



Student Support Services
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October 16, 2017

TO: Superintendents of School Districts with State and Federally Funded Pre-K Programs
District Contacts for the State and Federally Funded Pre-K Programs

FROM: Office of Early Learning

SUBJECT: Required Actions: Conducting a Program Quality Self-Assessment and Developing a Quality Improvement Action Plan

Overview of Required Actions

Section 3602-e of Education Law has been amended to require that all school districts receiving any State and/or federal prekindergarten grant must adopt approved quality indicators within two years, including, but not limited to, valid and reliable measures of environmental quality, the quality of teacher-student interactions, and student outcomes. In addition, grantees must ensure that assessments of child outcomes will not be used to make high-stakes educational decisions for individual children. Specifically, such results may not be used to preclude or discourage the enrollment of a child in kindergarten. These requirements apply to districts receiving one or more of the following Pre-K grants: Universal Pre-K (UPK); Targeted Pre-K (TPK); Statewide Universal Full-Day Pre-K (SUFDPK); Expanded Pre-K (EPK); Prekindergarten for Three-Year Olds (3PK); Additional Grants for Expanded Pre-K (EPK2); and federal Preschool Development Expansion Grant (PDG).

The State's approved quality indicators are set forth in the attached document titled *NYS Pre-K Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Action Plan*. These high-quality program indicators address the following categories:

- Classroom Environment (3 standards)
- Teaching Staff Qualifications (4 standards)
- Curriculum Planning and Implementation (5 standards)
- Child Screening and Assessment (5 standards)
- Professional Development (6 standards)
- Family Engagement and Supports (4 standards)
- Transitions to Kindergarten (7 standards)

Every two years, districts receiving one or more of the above listed Pre-K grants must complete and submit to the State Education Department (SED) the *NYS Pre-K Program Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Action Plan*. One Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Action Plan must be submitted for the district's entire Pre-K program. If a district has Pre-K classrooms at more than one site it is the district's responsibility to assess the **overall status** of its Pre-K program. Please do not submit an individual assessment and plan for each classroom or site that comprises the district's Pre-K program.

In addition, districts receiving multiple prekindergarten grants must think about their program and the self-assessment and quality improvement plan process across funding streams. Within the self-assessment and/or action plan, districts with multiple grants may need to reflect or describe different processes for different components of their Pre-K programs. For example, a district with UPK and 3PK may have different practices or be at different levels of implementation for its three year old program component and the four year old program component. Both components should be described in the self-assessment. In its action plan, the district should specify whether an action step applies to the entire program or to a specific component.

Important Note: Districts receiving a grant through EPK and 3PK, as well as those that previously received the Priority Pre-K grant, have already submitted the *NYS Self-Assessment and Program Quality Action Plan*. If the plan submitted and approved by the Office of Early Learning (OEL) was a comprehensive plan addressing the district's entire Pre-K program, the process does not need to be repeated at this time. If the district submitted a plan specific to the EPK or 3PK program and did not reflect on the district's entire Pre-K program, the self-assessment and action plan must be revisited and revised as needed to meet this requirement. Questions about whether an existing plan must be revised may be directed to Dee Dwyer by email at desylvia.dwyer@nysed.gov.

Conducting the NYS Pre-K Program Quality Self-Assessment

The purposes of the *NYS Pre-K Program Quality Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Action Plan* are:

1. To assess status of Pre-K program by looking at standards in seven areas of program quality;
2. To identify areas of strength and areas needing improvement; and
3. To establish priorities for program implementation and improvement.

It is recommended that districts use a team approach when conducting the self-assessment. The number and type of team members will vary by district, dependent on the size and design of the district's Pre-K program. Possible participants include, but are not limited to:

- District and community-based organization (CBO) administrators
- Pre-K teachers – district and CBO
- Kindergarten teachers
- Family/parent workers; social workers
- Parents
- Other community stakeholders

When using the *NYS Pre-K Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Action Plan*, read each standard carefully and rate the status of your district's implementation of the standard for prekindergarten services offered directly by the district and/or its collaborating CBOs. Place a checkmark in the box that best describes the level of implementation of each standard for your overall program – "Not Implemented," "In Progress," or "Implemented." In the Description of Implementation Status column describe what the district currently has in place to meet the standard.

Tip: Be sure that the description provided addresses all components of the standard. For example: Standard CSI-1 pertains to the district's screening and assessment process. The process must include three components: 1) compliance with applicable regulations, 2) procedures for collecting and protecting assessment results, and 3) provisions for sharing results with families. The description provided should relate to these components district's process, not merely list the screening and assessment tools used.

Developing the Pre-K Quality Improvement Action Plan

A district operating a Pre-K program must develop a Quality Improvement Action Plan based on the results of its self-assessment. The action plan must identify the next steps, the responsible person(s) and the timeframe for completion. For each standard identified as "Not Implemented" or "In Progress," identify the specific actions that need to be taken to ensure each standard will be implemented by June 30, 2020.

If the district determines that all standards are implemented, it must establish goals and action steps in at least two standard areas where it wishes to continue strengthening its program.

Submitting the NYS Pre-K Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Action Plan

The completed self-assessment and action plan tool can be completed using either the Word or *PDF form and submitted to SED for review and approval **no later than January 12, 2018 (extended to February 12, 2018)**. Please note that the PDF format must be submitted as the original **fillable** form. This allows OEL reviewers to provide comments and questions in the SED Comments box and return it to for clarification or revision. Therefore, any submitted scanned PDF files will be returned.

Completed submissions should be emailed to: oel@nysed.gov. The **subject line of the email** should read as follows: **District Name – PreK Action Plan**.

Questions?

Questions regarding this memo or any aspect of your Pre-K program may be directed to the Office of Early Learning at oel@nysed.gov or by phone at (518) 474-5807.