



Prince George's County Public Schools

# JUST THE FAQs FOR THE MEDIA: **Early Start**

## Curriculum and Services

### **Q: What is the difference between PGCPs Early Start and Head Start?**

**A:** Students and families will experience no difference in PGCPs Early Start and Head Start classrooms. Students will have the same program site, instructors and access to all of the services provided under Head Start. There will be a change in the source of program funds; PGCPs will now fully cover the program. Some parent services will be expanded, and there will be better staff screening, training and supervision.

### **Q: Which services will PGCPs provide through Early Start?**

**A:** Early Start students and families will continue to receive all services provided under Head Start: Certified instructors for all students at the same program location;

- Transportation to each program site;
- Breakfast, lunch and snacks during the school day;
- Age-appropriate sensory, vision and hearing screenings;
- Parent supports: Mental health consultants and nutrition and wellness consultants;
- Field trips for learning experiences beyond the classroom; and
- Early Learning Assessment to help teachers document, analyze, and make instructional decisions, aligned to state standards and best practices in early childhood education.

### **Q: What is the future of Head Start in Prince George's County?**

**A:** CDI is the interim grantee chosen by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to operate Head Start in Prince George's County under the current federal grant. ACF has assured PGCPs that Head Start will continue this school year in the county under CDI. PGCPs will be eligible for future Head Start funding as early as fall 2017.

## Funding

### **Q: How will PGCPs pay for Early Start? What is the program's total cost?**

**A:** Head Start's budgeted costs were approximately \$8 million in federal, county and school system funds. PGCPs invested additional resources in facilities, transportation and food and nutrition in excess of those funds. The \$6.4 million federal grant covered personnel costs.

PGCPs will continue to provide Early Start students with the same facilities, transportation, food and nutrition. The remaining program funds will be covered by reducing 19 central office Head Start positions (\$2.6 million) and freezing or eliminating current and projected central office vacancies (\$2.9 million). Services for parents and students will continue to be funded through our existing budget.

### **Q: What issues arose during negotiations with ACF and CDI?**

**A:** Since the start of conversations with ACF on Aug. 15 and later CDI, it became apparent that several areas would be a challenge in transitioning without any disruption in services, staff or Head Start locations. CDI could not guarantee that students would retain their current teachers and classroom aides, or that the program would continue to be offered at all current locations. While CDI expressed an interest in hiring PGCPs staff, current employees would have lost seniority and retirement benefits, complicating recruitment efforts.

### **Staffing, Safety and Accountability**

### **Q: What will the school system do differently to ensure student safety and improve staff screening, supervision and training?**

**A:** PGCPs will address student safety, staff screening, supervision and training primarily by: (1) interviewing and screening current teachers and classroom aides, (2) creating a Monitoring Board to meet more frequently that includes members with expertise in early childhood education and social services; and (3) providing more frequent professional development to reinforce standards of conduct for PGCPs employees and techniques on positive student discipline.

*Interviewing and Screening* – Current teachers and classroom aides will be interviewed by the Office of Human Resources to confirm willingness and capability to teach, support and provide a safe learning environment for 3- and 4-year-old students. Staff will also undergo Child Protective Services screening.

*Monitoring Board* – 10-member Monitoring Board will be created, consisting of three parent representatives, two external early childhood education experts, two Prince George's County social services representatives, two PGCPs central office staff members and one Board of Education representative.

The Monitoring Board will be charged with the following:

- Monitor the implementation of strategies identified on the Office of Head Start corrective action plan until completed;
- Monitor instructional practices used by Early Start teachers;
- Review parent concerns and staff responsiveness;
- Recommend supports for Early Start parents through the Prince George's County Department of Social Services;
- Review staff professional development and parent training;
- Review safety concerns and staff responsiveness to those concerns.

*Professional Development* – Sessions will be held more frequently throughout the school year with a focus on reinforcing positive student discipline, changing adult behaviors and mindsets and addressing PGCPs employee standards. Three professional development sessions on positive student disciplinary measures have been held this school year.

### **Q: What happens to the 19 central office-based Head Start staffers whose positions will be eliminated?**

**A:** The staffers will be placed in other PGCPs positions.