

Accountability and Implementation Board
Blueprint for Maryland's Future



2023 Joint Chairmen's Report
Alternative Quality Requirements and Structural Elements for Private Prekindergarten Providers to
Participate in Publicly Funded Prekindergarten Programs, p. 190

December 1, 2023

Accountability and Implementation Board

Isiah Leggett, Chair

William Kirwan, Vice Chair

Mara Doss

Jennifer Lynch

Joseph Manko

Justin Robinson

Laura Stapleton

Rachel Hise, Executive Director

Vision of the Accountability and Implementation Board

The Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) will guide, support, and monitor successful implementation of the Blueprint to achieve the goals of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

Non-Discrimination Statement

The Accountability and Implementation Board does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, marital status, national origin, race, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability in employment or access to its programs, services, or activities.

Acknowledgements

The development of this report was a collaborative effort. We would like to recognize and thank our partners who are supporting this work and collaborated to develop the report:

Maryland State Department of Education

Dr. Deann Collins

Dr. Shayna Cook

Maryland Family Network

Laura Weeldreyer

Clinton Macsherry

Beth Morrow

Danielle Ewen, Consultant

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....2

Report Request..... 4

Process for Gathering Input and Developing Recommendations..... 4

Background..... 5

Current Structural Elements to Support Early Childhood Educators with Attaining the Alternative Certification Requirements..... 8

Future Alternative Certification Pathways..... 11

Recommendations..... 12

 1. Explore continuing structural strategies currently initiated..... 12

 2. Maximize available resources..... 12

 3. Create, strengthen, and disseminate information on early childhood employee pathways..... 13

 4. Alleviate Barriers to Higher Education..... 14

 5. Explore Additional Pathways to Certification..... 14

 6. Increase Guidance and Support..... 15

Next steps..... 15

Appendix A Annotated Agenda for the October 18, 2023 Convening for Early Childhood..... 18

Appendix B List of Participants - AIB/MSDE Early Childhood Convening 10/2023..... 19

Report Request

The Maryland General Assembly restricted \$250,000 of the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) fiscal 2024 contractual services budget contingent on submission of a report to the budget committees with recommendations for alternative quality requirements and structural elements for a private prekindergarten provider to participate in publicly funded prekindergarten programs. The report shall be submitted by December 1, 2023, and the budget committees shall have 45 days from the date of the receipt of the report to review and comment¹.

Process for Gathering Input and Developing Recommendations

In order to develop recommendations for alternative quality requirements and structural elements for private prekindergarten providers to participate in publicly funded prekindergarten programs, the AIB engaged in a variety of processes to ensure comprehensive understanding of the current situation and challenges. A 50-state landscape analysis of promising practices is underway., In addition, a variety of stakeholders and experts in the field are being engaged².

This process included collaborations with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) , Maryland Family Network and their partners, and the AIB Advisory Committee for Pillar 1. In addition, the AIB hosted a convening on October 18, 2023, to hear from a variety of stakeholders. More than 40 people attended the session including representatives from private providers in family and child care, center-based settings, institutions of higher education, child care associations, and State agency partners. Dr. Shayna Cook from MSDE provided a comprehensive summary of efforts currently underway to support early childhood education in Maryland. During breakout groups, insights were sought from practitioners, leaders of innovative programs, and institutions of higher education in Maryland. The five breakout groups were facilitated by representatives from Maryland State Family Child Care Association, Maryland Higher Education Commission, Accountability and Implementation Board, Carroll Community College, and University of Maryland.

Information about this session and the information shared during it are available in the Appendices including: an Annotated Agenda of the Meeting, list of participants, the capture sheets from the breakout groups containing the ideas, insights and questions shared during the convening in each of the rooms. Additionally, letters submitted by child care organizations outlining challenges and recommendations are also included. The information gathered during the convening was instrumental in identifying concerns, challenges, and ideas to support the development of the recommendations in this report.

In addition, the AIB Advisory Committee for Pillar 1 has been actively engaging with stakeholders and sharing diverse perspectives on early childhood across the State of Maryland. Public and private providers, along with institutions of higher education, have shared successes, hurdles, and resources at

¹ In this document the terms prekindergarten, early childhood providers, and ECE are used interchangeably

² In this document prekindergarten students is used to capture 3 and 4 year old children

these meetings. The Pillar 1 Advisory Committee offered several considerations that have been included in the recommendations contained within this report.

Background

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Blueprint) Pillar 1 sets forth an expectation for each county to establish high-quality, full-day prekindergarten programs serving three- and four-year-olds. Emphasizing a mixed delivery system involving community-based or private providers and local education agencies (LEAs), the initiative requires collaborative partnerships between school districts and private programs. Central to this vision is the need for highly skilled and qualified early childhood educators across all early learning settings. Beginning in the 2027-2028 school year, the Blueprint requires teaching assistants to obtain a Child Development Associate (CDA) or an associate degree and lead teachers to have earned a bachelor's degree and hold teaching certification in early childhood education or be enrolled in an alternative certification program in early childhood education. In addition, the Blueprint requires public and private providers to meet high quality structural program elements based on evidence-based best practices aligned with the State's quality rating and improvement system known as Maryland EXCELS.

In close partnership with the Maryland State Board of Education and the MSDE, the AIB is actively engaged in supporting LEAs and providers to achieve these goals. As we progress toward increasing opportunities for more 3 and 4 year olds children to experience high-quality full-day prekindergarten programs, some challenges have been identified that require immediate attention. The primary purpose of this report is to outline current and future supports needed for alternative quality requirements and structural elements. For the incumbent early childhood workforce, the focus lies not only on increasing the availability of alternative certification pathways, but also on elevating the quality of these programs to meet the needs of children and families based on the most up-to-date research in the learning sciences and brain science. Alternative pathways also support the recruitment of new early childhood educators to build a pipeline of prekindergarten teachers across all settings. The Blueprint prioritizes forging partnerships between public and private sectors, with the AIB and MSDE taking the lead in spearheading initiatives, investment allocations, and targeted efforts aimed at easing the credentialing, degree attainment, and certification process. This report sets the stage for a detailed exploration of the initiatives and resources employed by the State to fulfill these Blueprint requirements.

Importance of Partnerships between Local Education Agencies and Private Providers

The integration of private providers within the educational landscape plays a pivotal role in the successful realization of the Blueprint's goals. The AIB and MSDE are deeply committed to cultivating a diverse and inclusive prekindergarten landscape. This commitment revolves around fostering collaboration between private providers and public schools to ensure a comprehensive, mixed-delivery system. Successful collaboration empowers families, supports a skilled workforce, and provides high-quality early childhood experiences, all of which further the Blueprint's goals and strengthens Maryland's education system.

The State aims to equip children with the necessary skills and competencies required for a seamless transition to kindergarten, irrespective of the educational setting. Additionally, we are dedicated to engaging families actively in their children's learning journeys, fostering involvement and support regardless of the educational setting their child is enrolled in.

Developing a highly skilled workforce of early childhood educators across diverse settings is critical to ensuring quality education for all. The Blueprint prioritizes serving targeted child populations including children from low-income households, children with disabilities, those experiencing homelessness, and English learners, ensuring that inclusive practices are at the forefront of prekindergarten education. Investments and initiatives are directed toward providing resources, training, and support to both private providers and public schools to ensure quality education and support services in all settings. The Blueprint places a strong emphasis on fostering equity and inclusion, ensuring that every child, regardless of background or circumstance, has access to high-quality education.

Private providers and public schools are often deeply embedded within local communities, fostering strong relationships and trust. Collaborating with these entities facilitates community engagement, garnering support and involvement from families, educators, and stakeholders. In addition, alignment between public schools and private providers on training, coaching, and upskilling the current early childhood workforce as well as recruitment of new members to the workforce is critical to ensure that all families and children are receiving a best-in-class prekindergarten experience that prepares children for the early elementary grades and beyond.

National Early Childhood Workforce Shortage

To fully understand the context and challenges currently faced in recruiting and retaining quality child care providers, it is imperative to recognize, address, and reduce the significant national (and local) workforce shortage. This early childhood workforce shortage is a significant challenge affecting the education sector. It is characterized by a scarcity of qualified professionals to meet the increasing demand for early childhood education and care, which impacts the ability of Maryland to scale the number of high-quality prekindergarten programs across the State. Factors contributing to this shortage include low wages, inadequate benefits, limited career advancement opportunities, and challenging working conditions. These conditions often lead to high turnover rates among educators and caregivers. Another challenge is that many family child care and center-based providers are closing and are not being replaced. Additionally, stringent qualification requirements and the cost and time investment for obtaining the necessary credentials, degrees, and teaching certification act as barriers, further exacerbating the shortage. The shortage has detrimental effects, leading to limited access to high-quality early childhood programs, impacting children's developmental outcomes and our State's educational progress, and creating a strain on families seeking affordable and reliable early learning programs. Addressing this shortage necessitates comprehensive strategies that focus on improving compensation, providing professional development opportunities, and creating supportive work environments to attract, retain, and upskill a high-quality early childhood workforce, all of which are critical components of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

AIB and MSDE Early Childhood Convening on Alternative Certification Pathways for Early Childhood Educators

In mid-October, the AIB and MSDE held a convening with early childhood stakeholders, which included private providers, LEAs, advocacy organizations, institutions of higher education, and experts in alternative certification pathways. The purpose of the session was to provide information about current initiatives in place to: (1) support alternative certification pathways; (2) generate discussion of current initiatives and additional needs; (3) and brainstorm opportunities for improvement, expansion, and additions moving forward with alternative certification opportunities. During the convening, stakeholders shared their expertise with the AIB and MSDE on how to leverage and improve the pathways around five key structural elements for alternative pathways. Those elements include:

1. **Early Childhood Registered Apprenticeships/Grow Your Own (GYO) Models:** Both of these models can be used to support upskilling the incumbent workforce and creating a pipeline for new teachers to join the early childhood workforce. Early childhood education is a key workforce area that lends itself to the apprenticeship model, both registered apprenticeships (primarily for adults) and students. The Blueprint emphasizes the development and expansion of apprenticeships that students begin, and even complete, before graduating from high school. The GYO model refers to a strategic approach within education or workforce development that focuses on cultivating and nurturing talent from within a particular community or organization. This model typically involves identifying and supporting individuals, often from underrepresented or local populations, to pursue careers or educational pathways within a specific field or profession. It emphasizes investing in existing community members, such as students, paraprofessionals, or employees, by providing them with opportunities, resources, training, and mentorship to grow and advance within their chosen field. The goal is to address workforce shortages or educational gaps by developing a pipeline of skilled professionals or educators who have deep ties to their communities or organizations.
2. **Stackable Credentials:** Clear articulation from the CDA to an associate's degree to a bachelor's degree, and finally, to alternative teacher certification in early childhood education is needed to provide early childhood educators with the ability to develop professionally as they earn additional credentials over time that are aligned with the requirements of the Blueprint. Stackable credentials also reduce the need for educators, who are often nontraditional college students, to repeat classes to attain the next credential level.
3. **Credit for Prior Learning:** Recognizing that the incumbent workforce is typically already working with prekindergarten children in evidence-based and developmentally appropriate ways, credit for existing knowledge and lived experience is needed as a part of an alternative certification pathway. In addition, key ways to identify credit for prior learning within institutions of higher education (IHEs) and outside of IHEs is essential to support the workforce in attaining an alternative certification.
4. **Targeted Support for Accessibility to Alternative Certification Pathways:** In both private provider settings and in LEAs, navigators are often needed to provide targeted support to early childhood

educators for easy on-ramps and connections to CDA, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, and alternative certification programs.

5. **Targeted Support for Early Childhood Educators Who Speak a Language other than English or who were Educated in Another Country:** For the incumbent early childhood workforce and new members of the early childhood field, programs that address the needs of educators who speak a language other than English are needed for CDA, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, and alternative certification programs. In addition, educators who have already attained degrees in their home countries need dedicated financial support with translating transcripts and ensuring that the degree aligns with Maryland requirements as this can often be a significant barrier.

In addition, AIB has received comments and additional information from various stakeholders addressing the needs of the field as Maryland adopts alternative certification processes. These are included in the appendices and have been included in the development of the forthcoming recommendations.

Current Structural Elements to Support Early Childhood Educators with Attaining the Alternative Certification Requirements

The AIB and MSDE recognize the significance of credentialing, degree, and certification requirements in improving the quality of prekindergarten education. Over the past year, MSDE has proactively focused its efforts on identifying alternative pathways and providing substantial support to facilitate attainment of the high-quality staff requirements by the 2027-2028 school year. These initiatives aim to empower prospective and current early childhood educators, enhance program quality, and ultimately benefit Maryland's youngest learners.

Early Childhood Registered Apprenticeships/Grow Your Own (GYO) Models

In 2023, MSDE funded Harford Community College (HCC) to conduct an early care and education registered apprenticeship program. The program is designed to be completed by child care professionals while working in licensed or registered Maryland early learning programs. The cohort-based program requires the apprentices to acquire field experiences and complete a series of classes, which are taught by a Child Care Apprenticeship Instructor employed by HCC. The program has 37 apprentices in Cohorts 1 and 2, as well as mentors and center directors within each child care center.

In addition, MSDE invested American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding for key supports for the early childhood workforce through the Maryland Rebuilds grant program. Maryland Rebuilds was a direct result of feedback from stakeholders received during virtual town hall meetings. To support both the incumbent early care and education workforce and promote Grow-Your-Own (GYO) youth apprenticeship for early childhood education, MSDE made the following investments:

- Chesapeake College (\$1,049,813)
- Echelon Academy (\$2,944,000)
- Higher Ground Education (\$1,120,544)
- Howard County Community College (\$2,095,242)
- Maryland Family Network (\$565,975)
- Montgomery College (\$1,531,837)
- Notre Dame University of Maryland (\$932,767)
- Salisbury University (\$2,487,943)
- Tip Top Tots Early Learning Center (\$3,000,000)
- Towson University (\$1,126,027)
- University of Maryland (\$2,900,221)
- Worcester County Public Schools (\$1,281,375)

It is anticipated that these investments will both add trained and credentialed employees to the workforce in the near future and establish programs that will continue to feed the pipeline through the Grow Your Own model. Expanding partnerships with local education agencies to connect high school students to appropriate post CCR pathways, apprenticeships, and options to complete college credits while in high school will also assist in adding trained, experienced, credentialed employees to the pipeline in the near future and continuously.

Stackable Credentials

The CDA Grant, overseen by the Council for Professional Recognition, holds exclusive authority in issuing the CDA, aiming to bolster Maryland's early childhood education workforce. The grant aligns with MSDE's ECE reform plans, aiming to integrate the CDA more extensively and support child care providers in obtaining their credentials. Maryland requires CDAs for all paraprofessionals, assistant teachers, and instructional support personnel in Pre-K programs, offering free training bundles to ensure compliance by a set date, which positions the grantee to collaborate with PK-12 public schools. These bundles aim to provide comprehensive support for individuals seeking their initial CDA or renewing their credentials³.

In addition, the Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund (CCCPDF) serves as a tuition assistance program supporting child care providers in pursuing college education across select fields in Maryland. This fund caters to degrees in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, Elementary Education, and Special Education. Unlike reimbursement programs, payments from the CCCPDF are directly made to participating colleges or universities. The Blueprint mandates increased funding for CCCPDF and several other ECE programs administered by MSDE. MSDE notifies applicants of fund approval, streamlining the financial assistance process for individuals seeking higher education in these specified fields.

Credit for Prior Learning

³ Based upon LEA and provider assistant teachers can be referred to as paraprofessionals and instructional support personnel in Pre-K programs.

Through Blueprint funding, Montgomery College (MC) developed an alternative certification program to support the existing private prekindergarten workforce with early childhood education certification attainment. Two cohorts, with a total of 23 students, are currently matriculating through the program that is approved by MSDE. The next step is to evaluate the program's results and the viability of scaling the program statewide through the Maryland Association of Community Colleges.

Through Maryland Rebuilds, MSDE invested \$1.5 million in Montgomery College to develop an additional alternative certification program for early childhood education that caters to the incumbent workforce and provides credit for prior learning. MSDE is in close partnership with Montgomery College to develop a feasibility plan to determine the best way to pilot an alternative certification program leveraging credit for prior learning, which MSDE anticipates will result in significantly increasing the number of early childhood professionals who are eligible for teacher certification.

In addition, MSDE is engaging with other states to identify ways in which states are leveraging credit for prior learning for the early childhood education workforce. Taking on lessons learned from other states, as well as, investing in developing a standard for issuing credit for prior learning through the Rebuilds grant, MSDE is poised to develop a clear implementation plan for establishing an alternative teacher education pathway that acknowledges the prior learning and experiences of our incumbent early childhood workforce.

Targeted Support for Accessibility to Alternative Certification Pathways

In Spring 2024, MSDE is launching a "Push to Prek" campaign, designed to disseminate crucial information in multiple languages and formats. This campaign aims to heighten awareness and accessibility to credential, degree, and certification programs for providers, bridging communication gaps and connecting educators with essential resources. Additionally, the Department will host dedicated office hours. These sessions are tailored to assist private providers in navigating grant-writing processes so that more programs can access the Maryland State Prekindergarten Grant and the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant.

In addition, MSDE has allocated \$10 million towards Pre-K Capacity Building Grants, particularly aiding those serving three-year-olds for the first time in public school settings or private providers. In FY 2024, MSDE issued 12 grants to 5 LEAs and 7 private providers. These grantees will receive targeted technical assistance to elevate ratings under the Maryland EXCELS quality rating and improvement system as well as to support navigating credentials, degrees, and alternative certification. MSDE staff from the Division of Early Childhood will support teachers with enrolling in programs so that they can move forward toward credential, degree, and certification attainment.

Targeted Support for Early Childhood Educators who Speak a Language other than English or who were Educated in Another Country

MSDE formally engages with early childhood stakeholders on a bi-weekly basis. MSDE, in partnership with stakeholders, has begun to identify barriers for prospective and current early childhood educators who speak a language other than English or who received higher education degrees in another country. Once barriers are clearly identified, MSDE will need to target existing and potential new funding to support this demographic of early childhood educators. In support of these educators, the Maryland State Board of Education adopted a new regulation in October 2023 to allow prospective providers who do not have a social security number to apply for a child care license or registration using an individual taxpayer identification number (ITIN). The ITIN expands access to refugees, asylees, and newcomers to Maryland to start an early childhood program, which could include serving prekindergarten students.

Furthermore, supporting these diverse early childhood educators is an important component of Pillar I and Pillar II of the Blueprint. [Research shows](#) that early childhood educators who can support early multilingual learners and provide culturally relevant pedagogy improves school readiness outcomes for young children⁴.

The AIB and MSDE will continue to evaluate current initiatives and develop new ones that are responsive to the needs of the workforce to provide targeted navigation through the attainment of qualifications, with a specific focus on educators who speak a language other than English and who have received degrees and credentials from another country.

Future Alternative Certification Pathways

In the future, AIB, the Maryland State Board of Education, and MSDE will continue to collaborate closely with early childhood stakeholders. As the Blueprint implementation plans continue to evolve, it is essential that the State provides support to the early childhood workforce to achieve high-quality outcomes for children in the early years and grades. MSDE is currently partnering with the Maryland Department of Labor (MDL) to ensure that the major one-time ARPA investments in apprenticeship programs are sustainable as a cohort of programs become registered with MDL. In addition, AIB and MSDE are partnering with MDL and the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), to continue the work needed to support the articulation of credentials, degrees, and certification across the State for early childhood educators. Clear articulation agreements will support prospective and current early childhood educators in attaining qualifications faster and more efficiently.

Additionally, MSDE is exploring the development of a narrow alternative certification that would focus on the skills and knowledge required to teach prekindergarten, to include child development from birth through the early grades. MSDE anticipates that this program could be delivered virtually through modules culminating in formal teacher observations. This alternative certification could exist outside of institutions of higher education and would allow prekindergarten educators to access alternative

⁴ <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/usable-knowledge/18/04/multilingual-preschoolers>

certification at little to no cost. MSDE also anticipates that this alternative certification model would allow for expedited completion, potentially in as little as a year and a half.

Finally, in FY 2024, MSDE will administer an early childhood workforce survey in early 2024 and expects results beginning in the Spring 2024. This survey will capture data on the current credential, degree, and certification attainment of the incumbent early childhood workforce with periodic updates. Using this survey data, MSDE will develop an online dashboard with measurable goals to track the effectiveness of the structural elements that have been implemented to support the workforce with qualification attainment by the 2027-2028 school year.

Recommendations

Numerous recommendations, both continuing work already underway and initiating new actions, surfaced in the research of this topic and from the stakeholder engagement undertaken this year. Recommendations listed below reflect both and are grouped by topic, in no specific order.

1. Explore continuing structural strategies currently initiated

- Explore the continuation of Grow Your Own initiatives that are effective.
- Continue the Push to Pre-K Initiative.
- Continue to disseminate crucial information in multiple languages and formats to heighten awareness and accessibility to credential, degree, and certification programs for providers.
- Continue to provide assistance to private providers in navigating the grant-writing processes.
- Explore opportunities to expand partnerships between LEAs and private providers to support the grant-writing processes for private providers.

2. Maximize available resources

- Review federal funds available to the State and ensure that resources that can be used to support alternative certification and professional pathways are being directed toward those services where possible. This includes various titles in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), including Titles I, II, and III, quality funds in the Child Care and Development Block Grant, uses of Child Care Access Means Parents in Schools (CCAMPIS), Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and funds available through the Higher Education Act.
- Explore partnership opportunities with Head Start and Early Head Start programs to identify professional learning resources that can support early educators both within Head Start and in other community-based settings.

- Encourage LEAs to use available professional learning funds through ESSA or other sources to provide scholarships and other supports for community-based early learning providers to participate in certification and training programs that meet the Blueprint requirements.
- Explore technical assistance options with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’s Administration for Children and Families and their new national workforce technical assistance center, which Maryland is a part of, to support the ECE workforce.⁵
- Review, compile, and disseminate IHE’s professional learning resources, scholarships, and other supports for community-based early learning providers to participate in certification and training programs that can meet the Blueprint requirements.
- Explore developing a “hub” model to support private providers to coordinate partnership within the mixed delivery system with local education agencies.
- Explore partnerships with philanthropy to coordinate existing resources and provide additional resources to support and expand high-quality prekindergarten including compiling and disseminating information to child care providers.

3. *Create, strengthen, and disseminate information on early childhood employee pathways*

- Create an early childhood “career guide” designed to clearly outline pathways for interested staff, regardless of their starting point, identify resources, scholarships, articulation agreements, and other supports available to interested staff.
- Create a statewide [workforce registry](#)⁶ that tracks ECE staff by provider as they make progress toward certification and degree requirements, building on the early childhood workforce data, allowing the state to identify areas where providers may need more supports and resources to meet requirements.
- Develop an inventory of and provide information on the availability of paid apprenticeships in early childhood and high school Child Development Associate (CDA) programs and help place interested providers in apprenticeships.
- Publicize the availability of supports, such as scholarships, free CDA trainings, and other opportunities.
- Develop clear communications to share with all LEAs, career counselors, and Local Workforce Boards about careers and credentialing/degree opportunities for early childhood careers.
- Collaborate with IHEs, LEAs and early childhood providers to encourage recruitment of teacher candidates with diverse backgrounds.

⁵ <https://www.nationaleceworkforcecenter.org/>

⁶ <https://www.registryalliance.org/> - "states should be motivated to collect timely, objective, and comprehensive state-level early childhood education workforce data because policy makers and stakeholders must be able to answer questions about supply, demand, equity, and quality. These questions include: How many professionals are The Evolution of the Child Care Workforce Registry part of the system? What training and education does the workforce need? What are the salaries of these professionals?"

<https://www.registryalliance.org/evolution-of-childcare-workforce-registry/>

4. *Alleviate Barriers to Higher Education*

- Incentivize IHEs to create, improve, and expand degree certification programs, with priority for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs).
- Develop an inventory of all ECE certification/degree programs and alternative programs/pathways *by county*, including online and flexible degree certification programs, and develop a communications plan to widely publicize existing programs. This will enable the State and IHEs to identify gaps in program offerings across the State.
- Collaborate with IHEs to ensure online and flexible degree certification programs are available throughout the State.
- Create community-based degree cohorts in two- and four-year institutions that do not require extensive travel by providers, and are available nights, weekends, and/or online with asynchronous supports and are available to providers who may speak a language other than English.
- Explore structural requirements and processes needed to make tuition payments directly to institutions to avoid paperwork and other burdens for providers.
- Explore the possibility of matching scholarship programs, such as the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Scholarship program, including other components such as tuition, books, transportation, and child care.⁷
- Create articulation agreements across two- and four-year institutions so that credits easily transfer between institutions.
- Develop a process to provide credit towards degrees or certifications based on work experience.
- Explore the possibility of free or low cost translation of international transcripts.
- Explore processes to develop an archive of transcript reviews by institution/degree to speed up the review process.

5. *Explore Additional Pathways to Certification*

- Explore increasing practicum host sites to include center-based and family child care providers to the practicum requirements in home- and center-based programs.
- Conduct a feasibility study of a Birth to Five online, modular alternative certification similar to other states.

⁷ T.E.A.C.H. covers a large percentage of tuition, books and course access or pays a capped amount that is adequate to cover tuition and books. Scholarship recipients also earn raises or bonuses after completing a set number of credits each year. Thus, T.E.A.C.H. scholarship recipients can essentially earn a debt-free education through all the supports provided. Scholarship recipients are also encouraged to seek other sources of financial aid to wrap around the scholarship support they receive. <https://www.childcareservices.org/2022/02/28/the-t-e-a-c-h-early-childhood-scholarship-program-moving-the-needle-on-student-success-for-the-past-30-years/>

- Highlight programs in which LEAs employ prekindergarten teachers in private provider settings to support the scaling of high-quality prekindergarten.
- Explore a variety of options to provide credit for prior learning and experience.
- Encourage LEAs to offer high school CDA programs through existing funding sources or to partner with local Workforce Development Boards.
- Explore scholarships to offset costs of the PRAXIS examinations.
- Expand the Nancy Grasmick loan assistance repayment program (LARP) to include early childhood teachers and teaching assistants.

6. *Increase Guidance and Support*

- Align regulatory and statutory requirements between MSDE child care regulations and the Blueprint (e.g., Pre-K class size in family child care settings).
- Clearly communicate the relationship between Maryland EXCELS Levels 3, 4, and 5 and the Blueprint requirements.
- Explore the possibility of creating Early Childhood navigators who are available to support interested individuals and providers in mapping out certification and degree requirements and providing support to candidates through the process.
 - Investigate how other states, colleges and universities, and/or LEAs provide this support to understand possible models, strengths and challenges of models, and to identify best practices of models.
- Provide guidance for the LEAs to establish expectations and share possible structures for public/private collaboration between each LEA and its private provider community.
- Facilitate opportunities for the sharing of best practices regularly between public and private providers across the State.
- Strengthen and support the development of relationships between Head Start, LEAs, and other non-profit organizations with private providers to streamline grant processes, increase high quality services and alignment of outcomes.
- Investigate the needs of educators who speak languages other than English to determine the type of programs and supports needed.
- Provide guidance and technical assistance to support the implementation of a centralized and accessible enrollment system for families of eligible Pre-K students.

Next steps

The AIB and MSDE will continue to work to ensure that LEAs and community-based providers have the resources and supports they need to serve families with young children and provide high quality, universally available, full-day prekindergarten in every region of the State. To make the recommendations in this report a reality, AIB and MSDE will:

- Establish and regularly convene an Early Childhood Workgroup jointly with MSDE. The 10/18/23 Covening will serve as a precursor to this workgroup and membership will be expanded moving forward to discuss challenges and identify solutions to overcome the challenges to implement the Blueprint.
- Leverage the Pillar 1 Advisory Committee to discuss implementation recommendations, challenges, and successes in this report and to provide community providers with the opportunity to contribute to the enhancement of early childhood education across the State.
- Identify roles, responsibilities, and a timeline for implementation of recommendations in partnership with MSDE, MFN, LEAs, ECE stakeholders, the State legislature, institutions of higher education, and other interested partners.
- Identify opportunities for partnership with additional state and local agencies, philanthropy, and other organizations.
- Monitor and support implementation of the recommendations.
- Provide supports to LEAs as they continue to engage with the private provider community to meet the requirements of the Blueprint.
- Once the review of all related federal funding sources is completed, analyze the information and determine next steps.

The AIB, Maryland State Board of Education, and MSDE are committed to advancing early childhood education and ensuring that all of our youngest learners experience high-quality programming.

The State's multifaceted approach, collaborations, and investments in prekindergarten education signify a robust commitment to providing accessible, high-quality educational experiences for Maryland's youngest learners. These efforts lay the groundwork for an inclusive and innovative early childhood education landscape that fosters lifelong learning and success for all children across the State.


Appendices

Appendix A Annotated Agenda of the October 18, 2023 Convening

Appendix B List of participants registered for the October 18, 2023 Convening

Appendix A

Annotated Agenda for the October 18, 2023 Convening for Early Childhood

**Accountability & Implementation Board**

Agenda

- 1 Welcome and Introductions (5 minutes)**
- 2 Purpose, Goals and Definitions (10 minutes)**
- 3 Update: What's Underway in this Work and Q&A (30 minutes)**
- 4 Breakout Groups, Debrief (30 min each, followed by 25 min debrief)**
- 5 Closing and Next Steps (5 minutes)**

4

Breakout Session Themes

Facilitators

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Apprenticeships | Christy Tirrell Corbin, University of Maryland |
| 2. Stackable credentials | Emily Dow, Maryland Higher Education Commission |
| 3. Upskilling existing educators and staff | Carole Williamson, Carroll Community College |
| 4. Developing educators and staff | Lisa Armstrong, AIB |
| 5. Supports for providers who speak a language other than English | Ruby Daniels, Maryland State Family Child Care Association & Pillar 1 Advisory Committee Chair |

Appendix B List of Participants - AIB/MSDE Early Childhood Convening 10/2023

Full Name	Organization
R. Carolina Reyes	Arco Iris Bilingual Children's Center
Donna Majors	Aspire
Jennifer Lynch	Baltimore County & AIB Member
Carole Williamson	Carroll Community College
Bill Hudson	Family Child Care Alliance of Maryland
Fatima Whitmore	Family Child Care Alliance of Maryland & SEIU LOCAL 500
Cyndi La Marca Lessner	Howard County Public Schools/Judy Center
Amanda Beacham	Littlest Learners Child Development Center at Carroll Community College
Beth Morrow	Maryland Family Network
Simeon Russell	Maryland Head Start Association
Emily Dow	Maryland Higher Education Commission
Elly Cowan	Maryland State Child Care Association
Christina Peusch	Maryland State Child Care Association
Shayna Cook	Maryland State Department of Education
Christina Lopez	MDAEYC
Danielle Ewen	Maryland Family Network
Aletheia McCaskill	MGA
Meylin Mejia	Montgomery College
Randi Albertsen	Maryland State Child Care Association
Phil Lasser	MSDE
Dr. Deann Collins	MSDE
Ruby Daniels	Maryland State Family Child Care Association

	& Pillar 1 Advisory Committee Chair
Valerie Lavala	Maryland State Family Child Care Association Child Care Provider in Frederick County
Sonya Odum	Sonya's Family Childcare
Cindi Webb	Frederick Country Day Montessori School
Kandace Hoppin	Towson University
Laila Richman	Towson University
Janese Daniels PhD	Towson University
Amy Noggle	Towson University
Emma Auffarth	Towson University (Child Care Center)
Christy Tirrell-Corbin	University of Maryland
Kelly Longerbeam	Washington County Public Schools
Gina Hoover	Washington County Public Schools
Lisa Buchy	Wee Lad & Lassie Early Learning Center