A bill for an act

relating to early childhood education; proposing grant programs; expanding the kindergarten developmental assessment; appropriating money; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 119B.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

Section 1. **[119B.30] EARLY CHILDHOOD COMMUNITY HUB PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS.**

Subdivision 1. **Establishment.** (a) A three-year grant program is established for school districts and tribal schools to increase children's school readiness through facilitating:

(1) collaboration among early childhood services, health services, family support services, and the kindergarten through grade 12 system within a local community;

(2) information and education for parents of young children;

(3) kindergarten transition services; and

(4) comprehensive early care and education programs targeted to low-income children and their families.

(b) School districts and tribal schools receiving grants must use the grants to plan and implement an early childhood community hub that is located in a public school, a tribal school, or other appropriate community location. A district superintendent or a designated representative, or a tribal school principal or a designated representative, must direct the community collaboration. An early childhood community hub must promote children's school readiness from prenatally to entering kindergarten by coordinating and improving children's access to:

(1) community early care and education services;

(2) school;

(3) health services; and

(4) other family support services that help stabilize, support, and assist families in meeting children's health and developmental needs.

Subd. 2. **Eligibility.** (a) An applicant for a grant must be a school district or tribal school that develops a plan for collaboration among local Head Start, district or school early care and education programs, licensed child care programs, child care resource and referral programs, and family, friend, and neighbor caregivers. Each applicant must pursue opportunities to work with charter schools located within the applicant's attendance area. Seventy percent of grant funds are available to applicants having 50 percent or more of enrolled children eligible for the federal free and reduced lunch program. The remaining 30 percent of grant funds are available to other applicants. The commissioner of education shall develop a plan for making technical assistance available to early childhood community hubs.

(b) An applicant must serve elementary age children and have an elementary and secondary student population large enough to warrant a hub, as determined by the commissioner. Grant recipients that continually meet program eligibility requirements and provide satisfactory services, as determined by the commissioner, are eligible to receive grant funding for up to three years. Grant recipients also may apply for grants under section 119B.31.

Subd. 3. **Program components.** Grant recipients must:

(1) administer the developmental assessment under section 119B.32 or another research-based assessment determined by the commissioner to children entering kindergarten in order to establish a baseline measure of the children's school readiness;

(2) involve the community, including parents, licensed early care and education providers, family, friend, and neighbor caregivers, health and mental health providers, business leaders, and other community leaders, in developing a plan to improve children's school readiness;

(3) provide parents and early care and education program providers with culturally appropriate, strategic outreach activities that promote children's health;

(4) provide meaningful transition activities for four-year-old children who are entering kindergarten in the next school year and their families that:

(i) involve a transition planning team composed of representatives from early care and education program providers, elementary school staff, parents, and community members;

(ii) include a plan that strengthens bonds among early care and education program providers, elementary schools, and families;

(iii) provide information and education for parents, program providers, and educators that encompasses comprehensive child development, math, and literacy;

(iv) provide information and education on school readiness, early childhood screening, nutrition, and other relevant services;

(v) provide activities beginning at least one school year before a child enters kindergarten that occur periodically at least six times throughout that school year; and

(vi) provide activities that engage parents, children, licensed and unlicensed child-care providers, public health agencies, local Head Start providers, libraries, and other local service delivery organizations helping to get children ready for school;

(5) help parents obtain culturally appropriate information and parenting skills they need to nurture and care for their children, and support and link families to early childhood and family education, early childhood special education, adult basic education, English language learners, English as a second language, and family literacy programs;

(6) link families with children ages 0 through 5 with the Minnesota child care resource and referral system to obtain information on available financial aid and high-quality early care and education services for which the families are eligible;

(7) provide professional development activities to community early care and education providers, including licensed child care providers, Head Start providers, school readiness program providers, and licensed family educators that integrate curriculum, assessment, and instruction, and are aligned with kindergarten through grade 12 standards;

(8) work with the local county to develop accurate counts of resident children ages 0 through 5;

(9) actively participate with the local Early Intervention Interagency Committee in child-find efforts to coordinate referrals for newborn visits, early childhood screening, intensive home visiting, and other comprehensive services;

(10) develop and implement an evaluation plan to determine the effectiveness of the identification system, the level of parent and community satisfaction, the level of kindergarten readiness, and how elementary schools and prekindergarten programs align instruction, practice, and curriculum with the "Early Childhood Indicators of Progress: Minnesota's Early Learning Standards" and share information about children;

(11) assign an unduplicated MARRS number for children referred for services through an early childhood community hub; and

(12) develop partnerships and collaboration among school district programs, including early childhood family education, school readiness, and early childhood special

education programs, and community-based Head Start and quality licensed child care programs, and family, friend and neighbor caregivers that:

(i) provide core services for:

(A) quality early care and education;

(B) parent education and involvement; and

(C) children's health including early childhood screening and appropriate referral;

(ii) provide additional family support services, including mental health support, adult basic education, family literacy, family development, and transportation services;

(iii) educate early childhood staff to assess program quality and child progress, and collect tracking data; and

(iv) assess each child's cognitive and social-emotional skills when the child enters and exits the program to inform program planning and promote school readiness.

Subd. 4. **Grant application process.** To obtain a grant, a school district or tribal school must submit an application to the education commissioner in the form and manner the commissioner determines. The application must:

(1) describe the applicant's demographic characteristics and community needs related to early care and education and the school readiness status of resident children and families;

(2) include a letter of intent from a local Head Start agency and its child care partners, and other involved public agencies and private sector organizations, indicating the ability of the agencies and organizations to collaborate and promote school readiness through specified services;

(3) describe how the applicant will use the resources of the district, community agencies, and private organizations to coordinate the early childhood community hub;

(4) propose a work plan describing how the applicant will implement required program components and ensure that children and families at greatest risk receive appropriate services;

(5) describe the community services the applicant will provide and the relationship between the services and the community's identified needs;

(6) indicate available matching funds; and

(7) provide other information the commissioner requires.

Subd. 5. **Staff qualifications.** A qualified person who is employed full time by an early childhood community hub must coordinate the hub. The hub employee, at a minimum, must have:

(1) a bachelor's degree in early childhood development or a related field, which may include a licensed parent educator;

(2) experience working with low-income families from diverse cultural communities; and

(3) experience working with state and community school readiness providers, including Head Start, child care, child care resource and referral, early childhood special education, or child care assistance programs.

Subd. 6. **Match.** A grant recipient must provide a 15 percent local match for any grant money it receives; five percent of the local match may be in in-kind contributions. A grant recipient must use all grants it receives to supplement but not supplant existing early childhood initiatives in the community.

Subd. 7. **Advisory committees.** (a) Each early childhood community hub must have an advisory committee. A grant recipient may use a preexisting early childhood committee or may form a new early childhood advisory committee that includes at least:

(1) 30 percent parents;

(2) a school district superintendent or designee, or tribal school principal or designee;

(3) kindergarten through grade 3 teachers;

(4) licensed child care providers that include family child care and center-based providers;

(5) Head Start providers;

(6) early childhood family education school readiness providers;

(7) early childhood special education providers; and

(8) a child care resource and referral agency.

(b) An early childhood advisory committee also may include representatives of:

(1) the business community;

(2) social service agencies;

(3) community libraries;

(4) law enforcement;

(5) public health; or

(6) school social workers.

Subd. 8. **Reviewing applications; awarding grants.** When reviewing applications, the commissioner must determine whether an applicant has met all the requirements in subdivisions 1 to 7. The commissioner may award up to 20 grants. Grant recipients must be located throughout the state. The amount of the grant shall be based on the number of children and families expected to participate in the program. Grant recipients must use their grant money to implement this program and must not use their grant money to supplant existing early childhood initiatives.

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective July 1, 2007.

Sec. 2. **[119B.31] PREKINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADE 3 PROGRAM GRANTS.**

Subdivision 1. **Establishment.** A multiyear, competitive planning and implementation grant program is established to develop community-based prekindergarten through grade 3 programs in public school collaborative settings that promote children's school readiness and future school success, and assist families by coordinating early childhood and early elementary initiatives that focus on closing the achievement gap. Seventy percent of grant funds are available to those applicants having 50 percent or more of enrolled students eligible for the federal free and reduced lunch program. The remaining 30 percent of grant funds are available to other applicants.

Subd. 2. **Program components.** Grant recipients must at least:

(1) provide high-quality prekindergarten programming for three and four-year-olds with appropriate community early care and education partners that:

(i) where applicable, have an upper level rating based on a child-care quality improvement and rating system for family child care or center-based care providers, consistent with section 119B.32;

(ii) obtain program accreditation under section 119B.13, subdivision 3a;

(iii) offer programs meeting Head Start performance standards;

(iv) offer school readiness programs in the public schools;

(v) offer early childhood special education; or

(vi) satisfy other quality standards determined by the education commissioner;

(2) provide all-day kindergarten that builds on children's prekindergarten experiences;

(3) align prekindergarten through grade 3 standards, curriculum, and assessments using the "Early Childhood Indicators of Progress: Minnesota's Early Learning Standards";

(4) provide principals and teachers with ongoing professional development, coaching, and mentoring, and sufficient planning time to implement a learning model;

(5) require an early childhood professional with a bachelor's degree and relevant specialized training to supervise early childhood classrooms, obtain training from the education department and local networks for early care and education providers in assessing children and using the results to improve classroom practices and enable each child to make progress, and require participating family child care providers to acquire an associate's degree within two years of entering an early childhood classroom under this program;

(6) coordinate prekindergarten through grade 3 programs through:

(i) colocation when possible;

(ii) a designated prekindergarten through grade 3 leadership team composed of prekindergarten and elementary school teachers and a school administrator authorized to review and coordinate programs; and

(iii) review of children's information at a meeting with program providers, on a need-to-know basis, when a child transfers from prekindergarten to kindergarten;

(7) implement small class sizes that include a preschool ratio of 17:2 and a kindergarten through grade 3 ratio of 25:2;

(8) provide meaningful transition activities for four-year-old children who are entering kindergarten in the next school year and their families that include:

(i) a transition planning team composed of representatives from early care and education programs, elementary school staff, parents, and community members;

(ii) a developed plan that strengthens bonds among early care and education program providers, elementary schools, and families;

(iii) information and education for parents, program providers, and educators that encompasses comprehensive child development, math, and literacy;

(iv) information and education on school readiness, early childhood screening, nutrition, and other relevant services;

(v) activities beginning at least one school year before a child enters kindergarten and occurring periodically at least six times during that school year; and

(vi) activities that engage parents, children, licensed and unlicensed child-care providers, public health agencies, local Head Start providers, libraries, and other local service delivery organizations helping to get children ready for school;

(9) promote parent involvement from prekindergarten through grade 3 using:

(i) a parent resource room and parent information and education provided by licensed parent educators or other community partners;

(ii) home visiting; and

(iii) parent meetings and related events;

(10) provide accountability to parents and communities by evaluating programs that assess children's progress, and facilitating schools' responsibility to report children's progress to families, communities, the school district, and the state; and

(11) provide or make referrals to counselors, nurses, social workers, and nutrition and other social service providers to ensure that children receive the social and economic support they need to learn.

Subd. 3. **Eligibility.** An applicant for a grant must be a school district, tribal school, or charter school. Seventy percent of grant funds are available to applicants having 50 percent or more of enrolled students eligible for the federal free and reduced lunch

program. The remaining 30 percent of grant funds are available to other applicants. School district and tribal school grantees also may apply for grants under section 119B.30.

Subd. 4. **Grant application process.** To obtain a grant, a school district, tribal school, or charter school must submit an application to the education commissioner in the form and manner the commissioner determines. The application must:

(1) describe the applicant's demographic characteristics;

(2) propose a work plan;

(3) indicate available matching funds; and

(4) describe the applicant's efforts to collaborate with licensed child care providers and Head Start programs.

Subd. 5. **Match.** A grant recipient must provide a 15 percent local match for any grant money it receives; five percent of the local match may be in in-kind contributions. A grant recipient must use all grants it receives to supplement but not supplant existing early childhood initiatives in the community.

Subd. 6. **Reviewing applications; awarding grants.** When reviewing applications, the commissioner must determine whether an applicant has met all the requirements in subdivisions 1 to 5. The commissioner may award up to 20 grants. Grant recipients must be located throughout the state. The amount of the grant shall be based on the number of children and families expected to participate in the program. Grant recipients must use their grant money to implement this program and must not use their grant money to supplant existing early childhood initiatives.

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective July 1, 2007.

Sec. 3. **[119B.32] EXPANDING MDE DEVELOPMENTAL ASSESSMENT ADMINISTERED TO ENTERING KINDERGARTNERS.**

Subdivision 1. **Establishment.** The commissioner of education shall develop a plan, based on the 2002-2003 model the department developed for school readiness studies, to expand to all school districts the developmental assessment that districts voluntarily administer to entering kindergartners. The department shall also set biennial milestones for measuring progress based on the number of children demonstrating proficiency on all assessment measures.

Subd. 2. **Description.** (a) School districts are encouraged to implement the voluntary school readiness kindergarten assessment initiative as follows:

(1) in 2009, assess 30 percent of children;

(2) in 2010, assess 50 percent of children;

(3) in 2011, assess 75 percent of children; and

(4) in 2012, assess 100 percent of children.

(b) The commissioner must report the assessment results for the current school year to the legislature by January 1 of the next year.

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective July 1, 2007.

Sec. 4. **APPROPRIATION.**

Subdivision 1. **Department of Education.** The sums indicated in this section are appropriated from the general fund to the Department of Education for the fiscal years designated.

Subd. 2. **Early childhood community hub planning and implementation grants.** For planning and implementation grants under section 1:

$ 5,000,000 2008
$ 5,000,000 2009

Subd. 3. **Prekindergarten through grade 3 program grants.** For prekindergarten through grade 3 program grants under section 2:

$ 5,000,000 2008
$ 5,000,000 2009

EFFECTIVE DATE. This section is effective July 1, 2007.