

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

**EXPANSION OF HIGH QUALITY PREKINDERGARTEN/PRESCHOOL
SERVICES FOR AT RISK FOUR-YEAR OLD CHILDREN**

Recommendation: High quality prekindergarten/preschool services for at-risk four year olds should be expanded to all schools by school year 2006-07. Local boards of education may contract with a private provider for the operation of the half-day pre-kindergarten programs, provided that the programs comply in all respects with the laws and regulations governing the Extended Elementary Education Program (EEEP).

Rationale: When a change in the cut-off date for age of entry for schooling is implemented, those at-risk children who fall out of age eligibility for kindergarten should be eligible for prekindergarten according to local screening and selection procedures. The EEEP regulations (COMAR 13A.06.02) provide for priority enrollment for at-risk four-year old children.

Impact: At-risk four-year-olds in all 24 local school systems will be impacted. According to the Committee's projections, more than 3,000 children will be in need of prekindergarten services as a result of the change of entry date. The greatest needs are in high poverty areas such as Baltimore City and several rural counties. The Committee stressed those local boards of education should contract with private vendors such as licensed child care centers, which have completed national or state program accreditation and are prepared to meet the EEEP regulations. Such arrangements would not only alleviate facilities shortages in public school buildings, but also provide high quality community-based, all-day, year round early childhood education.