

HB 1131 -- Missouri Preschool Plus Grant Program

Sponsor: Holsman

This bill establishes the Missouri Preschool Plus Grant Program, administered by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in collaboration with the Coordinating Board for Early Childhood, to serve up to 1,250 students with high-quality early childhood educational services beginning in the 2010-2011 school year. Grants will be awarded for three years and are renewable. Grantees may be unaccredited school districts or nonsectarian community-based organizations within those districts. If a district becomes provisionally accredited or accredited, it may complete its existing grant and apply for one renewal for three more years. At least half of the placements offered by the program must be through nonsectarian community-based organizations. Admission preference for children of active duty military members is required.

The program must comply with the standards for early childhood education in Section 161.213, RSMo. Public school grantees are required to employ teachers with a bachelor's degree, but nonsectarian community-based organizations may employ a teacher with at least an associate's degree if the teacher can demonstrate that he or she is in the process of obtaining a bachelor's degree within five years. The department must develop standards for teacher-student ratios, classroom size, teacher training requirements, and curriculum.

A sliding fee scale may be charged based on a family's income, but the services will be free to children whose family income is less than 130% of the federal poverty guidelines. School districts must collect data on the children, both in the short-term and through their completion of high school, for program evaluation. Programs must coordinate with the nearest Parents as Teachers site to ensure a continuum of care.

The program will be funded through an appropriation of at least \$5 million to the newly created Missouri Preschool Plus Grant Program Fund. No gaming commission funds may be used.

The provisions of the bill will expire six years from the effective date.