

FY 2008 QUESTION NUMBER: 24

QUESTION:

How many slots are available for three-year olds in pre-kindergarten/Head Start programs? How are the children identified? What is the enrollment forecast?

BUDGET PAGE REFERENCE : 3-62

ANSWER:

The MCPS Head Start program has designated three classes, with 45 slots, for three-year olds whose families meet federal poverty guidelines. While there are no designated slots in prekindergarten for three-year olds, the Maryland's *Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act of 2002* permits three-year old enrollment if all available prekindergarten slots are not filled with income-eligible four-year olds. At present, there are 113 three-year olds enrolled in Head Start classes and 118 three-year olds enrolled in prekindergarten classes.

Children for both programs are identified through a broad-based recruiting process. The MCPS staff collaborates with the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services staff (DHHS) and early childhood community partners, including other agencies and nonprofit programs. Staff in the Division of Long-range Planning works with Head Start and prekindergarten program staff to examine demographic trends in the preschool population and use this data to develop enrollment forecasts. The FY 2008 enrollment forecast for prekindergarten program is 1,925 and the forecast for Head Start is 584. This forecast is not disaggregated by age. The projected enrollment is established based on the number of available slots authorized to MCPS by the County Council. In FY 2006, the County Council reduced the number of authorized slots in prekindergarten programs from 1,985 to 1,925 to provide resources for community based programs managed by DHHS.