

# 2019-2020 EDUCATION INTERIM COMMITTEE PRESCHOOL WRAP-UP

When the STARS Preschool Pilot Program concluded at the end of fiscal year 2019, Montana rejoined the handful of states that provide no state funding to support preschool. Proposals for state-funded preschool have been considered during the last three legislative sessions, but up until this interim, no legislative committee had devoted time to examining preschool policy. At its first meeting in June 2019, the 2019-2020 Education Interim Committee decided to be the first. This short wrap-up provides a chronological summary of the committee's work with links to relevant documents and a table describing the current status quo and two proposals the committee considered. For a full record of the committee's work, including a list of committee members and meeting minutes and videos, please go to <https://leg.mt.gov/committees/interim/2019edic/>.

## June 2019

- ✓ discussed preschool and determined to add the topic to its interim work plan

## September 2019

- ✓ learned about the [STARS Preschool Pilot Program](#)
- ✓ learned about the [Montana Preschool Development Grant](#)

## November 2019 (in Bozeman)

- ✓ visited a Running Start Kindergarten classroom for four-year-olds and a special education preschool classroom for three- to five-year-olds at Whittier Elementary School
- ✓ visited the [Zoot Adventure Learning Academy](#) at Zoot Enterprises

## January 2020

- ✓ invited stakeholder and public comment about how a state-funded, voluntary preschool program for four-year-olds should be designed

## April 2020

- ✓ discussed [policy frameworks for state-funded pre-K](#) and reviewed [examples of programs from six states](#)
- ✓ reviewed a [graphic](#) showing where Montana kids from birth to age 5 are currently receiving child care and education

## June 2020

- ✓ examined [various documents](#) related to structuring local collaborations following discussion in April
- ✓ reviewed [PD 9](#) a bill draft reflecting a proposal from MT-PEC (the Montana Public Education Center)

## August 2020

- ✓ reviewed [PD 18](#) a bill draft reflecting committee direction and [providing options](#) for structuring local collaboration led by school districts and [fiscal estimates](#) of the cost to the state

## Comparing the Status Quo and Preschool Proposals Considered by EDIC in 2019-2020

Status Quo under Current Law	<a href="#">PD 09</a>	<a href="#">PD 18</a>
<p>Districts can establish preschool programs for three- to five-year-olds, but cannot include preschool kids in ANB counts or receive/use state funding in supporting a preschool program.</p> <p>Districts can establish "early kindergarten" programs for children under age 5 under the <a href="#">"exceptional circumstances" provision</a> in <a href="#">20-5-101, MCA</a>, and include those kids in ANB counts generating state funding.</p> <p>It's unclear what content standards and grade-level expectations apply to these early kindergarten programs and the developmental appropriateness of any that do apply.</p> <p>It's also unclear how compliance with the existing Chapter 63 Preschool Standards is currently assessed for those districts that have established locally funded preschool programs.</p> <p>Districts can contract with certain private providers for the education of resident kids and include those kids in ANB counts pursuant to <a href="#">ARM 10.20.106</a>. Contracting with licensed day care centers is not allowed.</p>	<p>Districts can establish preschool programs for three- to five-year-olds, and can include three- to five-year-old preschool kids in ANB counts generating state funding.</p> <p>Changes language of "exceptional circumstances" to "trustee discretion" and limits enrollment to ages 3+.</p> <p>Would allow districts to contract with private providers as appears to be the case under current law and rule, but would not necessitate revision to ARM 10.20.106.</p> <p>Modifies pupil definition.</p>	<p>Districts can establish preschool programs for three- to five-year-olds, and can include four-year-old preschool kids in ANB counts generating state funding.</p> <p>Changes language of "exceptional circumstances" to "trustee discretion" and limits enrollment to ages 3+.</p> <p>Adds language encouraging partnerships with Head Starts and community-based providers, and in options B and C, includes varying degrees of required local- and state-level collaboration and different means of assuring quality for nonpublic preschool providers. Clearly allows preschoolers in partnership programs to be included in ANB counts of the district (intended to spur revision to ARM 10.20.106 to remove exclusion of licensed day care centers).</p> <p>Modifies pupil definition.</p> <p>Requires the Board of Public Education to establish accreditation standards for preschool in consultation with DPHHS and establish the accreditation status of every preschool program.</p>