A bill for an act

relating to early childhood education; establishing an early childhood program for at-risk four-year-olds; amending Minnesota Statutes 2008, section 124D.19, by adding a subdivision.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

Section 1. Minnesota Statutes 2008, section 124D.19, is amended by adding a subdivision to read:

Subd. 15. **Early childhood program for at-risk four-year-olds.** (a) A school board may offer, as part of a community education program, an early childhood program for at-risk four-year-olds who are at least four years of age by September 1 of the program year, not yet enrolled in kindergarten, and are:

(1) English language learners;

(2) eligible for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program; or

(3) identified with delays through early childhood screening, but do not qualify for early childhood special education services.

(b) A school board must employ necessary licensed teachers for its early childhood program for at-risk four-year-olds. The Board of Teaching, at its discretion, may grant an applicant a variance under this paragraph consistent with sections 122A.09, subdivision 10, and 122A.25, and Board of Teaching rules. An emphasis must be placed on ongoing professional development, focusing on the areas of teaching English language learners; cultural, ethnic, and race differences; and encouraging and improving parent involvement.

(c) The child-to-adult ratio must not exceed six students to one staff person, with the first staff person holding a teaching license. The maximum class size is 18 students. The

program must meet for no less than 840 hours per year with no more than a four-week break in service.

(d) While all domains of the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress must be included in the curriculum, a particular emphasis on scientifically researched literacy curriculum must be a component of the program.

(e) The program must include home visits by program staff and parent education in early literacy activities.

(f) Each program must submit to the department a biennial plan describing how the program addresses program components and assessments. The department must approve a district's plan for this program before the district receives state aid for the program under this subdivision.

(g) Eligible children must complete early childhood screening before enrolling in the program. In addition, all domains of the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress must be assessed after program enrollment and again at the time of program completion. Literacy must be assessed through either the Indicators of Individual Growth and Development for infants and toddlers or Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening.

(h) Beginning in fiscal year 2010, a district is eligible to receive aid for at-risk four-year-olds when an approved and current biennial plan and annual report is on file with the department. Districts do not need to have an approved plan and annual report on file to receive revenue under this section in fiscal year 2009. The early childhood at-risk four-year-old aid for a district equals $9,000 per year per qualifying four-year-old. Aid is based on 840 membership hours per year.

**EFFECTIVE DATE.** This section is effective for revenue for fiscal year 2009.