

Investing in Pre-Kindergarten

The Importance of High-Quality Pre-K in MS

When children start school without important skills, it becomes harder and harder for them to achieve their potential without considerable intervention. These challenges can often lead children to face more severe issues such as being retained in a grade, experiencing discipline troubles, and failing to finish high school. Mississippi must help families get their children ready to succeed in school.

Mississippi's Investment in High-Quality Pre-K

In 2013, the state of Mississippi took a historic step by passing the *Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013*. The law established a collaborative delivery, state-funded pre-K program in which private or parochial schools, private child care centers, and/or Head Start centers may join with a local public school district and compete for state funds in order to provide pre-Kindergarten services to a specific community. In the first cohort, eleven collaboratives were funded, representing the first-ever investment the state of Mississippi has made in pre-K. All funded collaboratives will adhere to state regulations requiring that they meet nationally recognized standards of quality.

Costs for Providing Pre-K

Under the *Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013*, the costs for providing pre-Kindergarten services to four-year-old children amount to \$4,300 per child enrolled in full-day programs and \$2,150 per child enrolled in half-day programs. The state of Mississippi provides half of these costs (\$2,150 per child enrolled in full-day pre-K and \$1,075 per child enrolled in half-day pre-K). However, the state requires that the other half be provided by local matching funds, which may include local tax dollars, federal dollars (as allowed), parent tuition, philanthropic contributions, or in-kind donations of facilities, equipment, and services required as part of the program, such as food service or health screenings.

How can businesses help?

Start by contacting your local collaborative to become engaged in community plans. Work with the collaboratives and local Chambers of Commerce to make pre-K a success in your community. The State Department of Education, local communities, parents, children, and the business community are all partners in the voluntary pre-K initiative. Business has an opportunity to lead the way, especially in using the new pre-K state tax credit to support the local collaboratives.



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The State Tax Credit

Individuals or corporations who make a contribution to support the local matching fund of an approved early learning collaborative may be eligible to receive a state tax credit for the donated amount up to \$1,000,000. The Mississippi Department of Revenue can approve 1:1 tax credits up to the amount the Legislature appropriates to the *Early Learning Collaborative Act* each year. For 2016, the Legislature appropriated \$4,000,000; therefore, the sum of the donations eligible for the tax credit may not exceed \$4,000,000. If you attempt to claim the tax credit after the cap has been reached, you will not be eligible to receive the tax credit.



Securing the Tax Credit

To donate to collaborative and receive the state tax credit, follow these steps:

1

Contact the lead partner for the collaborative to which you wish to donate. A list of all the approved early learning collaboratives is found below, along with contact information for the person responsible for collecting donations.

2

The Mississippi Department of Education is estimating when the tax credit cap is reached. They will share this information with all the lead partners of the collaboratives. When contacting the lead partner, verify that the cap has not been reached.

3

When you make a donation, be sure to collect a receipt documenting that you have contributed to the local matching funds of an approved collaborative.

4

Indicate your donation when you file your state taxes. Use form 80-401, which can be found on the Department of Revenue's website.

2016-2017 MDE-Approved Collaboratives

Collaborative	Lead Partner	Contact Person	Contact Info.
Clarke County Early Learning Partnership	Quitman School District	Lacia Donald	601-775-6156
Coahoma County Pre-K Collaborative	Clarksdale Municipal School District	Toya Matthews	662-627-8500
Corinth-Alcorn-Prentiss Early Learning Collaborative	Corinth School District	Tanya Nelson	662-287-2425
Lamar County Early Learning Collaborative	Lamar County School District	Teresa Jenny	601-794-1030
McComb Community Collaborative for Early Learning Success	McComb School District	Betty Wilson-McSwain	601-684-4661
Monroe Early Learning Collaborative	Calvert's ABC Preschool and Nursery	Heather Walker	662-257-6474
Petal Early Learning Collaborative	Petal School District	DeDe Smith	601-584-4704
Picayune School District Early Head Start	Picayune School District	Pam Thomas	601-798-3230
Sunflower County Early Learning Collaborative	Sunflower Consolidated School District	Leigh Ann Reynolds	662-884-1285
Tallahatchie Early Learning Alliance	Rock River Foundation	Meghan Tooke	770-364-6390
Canton, Mississippi Early Learning Collaborative*	Agape Community Development Center	Margaret Chapman	601-859-8868
Starkville Oktibbeha Early Learning Collaborative*	Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District	Dr. Joan Butler	662-615-0033
Greenwood – Leflore County Early Learning Collaborative*	Greenwood Public Schools	Dr. Jennifer Wilson	662-644-0667
Grenada Early Learning Collaborative*	Grenada School District	Kim Ezelle	662-226-1606

*On Nov. 10, 2016, the Mississippi State Board of Education voted to add four new early learning collaboratives (ELC) to the current list of 10 to provide high-quality early childhood education programs to 4 year-old students. Their contracts will start January 2017.