

**RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE MARYLAND
KINDERGARTEN COMMITTEE
November 2001**

BACKGROUND

During discussions held by the Maryland General Assembly in 2001, the following major issues emerged affecting young children as they enter public school programs:

- Expansion of all-day kindergarten programs
- Change of the entry date for schooling
- Expansion of high quality preschool programs for at-risk four-year olds.

The Maryland Kindergarten Committee was formed in the summer of 2001. The Committee was charged by the State Superintendent of Schools to review the following:

1. *Expansion of All-day kindergarten* – During the recent legislative session, HB 1090 was introduced to expand all-day kindergarten to all schools in Maryland and to revise the reimbursement rate under the Current Expense Program from 0.5 Full Time Equivalency (FTE) to 1.0 FTE. In addition, HB 1121 was introduced to support all-day kindergarten programs in Title 1 eligible schools through a competitive grant program. As a result of the legislation, which did not pass, questions concerning the use of facilities, curriculum revisions, and staffing were reviewed by the Committee.
2. *Change of the Entry age for Schooling* – Currently kindergarten children are age-eligible if their fifth birthday falls on or before December 31. During the recent legislative sessions, HB 557 was introduced to change the “cut-off” date of December 31 to an earlier date, for instance, September 1. Maryland is one of four states where the date is December 31. The Committee was asked to examine the implications for changing the date to September 1.
3. *Expansion of High Quality Preschool Programs for At-Risk Four-Year Olds*– The The capacity of quality of services offered to at-risk gour-year olds directly relates to the expansion of All-Day Kindergarten programs and the change of the entry date for schooling. The Committee researched and studied the following questions:

- How would a change in the “cut-off” date affect the capacity of services for at-risk four-year olds?
- How would the quality of preschool programs for at-risk four-year olds in combination with all-day kindergarten support young children’s readiness for school?

The Committee examined the issues with the help of a variety of stakeholders. MSDE provided a comprehensive set of research and current literature on these issues. The Committee met four times and reached five major recommendations.