

POLICY

Tuition-Free Program

Heritage Academy shall offer tuition-free prekindergarten classes if it identified 15 or more eligible children who are at least four years of age. Heritage Academy may offer tuition-free prekindergarten classes if it identifies 15 or more eligible children who are at least three years of age.

Exemption

Heritage Academy may apply to the Commissioner for an exemption from the requirement that it provide a free prekindergarten program if Heritage Academy would be required to construct classroom facilities in order to provide the program.

Half-Day Basis

A tuition-free prekindergarten class shall be operated on a half-day basis.

Program Eligibility

A child is eligible for enrollment in free prekindergarten if the child is at least three years of age and:

1. Is unable to speak and comprehend the English language;
2. Is educationally disadvantaged;
3. Is homeless, as defined by federal law, regardless of the residence of the child, of either parent of the child, or of the child's guardian or other person having lawful control;
4. Is the child of an active duty member of the armed forces of the United States, including the state military forces or a reserve component of the armed forces, who is ordered to active duty by proper authority;
5. Is the child of a member of the armed forces of the United States, including the state military forces or a reserve component of the armed forces, who was injured or killed while serving on active duty; or
6. Is or ever has been in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services following an adversary hearing under Family Code 262.201.

A child who is eligible for enrollment under item 4 or 5 above remains eligible if the child's parent leaves the armed forces, or is no longer on active duty, after the child begins the prekindergarten class.

Public Notice

The Superintendent shall develop a system to notify the population in the community with children eligible or enrollment of the availability of the program. The system must include public notices issued in English and Spanish.

Annual Report

Heritage Academy shall report annually to the TEA, on a form proscribed by the Commissioner, the strategies implemented by Heritage Academy to increase community awareness of the Heritage Academy prekindergarten program. The report may be combined, at the discretion of the Commissioner, with another report that Heritage Academy submits to the TEA.

Transportation

Heritage Academy is not required to provide transportation for a prekindergarten class. If transportation is required, it is included for funding purposes as part of the regular transportation system.

Education Code 29.153, 29.1534.

Tuition-Supported and School-Financed Prekindergarten

Heritage Academy may offer on a tuition basis or use school funds to provide:

1. An additional half-day of prekindergarten classes to children eligible for free prekindergarten; and
2. Half-day and full-day prekindergarten classes to children not eligible for free prekindergarten.

Heritage Academy may not adopt a tuition rate for the program that is higher than necessary to cover the added costs of providing the program, including any costs associated with collecting, reporting, and analyzing data under Education Code 2.1532(c) (regarding PEIMS data for prekindergarten programs). Heritage Academy must submit its proposed tuition rate to the Commissioner for approval.

Education Code 29.1531.

Program Requirements

Heritage Academy' prekindergarten program shall be designed to develop skills necessary for success in the regular public school curriculum, including language, mathematics, and social skills.

Education Code 29.1532(a).

Daily Physical Activity

Students in full-day prekindergarten shall participate in moderate or vigorous daily physical activity for at least 30 minutes throughout the school year, as part of Heritage Academy' physical education curriculum or through structure activity during a campus's daily recess.

To the extent practicable, students enrolled in prekindergarten on less than a full-day basis shall participate in the same type and amount of physical activity as a student enrolled in full-day prekindergarten.

If Heritage Academy determines that requiring moderate or vigorous daily physical activity is impractical due to scheduling concerns or other factors, Heritage Academy may require that students participate in moderate or vigorous physical activity for at least 135 minutes during each school week.

Heritage Academy must provide an exemption for a student who is unable to participate in the required physical activity because of illness or disability.

Education Code 28.002(l)

High-Quality Prekindergarten Grant Program

Heritage Academy may participate in and receive funding under a grant funding program established by the Commissioner in order to implement a prekindergarten grant program under Education Code Chapter 29, Subchapter E-1. Heritage Academy must meet all program standards required under Education Code, Subchapter E-1.

Education Code 29.165

Funding

A student qualifies for additional funding if the student satisfies eligibility requirements under Education Code 29.153(b) and is four years old on September 1 of the year the student begins the program. Heritage Academy may use funding only to improve the quality of the Heritage Academy prekindergarten program.

Education Code 29.166

Curriculum and Teacher Requirements

Heritage Academy shall select and implement a curriculum for a prekindergarten grant program that:

1. Includes the prekindergarten guidelines established by TEA;
2. Measures the progress of students in meeting the recommended learning outcomes; and
3. Does not use national curriculum standards developed by the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

Each teacher for a prekindergarten program class must be certified under Education Code Chapter 21, Subchapter B and have one of the following additional qualifications:

1. A Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or another early childhood education credential approved by TEA;
2. Certification offered through a training center accredited by Association Montessori Internationale or through the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education;
3. At least eight years' experience of teaching in a nationally accredited child care program;
4. Be employed as a prekindergarten teacher in a public school that has received approval from the Commissioner for the school's prekindergarten-specific instructional training plan that the teacher uses in the teacher's prekindergarten classroom; or
5. An equivalent qualification.

Heritage Academy may allow a teacher employed by Heritage Academy to receive the training required to be awarded a CDA credential from a regional education service center. Training may not include national curriculum standards developed by the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

Heritage Academy must attempt to maintain an average ratio in any prekindergarten program class of not less than one certified teacher or teacher's aide for each 11 students.

Education Code 29.167

Family Engagement Plan

Heritage Academy shall develop and implement a family engagement plan to assist in achieving and maintaining high levels of family involvement and positive family attitudes toward education. The family engagement plan must be based on family engagement strategies established by TEA. Education Code 29.168

Program Evaluation

Heritage Academy shall:

1. Select and implement appropriate methods for evaluating the Heritage Academy program classes by measuring student progress; and
2. Make data from the results of program evaluations available to parents.

Heritage Academy may administer diagnostic assessments to students in a program class to evaluate student progress, but may not administer a state standardized assessment instrument.

An assessment instrument administered to a prekindergarten program class must be selected from a list of appropriate prekindergarten assessment instruments identified by the Commissioner.

Education Code 29.169

Eligible Private Providers

Heritage Academy may enter into a contract with an eligible private provider to provide services or equipment for its prekindergarten program.

To be eligible to contract with Heritage Academy to provide a program or part of a program, a private provider must be licensed by and in good standing with the Department of Family and Protective Services. A private provider is in good standing with the Department of Family and Protective Services if the department has not taken an action against the provider's license during the 24-month period preceding the date of a contract with Heritage Academy. The private provider must also:

1. Be accredited by a research-based, nationally recognized, and universally accessible accreditation system approved by the Commissioner;
2. Be a Texas Rising Star Program provider with a three-star certification or higher;
3. Be a Texas School Ready! participant;
4. Have an existing partnership with a district to provide a prekindergarten program not provided under Subchapter E-1; or
5. Be accredited by an organization that is recognized by the Texas Private School Accreditation Commission.

A prekindergarten program provided by a private provider under Education Code 29.171 is subject to the requirements of Education Code Chapter 29, Subchapter E-1.

Education Code 29.171

Prekindergarten Expansion Grant

Heritage Academy may use funds from grants administered by the Commissioner to expand an existing half-day prekindergarten program to a full-day basis or to implement a prekindergarten program on a campus that does not have a prekindergarten program. Heritage Academy may use funds received under this program to employ teachers and other personnel for a prekindergarten program or to acquire curriculum materials or equipment, including computers, for use in prekindergarten programs. Heritage Academy may use funds granted under this program in contracting with another entity, including a private entity. Education Code 29.155

Ready to Read Grant

Heritage Academy may apply for a Ready to Read grant if at least 75% of the children enrolled in the prekindergarten program are low-income students, as determined by Commissioner rule.

Grants funds shall be used for:

1. Professional staff development in prereading instruction;
2. Prereading curriculum and materials;
3. Prereading skills assessment materials; and
4. Employment of prereading instructors.

Education Code 29.157.

Coordination of Services

In a manner consistent with federal law and regulations, Heritage Academy shall coordinate with the TEA, the Texas Workforce Commission, and local workforce development boards regarding subsidized child-care services.

Education Code 29.158.

Statewide Information and Referral Network

Heritage Academy shall provide the Texas Information and Referral Network with information regarding eligibility for and availability of child-care and education services (including services provided through a prekindergarten or after-school program) for inclusion in the statewide information referral network. Heritage Academy shall provide the information in a form determined by the executive commissioner of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, and shall update the information at least quarterly.

When necessary, staff of the Texas Information and Referral network shall send an electronic mail message to Heritage Academy containing the name of and contact information for an applicant for child-care and education services and a description of the services the applicant is seeking.

On receipt of such an electronic mail message, Heritage Academy shall contact the applicant to verify information regarding the applicant's eligibility for available child-care and education services and, on certifying eligibility, shall match the applicant with entities providing those services in the applicant's community, including local workforce development boards, local child-care providers, or a Head Start or Early Head Start program provider.

Heritage Academy shall cooperate with the Texas Information and Referral Network as necessary in the administration of this project.

Gov't Code 531.0312, 531.03131.

Establishment of New Program

Before establishing a new prekindergarten program, Heritage Academy shall consider the possibility of sharing use of an existing Head Start or other child-care program site as a prekindergarten site.

Education Code 29.1533.

Contracting with Private Entity

If Heritage Academy contracts with a private entity for the operation of its prekindergarten program, the program must at a minimum comply with the applicable child-care licensing standards adopted by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services under Human Resources Code 42.042.

Education Code 29.1532(b).

General Definitions

For purposes of this policy, “child” includes a stepchild and “parent” includes a stepparent.

Education Code 29.183(a).