

# FOCUS

On Young Children's Learning

## FOR ALL NEW MEXICO PUBLIC SCHOOL PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

NM PreK, Special Education 619 and Title I  
Funded Classrooms



REVISED  
**JUNE 2020**

\*The FOCUS Essential Elements of Quality are the NM PreK Program Standards.

STATE OF NEW MEXICO  
PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
300 DON GASPAR  
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87501-2786  
Telephone (505) 827-5800  
[www.ped.state.nm.us](http://www.ped.state.nm.us)

RYAN STEWART, Ed.L.D.  
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM  
GOVERNOR

June 1, 2020

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Public School Superintendents, Charter School Administrators, and REC Directors  
**FROM:** Ryan Stewart, Ed.L.D. Secretary of Education  
**RE:** New Mexico's *FOCUS Essential Elements of Quality* for Public School Preschool Programs

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In 2012, New Mexico's Public Education Department (PED), along with the Children, Youth and Families Department, and the Department of Health, were proud recipients of the federal *Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant*. This \$37.5-million-dollar grant has supported the expansion of the state's coordinated systems of early learning and development for children birth through kindergarten entry. These systems are designed to ensure many more children have equitable access to high quality early learning programs, and that they enter schools with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions they need to be successful.

Although the federal support for the Race to the Top initiative has ended, the PED remains committed to the objectives outlined in the grant including the full implementation of *FOCUS* Essential Elements of Quality, New Mexico's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) in all public preschool programs statewide, including New Mexico PreK, Title I, and special education (IDEA, Part B) preschool classrooms. Participation in *FOCUS* is a pre-requisite for PreK awards. All PreK Program Standards are imbedded in the *FOCUS* criteria.

*FOCUS* includes common requirements for these programs and the criteria by which preschool programs will be measured, along with a structured process for program improvement. *FOCUS* was designed with stakeholders from school districts across New Mexico to ensure that many more children have access to dramatically improved early learning programs so that they enter kindergarten ready for success. Through the use of the QRIS, public school preschool programs will increase their ability to focus on children's learning, improve their practice, and—as a result of that improvement in practice—improve each child's growth, development, and potential with kindergarten readiness in mind.

*FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality* can be accessed at <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/FOCUS-Revised-June-2019-Criteria-web.pdf>, and addresses the following:

- The Full Participation of Each Child:
  - Family Engagement
  - Inclusive Practices for Children with Diverse Abilities
  - Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Instruction, including the Support of Multi-lingual Learners
  - Promoting Social-emotional Development
- Intentional Teaching, Lesson Planning, and Assessment using the *New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines*, the PED Preschool Lesson Plan, and the Early Childhood Observation Tool (ECOT).
- Required Hours for Classroom Instruction
- Adult-child Ratios and Group Size
- Health, Safety, Nutrition
- Developmental Screening
- Staff Qualifications and Training Requirements
- Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

Participation in New Mexico's *FOCUS* provides early childhood program personnel with the criteria, tools, resources, and support necessary to improve program quality to ensure that children are ready for success in kindergarten and beyond. All PED preschool programs will receive technical assistance and training to support achievement of a *FOCUS* Five Star rating. Preschool programs will be monitored for fidelity to the *FOCUS* Criteria beginning in their second year of participation in a public school preschool program. Many classrooms and programs have been verified as achieving the *FOCUS* 5-Star rating. The PED recognizes 5-Star programs with certificates for staff and banners for the school. Designation as a 5-Star program will positively impact future funding opportunities.

For more information on the PED *FOCUS*, please contact Brenda Kofahl, Director of the Early Childhood Bureau, at 505-827-6627 or Deborah Dominguez-Clark, Director of Special Education at 505-827-1457.

**N**ew Mexico is committed to creating and sustaining an early learning system that focuses on building high-quality, comprehensive, community programs that form a continuum of integrated services. This commitment reflects the goal adopted by the New Mexico Early Learning Advisory Council that “every child in New Mexico will have an equal opportunity for success in school, based upon equitable access to an aligned and high-quality early learning system.”

Early childhood public policy reforms are built upon the belief that families and community must be the platform from which all efforts are launched. We believe that all work must be informed and driven by a deep respect for the diverse values and cultures of New Mexico’s families. Although New Mexico has been at the forefront of the movement to create standards within the early childhood system, the state has taken great care to ensure that these standards do not impose a standardization of practice upon individual children, their families, or the communities in which they live. Rather, it is the state’s experience that these guidelines provide a framework allowing programs to flourish, as well as allowing for the implementation of unique and appropriate programs, which are based on the strengths of each community. In this way, community-specific programs are able to reflect the history, culture, language, and traditions that must be preserved and strengthened to support each and every child’s success.

New Mexico has created a coordinated system under the Early Childhood Education and Care Department. This approach focuses on building high-quality, comprehensive, community programs that are able to work together when provided with a common focus. New Mexico’s Early Learning System ensures that each child has equitable access to appropriate services and supports that acknowledge his or her uniqueness and enable him or her to reach his or her full potential.

## New Mexico’s Early Learning System

**New Mexico’s systematic approach acknowledges and respects the uniqueness of each community, each family, and each child and has led to the establishment of the Guiding Principles for the Full Participation of Young Children in New Mexico’s Early Learning System.**

New Mexico’s Early Learning System					
Ages					
PRENATAL	BIRTH TO ONE	ONE	TWO	THREE	FOUR TO KINDERGARTEN ENTRY
Home Visiting					
	IDEA Part C Early Intervention—NM FIT			IDEA Part B EC Special Education PROGRAM	
	Title 1				
	Child Care				
Early Head Start				Head Start	
				Early PreK (CYFD Only)	NM PreK

The FOCUS Quality Framework reflects these *Guiding Principles* (2010).

# Guiding Principles for the Full Participation of Young Children in New Mexico's Early Learning System

Every child in New Mexico has diverse strengths rooted in his or her family's unique culture, heritage, language, beliefs, and circumstances. Early learning programs that support the full participation of every child build on these strengths. They do so by promoting a sense of belonging, by supporting positive social relationships, and by enabling families and professionals to gain advocacy skills that positively impact the life of every child.

## *We believe that . . .*

- Every child has unique gifts and abilities that are to be celebrated and nurtured.
- The early years hold enormous promise for every child to reach his or her full potential.
- Every child learns within the context of relationships and through playful interactions within their environment.
- All children and their families deserve equitable access to appropriate services and to supports that acknowledge their uniqueness and enable them to reach their full potential.



## *Therefore, we are committed to . . .*

- Valuing and embracing all children and their families.
- Involving families and communities as partners and decision makers.
- Overcoming biases to build trust and establish collaborative partnerships that benefit children, their families, and the professionals who work with them.
- Providing choice, flexibility, and continuity of services and supports for families within communities.
- Making a variety of services and supports available, so all children have access to—and can participate in—opportunities that are both respectful of and responsive to their family experiences, culture, beliefs, abilities, and circumstances.
- Advancing advocacy efforts for inclusive practices that build upon unique child, family, and community strengths and are accountable to every child and their family.

## *We will . . .*

- Promote every New Mexico citizen's understanding of the importance of high-quality, inclusive, early childhood programs and practices.
- Support interactions and relationships that foster self-reflection.
- Utilize information about the growth, development, and experiences of individual children and families for program and curriculum development.
- Continuously improve services and supports by evaluating current practices and incorporating effective methods, models, and research in our work with children and families.
- Promote the establishment of aligned services and supports that build on both the unique assets of each child and that acknowledge the strengths of children's and families' heritage, language, and culture.
- Ensure that services and supports are provided by people who reflect the diversity of the community, are well educated, and are well compensated.
- Establish an integrated, multi-disciplinary system of professional development, training, and technical assistance that supports the design, implementation, and evaluation of practices that are respectful of—and responsive to—each child and family.

(All FOCUS documents can be found at <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/early-childhood-bureau/>)



# What is the FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality?

The FOCUS: *Essential Elements of Quality*, New Mexico's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) provides early childhood program personnel with the criteria, tools, and resources they need to improve the quality of their program. These quality improvements focus on children's growth, development, and learning—so that each child has an equitable opportunity to be successful when he or she enters school. This document contains the FOCUS: *Essential Elements of Quality* that provide a framework for public school preschool programs as they strive to make quality improvements. Together, the *New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines - Essential Indicators with Rubrics* and the FOCUS: *Essential Elements of Quality* provide common Early Learning Program Standards, a standardized process for continuous quality improvement and standardized criteria for a common quality rating and improvement system.

Just as the *New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines—Essential Indicators with Rubrics* provide a framework of criteria regarding children's growth, development, and learning, the FOCUS: *Essential Elements of Quality* provides a framework of criteria that program personnel can use to plan quality improvements to their program.

FOCUS is designed to ensure that many more children, from birth through age five, have access to dramatically improved early-learning programs so that they enter school with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions they need to be successful. Through the use of a program improvement and quality rating system, early learning programs will increase their ability to focus on children's learning, improve their practice, and—as a result of that improvement in practice—improve each child's growth, development, and potential with kindergarten readiness in mind.

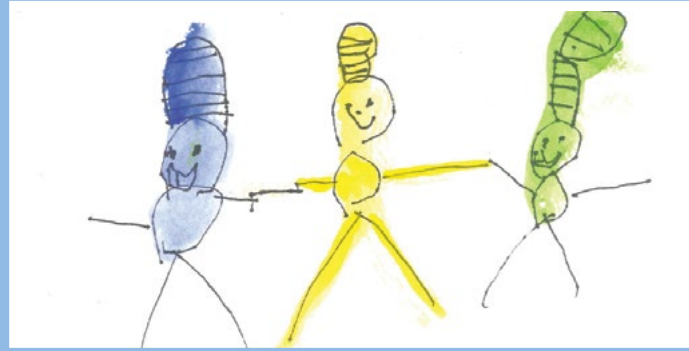


# Table of Contents

<u>Preschool Program Participation Requirements</u>	p. 2
<u>FOCUS Essential Elements of Quality</u>	p. 3
<u>Essential Element I:</u>	p. 3
<b>FOUNDATIONS OF QUALITY</b>	p. 3
<b>A. Full Participation of Each Child</b>	p. 3
1. Family Engagement	p. 3
2. Inclusive Practices for Children with Diverse Abilities	p. 6
3. Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Instruction	p. 11
4. Promoting Social-Emotional Development	p. 13
<b>B. Health Promotion and Developmental Screenings</b>	p. 16
<b>C. Ratios and Group Size</b>	p. 18
<b>Professional Qualifications</b>	p. 20
1. Preschool Administrator/Internal Coaches	p. 20
2. Teachers and Educational Assistants	p. 21
<u>Essential Element II:</u>	p. 24
<b>QUALITY PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT CHILDREN’S GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT, AND LEARNING</b>	p. 24
<b>A. Intentional Teaching</b>	p. 24
1. ERS	p. 21
2. TPOT	p. 24
3. Curriculum	p. 24
3. Effective Early Literacy Instruction	p. 24
4. Lesson Plans	p. 25
5. Assessment	p. 25
<b>B. Continuous Quality Improvement Process</b>	p. 28
<u>Definitions</u>	p. 30
<u>Appendix A</u>	p. 36
<u>Appendix B</u>	p. 38
<u>Appendix C</u>	p. 40



All areas underlined correspond directly to NM PreK Program Standards.



## Preschool Program Participation Requirements

All New Mexico public education preschool programs (PreK, Special Education 619, and Title I) will participate in the FOCUS QRIS. Programs will also collaborate within their district to support children in inclusive environments. The Public Education Department's (PED's) expectation is that programs will continue to be in substantial compliance with the applicable state rules, standards, and federal regulations that govern the program, services provided, and fiscal responsibilities. Each half-day classroom must provide a minimum of 450 clock hours of instructional time. PreK programs funded for full-day services must provide 900 clock hours of instructional time. Meals and outdoor play are important learning opportunities and are counted as instructional time. For extended day programs that provide a rest period, only 30 minutes of the rest period may count toward instructional time.

Participation in the FOCUS QRIS requires engaging in a continuous quality improvement process that includes planning with specific goals to meet the 5-Star Criteria. Programs will have up to **two years** from the start of FOCUS implementation to meet the 5 Star Criteria.

## Exemplary Practices Recognition

In addition to meeting the 5 Star Criteria, preschool programs that provide evidence of meeting at least 70 points (70%) of the Exemplary Practices in a specific area of the Foundations of Quality-Full Participation of Each Child will also be recognized as an Exemplary Program in that area.





# FOCUS ESSENTIAL ELEMENT I: FOUNDATIONS OF QUALITY

## A. FULL PARTICIPATION OF EACH CHILD

### 1. Family Engagement -See Appendix B

**Definition:** Family engagement occurs when there is an on-going, reciprocal, strengths-based partnership between families and their children's early childhood education programs (U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Education, 2016).

**Rationale:** Family engagement is essential for enhancing children's learning and family well-being. Through collaborative family engagement opportunities, early childhood programs and families exchange knowledge to support the development of the whole child, which maximizes and enhances the child's overall early learning experiences (McWayne, Melzi, Limlingan, & Schick, 2016; Wechsler, Melnick, Maier, & Bishop, 2016, WIDA, 2015). In partnering with families, early childhood programs can provide each child with equitable learning opportunities that help him/her achieve their full potential (Friedman & Mwenelupembe, 2020).

### 5 Star Criteria

#### Family-Centered Practices

1. The preschool program and classrooms reflect a welcoming environment for families including:
  - a. Greeting families as they drop off/pick up children
  - b. Displaying family and child photographs, with parental consent if required, throughout the classroom
  - c. Ensuring that posters and signs are clear and in families' home languages
2. The Preschool Home Visit Information form, developmental screening, individual education program (IEP), early childhood outcome summaries (ECO) and family-teacher summary report all reflect collaboration with the family in decision-making related to their child's education.
3. The preschool classroom and program staff offer a variety of opportunities for families to participate in classroom and program in-person or virtual activities, and they encourage family members to share cultural heritage and practices, stories, activities, holiday celebrations, and languages spoken in the home in order to integrate these aspects into classroom activities.
4. Families participate in an annual quality survey, created by the program, as part of the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process.
5. Each school has a process to identify parents, who are not proficient in English, and provides them with free language assistance services, such as translated materials and/or an interpreter, for all school-related information. The interpreter must be proficient in the target language as well as trained in the ethics and confidentiality of the role. Students, siblings, friends and untrained staff would not be considered as qualified to interpret. (National Center for English Language Acquisition & U.S. Department of Education, 2017)

#### Family Capacity Building Practices

1. Preschool program staff document 90 hours of family engagement that includes the following three required categories of activities:
  - a. At least one home visit annually per child. The program will offer an alternate location for homeless or migratory families
  - b. Three family/teacher conferences annually per child
  - c. A minimum of four annual family engagement activities/events outside of classroom hours—activities must relate to an Essential Indicator (EI)
2. Program administrators must develop and revise, in partnership with families, a Family Preschool Handbook that represents their program population. The Public Education Department (PED) Family Preschool Handbook can be completed as a section in the District or School Handbook. Every effort is made to provide the materials in the family's home language. The handbook must include information in the following eight categories:

## 5 Star Criteria—Family Engagement (Cont.)

- a. **Family engagement approach.** A plan that defines and describes the program's family engagement approach and value for soliciting, documenting, and engaging families as an effective way to support each child's full potential.
- b. **Admissions and enrollment policy.** Procedures for eligibility, recruitment, enrollment, and attendance to include the following:
- Methods by which children are recruited and families are informed of the availability of the preschool program
  - Methods by which program personnel work with the local school district's on-going Child Find policies and procedures, including the LEA Child Find contact information to support the year-round, ongoing Child Find process. This process occurs regularly, for example any time a parent requests an evaluation outside of Child Find events
  - The application process and selection criteria
  - Priorities for enrollment
  - Requirements for enrolling, including immunization records
  - How children are enrolled and dis-enrolled
  - How children—who do not have existing individualized education programs (IEPs)—are screened and referred to Child Find
  - How the district identifies, refers, and supports preschool age children who may be homeless or migratory (Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA], 2015), including practices that protect student privacy. Programs will utilize the New Mexico Student Enrollment Form
  - A non-discrimination policy and a process for reporting concerns
- c. **Collaboration and coordination.** Evidence of a Memorandum of Understanding with Head Start and other early childhood providers per the early childhood coordination requirements as required by the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015).
- d. **Curriculum and practices.** A description of the program's developmentally appropriate, inclusive, classroom practices, and evidence-based curriculum model.
- e. **Transportation.** Procedures for transportation of children (if applicable). Please note:
- Children with disabilities must be provided transportation the same way children without disabilities are provided transportation. A child with a disability cannot be denied transportation. Denial of services is considered a denial of free appropriate public education (Free Appropriate Public Education for Students with Disabilities [FAPE], 1973)
  - Transportation for children with disabilities can be considered a related service and part of the child's IEP. The IEP can specify specialized equipment such as ramps, lifts, etc.
  - LEAs must provide transportation services to homeless children to the school of origin, which includes public preschools [McKinley–Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 1987]
- f. **Screenings.** Procedures for developmental and health screenings, including the methods by which results are shared with families, the time frame within which results are provided to families, and the means by which follow-up occurs and including the information regarding all preschool services provided to families requiring such services (including special education preschool services).
- g. **Referrals.** Procedures for referring children with suspected developmental delays and/or disabilities in a timely manner to the district's year-round Child Find services, including the ongoing process that occurs between Child Find events (e.g., Child Find events or round-up).
- h. **Transition plans.** A detailed transition plan for supporting children moving into and onto kindergarten. This is a general transition plan and does not replace the individual transition plan required for children who are transitioning from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C (Early Intervention/Family Infant Toddler (FIT) Programs) to IDEA Part B (Preschool Special Education Programs).

## 5 Star Criteria—Family Engagement (Cont.)

- i. **Food service. NM PreK programs** must provide at least one meal for children in the 450-hour program (either breakfast or lunch) and two meals per school session in the 900-hour program. All meals and snacks must meet USDA requirements for children. Procedures for meals and snacks, including a statement that all food served by the preschool program must be prepared by the district/school/program nutrition staff or food service contractor. (Exception: food prepared as part of a developmentally appropriate classroom activity.) Procedure must include how families inform school personnel and how school personnel are made knowledgeable about each child's special nutritional needs, including allergies, medical conditions, and physician requests for dietary restrictions.

## Exemplary Practices—Family Engagement Rubric

1. Families complete an evaluation at the end of each family engagement activity. Program staff compile results and incorporate the data into their CQI plan. (15 pts)
2. Program staff hold a minimum of six family engagement activities annually, with at least three of those activities based on family input and recommendations for topics. (15 pts)
3. Program personnel implement a systematic plan to engage fathers and male family members as active participants in the child's education. (15 pts)
4. Program personnel develop and staff a family resource center that
  - Houses a lending library of resources for parenting including typical and atypical child development;
  - Offers family learning activities, books and games; and
  - Provides access to a computer with internet capabilities. (25 pts)
5. Program staff provide resources to assist families to document their child's growth and development in the natural routines and activities in the home. (10 pts)
6. Program personnel provide a community resource guide to connect families with local services and supports. (5 pts)
7. Program staff offer family supports (financial literacy, nutrition, parenting, literacy, language classes, fatherhood, and male caregiver initiatives) that are
  - Flexible;
  - Culturally and linguistically relevant; and
  - Responsive to family-identified preferences (15 pts)



## 2. Inclusive Practices for Children with Diverse Abilities<sup>1</sup>

**Definition:** Inclusion in early childhood programs refers to including children with disabilities in early childhood programs, together with their peers without disabilities. Programs must hold high expectations and intentionally promote participation in all learning and social activities using evidence-based services and supports to foster each child's development (cognitive, language, communication, physical, behavioral, and social-emotional), friendships with peers, and sense of belonging. The directive to segregate children with disabilities as seldom as possible, is set out in 34 CFR 300.114 (a) (2). This applies to all young children with disabilities. (U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services & Education, 2015).

**Rationale:** Being meaningfully included as a member of society is the first step to equal opportunity and is every person's right—a right supported by our laws. Research indicates that early childhood inclusion is beneficial to children with and without disabilities. Additionally, preliminary research into the financial costs of operating inclusive early childhood programs shows that it is not necessarily more expensive than operating separate early childhood programs for children with disabilities. Finally, meaningful inclusion can support children with disabilities in reaching their full potential, resulting in broad societal benefits, including higher productivity in adulthood, and fewer resources spent on interventions and public assistance later in life. It is the **PED's position that all young children with disabilities should have access to inclusive, high-quality, early childhood programs, where they are provided individualized and appropriate support in meeting high expectations** (U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services & Education).

### 5 Star Criteria

#### Identification, Access, and Support

1. There is a written plan in the Family Preschool Handbook that describes how the program identifies and serves children with, or suspected of having, a developmental delay and/or disability. The plan includes policies and procedures that are outlined with roles and responsibilities specific to the program. The plan is not a repeat of the regulations. The plan describes how regulations are implemented. The seven categories of the plan include the following:

- a. **Access and Support.** Policies to ensure that children of all abilities have access to the general education program and are supported, so they are able to participate. The eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance plan includes strategies for recruiting and placement of children with developmental delays and/or disabilities—including children entering the program from an IDEA Part C program—into classrooms with same age peers without developmental delays or disabilities.
- b. **Developmental screenings.** Developmental screenings that include a social emotional component must occur within the first three months of attendance.

**Note:** Developmental screenings are not required for children who have been identified for services under an IDEA Part B program and/or have an IEP because they have already received a developmental screening

- Children with disabilities who received services under IDEA Part C must be referred for a Part B evaluation
- An IEP must be in place by the child's third birthday (NMAC 6.31.2.11A1 and New Mexico Transition Guidance Document). IDEA Part C information (that is current within six months) should be considered as part of the evaluation for Part B; it cannot be used solely to determine eligibility for Part B

<sup>1</sup> This section relies for its information primarily on US DOH and US DOE (2015).

## 5 Star Criteria (Identification, Access, and Support Cont.)

- c. **Refer and Connect.** How program staff, with parental written consent and prior written notice, refer and connect families to the IDEA Part B Child Find Program in the local school district when;
  - The child scores as someone in need of further evaluation on the developmental screening (referrals shall not be delayed due to lack of evaluation services, but must be processed in a timely manner) and/or
  - The family or teacher has concerns regarding a child's development
- d. **Referral Packet.** In collaboration with families, a referral packet will be completed for use by evaluators. This Child Find Packet should include the following items: Developmental screenings that include a social emotional component such as the Ages and Stages Questionnaire® (ASQ®), the ASQ with the social-emotional component ASQ-SE®, Denver Developmental Screening, HELPS, the Brigance®—an age-appropriate screener only, a well-child screening, and vision and hearing screenings. In addition, if a child has been enrolled in a program, the packet includes the online Early Childhood Observation Tool (ECOT), classroom strategies, anecdotal progress notes, and a copy of the Home Visit form.
- e. **Child Find Screening Process.** How program staff assist and support the child and family throughout the Child Find process. Child Find takes the place of a student assistant team (SAT) meeting. (Guidance Memo April 2016—RTI cannot be used to delay or deny the evaluation process pursuant to 34 CFR 300.304-300.311).
- f. **Child Find.** Participation in Child Find activities with local IDEA Part C and Part B Programs. **Note:** Child Find is not a one time event (i.e., a Child Find round up). It happens continuously as an on-going intake process.
- g. **Initial Evaluation Time Frame.** How program staff ensure that the initial evaluation for special education is completed within 60 days of parental consent, in accordance with 34 CFR § 300.301. Note: Parental consent should not be signed at the day of evaluation, as it signals a delay in the identification process. Parental consent should be obtained in a timely manner after referral, Child Find, or transition from Part C to Part B. There must be no undue delay in the evaluation process NMAC 6.31.2.10 (A)(B).
- h. **IEP Goal Achievement.** How program staff—and particularly the classroom teacher—support the achievement of goals in the child's IEP through classroom activities and learning centers.



## Provision of Inclusive Settings

1. As part of the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) plan, which is part of the Dash Plan, program staff will use the Early Childhood Inclusive Practices Self-Assessment Tool found at <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/early-childhood-bureau/>.
2. All children, including those with delays and/or disabilities, are general education students first. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) presumes that the first placement option considered for each child with a disability is the regular classroom the child would attend if they did not have a disability. At a minimum, inclusive preschool classrooms will maintain a 60/40 ratio of typically/atypically developing students. Programs should strive for a 75/25 ratio. Based on the child's need for services, they could be enrolled in more than one early care and education setting. Options could include a combination of Head Start or private/nonprofit and public school special education preschool programs. However, a child may not be enrolled in two NM PreK programs concurrently. Inclusive NM PreK and Title I preschool programs are considered part of the local education agency (LEA)—also known as the district
  - “The IEP must include an explanation of the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate with nondisabled children in the regular class. 34 CFR §300.320(a)(5). Before a child with a disability can be placed outside the regular educational environment, the group of persons making the placement decision must consider whether supplementary aids and services could be provided that would enable the education of the child, including a preschool child with a disability, in the regular educational setting to be achieved satisfactorily. 34 CFR §300.114(a)(2). If a determination is made that the education of a particular child with a disability cannot be achieved satisfactorily in the regular educational environment, even with the provision of appropriate supplementary aids and services, that child then could be placed in a setting other than the regular educational setting. The public agency responsible for providing a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to a preschool child with a disability must make available the full continuum of alternative placements, including instruction in regular classes, special classes, special schools, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions, to meet the needs of all preschool children with disabilities for special education and related services. 34 CFR §300.115. In selecting the LRE, consideration also must be given to any potential harmful effect on the child or on the quality of services that the child needs. 34 CFR §300.116(d)” (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2017). Regular classes considered by the IEP team include Head Start, kindergartens, preschool classes to an eligible pre-kindergarten population by the public school system, private kindergartens or preschools and group child development centers or child care.

Children, including those with delays or disabilities who also have behavioral needs, must not be dismissed (i.e. dis-enrolled, suspended, or expelled) from the preschool program solely because of their behavioral needs, unless the child is evaluated by the district's multidisciplinary team personnel, and an IEP is developed or amended to specify placement in another setting. Children with disabilities who are suspended for 10 cumulative days must have a manifestation determination, in accordance with 34 CFR § 300.500(e). Removal for longer than 10 days is considered a change of placement and the child is still entitled to a free and public education (FAPE). **Any partial day removal from the classroom must be documented and counted toward the child's 10 days.**
3. If so indicated in a child's IEP, preschool program personnel must modify the indoor/outdoor physical and learning environments (soliciting support from facilities/maintenance department) to accommodate the needs of children with disabilities and developmental delays, with supports from appropriate service providers. **All public preschool programs must meet ADA compliance in accordance to the needs of the child for consideration of placement.**
4. When planning for the succeeding school year, **programs shall consider that some classrooms may require a smaller group size** based on the nature and severity of the needs of the children with delays and/or disabilities.



### **Participation**

1. With written parental consent, the child's early care and education providers—including those from private/non-profit settings—are active partners in the IEP process, including placement, coordination of services, goal-setting, and consultation with additional education providers. High quality evidence-based practices must be in place to maximize child growth in every setting.
2. In collaboration and consultation with the Part C/Part B service providers, educators develop and embed IEP goals and objectives into the daily schedule, classroom, and lesson planning.
3. Therapists, to the maximum extent possible, provide therapies in the inclusive environment and incorporate same-age peers without an IEP in the activities, as long as the students with disabilities receive their services as written on their IEPs and are not denied FAPE.
4. The team of adults providing services will ensure children receive adequate and appropriate supports and services. The team is comprised of the general education teacher, special education teacher, and related service providers.

### **Transition From IDEA Part C To IDEA Part B**

With parental written consent, the school district engages the child's early care and education providers—including those from private/non-profit settings—to actively participate in supporting the child's IEP process, early childhood outcomes process, and the individual transition in or out plan, as required by IDEA. LEAs must request all third- party documents from original agencies due to HIPPA and FERPA requirements.



## Exemplary Practices—Inclusive Practices for Children with Diverse Abilities Rubric

1. Programs use the results of the Inclusive Practices Checklist to develop a timeline to ensure progress towards more inclusive settings. The program provides evidence of working towards natural proportions (the inclusion of children with disabilities in proportion to their presence in the general population) of children with and without IEPs in the same classroom.
  - 70 percent of children in the classroom do not have IEPs. (10 pts)
  - 80 percent of children in the classroom do not have IEPs. (15 pts)
2. Preschool program staff—including district special education staff; general education staff, which includes private child care and Head Start staff; families; and ancillary service provider(s)—have at least quarterly, regularly scheduled meeting times to review individual child progress and update or revise strategies and modifications needed to support the ongoing, full participation of each child in activities and daily routines. (10 pts)
3. The program provides documentation of systematic ongoing staff training in areas of developmental delays and disabilities, including positive behavior supports. (10 pts)
4. At least 50 percent of teachers hold BOTH an early childhood and the highly qualified special education PreK–12 licenses. (10 points)
5. The school district and the private childcare or Head Start facility have mutually entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to provide special education services in the private and Head Start settings, in compliance with IDEA according to 34 CFR § 300.114-117. (10 pts)
6. As a first option, special education services are embedded in everyday routines, as opposed to working with children in separate settings or pulling children out of their setting for specialized instruction. Same-age, non-identified peers are included in instructional opportunities. (10 pts)
7. Program procedures have clearly demonstrated re-allocation or the braiding of funds to support increased access to inclusive settings that meet the individualized learning and developmental needs of children with disabilities. (10 pts)
8. Program staff implement quality IEPs. (25 pts)
  - 80 percent of teachers and administrators have completed Writing Quality Individualized Education Plan (IEP) Goals using the Early Learning Guidelines (ELG) training
  - 80 percent of teachers and administrators are utilizing the Developing Quality IEPs Technical Manual published by the PED Special Education Bureau
  - IEP goals for the early childhood outcomes (ECO) categories of positive social relationships, acquires and uses knowledge, and takes appropriate actions to meet needs are derived from the New Mexico ELGs
  - If a child is not placed in the general education setting (S1), the IEP documents evidence that
    - o S1 was tried and assessment showed regression; and
    - o Practices were adjusted within S1 and assessed prior to considering another placement.

### 3. Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Instruction

**Definition:** Culture refers to deep patterns of values, beliefs, practices, and traditions that have been compiled and normalized over a period of time, setting the standard for what is normal and expected (Muhammad & Hollie, 2012). Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching is a collaborative effort between families and early childhood classrooms that support the cultural knowledge and experiences of children from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds (Gay, 2018; WIDA, 2015).

**Rationale:** Through their home language and culture, families share a sense of identity and belonging (Arreguin-Anderson, Salinas-Gonzales & Alanis, 2018; Peterson & McCabe, 2013). Every child in New Mexico has diverse strengths rooted in their family's unique culture, heritage, language, beliefs, and circumstances; therefore, it is imperative for preschool programs to incorporate children's home cultures and languages within the classroom (State of New Mexico, Children, Youth and Families Department, 2010; WIDA, 2015). This collaboration can help ensure that Multilingual Learners (MLLs) and their families "feel welcomed, respected, and valued as integral members within the early childhood setting" (WIDA, 2015, p.8). Preschool programs must gather information about MLLs and their families as well as recognize their strengths to enhance language development and support learning (Gay, 2018; WIDA, 2015).

#### 5 Star Criteria

##### Culture

1. The program, classroom environment, and materials reflect the culture, language, identity, and reality of the children, families, and communities served.
2. The program administration makes every effort to recruit staff who reflect the cultures and languages of families served.
3. A process is in place to ensure translators and interpreters participate in IEP and other meetings, including family-teacher conferences and home visits. The interpreter must be proficient in the target language as well as trained in the ethics and confidentiality of the role. Students, siblings, friends, and untrained staff are not considered qualified to interpret.

##### Supporting Multilingual Learners

1. Print-rich labeling is visible and represents the children's (written) home languages.
2. Educators implement strategies that reflect an understanding of the stages of second-language acquisition by planning activities, materials, and experiences that support each stage.
3. Educators implement strategies that foster the relationships of children who speak languages other than English with English-speaking children.
4. Educators promote children's home language, while supporting English language development.
5. To promote early language development for multilingual children, ages 2.5-5.5, New Mexico has become a WIDA Early Years Member State. Educators have full access to WIDA Early Years tools and resources in the WIDA Resource Library located at [https://wida.wisc.edu/resources?keys=&field\\_type\\_target\\_id%5B230%5D=230](https://wida.wisc.edu/resources?keys=&field_type_target_id%5B230%5D=230) to be able to;
  - Highlight what multilingual children can do with language
  - Support instructional planning with attention to language
  - Offer suggestions for scaffolding language development
  - Promote language-focused family engagement

As part of our state's membership, educators have access to the WIDA Early Years Online Learning Modules located at <https://go.wisc.edu/69c3t6>. The modules are self-paced professional learning opportunities designed for early childhood educators to support young multilingual children. Completing these modules is a FOCUS training requirement.

## Exemplary Practices—Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Instruction Rubric

1. Program administration provides systematic professional development that informs staffs' culturally and linguistically responsive instruction, including evidence-based teaching strategies to support MLLs in both home and English language development. (15 pts)
2. At least 50 percent of program teachers have completed requirements for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) or a bilingual endorsement. (20 pts)
3. The program provides a clear and intentional plan to support children's home and English language development at school and at home. (25 pts)
4. The program provides evidence that recruitment efforts target families, who may be unfamiliar or unaware of public preschool programs and systems as a result of cultural and linguistic barriers. (10 pts)
5. Program procedures ensure that the Community Resource Guide (see, Family Engagement section detailed above) is translated and includes specific resources and supports for families who speak a home language other than English. (10 pts)
6. In addition to appropriate culturally and linguistically responsive instruction, the program procedures ensure support for language revitalization, maintenance, and preservation efforts in tribal communities by providing opportunities outside of program hours for tribally designated experts to;
  - Conduct language classes and activities for families;
  - Translate learning materials;
  - Facilitate family engagement activities; and
  - Teach traditional crafts while incorporating the native language. (20 pts)



#### 4. Promoting Social-Emotional Development

**Definition:** Social skills that have been identified as essential for school success include the following eight abilities: 1) getting along with others, 2) following directions, 3) identifying and regulating one's emotions and behavior, 4) thinking of appropriate solutions to conflict, 5) persisting on tasks, 6) engaging in social conversation and cooperative play, 7) correctly interpreting other's behaviors and emotions, and 8) feeling good about oneself and others (Fox & Smith, 2007). New Mexico has implemented the Pyramid Framework for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Young Children (Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning; The Pyramid Model Consortium, 2016) as a guide for supporting children's social-emotional development.

**Rationale:** Research has established a compelling link between social emotional development and school success (Blankson, Weaver, Leerkes, O'Brien, Calkins & Marcovitch, 2017; Raver, 2002). There is a growing body of research that indicates how social emotional competence and challenging behavior can be effectively addressed within early childhood programs (Domitrovich, Moore, & Greenberg, 2012; Fox & Hemmeter, 2014; Dunlap & Fox, 2014). A child's early years set the trajectory for the relationships and successes he or she will experience for the rest of his or her life, making it crucial that a child's earliest experiences truly foster—and never harm—his or her development. During these years, children's brains are developing rapidly, influenced by both positive and negative experiences. As such, expulsion and suspension practices in early childhood settings are two stressful and negative experiences young children and their families may encounter. "Suspension and expulsion can influence a number of adverse outcomes across development, health and education. Young students who are expelled or suspended are as much as 10 times more likely to drop out of high school, experience academic failure and grade retention, hold negative school attitudes, and face incarceration than those who are not" (U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Education, 2014, p.3). New Mexico public school preschool programs must not suspend or expel preschool children. High-quality early childhood programs provide the positive experiences that nurture positive learning and development.

#### 5 Star Criteria

##### Building Positive Relationships:

1. The classroom staff analyze data from the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) and engage in the Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) specific to improving teaching practices that support social-emotional development. Preschool staff:
  - a. Develop their students' self-esteem by utilizing culturally and linguistically responsive instructional practices such as
    - Respecting and acknowledging children's cultural and linguistic backgrounds;
    - Actively listening and providing appropriate responses to children;
    - Refraining from judgmental statements;
    - Positively responding to children's ideas and extending the conversation by using open-ended questions;
    - Recognizing children's efforts with specific positive comments;
    - Using proper name and conversing with each child such as the Strive for Five teaching practice (Paulson, Moats, & Nelson, 2010)
    - Using a tone of voice that is positive, calm, and supportive; and
    - Interacting with children at their eye level and establishing eye contact, when culturally appropriate.
  - b. Encourage autonomy by
    - Providing children with opportunities to make choices;
    - Allowing children time to respond and complete tasks independently;
    - Creating opportunities for decision-making, problem-solving, and working together; and
    - Teaching children strategies for self-regulating and self-monitoring behaviors.



## 5 Star Criteria—Promoting Social-Emotional Development (Cont.)

- c. Promote children’s individualized emotional regulation and executive function by
  - Helping children recognize emotional cues; and
  - Helping children identify appropriate choices and solve problems.

### Implementing Preventative Practices

1. Program staff is responsible for screening for early detection of children at risk for developmental delay and disability. Prior to the third month of attendance, preschool program staff must assess each child with a developmental screening instrument that includes a social-emotional component. The screening tool selected will be completed collaboratively by program staff and family member(s). Program staff should additionally ensure that—if a screening has taken place within the last 12 months, and the documentation is available to the preschool program, or if the child has an IEP, that child is not rescreened.
  - Preschool program staff must inform families of screening and observational assessment results no later than the next scheduled family-teacher conference.
  - Program staff provide evidence of follow-up on the developmental screening tool including, if necessary, referrals for further evaluation.
2. Preschool program personnel are knowledgeable about the indicators of stress in young children and use the Menu of Practices from the New Mexico Pyramid Framework to support young children in coping with trauma-induced experiences.
3. The learning environment and daily schedule support children’s interests and developmental levels and includes a balance of teacher-led large- and small-group activities.

### Addressing Concerning Behaviors <sup>2</sup>

Research suggests that school expulsion and suspension practices are associated with negative educational and life outcomes. No child can be dismissed, including being dis-enrolled, suspended, or expelled (see Definitions section), from the preschool program. Instead, Child Find screenings shall serve as interventions for children that are not identified and do not have an IEP. A functional behavior assessment (FBA) will be conducted and, if warranted, a behavior intervention plan (BIP) will be developed in such a way as to

1. Solicit input from the family;
2. Provide written consent and prior written notice to the family if the FBA is going to be a part of the evaluation for special education;
3. Organize the environment, interactions, and curriculum to minimize the likelihood of challenging behaviors;
4. Make a referral to Child Find if concerning behaviors persist;
5. Have the child evaluated by the district’s multidisciplinary team; and
6. Provide access to documents, that are considered for the Child Find and evaluation process, to classroom teachers; developmental screenings that include a social emotional component (such as Ages and Stages Questionnaire®, Ages and Stages Questionnaire®- Social Emotional, Denver Developmental Screening, HELP, Brigance®—screener only), a well-child screening, vision and hearing screenings, the Early Childhood Observation Tool (ECOT), anecdotal progress notes, a copy of the Home Visit form, and PART C.

For children who are identified, or who already have an IEP, the IEP team determines a need for an FBA, and the appropriate school district personnel complete the FBA and develop the BIP. All staff who provide services to the child will implement the behavior improvement plan.

<sup>2</sup> The US Department of Health and Human Services and the US Department of Education are the resource for this list regarding the appropriate response to behavioral concerns.



## Exemplary Practices—Promoting Social-Emotional Development Rubric

1. The Family Resource Library houses family supports for positive behaviors in the home environment, including the New Mexico Pyramid Framework. (15 pts)
2. The preschool program invites staff from community childcare and Head Start programs to NM Pyramid Framework training for staff and families. (15pts)
3. The program staff demonstrate ongoing utilization of strategies from the New Mexico Pyramid Framework. (25 pts)
4. The program staff creates ongoing communities of practice and deepen staff's knowledge and ability to implement the New Mexico Pyramid Framework. These groups also contribute time and resources to provide the classroom materials required to fully implement the New Mexico Pyramid Framework. This is demonstrated by obtaining a score of 80 percent or higher on all sub-sections in the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool. (25 pts)
5. The program extends the New Mexico Pyramid Framework by providing ongoing Pyramid training for families. This training is located at <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/family.html> (20 pts)



## B. HEALTH PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENINGS

### 5 Star Criteria



1. Each child must have an up-to-date immunization record or a public health division approved exemption from the requirement on file. Children cannot be enrolled without an up-to-date immunization record or a public health division approved exemption form, unless that child is experiencing homelessness. A child experiencing homelessness must be enrolled regardless of lack of immunization records. Lack of immunization records cannot delay a screening or evaluation process. Any minor child, through his or her parent or guardian, may file with the health authority—charged with the duty of enforcing the immunization laws—the following requests for exemptions from immunizations:
  - a. A certificate from a duly licensed physician stating that the physical condition of the child is such that immunization would seriously endanger the life or health of the child.
  - b. Affidavits or written affirmation from an officer of a recognized religious denomination that such child's parents or guardians are bona fide members of a denomination whose religious teaching requires reliance upon prayer or spiritual means alone for healing.
  - c. Affidavits or written affirmation from his or her parent or legal guardian that their religious beliefs, held either individually or jointly with others, do not permit the administration of vaccine or another immunizing agent.
2. Each child must receive the following health screenings by a school health care professional or private provider prior to the beginning of the program or within the child's first three months of attendance.
  - Well child screening
  - Hearing screening
  - Vision screening
  - Dental screening
3. Developmental screenings must include all domains of development, including the social emotional component. They must be conducted for each child within the first three months of attendance. Program staff monitor for early detection of children at risk for developmental delays using screeners and other evaluation materials to assess their students. These materials are administered in the child's native language or other appropriate mode of communication and in the form most likely to yield accurate information, as to what the child knows and can do academically, developmentally, and functionally— unless it is not feasible to provide or administer, 34 CFR § 300.304(c) (1)(ii) (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004). Families are included in the screening process and informed of the results no later than the next scheduled family-teacher conference.
4. Screenings are a collaborative process with families. Families are included in the screening by participating in interviews during the home visit. Families and teachers review results and referrals are made in a timely matter. Appropriate referrals and follow-up services are made available to families to address all concerns that have been identified.



## 5 Star Criteria—Health Promotion and Developmental Screenings (Cont.)



### Meals

All personnel must be knowledgeable about each child's special nutritional needs including allergies, medical conditions, and physician requests for dietary restrictions. Family-style dining takes place in the classroom unless otherwise mandated by the NM Department of Health. The program ensures that family-style dining is in compliance with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) requirements. (National School Lunch Act and Child Nutrition Act, 1978).

**All PED preschool programs** must participate in the USDA School Lunch Program and must organize their schedule to meet the following:

- Programs funded for 450 hours must provide at least one meal per day that meets USDA requirements
- PreK Full-Day (900 hours) programs must provide at least two meals per day, both meeting USDA requirements
- Families of preschool children must complete the same forms for meal reimbursement, as required of other students in the school, unless students are directly certified or categorically eligible to participate in the program
- Children experiencing homelessness qualify for free lunch through The National School Lunch Program. (National School Lunch Act and Child Nutrition Act, 1978.)



## C. RATIOS AND GROUP SIZE

### 5 Star Criteria

**Staff: Child Ratios & Group: Much confusion exists around ratios and group size. There are three considerations for which to plan.**

Class load means the number of students for whom a teacher structures activities at a given time (NMAC 6.29.1.9). General education preschool program adult-child ratio for four-year olds must be no greater than 1:10, with one lead teacher. One educational assistant is added to the classroom if the group size is 11 or more. Four-year-old group size may never exceed 20 children.

- **Evidence-based: Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)** requires evidence-based practices. Evidence has shown that the 3:1 ratio has better outcomes for students (NIEER, 2016). Three students without Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) to one student with an IEP (3:1 ratio) has a strong correlation to maximum growth when the following are provided:
  - o supports and services are provided for those with IEPs in the general education environment,
  - o the general education teacher is provided with professional development in strategies needed, and
  - o the special education teacher/case manager is involved.

The IEP team makes the decisions and develops evidenced-based interventions to build the skills of the student. The opposite can be true, however. When IEP teams do not provide the student and teacher with the professional development, supports, materials, accommodations and modifications, the teacher and students may fail to achieve maximum growth. **Please set teachers and students up for success!**

- a. For example: In a classroom of 20 students, a 3:1 ratio would be 15:5 (15 general education/5 special education). In addition to needing a general education teacher and a general educational assistant (EA), this ratio example would also need a special education teacher and ancillary supports as required in the IEP. If these students with IEPs are D-level, there would be a need for a case manager and possibly an EA or a waiver for how much the case manager is over her full time equivalent (FTE). Five D-level students at .25 FTE would be a 1.25 case management load. This same size classroom could have four D-level students and one A-level speech only student. The case management would then be 1.14. It is possible a smaller class size is recommended for the children with IEPs. A classroom of 16 could have 12 students without IEPs and 4 students with IEPs.
- **Case load (management)** – Student/staff caseloads in special education in accordance with Subsection I of 6.30.2.10g
  - a. The student/adult caseload shall not exceed a 1:4 ratio for center-based special education services in which one of the adults in the program is a properly licensed professional providing **three- and four-year old children** with the amount of special education needed to implement each child's IEP.
  - b. The student/adult caseload shall not exceed a 1:2 ratio for center-based special education services in which **three- and four-year old children** have **profound** educational needs.
  - c. All students in the general education classroom must still have a special education teacher or a speech language pathologist case manager/teacher. If the general education teacher is dual certified Early Childhood and Special Education, then that teacher's position can be cost allocated for both positions in STARS.
- **Class load** – Class load means the number of students for whom a teacher structures activities at a given time (NMAC 6.29.1.9). General education preschool program adult/child ratio for four-year-olds must be no greater than a 1:10 ratio, with one lead teacher. One EA should be added to the classroom if the class load is 11 or more. A four-year-old class load may never exceed 20 children. Public preschool program adult-child ratios for three-year olds must be no greater than 1:8, with one lead teacher and one educational assistant, if the group size is nine or more. A three-year-old group size may never exceed 16 children. As indicated in statute (NMAC 6.30.9.10), New Mexico Pre-K classrooms can only serve 4-year-old children. Mixed-age classrooms are allowable by statute in Title 1 and Special Education classrooms only.



## 5 Star Criteria (Cont.)

### HOW TO CALCULATE CASELOAD MAXIMUMS

For teachers with Assignment Codes:

- 94 regular education teacher of gifted
- 95 speech-language pathologist caseload manager
- 95S preschool speech-language pathologist caseload manager
- 96 preschool teacher
- 97 special education teacher

Each “A or minimum” level student **1/35 or .029 FTE** (IN PRESCHOOL, Speech/Language identified)  
(receives special education service 10% or less of the day = level 1 on STARS)

Each “A or minimum” related service student **1/60 or .017 FTE** (IN PRESCHOOL, Speech/Language identified)  
(must be under staff at code 95)

Each “B or moderate” level student **1/24 or .042 FTE** (IN PRESCHOOL, Speech/Language identified)  
(receives special education service less than half of the day = level 2 on STARS)

Each “B or moderate” related service student **1/35 or .029 FTE** (IN PRESCHOOL, Speech/Language identified)  
(must be under staff at code 95)

Each “D or maximum” level student **1/8 or .125 FTE** (Grades K-12)  
(receives special education service all day or approaching a full day = level 4 on STARS)

Each “D or maximum” level preschool student **1/4 or .25 FTE** (Preschool) per Subsection I of 6.30.2.10g(a)  
(receives special education service all day or approaching a full day = level 4 on STARS)

The FTE generated by the students cannot exceed the FTE for their caseload teacher unless a waiver is granted. These caseload waivers are granted by the Secretary of the New Mexico of Public Education Department on a case-by-case basis, and are available at: <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/admin.personnel/waiver>

WAYS TO MEET INDICATOR 6 (EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS) 4-YEAR-OLD PRESCHOOL RATIOS							
3:1 Ratio Evidence-based NM Pre-K/FOCUS Accepts		Required Staffing		2:1 Ratio Acceptable NM Pre-K/FOCUS Accepts		Required Staffing	
STUDENTS		TEACHERS		STUDENTS		TEACHERS	
No IEP	IEP	Teacher	Teacher or Assistant	No IEP	IEP	Teacher	Teacher or Assistant
6	2	1	1	8	4	1	1 SE
9	3	1	1 SE	10	5	1	1 SE
12	4	1	1 GE/1 SE	12	6	1	1 GE/1 SE
15	5	1	1 GE/1 SE	14	6	1	1 GE/1 SE

SE = special education GE = general education \*Case manager must hold a special education license.

50/50 Ratios are not allowable in NM Pre-K classroom because it is not evidence-based. This should hold true for all classrooms in preschool.

# PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

## Preschool Administrators/Internal PreK Coaches

### 5 Star Criteria

#### Credentials

Preschool program administrators and internal coaches must meet the following licensure and/or educational requirements:

1. Preschool program administrators and internal coaches must hold one of the following licenses: a) the New Mexico education administration, PreK-12 license; b) the New Mexico early childhood teacher license: birth through third grade; c) the New Mexico early childhood teacher license: age three through grade three; or d) the New Mexico special education license PreK-12.
2. Internal coaches must also have a Master's degree in Education.

#### Professional Development

**Preschool administrators** must have successfully completed the following:

- Web-based PED FOCUS Leadership Academy, available at <https://nmped.mrowl.com/>: which includes
  - o Intentional Teaching Overview;
  - o New Mexico Pyramid Framework Overview; and
  - o The Full Participation of Each Child Overview;**to be completed within the first year** of hire or start of FOCUS implementation;
- The Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale—Third Edition (ECERS-3): online training with evidence of successful completion **within the first three months**;
- Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling for Early Childhood Educators (LETRS-EC): which must be completed **within the second year** of hire or start of FOCUS implementation;
- The online [Early Childhood Observation Tool \(ECOT\) training](https://nmped.mrowl.com/), available at <https://nmped.mrowl.com/>: first year preschool administrators **must complete the initial training by August 31st**. All preschool administrators must complete refresher training annually by August 31st; and
- Five WIDA Early Years online professional learning modules: all modules Multilingual learners and their Families;
  - o Multilingual learners with Disabilities;
  - o Scaffolding Language Learning;
  - o Promising Practices; and
  - o WIDA Early English Language Development Standards Framework.**to be completed within the second year** of hire or start of FOCUS implementation

**Internal Early Childhood Instructional Coaches** must successfully complete the following trainings:

- Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale—Third Edition (ECERS-3) online training with evidence of successful completion **within the first 30 days** of hire;
- New Mexico Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) trainings **within the first 30 days** of hire;
- Intentional Teaching Training: Module I & Module II **within the first 30 days** of hire;
- Full Participation of Each Child **within the first two months** of hire;
- Online Early Childhood Observation Tool ECOT training, available at <https://nmped.mrowl.com/> must be completed **within the first 30 days** of hire;
- Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling for Early Childhood Educators (LETRS-EC) with at least 90% mastery on post-test, **within the first two months** of hire;



## PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS Preschool Administrators/Internal PreK Coaches 5 Star Criteria (Cont.)

- LETRS-EC Facilitator Training as available;
- Pyramid Framework Training of Trainers as available; and
- TPOT training including inter-rater reliability training as available.
- Transition Boot Camp
- Five WIDA Early Years online professional learning modules to be completed **within the first year** of hire or start of FOCUS implementation:
  - o Multilingual learners and their Families;
  - o Multilingual learners with Disabilities;
  - o Scaffolding Language Learning;
  - o Promising Practices; and
  - o WIDA Early English Language Development Standards Framework.

## PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS Teachers and Educational Assistants

### 5 Star Criteria

#### Credentials

##### PreK and Title 1 Preschool Teachers

In each preschool classroom, the teacher must have 1) the New Mexico early childhood teacher license: birth through third grade, 2) the New Mexico early childhood teacher license: PreK through grade three, or 3) the New Mexico early childhood teacher license: birth through PreK.

If the teacher does not hold one of these early childhood teacher licenses but does hold a K–8 Elementary license and/or a special education PreK–12 license, he or she must provide evidence of successful completion of the following:

1. The early childhood alternative licensure program (coursework or OPAL-Online Portfolio route) **within two years** of hire or implementation of FOCUS; OR
2. A minimum of **twelve college credits annually** toward a master's degree leading to one of the two early childhood licenses; OR
3. National Board Certification in early childhood education.

**Every preschool classroom must be staffed at all times by a licensed teacher.**

##### Special Education Preschool Teachers:

Teachers must be highly qualified in accordance with 34 CFR § 300.18 (IDEA, 2004) and as indicated in Student Teacher Accountability Reporting System (STARS) (New Mexico Department of Public Education).

##### Educational Assistants, Non-Special Education:

Educational assistants (EAs) in each preschool classroom must have an Associate's degree (AA) in early childhood education and hold a level 3 educational assistant license from the PED. Any EA who does not currently possess an AA in early childhood education must provide evidence of successful completion of a minimum of **nine college credit hours towards the degree annually**.

### Educational Assistants, Special Education:

Instructional and non-instructional EAs must meet requirements under 6.63.9 of the NMAC (Licensure for Educational Assistants, 2007).

**Note:** Non-instructional special education EAs are not reflected in adult-child ratios.

### **Teachers and Educational Assistants:**

Preschool teachers and EAs, including approved long-term substitutes, must attend all required FOCUS professional development as follows:

- The Online Early Childhood Observational Tool (ECOT): training, available at <https://nmped.mrowl.com/> must be completed **no later than August 31st**, or within 30 days of hire, and prior to submitting observation data in ECOT. New teachers must complete the full online training. Returning teachers must complete the freshener training **annually by August 31**.
- Intentional Teaching: Module I-Powerful Interactions and Module II-Observational Assessment which is the equivalent of the NM PreK New Teacher Training and must be completed **within two months** of hire or start of FOCUS implementation.
- Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale—Third Edition (ECERS-3): online training with evidence of successful completion must be completed by **October 1 (one time)**.
- The Full Participation of Each Child: training must be completed **within one year** of hire or within one year from the start of FOCUS implementation.
- New Mexico Pyramid Framework: training must be completed **within the first year** of hire or start of FOCUS implementation.
- Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling for Early Childhood Educators (LETRS-EC): training must be completed **with at least 80% mastery on post-test, within the second year of hire** or start of FOCUS Implementation (for licensed teachers only).
- Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling for Early Childhood Educators Strategies in Action-The Oral Language Connection to Early Literacy and Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling for Early Childhood Educators Strategies in Action- The Phonological Awareness Connection to Early Literacy: trainings must be completed **within the first year** of hire or start of FOCUS Implementation.
- Five WIDA Early Years online professional learning modules: training must be completed **within two years** of hire for new teachers and **within the current school year** for returning teachers. Modules are:
  - o Multilingual learners and their Families;
  - o Multilingual learners with Disabilities;
  - o Scaffolding Language Learning;
  - o Promising Practices; and
  - o WIDA Early English Language Development Standards Framework.

**After a teacher or educational assistant has completed all required FOCUS training, that person must annually complete at least 15 hours of professional development as required by the National Institute of Early Education Research (NIEER, 2019). The teacher/EA will select from a menu of professional development opportunities provided by the New Mexico Public Education Department and the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department. Opportunities include:**

- Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling for Early Childhood Educators Strategies in Action-Alphabet Knowledge
- Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling for Early Childhood Educators Strategies in Action-How Young Children Become Writers
- Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling for Early Childhood Educators Strategies in Action-Read Alouds
- Transition Boot Camp
- Trauma-Informed Care & the Pyramid Model

## ADMINISTRATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Professional Development Plan:**

Preschool teachers and educational assistants all must have a current professional development plan (PDP) with specific professional goals and timelines related to the current FOCUS criteria. If applicable, PDPs must include specific coursework that is entered into the appropriate database upon successful course completion. Timelines follow the established PED teacher evaluation process.

- **School administrators will complete the Preschool Classroom Walkthrough monthly for each preschool classroom.** Information from the walk-through may be used for PDP goals. After the first month, administrators do not need to complete the entire walkthrough monthly; they may instead choose to complete specific sections each month. These walkthroughs may be artifacts for teacher evaluation(s).

- **Release Time for Planning and Coaching**

Educators must have weekly planning time (at least equivalent to the time provided to kindergarten teachers) to review child assessment information and for curriculum planning. Teachers with am/pm sessions should have additional planning time due to the increased number of children.

Preschool program staff (PreK, special education, and Title 1 preschool) will fully participate in the Practice-Based Coaching model, which includes both on-site and video-based observations. Teachers will participate in a 45-minute reflection and feedback meeting following each focused observation. Administrators will arrange for classroom coverage during these meeting sessions.

- **Integrity of Staff Assignments**

PreK program administrators must ensure that teachers, educational assistants, and internal Early Childhood Instructional Coaches assigned to PreK classrooms will not be assigned to non-PreK duties.

- **Support Classroom Teaming**

Administrators foster the kind of classroom teaming relationship that supports and empowers educational assistants. Educational assistants' primary responsibility is to support the individual needs of the children in the classroom. Custodial or clerical duties shall be kept to a minimum.

## FOCUS ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF QUALITY II:

### QUALITY PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT CHILDREN'S GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT, AND LEARNING

#### 5 Star Criteria

##### ERS—Environment Rating Scales

Teaching staff and administrators conduct a classroom self-assessment using the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale—Third Edition (ECERS-3) and, in collaboration with their coach and administrator, use the results to inform their CQI planning efforts, paying close attention to the scoring rubrics.

##### TPOT— Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool

Coach will conduct a fall TPOT to be used as a baseline to assist in planning coaching goals and determining professional development needs. A spring TPOT will measure growth from the fall assessment.

##### **Curriculum**

All programs must utilize an evidence-based curriculum with fidelity. This curriculum must be supported by a university research study. A comprehensive, integrated, curriculum will address early literacy, math, science, and social emotional competencies through purposeful play. The curriculum must have strong external evidence of positive impact on improving child outcomes. A partial list of research-based curricula can be found at <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/early-childhood-bureau>.

##### **Effective Early Literacy Instruction**

Teachers incorporate intention structured early literacy instruction throughout the day, beginning with Morning/Afternoon Message. Classroom observations document the following practices:

1. Phonological awareness strategies (e.g., songs, finger play, rhyming, beginning sounds);
2. Oral language and vocabulary strategies;
3. Alphabet knowledge instruction;
4. Read-alouds that incorporate comprehension strategies;
5. Individual and small group (2–4 children) read-alouds using first read, second read, and third read strategies (Paulson, Moats, & Nelson, 2010) to ensure that each child is read to, at least once weekly in 450-hour programs, or twice weekly in 900-hour programs;
6. Large group read-alouds. Half or more of the children may rotate large group time; however, these groups must occur daily; and
7. Opportunities for developmentally appropriate writing.

**These practices are verified using the TPOT, ECERS-3, and the Preschool Classroom Walkthrough.**



## Lesson Plans

Teachers use information from multiple sources, such as assessment data, on-going child observations, children's interests, family input, the approved evidence-based curriculum, and IEP/ECO (individual educational program/early childhood outcome) goals, to create weekly lesson plans using the required New Mexico PED preschool electronic lesson plan form.

1. Every Monday or first day of the program week, lesson plans will be posted in the classroom for families.
2. Lesson plans will be archived in a binder for review for at least two school years.
3. Educators must have weekly planning time (at least equivalent to the time provided to kindergarten teachers) to review child assessment information and for curriculum planning. Teachers with am/pm sessions should have additional planning time due to the increased number of children.

## Assessment

Preschool teachers and EAs must provide evidence of implementation of classroom-based services with fidelity to approved evidence-based curriculum, aligned to the New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines—Essential Indicators with Rubrics, available at <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/early-childhood-bureau>.

This evidence includes the following:

1. Documented use of the ECOT\*\* for ongoing assessment of children's progress and as a primary source of information for individualized lesson planning, utilizing the beginning of year (BOY), middle of year (MOY), and end of year (EOY) assessment data. Assessment results should be used by the interdisciplinary team, which includes family members, to develop the child's IEP. The ECOT is the online tool for recording the assessment notes and rubric ratings.
2. Documented use of the New Mexico PED preschool electronic lesson plan form.
3. Documented use of Family-Teacher Summary Reports, found in ECOT, for each of the three family-teacher conferences. For children with an IEP, the IEP meeting may suffice for one of the family-teacher conferences and the Family-Teacher Summary Report.

\*\*The ECOT is approved by the OSERS (2012) to be used for ECO reporting.



## Preschool Assessment (Implement Beginning SY2017-18)

In preschool programs, the child observational assessment process includes the following:

### 1. The NM Quick-Look Recording sheets and report data for 26 essential indicators (EIs) for each child

EI	DESCRIPTION	EI	DESCRIPTION	EI	DESCRIPTION	EI	DESCRIPTION
1.1	Demonstrates body coordination and strength in activities such as climbing stairs with alternating feet, marching, running, jumping, hopping, dancing, and riding tricycles and scooters	7.3a	Shows an understanding of the basic concepts of print	14.1	Uses senses to investigate characteristics and behaviors in the physical and natural worlds and begins to form explanations of observations and explorations	24.2	Develops increasing independence during activities, routines, and play
		7.3b	Understands that print carries meaning				
1.2	Demonstrates balance and spatial awareness in many situations (running and stopping, climbing, ball-handling, in simple group games e.g., "Duck, duck, goose")	7.4a	Recognizes and generates rhyming sounds in spoken language	14.3	Makes predictions and forms hypotheses	25.3	Role-plays to express feelings, to dramatize stories, to try out social behaviors observed in adults, and to reenact real-life roles and experiences
		7.4b	Demonstrates understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes)	18.1	Adapts behaviors to fit different situations (e.g., accepts transitions, follows daily routines, incorporates cultural expectations)	27.1	Focuses and completes a variety of tasks, activities, projects, and experiences
2.1a	Develops manual coordination to use writing and crafting tools	7.5a	Shows an understanding of alphabetic knowledge				
2.1b	Demonstrates self-help fine motor skills, such as buttoning and zipping	7.5b	Knows and applies letter-sound correspondence and beginning sound-recognition skills	19.1	Cares for personal and group possessions		
5.2	Demonstrates the ability to attend, understand, and follow increasingly complex directions	9.1	Uses numbers and counting as means for solving problems and determining quantity	20.1	Plays and interacts with various children, sharing experiences and ideas with others		
6.1	Demonstrates the ability to effectively engage in a range of conversational skills in their home language (including ASL) for a variety of purposes relating to real experiences and different audiences	9.3a	Rote counts in sequence	20.2	Uses and accepts negotiation, compromise, and discussion to resolve conflicts		
		9.3b	Names and identifies written numerals				
		10.1	Recognizes, names, describes, compares, and creates familiar shapes	21.2	Accepts guidance from a variety of appropriate adults and seeks their support when needed		



### 2. Creativity Sample (not rated)

EI	DESCRIPTION
13.1	Communicates ideas and/or feelings through creative activities (e.g., making up a song, acting out a story, creating a piece of art work or a set of movements)

### 3. Portfolio documentation for 3 EIs using the NM Portfolio Collection Forms specifically designed for these EIs

EI	DESCRIPTION	EI	DESCRIPTION	EI	DESCRIPTION
7.2	Demonstrates comprehension of a story that is read aloud	8.3	Understands how to apply the early stages of drawing and writing to convey meaning	12.1	Sorts, classifies, and groups materials by one or more attributes

**Special education preschool programs** use the ELG to develop IEP goals and for ECO reporting (See ELG-ECO Crosswalk, Appendix A).



## Assessment Reporting

**PED programs must use the Early Childhood Observation Tool (ECOT) to record observations and rubric ratings.**

1. NM PreK and Title 1 preschool teachers must complete three child observational assessments and report data. They must:

- Finalize BOY in ECOT by the 30th instructional day from the first day of child attendance;
- Finalize MOY in ECOT for extended-day (900-hour) programs, including portfolio forms, by the first Friday in February;
- Finalize MOY in ECOT for 450-hour programs, which does not include portfolio forms, by the first Friday in February; and
- Finalize EOY in ECOT within two weeks prior to the last day of the child's attendance in the preschool program.

**\*Regardless of the ECOT window of time, data must be taken from the first day a child's attendance. Data must be reported within the nearest ECOT window from the child's start date.**

2. Preschool special education teachers, in collaboration with related service providers, must complete three child observational assessments and report the data. They must:

- Finalize BOY in ECOT and conduct the first Preschool Observational Assessment for ECO reporting within the first 30 calendar days that the child enters the program;
- Include the portfolio forms before the 45th calendar day;
- Finalize MOY in ECOT for extended-day (900-hour) programs, including portfolio forms, by the first Friday in February;
- Finalize MOY in ECOT for 450-hour programs, which does not include portfolio forms, by the first Friday in February; and
- Finalize EOY in ECOT within two weeks prior to the last day of the child's attendance (their exit from the program) for the end of year assessment.

**Program must develop CQI goals based on child assessment results.**



## B. CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

### 5 Star Criteria

All programs must engage in a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process that includes a data analysis process, with a focus on setting a district goal that impacts student achievement, implementing an action plan, and monitoring progress towards meeting the goal in the time frame specified.

Identify the sources used to determine specific areas for improvement within the district's public-school preschool program. The district goal that is chosen must:

- Correlate with the FOCUS Essential Elements of Quality and directly impact student achievement as demonstrated by ECOT data;
- Provide a brief explanation regarding why the specific source was selected;
- Note one or more ELG EIs and the assessment data for each goal; and
- Be developed by September 15th to be reviewed as part of PED monitoring and the FOCUS verification process.

**Note:** 1) Classroom goals are not required in this CQI document. The goals and action plans developed in the Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) process are the classroom goals. 2) Purchasing items is not a goal but may be one of the strategies listed to reach a goal. 3) The CQI plan may also be documented on the NM DASH 90-day plan.



SOURCES OF INFORMATION/DATA USED
Preschool Observational Assessment (ECOT)—Data must be referenced for each goal
ECERS-3
Pyramid Social-Emotional Strategies
LETRS—Early Childhood Literacy Strategies
Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT)
Inclusive Practices Self-assessment
Family Survey
Feedback from Program Monitor/FOCUS Verification
Classroom Walkthroughs
Coaching Reports
Other

Each program must have at least one district/charter goal but may choose to add up to two additional goals.

Preschool staff are encouraged to reach out to all those involved with the preschool program to make education a team effort for quality improvement. Teacher and family input are especially important.

# Notes



## Definitions

**Administrator** is the individual designated by the school or district as the person responsible for the early childhood program for the school or district. To support quality early childhood practices, administrators must have early childhood knowledge and experience or have on-site administrative personnel with early childhood knowledge and experience. In addition, program administrators must have knowledge and experience in early childhood education, early intervention, early childhood special education, and supervision.

**Appropriate Accommodations and Modifications** are plans and environmental accommodations for children with special needs or abilities (medical, educational, or behavioral). These include written plans, space arrangements, adaptation of materials, inclusion in age-appropriate self-help activities, and handling questions about differences. Adaptations permit children with disabilities or Multilingual learners to show what they know and can do. This definition is used in connection with children of diverse abilities. In support of the full participation of every child, appropriate accommodations and modifications are often made for all children.

**Assessment** of children’s development and learning is essential for early childhood educators and programs. It supports planning, implementation, and evaluation of the effectiveness of the classroom experiences preschool staff provide. The most reliable and informative assessment process is the observation and documentation of children’s participation in daily activities and routines. Educators involved in authentic observation seek to observe children’s development, skills, and behavior naturally through their play and participation in daily activities and routines and does not include specifically planned activities that test children’s knowledge, abilities, or skills. The information gained through authentic observational assessment, related to the New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines, is used to inform families and plan individualized activities and strategies to help each child grow and develop.

**Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)** takes the observations made in a Functional Behavioral Assessment (BFA) and turns them into a concrete plan of action for managing a student’s behavior. A BIP may include ways to change the environment to keep behavior from starting in the first place, provide positive reinforcement to promote good behavior, avoid reinforcing bad behavior, and provide needed supports so that the student will not be driven to act out due to frustration or fatigue.

**Caseload** is typically defined as the number of students with Individual Education Plans (IEP) for whom a teacher serves as case manager and is responsible for writing and implementing those students’ IEPs. In the area of special education, the definition of class size differs from that of caseload.

**Child Find:** IDEA Sec. 300.111 requires all school districts to identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disabilities (IDEA, 2004). This obligation to identify all children who may need special education services exists even if the school is not providing special education services to the child. A child may be referred to Child Find services. The child is screened for possible developmental delays and disabilities. The results of the screening are compared to the state’s eligibility guidelines. The state is required to track and follow-up on all children who receive Child Find services. There is interagency coordination to ensure resources are available to provide the needed services to the child. Child Find is not a one-time event (i.e., “Child Find Round Up”). It happens all year long as an ongoing intake process. For preschool children, Child Find screenings shall serve as interventions under Subsection B of 6.31.2.10 NMAC (Educational Standards for New Mexico Schools, 2009).

**Curriculum** consists of the knowledge, skills, abilities, and understandings children are to acquire and the plans for the learning experiences through which those gains will occur.

**Developmental Screening** is a short assessment to determine if a child is learning basic skills in a developmentally expected time frame and to alert educators and family if there are lags. Often, children with developmental delays are not identified as early as possible, resulting in unnecessary and costly missed social and educational opportunities. For young children ages birth to five years, physical, cognitive, linguistic, and social-emotional growth and development occur at a rapid pace. While all children in this age range may not reach developmental milestones (e.g., smiling, saying first words, taking first steps) at the same time, development that does not happen within an expected timeframe can raise concerns about developmental disorders, health conditions, or other factors that may negatively impact a child’s development. Early and frequent screening of young children for healthy growth and development is recommended to help identify potential problems or areas needing further evaluation. With early identification of delayed or missed developmental milestones, a child can be provided treatment or intervention more effectively, and additional developmental delays or deficits may be prevented (OPRE report, 2/14).

**Documentation** is necessary to the effective education of preschool children. Educators observe, document, and reflect on all Essential Indicators. The documentation may be in the form of Quick-Look Recording sheets, brief notes for some of the indicators, or more lengthy written notes for others. Factual descriptions of how the child demonstrates progress on the indicators are written on portfolio forms and may be accompanied by photographs and/or work samples. Documentation is recorded in the online ECOT.

**Early Childhood Outcomes** must be reported by states as the percentage of preschool children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) who demonstrate improved:

- o Positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships);
- o Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early literacy); and
- o Use of appropriate behavior to meet needs.

The outcomes address these three areas of child functioning necessary to be an active and successful participant at home, in early care and education settings, and in the community.

**Essential Indicators** are fully described in the New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines—Preschool Essential Indicators with Rubrics. Major aspects of, and reasonable expectations for, the development of young children from birth through kindergarten are described by the essential indicators of children’s development. These indicators focus educators’ attention on those areas most essential and most telling of a child’s timely social, emotional, academic, and physical development. Assessment of these developmental indicators ensure knowledge of expected child growth and the guidance to respond suitably when benchmarks are not being met.

**Evidence-based Curriculum** is a curriculum with strong external evidence of positive impact on improving child outcomes and that has been vetted through rigorous research.

**Expulsion** is the permanent dismissal of the child from the program in response to problem behavior. This does not include transition to another program, service or classroom (e.g., special education, transitional classroom, or therapeutic preschool program) deemed more appropriate for the child if done in collaboration with the family and the receiving classroom, program or service.

**Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)** is a process that identifies a. specific, target behavior; b. the purpose of the behavior; and c. what factors maintain the behavior that is interfering with the student’s educational progress.

**Home Language is the language that the child most often speaks with family members when at home.** School readiness and school success for children who are multilingual learners are tied directly to mastery of their home language. It is important for teachers to acknowledge, support, and emphasize the benefits of being bilingual, the importance of maintaining home language, and the value of becoming fully bilingual.

**Inclusive Practices and Settings.** The right to access inclusive early childhood programs is supported by a robust legal foundation. The IDEA supports equal educational opportunities for eligible children with disabilities through 21. Part B of the IDEA, requires that special education and related services are to be made available to all children with disabilities, ages 3 through 21, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the least restrictive environment (LRE), factoring in an individual child’s unique strengths and needs. Eligible children with disabilities under Part B of the IDEA are to receive the full range of supplementary aids and services to enable them to be educated with children who do not have disabilities, participate in the general educational or developmental curriculum, and participate in typical non-academic activities with nondisabled peers, to the maximum extent appropriate (IDEA, 2004). The American with Disabilities Act, Section 504 regulations require recipients, such as schools, to provide equal educational opportunities for children with disabilities in the most integrated setting appropriate to the child’s needs.



**Individualized Education Program (IEP)** is a legal written document that defines a child’s special education program. The IEP is intended to help school children, ages 3 to 21, reach educational goals more easily than they otherwise would. In all cases, the IEP must be tailored to the individual child’s needs, as identified by the IEP evaluation process. An IEP is written by a team, including a school administrator, a special education teacher, regular classroom teacher, the family of the child, and other family as appropriate. The IEP must especially help educators and related service providers understand the child’s disability and how the disability affects the learning process. The IEP describes how the child learns, how the student best demonstrates that learning, and what educators and other service providers will do to help the student learn more effectively. The IEP has stated goals and objectives that correspond to the needs of the child and indicates placement for learning in the least restrictive environment possible for the child. It must be reviewed and updated by the team annually and can be reviewed and amended any time, if requested by the family. An IEP is mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004).

**Multilingual Learners** are children who acquire two or more languages simultaneously and learn other languages, while continuing to develop their first language. The term Multilingual learners encompasses other terms frequently used, such as Limited English Proficient (LEP), bilingual, English language learners (ELLs), English learners (ELs), and children who speak a language other than English.

**PED’s New Mexico PreK** is a voluntary program, funded by the State. The PreK program began in 2005 to ensure that every child in New Mexico had the opportunity to attend a high-quality, early childhood education program before attending kindergarten. All children, no matter their background or neighborhood, should have an equal chance for success in school and in life. The purpose of the New Mexico PreK Program is to:

- Increase access to voluntary, high-quality pre-kindergarten programs;
- Expand community capacity for early childhood programs;
- Support linguistic and cultural curriculum that is appropriate;
- Focus on school readiness; and
- Provide developmentally appropriate activities for New Mexico children.

**Portfolio Collection** is the way to best format and document a child’s progress on some of the Essential Indicators. This format requires a detailed description of how the child demonstrates that indicator, including photographs and work samples. Portfolio items provide each family a better-rounded picture of what their child does and how their child is learning and growing. Each item in the portfolio should be a distinct observation of different experiences. Family members often find portfolio items valuable treasures that capture their young child in action. Additionally, the portfolio collection for each child offers the early educator a tool to actively engage family members and invite them to participate as partners in supporting their child’s growth and development.

**Professional Development Plan** is an ongoing plan for continued professional development for each staff member. The plan must document ongoing activities to increase the educator’s knowledge, specialization, and qualifications in early childhood education, individualization, and family support.

**Ratios**, in the context of preschool special education caseloads, refers to the maximum number of students with IEP’s who can be taught by one certified educator. When the number of students with IEPs exceed that maximum, ratio is also used to indicate that number who can additionally work when a paraprofessional, with whom the certified educator works and is responsible for providing services and managing IEPs, is posted to that classroom. It is written as “students: special education teacher,” also as “student: paraprofessional.” **Adult/child ratios** refer to the number of adults required to support a group of children.

**Referral** is a written request for evaluation or eligibility for special education and related services.

**Suspension** is when the child is temporally removed from classroom and/or class peers. Child is sent to some other part of the school/ program (e.g., other classroom, director’s office) for part of the day or multiple days in response to problem behavior. This includes when the child is removed from the classroom to spend extended time with administrator, counselor, behavior therapist or other adult.

**Transition Plan** is a written plan which details policies and procedures that assist families of children moving into the program, exiting the program, or transitioning into kindergarten. This plan must reflect the diversity and uniqueness of the children and community in which they reside. **Transition Plans** must include a series of activities that take place throughout the year to prepare the child and family for the upcoming changes and that facilitate a positive evolution to kindergarten. Program staff collaborate with kindergarten teachers receiving children to ensure that the curriculum supports a smooth transition from the preschool program to kindergarten.

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## APPENDIX A: Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) Crosswalk- NM Early Learning Guideline (ELG): Birth through Kindergarten

ECO Outcome 1: Positive Social Relationships	ECO Outcome 2: Acquires and Uses Knowledge	ECO Outcome 3: Takes Appropriate Action to Meet Needs
ELG Indicator 6.1: Demonstrates the ability to effectively engage in a range of conversational skills in his or her home language (including ASL) for a variety of purposes relating to real experiences and different audiences	ELG Indicator 5.2: Demonstrates the ability to attend, understand, and follow increasingly complex directions	ELG Indicator 1.1: Demonstrates body coordination and strength in activities such as climbing stairs with alternating feet, marching, running, jumping, hopping, dancing, and riding tricycles and scooters
ELG Indicator 13.1: Communicates ideas and/ or feelings through creative activities (e.g., making up a song, acting out a story, creating a piece of art work, performs a set of movements)	ELG Indicator 6.1: Demonstrates the ability to effectively engage in a range of conversational skills in his or her home language (including ASL) for a variety of purposes relating to real experiences and different audiences	ELG Indicator 1.2: Demonstrates balance and spatial awareness in many situations (e.g., running and stopping, climbing, ball-handling, simple group games such as Duck, Duck, Goose)
ELG Indicator 18.1: Adapts behavior to fit different situations (e.g., accepts transitions, follows daily routines, incorporates cultural expectations)	ELG Indicator 7.2: Demonstrates comprehension of a story read aloud by asking relevant questions and providing key details in literary texts	ELG Indicator 2.1: Is developing manual coordination to use writing and crafting tools and demonstrate self-help skills such as buttoning and zipping
ELG Indicator 19.1: Cares for personal and group possessions	ELG Indicator 7.3: Demonstrates the knowledge to make sense of print	Rubric 2.1a: Develops manual coordination to use writing and crafting tools
ELG Indicator 20.1: Plays and interacts with various children, sharing experiences and ideas with others	Rubric 7.3a: Shows an understanding of the basic concepts of print	Rubric 2.1b: Demonstrates self-help fine motor skills, such as buttoning and zipping
	Rubric 7.3b: Understands that print carries meaning	ELG Indicator 20.2: Uses and accepts negotiation, compromise, and discussion to resolve conflicts
ELG Indicator 20.2: Uses and accepts negotiation, compromise, and discussion to resolve conflicts	ELG Indicator 7.4: Hears and discriminates the sounds of language in words to develop phonological awareness	ELG Indicator 21.2: Accepts guidance from a variety of appropriate adults and seeks their support when needed
ELG Indicator 25.3: Role plays to express feelings—e.g., dramatizes stories, tries out social behaviors observed in adults, reenacts real-life roles and experiences	Rubric 7.4a: Recognizes and generates rhyming sounds in spoken language	ELG Indicator 24.2: Develops increasing independence during activities, routines, and play



	<p>ELG Indicator 7.5: Demonstrates an understanding of the alphabetic principle and word recognition skills</p> <p>Rubric 7.5a: Shows an understanding of alphabetic knowledge</p> <p>Rubric 7.5b: Knows and applies letter-sound correspondence and beginning sound recognition skills</p>	
	ELG Indicator 8.3: Understands how to apply the early stages of drawing and writing to convey meaning	
	ELG Indicator 9.1: Uses numbers and counting as means for solving problems and determining quantity	
	<p>ELG Indicator 9.3: Progresses in an understanding of number words and numeral recognition skills</p> <p>Rubric 9.3a: Rote counts in sequence.</p> <p>Rubric 9.3b: Names and identifies written numerals</p>	
	ELG Indicator 10.1: Recognizes names and describes, compares, and creates familiar shapes	
	ELG Indicator 12.1: Sorts, classifies, and groups materials by one or more attributes.	
	** ELG Indicator 13.1: Communicates ideas and/or feelings through creative activities (e.g., making up a song, acting out a story, creating a piece of art work, performing a set of movements)	
	ELG Indicator 14.1: Uses senses to investigate characteristics and behaviors in the physical and natural worlds and begins to form explanations of observations and explorations	
	ELG Indicator 14.3: Makes predictions and forms hypothesis	

\*\*ELG Indicator may be used for multiple outcomes

## APPENDIX B: NM PreK Guidance

### Using PreK Funds

#### General Principles

1. Justification must be included with all submitted requests for reimbursements (RfR). This includes lesson plans pre-during-and post for field trips, cooking, and sensory activities that use food products.
2. Reimbursements must be submitted at least monthly.
3. Pre-approval is required for all items, or systems of items over \$5,000 (e.g., A cart with multiple iPads is considered a system.)
4. Pre-approval is required for purchase/adoption of curriculum programs. Any purchased curriculum must align with the NM ELG, be rated “effective” or higher by independent research, and be approved by the PED prior to purchase.
5. Salaries for staff, who serve multiple programs, must be cost-allocated proportionately among the programs.
6. Field trips are charged to student travel, Object 55817.

#### Allowable Costs

1. PreK staff salaries and benefits
2. Classroom materials and supplies
3. Classroom equipment, including computers, laptops, printers, iPads, tablets, cameras
4. Playground equipment
5. Classroom furniture
6. Field trips with an academic purpose (must include lesson plans with the RfR)
7. Cooking activity expenditures accompanied by lesson plans
8. In-state travel for approved early childhood meetings, trainings, or conferences – please request approval for all training and conferences other than FOCUS required training.
9. Up to one percent of program services award for administrative costs

#### Un-Allowable Costs

1. Entertainment, such as field trips to movies, bowling alleys or amusement parks
2. Food for parent or staff meetings or classroom celebration events
3. Children’s food, including meals while on field trips
4. Candy, soft drinks, or other high sugar items
5. Out-of-state travel costs
6. In-state travel other than approved early childhood conferences and training
7. Educational assistants funded through the transportation award
8. Assistants who accompany children on the bus in accordance with the child’s IEP (these must be charged to special education)
9. Property/Liability Insurance

1. Allowable Activities for calculating the required 90 hours of family engagement:

- a. All time allotted for home visits and family-teacher conferences (Note: Two 6-hour days, not including lunch, are set aside for home visits, so count as 12 hours.)
- b. Contact time for family activities (Note: A family literacy night is from 6:00 to 8:00 pm, so count as two hours.)
- c. Family engagement activities that occur during the day, either during classroom time or at another time, when children are not usually present (e.g., the fifth day of four-day week programs or early dismissal days), provided all parents are invited and there are specific activities related to one or more NM Early Learning Guidelines' essential indicators.
- d. Field trips that all parents are asked to attend and that have at least one academically focused activity for families to complete together while on the trip
- e. Kindergarten visits that all parents are asked to attend
- f. Potlucks and holiday meals with a specific instructional focus linked to an essential indicator
- g. School-wide activities, like science fairs or school plays that incorporate a specific activity session just prior to the event, to which the preschool teacher invites the families to the classroom for an activity related to that school-wide event. (e.g., the 5th grade is putting on a play based on a children's book. The preschool teacher invites the families to the classroom 30 minutes prior and reads the story aloud, modeling questions that build comprehension. He then provides a handout of suggestions for families to discuss with their child after the event.) The additional preschool activities allow the school to count the entire evening as part of the required family engagement hours.

2. **Unallowable Activities** for calculating the required 90 hours of family engagement:

- a. Take-home activities, reading logs, newsletters, etc.
- b. Individual family volunteer time in the classroom
- c. Field trips with only a limited number of parents invited
- d. School events without a PreK connection activity
- e. Holiday meals or potlucks without an instructional activity

## APPENDIC C: FOCUS VERIFICATION

### **What is verification?**

To verify that New Mexico public school preschool programs are meeting the 5 Star Criteria, as outlined in the FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality—the documentation, and observation collected throughout the year by staff are collated and reported by preschool administration. Preschool programs that provide evidence of meeting 1) at least 70 points (70 percent) of the Exemplary Practices in a specific area of the Foundations of Quality—Full Participation of Each Child and 2) the 5 Star Criteria, will also be verified and recognized as an Exemplary Program in that area.

### **Why is the verification process important?**

As part of New Mexico’s Early Learning System, the PED has committed to the implementation of a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).

Verification

- Is a key component of the QRIS and monitors compliance of the Pre-K standards and FOCUS Criteria.
- Validates and recognizes quality instructional practices.
- Is a self-study that supports Continuous Quality Improvement.
- Aligns with PED’s quality improvement initiatives.
- Provides opportunity for data-driven analysis and decision making for funders, stakeholders, families and policymakers.
- Documents stewardship of public funds.

### **Who conducts the verification?**

- The verification is conducted by the Early Childhood Bureau from the NM PED. It is a team process. Verifiers complete a training process to ensure inter-rater reliability and demonstrate fidelity to an outlined procedure and the FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality.

### **How is the verification self-study process completed?**

- Gather evidence regarding each program’s adherence to the FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality. Complete three forms available at <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/early-childhood-bureau/> by September 15th and return them to PED at EarlyChildhoodBureau@state.nm.us.
  - o Teachers Eligible for Verification
  - o Credentials and Training for Teachers, Educational Assistants and Administrators
  - o School Information Sheet
- Eligible teachers receive a verification visit
- The program is verified as meeting the 5 Star Criteria, or it is notified which components of the 5 Star Criteria have not been verified.
- District administrators and classroom teachers will provide a plan for components of the 5 Star criteria not verified. Once evidence has been provided, programs will be notified of meeting the 5 Star criteria.
- Thereafter, the program must demonstrate that the 5 Star Criteria is maintained by
  - o ensuring that all the evidence documentation is up to date
  - o ensuring that new staff meet the training requirements
  - o providing evidence of Continuous Quality Improvement

All FOCUS verification materials may be found at: <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/early-childhood-bureau/>

**Verification Requirements:**

- **By September 15th**, complete and send to the EarlyChildhoodBureau@state.nm.us:
  - o the Teachers Eligible for Verification form,
  - o Credentials and Training for Teachers form, Educational Assistants and Administrators and
  - o School Information Sheet.
- **By February 15th**, complete the Mid-Year Administrator's Report available at <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/early-childhood-bureau/> and send it to the EarlyChildhoodBureau@state.nm.us
- **By May 20th**, complete End of Year Administrator's Report available at <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/early-childhood-bureau/> and send it to the EarlyChildhoodBureau@state.nm.us



