

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2017 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 548  
Ways and Means

(Delegate Shoemaker, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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Education - Prekindergarten Student Assessment

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This bill authorizes a local board of education to administer the Early Learning Assessment (ELA) to enrolled prekindergarten students in the county if, prior to administering the assessment, the local board consults with prekindergarten teachers, including teachers nominated by the exclusive bargaining representative, in determining how to implement the assessment. The bill also authorizes the administration of the ELA to an enrolled prekindergarten student by a school psychologist or other school-based professional who intends to use the results in order to identify a disability.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2017.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** None. It is assumed that local school systems administer the ELA in a manner that does not conflict with federal accountability requirements for preschool children with disabilities.

**Local Effect:** Local school systems can consult with prekindergarten teachers in determining how to administer the ELA to enrolled prekindergarten students prior to administering the ELA using existing resources. Authorizing the administration of the ELA does not affect revenues or expenditures.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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## Analysis

**Current Law/ Background:** ELA is a formative assessment meant to be used in a natural learning environment that gauges the progress of learning in young children, ages 36 to 72 months, in seven developmental domains. The seven developmental domains for the ELA are social foundations, language/literacy, mathematics, physical well-being and motor development, science, social studies, and the fine arts.

MSDE advises that ELA is in its pilot year for general education early childhood and is being implemented on a *voluntary* basis in the 2016-2017 school year. For preschool students with disabilities, age three to kindergarten, who are served under an individualized education program (IEP) by local school systems, the ELA is in its field test year, having completed a pilot year in the 2015-2016 school year. MSDE advises that the ELA is formative with indirect measures (*i.e.*, observational rubrics) and does not include standardized items.

ELA is part of the new Ready for Kindergarten: Maryland's Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System (R4K) that was developed to align with Maryland's more rigorous PreK-12 College- and Career-Ready Standards. R4K was developed as part of the \$50 million Early Learning Challenge federal grant that Maryland received. It was developed by the Divisions of Early Childhood Development and Special Education/Early Intervention Services at MSDE in partnership with the Ohio Department of Education. The R4K provides one system for recognizing the needs and measuring the learning progress of all children from age three to six.

MSDE advises that it uses the ELA to meet federal accountability requirements for preschool children with disabilities. MSDE must report annually to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, on the effectiveness of local school system preschool special education programs to narrow the school readiness performance gap of children with disabilities, age three to kindergarten, with their typically developing peers. The administration of *selected portions* of the ELA is used by MSDE as part of meeting this federal requirement. MSDE advises that it used the Maryland Model for School Readiness, the prior kindergarten readiness assessment, to meet this accountability requirement prior to implementation of the ELA.

The fiscal 2018 State budget includes over \$200 million in federal funds for students with disabilities, including approximately \$7 million from special education preschool grants.

**State Fiscal Effect:** It is assumed that local school systems administer the ELA in a manner that does not conflict with federal accountability requirements for preschool children with disabilities. As stated above, MSDE uses portions of the ELA to meet the

federal special education accountability requirements. Therefore, it is assumed that federal special education funds will not be affected.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** SB 667 (Senator Jennings) - Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 13, 2017  
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