



## For Immediate Release

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## Income Eligibility Levels Adjusted to Offer Free Preschool to More Families

*Grand Traverse, Kalkaska and Leelanau counties have open slots for preschool students*

**TRAVERSE CITY, Mich.** — Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) and Head Start early childhood programs located in Grand Traverse, Leelanau and Kalkaska counties announce immediate openings for 3- and 4-year-old children.

Families have access to several preschool program options in the Northwest Education Services (North Ed) region. GSRP and Head Start are free services that provide excellent opportunities for children to learn in a safe, encouraging environment and introduce young families to quality school experiences before entering kindergarten. Each offers different program options designed to meet the needs of any family, regardless of socioeconomic status.

A quality preschool experience can establish basic developmental skills in the areas of social interaction, play, language, emotional development, early literacy and fine motor skills that can have a long-term impact on everything from reading at grade level to graduating high school and being career-ready later in life. Regardless of a child's present abilities, preschool programming aims to provide skills that support a successful transition into the routines and expectations of kindergarten.

Thanks to a waiver from the Michigan Department of Education, state law allows for any child whose family income is at or below 300% of the federal poverty level to be eligible for GSRP. Translated into dollars and cents, that means a family of four with an annual income of \$83,250 or less would be eligible for the free preschool.

North Ed's Early Childhood Services Supervisor Dr. Yvonne Donohoe explains, "Many families within this income range assume that they would not qualify for free preschool because their income is not low enough. As a result, children and families who could greatly benefit from free preschool either pay for programs needlessly or skip preschool altogether – and we want all who qualify to reap the tremendous benefits of this early educational opportunity."

Beyond income, other important factors in determining if a family is eligible for free GSRP preschool are situations such as a child's disabilities, behavioral concerns, language barriers, abuse or neglect, and environmental risks. Even if an applying family's income is above the threshold level, these risk factors can be taken into account when determining eligibility and they may be eligible for over-income placement.

"GSRP preschool is specialized to prepare students in these circumstances to be well-prepared for kindergarten and build a strong foundation for educational success throughout their schooling," Donohoe said.

North Ed works in partnership with GSRP, local school districts, community-based providers and Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency (NMCAA) to provide quality preschool education throughout the northwest Michigan service area. Anyone seeking quality child care is encouraged to inquire. For more information or to begin the pre-application process, call 231.947.3780 or go to [www.nmcaa.net](http://www.nmcaa.net).

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