

2009-10 Great Start Readiness Program – Formula Funding Frequently Asked Questions

- Q1. What if our program cannot run the minimum 30 weeks required?
- A1. There is still time in the school year to implement GSRP for the minimum 30 weeks per session. Report your planned dates of operation in the Project Fact Sheet of the MEGS application. If there are extenuating local circumstances resulting from the late budget this year that do not allow you to implement the program for at least 30 weeks, use the “Comments” section of the application to explain the specific reasons why and how you plan to supplement the program to ensure children receive the full benefit of GSRP. To access the “Comments” section, click “View Comments” in the blue bar at the top of the screen. Comments to your consultant can be made in the appropriate section of the “Comments Checklist.”
- Q2. Should our district hold off beginning the GSRP program until we receive official notification of funding?
- A2. We are considering the posted GSRP Formula allocations as all but final. Once the governor signs the bill, they will be official and you will receive official notification. If you have not started your GSRP classrooms, you should do so as soon as possible while maintaining recommended recruitment and enrollment processes as well as all other GSRP requirements.
- Q3. If we started a modified program such as 3 days a week, but will expand to four days a week once funding is assured, will we be able to receive funds?
- A3. Grantees report in MEGS the starting date of an approved GSRP model; not the starting date of a lesser version of our state prekindergarten program. You will report the date you begin the four days a week program.
- Q4. When will tentative allocations become final?
- A4. The Governor has 15 days to sign or veto the budget sent to her by the legislature on October 8, 2009.
- Q5. How will funds be awarded if we begin late?
- A5. Grantees receive eleven state aid payments throughout the fiscal year. The first payment, 1/11th of the grant award will occur on October 22, 2009. If grantees are unable to implement the program for the minimum of 30 weeks, this should be reflected as described above in the MEGS application. If approved in the application as a good faith effort to meet the requirement, this would exempt grantees from any proration of their funds. If when submitting the Program Report next summer, a grantee unexpectedly reports that fewer than 30 weeks of services were provided and MDE determines that a good faith effort was not made, a proration of funds could occur.
- Q6. Do districts have to follow the new risk factors? Will there be additional guidance on the changes to the risk factors and prioritization process?
- A6. Additional guidance on the changes to the enrollment prioritization process will be posted to the GSRP website shortly. Decisions made by local districts/PSAs to date regarding

prioritization of children for slots can stand. Once the School Aid Budget is signed by the Governor, as additional children are enrolled, you are required to begin using the new risk factors and prioritization process.

- Q7. How did our poverty ranking change so dramatically from last year to this year?
- A7. Poverty percentages were calculated by dividing a school district/public school academy's fall 2008, grade 1-5, free lunch count as reported in the SRSD by the fall 2008, grade 1-5 enrollment. These numbers are entered by local districts directly into SRSD. The Early Childhood Education and Family Services Office does not manipulate the data. Once a poverty percentage is calculated for each grantee, grantees are ranked by highest to lowest poverty percentage. Please see the "2009-10 Rank Order List" to see where you fall in the rank order and the "2009-10 Formula Funding Procedure" for an explanation of the GSRP funding formula. Both documents can be found on the GSRP website under the *Eligibility and Allocations* section.
- Q8. Is there still language in the School Aid Bill allowing districts to use GSRP funds for K-12 instead of GSRP?
- A8. There is still language in the proposed School Aid Bill, awaiting the Governor's signature, giving districts some options for funneling money from specific programs, including GSRP, to K-12. There are some stipulations about consolidating services that must be met for that to happen. If the governor signs the Bill as written, MDE will have to develop guidelines for that option. Here is the pertinent language from the Bill:

"Sec. 11d. (1) For 2009-2010 only, the department shall deduct an amount equal to \$165.00 per membership pupil from the total state school aid otherwise allocated under this act to each district, except for money allocated under sections 11g, 22a, 31d, 51a(12), 51c, and 53a. If a district complies with subsection (2), a district may choose to apply this reduction to funding the district receives under any provision of this act, other than sections 11g, 22a, 31d, 51a(12), 51c, and 53a, even if the reduction chosen by the district results in a program being reduced or discontinued. If a district does not comply with subsection (2), the district shall apply this reduction to available funding under section 22b first, up to the total amount of the reduction, before reducing other funding the district receives under this act, other than sections 11g, 22a, 31d, 51a(12), 51c, and 53a.

(2) Not later than February 1, 2010, a district shall enter into an agreement with the department to develop a service consolidation plan to reduce school operating costs that is in compliance with department guidelines. The department guidelines may identify, but are not limited to, allowable cost-sharing arrangements for the provision of business services and instructional services and the creation of joint operating agreements between and among districts and intermediate districts. The department shall establish guidelines for service consolidation plans under this subsection not later than 60 days after the effective date of this section."

- Q9. Can you tell me whether, if districts choose to use GSRP money for K-12 in 2009-2010, they will lose GSRP funding for 2010-2011?
- A9. If districts choose to accept the GSRP funds and do not use it for a GSRP program, they will report to MDE that they served zero children in 2009-2010. Therefore, in 2010-2011, they will be viewed as a new grantee and held to 32 slots for the year and their hold harmless number will be zero. Before diverting funds each district should consider how that could affect their future allocations.