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Public Preschool Programs in Maine: Program Design, Capacity and Expansion Challenges



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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	i
Introduction.....	1
Background.....	1
Methodology	4
Findings.....	5
Survey Participation.....	5
Description of Public Preschool Programs	6
Enrollment.....	6
Schools and Districts.....	6
Hours and Days per Week	6
Wrap-around Programs.....	7
Excess Capacity	9
Excess Demand.....	9
Preschool Partnerships	10
Curriculum and Assessment	10
Preschool Teachers	11
Staffing.....	11
Professional Development	11
Capacity	12
Preschool Expansion Plans	15
Expansion Challenges.....	16
Expanding the Number of Students	16
Expanding Program Hours and Days.....	17
Schools and Districts without Public Preschool Programs	17
Superintendent Perceptions of Preschool Effects on Kindergarten Performance.....	18
Conclusion and Implications for Policy and Practice	19
Bibliography	21
Author Information	25
Appendices.....	26

Executive Summary

Why was this study conducted?

The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs requested the Maine Education Policy Institute (MEPRI) provide an update on the status of public preschool program expansion in Maine given the state's goal to move toward universal preschool. Maine is a leading state in establishing public preschools. Public preschool programs were first introduced into Maine schools in 1983. In 2006, Maine was one of only six states to include public preschool in the public education funding formula. Maine's statute Chapter 124 went into effect in 2017, specifying requirements for state approval of public preschools as well as reporting on public preschools to the Maine Department of Education (MDOE). MEPRI last reviewed public preschools in Maine in 2015 and 2016. Two studies described the characteristics of public preschool programs in Maine and also explored the facilities and financial needs to expand public preschool, as well as classrooms and teachers (Mason & Porter, 2015; Logue, Tu, Fisher, & Mason, 2015) while a third study investigated parents' perceptions about and use of public and private preschool programs (Fairman, Logue & LaBrie, 2016). This study provides an update on the characteristics of public preschool programs in Maine as well as the progress and challenges in expansion of programs.

What do you need to know to put this study into context?

Studies of public preschool programs in urban areas such as Boston have shown increased school readiness with a universal preschool program. Other studies have looked at length of preschool day, skills gained in preschool that enhance kindergarten readiness, curriculum, assessment and teacher credentialing. Studies have shown that full-day programs that emphasize play and peer interactions produce the largest gains in executive function and social emotional skills. These attributes, more than academics, are indicative of kindergarten readiness. Teacher professional development plays a larger role in preschool quality than does curriculum or assessment methods.

The current study, conducted in fall 2019 through a statewide survey of all Maine school districts and data reported by districts to the MDOE, captures the perspectives of superintendents and their district designees, which typically were preschool teachers. The study also allows for perspectives and district practices to be examined in relation to geographic and demographic variables such as district enrollment, locale (urban/ suburban/ rural), region of the state, and Title I status of schools.

What did we learn from the study?

Maine's public preschool program is well regarded nationally. The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) based out of Rutgers University has ranked the fifty states on their preschool programs. Maine is one of eight states that met nine or more of the ten benchmarks NIEER used to rank preschool programs across the states. The benchmark Maine did not meet was for teacher professional development. This benchmark looks at whether or not

preschool teachers have individual professional development plans, coaching and participation in fifteen hours of professional development annually.

Description of Public Preschool Programs. Based on statewide enrollment data, in 2019-20, most Maine kindergartners (n=9300, 64.1%) are in School Administrative Units (SAUs) that offer public preschool. At least 158 SAUs offer preschool while 39 SAUs do not offer preschool.

In 2019-20, there are 6500 preschool students in 250 different schools. This is 48% of Maine four-year-olds. Five years ago, there were 5004 preschool students in Maine.

However, only 1170 students, 8.9% of Maine's four-year-olds, are in preschool programs that are full-day and five-days-per-week. Fifty percent of preschoolers (n=3265, 50.2%) are in classes that meet only half-days. A large number of the half-day classes meet fewer than five-days-per-week, resulting in 1533 (23.6%) of preschoolers in half-day programs that meet fewer than five-days-per-week.

There is a nationwide trend to full-day early childhood education programs. In 2018, 17 of the 45 states that mandate public kindergarten specified that the programs are full-day. While five-day-a-week kindergarten in Maine is mandated, the hours per day are not mandated. Twenty-seven schools (9.0%) have half-day kindergarten programs that educate 6.1% (803) of Maine's 13,200 kindergartners.

Most Maine districts are using the PreK for ME curriculum provided by the MDOE (n=30, 42.3%) or a commercial curriculum (n=31, 43.7%). The most commonly used commercial curriculum is Opening the World of Learning, which is the basis for PreK for ME. Only four (5.6%) districts reported their districts only used curriculum the teacher created.

Many districts (n=27, 38.0%) are using multiple assessment methods. The most commonly used ones are Teaching Strategies Gold, Child Observation Record and Work Sampling System. Eleven districts (84.5%) use other commercially available assessments, district development assessments or teacher created assessments.

MDOE data indicates 174 schools (71%) have preschools run solely by the district. Most districts answering the survey operate their preschool programs without a partner (n=57, 77%). Two-thirds (n=33) of these districts had not discussed collaborating with a partner while one-third (n=17) had discussed collaboration. Some districts felt they saved money collaborating with an outside agency while others reported that the cost of collaboration was higher than running a district program.

Preschool Teachers. The majority of districts (n=52, 75.4%) reported on the survey that all or most of their preschool teachers are full-time teachers.

Preschool teachers in Maine require a different teaching credential (081) than do kindergarten teachers. In 2014, Maine was one of only ten states where an Early Childhood Educator (081) could not teach kindergarten. The state university early education programs allow teachers to become dual certified for Early Education (081) and K-3.

“The ability to hire and retain qualified early education teachers” was reported by several districts as a challenge to expanding the number of students (n=14) in their preschool program and/or expanding the hours of their preschool program (n=16).

A large percentage of preschool teachers and kindergarten teachers were not receiving early education professional development. While most districts (n=55, 79.9%) reported on the survey that preschool teachers attended in-service training at least one a semester, only half (n=34, 49.3%) said that they receive in-service training directed at early childhood education at least one a semester. Weekly to monthly professional learning communities (PLCs) (n=26, 37.7%), and coaching of preschool teachers at least twice a semester (n=30, 43.5%) were reported by some districts. More districts reported early education professional development for kindergarten teachers but there still were gaps for about forty percent of districts. In-service directed at early education (n=45, 57.7%), coaching at least twice a semester (n=43, 56.6%), and weekly to monthly PLCs (n=37, 48.1%) were provided to kindergarten teachers.

Most districts completing the survey provide early childhood educators with training in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Thirty-nine districts (56.4%) have ACEs training as part of preschool teacher in-service. Slightly more districts provide kindergarten teachers (n=47, 61.1%) ACEs in-service training.

Capacity. If a universal preschool statute were enacted in Maine, additional classrooms would need to be built. Several small districts have preschool even though no approved program is registered with MDOE. Other districts have 15 or more students above approved capacity. When the number of approved preschool spaces is adjusted for these districts, there are currently 500 classes in 252 schools that could accommodate 8008 preschoolers.

Of the 240 schools with approved capacity for preschool, 140 schools were three or more students under capacity. Only 19 of these districts had fewer kindergartners than there were approved preschool seats. Preschools with half-day programs (n=71, 68.3%) were more likely than full-day programs (n=44, 48.4%) to be three or more students below capacity.

To estimate the number of additional preschool classes that would need to be added under universal preschool to accommodate all students, the 69 SAUs with an average number of first graders less than 16 were excluded. This accounts for 583 (4.5%) of first graders in the state. If all SAU's were to accommodate all kindergartners keeping their current weekly class hours, 392 additional classes would need to be added. If the SAUs that offer two day a week classes continued to offer full-day classes but changed to five-days-per-week, 21 additional classes would need to be added. If half-day classes became full-day classes, 90 more classes would need to be added. The total number of preschool classes that would need to be added for full-day, five-day-per-week preschool is 482. Another estimate was made from the survey by asking superintendents to estimate the number of additional district students that would enroll in preschool if space were available. A total of 80 additional classrooms were indicated as needed from their estimates. This scales to 192 new classrooms that would need to be added.

Using these two methods of estimating the number of new preschool classrooms that would need to be added to serve all four-year-olds with full-time, five-day-per-week preschool programs, we concluded that between 200 and 400 additional classrooms are needed.

Ten new preschool classes were added last year. Districts indicated approximately ten new classes per year are planned over the next three years, a total of 32 classes. There are discussions underway for an additional 20 classes. However, the gap between the number of additional planned classes and the number needed to serve all four-year-olds is still large.

Districts without Preschool. Superintendents report the chief barriers to expanding the number of students accommodated in their preschool programs are the annual cost to run programs, start-up costs, indoor space, outdoor space, and the ability to hire and retain qualified teachers.

Based on attendance data, there are 39 SAUs that do not offer public preschools. These districts are more often in the southern region of the state. A higher percentage (n=27, 59.3%) of schools with kindergarten programs that are not Title I do not offer preschool. In the survey, 10 districts indicated that they do not offer preschool. Half said there were discussions around starting a preschool program. Challenges to beginning a preschool program were: space to house a program (n=6, 60%), cost (n=3, 30%), and lack of community support (n=2, 20%).

Superintendents Perspectives on Their Preschools. There was strong agreement that students from a district's public preschool program had better academic performance in kindergarten (n=43, 62.3%), better social interactions with peers and teachers in kindergarten (n=48, 69.6%) and fewer behavioral issues in kindergarten (n= 29, 42.0%). Superintendents in districts without public preschool programs also felt preschool positively impacted kindergarten outcomes: better academic performance in kindergarten (n=6, 60.0%); better social interactions with peers and teachers in kindergarten ((n=6, 60.0%); and fewer behavioral issues in kindergarten (n= 3, 30.0%).

What did we conclude overall from the study?

Maine preschools meet state quality guidelines and are highly rated nationally. Most Maine preschools meet the Chapter 124 guidelines on curriculum and assessment by using commercially available products and the MDOE PreK for ME curriculum. However, not all preschool teachers and kindergarten teachers receive early education focused professional development. Teacher training is an area where Maine may impact early education quality.

There has been growth in the number of students enrolled in public preschool and in the number of public preschool programs offered in Maine in the last five years since MEPRI reported on this effort. However, most preschools have space for additional students to attend. Less than ten percent of Maine four-year-olds are in full-time preschool (full-days, five-days-per-week). There are three inter-related ways Maine preschools could expand: 1) increasing the number of schools offering preschool, 2) increasing preschool to full-day and five-days-per week, 3) increasing student participation in these programs, or some combination of these three

strategies. Increasing the hours of preschool classes to full-day, five-days-per week would also increase utilization by families.

What are some potential implications for education policy and/ or practice?

All but 27 (9.0%) of Maine's school kindergarten programs are full-day. Seventeen states require districts to offer full-day kindergarten (NCES 2020). Legislation to require full-day kindergarten in Maine could encourage both growth and participation in public preschool programs.

There is currently a financial disincentive for districts to offer full-day preschool programming. The education funding formula does not take into account the length of time a student is in school. The student in half-day preschool two times a week is funded at the same level as a student in a full-day, five-day-a-week program. Thus, school districts receive the same level of funding for public preschool regardless of whether they provide that programming part time or full time.

Title I schools are more likely to have a preschool program than non-Title I schools. And, schools in the southern and central parts of the state are the least likely to offer public preschool. This disparity has implications for families who wish to access public preschool programs but cannot find them in their regions, and could also have economic implications for the state if working parents choose not to move to Maine because of the lack of widespread public preschool in some regions

The rate of expansion of preschool classes is unlikely to meet perceived demand for preschool or be able to accommodate all four-year-olds in the next ten years. This has implications for state planning and policies to prepare for adequate facilities, number of programs and seats offered, and training of preschool teachers.

Maine's university teacher preparation programs for early childhood education prepare students for Early Childhood Education certification (081) and K-3 certification. Only ten states including Maine do not allow early childhood educators to also teach kindergarten. Schools report the ability to hire and retain qualified teachers is a barrier to expanding the number of children that can be educated in their preschool program and/or expanding preschool program hours to full time. Revising current certification regulations in Maine to allow early childhood educators to teach at the kindergarten level could ease the hiring challenges schools are experiencing.

Less than half of the surveyed districts offer in-service professional development focused on early education to preschool teachers. Both the quantity and quality of professional development is important for high quality preschool programs and outcomes. State sponsored or regional efforts to provide early childhood educator professional development across SAUs may be beneficial (Hargreaves, Parsley, & Cox 2015).

Some of the survey responses indicated a need to increase public awareness of the benefits of preschool education. These efforts could be addressed at the state and local levels.

The ability to closely estimate the number of new preschool programs, classes and spaces needed to serve all of Maine's four-year-olds in full-time programs is challenged by the lack of complete, accurate and reliable data in the state's educational database system. This is a recurring challenge for MEPRI studies and indicates that attention is needed to overhaul and improve the state's database system to inform education policy decisions and reporting requirements.

What methods were used to conduct this study?

This study used a statewide online survey to gather data from a large, representative sample of school districts across the state and to allow for analysis by certain demographic characteristics. Superintendents of all SAUs in Maine that had a kindergarten program in Maine were emailed a link to a confidential survey. Several superintendents were responsible for several districts. These superintendents were sent only one link. Non-respondents received two reminder emails to complete the survey.

Preschool program data were also obtained from the MDOE. District-level data were obtained from the chapter 124 report of preschool hours and days per week of classes. The number of approved spaces in preschool, name of preschool partner agencies and date of approval were provided by the MDOE. School-level data on enrollment in preschool, kindergarten and first grade were also obtained from the MDOE.

The National Center for Educational Statistics website provided school location and Title I status for demographic information about Maine schools.

How robust are the findings?

The MEPRI survey had a strong response rate 62% (88 of 142 superintendents surveyed responded). Ten respondents reported their districts did not have preschool programs. The geographic and district size distribution of the 135 responding SAUs was representative of SAUs in Maine as a whole.

While our analysis found some discrepancies in reported enrollment figures in the MDOE data, none were greater than 10%. Most calculations were made from the same data source.

Concerns reported by districts in this survey, related to the challenges of the financial cost of preschool expansion and facility space limitations that do not comply with Chapter 124 requirements, are similar to concerns reported in a 2015 MEPRI report (Mason & Porter, 2015).

Introduction

The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs requested the Maine Education Policy Institute (MEPRI) provide an update on the status of preschool in Maine with an eye toward establishing high quality universal preschool. Maine is a leading state in establishing public preschools. Public preschool programs were first introduced into Maine schools in 1983. In 2006, Maine was one of only six states to include public preschool in the public education funding formula. MEPRI last reviewed public preschools in Maine in 2015 and 2016. Two studies described the characteristics of public preschool programs in Maine and also explored the facilities and financial needs to expand public preschool, as well as classrooms and teachers (Mason & Porter, 2015; Logue, Tu, Fisher, & Mason, 2015) while a third study investigated parents' perceptions about and use of public and private preschool programs (Fairman, Logue & LaBrie, 2016). These reviews looked at what changes preschools in Maine would need to make to meet Chapter 124 standards. (Mason & Porter 2015, Logue, Tu, Fisher, & Mason 2015).

Maine's statute Chapter 124 went into effect in 2017. Chapter 124 sets out requirements for approval of public preschools as well as requires reporting on the public preschools to Maine DOE. This is the first review since Chapter 124 went into effect. Several bills have been put forth to establish universal preschool, in the 2019 session LD 1043 was proposed. This study sets out to provide an overview of the status of public preschools in Maine and the barriers to establishing universal preschool that districts face.

Background

Nationwide, Maine's public preschool program is well regarded. The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) based out of Rutgers University has ranked the fifty states on their preschool programs. They set ten benchmarks with Maine meeting nine of these. Five other states met nine benchmarks and three states met all ten-benchmarks. Benchmarks Maine met include: early learning and development standards, curriculum supports, maximum class size, staff-child ratio, screening and referral process and continuous quality improvement system. Maine met the benchmarks of teachers having a bachelor's degree specializing in early childhood education, but not the benchmark of teachers and assistants having at least 15 hours per year of professional staff development. This missed professional staff development benchmark also included individual professional development plans and coaching (NIEER 2019). Chapter 124 addresses many of the benchmarks.

Most public preschool studies measure readiness for kindergarten as the primary outcome. Over the past two decades, kindergarten readiness has been a changing standard. Other states have recently made policy changes directed at the kindergarten level. Kindergarten became academically accountable with the adoption of the federal No Child Left Behind legislation in 2001. The 2009 Race to the Top initiative further encouraged states nationwide to adopt common core standards that applied to kindergarten to grade 12 (Bassok, Latham, & Rorem 2016, Repko-

Erwin 2017). States are now emphasizing the socio-emotional development aspect of kindergarten. New Hampshire in 2018, made play-based learning and unstructured time a requirement of their kindergarten programs (New Hampshire RSA 193-E:2 2018, Mader 2020). To see strong gains from a preschool, both dosage and the quality of the program matter (Heagle, Hargreaves, & Pelletier 2017, Jenkins 2014). Seventeen states require kindergarten to be full-day, but Maine is not among those (NCES 2019).

What makes a preschool program effective at promoting kindergarten readiness as well as producing the gains seen in later years is an area of significant recent research. The two broad areas of improved socio-emotional skills and executive function are most often cited as the benefits of a high quality preschool education (Duncan & Magnuson 2013). Play, especially peer play is an integral aspect of both preschool and kindergarten. Both executive function and socio-emotional learning are developed through play (Eggum-Wilkens, Fabes, Castle, Zhang, Hanish & Martin 2013, Torres, Domitrovich, & Bierman 2015). Quality public preschool programs incorporate academic activities (math, reading, social studies) along with non-academic activities such as performing/visual arts, eating, naptime and play (Atteberry, Bassok, & Wong 2019).

Maine's Chapter 124 statute, Head Start programs and NIEER all call for evidence-based curriculums to be used in preschool classes. The Maine Department of Education (MDOE) website provides the PreK for ME curriculum which is based on the Boston preschool program. The PreK for ME curriculum is free and includes on-line resources. This curriculum targets language, literacy, mathematics and emotional development. In Boston public preschools, significant gains in language, literacy, mathematics, executive function and emotion recognition were observed. Many of the Boston preschool mathematics teaching blocks are child directed. Each unit of the language and literacy components has a socio-emotional component (Weiland & Yoshikawa 2013).

One of the challenges with preschool classrooms in Maine and nationally, is that some students have significant behavioral problems as well as undiagnosed developmental delays. Teacher reports of preschool behavioral problems have been as high as 52% of students in some studies. Expulsion rates for preschool students can be triple those of K-12 students. Behavioral issues are a concern in preschool because they can persist (Upshur, Wenz-Gross, & Reed 2013). Maine DOE has done targeted programs with some preschools on developing inclusive classrooms (Fairman and Johnson 2019). The MDOE also offers preschool teacher training on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and behavior. In the last legislative session, "An Act to Promote Social and Emotional Learning and Development for Young Children" passed. Beginning in September 2020, there will be a voluntary statewide consultation program for early education teachers and childcare facilities for children under the age of eight experiencing behaviors that put the child at risk of learning difficulties and removal from the environment. Maine Chapter 124 requires screening assessments within 30 days of starting preschool or kindergarten.

Although there are several studies showing curriculums are effective in preparing preschoolers for kindergarten, most all acknowledge teachers rather than curriculum or

assessment method are the crucial element. Many studies single out regular professional development as essential. In addition to most teachers having master's degrees in early childhood education, a key component of the Boston Public School curriculum is extensive teacher coaching and training (Weiland 2016, Weiland & Yoshikawa 2013, Sachs & Weiland 2010). The long running successful universal preschool program in Tulsa also emphasizes a strong professional development component for teachers (Gormley, Phillips, & Anderson 2017). Research is showing best results in early childhood education come from combining a proven curriculum with strong professional development program for teachers (Duncan & Magnuson 2013, Jenkins, Whitaker, Nguyen, & Yu 2019). The transition to kindergarten is improved when professional development for preschool and kindergarten teachers includes regular communication around curriculum and individual students (DeLuca, Pyle, Roy, Chalas, & Daniels 2019, Welchons & McIntyre 2017). Maine preschool teachers indicated in 2015 that joint training for preschool and kindergarten teachers would be useful. In that same year, a quarter of preschool teachers said they received less than ten hours annually of professional development. Maine preschool teachers suggested a statewide conference for teachers, face-to-face trainings and webinars would be useful forms of professional development (Mason & Porter 2015).

Teacher licensing requirements in Maine differ from most other states that certify early childhood educators to teach kindergarten. Maine's early education certificate (081) certifies one to teach ages 0-5 years excluding kindergarten. Maine has two licenses for kindergarten teachers: 020 General Elementary (K-6), and 029 Early Elementary (K-3). Maine preschool teachers are required to have a bachelor's degree in early childhood education while kindergarten teachers may have a bachelor's degree in elementary education. Massachusetts, where the Boston preschool program is based, has an early educator license for Prekindergarten to grade 2 and the elementary educator license excludes kindergarten. It is grade 1 to grade 6 (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education). New Hampshire Early Childhood Education Certification allows a teacher to instruct neonates through grade 3 (New Hampshire Department of Education). In 2014, Maine was one of only ten states where an Early Childhood Educator (081) could not teach kindergarten (Hooper 2018). Maine state university early childhood education programs prepare students for the early educator certification (birth to age five) and for early elementary K-3. Both state universities offer graduate programs for elementary educators to become certified as early educators. Previous MEPRI studies showed over half of Maine preschool teachers were dually certified to teach early education and kindergarten. They had a 081 credential and K-3 or K-8 certification (Logue, Tu, Fisher, & Mason 2015, Mason & Porter 2015).

Many would like Maine to have universal preschool. A previous MEPRI study showed Maine parents preferred to use public preschool and the majority felt that districts should provide enough pre-K slots for those who want to send their children (Fairman, Logue and Labrie 2016). Although several districts do not offer preschool, data shows a statewide excess of preschool space. How preschool space is distributed throughout the state is one of the key elements of this

report. In addition to districts not offering preschool there are districts where the available preschool spaces are not enough to accommodate all families wishing to enroll their child. How districts select students in this situation is not known.

This study looks at multiple aspects of public preschool in Maine to present a broad picture of how preschool is provided statewide, and identifies areas of possible policy implications that could improve Maine public preschools.

Methodology

This purpose of this study was to update information about Maine's public preschool programs since the previous MEPRI studies conducted in 2015 and 2016. The broad research questions explored in this study were:

- How is public preschool currently delivered and structured in Maine?
- What curricula and assessments are used in public preschool programs in Maine?
- How are preschool teachers supported through professional development?
- What motivated districts to start or expand their preschool programs?
- What benefits do districts see from offering a public preschool program?
- What challenges or barriers make it difficult for districts to start or expand public preschool programs?

Three sources of data were used for this report. Survey methods were used to collect data on the perceptions of district superintendents or their designees about their preschool programs. The MDOE provided data by school on preschool and kindergarten enrollment, the length of preschool and kindergarten days, and the days per week that preschool was offered along with preschool program accreditation information. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) data was used for demographic information on district and school characteristics such as school location and Title I status.

Superintendents of all SAUs in Maine that had a kindergarten program (n=195) were emailed a link to a confidential survey. Several superintendents were responsible for several districts. These superintendents were sent only one link. Non-respondents received two reminder emails to complete the survey. A total of 142 superintendents were contacted. Eighty-eight superintendents responded (62.0%). They represented 135 SAUs, which is 69.2% of the SAUs that offer kindergarten.

Superintendents could complete the survey or forward it to another individual for completion. The survey was designed to include questions about district funding and demand for preschool in the first portion and then specific questions about the preschool program and teachers at the end. A superintendent could answer questions about funding, space, and perceived demand for preschool then have a preschool coordinator or preschool teacher answer questions about preschool curriculum and teacher professional development.

The survey consisted of multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions (see Appendix A for the survey and summary of response results). The first set of questions asked

superintendents about the decision to have preschool, the district's decisions on pursuing a partnership with a federal agency or private program, what they perceive as the limiting factors to preschool expansion in their district. The next set of questions looked into the perceived demand for preschool in their area. A broad range of questions then asked about various programmatic characteristics of the preschool programs offered. Questions about programs covered curriculum, assessment, and professional staff development for both preschool and kindergarten teachers. The final questions focused on the perceived benefits of preschool education. If a superintendent was responsible for more than one SAU, they were asked to answer the questions about preschool demand and barriers to expansion based on all SAUs under their direction.

Three sources of data from Maine Department of Education were used. The sources were: the website, the data warehouse and the Early Childhood Education section. There were discrepancies noted between state data sources in numbers of schools and students. The number of preschoolers in the 2019-20 school year varied from 6169 in 247 schools to 6495 in 218 schools. When comparisons were made data from the same source were used when possible. State data were cleaned to edit out private schools that did not indicate affiliation with any SAU. Schools that were closed had data attendance data transferred to the schools listed in news articles as being the new area school.

Four main geographical areas were defined based on counties. Schools were placed by their county as follows

- Central Maine (Kennebec, Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Waldo)
- Northern Maine (Aroostook, Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Washington)
- Southern Maine (Cumberland, York)
- Western Maine (Androscoggin, Franklin, Oxford, Somerset)

Data from the different sources were merged by school and SAU to allow comparisons to be made. Comparisons were made based on enrollment, approved maximum number of preschool spaces by school, program duration, if a school was Title I, and by area. Summary tables of data from NCES and MDOE are provided in Appendix B.

Findings

Survey Participation

There was clear interest in this topic as 88 of the 142 (62%) surveyed superintendents responded to the survey. These 88 superintendents represented 135 SAUs. The number of first graders in these SAUs and geographic distribution was representative of SAUs statewide. Since many of the superintendents that oversaw multiple districts were in small Northern districts, the number of independent answers on the survey were more evenly distributed geographically and were weighted toward districts with larger number of first graders. (The survey sample is described in Appendix B, Table 1.)

Description of Public Preschool Programs

Enrollment. Based on enrollment data from the MDOE, there are approximately 6500 students attending public preschool in 245 schools in Maine in 2019-20. This is only about half (48%) of the number of kindergartners in the same year. One would estimate that there are roughly the same number of potential preschool children in the state as there are kindergarten-aged children.

Based on several years' data, there are 252 schools in 158 different SAUs offering preschool. These numbers listed are approximations because there was variation in the data received from the MDOE. Depending on the source for the MDOE data, the number of students ranged from 6196 students in 247 schools to 6495 students in 218 schools. The number of kindergartners varied from 13,059 to 13,338. Some of the MDOE data included SAUs paying tuition for students sent to other districts and private schools. The private schools not linked with an SAU were removed from our calculations. When possible, data from the same source were used for comparisons, so there is variation in total numbers seen in our data tables. Using these figures, the number of children in public preschool was 47.4% or 48.7% in 2019-20. The number in full-time, five-day-per-week preschool is much lower, at 1170, approximately 18% of the preschoolers and 9% of kindergartners. Depending on the data source used, this represents an increase of 23.8% to 30.0% more students in preschool from five years ago, when there were 5004 preschool students in Maine (Mason & Porter 2015).

School and Districts. At least two-thirds of Maine's young children live in the 158 SAUs that offer preschool. Based on enrollment data in Maine, there are 39 SAUs without preschools. Ten of the 39 SAUs shown as not offering preschool averaged fewer than five first graders. In these ten SAUs, it is unclear if an option for preschool may exist if families desire it. In 2019-20 there were 3327 (33.9%) kindergartners attending 84 schools in the 39 SAUs without preschool. Based on average attendance over three years, the percentage of children living in an area without a preschool program may be as low as 14% (n=1813).

The key factors in predicting whether a school offered preschool were Title I status and location. Most schools in Maine are Title I. Two hundred-ninety-nine of the 326 schools that had kindergarten were Title I. Of the 27 non-Title I schools, 16 (59.3%) did not offer preschool. This contrasts to 22.7% (n=68) of the 299 Title I schools not offering preschool. Counties in the Southern area are Cumberland and York. The counties in the Central area are Kennebec, Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Waldo. Districts in Southern Maine (n=11 SAUs, 36.7%) and Central Maine (n=12 SAUs, 29.9%) were most likely not to offer public preschool. All SAUs in the Western area (Androscoggin, Franklin, Oxford, Somerset) offered preschool. In the Northern area (Aroostook, Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Washington) a small percentage of SAUs (n=13, 14.0%) did not offer preschool. Some of these are very small SAUs. To better understand the availability of preschool, a three-year average enrollment was calculated based on attendance

data. When a preschool was new, only the years that the preschool was operational were used in the average. Over 80% of districts in Northern and Western Maine enrolled more than 60% of their kindergarten students in public preschool. SAUs that did not offer public preschool tended to be non-Title I schools located in the Central and Southern portion of the state.

Table 1. Percent of SAU kindergartners enrolled in preschool by geographic area.

By SAU	Central	Northern	Southern	Western	Total
>60% of K in PK	21 (48.8%)	75 (80.6%)	9 (30.0%)	23 (82.1%)	128 (65.6%)
0-60% of K in PK	10 (23.3%)	5 (5.4%)	10 (33.3%)	5 (17.9%)	30 (15.4%)
None	12 (27.9%)	13 (14.0%)	11 (36.7%)	0 (0.0%)	37 (19.0%)
Total	43 (100%)	93 (100%)	30 (100%)	28 (100%)	195

Hours and Days per week. As public preschool has become more common, so has full-day kindergarten. In 2018, 45 states had universal kindergarten laws, 17 of them mandated full-day kindergarten. Maine is one of the 28 states that mandates universal kindergarten five days per week but does not specify full-day kindergarten (NCES 2020). Of the 13,200 kindergartners in Maine, only 803 (6.1%) are in half-day kindergarten programs. There are 27 schools that have half-day kindergarten programs. This follows the pattern of most students being in urban areas while most schools are in remote areas. Most of the half-day kindergarten students are in Augusta, Waterville, or Saco. Most schools with half-day kindergarten are in the northern counties. Statewide, district policies on allowing half-day kindergarteners to stay for a full-day are not known. In this survey, five districts (6.5%) had half-day kindergarten. None of these districts allowed students to stay for a full-day if space was available.

While the majority of kindergartners in Maine are in full-day programs, the picture is very different for preschool. From the state data, of the 6600 students in preschool only 1169 (18.0%) are in preschool full-time, five-days-per-week. Schools in the western districts are more likely to have preschool classes that meet twice a week. There are 689 (10.6%) preschoolers who are in preschool two-days per week. One of two preschoolers (3265, 50.2%), are in half-day preschool. There are 1533 (23.6%) preschoolers in half-day programs that meet fewer than five-days-per-week.

There was also regional variation in the hours of preschool programs. Southern schools were more likely to be five-days-per-week full time preschool. Northern districts were more likely to have half-day programs. The western districts that offer two-day a week programs cite two primary advantages over half-day programs. In the survey comments, they noted weekly childcare cost to families and transportation costs to the district are lower with two full-day programs rather than half-day programs.

Title I status did not affect the hours that preschool programs were offered. Of the 186 Title I schools that had preschool programs, 58 (31.2%) were five-days-per-week full time preschool while three (37.5%) of eight non-Title I schools offering preschool had five-days-per-week full time preschool.

Table 2. 2019-20 Enrolled preschoolers by program hours and days per week.

2019 Students	2 days	3 days	4 days	5 days	No Information	Total
Preschool Full day	569	7	303	1169		2048
Preschool Half day	89	52	1392	1732		3265
Preschool other time	31	19	183	498		731
No Information					458	458
Total	689	78	1878	3399	458	6502

Table 3. Days per week that preschool classes meet by geographic distribution of school.

PreK days	Central	Northern	Southern	Western	Total
5 days	17 (31.5%)	59 (58.4%)	25 (73.5%)	25 (44.6%)	126
4 days	26 (48.1%)	17 (16.8%)	5 (14.7%)	13 (23.2%)	61
3 days	0 (0.0%)	8 (7.9%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (3.6%)	10
2 days	3 (5.6%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (5.9%)	15 (26.8%)	20
No information	8 (14.8%)	17 (16.8%)	2 (5.9%)	1 (1.8%)	28
	54 (100%)	101 (100%)	34 (100%)	56 (100%)	245

The number of preschoolers (n=3265, 50.2%) attending half-day programs may be slightly overstated or understated. State enrollment data does not report on whether or not a student is a half-day or full-day student. In the MDOE survey of superintendents, the options were full time, half time, two half-day sessions or other. Some districts (n=28) did not provide information. “Other” was selected for 22 of the 245 schools. In the MEPRI survey, superintendents were given a greater range of options to indicate their school status. Thirty-two responding superintendents selected half-day (43.8%) with another eight (11.0%) indicating their

district programs were half-day and full-day. Students in these districts were able to stay a full-day when space was available.

When asked how many of the district students would enroll in each type of program, the most popular choice was full-day program with 61.2% of districts saying many or most would enroll in this option. One district that had some parental resistance to doing full-day preschool offered them an option of half-days and found most quickly transitioned into full-day. In survey comments, districts noted that most parents want full time preschool or expanded hours.

Wrap-Around Programs. Extended care or “wrap-around” programs can be helpful for working families. Yet only three districts indicated they have extended day programs. In a separate question, 18 districts indicated that their preschool sites offer after school care for preschoolers. For six districts, the demand for extended day spaces exceeded available spaces. Of the 74 districts not offering after school care for preschoolers there was a split in perceived demand. Twenty-four felt there usually was a demand while 30 felt there was no demand for the extended program.

Available Space. Most preschools have available space. There were 140 schools (58.3%) that were under capacity by three or more preschool students. Of these 140 schools, only nineteen had fewer kindergarteners in the 2019-20 school year than there were approved preschool seats in 2018-19. This may relate to the hours that preschool programs are offered. Preschools with half-day programs (n=71, 68.3%) were more likely than full-day programs (n=44, 48.4%) to be three or more students below capacity. One Maine district noted that when their preschool hours increased from half-day to full-day, the enrollment increased.

Excess Demand. In this MEPRI survey with 87 responding districts, half indicated that there are additional students that would enroll if public preschool was available (n=40), but only 22 districts (25.3%) indicated that there are more students wanting to enroll than there are spaces. In this situation, there are two main ways districts said they allocate spaces. When there are more students wanting to enroll than there are spaces, most districts use order of enrollment (n=12, 60%) or a lottery (n=8, 38.2%) to select the students for their classes. Other factors that were ranked as *very important* or *extremely important* in determining which students would be enrolled, were family income below 185% of federal poverty level (n=14, 63.4%), diagnosed disability (n=11, 52.4%), and suspected disability (n=8, 20%). Schools were split on the importance of “English language is not the primary language spoken at home” and “high risk family situation such as incarceration or substance abuse” with eight (38.1%) ranking each as not important at all and seven to eight ranking (33.3%-38.1%) each as very important or extremely important in determining which child is enrolled in preschool. One district wrote in “homeless” as a criterion for allocating scarce space. Factors that were not important to about 50% of the districts were: “caretakers employed full time” (n=13, 65.0%), “proximity of home to program site” (n=11, 52.4%) and “having an older sibling in the same school” (n=9, 47.4%).

Preschool Partnerships. Of the 74 responding districts that had preschool, most districts (n=57, 77.0%) had programs run solely by the SAU. This is in line with the MDOE preschool approval data that showed 174 preschools (71%) being run solely by the SAU. Fifty of the schools that were not collaborating with an outside agency responded to the question of whether they had discussed collaborating with an outside agency. Most districts (n=33, 66.0%) indicated they had not discussed the option of collaboration. Common reasons that they had not collaborated were: no agency or private school in the area (n=15, 34.9%), parents prefer separate programs (n=6, 14%), and cost to place students with partner agency is higher than to educate in SAU (n=5, 11.6%). In open-ended responses, superintendents discussed control over programming and curriculum. They felt their district run program was successfully meeting student needs. Some noted that their half-day times and/or two-days-per-week classes do not match the federal programs. One noted that parents commute and have their children in daycare close to their work site. Two districts noted they had ended partnerships with Head Start. One district cited costs being higher with Head Start and the other partnership termination was based on philosophical differences. Some districts indicated partner programs were half-day.

The reasons districts formed a partnership with a federal agency were primarily cost and space. Some mentioned existing expertise and preexisting relationships. Others appreciated that students who were not yet school age had educational opportunities and that there was “wrap-around” services.

Curriculum and Assessment. The literature on using published curriculums is divided on whether or not it is beneficial for preschool programs. Most studied programs rely on a curriculum with an emphasis on fidelity of implementation. Chapter 124 requires schools to use a curriculum that meets Maine Early Learning and Development standards (MELDs). In Maine, most preschools reported using commercial preschool curriculums (n=31, 43.7%) or the PreK for ME curriculum that MDOE provides (n=30, 42.3%). This is based on the Boston Public Schools preschool curriculum that utilizes the commercially available Opening the World of Learning (OWL) language, literacy and social skills program and the Building Blocks mathematics curriculums (Weiland & Yoshikawa 2013). The most commonly listed commercial preschool curriculum on the MEPRI survey was Opening the World of Learning (OWL). Only four districts (5.6%) indicated that teachers are creating curriculum entirely on their own.

Chapter 124 calls for annual reporting of fall and spring preschool student results from assessments. Districts report the number of students assessed and the number of students below, at or above expectations in social and emotional development, approaches to learning, creative arts, early language and literacy, reading standards for literature, physical development, mathematics, science and social studies. In the MEPRI survey, districts indicated teachers are using the state assessments Teaching Strategies Gold, Child Observation Record and Work Sampling System. Multiple assessments are used by 27 of the responding districts (38.0%) in their preschool programs.

Preschool Teachers

Preschool Teacher Staffing. There were 69 districts that provided information on preschool teachers in the MEPRI survey. Even though the majority of preschool students do not attend preschool full-time, five-days-per-week, in three quarters of the districts, all preschool teachers are full-time preschool teachers (n=52, 75.4%). In an additional seven districts, some or most of the preschool teachers are full-time preschool teachers. In seven districts, some to all of preschool teachers are full-time employees that have other duties. One example given was a teacher that does Pre-K in the morning and Special Education in the afternoon. Multi-age classrooms were reported by three schools. One was age three to kindergarten, another was preschool through second grade. In three districts, none of the preschool teachers was a full-time employee. One said the part-time teacher taught in their partnership program in the morning and in the community program in the same space in the afternoon. Another district indicated preschool teachers were hired through a contractor who was responsible for their on-going training.

Preschool Teacher Professional Development. Although the licensing requirements are different for preschool teachers and other elementary education teachers, most districts responding to the MEPRI survey indicated they include preschool teachers in their professional development programs. Several written comments indicated that preschool teachers attend the same in-service days as K-12 teachers. In most districts, the preschool teachers attend in-service training once per semester up to weekly (n=55, 79.9%). Three schools said Head Start or a partner agency provided the training.

However, while teachers are receiving in-service training in most districts, it usually is not directed at the early childhood level specifically. The in-service was directed at early childhood education once a semester or more frequently in less than half the districts (n=34, 49.3%). Superintendents or their representatives reported that in 30 districts (43.5%) preschool teachers received coaching that was directed at the prekindergarten level twice a semester or more. Weekly to Monthly PLCs aimed at the prekindergarten and/or kindergarten level were held in 26 districts (37.7%). Our findings are similar to the 2015 MEPRI finding that a quarter of preschool teachers received less than ten hours annually of professional development. Maine preschool teachers indicated in 2015 that joint training for preschool and kindergarten teachers would be useful. (Mason & Porter 2015).

The MEPRI survey also asked districts about professional development for kindergarten teachers as a reference point. There was a higher percentage of districts saying they provided early childhood professional development for kindergarten teachers compared to preschool teachers. Kindergarten teachers had in-service at least once a semester in 88.5% of districts (69) and it was focused on early education at least once a semester in 57.7% of districts (45). Forty-three districts (56.6%) said there was coaching of kindergarten teachers. Weekly to monthly

PLCs aimed at the kindergarten level were held in 37 districts (48.1%). This survey did not ask about what type of professional development was desired. In a previous MEPRI study of preschool teachers, teachers suggested that a statewide conference for teachers, face-to-face trainings and webinars would be useful (Mason & Porter 2015). The numbers show fewer than half of preschool teachers and less than 60% of kindergarten teachers receive early childhood focused professional development. This finding indicates a need for increased efforts to provide regular on-going professional development for preschool teachers and kindergarten teachers in a large number of Maine districts.

Management of student behavioral issues at the preschool level is an area of interest to Maine educators and policy makers. Legislation for DHHS to provide behavioral coaches for children under the age of eight in the next few years passed last year. The MDOE has a grant to further Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) training. Over half of the Maine districts (n=39, 56.4%) responding to the MEPRI survey indicated they provide preschool teachers and educational technicians with training on ACEs as a mandatory in-service (n=8, 11.6%) or as an optional in-service (n=31, 44.9%). Training on ACEs was optional with time provided to attend in some districts (n=10, 14.5%). As with preschool teachers, most districts (n=47, 61.1%) provided kindergarten teachers in-service training on ACEs as a mandatory in-service (n=8, 10.4%) or optional in-service (n=39, 50.7%). It was an optional training with time provided to attend for some districts (n=12, 15.6%). There were a few SAUs that said they do not provide ACEs training to preschool teachers (n=5, 7.3%) or to kindergarten teachers (n=6, 7.8%). Behavioral consultants or coaches work with preschool teachers in 39 of the responding districts (56.5%).

Capacity

In this section, we describe the use of data to determine availability of preschool statewide as well as to make estimations of how many additional classrooms would need to be added to establish universal preschool in Maine. Both state enrollment data and MEPRI survey data were both used to make these estimates. To accommodate every kindergartener in full-day five-day-per-week preschool there would need to be a doubling of preschool classes from 500 to 980 classes.

Determining current capacity was not exact. There were some challenges in relying on the data provided by the MDOE on preschool capacity and enrollment. In addition to the previously discussed differences in enrollment numbers based on the MDOE sources, the capacity figures required revision. Some schools had been closed, other small schools were not included and one larger district had significantly more students than approved spaces. For example, when closed schools were removed, and adjustments made for the schools with significantly more preschoolers were added, there are 500 approved/existing classes in 252 schools that can accommodate 8008 preschoolers.

Most preschools have available space. There were 140 schools (58.3%) that were three or more preschool students under capacity. Of these 140 schools, only nineteen had fewer kindergartens in 2019-20 school year than there were approved preschool seats in 2018-19. Preschools with half-day programs (n=71, 68.3%) were more likely than full-day programs (n=44, 48.4%) to be three or more students below capacity. Nineteen schools had one to eight more preschool students than the allowed capacity. Twenty-seven schools (11.3%) were at capacity. Forty schools (16.7%) were one to two students under capacity. In the survey with 87 responding districts, only 22 districts (25.3%) indicate that there are more students wanting to enroll than there are spaces. This is consistent with the enrollment data showing most programs are not at capacity.

Table 4. Comparison of enrolled students and approved preschool spaces in schools.

2018-19 School Data	Preschool Students 2018-19	Kindergarten Students 2019-20	Approved spaces	Number of schools
Far above capacity > 8	473	562	256	6
Above Capacity (1-8)	692	1048	632	19
At Capacity	720	1299	720	27
One-two below capacity	985	1594	1040	40
Below capacity	3154	4598	4912	140
No capacity information	51	199		10
Total	6106	9300	7560	242
None		3885		95

To estimate needed spaces, districts with an average of fewer than 16 first graders were excluded. The total number of first graders in SAUs that average under 16 first graders is 583 in 69 SAUs. This represents 4.5% of students in the state. One reason for excluding these districts is the uncertainty if very small districts have preschool. Another issue in estimating new preschool seats is class size. In these districts with an average number of first graders less than 16, a preschool class of 16 will not be full most of the time. Forty-seven of the 500 preschool classrooms are in schools that have an average district first grade enrollment less than 16. The small district students can be split into two groups. A total of 429 students are in 52 SAUs that have preschool and 126 students are in 17 SAUs that may or may not have preschool. Most of the small SAUs that are excluded from the capacity increase needed estimation do have preschool.

To make an estimate of the maximum number of classrooms that would need to be added, the number of kindergartners in each district was used. In this survey, most districts (89.6%) felt

a few or some students would not be enrolled in their preschool program. This is consistent with other public preschool studies. Basing the number of needed preschool spaces on kindergartners would over-estimate the needed spaces. However, in other areas, as public preschool existed for longer periods of time the percentage of students enrolling increased (Gormley, Phillips, & Anderson 2017). The MDOE data on the approved maximum number of seats was first compared with preschool enrollment data. When there were eight or more students over the maximum approved number of seats, the number of classrooms was adjusted to reflect a maximum of 16 in each class. For programs that did not have a maximum number of seats approved, the total number of preschoolers was divided by sixteen to determine how many classes the district had. This resulted in there being 7336 approved spaces in 459 classes. Next, the number of kindergartners in the SAU was divided by 16 to determine the maximum number of classes needed to accommodate all students. The number of classrooms need to accommodate all preschoolers was compared with the number of classes. Thirty-one SAUs could accommodate all students. Forty-three districts would need to add one or two classes. Twenty-two districts would need to add four or more classes. Most SAU’s without a preschool program would need to add four or more classes.

If all SAU’s were to be able to accommodate all kindergartners, then 392 additional classes would need to be added. Table 6 shows the number of needed classrooms by district. Eight SAU’s have twice a week preschool. Currently two of these districts are able to accommodate all potential students. If uniform preschool was mandated these schools would be able to accommodate half the number of students. Twenty-one additional classrooms would need to be added. Fifty-one SAUs have half-day preschool that typically is a morning and afternoon session. To estimate the number of classrooms for full-day preschool, the number of current student spaces in these districts was halved. When the number of kindergarten students was compared to this adjusted number of classrooms, ninety additional classrooms would need to be added. A breakdown of additional classes needed is in Appendix B. The estimated maximum number additional number of classrooms that would need to be added to have full-day five-day-week kindergarten in Maine is 482. This represents almost a doubling of the current 500 classrooms.

Table 5. Number of districts with over 16 first graders that would need to add preschool classes to accommodate all kindergartners.

Current	Classrooms needed 392 total				
	Meet need	One classroom	Two Classrooms	Three Classrooms	More than 3 Classrooms
Current	30	27	16	9	22*
Unlisted	1				1**
New Program		1	6	2	11***

*4 (4) ,5 (6), 7, 8 (3), 9 (2), 10, 11, 12, 13 (2), 23 additional classes

** 6 additional classes

***5, 6, 7 (4), 9, 13, 14 (2), 15 additional classes

In the MEPRI survey, just over half the districts (n=41, 50.6%) reported that more preschoolers would enroll if space in a public preschool was available. Half of the schools having excess space is consistent with the enrollment finding that most schools have excess capacity. Of the 41 districts that said more students would enroll if space were available, 30 districts estimated the additional students that would enroll. Six districts had fewer than eight additional students wanting to enroll. Nine districts had nine to 16 students that would enroll. Fifteen districts had twenty to 144 additional students that would enroll. A total of 80 additional classrooms were indicated as needed. When scaled by response rate, the number would be 191 classrooms.

In the survey estimate, an adjustment for prevalence of sharing class space is not included. Survey data and MDOE data indicated two half-day sessions were very common. Another way preschool classes shared space was by offering classes only two days a week. Preschool classes meeting in the same space but at different times was reported by 32 districts. Three districts indicated preschool classes share space with another grade by meeting in the same room but at different time. In these three districts, all indicated preschool was sharing space with a kindergarten class. One of these districts also had three-year-olds in the same classroom and another also had first graders.

The survey estimate of needed classes is lowered by asking for the number of students that would attend a SAU preschool if space was available. Only 1170 students attend public preschool full-day, five-days-per-week. Data from this survey and other studies have shown that more families will enroll their children in full-day preschool than half-day preschool (Atteberry, Bassok, & Wong 2019, Wolgemuth, Cobb, Winokur, Leech, & Ellerby 2006). Many Maine four-year-olds are already in some form of daycare or preschool. About four out of five districts reported that most of their kindergartners who did not attend a public preschool attended some childcare program. Daycare (n=24, 30.4%), private preschool (n=15, 19.0%) and Head Start of community agency preschool (n=13, 16.5%) were identified by districts as where most of the students were before entering kindergarten. About a fifth of districts (n=16, 20.3%) felt most of the kindergarten students that did not attend public preschool had no prior formal program. This may be in part due to availability of programs. There may be existing space if more partnerships are formed.

Preschool Expansion Plans. Most districts are discussing adding additional preschool programs or expanding in the next three years. Among survey respondents, discussion is underway in their SAUs to add up to 50 classrooms in the next three years. Fifteen SAUs (18.3%) have plans to add public preschool classes. Most are looking at adding one or two classes. Three districts are looking at adding 70 to 100 additional spaces. A total of 32 classrooms were indicated as planned in the fifteen districts over the next three years. In the past year, ten new public preschool classes were added. Twenty-one districts are planning major renovation or construction of an elementary school in the next few years. Fifteen of these

districts plan to expand their preschool program as part of the renovation. An additional 30 districts indicated that public preschool expansion is under discussion. The districts indicated twenty classes are being discussed. Two districts indicated they are looking at increasing hours and days of operation. One remote district is looking at adding public preschool programming for three year olds since none is available in the region.

While estimating the needed increase in classrooms to provide universal preschool is not exact, our data indicated planned and discussed expansion will not accommodate all four-year-olds. A key issue is whether or not a program is full-day, five-days-week. Some districts' partner agencies do not offer full-day preschool. At present there are 500 preschool classes offered with space for 8008 students. If a five-day-per week requirement is passed, then between 200 and 400 additional classrooms are needed. If a full-day program is part of universal public preschool in Maine required the number of new classrooms needed increases to 480. Ten public preschool classes were added this year. The addition of thirty-two preschool classes are planned in the next three years. Universal preschool legislation would significantly change the rate that new preschool classes are added.

Expansion Challenges

When districts were asked to identify factors that made expansion challenging on the MEPRI survey, most indicated several areas that were common to expanding the number of preschool children that can be accommodated in the program and the days and hours that preschool programs operated. The chief challenges were related to cost, space and staffing.

Expanding the Number of Preschool Students. The biggest challenge to expanding the number of preschool students that can be accommodated in a district is cost. This includes start-up costs (n=18), the annual costs of running the program (n=18), and transportation issues (n=7). Space that can be modified to comply with Chapter 124 both indoor (n=15) and outdoor (n=9) was also identified as a challenge in the MEPRI survey. In this study of barriers to preschool expansion, there was more of an emphasis on program cost than there has been in the past when the primary issue reported as a challenge was the lack of suitable space that complies with Chapter 124 (Mason & Porter 2015). Nine districts felt being a low or non-receiver of state funds limited the number of preschool students their district accommodates.

Several districts indicated low demand for public preschool was a limit to expansion. Parents wanting an extended day program at the same site (n=6), convincing parents to use public preschool over private preschool (n=5), lack of community support for public preschool programming (n=4) and number of potential four-year-olds in the district were factors cited that relate to low demand for preschool expansion.

Some districts are primarily limited by the number of children. A few small districts project fewer than four preschoolers. This may result in increased travel time for preschoolers. One district reported that students from their smaller schools attend preschool at larger schools

before returning to their local school for kindergarten the following year. One superintendent is in discussion with other SAUs to develop a regional preschool.

Several districts indicated “the ability to hire and retain qualified early education teachers” (n=14) was a factor in expansion.

Expansion of Preschool Program Days and Hours. Districts were asked what factors make it difficult to increase the number of days and/or hours of the preschool program to full-day, five-days-per-week. Twenty-two districts (31.0%) reported their preschool programs are already full-day, five-days-per-week. The same issues that limited the number of children that could be accommodated in a preschool program were seen as limiting expansion of preschool hours. Indoor space (n=18) and outdoor space (n=4) that could be modified to comply with Chapter 124 were the top reasons limiting expansion of hours. Start-up costs (n=13), annual costs (n=17), and transportation issues (n=10) were also limiting factors.

The ability to hire and retain qualified early education teachers (n=16) was identified as a limiting expansion factor. Teachers with multiple roles and salary hours for teachers were concerns. One district noted the benefit costs of becoming full-time staff would result in moving teachers from a part-time two days per week position to full time. There was some staff and teacher resistance to expansion of preschool hours. One superintendent noted that most of the half-day preschoolers go to day care and take a long nap in the afternoon so the superintendent felt the four-year-olds were not ready for a full time program. Districts saw a challenge in convincing staff that preschool should be five-days-per-week not three.

Ten districts (14.1%) felt convincing parents to send their children to preschool for more time each week was a challenge.

Schools and districts without preschool programs

There were ten superintendents from districts without a preschool that responded to this survey. This was 11.4% of the respondents. Half (n=5, 50.0%) said a preschool program was under discussion and one said they were planning a preschool program. Another said the district was paying tuition for preschoolers to attend school in another district. Cost to educate students (n=3, 30%) and lack of space within the district to house a program (n=6, 60%), were the reasons most often cited as to why their district had not formed a preschool program. Two superintendents felt public preschool was not a priority for their community. Three felt parents prefer separate programs.

The availability of other community preschool programs was mixed in these districts. Seven of these superintendents indicated there were four or more preschool programs in their community. Two said there was one preschool program in the community. The other said there were no preschool programs in the community. Most had not discussed collaboration with a federal agency or with private preschools. Of the ten districts without preschools, only two had discussed collaborating with an outside agency. One superintendent in a rapidly growing district

expressed frustration that the potential partners did not qualify under Chapter 124 quality standards of a level 4 but were rated a level 3 on quality. Another noted that the private preschools had no seats or space available.

Superintendent Perceptions of Preschool Effects on Kindergarten Performance

Superintendents were asked for their perceptions on how students who attend their preschool program perform in kindergarten. There was strong agreement that these students had better academic performance in kindergarten (n=43, 62.3%) and better social interactions with peers and teachers in kindergarten (n=48, 69.6%) than students who had not attended their preschool program. There was also agreement that students from their public preschool had fewer behavioral issues in kindergarten (n= 29, 42.0%) than students who had not attended their preschool. No superintendent disagreed with the statements that students who attend their preschools have “better academic performance in kindergarten” and “better social interactions with peers and teachers in kindergarten”.

Table 6. Superintendents’ Views on their District Preschool Students’ Performance in Kindergarten. (N=69)

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable
better academic performance in kindergarten	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (5.8%)	21 (30.4%)	43 (62.3%)	1 (1.5%)
better social interactions with peers and teachers in kindergarten	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (4.4%)	17 (24.6%)	48 (69.6%)	1 (1.5%)
fewer behavioral issues in kindergarten	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.5%)	11 (15.9%)	27 (39.1%)	29 (42.0%)	1 (1.5%)

The ten superintendents in districts without public preschool also strongly agreed that students who attend preschool have better academic performance in kindergarten (n=6, 60.0%) and better social interactions with peers and teachers in kindergarten ((n=6, 60.0%). They felt that student who attend preschool have fewer behavioral issues in kindergarten (n= 3, 30.0%).

None of these superintendents disagreed with any of the three statements. In the open-ended comments, there was only one negative comment:

We are not a daycare. The main reason for public schools being asked (or mandated) to accept younger and younger students is the lack of available daycare programs and therefore the cost. Most schools are not set up to "babysit," changing diapers and caring for children too young for a school setting is the responsibility of parents.

Conclusion and Implications for Policy and Practice

The benefits of a quality preschool program extend to students, school districts and communities. Maine is a leading state in implementing public preschool programs. There are several areas where policy changes may move Maine closer to high quality universal preschool for four-year-olds. There are three potential areas of policy implications that relate to statewide capacity and expansion. The first area is improving the capacity to serve all families and students who may want to use public preschool programs by expanding the number of programs, classes and seats available. The second area is increasing capacity to provide full-time, five-day-a-week programs for families using public preschool. The third area relates to improving the professional development and training of preschool teachers.

Other policy implications from this study include: the need to re-examine the state's funding formula for preschool education, opportunities to revise teacher certification rules to improve teacher recruitment, the need to increase public awareness of the benefits of preschool education, and the need to improve the state's educational database system.

Implications for practice relate to the professional development of preschool teachers. The data reveal a need to upgrade existing professional development at the state and district levels to ensure that preschool teachers have more regular opportunities to engage in professional learning, and to improve the quality of professional development so that it is more clearly focused on early childhood education and incorporates research-based practices.

We describe these implications further in the following section.

Capacity. Currently there are 500 preschool classes that could accommodate 8808 students. If Maine increased capacity to serve all four-year-olds with full-time, five-day-per-week preschool programs, then between 200 and 400 additional classrooms would be needed.

The 71 districts offering preschool three or four days per week would also need to increase staffing. Schools that do not have preschool programs tend to be non-title I schools located in the Southern part of the state. The primary reasons public preschool programs have not been started or expanded to accommodate all four-year-olds are financial. Annual costs, start-up costs, and lack of Chapter 124 approved space are the most common reasons that districts have not begun or expanded their preschool program. Districts that receive higher proportions of state funding have been more successful in implementing public preschool programs in those districts.

Expansion of Hours and Days. Only 18% (1170) of Maine preschool students attend full-day, five-day-week programs. In many Maine communities, families do not have full-time, full week public preschool programs available and must either use private programs entirely or cobble together various programs and childcare services. Full-time, full week public programs could attract families to Maine communities, and would also increase students' time in preschool, improving their readiness for kindergarten.

There are 27 Maine schools with half-day kindergarten programs educating 803 (6.1%) kindergartners. In 2018, 45 states had universal kindergarten laws. Maine is one of the 28 states that mandates universal kindergarten at least half-day, five-days-per-week. The other seventeen states mandated full-day kindergarten. Colorado is one state that enacted a change from half-day to full-day universal kindergarten in the past year (NCES 2020).

School Funding. Maine's school funding formula does not account for students' program time. SAUs receive the same funding to educate a preschooler for a half-day, twice a week as they do to educate the same student full-time, five-days-per week. There is a disincentive to offering full-day, five-day-per-week early childhood education programs.

Teaching Certification. In 2014, Maine was only one of ten states that did not allow those with an early childhood education teaching certificate (birth to age 5) to teach kindergarten. Changing the certification policy to allow early childhood certified teachers to teach kindergarten would make Maine's licensing consistent with other states, allow preschool teachers and districts more flexibility in teaching assignments, and ease hiring and recruitment challenges for school districts.

Teacher Professional Development. While most public preschool teachers are full-time teachers, many are not offered professional development that is focused on early childhood education. Forty percent of kindergarten teachers also lack early childhood education professional development. Professional development for preschool teachers is also challenged by the small number of teachers within a school or district. In fact, many schools have only one early childhood certified teacher. Geographic distance can be another barrier to accessing professional development in some regions of Maine. One model for professional development the state could consider is the Northwest Rural Innovation and Student Engagement network (NW RISE) which has been used for over five years. Job-alike educators meet twice a year for professional development. They then stay in contact by video conference and email. State funds were used to support educators' travel to twice-yearly meetings (Hargreaves, Parsley, & Cox 2015, Hargreaves & O'Connor 2018).

Community Awareness. The lack of full participation in the available public preschool programs indicates that some parents or families may not find their programs convenient in terms

of scheduling, or may not be fully aware of the social and emotional learning benefits of preschool programs and how they help to prepare young children for future success in school. Lack of administrator, educator and/ or community support of preschool programs was reflected in a few survey answers. Peer play is an essential part of early childhood education according to the current research literature.

Maine is a leader in public preschool and continues to be recognized as one by national institutions. Districts recognize the benefits of preschool but feel limited by the cost, space, and the ability to recruit and retain qualified early education teachers. There are areas where public preschool in Maine can be improved. While Maine is making steady progress toward quality universal public preschool, policy can accelerate and support this process.

Reliability of the state's educational database. In attempting to report accurate data on preschool programs and enrollment, and to calculate close estimates for the number of new programs, classes and spaces that would be needed to serve all of Maine's four-year-olds in full-time, five-day-a-week programs, we drew on sources of data collected by the MDOE from school districts. We found wide discrepancies for some of the data points needed, and missing data, which made it very difficult to report on and calculate firm numbers. This is proving to be a recurring challenge for many of the MEPRI studies commissioned by the state. It is clear that serious attention is needed to overhaul and improve the state's educational database system to ensure the most accurate, complete and reliable data are available for all districts statewide to inform state policy decisions.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Survey Instrument and Responses	27
Appendix B. Supplemental Data Tables Based on Data from Maine Department of Education and National Center for Education Statistics	67

Appendix A: Survey Instrument and Responses

1. Which role best describes your current position?

n=83

Position	Frequency	Percent
Superintendent	51	61.5%
Assistant Superintendent	8	9.6%
Principal/Head of School	12	14.5%
Curriculum Coordinator	4	4.8%
Other	8	9.6%

Teacher/ director
 Superintendent/Principal
 Pre-K Teacher
 PreK Director
 PreK Coordinator & Coach
 Pre-K Coordinator
 CDS employee

2. Do your district schools have a preschool program, operate one with a partner or plan to implement one in the future? (check all that apply)

n=84

Program Administration	Frequency	Percent
Yes, there is a program run solely by the SAU.	57	67.9%
Yes, there is a program run jointly by the SAU and one or more federally funded agencies such as Head Start.	22	26.2%
Yes, there is a program run jointly by the SAU and one or more private preschool schools or childcare centers.	3	3.6%
No, there is not a public preschool program.	10	11.9%
There are plans to form a new preschool program.	5	6.0%

3. Has your district discussed collaborating with an agency for preschool programming? (shown to districts that are not collaborating with a private school or agency)

Schools with a preschool program that are not collaborating with outside agency. n=50

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	17	34.0%
No	33	66.0%

Schools without a preschool program. n=10

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	2	20.0%
No	8	80.0%

3b. What are some of the reasons that your district has not collaborated with a private school or agency for preschool programming? (check all that apply) - Selected Choice

Schools with a preschool program that are not collaborating with outside agency. n=43

	Frequency	Percent
No agency in area	10	23.3%
No private school in area	5	11.6%
Agency in area not willing to partner	1	2.3%
Private school(s) in area not willing to partner	1	2.3%
Area agency/private school educational program does not meet Chapter 124 standards	2	4.7%
Physical space at agency/private school does not meet Chapter 124 standards	2	4.7%
Cost to place students with partner agency is higher than cost to educate in SAU	5	11.6%
Parents prefer separate program	6	14.0%
Transportation issues	4	9.3%
Other	19	44.2%

Other: (written comments)

Able to maintain quality programming

Curriculum

Geographic issues

Island school -- preschool experience we offer 4 year olds is half day and simply part of the all day K program in our K-2 multi-age setting.

Not sure what this is asking as we are a public school with our own program.???

Our guidelines and Head Start guidelines do not match well for school hours and transportation.

Ours 2 days/others 4 days

Standards required by the other agencies

There isn't a need for a 3rd party partnership as we have a successful program.

Want to maintain the fidelity of the district PreK program

We did meet quite a few years ago to discuss curriculum expectations. We haven't met to formally collaborate since that time.

We did partner for 5 years. They were hard to partner with. Had to follow their rules not ours.

We just figured we could handle it on our own.

We work with CDS and thus far we have been able to service those families who apply for PK (although we are not universal). Many parents commute and have their children in a daycare close to work and they would not be able to provide transportation (one way) to our PK program.

Would be willing if mutually beneficial.

Schools without a preschool program. n=10

	Frequency	Percent
No agency in area	0	0.0%
No private school in area	0	0.0%
Agency in area not willing to partner	0	0.0%
Private school(s) in area not willing to partner	0	0.0%
Area agency/private school educational program does not meet Chapter 124 standards	1	10.0%
Physical space at agency/private school does not meet Chapter 124 standards	1	10.0%
No space in district schools to house program	6	60.0%
Cost to educate students	3	30.0%
Parents prefer private program	3	30.0%
Parents do not want preschool program	1	10.0%
Transportation issues	1	10.0%
Other	1	10.0%

Other:

We tuition all our students to area schools

What is the primary reason that a partnership between your district and an agency for preschool programs was not formed this year? (Shown only to schools with a preschool program that are not collaborating with outside agency)

Written comments:

Distance and transportation

Distance between programs. We are working on finding a space (hopefully) for head start to work in our district which will help us collaborate. In terms of CDS, we try to collaborate. Unfortunately, CDS does not have the capacity to meet our students needs in a timely and efficient manner.

I'm not entirely sure...I assume because we felt we could handle the addition of more students to our K-8 system seamlessly.

It was going to cost the district money to partner with Head Start.

Never looked into partnering with another agency.

No agency in the area.

No need.

None exist

None available to partner with.

Not considered

Our district is unique in that in addition to running a PK program at each our schools with Kindergarten, we also house a PreSchool program for 3 and 4 year-olds that runs independently through Community Programs. We do collaborate with them by offering relevant professional development.

Our PreK program has been running successfully without partnership.

Our program is based on our philosophy of what an early childhood program needs to be and might not be what the other program's requirements are.

Our School Department partners with various organizations such as the Public Library, and a local Museum, but the partnerships are supplemental offerings, not regular offerings and programming.

PreK Charter we were working with did not continue.

Space

Space issues and the lack of partner to collaborate with in the area.

There has not been a discussion and we are unsure on who we would partner with at this time.
(We don't have Head Start)

There is no agency to partner with that covers all four of the communities that are part of our district.

There is no need.

This is our fifth year and we have had great success without collaboration.

Time...Our PreK teachers are completing a PreK grant, PreK for ME. Much effort and time has been spent implementing the new curriculum and expectations with the grant.

Too busy setting up this new school.

Want to maintain the fidelity of the District PreK program.

We already have an established prek program.

We are a one-school district that is 16-35 miles from the two area districts. The travel distance for students/parents along with loss of local control are the biggest obstacles.

We are a rural community and CDS looks to us to provide services such as speech. We had partnered with Head Start but their requirement for the length of the school day did not allow for two half day programs that fit our teacher contract/transportation run, etc.

We are an AOS and different schools have taken different steps re preschool. CDS provides local services to 4 of our schools -- this is ongoing but may not be continued as we examine the development of preschool programs locally. One school has a preschool operated by the school.

We are piloting our own program.

We are working with the DOE on inclusionary environments at this time.

We collaborated with CDS in the past...easier to provide PK education on our own.

We collaborated with Head Start for three years, but the current demographic in our community no longer supports this collaboration. Head Start was having difficulty filling their seats.

We also found partnering to be more costly than running our program independently as Head Start billed both direct and indirect costs for their services (part time family advocate).

We currently do not have any agencies in the area and the next ones near us are already partnered with other districts.

We did not want one. Our experience in the past was not a good one. Philosophies didn't align well. We had to follow their rules and they would not compromise on any of the issues.

We do work with CDS.

We have a 5 day a week Pre-K program that is meeting the needs of our students and parents.

We have a unique situation. We have our own SAU run program and we also have a separate Head Start program in our facility. The two programs do collaborate at times but are managed separately.

We have expanded our program over the last 3 years and have been able to fill the slots with ease. We see no need at this time to partner with an outside organization.

We have funded our own programs since we implemented them, it was more efficient and cost effective for us to do it this way then collaborating with an agency. We wanted to have the control of the programs and we are able to fill our programs with students from our district.

We have had a pre k program up and running for years. Many local day care providers send a van to school to allow the children to participate in our pK (and k-5) programming.

We have our own pre-k that has been very successful in meeting our students' needs.

We were not asked to collaborate,

What is the primary reason that a partnership between your district and an agency for preschool programs was not formed this year? (Shown only to schools without a preschool)

Cost and space is a big issue.

Costs and facilities.

Most of the issues have to do with existing potential partners not qualifying under Chapter 124 standards either with accreditation issues or with physical space issues. I am willing to partner with these organizations to help move them along, but that will take time. I'd like to see the state step up to help by reducing the Chapter 124 requirements to potential partners only having to reach a 3 on the Quality rating scale vs. the current 4. That would help TREMENDOUSLY. Bottom line is that in my district I do not have physical space in my schools to operate PK programs, nor will I. Our populations are booming and I am having a hard time finding space for my K-12 programs as they currently exist. The only way we are going to be able to have PK programs is to use private/public partners and in order for me to be able to purchase the number of seats I would need to - the requirement needs to be lowered to level 3.

Our community doesn't view as a priority for our community.

There was no interest or expressed need in the community. It was never discussed.

We have begun exploring but the privates have no seats/space available nor does the district have room.

What were the primary reasons that led your district to form a partnership with a federally funded agency (such as Head Start, or Penquis) for the preschool program? (Shown only to districts that indicated that they collaborated with an agency)

Comprehensive services available for students, families and staff.

Cost and expertise

Cost of running a stand alone program

Cost Savings; Connections with Families

Curriculum and supervision

Educational opportunity for students who are not school age yet.

It was already in operation when we decided to team up. We did not want to cause disruption.

Also, at the time, there was no space nor budgeted funds for the school to operate with it's own pre-k.

Maximizing resources and expertise in early childhood

Need for PreK slots to serve our 4 year olds, desire to have families who need them access to services that Head Start provides.

Needs and space

Providing wraparound services to all children enrolled within the district as well as financial reasons

Resources

Space

The Head Start program feeds into our public school system and it made sense for us to partner with them on registration and best placement for students.

The nature of the partnership with our partner, combination of resources, space, expertise, and community provided the ability to initiate the program in our District.

The primary reasons were funding, this allowed our students to have access to preschool.

What were the primary reasons that led your district form a partnership with a private preschool or private childcare center for the preschool program? (shown only to districts that indicated they collaborate with a private program)

Expand slots

Need for PreK slots to serve our 4 year olds, desire to have families who need wrap around care to have this option.

space

What types of preschool programs are run by your district? (Check all that apply)

n=73

	Frequency	Percent
Half-day	32	43.8%
Half-day, Full-day	7	9.6%
Half-day, Full-day, Extended day	1	1.4%
Half-day, Extended day	1	1.4%
Full-day	31	42.5%
Full-day, Extended day	1	1.4%

Can half-day preschool students elect to stay a full day? - Selected Choice

n=41

	Frequency	Percent
Yes, when there is space available	6	14.60%
No	32	78.10%
Other	3	7.30%

They can stay if parents pay for on-site private childcare

We currently only offer full day programs but we are looking to change this in 2 of our 3 schools.

We have not encountered any such request but would certainly try to accommodate.

Do any of your preschool program sites offer after school care for preschoolers?

n=72

	Frequency	Percent
Yes, but there is usually more demand for spaces than are available.	6	8.3%
Yes, there usually is space available.	12	16.7%
No, but there is usually demand for spaces.	24	33.3%
No, usually there is no demand for spaces.	30	41.7%

Including private, Head Start, community agency and your district programs, how many separate preschool programs exist in your community?

n=82

	Frequency	Percent
None	9	11.0%
One	21	25.6%
Two	14	17.1%
Three	11	13.4%
Four or more	27	32.9%

How many kindergarten programs in your district do not have a preschool program at the same location? - Selected Choice

n=83

	Frequency	Percent
None, all kindergarten programs have a preschool program at the same location	51	61.4%
One	16	19.3%
Two	8	9.6%
Other	8	9.6%

Other:

All

All of them

I have NO PK programs.

NA

NA

We are a stand-alone municipal district. We have a partner-based PK program and a full kindergarten program in the same facility.

Are there more four-year olds in your district area that would enroll if space in a public preschool was available?

n=81

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	41	50.6%
No	40	49.4%

If more public preschool programs and/or space were available in your district, approximately how many additional students would enroll?

2-5

3

We have 3 on a waiting list at this time.

4

4

5-6

10

10

10

Approximately 10

10-12

10-15

10-15

16

16

20

20 students

twenty or thirty

Roughly 30-40

At least 32

Approximately 40-60

48-64

70

Estimated 75

80

90

90

144

Not sure

Our class sizes average around 105 so we could, in theory, get another 50 or so students.

However, a number of families have shared that they keep their children out of school until K.

That depends on whether it is a 1/2 day or full day program

This is an unknown quantity.

Unknown

We currently have staffing for 4 more full day students and room for double-digit half-day students. Our classes K-8 average 200, and we currently have 112 Pre-K.

We have not collected that information

For any of your district preschool programs, is there a waiting list or more students wanting to enroll than spaces are available?

n=35

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	22	62.8%
No	13	37.1%

When there are more students wanting to attend a preschool program than there is space available, how important are each of these factors in influencing your district's determination of which students will be enrolled in a preschool program?

n=22

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important
Lottery for space	13 (61.9%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (19.1%)	4 (19.1%)
Order of enrollment (first come first served)	3 (15.0%)	4 (20.0%)	1 (5.0%)	6 (30.0%)	6 (30.0%)
Child enrolled in partner program as a 3 year old	10 (50.0%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (35.0%)	3 (15.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Proximity of home to program site	11 (52.4%)	1 (4.8%)	4 (19.1%)	3 (14.3%)	2 (9.5%)
Older sibling in same school	9 (47.4%)	4 (21.1%)	3 (15.8%)	3 (15.8%)	0 (0.0%)
Diagnosed disability	5 (23.8%)	1 (4.8%)	4 (19.1%)	6 (28.6%)	5 (23.8%)
Suspected disability	5 (25.0%)	3 (15.0%)	4 (20.0%)	4 (20.0%)	4 (20.0%)
Family income below 185% of federal poverty level	4 (18.2%)	1 (4.6%)	3 (13.6%)	6 (27.3%)	8 (36.4%)
High risk family situation such as incarceration, substance abuse...	8 (38.1%)	2 (9.5%)	4 (19.1%)	5 (23.8%)	2 (9.5%)
English language is not the primary language spoken at home	8 (38.1%)	1 (4.8%)	4 (19.1%)	6 (28.6%)	2 (9.5%)
Caretakers employed full-time	13 (65.0%)	2 (10.0%)	4 (20.0%)	1 (5.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Other	1 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (20.0%)	2 (40.0%)	1 (20.0%)

Other:

Homeless family

Role models

single parent family

If all students could be accommodated in a district preschool program of their parents' choice, how many of your district students do you think would enroll in each type of program:

	None	Few	Some	Many	Most	All	n=
Extended day program	3 (4.1%)	14 (19.2%)	26 (35.6%)	20 (27.4%)	8 (11.0%)	2 (2.7%)	73
Full-day program	1 (1.3%)	6 (7.7%)	13 (16.7%)	16 (20.5%)	31 (39.7%)	11 (14.1%)	78
Half-day program	3 (4.2%)	11 (15.5%)	20 (28.2%)	19 (26.8%)	12 (16.9%)	6 (8.5%)	71
Would not enroll in a public school preschool program	6 (9.0%)	46 (68.7%)	14 (20.9%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.5%)	0 (0.0%)	67

Do you intend to begin a preschool program, add additional preschool programs or expand your district's preschool program in the next three years?

n=82

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	15	18.3%
It is under discussion, but no final determination has been made	30	36.6%
No	37	45.1%

How many additional spaces for preschool students are planned?

1

1 or 2

3

16

20 to 30

32 for next year

32 slots/year

70 in 2023-24

I would need 220 spaces for all, but we can't do that, so hoping for 100 "slots" that we can "purchase" from partners.

No plans YET; however, we expanded from 48-112 and want to make sure all kids can access.

As I said before, our classes typically are at the 200 mark in our community.

TBD

Two to three classrooms.

We just expanded this year.

How many additional spaces for preschool students are being discussed?

1

1

1

one depending upon need

1 room

One or two within current school building

Possibly 3

10-12

10-15

15

15

16

sixteen

18

30

32

3 classrooms

As needed to accommodate universal option

Still in discussion, space is an issue.

0; discussion is for increased dose and duration

more days, not more spaces

None, expansion would be to full day PreK

No discussion on this

We are discussing a three year old program. Our area is remote and could use three year old programming.

We are talking with our districts about a regional program.

Will vary by school and program parameters

Is your district planning major renovation or construction of any elementary school in the next few years?

n=81

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	21	25.9%
No	60	74.1%

Will your district preschool program be expanded as part of the elementary school renovation/construction project?

n=21

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	15	71.4%
No	6	28.6%

Does any preschool class share space with another grade by meeting in the same room but at a different time?

n=68

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	3	4.4%
No	65	95.6%

Do two or more sessions of your preschool program meet in the same room but at different times?

n=68

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	32	47.1%
No	36	52.9%

Please explain how the preschool space is shared between different preschool sessions or with different grades.

1/2 day sessions same teacher, same room

2 am sessions and 2 pm sessions each day

Am and pm

Am and pm programs

AM and PM sessions in the same classroom, same teaching staff

AM session/PM session

AM/PM

Half day program

Morning and afternoon sessions

Morning class ends at 11:10. Afternoon session begins at 12:10.

PreK is half day, so there are two sessions - an AM session and a PM session

PreK sessions are half day, so the teacher has two sections of PreK

Same room - morning session and then an afternoon session

Split Day

Start and end times of sessions do not overlap

Teacher has an am session and a pm session in the same room

Two 1/2 day sessions have the same teacher and use the same space

We have AM and PM PK at our school.

We have an am session and a pm session

We have morning and afternoon sessions

We have one morning session and one afternoon session

We run two half day programs and the space is shared

We run two half day sessions in two classrooms dedicated to PK

2 full days & 2 full days

Students come on different days.

We have different day programs, so a Monday and Thursday Program, and then a Tuesday

Friday program that use the same space.

We offer classes on MW or TR full day so they share the space on opposite days

One classroom and Teacher is part of our collaborative program in the morning and teachers a

local Preschool program in the afternoon in the same space.

In the same building as Kindergarten and Grade 1

Small island school; multi-age setting. PreK and K meet separately for an hour each day in the great room but otherwise share the K-2 classroom space.

What factors make it difficult to begin or expand the number of students that can be accommodated in your districts preschool program. (check all that apply)

n=43

	Frequency	Percent
Number of potential 4 year olds in district	3	7.0%
Convincing parents to send their children to preschool	0	0.0%
Convincing parents to use public preschool over private preschool	5	11.6%
Parents wanting an extended day program at the same site	6	14.0%
Lack of community support for public preschool programming	4	9.3%
Lack of a partner agency	3	7.0%
Indoor Physical space that could be modified to comply with Chapter 124	15	34.9%
Outdoor Physical space that could be modified to comply with Chapter 124	9	20.9%
Start-up costs such as the cost of renovations	18	41.9%
Annual costs of running the program	18	41.9%
Ability to hire and retain qualified early education teachers	14	32.6%
District is a low or non-receiver of state funds	9	20.9%
Transportation issues	7	16.3%
Other	7	16.3%

Other:

A mandate not funded

Charter School

Need more classroom space

Physical space/classrooms

We are looking to have 2 sections go to 1/2 days every day next year. Bussing midday will be an additional cost.

We tuition all students

What factors make it difficult to increase the number of days and/or hours of your preschool program to full-day five days a week . (check all that apply)

n=71

	Frequency	Percent
Our preschool programs already are full-time five days per week	22	31.0%
Convincing parents to send their children to preschool for more time each week	10	14.1%
Convincing parents to use public preschool over private preschool	0	0.0%
Parents wanting an extended day program at the same site	3	4.2%
Lack of community support for public preschool programming	4	5.6%
Lack of a partner agency	1	1.4%
Indoor Physical space that could be modified to comply with Chapter 124	18	25.4%
Outdoor Physical space that could be modified to comply with Chapter 124	4	5.6%
Start-up costs such as the cost of renovations	13	18.3%
Annual costs of running the program	17	23.9%
Ability to hire and retain qualified early education teachers	16	22.5%
District is a low or non-receiver of state funds	5	7.0%
Transportation issues	10	14.1%
Other	10	14.1%

Other:

Administration of before and after school programs

Already full day program

Comm. support, Space, staffing

Convincing staff that the three-day program should be five.

Head Start only offers a 4 day program.

Philosophical reasons why more time would be appropriate; not everyone agrees full day preschool is appropriate for young children.

Salary for full time teachers, budget concerns

Teacher with multiple roles

We do not have any more classroom space to have a 5 day/ week full day program.

We do not have enough classrooms to accommodate full time PreK

We transitioned this year form a half day program to a full day program and saw an increase of participation.

Please elaborate on the decision to expand or not expand your district's preschool program in the next few years.

67% of the PreK go to day care from the half day and take a long nap in the afternoon. It appears the 4 year-olds do not have the stamina to work a 7 hour day yet.

All of our schools offer a full day PK program and intend to keep that format in most of our schools, but in the future we could look at other options if conditions change.

Another problem is the number of seats we would need to purchase from partners (100 would only reach half of our PK students) the other is not enough partners able to reach current Chapter 124 rules (either with accreditation or with physical spaces). Those are the Three biggest problems in my district.

At this time we have four pk rooms that are servicing 64 students in an all day program. We do not have a waiting list for the first time in ten years

Because of the perceived need, the district would most likely want to expand our preschool programs.

Currently there are 7 pre-k (112 students) representing approx 50% of the annual K registration. the goal is to continually expand to reach 75% of the population. Expansion beyond this would need more parent desire for programming.

Full time Program

I am currently talking with area superintendents about sharing services regionally and possibly having a regional pre-school center.

I am out of space at a school.

If money is allocated and we can provide space these two variables would make it doable

Lack of space

None

Our community does not view as a priority for our district.

Our community is small and this year we have had our largest number of 14, but I don't think we'd surpass that number. We are already full-time five days/week.

Our pre-kindergarten enrollments have stayed steady for the last several years which has resulted in no "demand" to change the structure of our program.

Prior to this year we have not been able to consistently fill the 32 full time seats we had available. This year we have filled all 32 seats and have several students on a waiting list. Projections based on known siblings combined with anticipated housing increases in town indicate that we will exceed 32 applicants in 2020-21. Space could be made

available in our current elementary school and we would anticipate being able to hire qualified staff. The issue for us is financial. Our district is a minimal receiver in a tourist town with a small year round population. The costs of adding another Pre-K classroom would be a burden to the community.

Small school which has a teacher who teacher Pre-K in the morning and Special Education in the afternoons.

Space, need, funding

Our School Department would like to have full day PreK. Presently, we do not have enough space to accommodate this change.

The cost of full time staff is a barrier in increasing from 2 days a week to 5 days a week.

The decision is based on enrollment

The decision will be based on schools who have available space and funding.

The primary issue is financial as relates to staffing and startup costs. Space is also a significant issue at some schools.

The two area school districts that we tuition our students to both run preK 1 programs and space hasn't been an issue.

There has not been an expressed interest and has been no discussion on the matter.

This is purely cost driven. Some School Committee members have not been convinced of the need.

Two issues: Convincing the parents to send their children for more time and funding to add staff.

We already have a full day program and do not foresee a problem with enrollment exceeding the limit.

We already have universal PreK for all students five days a week, full-day, with transportation.

We already offer 4 half day sessions per week with an AM and PM.

We are a district that is nearly close to universal PreK. One of our community's prefers the full day (2 days/week) as opposed to everyday 1/2 day due to childcare issues which are more expensive for 1/2 days.

We are already in every school, accepting all children, full day, 5 days a week.

We are building a new grade 5-8 middle school. When grade 5 moves out of the elementary school this will create room for PreK classrooms with a goal of having space available for about 50% of our projected K enrollment.

We are building a new school that will have 4 preschool classes.

We are considering expansion. We do not have the space or funding at this time

We are currently limited in space to expand. The areas we are in are adequate but not ideal and they crowd other programs. We do offer 2 full day programs.

We are currently meeting the needs of our community.

We are hoping to have a new school within 5 years and that is when it would be considered for that region. In our other region there is a waiting list but we have no space to expand.

We are limited on space in our elementary buildings. One preK class is housed in the Town

Office next door to the school. Another elementary school has absolutely no classroom space available for a preK classroom.

We are near maximum of our 72 slots and would consider adding another PK teacher and 2 more sessions.

We are not a daycare. The main reason for public schools being asked (or mandated) to accept younger and younger students is the lack of available daycare programs and therefore the cost. Most schools are not set up to "babysit," changing diapers and caring for children too young for a school setting is the responsibility of parents.

We continue to see a decline in our District's enrollment. If this trend continues, we have discussed and may consider relocating 5th grade students to the middle school. This would make room at the elementary schools for more Prek classrooms. Then, we would need to plan and modify buildings to comply with Chapter 124 requirements and find qualified staff

We currently have a few PreK classrooms that run the full elementary school day, some that run almost the full elementary day, and one program (a Head Start site) that runs 8:30-1:30. We anticipate that if we were able to provide transportation, the PreK hours would be able to mirror the K-5 hours, thus "extending" the school day for the sites that are not the full K-5 day. As of now, staggered start and end times are to accommodate PreK families entering and exiting the building without competing with the busses that transport the K-5 students. That being said, many of our working families want and need before and after school care as well, and not being able to provide this wrap around care widely is often a barrier that results in working families not even engaging in our lottery process for our PreK slots, or declining a slot once they are chosen via the lottery b/c they cannot make other arrangements for child care in order to use our (school day) PreK slots. It is our hope to expand our program to offer both wrap around care and transportation, but the time, costs, and complexities of planning and implementing these make the process slow.

We currently have two half day sessions with a total of 28 students. We have a small waiting list but we also have three other private preschools with daycare before or after the program. Head Start also currently has one preschool program in our district. If we do not find a way to transport our students we would not get any additional children unless we became a full day program.

We currently serve 90% of our K students. The other 10% are happy with the local preschools or are in an outplacement with CDS. Therefore, we are servicing all the students in our community. We have not explored full day due to lack of parent interest and lack of space to add additional classrooms.

We do not provide transportation for pre-school program. This limits which children attend.

We have 3 programs in 3 out of 5 elementary schools. The two schools that do not have a program are small rural schools that would not have enough students to run a program. Students that live in the two towns that do not have a program attend one of the other programs in the district.

We have 5 full days of Pre-k so we are doing well with offering a program for our students.

We have been in discussion but honestly the space and the upcoming decision on providing for CDS students in our schools will demand space as well - it really is about providing the space AND providing an opportunity that does not detract from the private offerings as well.

We have drunk the Pre-K "Koolaid" and cannot say enough about the benefit to our community. :) Of the 48 students who attended last year, 45 entered K and transitioned smoother than other students. CDS has also helped with earlier identification than would have occurred in K.

We have elementary construction projects that will provide space to expand our Pre K programs. We have made the initial commitment to provide this opportunity for all interested families and expanded from 1 to 2 classrooms last year.

We have no more space available to expand our programming.

We have not had a wait list in the last few years and it appears that we can meet our community needs with 3 half day programs at this time.

We have not had community support for moving from a half-day to full-day model. Additionally, our population is aging and we do not have a critical mass of four year olds to "force" the issue with the community.

We project only 1-3 preschool age children in the coming years.

We would consider expanding our program if public demand dictated the need. We have a cap of 18 student at this time. We have only enrolled 16 and 12 over the past two years. Our community is very supportive of education and would likely support an expanded program.

We would like to expand the program to offer a longer session for children to attend preschool within the district.

We would love to renovate a space on our school campus in order to hold publicly funded Pre-K. If we had the resources available to do this affordably, we would start ASAP.

We, as a district, recognize the importance of and positive benefits of offering pre-school opportunities to students, especially those who do not necessary receive support with background academic knowledge or development of social skills that help students in their transition to public schools. We would like to invest in our younger students to avoid enrolling kindergarten students who start already behind their same-aged peers (many of whom never catch up).

While we occasionally have a short waiting list, for the six years that I've been here as principal, we have been able to service all of the students who have registered for PK.

Are you the same person who filled out the first part of the survey?

n=81

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	77	95.1%
No	4	4.9%

Which role best describes your current position? (shown to those who didn't fill out first part)

Curriculum coordinator (2)

PreK Director

Prek Teacher

Are any preschool classes combined with other grade levels and/or age levels in the same classroom? (multi-age classroom)

n=72

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	3	4.2%
No	69	95.8%

What other grade and/or age levels may be in the same classroom when preschool classes are taught? (Check all that may apply)

Classes for age 3 or under, Kindergarten

Kindergarten

Kindergarten, First Grade, Second Grade

(no district selected responses of third grade or higher)

What curriculum is used in your preschool classes? (Check all that apply) - Selected Choice

n=71

	Frequency	Percent
Pre K for ME (from MDOE)	18	25.4%
Pre K for ME (from MDOE), Commercial preschool curriculum	2	2.8%
Pre K for ME (from MDOE), Teacher creates own curriculum	7	9.9%
Pre K for ME (from MDOE), Teacher creates own curriculum, Other	2	2.8%
Pre K for ME (from MDOE), Other	1	1.4%
Commercial preschool curriculum	20	28.2%
Commercial preschool curriculum, Teacher creates own curriculum	4	5.6%
Commercial preschool curriculum, Other	1	1.4%
Commercial preschool curriculum, Commercial kindergarten curriculum, Teacher creates own curriculum	2	2.8%
Commercial kindergarten curriculum, Teacher creates own curriculum	1	1.4%
Teacher creates own curriculum	4	5.6%
Teacher creates own curriculum, Other	4	5.6%
Other	5	7.0%

Preschool commercial curriculum used:

Big Day for PreK (2)

Creative Curriculum

Frog Street

High Scope (2)

Lively Letters, Handwriting without Tears

Opening the World of Learning (OWL) 2005 edition (2)

Opening the World of Learning (OWL) unspecified edition (10)

Opening the World of Learning (OWL) unspecified edition and Building Blocks (3)

Starfall, Hand Writing Without Tears

World of Wonder

Kindergarten commercial curriculum used:

Envisions (math), Handwriting without Tears

Reading Street literacy, Everyday Math

Other curriculum used:

Approved local curriculum which was reviewed by MDOE

Boston Public Pilot

Everyday Math, Heggerty Phonics, Fountas & Pinell, Handwriting without Tears,
Understanding by Design Created Curriculum

Head Start curriculum

Kindergarten Jump Start

Not sure

Opening the World of Learning (OWL) unspecified (3)

Second Step (social-emotional learning) (2)

We use the MELDS standards.

**What assessments does your district use for formative assessment of preschool students?
(Check all that apply) - Selected Choice**

n=71

	Frequency	Percent
Child Observation Record (COR)	12	16.9%
Child Observation Record (COR), Work Sampling System	9	12.7%
Child Observation Record (COR), Other	1	1.4%
Teaching Strategies Gold	19	26.8%
Teaching Strategies Gold, Child Observation Record (COR)	2	2.8%
Teaching Strategies Gold, Child Observation Record (COR), Work Sampling System	4	5.6%
Teaching Strategies Gold, Other	2	2.8%
Work Sampling System	5	7.0%
Work Sampling System, Other	6	8.5%
Other	11	15.5%

Other assessments:

Brigance, Frog Street, STAR

Children's Progress Academic Assessment part of NWEA

Developmental Indicators for Assessment of Learning, Fourth Edition (DIAL 4) (2)

District Developed Assessment System that aligns to MELDS (Maine's Early Learning and Development Standards) (3)

ESGI

Not sure

Observation Survey

Portfolios, videos, anecdotal notes

PreLAS

Preschool is primarily an enrichment experience getting children ready for kindergarten.

Scholastic Early Childhood Inventory (SECI) Alpha Knowledge Letter Recognition; SECI rhyming; SECI math, School Dept. Letter id, letter naming, and letter sounds;

Teacher Created

Teacher-created assessments based on background experience and TSG experience

Thematic Creative Curriculum

Worlds of Wonder, DIAL

Are your preschool teachers considered full-time employees? (Check all that apply)

n=69

	Frequency	Percent
All are full-time preschool teachers.	52	75.4%
All are full-time employees but have other duties.	3	4.4%
Most are full-time preschool teachers.	5	7.3%
Most are full-time employees but have other duties.	2	2.9%
Some are full-time preschool teachers.	2	2.9%
Some are full-time employees but have other duties.	1	1.5%
All are full-time employees but have other duties., Most are full-time preschool teachers., Most are full-time employees but have other duties., Some are full-time preschool teachers.	1	1.5%
None are full-time employees.	3	4.4%

In the previous school year, how often did the preschool teachers in your district attend staff in-service training? - Selected Choice

n=69

	Frequency	Percent
Two to three times per semester	34	49.3%
Once a semester	10	14.5%
Once a year	5	7.3%
Never	1	1.5%
I do not know	4	5.8%
Other	15	21.7%

Other:

Weekly

Every week, PLC days in district

We have weekly PLC time, where staff collaborate on lessons, assessments, and student work.

Monthly

At least once a month (2)

All faculty meetings, district workshops, multiple off site opportunities, etc.

All in-service days just like a K-12 regular classroom teacher

Same as other teachers

Pk teachers attend all five PD days that other staff members attended

Training provided with Boston Public Pilot, as well as in-district opportunities

Head Start makes these arrangements.

Partner agency does this

Preschool teachers are hired through a contracted service

This is year 1

In the previous school year, how often did the preschool teachers in your district attend staff in-service that was specifically focused on early childhood education and development? - Selected Choice

n=68

	Frequency	Percent
Two to three times per semester	15	22.1%
Once a semester	13	19.1%
Once a year	18	26.5%
Never	4	5.9%
I do not know	7	10.3%
Other	11	16.2%

Other:

Twice a month

Monthly or more (2)

Monthly

2-3 times a year

We provided a 3 day PK Institute on site last summer and all staff in PK including the Ed Techs attended. We also took all PK teachers to NYC Teachers College for PD specifically around PreK.

Partner does this

Head Start makes these arrangements.

Offered through Penquis

Not sure

This is year 1

In the previous school year, how often did the preschool teachers receive coaching that was specifically aimed at the prekindergarten level?

n=69

	Frequency	Percent
Weekly	2	2.9%
Biweekly	8	11.6%
Monthly	8	11.6%
Two to three times per semester	12	17.4%
Once per semester	7	10.1%
Never	16	23.2%
I do not know	16	23.2%

In the previous school year, how often did the preschool teachers receive regular professional peer development such as a Professional Learning Community that was specifically aimed at the prekindergarten and/or kindergarten level?

n=69

	Frequency	Percent
Weekly	12	17.4%
Biweekly	3	4.4%
Monthly	11	15.9%
Two-Three times per semester	7	10.1%
Once per semester	12	17.4%
Never	8	11.6%
I do not know	16	23.2%

Does your district provide training on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES), behavior and building resilience to preschool teachers and preschool Ed Techs?

n=69

	Frequency	Percent
Mandatory each year	8	11.6%
In-service	31	44.9%
Optional with time provided to attend	10	14.5%
Providers are encouraged to attend events outside of work hours	6	8.7%
Definitely not	5	7.3%
I do not know	9	13.0%

Does your district have behavioral consultants or coaches that work with preschool teachers?

n=69

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	39	56.5%
No	27	39.1%
I do not know	3	4.4%

What types of kindergarten programs are run by your district? (Check all that apply) - Selected Choice

n=77

	Frequency	Percent
Half-day	5	6.5%
Full-day	70	90.9%
Full-day,Extended day	2	2.6%

Can half-day kindergarten students elect to stay a full day? - Selected Choice

n=5

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	0	0.0%
No	5	100.0%

For most of your district kindergarten students that did not attend a public preschool program, what type of education did they have prior to kindergarten?

n=79

	Frequency	Percent
Head Start or Community Agency preschool	13	16.5%
Private preschool	15	19.0%
Formal home-schooling	0	0.0%
Daycare	24	30.4%
No formal program	16	20.3%
I do not know	11	13.9%

In the previous school year, how often did the kindergarten teachers in your district attend staff in-service training? - Selected Choice

n=78

	Frequency	Percent
Two to three times per semester	50	64.1%
Once a semester	7	9.0%
Once a year	3	3.9%
Never	1	1.3%
I do not know	4	5.1%
Other	13	16.7%

Other

Weekly (4)

Weekly PLC meetings

Monthly

Once a month at least

2-3 year

5 days

All required staff in-service training

Same as other teachers

Always - staff meetings, PLCs, in service, off site, etc.

No schools

In the previous school year, how often did the kindergarten teachers in your district attend staff in-service that was specifically focused on early childhood education and development? - Selected Choice

n=78

	Frequency	Percent
Two to three times per semester	20	25.6%
Once a semester	20	25.6%
Once a year	14	18.0%
Never	7	9.0%
I do not know	11	14.1%
Other	6	7.7%

Other

- Monthly (2)
- Monthly or more
- Twice a month
- 2 times
- No schools

Does your district have coaches that work with kindergarten teachers?

n=76

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	43	56.6%
No	32	42.1%
I do not know	1	1.3%

In the previous school year, how often did the kindergarten teachers receive regular professional peer development such as a Professional Learning Community that was specifically aimed at the kindergarten level?

n=77

	Frequency	Percent
Weekly	14	18.2%
Biweekly	9	11.7%
Monthly	14	18.2%
Two-Three times per semester	12	15.6%
Once per semester	9	11.7%
Never	6	7.8%
I do not know	13	16.9%

Does your district provide training on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES), behavior and building resilience to kindergarten teachers and kindergarten Ed Techs?

n=77

	Frequency	Percent
Mandatory each year	8	10.4%
In-service	39	50.7%
Optional with time provided to attend	12	15.6%
Providers are encouraged to attend events outside of work hours	5	6.5%
Definitely not	6	7.8%
I do not know	7	9.1%

Please express your agreement or disagreement with the following statements. - Children who attend our public preschool have :

n=69

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable
better academic performance in kindergarten	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (5.8%)	21 (30.4%)	43 (62.3%)	1 (1.5%)
better social interactions with peers and teachers in kindergarten	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (4.4%)	17 (24.6%)	48 (69.6%)	1 (1.5%)
fewer behavioral issues in kindergarten	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.5%)	11 (15.9%)	27 (39.1%)	29 (42.0%)	1 (1.5%)

Please express your agreement or disagreement with the following statements. - Children who attend preschool have:

n=10

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable
better academic performance in kindergarten	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (40.0%)	6 (60.0%)	0 (0.0%)
better social interactions with peers and teachers in kindergarten	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (40.0%)	6 (60.0%)	0 (0.0%)
fewer behavioral issues in kindergarten	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (30.0%)	4 (40.0%)	3 (30.0%)	0 (0.0%)

Please share any additional comments on public preschool here.

Again, I think offering a public preschool option for families would be excellent. It really is about the space!

Although not formal programming, the district PreK classes work closely with a wide range of organizations for specific programming needs. Although not exclusive, some examples are:

YMCA

Boys and Girls Club

Good Shepherd Food Bank

Parks and Rec

Public Library

CDS

University of Maine

Being an AOS, this is a very difficult survey to answer.

Capacity is a huge issue here. With our growing overall populations, we are struggling to provide adequate space for our K-12, let alone expand to PK. The only way we can expand to PK would be through public/private partnerships, but right now of the 38 early care providers in my community, only 2 meet level 4 required by Chapter 124. There are several, however that are at level 3 qualifications and who would be interested in partnering with the public school to offer seats if state funding were available...we also have several that are level 2 that would be interested in moving to level 3. The barrier to level 4 is mostly the cost of accreditation. If we are going to keep the level 4 requirement then we need HUGE INVESTMENTS to help these providers reach that mark - if we aren't going to support that then we need to lower the requirements to level 3. My two cents!

CDS services are often delayed due to a variety of reasons

If funding was available we would maximize children in attendance.

It would be great if the state offered more pre K specific trainings and helped work with local colleges to provide coursework for the 081 certification.

Most school districts can not afford the additional cost of running these programs which would be paid for through local property taxes.

One of the greatest benefits of a public PK is that student learn routines of how school works which translates to familiarity with buses, staff. Some the questions asked are really dependent on how strong your teachers are. Also when placing students, we have no real history on the students.

Note: PreK is the most heavily regulated program in the Pk-12 schools. Rest time is the

biggest issue because some kids rest and others misbehave.

Our district has benefitted from a high level of professional development for Pre-K and K teachers because of our involvement in the Preschool Development Grant and the Kindergarten Curriculum Pilot through the DOE. Without these opportunities we would not have professional development or coaching that is targeted to this age/grade level and developmentally appropriate practice. PEG funds have supported training for teachers, coaches and administrators. This has been crucial to the success of our program. The funding has allowed us to integrate practices that support PBIS, MTSS, and coaching to enhance developmentally appropriate practice into our Pre-K to Grade 2 classrooms.

Our Preschool students who return for K the following year experience a much smoother transition as they are used to staff, building, routines etc.

Our programs are 2 day a week programs and we would really like them to be 4 half day for consistency but transportation is a barrier.

Our RSU is part of the Federal Preschool Expansion grant. There is an intensive focus on training and professional development.

Our teachers are receiving regular coaching this year. This is new to the district.

Partnerships with existing programs in the community are wonderful in theory, and are important if we want to ensure that public PreK does not take all 4 year olds from community programs who rely on 4 year old enrollments to help subsidize infant and toddler care (which is also critical). Finding space in elementary school buildings OR in high quality partner sites that match the needs in various neighborhoods can be challenging. In practice, there are many barriers to providing PreK in partnership with community partners, including: pay inequity in community partner programs vs. public PreK teacher salaries (resulting in partner site staff wanting to leave to go work for public schools), difficulty of school districts to transport to students partner sites that are not in the student's home neighborhoods, complexities of navigating agreements/MOUs and dedicated staff/time to do this work, financial cost sharing that "works" for both parties, among others. Logistically, if there is space, it is easier to add PreK classrooms into existing public elementary school buildings than to engage in partnerships (e.g. 1 classroom/partner site, potentially resulting in multiple partners with which to navigate partnerships, create MOUS, etc) but there are often unintended negative consequences (e.g. offering wrap around care in public schools is difficult and costly for public schools, but partner sites often already have wrap around care built in, and Head Start programs have additional child and family supports that public schools do not have). Another big need is helping public elementary school administrators to understand what quality PreK looks like and how to best support teachers to implement it. Finally, existing district PD and curriculum planning structures that will need support to authentically include PreK into their planning and delivery services provided (e.g. math and literacy coaches, social work support, etc.) and professional development.

The Pre-K program in our district has been very successful and we appreciate the state support.

There needs to be more funding per pupil if we have a 4 or 5 day per week program instead of a 2 day a week program. Right now the funding is the same and clearly the cost of 4 or 5 days is substantially more.

This is our first year of Pre-K. We have no data on how it will affect our k kids.

This year has been challenging for our district. We have changed PreK partnership due to the closing of a program. We have been lucky to procure a partnership with Head Start. We have interested in learning more about how we can develop and manage our own prek program but space, teacher costs, and knowledge of curriculum, licensing and supervision of the program will need to be determined.

We are concerned with the implications if Public Preschool is required for a full day. This will create an issue where we will have to have less students served, as we do not have the funds or the space to add additional classes.

We are very fortunate to have a full day preschool program at our school. This is our third year as a full day program. Parents were a bit apprehensive at first and a couple had opted to have their children start half days but they soon had them going all day as they were missing out on a lot of afternoon activities and programs. Our preschool teacher has attended a national conference two years ago and will be attending another national conference in the very near future. The program she runs is very well done and she is teaching from a research based curriculum. We believe that our students that attend our preschool program are very well prepared to move on to kindergarten. Those students that come to us for kindergarten and have not attended a preschool program whether it be with us or another school are behind both academically and socially.

We believe that our Preschool programs in our district are important to the academic, behavioral success of our students.

We have had the development of a full day pre k program for over five years. Previously, there was only a Head Start option that would serve fewer than 30 children per year. Through a partnership with Head Start we now have several pre k classrooms. This has been possible through a partnership with Head Start, but that partnership has come with inherent challenges relative to philosophy and curriculum. Those challenges have been worked through but the outcome stills requires considerable compromise to meet the Federal expectations. However, the compromises are welcomed given the opportunity to provide several classrooms of full day programming for students. The big challenge is the level of funding our partner agency receives year to year.

We think a strong public preschool program is critical for the integration of CDS services into school districts. We believe sound early intervention will provide better outcomes for students and reduce special education costs in later grades.

We would love help developing our own Public preschool program because we are finding that a lot more of our kindergarten kids are coming in with no pre-k because the partner agency does not provide transportation and there is a strict limit on numbers because of income.

We (educators) are amazed at how learners in this day and age come to school not knowing

letters, colors, and numbers. Fine motor skills are non-existent due to electronics.

Appendix B: Supplemental Data Tables Based on Data from Maine Department of Education and National Center for Education Statistics.

Table 1. Comparison of survey sample with Maine SAUs that offer kindergarten by geographic region.

Geographic area	Survey Respondents	Number of SAUs in Survey	Number of SAUs in MDOE enrollment data
Central	19 (21.6%)	30 (22.2%)	43 (22.1%)
Northern	28 (31.8%)	61 (45.2%)	93 (47.7%)
Southern	21 (23.9%)	21 (15.6%)	30 (15.4%)
Western	20 (22.7%)	23 (17.0%)	29 (14.9%)
Total	88 (100%)	135 (100%)	195 (100%)

Classifications of Geographic Area

Central Maine (Kennebec, Knox, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Waldo)

Northern Maine (Aroostook, Hancock, Penobscot, Piscataquis, Washington)

Southern Maine (Cumberland, York)

Western Maine (Androscoggin, Franklin, Oxford, Somerset)

Table 2. Comparison of survey sample with Maine SAUs that offer kindergarten by average number of first graders in district.

Average First Grade Enrollment	Survey Respondents	Number of SAUs in Survey	Number of SAUs in MDOE enrollment data
Under 16 students	19 (21.6%)	61 (45.2%)	69 (35.4%)
16-50 students	20 (22.7%)	24 (17.8%)	50 (25.6%)
More than 50 students	49 (55.7%)	50 (37.0%)	76 (39.0%)
Total	88 (100%)	135 (100%)	195 (100%)

Table 3. Number of schools that are above, at or below the number of approved preschool spaces statewide in 2018-19.

2018-19 School Data	Preschool Students 2018-19	Kindergarten Students 2019-20	Approved spaces	Number of schools
Far above capacity (eight or more students above capacity)	473	562	256	6
Above Capacity (one to eight students above capacity)	692	1048	632	19
At Capacity	720	1299	720	27
One or two students below capacity	985	1594	1040	40
Below capacity (three or more students under capacity)	3154	4598	4912	140
No capacity information	51	199		10
Total	6106	9300	7560	242
None		3885		95

Table 4. Number of schools that are above, at or below the number of approved preschool spaces statewide in 2019-20.

2019-20 School Data	Preschool Students 2019-20	Kindergarten Students 2019-20	Approved spaces	Number of schools
Far above capacity (eight or more students above capacity)	433	644	240	8
Above Capacity (one to eight students above capacity)	462	709	400	17
At Capacity	1008	1519	1008	34
One or two students below capacity	857	1350	904	32
Below capacity (three or more students under capacity)	3278	5182	4976	142
No enrollment information		210	192	7
No capacity information	150	203		12
Total	6188	9817	7720	252
None		3327		84

Table 5. Number of schools that are above, at or below the number of approved preschool spaces by region in state 2018-19.

2018-19	Central	Northern	Southern	Western
Above capacity (one or more students above capacity)	8	11	4	2
At Capacity	7	3	7	10
One or two students below capacity	10	12	7	11
Below capacity (three or more students under capacity)	27	69	11	33
Missing information	1	6	3	0
Total	53	101	32	56
None	32	13	41	8

Table 6. Number of schools that are above, at or below the number of approved preschool spaces by region in state 2019-20.

2019-20	Central	Northern	Southern	Western
Far above capacity (one or more students above capacity)	6	14	4	1
At Capacity	7	3	14	10
One or two students below capacity	8	14	1	9
Below capacity (three or more students under capacity)	31	59	16	36
Missing information	2	11	4	2
Total	54	101	39	58
None	31	13	34	6

Table 7. Number of schools collaborating with federal agency or private preschool to operate PreK programs.

Preschool partners	Schools	Classrooms	Maximum Students
Have Partner	71 (29.0%)	156 (31.8%)	2496 (31.9%)
No Partner	174 (71.0%)	334 (68.2%)	5336 (68.1%)
Total	245	490	7832

Table 8. Distribution of schools offering kindergarten by Title I status and geographic region.

Title I 2017 Schools	Central	Northern	Southern	Western	Total
Title I School	75 (89.3%)	105 (97.2%)	59 (81.9%)	62 (95.0%)	301 (91.8%)
Not Title I	9 (9.1%)	3 (2.8%)	13 (18.1%)	2 (3.1%)	27 (8.2%)

Table 9. Distribution of schools by Title I schools and hours per week of preschool program.

Title I School and Preschool Duration	Full, 5 days*	Partial week**	Other/ No information	None	Total
Title I School	58 (19.4%)	128 (42.8%)	45 (15.1%)	68 (22.7%)	299 (100%)
Not Title I	3 (11.1%)	5 (18.5%)	3 (11.1%)	16 (59.3%)	27 (100%)
Total	61	133	48	84	326

*Full, 5 days a week programs have full-time five-day-per-week preschool programs

**Partial preschool programs operate half-day per week and/or fewer than five-days per week

Table 10. Distribution of schools by city/rural location and hours per week of preschool program.

Preschool Duration by School	City Suburb	Rural: Fringe	Rural	Town	Total
Full time (full-day, 5 days per week)	10 (18.5%)	4 (8.3%)	43 (22.5%)	4 (12.1%)	61
Partial (half-day and/or fewer than 5 days per week)	20 (37.0%)	23 (47.9%)	74 (38.7%)	16 (48.5%)	133
Other/ No Information	8 (14.8%)	2 (4.2%)	34 (17.8%)	4 (12.1%)	48
None	16 (29.6%)	19 (39.6%)	40 (20.9%)	9 (27.3%)	84
Total	54 (100%)	48 (100%)	191 (100%)	33 (100%)	326

Table 11. Distribution of preschool schools by hours per week of preschool program and by region in state.

Preschool Duration	Central	Northern	Southern	Western	Total
Full time (full-day, 5 days per week)	6 (11.1%)	25 (24.8%)	17 (50.0%)	13 (23.2%)	61
Partial (half-day and/or fewer than 5 days per week)	36 (66.7%)	56 (55.4%)	14 (41.2%)	28 (50.0%)	134
Other/ No information	12 (22.2%)	20 (19.8%)	3 (8.8%)	15 (26.8%)	50
	54 (100%)	101 (100%)	34 (100%)	56 (100%)	245

Table 12. Distribution of preschool programs by class days per week and by region in state.

PreK days	Central	Northern	Southern	Western	Total
5 days	17 (31.5%)	59 (58.4%)	25 (73.5%)	25 (44.6%)	126
4 days	26 (48.1%)	17 (16.8%)	5 (14.7%)	13 (23.2%)	61
3 days	0 (0.0%)	8 (7.9%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (3.6%)	10
2 days	3 (5.6%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (5.9%)	15 (26.8%)	20
No information	8 (14.8%)	17 (16.8%)	2 (5.9%)	1 (1.8%)	28
	54 (100%)	101 (100%)	34 (100%)	56 (100%)	245

Table 13. Distribution of preschool programs by daily class time and by region in state.

PreK time	Central	Northern	Southern	Western	Total
Full-day	17 (31.5%)	28 (27.7%)	23 (67.6%)	23 (41.1%)	91
Half-day	25 (46.3%)	53 (52.5%)	8 (23.5%)	18 (32.1%)	104
Other	4 (7.4%)	3 (3.0%)	1 (2.9%)	14 (25.0%)	22
No information	8 (14.8%)	17 (16.8%)	2 (5.9%)	1 (1.8%)	28
	54 (100%)	101 (100%)	34 (100%)	56 (100%)	245

Table 14. Number of preschool schools that are above, at or below the number of approved preschool spaces by daily class time.

2019-20 School level	Full-Day	Half-day	Other	No time given
Above, at or one to two students below capacity	43 (47.3%)	31 (29.8%)	7 (31.8%)	9 (32.1%)
Below capacity (three or more students under capacity)	44 (48.4%)	71 (68.3%)	14 (63.6%)	9 (32.1%)
Missing information	4 (4.4%)	2 (1.9%)	1 (4.5%)	10 (35.7%)
Total	91 (100%)	104 (100%)	22 (1005)	28 (100%)

Table 15. Number of preschools that are above, at or below the number of approved preschool spaces by class days per week.

2019-20 School Level	2 days	3 days	4 days	5 days	No days given
Above, at or one to two students below capacity	7 (35%)	1 (10%)	23 (37.7%)	50 (39.7%)	9 (32.1%)
Below capacity (three or more students under capacity)	13 (65%)	9 (90%)	37 (60.7%)	70 (55.6%)	9 (32.1%)
Missing information			1 (1.6%)	6 (4.8%)	10 (35.7%)
Total	20 (100%)	10 (100%)	61 (100%)	126 (100%)	28 (100%)

Table 16. Distribution of SAUs by percentage of district kindergartners enrolled in preschool and by region in state.

By SAU	Central	Northern	Southern	Western	Total
>60% of K in PK	21 (48.8%)	75 (80.6%)	9 (30.0%)	23 (82.1%)	128 (65.6%)
0-60% of K in PK	10 (23.3%)	5 (5.4%)	10 (33.3%)	5 (17.9%)	30 (15.4%)
None	12 (27.9%)	13 (14.0%)	11 (36.7%)	0 (0.0%)	37 (19.0%)
Total	43 (100%)	93 (100%)	30 (100%)	28 (100%)	195

Table 17. Distribution of SAUs by percentage of district kindergartners enrolled in preschool and by average number of first graders in SAU.

By SAU	Number in first grade			
	More than 50	16 to 50	less than 16	Total
>60% of K in PK	45 (59.2%)	36 (72.0%)	47 (68.1%)	128 (65.6%)
0-60% of K in PK	20 (26.3%)	5 (10.0%)	5 (7.2%)	30 (15.4%)
None	11 (14.5%)	9 (18.0%)	17 (24.6%)	37 (19.0%)
Total	76 (100%)	50 (100%)	69 (100%)	195

Table 18. Distribution of SAUs by average number of first grade students in SAU and by region in state.

Number in first grade	Central	Northern	Southern	Western	Total
More than 50	18 (41.9%)	17 (18.3%)	24 (80.0%)	17 (58.6%)	76 (39.0%)
16 to 50	10 (23.3%)	31 (33.3%)	4 (13.3%)	5 (17.2%)	50 (25.6%)
less than 16	15 (34.9%)	45 (48.4%)	2(6.7%)	7 (24.1%)	69 (35.4%)
Total	43 (100%)	93 (100%)	30 (100%)	29 (100%)	195

Table 19. Distribution of SAUs with preschool by percentage of district kindergartners enrolled in preschool and by class days per week.

By SAU	5 days	4 days	3 days	2 days	No Information	Total
>60% of K in PK	63 (81.8%)	24 (80.0%)	6 (100%)	8 (100%)	17 (70.8%)	118 (81.4%)
0-60% of K in PK	14 (18.2%)	6 (20.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (18.6%)	27 (18.6%)
Total	77 (100%)	30 (100%)	6 (100%)	8 (100%)	24 (100%)	145

Table 20. Distribution of SAUs with preschool by percentage of district kindergartners enrolled in preschool and by daily class time.

	Full-day	Half-day	Other time PK	No Information	Total
>60% of K in PK	40 (80.0%)	53 (84.1%)	8 (100%)	17 (70.8%)	118 (81.4%)
0-60% of K in PK	10 (20.0%)	10 (15.9%)	0 (0.0%)	7 (18.6%)	30 (18.6%)
Total	50 (100%)	63 (100%)	8 (100%)	24 (100%)	145

Table 21. Distribution of SAUs with preschool by average number of first graders and by class days per week.

Number in first grade	5 days	4 days	3 days	2 days	No Information	Total
More than 50	26 (33.8%)	16 (53.3%)	1 (16.7%)	7 (87.5%)	5 (20.8%)	55 (37.9%)
16 to 50	22 (28.6%)	10 (33.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (12.5%)	7 (29.2%)	40 (27.6%)
less than 16	29 (37.7%)	4 (13.3%)	5 (83.3%)	0 (0.0%)	12 (50.0%)	50 (34.5%)
Total	77 (100%)	30 (100%)	6 (100%)	8 (100%)	24 (100%)	145

Table 22. Distribution of SAUs with preschool by average number of first graders in SAU and by daily class time.

Number in first grade by SAU	Full -day	Half-day PK	Other time PK	No Information	Total
More than 50	18 (36.0%)	28 (44.4%)	4 (50.0%)	5 (20.8%)	55 (37.9%)
16 to 50	9 (18.0%)	23 (36.5%)	1 (12.5%)	7 (29.2%)	40 (27.6%)
less than 16	23 (46.0%)	12 (19.0%)	3 (37.5%)	12 (50.0%)	50 (34.5%)
Total	50 (100%)	63 (100%)	8 (100%)	24 (100%)	145

Table 23. Summary statistics for SAUs offering preschool showing the average number of students by grade, categorized by average number of first graders

158 SAUs

Average number of first grade students in SAU		avg P students	avg K students	avg 1st grade students	PK 2019	Maximum students
more >50	SAUs	65	65	65	65	65
	Students	4458.3	9114.0	8906.0	4843	5848*
	Mean	68.6	140.2	137.0	74.5	91.4
	minimum	0.0	50.7	51.7	11	16
	maximum	280.7	509.0	519.3	264	304
16-50	SAUs	41	41	41	41	41
	Students	850.0	1264.0	1236.3	915	1200*
	Mean	20.7	30.8	30.2	22.3	30.0
	minimum	0.0	12.7	16.0	8	16
	maximum	37.0	55.7	48.7	44	48
under 16	SAUs	52	52	52	52	52
	Students	370.3	449.0	429.0	411	752
	Mean	7.1	8.6	8.2	9.1	16.7**
	minimum	0.0	1.3	0.3	1	16
	maximum	19.7	17.7	15.3	24	32

* One school without max students listed

** Seven schools without max students listed, two schools with 32 listed

Table 24. Distribution of schools by kindergarten daily class time and by preschool daily class time.

By School	Full-day Preschool	Half-day Preschool	Other	No information	None	Total
Kindergarten Full-day	83 (27.8%)	95 (31.8%)	18 (6.0%)	30 (10.0)	73 (24.4%)	299
Kindergarten Half-day	6 (22.2%)	9 (33.3%)	2 (7.4%)	2 (7.4%)	8 (29.6%)	27

6 that have half day Kindergarten and full day preschool are all rural remote Northern schools

None list a partner

Table 25. Distribution of kindergartner students by daily class time and by school year.

Students	2019-20	2018-19
Kindergarten Full-day	12091	11913
Kindergarten Half-day	803	882
Kindergarten no information*	343	352

6 schools with enrolled kindergarteners did not provide information

Table 26. Distribution of preschools by daily class time and by class days per week.

2019 Schools	2 days	3 days	4 days	5 days	No Information	Total
Preschool Full-day	14	2	14	61		91
Preschool Half-day	3	6	41	54		104
Preschool other time	3	2	6	11		22
No Information					33	33
Total	20	10	61	126	33	250

Table 27. Distribution of preschool students categorized by daily class time and by class days per week.

2019 Students	2 days	3 days	4 days	5 days	No Information	Total
Preschool Full-day	569	7	303	1169		2048
Preschool Half-day	89	52	1392	1732		3265
Preschool other time	31	19	183	498		731
No Information					458	458
Total	689	78	1878	3399	458	6502

Calculations for seats lost

106 districts with more than 16 students and preschool

2 districts with no information on Maximum students- Indian township, Wells-Ogonquit

Table 28. Calculations for current number of preschool classes in districts that average 16 or more first graders.

Districts with an average of 16 or more first grade students	Maximum preschool seats	Adjustment
Current Maximum for 104 districts	7048	
Preschool seats over reported maximum		288
Adjusted maximum	7336	
two day		-768
ADJ- Two day loss	6952	
Half day		-1816
ADJ- Two day loss-half day	5136	

Table 29. Number of preschool classes by SAU that would need to be added to accommodate all kindergartners assuming no change in current class scheduling.

Current	30	27	16	9	22*
Unlisted	1				1**
New Program		1	6	2	11****

*4 (4) ,5 (6), 7, 8 (3), 9 (2), 10, 11, 12, 13 (2), 23 additional classes

** 6 additional classes

***5, 6, 7 (4), 9, 13, 14 (2), 15 additional classes

Table 30. Number of additional preschool classes by SAU that would need to be added to accommodate all kindergartners if two-day-per-week programs became five-day per-week programs.

Classrooms needed 412					
8 districts- 20 additional classrooms needed	Meet need	One classroom	Two Classrooms	Three Classrooms	More than 3 Classrooms
without adjustment	2	1	3		2*
with adjustment	1		1		6**

*4 (2) additional classes

**5 (4), 7 additional classes

Table 31. Number of additional preschool classes by SAU that would need to be added to accommodate all kindergartners if half-day programs became full-day programs.

Classrooms needed 482 total					
51 districts-90 additional rooms needed	Meet need	One classroom	Two Classrooms	Three Classrooms	More than 3
without adjustment	18	16	9	2	6*
with adjustment	1	13	10	10	17**

*4 (2), 5 (2), 8, 12 additional classes

**4 (6), 5 (3), 6 (2), 7 (3), 8, 12, 13 additional classes