ethnic radio, press, etc.) to disseminate information and target particular audiences.

- Perform outreach to the business community including the County Chambers of Commerce including local and ethnic affiliations and the Montgomery County Business Roundtable for Education.

- Engage the business community in a variety of ways matched to its interests (e.g., training, space, funding scholarships or children, etc.).

- Perform outreach to the faith community and religious institutions including Interfaith Works, Action in Montgomery, and County Executive Office of Community Partnerships.

- Make presentations to and solicit the support and feedback of other community groups, such as the Committee for Montgomery, NAACP, civic associations, MCCPTA, and Upcounty Latino Network.

- Perform outreach to and educate parents through the MCCCR&RC, schools, and family support programs.

- Offer technical assistance to help preschool providers understand the opportunities to deliver Preschool for All services and the support that is available for credentialing, certification, and accreditation.

- Develop a communication plan among all Preschool for All providers to facilitate collaboration and foster a unified delivery system of Preschool for All services.

M.   BUDGET AND FUNDING

Even during times of fiscal constraint, the Work Group recommends that the County maintain funding for early childhood services from birth through age five. Full funding must be in place for programs like the Montgomery County Child Care Resource and Referral Center that provide critical infrastructure services to preschool programs to support child care provider training, licensing, accreditation, English language development, and working with children with special needs.

For the future roll out of the Preschool for All initiative, the Work Group recommends that the County:

- **Keep pace with the State expansion of Preschool for All.** Ensure that the County is fully utilizing funding made available by the State, which may require the County to make local resources available in order access State funding.

- **Assess current early childhood infrastructure in Montgomery County to identify funding needed to address increased requirements generated by Preschool for All** that include community assessment; quality and outcomes monitoring; professional development; higher education program development; family child care network development; increased demands for auxiliary services; and technical assistance for RFP development. Phase-in infrastructure enhancements in conjunction with Preschool for All implementation.

- **Expand local funding for Preschool for All services beyond State formulas to the extent necessary to implement the Work Group's recommendations.** Areas in need of enhancement may include teacher compensation, years of service incentives, transportation, and other service enhancements for at-risk children and their families.

- **Maximize available funding for programs by seeking public and private resources** including federal, state, and local funding streams, contributions from the business community, and foundation support.

- **Conduct a study of the Working Parents Assistance program (WPA) to explore the extent to which required family contributions affect participation in the program, how eligible families can pay a lower percentage of their income on child care, and what impact the lowering of family contributions would have on overall participation given existing funding levels. If changes to WPA are ultimately recommended, the Work Group recommends that the Council advocate for similar changes to the State Purchase of Care child care subsidy program, if applicable.** The Work Group discussed the importance of child care subsidies in making preschool services accessible to working, low-income parents. Because preschool programs under the State's Preschool for All model are likely to be 3 to 6 hours in length, some parents will need additional wrap around child care support to accommodate their work hours. Child care subsidies allow families to access licensed care at a higher cost than informal care; however, the family contribution required by the State Purchase of Care and the County Working Parent Assistance programs can be onerous, as much as 36% of a low income family's household income.

- **Advocate with policy makers at all levels to increase visibility and investment in early childhood education programs that support the development of young children and prepare them for school.**

VIII. GLOSSARY

Child Care Center: A facility, usually non-residential, that for part or all of the day provides care to children in the absence of the parent. Centers are licensed by the Maryland State Department of Education/Office Child Care.

Child Care Substitutes: A qualified child care provider who takes the place of the regular child care provider (in her/his absence) caring for the children.

Community Pre-Kindergarten: An approved educational program for four-year-olds provided by a private entity.

DHHS: Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

Family Child Care: Regulated care given to a child younger than 13 years old, in place of parental care for less than 24 hours a day; in residences other than the child's residence; and for which the provider is paid. Regulated by the Maryland State Department of Education/Office Child Care.

Full Day: Providing a preschool education program for a specific length of time, usually a minimum of 6.5 hours.

Full Year: A program that is offered for 12 months or approximately 260 days.

Half Day: Providing a preschool education program for 2.5 to 3.5 hours per day.

Qualified Child Care Teacher: A person who meets the requirements of MSDE to be a credentialed child care teacher (90 clock hours and high school diploma).

MCPS: Montgomery County Public Schools

MCPS Pre-Kindergarten: A preschool educational program offered by Montgomery County Public Schools, including income eligible students who are four-years of age lasting at least 2.5 hours per day.

MCPS Head Start: A preschool educational program offered by Montgomery County Public School, including income eligible children who are four-years of age lasting 3.25 hours for half-day programs and approximately 6 hours for full-day programs.

MSDE: Maryland State Department of Education

Part Day: A program with an educational focus for children before entering Kindergarten. These programs are usually 2 -3 hours per day, nine months a year.

Public Pre-Kindergarten: Publicly funded programs for eligible 4-year-old children administered by local boards of education or qualified vendors.

School Year: 180 days

Preschool for All Teacher: An educator with Bachelor's Degree who is State certified or approved in early childhood education.

Technical Assistance: Providing advice, assistance or training.

Wrap Around Care: Child care that is provided before and/or after a school day and may include school vacation and holiday care.