Preschool for All
Implementation Manual

November 2017
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Introduction

ISBE Position Statement

Early Childhood Care and Early Childhood Education Position Statement:

Adopted January 20, 2000

The State Board of Education believes that the success of all Illinois children can be significantly enhanced when children participate in early childhood programs and services.

For the purposes of the Prevention Initiative, Preschool for All, and Preschool for All Expansion programs, early childhood is defined as the period in a child's life from birth through 8 years of age. Appropriate early childhood programs, practices, and services are defined as those that:

- are grounded upon research-based knowledge about child development;
- promote the child's emotional, physical, mental, and social well-being; and
- support nurturing families.

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is actively committed to develop, deliver, and support early childhood programs, practices, and services that will enable all children to be successful students and responsible citizens. ISBE believes the following commitments are essential in supporting the development of the whole child:

1) Emphasize the need for high-quality early experiences that reflect research and knowledge on program quality and outcomes across the developmental period of birth through age 8.
2) Encourage Illinois public schools to create coherent early learning systems that minimize major transitions for children and provide stable, consistent educational experiences for young children, ages 3 through 8 years.
3) Make prekindergarten programs available for all Illinois children identified as at risk of academic failure and actively seek their participation. Support the provision of full-day prekindergarten for at-risk students who need additional educational experiences.
4) Support the availability of full-day kindergarten programs for all Illinois children.
5) Collaborate with families and relevant social service providers to provide early identification of and response to educational risk factors among children from birth through 3 years of age.
6) Collaborate with families, community organizations, child care organizations, Head Start, and other state agencies to meet the physical, mental, social, and emotional needs of young children, including their physical care and protection; share resources, services, and accountability.
7) Emphasize the quality of instructional staff and leadership for early childhood programs in Illinois.

Law

ISBE is committed to supporting early childhood education to ensure that all Illinois children develop a strong foundation for learning. Public Act 096-0948 amends Section 2-3.71 of the School Code (105 ILCS 5/2-3.71) to establish the Preschool for All (PFA) program to be administered on a competitive basis. The PFA program emphasizes the relationship among early childhood education, parenting education and involvement, and future success in school.

Priority Populations

In awarding PFA grants, ISBE shall address two legislatively mandated priorities:

- The first priority in awarding grants must be given to applicants that propose to serve primarily children who have been identified as being at risk of academic failure. At-risk children are those who, because of their home and community environment, are subject to such language, cultural, economic, and like disadvantages. They have been determined, as a result of screening procedures, to be at risk of academic failure. A disproportionate share of all children considered to be at risk come from low-income families, including low-income working families, homeless families, families where English is not the primary language spoken in the home, or families where one or both parents are teenagers or have not completed
high school. However, neither a child’s membership in a certain group nor a child’s family situation should determine whether that child is at risk.

- The second priority in awarding grants must be given to applicants proposing to serve primarily children whose family’s income is less than four times the poverty guidelines updated periodically in the Federal Register by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the authority of 42 U.S.C. 9902(2). The successful applicant must collect evidence of family income level for each child whose participation is based on the family’s income.

For purposes of the PFA grant, “programs serving primarily at-risk children” are defined as those programs that:

- Have 80 percent or more of the enrolled children identified as at risk; prioritize at-risk students over non-at-risk students when making enrollment decisions; and have taken specific, proactive measures to ensure that parents of potentially at-risk children in the community are aware of the opportunity for preschool education through the program.

**History**

The Prekindergarten Program for Children at Risk of Academic Failure began with the 1985 School Reform legislation through Public Act 86-316 and had an effective date of July 18, 1985. (105 ILCS 5/2-3.71)

- $9 million in grants for services
- $3.1 million in grants for screening

The Early Childhood Model Parental Training Program was established with Public Act 85-1046 and became effective July 13, 1988 (105 ILCS 5/2-3.71a). After July 1, 2006, any parental training services funded pursuant to this Section on the effective date of this amendatory Act of the 94th General Assembly shall continue to be funded pursuant to this Section, subject to appropriation and the meeting of program standards. Any additional parental training services must be funded, subject to appropriation, through preschool education grants pursuant to subdivision (4) of subsection (a) of Section 2-3.71 of this Code for families with children ages 3 to 5 and through prevention initiative grants pursuant to subsection (b) of Section 2-3.89 of this Code for expecting families and those with children from birth to 3 years of age.

Prevention Initiative was established with Public Act 85-1046 and became effective July 13, 1988. (105 ILCS 5/2-3.89) Public Act 94-0506, which stated that grantees would conduct intensive, research-based, and comprehensive prevention services for expecting parents and families with children from birth to age 3 who are at-risk of academic failure, became effective July 1, 2005.

The three programs were combined into the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) in 1998 with Public Act 88-555. (105 ILCS 5/1C-2)

From 1998 to 2003, 8 percent of ECBG funding was to be used for programs serving children 0 to 3. Through Public Act 93-0396 effective July 29, 2003, the percentage increased to 11 percent. Through Public Act 096-0423 effective August 13, 2009, the percentage was to increase to at least 20 percent by fiscal year 2015. Public Act 98-0645 provides that not less than 14 percent (instead of 11 percent) of the Early Childhood Education Block Grant shall be used to fund programs for children ages 0-3, which percentage shall increase to at least 20 percent by fiscal year 2016 (instead of 2015). Effective July 1, 2014.

The Preschool for All Children program was established with Public Act 94-1054 and became effective for two years on July 25, 2006. In 2008, the sunset was extended to 2010. Through Public Act 96-0948 effective June 25, 2010, the Preschool for All Children program was extended by removing the date restrictions of July 1, 2006, through June 30, 2010. (105 ILCS 5/2-3.71)

Link to the Illinois School Code (105 ILCS 5/)
Preschool for All Key Points
The sections below describe a high-quality preschool program that will enhance the development of young children. Preschool for All (PFA) offers an appropriate educational program for children who are eligible to participate, as determined by the screening process. This section consists of an overview of requirements the PFA program must meet, which will be explained in further detail in subsequent sections:

Recruitment, Enrollment and Records
- Recruitment and outreach should be a year-round process to ensure the program is continually reaching out to unserved and/or underserved populations.
- Programs are expected to maintain total enrollment consistent with their current fiscal year, approved PFA grant.
- Programs are required to serve all children identified as being at risk of academic failure before enrolling other children. A waiting list system is utilized when maximum program enrollment is reached.
- The PFA program is for children ages 3 through 5 who are not age eligible for kindergarten (i.e., age 5 on or before September 1 of the school year in which the early childhood program is to be implemented) and who are determined by multiple weighted at-risk factors.
- PFA eligibility criteria may not discriminate against children who are not toilet trained.
- Student records should be kept intact in a secure place and may be in electronic or hard copy format.

Children with Disabilities
- The goal for local school districts/public schools, academies, and agencies should be to provide high-quality preschool experiences for all preschool-age children, including children with disabilities, in the least restrictive environment.
- Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must ensure that children who receive early intervention services before they turn 3 and who will receive Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services experience a smooth and effective transition and have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan developed and being implemented by their third birthday [34 CFR 300.124].

English Learners
- Programs must administer a Home Language Survey for all children who come from a language background other than English.
- Programs must offer an appropriate English Language Learning program based on the needs and population of their students.
- By July 1, 2016, preschool teachers who provide native language/English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction to English learner (EL) students must also hold the ESL or bilingual endorsement that corresponds with the teaching assignment.

The Early Learning Environment
- Classrooms utilize multi-age grouping, with the exception of classrooms funded by the Preschool Expansion grant.
- It is the expectation of ISBE that the PFA program have a safe and healthy environment that provides appropriate and well-maintained indoor and outdoor physical spaces.
- ISBE expects each PFA classroom to serve 20 children, excluding PFA ECSE and Head Start children, unless Illinois Department of Children and Family Services guidelines restrict the number of children allowed in the PFA classroom due to square footage limitations.
  ✓ The staff-child ratio for each classroom must not exceed one adult to 10 children, and no more than 20 children can be served in a single classroom per session.
  ✓ Provisions are made for children with disabilities to participate in the program. No more than
30 percent of the children in a PFA classroom may have an IEP, not including speech-only IEPs.

Scheduling
- Scheduling guidelines are based on Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-3) recommendations.
- The daily schedule needs to include a balance of large group, small group, and individual activities.
- The program meets a minimum of two and a half hours each day, five days a week.
- Start and end dates are identified and follow the local district calendar, with children in attendance a minimum of 165 days.
  - Any days beyond 165 in the district calendar may be used for parent/guardian conferences, home visits, and professional development OR attendance days.
  - If the district has regular weekly or monthly planning dismissal times that affect the PFA weekly class time, district must ensure weekly class time overall equals at least 12.5 hours per week (412 hours per school year).
- The program schedule should allow staff to assist families and children who need help with toilet learning.
- An appropriate, nutritious snack is provided for participating children in a half-day program, regardless if a meal is served. Full-day programs must provide a meal and a snack.

Early Learning Curriculum and Assessment
- The curriculum and instructional practices are aligned with the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS). (NOTE: The approved curricula for ExceleRate are aligned with IELDS; however, they may not meet all requirements of PFA.)
- A research-based authentic assessment system is used to determine the educational program for each child.
- Portfolio collections should be representative of the work done by the student illustrating his/her progress over time.
- Teacher lesson plans reflect individualization for students and connect to the IELDS or curriculum standards.

Social Emotional Learning
- Identifying and talking about feelings is critical to a preschooler's social emotional development, contributing to positive social interactions and a predictor of school success.
- Building relationships is an important component of social and emotional development.
- Transition Plans
- Teachers and administrators should play a vital role in assisting children and families through the transition process by planning ahead and working together.
- Successful transitions engage parents and teachers in developing the transition team, focusing on strengths to identify goals and challenges, sharing information between families and the sending and receiving programs, preparing the child for change, monitoring child and family experiences, and evaluating the transition process.
- Building the bridge between prekindergarten and kindergarten is essential to our youngest learners and their families.

Parent & Family Involvement
- No fees may be charged to children or parents/guardians who are enrolled and participate in PFA programs. Programs are not allowed to charge fees for field trips, snacks, registration, supplies, and materials, etc. nor are families to be asked to bring supplies or snacks.
- A system should exist to facilitate ongoing, two-way communication between school and home on at least a weekly basis, daily if needed.
- Programs must provide and document opportunities for parent education and involvement as well as have a system for ongoing, two-way communication with parents and guardians.
- Programs should develop a system for tracking the level of parent engagement/family involvement in their program.

Community Collaboration
o PFA programs should work toward building relationships with other community service providers and develop formal agreements that will clarify and strengthen the mutual understanding of each entity’s roles and responsibilities.

o PFA grantees must have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the local Head Start agency.

**Educator Licensure Requirements**

o PFA teacher holds a current, registered Professional Educator License (PEL) with Early Childhood Education (ECE) endorsement.

o PFA/ECSE blended classroom teacher has current PEL with ECE endorsement and ECSE approval unless itinerant services are provided per the IEP.

o PFA classroom assistant holds current, registered Paraprofessional Approval.

**Professional Development & Program Improvement**

o Programs are required to have a written professional development plan for all staff members (teachers, paraprofessionals, and parent coordinators).

o ISBE has collaborations with several statewide professional development providers.

**Budget, Financial, and Reporting**

o PFA grant applications are created each fiscal year in ISBE Web Application System (IWAS).

o The budget detail page is to be used to indicate itemization and descriptions of budget expenses that are to be listed and identified within the proper function code/object code. This page also indicates the current fiscal year’s allotment of funds for the PFA program.

o The provision of most federal and state funded programs provides that only supplemental costs may be charged.

o The budget should specify no more than 5 percent of the total grant award used for administrative and general expenses not directly attributed to program activities.

o All payment requests should be based on the projected date of expenditures.

o Programs must submit quarterly expenditure reports to reflect the progress of the grant program.

o All amendments must be submitted in IWAS and are due to ISBE 30 days prior to the project end date.

o All PFA programs are required to enroll all students attending any preschool program, including those with speech only IEPs.

o Immunization/health examinations are required of all children PreK-12.

**Program Accountability**

o Monitoring visits are typically conducted on a three-year basis.

o The visit consists of two parts, which include classroom observations using ECERS-3 and a program compliance assessment using ISBE Early Childhood Block Grant 3-5 Compliance Checklist.

o PFA sites located in a school-based setting are awarded an ExceleRate Circle of Quality based on its Compliance and ECERS-3 scores obtained during regular monitoring visits.

**Preschool Expansion Grant**

o The Preschool Expansion Grant (PEG) is federally funded with a goal to expand access to full-day early childhood education and comprehensive services to the most at-risk 4-year-olds in their communities.

o Eligibility includes the most at-risk 4-year-olds.

o Comprehensive services may include mental health and dental services, family support referrals, and parent education.

**Acronym Glossary**

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<tr>
<td>AOK</td>
<td>All our Kids</td>
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<tr>
<td>APR</td>
<td>Annual Performance Report</td>
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<td>CACFP</td>
<td>Child and Adult Care Food Program</td>
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<td>CCAP</td>
<td>Child Care Assistance Program</td>
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<td>CCSS</td>
<td>Common Core State Standards</td>
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<td>CFC</td>
<td>Child and Family Connections Office</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
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<td>CQIP</td>
<td>Continuous Quality Improvement Plan</td>
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<td>CSEFEL</td>
<td>Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning</td>
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<td>DCFS</td>
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Recruitment, Enrollment & Records

Child Find, Recruitment & Outreach
Recruitment and outreach should be a year-round process to ensure the Preschool for All (PFA) program is continually reaching out to unserved and/or underserved populations. The targeted populations may change from year to year depending on the dynamics of the community in which the program or site is located. Recruitment activities and strategies must adapt to ensure the agency stays connected to the community. The recruitment and outreach activities should include the local Head Start (HS) agency and all area early childhood programs. Programs should be prepared to assist families in completing an application during recruitment and outreach efforts.

Programs are expected to maintain total enrollment consistent with their current fiscal year, approved PFA grant. Recruitment and outreach strategies may include, but are not limited to:

- Monitor waiting lists. The waiting lists are a good indication of the effectiveness of the recruitment activities and can help to better plan the location of classrooms, programs, and services in order to ensure full enrollment is achieved and maintained.
- Focus on recruiting homeless families. Contact Regional Office of Education/Intermediate Service Center Lead Area Homeless Liaison and/or School District Homeless Liaison local shelters, community-based organizations, and local churches that are offering services to homeless families and develop partnerships with them.
- Identify and recruit underserved communities/populations (e.g., families experiencing homelessness, families utilizing transitional housing, families that may be undocumented, families that are experiencing poverty or severe poverty, children in the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) system or foster care system, intact families receiving services from DCFS, children with disabilities, etc.). Develop informational fliers and brochures and disseminate to all agencies and community providers working with these populations.
- Build relationships with community organizations that work with targeted populations such as Easter Seals; Child and Family Connections; Early Intervention (EI); Special Education, Special Education cooperatives, etc.; HS and Early HS programs; DCFS and foster care agencies; Public Health Departments; Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) offices; etc.
- Formalize relationships by developing Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) specifically to define the referral system and follow-up procedures.
- Conduct community outreach by participating in and setting up a display at local community events such as health fairs, job fairs, church, etc.
- Contact local elementary schools and/or childcare centers and participate in events held throughout the year, such as back-to-school night, open house, fairs, and other events.
- Send home fliers with children enrolled in local elementary school or childcare centers.
- Display advertisements at local health departments, low-income housing, libraries, post offices, hospitals, community mental health agencies, laundromats, grocery stores, and doctors’ offices, and area health fairs and festivals.
- Place advertisements in the local newspapers and other local publications.
- Conduct door-to-door recruitment activities.

Screening
The goal of screening is to identify and serve Illinois’ neediest children. Programs must develop procedures to screen all children and their families to determine their need for services. Screening should be conducted on a community-wide basis and be developed and implemented with cooperation among programs serving young children in the community (e.g., public schools, childcare providers, special education cooperatives, HS, Prevention Initiative, EI, Child and Family Connections, and Child Find).
The screening process includes a quickly administered research-based screening tool that identifies children needing further assessment/evaluation or identifies participants for a given program. A comprehensive PFA screening process includes the following:

- Written parental/guardian permission for the screening must be obtained and a copy of the signed consent should be maintained in the child’s PFA record.
- Criteria will be used to determine at what point performance on a research-based screening instrument indicates a child is at risk of academic failure. In addition, the team must assess other environmental, economic, and demographic information that may contribute to the likelihood that a child is at risk for academic failure.
- All screening instruments and activities must relate to and measure a child’s development in these specific areas: (1) vocabulary, (2) visual-motor integration, (3) language and speech development, (4) English proficiency, (5) fine motor skills (6) gross motor skills, (7) social skills, and (8) cognitive development.
- All screening procedures must include a parent/guardian interview (to be conducted in the parents’ home/native language, if necessary). This interview should be designed to obtain a summary of the child’s health history and social development and may include questions about the parents’ education level, employment, income and age, the number of children in the household, and if applicable, the number of school-age siblings experiencing academic difficulty.
- Vision and hearing screening tests shall be conducted in accordance with the Illinois Department of Public Health’s (IDPH) rules titled Hearing Screening (77 Ill. Adm. Code 675) and Vision Screening (77 Ill. Adm. Code 685).
- The PFA teaching staff should be involved in the screening process.
- Results of the screening are to be shared with the parent(s)/guardian(s) during an exit interview. Evidence of the exit interview should be placed in the student’s record.
- The screening results should also be maintained in the child’s temporary record and made available to the teaching staff for review.

Examples of Research-Based Screening Instruments:
- Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)
- AGS Early Screening Profiles
- Battelle Developmental Inventory (BDI)
- Brigance Screens
- Comprehensive Identification Process (CIP) Screen
- Denver Developmental Screening II
- Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning–Third Edition or Fourth Edition (Dial-3, Dial-4)
- Early Screening Inventory (ESI-R or ESI-P)
- First Screening Test for Evaluating Preschoolers (First STEP)

(Additional screening instruments not included in this list of examples may meet the requirements.)

Initial Evaluations for Special Education
When a child who may be eligible for special education and related services is identified through screening or referral, an initial evaluation may be warranted.

Eligibility Criteria
The PFA program is for children ages 3 through 5 who are not age eligible for kindergarten (i.e., age 5 on or before September 1 of the school year in which the early childhood program is to be implemented) and who are determined by multiple weighted at-risk factors. Students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) who are age eligible for kindergarten can attend a PFA program if the IEP team decides it is appropriate. Eligibility requirements are based on local need to identify children at risk of academic failure. At-risk children are those who, because of their home and community environment, are subject to such language, cultural, economic, and like disadvantages to be at risk of academic failure. A disproportionate share of all children considered to be at risk
come from low-income families, including low-income working families, homeless families, families where English is not the primary language spoken in the home, or families where one or both parents are teenagers or have not completed high school. **Children who are youth in care or meet homeless criteria are prioritized as most at risk on the weighted eligibility criteria.**

Eligibility criteria may also be established for PFA to meet the needs of the program and community. Please note: PFA eligibility criteria may not discriminate against children not toilet trained. Programs should use a weighted eligibility checklist that includes local risk factors and a scoring system to identify each child’s risk factors, creating a prioritized list for enrollment. The priority for enrollment must be children identified most at risk based on scores on the weighted eligibility checklist. [23 Ill. Adm. Code 235.30(b) (c) and 235.20 (c) (4) and 235.50(a) (1) (A-C)] and ISBE policy]

PFA programs should include what research has shown are effective eligibility practices:
- The at-risk factors to determine eligibility are agreed upon by all partners
- The at-risk factors used for program eligibility are based upon the risk factors present in the community
- The most at-risk children/families, those exhibiting the greatest number of at-risk factors as determined by the eligibility criteria, are given priority for enrollment in the program

ISBE’s sample Weighted Eligibility Form may be used.

**Residency**

All children who attend a state-funded Illinois PFA program must live in Illinois and be eligible to attend Illinois public schools. A child who lives in a bordering state is not eligible to attend an Illinois PFA program even if their parent travels into the state daily for work.

The PFA program does not require district residency. A district may collaborate with neighboring districts to fill its PFA slots with PFA-eligible children.

**Age**

PFA programs must serve only 3-5 year old children who are not age-eligible for kindergarten (i.e., age 5 on or before September 1 of the school year in which the PFA program is implemented) unless determined by the IEP team. A copy of the birth certificate must be kept in the child’s record for monitoring purposes. Only the most at-risk children who turn 3 after the September 1 deadline should be enrolled on their third birthday. A copy of a legal birth certificate may document a child’s age eligibility. Homeless children may not have a copy of a legal birth certificate available. Other documentation, including a letter from shelter staff, a letter from a homeless liaison, a hospital birth certificate, medical records, baptismal certificates, or a statement signed by the parent or guardian, should be acceptable for homeless families.

**Birth Certificates**

The purpose of requiring a certified copy of the child’s birth certificate is to ensure that the student has not been listed as a missing child. Although it can be used to verify age and gender of a child, it is not a document designed to verify residency for school enrollment purposes. According to the **Missing Children Records Act** [325 ILCS 50/5], a pupil must provide a certified copy of his/her birth certificate to the school district within thirty (30) days of enrollment. If a birth certificate is unavailable, the parent may present other reliable proof of the child’s identity and age, supported by a sworn statement explaining why the birth certificate is not available. Other reliable proof of the child's identity and age shall include a passport, visa, or other governmental documentation of the child's identity. If the student was not born in the United States, the school must accept birth certificates or other reliable proof from a foreign government.

Upon failure to comply, the school or other entity shall immediately notify the local law enforcement agency of such failure, and shall notify the person enrolling the child in writing that he has 10 additional days to comply [325
ILCS 50/5]. There is no basis in law to exclude a student for failure to produce a birth certificate or other proof even if the parent fails to provide such proof after the 10 additional days.

Homeless Status
ISBE considers the school enrollment, attendance, and success of homeless children and youth throughout Illinois as a high priority. It is the policy of ISBE that every homeless child and youth be sensitively identified as required by the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento), 42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq., that every such child or youth be enrolled in and attend the appropriate school on every school day, and that school admission for such children and youth be immediate and be handled sensitively and in a child- and family-centered manner in accordance with McKinney-Vento and the Illinois Education for Homeless Children Act, 105 ILCS 45/1-1 et seq.

Children identified as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act must be enrolled immediately regardless of the parent/guardian's ability to provide birth certificates or health and immunization records. The McKinney-Vento liaison and/or PFA parent coordinator/designee should make every effort to assist the family in obtaining this information, as well as to assist in the coordination of obtaining any needed health checks or immunizations.

Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (as reauthorized by Title X, Part C of the No Child Left Behind Act) defines homeless as follows:

The term "homeless children and youths"--
(A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (within the meaning of section 103(a) (1)); and (B) includes--
(i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
(ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of section 103(a)(2)(C));
(iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
(iv) migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).
42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq.

Illinois has created a PFA Homeless Plan for programs to complete in order to better serve homeless children in Local Education Agency (LEA) preschool programs. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Common Form has also been created to assist with identifying preschool-aged children as well as children for Prevention Initiative (birth to age 3) families.

Research has shown that parents are often not aware or do not readily share that they meet the definition of homeless according to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Programs are advised to have a conversation with parents to assess their living situation. Listed below are questions which should be part of the interview to ensure that children who meet the definition of homeless are accurately identified:

- What is your current living situation?
- How long have you been in your current place?
- Is it permanent or just temporary?
- How many times have you moved in the past year? What is the reason for the moves?
- Where would you go if you couldn’t stay where you are?
- Are you staying in your own place or with friends/relatives?
If you are staying with friends/relatives: Did you and your friends/relatives decide to move in together and share expenses for the long-term? Or is this a temporary situation?

- How many people share the housing?
- How many people are staying in one room?
- Are you and your children sleeping in a bedroom or in a public area, like a dining room?
- Could your friends/relatives ask you to leave if they wanted to?

- Do you feel safe and comfortable in the place you’re staying now?
  - What condition is the home in?
  - Is it safe?
  - Does it keep out rain and wind?
  - Is it warm and dry?

**Child Welfare Involvement**

As with homelessness, families do not always offer information that would allow a program to determine that a child should be considered as having current or recent involvement with the child welfare system. Therefore, the following questions are suggested for inclusion in the parent interview:

- Is the child currently in foster care?
- Has the child been in foster care at any point during the past year?
- Do you have an open intact family services case with the Department of Children and Family Services? Have you had an open intact family services case at any point during the past year?
- Is either parent currently a youth in care? Has either parent of the child been a youth in care during the past year?

**Immigrants or Refugees**

The interview should include the following questions to determine whether the child or family is considered a recent immigrant or a refugee:

- Has the child and/or either of the child’s primary caregiver(s) immigrated to the United States within the past two years? If so, when? (Note: Legal immigration status is not a relevant factor.)
- Does anyone in the child’s immediate family (including any guardians) have legal status as a refugee or asylum?

**Children’s Records**

A temporary student record with the information below must be maintained for each child.

- Name, address, and phone number
- Copy of child’s birth certificate (passport or other governmental document)
- Copy of the [Home Language Survey](#) signed by parent/guardian and screening results of children identified as speaking a language other than English in the home
- Copy of current physical and immunization records (physicais must be submitted by October 15th; immunizations due at enrollment or within 30 days if moving from out of state).
- Documentation of a minimum of two risk factors used for eligibility in the program ([Weighted Eligibility Form](#))
- Income verification if being used as enrollment criteria
- [Sample Student/Family Information Sheet](#)
- Name and numbers of anyone else to whom the child can be released
- Signed parent/guardian consent allowing the child to participate in the PFA screening
- Vision and hearing screening results
- Evidence of screening results and/or IEP
- [Parent/Guardian interview](#)
Districts may determine if this temporary student record will become part of the child’s permanent record at time of program exit and should follow local school board policy. School Code (105 ILCS 10/4) (from Ch. 122, par. 50-4) dictates specific record retention timeframes after the child/student leaves the PFA program/school for temporary (five years) and permanent (60 years) student records. Additionally, student records are subject to rules outlined in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 USC 1232(g) and the regulations promulgated under that Act (34 CFR 99).

Student records should be kept intact in a secure place and may be in electronic or hard copy format. If stored in more than one location (for example, one copy at the PFA administrative office AND one copy at the district office), photocopies of original documents may be created to ensure both locations have complete records at all times.

Programs are required to have confidentiality policies and to limit access to sensitive information. Families have the right to review any documentation being stored in their child’s record. When programs are monitored, assessors must be provided with complete student records.

Additional program records that monitors may request:
- Documentation of agendas or sign in sheets for family education involvement
- Annual program self-assessment
- Program Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP)
- Individual staff development plans for each teacher and assistant
- Copy of a signed MOU with the local HS
- Written plan for homeless children*
- Written plan for transitioning children into and out of the program and into Kindergarten
- Copy of mission statement*
- Written plan for collaboration with local community agencies
- Written plan for screening procedures for English learner children*
  *school district-based PFA programs may utilize existing district documents

**Additional Resources**

**Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)**
- Preschool for All Outreach Toolkit
- Engaging Hard to Reach Families

**National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY)**
- Supporting Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness
  - CCDF State Guide
  - CCDF State Self-Assessment

**National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)**
- Best Practices in Homeless Education Brief Series
  - Determining Eligibility for Rights and Services Under the McKinney-Vento Act

**Early Care and Education for Young Children Experiencing Homelessness**
Children with Disabilities

**Recommended Practices**
The Council for Exceptional Children’s Division of Early Childhood (DEC) has published updated recommended practices that summarize research-based practices found to be most effective in achieving greatest improvement in students with disabilities in the preschool environment and are not disability specific. The recommendations address eight different areas: leadership; assessment; environment; family; instruction; interaction; teaming and collaboration; and transition. Recommendations should be considered when planning programming for students with disabilities.

**Initial Eligibility**
Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must ensure that children who receive early intervention services before they turn 3 and who will receive Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services experience a smooth and effective transition and have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) developed and implemented by their third birthday [34 CFR 300.124]. ISBE Guidance 10-2 Relating to Transitioning from Early Intervention to Early Childhood Special Education Services when Children Turn Three and Early Intervention to Early Childhood Transition Frequently Asked Questions provide more details on the transition process. During this process, the LEA must implement all required procedural safeguards, including, but not limited to, providing any necessary parental notifications and requesting any necessary parental consent.

Each school district shall ensure that a full and individual evaluation is conducted for each child being considered for special education and related services. The purpose of an evaluation is to determine:

- Whether the child has one or more disabilities
- The present levels of academic achievement and functional performance of the child
- Whether the disability is adversely affecting the child’s education
- Whether the child needs special education and related services

If the child is found eligible for special education services, goals, objectives, services, and placement should be discussed and determined. Section II of the Early Intervention to Early Childhood tracking form should be completed and returned to the Child and Family Connections Office (CFC) within 20 calendar days of the child’s third birthday.

A parent/guardian of the child, an employee of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), another state agency, an LEA, or a community agency may request a special education evaluation for a child age 3 through 5. Within 14 school days after receiving a request for an evaluation, the district must determine whether an evaluation is warranted and notify the parent/guardian using the Parent/Guardian Notification of Decision Regarding a Request for an Evaluation. This document and others translated into other languages may be found on the Special Education Services, Required Notice and Consent Forms website.

**Inclusion**
The goal for local school districts, public schools, academies, and agencies should be to provide high-quality preschool experiences for all preschool-age children, including children with disabilities, in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Local school districts and/or special education cooperatives may determine through the IEP team process that a Preschool for All (PFA) classroom is the most appropriate placement for students to receive their ECSE services. The following information on inclusion is important in providing education and care for all students—especially for those with differing abilities.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) outlines the LRE requirements for children with disabilities, including preschool-aged children with disabilities. The U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released a policy statement on inclusion of young children with
disabilities in high quality inclusive early childhood programs on September 14, 2015. An executive summary is also available. In addition, a Preschool LRE Dear Colleague letter was issued to states on January 9, 2017. Both documents express the importance of educating students in the least restrictive environment, including preschool aged students regardless of if a school district has a preschool program. At the preschool level, regular classes may include PFA, Head Start, childcare, and private/community preschools. The clarification letter stresses the preference to educate students with disabilities with their same aged peers without disabilities. IEP teams must determine the LRE for each child based on what he or she needs in order to receive a free and appropriate public education and not on “slot or program availability.”

Recent research supports the benefits and positive outcomes children with and without disabilities can gain from inclusion in regular preschool settings with typically developing peers. The following facts are taken from a research compilation by Erin E. Barton and Barbara J. Smith, June 2014.

- Inclusion benefits children with and without disabilities.
- Children with disabilities can be effectively educated in inclusive programs using specialized instruction.
- Parents and teachers influence children’s values regarding disabilities.
- Individualized embedded instruction can be used to teach a variety of skills, including those related to early learning standards, and promote participation in inclusive preschool programs to children with and without disabilities.
- Families of children with and without disabilities generally have positive views of inclusion.
- Inclusion is not more expensive than having separate programs for children with disabilities.
- Children with disabilities do not need to be “ready” to be included. Programs need to be “ready” to support all children.

ISBE’s Preschool Special Education website includes resources and links for these topics as they pertain to Early Childhood Education:

- School District Preschool Program Models and Guidance Document
- Early Childhood Block Grant Administrative Rules Clarification Document
- Preschool Inclusion/LRE website
- ECSE Services – Training and Technical Assistance Projects
- The Federal Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs Module

Educational Environment Codes

Educational Environment (EE) codes identify the type of early childhood education program children with an IEP attend and where their services are provided. EE codes are defined in Illinois by ISBE and reported using the IEP-Student Tracking and Reporting System (I-STAR). OSEP requires each state to submit a State Performance Plan (SPP) and an Annual Performance Report (APR) yearly. ISBE reports on the 21 indicators in the SPP. Indicator 6 focuses on preschool LRE. The data for this indicator is collected at the December 1 Child Count for children who are aged 3-5 on December 1. The Educational Environment Code Generator and Decision Tree for Coding Educational Environments can be used to assist in determining proper EE codes.

Early Childhood Outcomes System

Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) are measured using authentic assessment practices through which providers and families observe children in their everyday routines, activities, and places, and collect documentation that illustrates what children know and are able to do in areas key to future success. Three ECO are used nationwide to reflect the integrated nature of child learning and development and make it possible for comparable data from a variety of assessment instruments to be combined for further analyses.

The three childhood outcomes are:

1. Children have positive social skills, including positive social relationships.
2. Children acquire and use knowledge and skills, including language and early literacy.
3. Children take appropriate action to meet their needs.

Upon entry into ECSE services, each child must receive ECO ratings within 45 days. Progress ratings are required yearly between February 1 and July 31. No exit ratings are needed; however, the last progress rating should be no more than six months old upon exiting enrollment.

The Early Childhood Outcomes Rating Generator and the Decision Tree for Summary Rating Discussions can be used to determine Progress Ratings. Additional information on the Early Childhood Outcomes System can be found at the ISBE ECO Webpage.

Additional Resources
Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)
- Determining Early Childhood Education Codes
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- Joint Position Statement: Early Childhood Inclusion
United States Department of Education (USDE)
- LRE and IDEA requirements as applied to preschool children
- Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs
  - Executive Summary
University of Colorado, Denver
- Inclusion for Preschool Children with Disabilities: What We Know and What We Should Be Doing
- IDEA Provisions Supporting Preschool Inclusion
English Learners

Under 23 Illinois Administrative Code Part 228 Transitional Bilingual Education (Part 228), public school districts must uniformly identify children who are English learners (ELs) by administering a Home Language Survey (HLS) to all children new to the district and conducting an English language proficiency (ELP) screening process for children who come from a language background other than English. Preschool programs must offer a language instruction program for ELs consistent with the requirements of Part 228 to all preschool children identified as ELs. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Division of English Language Learning and Division of Early Childhood websites, in addition to other ISBE links in this document, offer many tools and resources to support the Preschool for All EL requirements.

An EL student in preschool:

- comes from a home where a language other than English is spoken by the student and/or by the student’s parent, guardians, or anyone else who resides in the household
- demonstrates limited English proficiency during a research-based ELP screening procedure that is developmentally appropriate for the student.

All preschool programs for children ages 3 -5 that are administered by a public school district, including charter schools, must adhere to the rules under Part 228. This includes preschool programs that are subcontracted by districts to community organizations and preschool programs that districts administer regardless of the source of funding for the programs.

Identification and ELP Screening of EL Students

The district must have families of all children new to the district, including preschool children, complete the HLS by the first day the student starts to participate in the program. The HLS contains two questions. If the answer to one or both of the questions is “yes,” then the district must screen the child for ELP.

The district must establish research-based Standard ELP screening procedures to determine each potential EL preschool student’s ELP level, minimally in the domains of listening and speaking. The procedures may include use of an established assessment such as the pre-IPT or other screening procedures. State rules indicate that the screening procedures must:

- Be age and developmentally appropriate
- Be culturally and linguistically appropriate for the children being screened
- Include one or more observations using culturally and linguistically appropriate tools
- Use multiple measures and methods (e.g., home language assessments; verbal and nonverbal procedures; various activities, settings, and personal interactions)
- Involve family by seeking information and insight to help guide the screening process without involving them in the formal assessment or interpretation of results
- Involve staff who are knowledgeable about preschool education, child development, and first and second language acquisition
- Screening procedures may be modified to accommodate the special need of students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP)

There are no annual ELP testing requirements for ELs in preschool programs after the initial testing. Districts are not required to rescreen preschool EL students in their second year of participation. The student is considered EL and eligible for the EL program services in the second year of participation based on the initial ELP screening results. However, the district may choose to assess students’ progress in English acquisition and modify the level of EL services provided in the second year based on assessment results. In order to determine ELP and placement for kindergarten, students are screened with the WIDA MODEL™.
ISBE does not require specific training for preschool staff who administer ELP screenings. However, it is recommended that staff be trained on the use of the specific screening tool that is regularly used in the program in order to ensure consistent administration and valid results.

Establishment of Programs
An attendance center that enrolls 20 or more preschool ELs who have the same home language must offer a Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) program that includes instruction in the home language and in English, as well as English as a Second Language (ESL). TBE services may be offered by the classroom teacher or by another teacher who pushes into the classroom. A pull-out model for language support may be used in some circumstances, but generally is not recommended.

An attendance center that enrolls 19 or fewer preschool ELs who have the same home language must offer either a Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI) or a TBE program for these students. This attendance center may have more than 19 EL students enrolled who have different home languages. TPI programs provide language instruction that typically include ESL and may include home language instruction or support based on the needs of the students.

Enrollment in preschool does not count toward the number of years a child has been enrolled in the TBE/TPI program under Article 14C.

Program Models
Language instruction may be delivered by the classroom teacher or by a pull-out or push-in teacher. EL students may be integrated with non-EL students in the classroom as long as the preschool program provides the EL children with daily language instruction that specifically addresses second language acquisition and makes the curriculum accessible for ELs.

Whenever possible, the preschool program should offer a program model that aligns with the program model that the child will enter in kindergarten to provide continuity and best prepare the child for successful entry into kindergarten.

The district may select the program model(s) best suited to its preschool population. Many configurations meet the requirements of TBE and TPI. Models most commonly used include:

Appropriate for TBE or TPI:
- **Transitional Bilingual Education Model**: This is one of the program models allowed, not to be confused with the broader use of the term in state rules. Instruction is in the students’ home language and English to enable them to transition into English. ESL is provided in addition to content area instruction. The goal is to help students transition to mainstream, English-only classrooms as quickly as possible and the linguistic goal of such programs is English acquisition.
- **Dual Language Models**: Instruction is provided in English and a second language with the goal of achieving bilingualism and biliteracy.
- **Two Way Immersion**: Instruction is given in English and another language to English-speaking students and students who speak the other language together in the same classroom with the goal of developing proficiency in both languages for all students in the class.
- **One Way Immersion/Developmental Bilingual**: ELs receive instruction in their home language for an extended duration, accompanied by education in English and ESL. The goal is proficiency in English and the home language.

Appropriate for TPI only:
- **English as a Second Language**: Teachers focus on building English language skills. The language of instruction is English but some support may be provided to students in their native language. Teachers also use sheltered English instruction strategies to modify instruction for ELs to facilitate student
comprehension of learning area content. Classes may be composed of ELs from many different language backgrounds who do not share the same home language.

**Parent Notification**
The district must notify the parent in writing that the child has been placed in a TBE or TPI program for ELs within 30 days after the beginning of the school year or 14 days after enrollment in the program during the middle of the school year. The notification letter must be in English and the home language of the student and must address the areas required under Section 14C-4 of the Illinois School Code. A parent may withdraw a student from the TBE/TPI program at any time by submitting the request in writing to the school or district. An example of the letter can be found on the ISBE website.

**EL Teacher Certification**
To teach preschool students, teachers must hold a Professional Educator License (PEL) with an Early Childhood endorsement (ECE). By July 1, 2016, preschool teachers who provide native language/ESL instruction to EL students must also hold the ESL or bilingual endorsement that corresponds with the teaching assignment. A teacher who provides bilingual instruction, which may include instruction in the home language, in English and ESL must hold the bilingual endorsement. A teacher with the ESL endorsement may provide ESL instruction to help EL students learn English. The teacher who provides the native language/ESL instruction may be the classroom teacher or another teacher who pushes into the classroom for part of the day. A pull-out model is not generally recommended, but may be used in some circumstances. Teachers not providing these services are not required to hold the endorsements.

To provide bilingual instruction to preschool children, a teacher must hold (1) a PEL with endorsements in Early Childhood and bilingual education or (2) both a PEL with an ECE and an Educator License with Stipulations with a bilingual education endorsement.

To provide ESL instruction to preschool children, a teacher must hold (1) a PEL with endorsements in ECE and either bilingual education or ESL or (2) both a PEL with an ECE endorsement and an Educator License with Stipulations with a bilingual education endorsement.

In a classroom, the licensure requirements for either bilingual or ESL instruction may be met through a co-teaching or push-in model in which a licensed early childhood teacher serves as the classroom teacher and a teacher with the bilingual and/or ESL endorsement co-teaches or pushes into the classroom, and both teachers work together to plan instruction for ELs.

By July 1, 2016, all districts must have properly endorsed teachers for preschool ELs in place. Beginning with school year 2014-15, any school district unable to meet these requirements must submit an annual plan to the State Superintendent of Education using the template provided. The plan must demonstrate that the program is actively working toward recruiting and hiring fully qualified staff and currently serves preschool-age ELs. The plan must indicate how the district will provide programs to meet the needs of EL preschool students without fully qualified staff. School administrators responsible for the preschool program and the bilingual education program must jointly develop and monitor the plan.

**TBE/TPI Program Director**
The TBE/TPI Program Director who oversees the program in the district should meet the requirements for administrator qualifications included under Part 228.35(d). This individual may often be someone other than the Early Childhood Director in the district. As such, implementation of a successful preschool EL program will require ongoing communication and coordination between the TBE/TPI Program Director and the staff who oversee the Early Childhood Program.
**Kindergarten Placement**
Preschool screening results may not be used to determine placement in kindergarten. All children identified as coming from homes where a language other than English is spoken on the home language survey must be screened with the WIDA MODEL™ to determine EL status and placement in the TBE/TPI program in kindergarten. Children who were identified as EL in preschool but meet the state English proficiency standard when screened for kindergarten should be enrolled in the same manner as other students who demonstrate English proficiency on the WIDA MODEL™. No parent permission is required to place these children in the general education program.

**Professional Development**
Districts must offer professional development opportunities to all staff in the TBE/TPI program, including certified and non-certified staff in the preschool TBE/TPI program. The district must offer at least two professional development activities a year that focus on at least one of the following topics related to the education of EL students: current research in bilingual education; content-area and language proficiency assessment of students with limited ELP; research-based methods and techniques for teaching students with limited ELP; research-based methods and techniques for teaching students with limited ELP who also have disabilities; and the culture and history of the United States and of the country, territory, or geographic area that is the native land of the students or of their parents. Districts must also provide newly hired TBE/TPI program staff with an orientation that includes information about the TBE/TPI program requirements. Districts should offer professional development that is relevant and addresses developmentally appropriate practices for preschool teachers who work with EL students.

Preschool staff may be included in training related to the implementation of the Spanish language arts standards that districts must offer yearly, and the training should include information about how preschool programs can use developmentally appropriate practices to help prepare children for Spanish literacy.

**Program Funding**
State TBE/TPI funding is available to reimburse school districts for the excess costs associated with providing EL students with five or more periods of TBE/TPI instruction a week in accordance with the Illinois School Code Article 14C and the corresponding state rules. As such, districts may receive funding for preschool students who receive TBE/TPI instruction from a teacher who is properly certified to provide bilingual or ESL instruction to preschool students.

**Additional Resources**
Foundation for Child Development
- [Challenging Common Myths About Young English Language Learners](#)
The Early Learning Environment

It is the expectation of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) that the Preschool for All (PFA) program have a safe and healthy environment that provides appropriate and well-maintained indoor and outdoor physical spaces. An organized, properly equipped, and well-maintained program environment facilitates the learning, comfort, health, and safety of the children and adults who use the program. ISBE expects each PFA classroom to serve 20 children (excluding PFA/ Early Childhood Special Education and Head Start children), unless Illinois Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) guidelines restrict the number of children allowed in the PFA classroom due to square footage limitations. The staff-child ratio for each classroom must not exceed one adult to 10 children, and no more than 20 children can be served in a single classroom per session. Provisions are made for children with disabilities to participate in the program. No more than 30 percent of the children in a PFA classroom may have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), not including speech-only IEPs.

Physical Environment

- Ample indoor space to accommodate furniture and materials needed to run the classroom and allow enough space for free movement of children and adults
- Good lighting, ventilation, and temperature control
- The facility is designed so that staff can supervise all children by sight and sound
- Appropriate furnishings, such as sinks, child-size chairs and tables, learning equipment, and cots or sleeping pads
- A variety of materials and equipment appropriate for children’s ages and stages of development is available and kept clean, safe, and in good repair
- Materials are systematically arranged, labeled with word and picture, and easily accessible to children
- Materials reflect human diversity and the positive aspects of children’s homes and community cultures
- Multicultural materials are integrated naturally into the classroom and daily routine
- Most of the displays in the room represent children’s work, relate to current activities, and are displayed at children’s eye level
- First-aid kits, fire extinguishers, fire alarms, and other safety equipment are installed and available
- A variety of interest centers including, but not limited to: art, music/movement, blocks, sand/water, and nature/science
- A cozy area with soft furnishings and quiet activities and a planned space for privacy

For more information, please refer to All About the ECERS-R and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Program Standards. An All About book for ECERS-3 is not yet in publication.

Interest Centers

The foundation of quality teaching and learning is engaging interactions that take place within an early learning environment with developmentally appropriate materials organized into interest centers. High-quality preschool classrooms include a well-organized and managed classroom with materials that stimulate children’s thinking skills and provide for various levels of difficulty.

Considerations for interest centers include:

- Able to accommodate several children at one time
- Is a clearly defined play area for a particular kind of play
- Materials are organized by type and stored so that they are accessible to the children.
- Labeled with names and pictures that are easily understood by children; the Illinois Early Learning and Developmental Standards (IELDS) that best describe what each center is addressing
- Compatible areas are near each other and non-compatible areas are kept apart (for example, Block Center is near Dramatic Play Center, whereas the Art Center is near a sink or bathroom, and the Reading Center or Cozy Center is placed away from Block Center)

The following chart includes centers and examples of materials, as well as examples of the IELDS that apply to each.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interest Centers</th>
<th>Examples of Materials</th>
<th>Examples of IELDS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fine motor/ manipulatives</td>
<td>Small building materials such as Lincoln Logs; bristle blocks and magnetic blocks, beads and strings in various sizes, colors, and shapes; lacing cards with strings; pegs and pegboards; snap blocks, nuts and bolts; puzzles; teddy bear counters</td>
<td>1. A. ECa Follow simple one-, two- and three-step directions. 8. A. ECa Sort, order, compare, and describe objects according to characteristics or attributes. 8.A. ECb Recognize, duplicate, extend, and create simple patterns in various formats. 8.B. ECa With adult assistance, represent a simple repeating pattern by verbally describing it or by modeling it with objects or actions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Crayons, markers, pens, pencils, chalk, finger paint, tempera paint, water-color paint, clay, pipe cleaners, collage materials (cotton balls, pom-poms, feathers, buttons), safe scissors, stapler, hole punch</td>
<td>25. A. ECd Visual Arts: Investigate and participate in activities using visual arts materials. 25. B. ECa Describe or respond to their creative work or the creative work of others. 26. B. ECa Use creative arts as an avenue for self-expression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music &amp; Movement</td>
<td>Musical instruments, cassettes/CDs, music players, microphones</td>
<td>25. A. ECa Movement and Dance: Build awareness of, explore, and participate in dance and creative movement activities. 25. A. ECb Drama: Begin to appreciate and participate in dramatic activities. 25. A. ECc Music: Begin to appreciate and participate in music activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blocks</td>
<td>Unit blocks, foam blocks, large hollow blocks, homemade blocks</td>
<td>7. A. ECc Use vocabulary that describes and compares length, height, weight, capacity, and size. 9. A. ECb Sort collections of two- and three-dimensional shapes by type (e.g., triangles, rectangles, circles, cubes, spheres, pyramids). 17. A. ECb Express beginning geographic thinking. 25. B. ECa Describe and respond to their creative work or the creative work of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sand &amp; Water</td>
<td>Measuring cups, unbreakable containers, funnels, shovels, scoops, trucks, plastic animals. Toys specific to water might include pumps, sponges, things that sink or float, turkey basters, and spray bottles</td>
<td>7. B. ECa Practice estimating in everyday play and everyday measurement problems. 7.C. ECa With teacher assistance, explore use of measuring tools that use standard units to measure objects and quantities that are meaningful to the child. 12. E. ECa Observe and describe characteristics of earth, water, and air.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramatic Play (Role Play/ House Area)</td>
<td>Clothing (dresses, skirts, pants, jackets, ties, scarves, aprons, footwear, hats, accessories for both men and women), uniforms for various work roles, many types of hats for men and women Supplies/furniture (child-sized kitchen sink, stove/oven, refrigerator, couch, table and chairs, pots/pans, utensils, dishes, tea set, wok, toaster, microwave oven, telephones, mirrors), play food</td>
<td>1. A. ECd Identify emotions from facial expressions and body language. 1.B. ECa Use language for a variety of purposes. 15.A. ECa Describe some common jobs and what is needed to perform those jobs. 15.A. ECb Discuss why people work. 15.D. ECa Begin to understand the use of trade or money to obtain goods and services. 18.B. ECa Understand that each of us belongs to a family and recognize that families vary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Standards</td>
</tr>
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<td>--------------------------------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Nature & Science               | Magnets, magnifying glasses, plastic translucent color paddles; collections of natural objects such as leaves, seashells, rocks, bird nests, pine cones; living things such as butterfly hatching kit, worm farm or ant farm, class plant, class pet | 11.A.ECc Plan and carry out simple investigations.  
11.A.ECd Collect, describe, compare, and record information from observations and investigations.  
12.A.ECa Observe, investigate, describe, and categorize living things.  
12.B.ECa Describe and compare basic needs of living things.  
12.B.ECb Show respect for living things.  
12.C.ECa Identify, describe, and compare the physical properties of objects.  
13.A.ECa Begin to understand basic safety practices one must follow when exploring and engaging in science and engineering investigations.  
13.B.ECa Use nonstandard and standard scientific tools for investigation. |
| Library/Book/Reading (Cozy Area) | Books organized by theme/topic; different types of books such as fiction, nonfiction, predictable, poems; books on CD/tape, props for retelling stories; book characters; soft chairs/beanbag chairs | 2.A.ECa Engage in book-sharing experiences with purpose and understanding.  
2.A.ECb Look at books independently, pretending to read.  
2.B.ECb With teacher assistance, retell familiar stories with three or more key events.  
2.C.ECa Interact with a variety of types of texts (e.g., storybooks, poems, rhymes, songs).  
2.C.ECb Identify the front and back covers of books and display the correct orientation of books and page-turning skills.  
4.A.ECb Begin to follow words from left to right, top to bottom, and page by page. |
| Math & Number                  | Toys and games that require children to figure out “more and less,” cubes for stacking, height chart, foot size measurer, nesting cups, chart and graph activities, pattern or matching cards, magnetic shapes, geoboards, dice | 6.A.ECa Count with understanding and recognize “how many” in small sets up to 5.  
6.A.ECb Use subitizing (the rapid and accurate judgment of how many items there are without counting) to identify the number of objects in sets of 4 or less.  
6.A.ECd Connect numbers to quantities they represent using physical models and informal representations.  
6.A.ECe Differentiate numerals from letters and recognize some single digit written numerals.  
6.B.ECa Recognize that numbers (or sets of objects) can be combined or separated to make another number.  
6.D.ECa Compare two collections to see if they are equal or determine which is more, using a procedure of the child’s choice.  
6.D.ECb Describe comparisons with appropriate vocabulary, such as “more,” “less,” “greater than,” “fewer,” “equal to,” or “same as.”  
9.A.ECa Recognize and name common two- and three-dimensional shapes and describe some of their attributes (e.g., number of sides, straight or curved lines).  
9.A.ECd Combine two-dimensional shapes to create new shapes. |
Writing

Pencils, pens, crayons, markers, chalk and boards, write and wipe boards and markers, children’s names on note cards, envelopes, mailbox, different types of paper (construction, tag board, colored, and white), alphabet and number stamps, alphabet and number stencils, a poster/display showing numbers and the alphabet (upper and lowercase)

4.A.ECa Recognize the differences between print and pictures.
4.A.ECb Recognize the one-to-one relationship between spoken and written words.
4.A.ECd Understand that words are separated by spaces in print.
4.A.ECe Recognize that letters are grouped to form words.
4.A.E Cf Differentiate letters from numerals.
4.B.ECb Recognize and name some upper/lowercase letters of the alphabet, especially those in own name.
4.B.ECd With teacher assistance, begin to form some letters of the alphabet, especially those in own name.
5.A.ECa Experiment with writing tools and materials.
5.A.ECb Use scribbles, letter-like forms, or letters/words to represent written language.
5.A.ECc With teacher assistance, write own first name using appropriate upper/lowercase letters.

Computer/Technology (not a required center)

Desktop computer, child-size mouse or touchscreen, tablet, educational apps, developmentally appropriate computer games/activities

Note: The 2011 version of Caring for Our Children (pages 66-67) recommends no more than 30 minutes -- total -- of video, DVD, computer, and television viewing time per week. Computer use time should be limited to no more than 15 minutes per day for children in a program of any length with the exception of children with disabilities who require assistive computer technology.

1.A.ECa Follow simple one-, two-, and three-step directions.
19.A.ECd Use eye-hand coordination to perform tasks.

Sample Classroom Floor Plan
**Gross Motor Environment**

The gross motor environment should be created with intentionality and include an indoor alternative to accommodate these activities during inclement weather days. Gross motor skills can be enhanced through the use of stationary equipment as well as through simple materials such as balls, tricycles, beanbags, low balance beams, hula-hoops, and parachutes. This environment can also be used to provide learning opportunities by creating spaces that promote learning experiences to support the IELDS. Materials and items such as a sand/water table, a blanket with a basket of books and props, a dollhouse with the play family, musical instruments, etc. may be made available to take outside or to the indoor gross motor area.

Considerations for Gross Motor Environment:

- Fences or natural barriers that prevent access to streets and other hazards
- Adequate space with different surfaces in order for children to participate in different types of active play
- Enough stationary and portable equipment and materials to support seven to nine large motor skills such as:
  - Running
  - Jumping
  - Hopping
  - Pushing and pulling
  - Swinging
  - Catching, tossing, throwing
  - Kicking
  - Jump rope and hula hoop
  - Pulling up by arms
  - Balancing
  - Pedaling and steering
  - Sliding
  - Climbing
- Areas that protect children from the elements of nature, such as shade trees or other types of covering, and windbreaks in the winter
- A storage space for equipment.
- Staff actively assist in the development of gross motor skills

**Additional Resources**

**National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)**
- NAEYC Program Standards

**The National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning**
Schedule
Preschool for All (PFA) programs are expected to implement research-based, best practices in early childhood education. This includes creating a program with a consistent daily schedule, routines, and learning experiences that support children’s developmental levels, abilities, and interests. Scheduling guidelines are based on best practice recommendations. Whether it is snack time, cleanup time, group time, or a planned learning activity, the program should provide opportunities that optimally promote children’s learning and development.

The program meets a minimum of two and a half hours each day, five days a week. Start and end dates are identified and follow the local district calendar, with children in attendance a minimum of 165 days. Any days beyond 165 in the district calendar may be used for parent/guardian conferences, home visits, and professional development OR attendance days. If the district has regular weekly or monthly planning dismissal times that affect the PFA weekly class time, the district must ensure weekly class time overall equals at least 12.5 hours per week (412 hours per school year).

Schedule Components
The daily schedule needs to include a balance of large group, small group, and individual activities that reflect children’s developmental abilities, interests, and attention spans. There should be a balance of active and quiet play. Children should spend at least one-third of their day in play activities, which consist of a combination of indoor and outdoor, teacher-directed (small group or whole group), and child-directed (self-selected) play. The daily schedule should be posted in each classroom, including words and pictures, so staff and students can access readily. The schedule should allow flexibility to meet student needs, but overall should be accurate and consistent so students know what to expect.

Greeting/Departing
- Each student should receive an individual greeting upon entry to the room. This should include using the child’s name, providing a greeting in their primary language, giving a smile or physical contact, and asking something personal about them (e.g., How was your dance class?). Students should also be given time to talk informally with the teacher.
- Each student should be given a farewell at departure time.
- Appropriate greeting and farewell practices help students feel welcome, build relationships with parents, and help the transition from school to home and home to school. This also provides a safety component so staff is aware of who dropped off/picked up students and who is present in the classroom.

Interest Centers/Free Play
- The program plans purposeful, high interest, developmentally appropriate learning activities that support all domains of development and emphasize language and higher level thinking skills.
- Interest centers allow children to carry out their individual plans and choices, to move freely between centers, and to use materials in open-ended and creative ways.
- Three to five choices of different items within each center are present.
- Adults are actively involved in interest centers, initiating meaningful interactions, asking open-ended questions to prompt thinking, reinforcing vocabulary and concept development, and promoting positive social interactions among children.

Gross Motor
- Gross motor activities are scheduled daily and take place outdoors whenever weather permits. Each school district/program typically has policies relating to temperatures and outdoor play.
- Gross motor activities are provided for 30 (half-day programs) or 60 (full-day programs) minutes daily.
- Gross motor activities include a balance of planned play and spontaneous/free play.
- Children have daily access to both age-appropriate stationary outdoor equipment and portable equipment (tricycles, wagons, sleds, balls, sand/digging toys, garden toys, bubbles, chalk, etc.).
- A variety of gross motor activities are offered to support a range of physical skills such as running, jumping, skipping, climbing, ball handling, etc.
- Adults supervise and participate in gross motor and outdoor play and support children’s interactions and
skill development.

Whole Group
- Whole group time includes when all children are participating in the activity.
- Whole group should be limited to short periods of time with activities that are age appropriate and meet the needs of all children, as whole group settings are not the best way for children of this age to learn.
- Teachers should monitor the length of time of whole group through student engagement. If students appear bored or are not paying attention, the time should be shortened. The amount of time must allow all students to participate the entire time.
- Refer to the curriculum for guidance on appropriate duration and activities for large group time.

Meals/Snacks
- All programs must offer a snack each day. Full-day programs must also offer a lunch.
- USDA meal guidelines need to be followed.
- Snacks should be considered a time for socializing and building independence in meal/feeding routines. Staff should sit with children to guide these skills.
- Individual dietary restrictions should be respected.

Nap/rest
- Programs that are longer than four hours must offer a naptime. Students not requiring a nap should be offered an opportunity to participate in relaxation or quiet activities.
- Naps should be offered at a regular time each day, with environment set up to accommodate for the period (low lights, quiet environment, and availability of cots/mats).

Transitions
- The number and duration of transitions throughout the day should be kept to a minimum (less than three minutes) and are planned to align with children’s attention spans and developmental abilities.
- Whenever possible, efforts are made to avoid or minimize waiting time (such as waiting in line or waiting for all children to finish an activity) and interactive activities (songs, finger plays, movement) are utilized to support children during transitions. Routines can be completed in small groups to minimize wait time as well.
- Expectations for transitions are clearly communicated in advance and positively reinforced so that children understand the expectations.
- Transition routines and procedures are taught and reviewed regularly so that the process is both smooth and safe.
- Adults support children during transitions, such as cleanup time or moving from one activity to another, with positively stated reminders and guidance.

Toileting
- Children must be able to understand explanations, commands, and responses, and express their own feelings about toilet use in order to learn about using the toilet.
- PFA staff should implement Diapering and Toileting Procedures for the health and safety of both the child and caregiver.

Sample Daily Schedules
2.5 Hour Programs
- 10 minutes: Arrival and quiet centers
- 5 minutes: Cleanup Time
- 15 minutes: Whole Group Time
- 65 minutes: Choice Time (includes snack as a center)
- 5 minutes: Cleanup Time
- 30 minutes: Gross Motor
- 15 minutes: Small Group Time
- 5 minutes: Pack up and Dismissal
3 Hour Programs
- 20 minutes: Arrival and Quiet Centers
- 5 minutes: Cleanup Time
- 15 minutes: Whole Group Time
- 80 minutes: Choice Time (includes snack as a center)
- 10 minutes: Cleanup Time
- 30 minutes: Gross Motor
- 15 minutes: Small group time
- 5 minutes: Dismissal

Full Day Program (6 Hour Day)
- 15 minutes: Arrival and Quiet Centers
- 5 minutes: Cleanup Time
- 15 minutes: Whole Group Time
- 65 minutes: Choice Time (includes snack as a center)
- 5 minutes: Cleanup Time
- 30 minutes: Gross Motor
- 20 minutes: Small Group Time
- 5 minutes: Prepare for lunch
- 30 minutes: Lunch
- 60 minutes: Rest Time/ Quiet Centers
- 5 minutes: Cleanup Time
- 30 minutes: Gross Motor
- 65 minutes: Choice Time (includes snack as a center)
- 10 minutes: Clean up Time/Prepare for departure/Dismissal

Additional Resources
Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)
- 23 ILLINOIS ADMINISTRATIVE CODE 235
Illinois Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR)
- Diapering and Toileting Procedures
American Academy of Pediatrics – Healthy Children
- Toilet Training Children with Special Needs
Environment Rating Scales Institute
- Table Washing Procedure
United States Department of Agriculture – Food and Nutrition Service
- Nutrition Standards for School Meals
Zero to Three National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families
- Learning to Use the Toilet
Early Learning Curriculum & Assessment
The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) does not endorse specific curricula for use in Preschool for All (PFA) classrooms. However, programs must consider the following criteria when selecting a curriculum:

- Alignment with the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS)
- Inclusion of content to be taught with intentionality and integration
- Provision for child initiation and engagement
- Use of content based on research of how young children learn
- Provision for parent involvement through meaningful communication with families
- Alignment with an authentic assessment tool that is ongoing and comprehensive
- Consideration of the child’s linguistic and cultural background
- Consideration of the range of experience and qualifications of early childhood teachers
- Consideration of a wide range of children’s abilities, including those of children with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Provision of research evidence of the effectiveness of the curriculum

An applicant’s proposal will not be rejected solely based on the curriculum included; however, ISBE must determine that a curriculum is appropriate (based on the criteria above) before it will permit any project to use state funds for such curriculum.

Curricula that have been reviewed and are aligned to the Illinois Early Learning Guidelines for Children Birth to Age 3 Years and the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards for Preschool 3 years old to Kindergarten Enrollment Age may be found at the ExceleRate website. Even though a curriculum is determined to be aligned with the Illinois Early Learning Guidelines and/or the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards, it may not meet all criteria as set forth by PFA guidelines.

Best Practices for the PFA Classroom
- Provides for interactive/hands-on learning that promotes the child’s construction of learning
- Allows for concept learning and skill development in an integrated and natural way
- Allows for active learning and permits children to frequently make their own meaningful choices
- Provides opportunities to explore and inquire instead of focusing on “right” answers or “right” ways to complete a task
- Promotes the development of higher-order abilities, such as thinking, reasoning, problem solving, and decision making
- Promotes and encourages social interaction among children and adults
- Builds and elaborates on children’s current knowledge and abilities
- Encourages development of positive feelings and dispositions toward learning while leading to acquisition of knowledge and skills
- Provides activities that promote feelings of success, competence, and enjoyment of learning
- Utilizes a variety of learning experiences, such as interest areas furnished with materials based on program goals and children’s interests and their abilities, as well as small group and large group activities
- PFA staff is actively involved in implementing all aspects of the curriculum
- Skills are embedded in naturalistic environments using ideas from the children or contributions by the teacher

Curriculum components not appropriate for a PFA classroom include, but are not limited to:
- Use of workbooks, worksheets, flashcards, and/or other materials that do not engage children’s interests
- Limited materials, used day after day, with few choices and little variety in materials and activities
- Use of curriculum without alignment to a research-based assessment tool that informs instruction to meet individual and group needs

**Field Trips**
PFA programs may choose to include educationally appropriate, local field trips into regular curriculum to enhance the classroom learning experience. All children in the program should be able to participate and the activities should be affordable for parents, should they want to replicate the trip. The following questions should be considered when planning field trips:

- Is the field trip destination within a reasonable distance from the program site or community?
- Does the activity support and enhance the parent-child relationship?
- Does the activity offer an opportunity for enhancing language and developing and supporting literacy?
- Does the activity provide an experience that is affordable and repeatable by parents outside the program?
- Does the activity offer the opportunity for a structured agenda to support budgetary and fiscal requirements?

**Assessment**
Characteristics of Authentic Assessment

- Is ongoing and a natural part of what teachers do
- Observes all areas of a child’s growth and development over time
- Occurs in a naturalistic environment
- Uses information from a variety of sources
- Helps teachers plan, measure progress, work with families, and individualize curriculum

The following excerpt is taken from *Authentic Assessment and Early Childhood Education— an Update and Resources*, a publication of the ISBE Early Childhood Education Division.

Preschool or early childhood assessment can be seen in the context of the larger push for accountability. It can indicate which skills children in a particular preschool classroom or program have that are needed for the academics associated with elementary education beginning in first grade. State Early Learning Standards are partly an attempt to put early childhood learning on a continuum that leads to higher and different expectations of achievement. The use of formal research-based student assessment is a requirement for funding of all state-supported Preschool for All and Early Childhood Special Education programs.

Early childhood assessment cannot follow the standardized testing or student assessment model that may be appropriate for higher grade levels. Students who are 3 to 5 years of age are developing rapidly, at individual paces, and with different interests. It is important to document their successes and their progress, rather than their failures or lack of progress, as they grow. Some formal testing, of course, is appropriate for diagnostic purposes to prepare for special interventions that may be needed to deal with physical, psychological, or behavioral circumstances. Evaluation for diagnostic or special education eligibility purposes should be distinguished from “authentic assessment.” Young students learn through play; authentic assessment aims to document a student’s development and progress in a way that is non-intrusive and captures how a student uses his or her skills while engaging with materials, teachers, parents, and peers. Authentic assessment involves the teacher as an observer and a researcher – working from a background of solid education and specialized training, collecting data over time, selecting and organizing evidence (the portfolio), preparing a hypothesis that can be tested (the curriculum), sharing conclusions with parents and others to refine what will work best in guiding a student to develop to his or her potential, and developing lesson plans that will help students individually progress toward meeting learning expectations.
John Dewey, the progressive educational reformer who spent an important part of his career in Illinois more than one hundred years ago, recognized that education strikes a balance between imparting necessary knowledge and letting students pursue their own learning interests as individuals. He would have been fascinated by the modern trend in early childhood education that recognizes a child at play as a child who is learning, the preschool teacher as guide and facilitator rather than dispenser of information, and the use of authentic assessment as an appropriate way to document development and guide a student’s education.

**Portfolios**

Portfolios that document student progress over time are a required component of all PFA programs. Collections contained in the portfolio should be representative of the work done by the student illustrating his/her progress over time. Anyone who works with the student should contribute to collecting documentation. In many early childhood programs, younger students spend time working on tasks that are not easily saved for future reference. For example, building with blocks can be an involved activity that a child might pursue with vigor. Progress in the student’s ability to work with blocks can be documented over time by taking photographs of the various structures built. A collection is then available for future reference and can serve as a topic of discussion with the family and the student.

A portfolio for each child contains:

- A research-based developmental checklist that measures progress over time with three reporting periods
- Individualized collections such as work samples, photos, anecdotal notes, etc. that reflect the IELDS
  - FY 18 and all fiscal years thereafter, portfolios reflect, at a minimum, two benchmarks from the language arts, math, social-emotional, science, social studies, physical, fine arts, and ELL (if applicable) domains of the IELDS per reporting period
- Narrative summary reports used to share assessment information with parents/guardians
  - Should be factual, brief, and relevant
  - Contain name, date collected, domain, and IELDS objective or the indicator from the program’s researched-based assessment tool that is aligned with the IELDS

Teachers should choose a benchmark to show progress that documents the integration of many skills and capabilities of the child. It should also show the unique ways a child goes about doing something and show how a child is growing and learning over time. After collecting and documenting information, teachers should use it to reflect on the child and drive instruction. Some questions to guide reflection include:

- What was my purpose for observing?
- What similarities or patterns do I notice?
- What do these observations suggest?
- What else might be going on?
- What else do I want to observe or find out?
- How does this observation fit with other things that I know about the child from previous observations?
- How will I document my interpretations?

The Child Portfolio Teacher Reflection Tool may be used by teachers and administrators to improve the quality of child portfolios.

**Lesson Plans**

The development of thoughtful lesson plans is a requirement for all PFA educators. Thoughtfully constructed lesson plans take into account the unique learning needs of each student and demonstrate a clear understanding of the content and the curriculum expectations of the young learner. Samples of lesson plans can be found on the PFA website under resources. The Early Childhood Division and StarNET have put together a FAQ for Lesson Planning. This FAQ document has been created to provide guidance to teachers and programs on best practices.
related to lesson planning. Programs that are funded by the State should also follow their curriculum guidelines in order to implement the curriculum with fidelity.

Required Components within a PFA Lesson Plan:
- Show connection with IELDS benchmarks (use key phrases from IELDS benchmarks or objectives from the program's research-based curriculum that are aligned with IELDS)
- Outcomes build on child’s prior knowledge to move learning forward
- Learning activities are aligned to instructional outcomes
- Use of worksheets is not evident
- Designed to meet individual child's needs
- Formative assessment selected matches instructional outcome(s) and evidence exists to support possible adjustments made based on formative assessment data
- Based on assessment data

Common Core and IELDS
The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have implications for preschool in terms of content and skills expected for success upon entry to and during kindergarten and beyond. While the CCSS are written for K-12, early childhood educators should take time to carefully reflect on the developmental needs of the preschool student and how early childhood education can align to the CCSS. Vertical alignment was completed to ensure that Illinois Early Learning Guidelines for Children Birth to Age 3 align with IELDS and IELDS align with CCSS.

Technology
2011 Caring for our Children Recommendations: STANDARD 2.2.0.3: Limiting Screen Time – Media, Computer Time indicates that children should have a maximum of 30 minutes per week using technology with a maximum of 15 minutes per day, including computers, laptops, tablets, smart boards, television, movies, etc. When whole group technology lessons are being conducted, an alternative non-technology option must be offered.

Additional Resources
Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)
- Little Prints – Authentic Assessment and Early Childhood Education – an Update and Resources
Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes
- Resources
Colorado Department of Education
- Results Matter Video Library
- Observation: The Heart of Authentic Assessment
Division for Early Childhood (DEC)
- Frameworks for Response to Intervention in Early Childhood: Description and Implications
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- Technology and Interactive Media as Tools in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8
- Early Childhood Curriculum, Assessment, and Program Evaluation
- Where We Stand on Curriculum, Assessment, and Program Evaluation
National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER)
- Preschool Curriculum Decision-Making: Dimensions to Consider
National Public Radio (NPR)
- Q&A: Blocks, Play, Screen Time and the Infant Mind
University of Illinois at Chicago
Common Core State Standards and Early Childhood Literacy Instruction: Confusions and Conclusions
Social Emotional Learning

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is integral to every child’s ability to manage feelings and to interact successfully with others. Identifying and talking about feelings is critical to a preschooler’s social emotional development by contributing to positive social interactions and is a predictor of school success. In the SEL process, children and adults acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to recognize and manage their emotions, demonstrate caring and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle challenging situations constructively.

Key social emotional skills children need as they enter school:
- Confidence
- Capacity to develop good relationships with peers and adults
- Concentration and persistence on challenging tasks
- Ability to effectively communicate emotions
- Ability to listen to instructions and be attentive
- Ability to solve social problems

SEL Instruction

With quality SEL instruction, children learn to process, integrate, and selectively apply SEL skills in developmentally, contextually, and culturally appropriate ways. In conjunction with a safe, caring, participatory, and responsive school climate, this can result in positive outcomes, including prevention of mental health issues, reduction in suspensions, and improved academic outcomes.

Tips for quality SEL instruction that promote social interactions:
- Arrange materials and classroom environment to promote social emotional competency
- Create opportunities for children to interact
- Think about how children are positioned
- Promote looking at each other, if culturally appropriate
- Encourage use of names and/or appropriate physical contact
- If child gets no responses, remind to try and try again
- Remind to “play with friends”
- Give children the words and phrases to say to express their feelings

The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) Pyramid Model

CSEFEL developed extensive resources for teachers for use in their classrooms along with professional development. One of the resources is the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in infants and young children (shown at left), which provides a framework for teaching social emotional skills and targeting challenging behaviors. At the base of this model is a focus on promotion and prevention for all children. When the classroom is managed effectively, relationships have developed and supportive environments are provided, and most children will be successful and develop their social emotional skills. The next layer of the pyramid, targeted social emotional supports, applies only to some children who require explicit instruction on social skills. The top layer refers to children whose behavior is not decreased by the foundational layers. These children require targeted intervention based on their
own individual behaviors, triggers, and consequences, and require behavior support plans to help them find success.

**Relationships**

Building relationships is an important component of social and emotional development. The relationships built with children, families, and colleagues are at the foundation of everything educators do. It is important to build these relationships early rather than waiting until there is a problem. Children learn and develop in the context of relationships that are responsive, consistent, and nurturing. Parents and other colleagues are critical partners in building children’s social emotional competence.

Children with the most challenging behaviors especially need these relationships, and yet their behaviors often prevent them from benefiting from those relationships. Adults’ time and attention are very important to children and must be given at times other than when children are engaging in challenging behavior. All adults should work together to ensure children’s success and prevent challenging behavior.

How to promote relationships:
- Help each child feel accepted in the group
- Assist children in learning to communicate and get along with others
- Encourage the feeling of empathy and mutual respect among children and adults
- Provide a supportive environment in which children can learn and practice appropriate and acceptable behaviors as individuals and as a group

**Positive Behavior**

*A Comprehensive Positive Approach to Behavior Support for Preschool Children,* published by CSEFEL, indicates that a comprehensive and positive approach to behavior support should include the following:
- Building positive relationships
- Using classroom preventive practices
- Teaching social skills
- Individualizing behavior intervention efforts
- Teaching children replacement skills
- Providing specialized services
- Involving families

**Expulsion and Suspension**

The U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Education issued an introduction letter and *Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Policies in Early Childhood Settings* to assist states and public and private early childhood programs in partnering to prevent and severely limit expulsions and suspensions in early learning settings. Recent data indicate that expulsions and suspensions occur at high rates in preschool settings. This is particularly troubling given that research suggests that school expulsion and suspension practices are associated with negative educational and life outcomes. Early suspension, expulsion, and other exclusionary discipline practices contribute to setting many young children’s educational trajectories in a negative direction from the beginning. This has long-term consequences for children, their families, and the schools that they will later attend. In addition, stark racial and gender disparities exist in these practices, with young boys of color being suspended and expelled much more frequently than other children. These disturbing trends warrant immediate attention from the early childhood and education fields to prevent, severely limit, and work toward eventually eliminating expulsion and suspension and ensuring the safety and well-being of young children in early learning settings.

**Public Act 100-105 Suspension - Expulsion of Children Birth to Five**

Governor Rauner signed Public Act 100-105 on August 14, 2017. The law will take effect on January 1, 2018. Details related to enforcement/monitoring will be specific in the administrative rules currently being developed by
the state agencies. The goal of Public Act 100-105 is to ensure that early childhood programs engage in best practices in their disciplinary actions by prohibiting the use of expulsions due to child behavior. Planned transitions, after documented attempts to address the child’s needs, are not considered expulsions. The bill also puts in place a system to track transitions, providing data to better understand the issue and identify the need for additional resources. A frequently asked questions document can be accessed here.

Additional Resources

- **CSEFEL**
  - Pyramid Model Overview (recorded webinar)
  - Teaching Your Child to Express and Identify Emotions
  - Children’s Book List
  - Practical Strategies for Teachers/Caregivers
- Administration for Children & Families – Social-Emotional and Behavioral Health and Development are the foundations of learning
- Key Components of Erin’s Law (Sexual Abuse)
Transition Plans

There are many different transitions that occur throughout the early childhood years, particularly when a child enters the school system for the first time. These transitions -- or times of change -- can be stressful, especially for families with children who have limited experiences outside the home. Moving from program to program requires adjustments. However, teachers and administrators should play a vital role in assisting children and families through the transition process by planning ahead and working together. For this reason, a formal transition plan is a requirement of the Preschool for All (PFA) grant that includes kindergarten transition and transitioning children into and out of the program other than kindergarten. It should take into consideration transitions into the program from home, Prevention Initiative, Early Head Start, Early Intervention, or other childcare settings. It should also take into consideration transitions out of the program to kindergarten or another program setting, or when a family leaves the program in the middle of the year. This plan should be shared with the family any way the program chooses in the family’s native language. Common ways of sharing the plan include placing it in the parent/guardian handbook or sharing the information at beginning of the year orientation.

A key factor in transition is to ensure the continuity in certain key elements that characterize all good early childhood education and care programs. Because of the variety of experiences children and their families go through in the developmental period of life, it would be reasonable to assume that easing the transition process, along with ensuring continuity, is more efficiently and effectively accomplished through community cooperation and collaboration. Transition practices that are developmentally appropriate and specific to a given situation can be helpful in all transitional situations.

Procedures for transition are ongoing and not limited to one-time efforts at the end of the program year. The following steps should be considered when looking at and formulating a transition process:

- Assess the existing transition process and procedures in your program. If one does not exist, then develop it.
- Provide staff development training on transitions and their importance.
- Develop strategies for informing and involving parents in the transition process.
- Inform families on their rights and procedures, including confidentiality.
- Create confidentiality guidelines that are shared with other programs.
- Encourage families to visit settings where the child is likely to attend.
- Develop and/or utilize materials that outline what parents should look for in quality programs.
- Gather information concerning other training opportunities on transition and encourage staff and parents to attend.
- Offer training workshops to staff to discuss strategies to effectively communicate with parents of diverse backgrounds.
- Develop written transition agreements with schools and other childcare settings that clarify roles, transition responsibilities, and timelines.
- Develop a mentor system in which experienced parents work with newly participating parents.
- Develop a packet of information about the child’s progress that the family can take with them to the next program.
- Form special groups or provide other forms of support to parents as they seek to continue to be their children’s advocate in new settings.
- Become aware of and inform parents of local education and training on local program options and how to access them.
- Give special assistance to migrant and other culturally and linguistically diverse families in locating services to assure a smooth transition.
Transitioning into Preschool
Going to preschool for the first time is a new experience for any family with a young child. For many parents, preschool may be the first time their child will spend part of the day away from home. Often parents talk about feeling anxious when their child begins preschool. Questions like “Will my child be OK?” or “How will the teacher know what my child wants?” are typical. A parent who speaks very positively about his or her child’s upcoming experience in a new program is more likely to have a child who is successful in separating from the parent than one whose parent expresses doubt and guilt at leaving the child.

Successful transitions engage parents and teachers in developing the transition team, focusing on strengths to identify goals and challenges, sharing information between families and the sending and receiving programs, preparing the child for change, monitoring child and family experiences, and evaluating the transition process. The result of a successful transition is smooth placement of the child into the preschool.

The transition period is a good time for families to begin visiting the PFA program. Many parents find it helpful to picture their child as part of the group and are interested in the structure of the day and what activities their child will be doing. If parents were not able to visit any local early childhood classrooms, give them a sense of what a preschool classroom might look like and how their child will spend the day. There are many ways to help families prepare for this new adventure into early childhood.

The following is an example of a process to develop a transition agreement if the child is going to attend the school district’s prekindergarten program:

- The PFA program will automatically accept all birth-to-3 program participants into its pre-kindergarten program if the family has met the agreed upon initial at-risk criteria. This is important because it may give parents an incentive to participate in the birth-to-3 program. It also creates the opportunity for uninterrupted services.
- The PFA program will help parents follow the procedures necessary to establish residency in their home school district.
- The PFA program should inform parents about school district health requirements and support parents in getting updated physical examinations and immunizations for their children.
- The PFA program, in collaboration with the birth-to-3 program, will assure that parents have an opportunity to visit the PFA program and ask questions.
- The PFA program will receive developmental monitoring information with parental consent and help parents complete required information forms.
- The PFA program will work together with parents to transfer relevant records to school districts. Parents may play an active role by taking responsibility for delivering copies of records to the appropriate personnel in the PFA program.
- The PFA program will assist with transition in ways identified appropriate by the birth-to-3 program or agreed upon by the birth-to-3 program and the PFA program.
- The birth-to-3 program will follow up with families in the prekindergarten program to see how the child has adjusted.

Transition Plan Tips for Children Entering Preschool:
- Encourage positive talk
- Suggest families visit the PFA program
- Share pictures of preschool
- Read stories about preschool
- Help children feel comfortable in a group setting
- Encourage parents to be their children’s advocate by being actively involved in their education
- Provide meaningful, two-way communication between classroom and home such as newsletters, calendars, parent guides, or parent handbook
- Allow child to attend a shorter day, if necessary
- Home visits

**Transitioning into Kindergarten**

Transition begins with forming a network of social connections that are built around supporting children and families. These connections go further than just making a connection between the preschool teacher and the kindergarten teacher. The connections also include building a relationship between the child and the teacher, the child and his or her peers, and the parent and the teacher. These relationships are instrumental in the success of the children and their learning.

The key to this transition process is giving children continuity in the learning environment and the curriculum strategies that teachers use within their classrooms. This continuity process builds a comfort zone for all participants. Developmental continuity describes how we design early childhood curriculum, how we provide learning experiences that build on the child’s prior knowledge, and how these experiences flow in a natural progression across not only the preschool and kindergarten years, but also how they build through the entire primary school years. When the focus is on both transition and continuity together using a team approach with teachers, parents, and children, smooth transitions for children are ensured as they move from preschool to kindergarten and primary grades.

**Examples of Prekindergarten to Kindergarten Transition**

(Adapted from *Enhancing the Transition to Kindergarten: Linking Children, Families, and Schools*, Kraft-Sayre & Pianta, 2000)

A national Head Start organization has highlighted the importance of continuity between programs as an element of successful transitions between preschools and elementary school. Being aware of the composition of the program that children will go to makes it possible to include activities that will be most effective for transitioning them to the next step. Increasing the communication between the staff of sending and receiving schools can also be a catalyst for change so that more child-centered approaches grow at all levels.

No matter which activities teachers and administrators choose to implement to assist in the transition process for children and families, it is important to understand that all programs are unique and there is no single “right way” to approach transition. Each community must tailor its transition process and activities to meet the needs of the specific children and families it serves (Rous, Hemmeter, & Schuster, 1994; Logue & Love, 1992).

**Sample Preschool to Kindergarten Transition Plan**

**Individualized Transition Plans**

Transitions are too important to be left to chance. Because not all children experience the same transitions, the program may find it needs to develop individualized transition plans for some children and their families. Adjustments to important transitions are accomplished more effectively when individuals have adequate and reliable information about what to expect and are provided with the appropriate emotional and social support. This is true for adults as well as for children. Life has many transitions or changes, such as attending school for the first time, going away to college, beginning a new job, getting married, giving birth, moving, or changing jobs. A great deal of stress can be associated with these changes. Appropriate planning and preparation during any transition can minimize the impact of stress. When the need to create an individualized transition plan is identified, the program staff should work in collaboration with each family to develop a written transition plan that ensures all interested parties have a clear understanding of what will happen to support a smooth, transparent transition.

Transition Forms should contain the following:

- Reason for transition
• Description of how the family feels about the transition
• Ideal outcome of transition
• Family strengths that will support transition
• Child strengths that will support transition
• Activities that will support a smooth transition
• Community agencies that will need to participate or be informed
• Questions regarding parents’ rights or responsibilities
• Projected community service providers being accessed, dates the plan will be reviewed, actual dates the form was reviewed, and signatures of the parents and staff

Collaboration between Prekindergarten and Kindergarten Teachers
Building the bridge between prekindergarten and kindergarten is essential to our youngest learners and their families. The following ideas provide a starting point for programs seeking to increase collaboration between prekindergarten and kindergarten.

• Invite kindergarten teachers to be involved in the plan for transition from prekindergarten to kindergarten.
• Discuss possible activities for kindergarten and prekindergarten classrooms to share.
• Plan Family Nights together with prekindergarten and kindergarten families.
• Classroom Swap! Invite kindergarten teachers to spend one day each month in a prekindergarten classroom, while the prekindergarten teacher visits the kindergarten classroom on that day.
• Prekindergarten teachers meet with kindergarten teachers to discuss expectations for children going into kindergarten. Questions/topics to consider:
  • What do kindergarten teachers expect of incoming kindergarten children?
  • What do prekindergarten teachers think the child needs to know before leaving prekindergarten?
  • Compare expectations and create an appropriate list of expectations agreeable to both prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers, ensuring it is aligned with the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards and the Illinois Early Learning Standards for Kindergarten.
  • Prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers should discuss philosophies for teaching and learning in early childhood.

Additional Resources
• Bridging Refugee Youth & Children’s Services (BRYCS)
  • BRYCS Brief – Giving Young Refugee Children a Head Start
  • Raising Young Children in a New Country – Supporting Early Learning and Healthy Development
• Head Start
  • Transition to Kindergarten
• Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR)
• Syrian Community Network
Parent & Family Involvement
Preschool for All (PFA) grantees must provide for active and continuous participation of parents or guardians of the children in the program. Programs must provide and document opportunities for parent education and involvement as well as ongoing two-way communication with parents and guardians to comply with the PFA grant. No fees will be charged for child supplies, materials, field trips, or registration. Research indicates that a successful parent education and involvement program component has multiple and varied approaches to develop a relationship with the family.

Components may include:
- create an atmosphere in which teachers, administrators, and families are all valued participants in the child’s education
- cooperatively develop a mission statement based on shared beliefs
- develop and implement a written parent involvement plan
- workshops, field trips, and child/parent events are provided
- parents are encouraged to volunteer in the classroom
- parent education opportunities are planned
- encourages all parents and guardians to be involved in children’s lives
- home visits, a useful tool for developing family relationships, are scheduled regularly
- lending library for parents
- toy/book lending library for children
- program newsletter

Communication
A system should exist to facilitate ongoing, two-way communication between school and home on at least a weekly basis, and daily if needed. There are many ways in which a program can fulfill the home and school communication requirement. Programs are encouraged to develop the system that works best for their families and their program.

Defining Family Involvement
Family makeup varies widely and can include parents, stepparents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, and others living in the household. Families also come from a variety of cultural backgrounds and have a variety of values and traditions. Differences can be misinterpreted as indifference to children’s education. There are numerous and varied ways to effectively engage family members in their child’s preschool experience, from asking them to help out at the school to allowing them to take an active role in decision-making processes. It is critical that schools develop policies that are sensitive to, and reflective of, the communities they serve. (Adapted from the Maryland State Department of Education)

Engaging Families
The following section has been adapted from the Michigan Department of Education Office of School Excellence Implementation Manual. These ideas can help you more deeply engage families in the educational process.

Parent Education
- Enhance parenting skills, knowledge, and understanding of the educational and developmental needs and activities of their children by including adult parent group activities and parent-child interaction activities.
- Establish policies that support and respect family responsibilities, recognizing the variety of parenting traditions and practices within the community’s cultural and religious diversity.

Child Learning
- Inform parents about child development, age-appropriate expectations, and the behaviors of young children.
- Provide information regarding how parents can foster their child’s learning and development through parent-child interaction, at-home activities, and parent education groups.
Engage parents in a dialogue related to their observations of their child’s increasing skills and abilities.
Sponsor workshops and distribute information to assist parents in understanding how young children learn. Include information about the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards and performance-based assessments.
Provide opportunities for staff members to learn and share effective strategies to engage parents in their child’s education.

Involvement
- Encourage parent volunteers in the classroom and other areas of the program and/or from home.
- Survey parents regarding their interests, talents, and availability, and then coordinate parent resources with those that exist within the program and community.
- Encourage parents to observe children as often as possible and to participate with children in group activities.
- Educate and assist staff members in creating an inviting climate and effectively utilizing volunteer resources.

Decision Making and Advocacy
- Include parents in the development and implementation of program activities.
- Assist parents in becoming their children’s advocates as they transition into preschool from the home or other child care settings and from preschool to elementary school.
- Provide education and training to parents so they can understand and exercise their rights and responsibilities concerning the education of their children.
- Assist parents in communicating with teachers and other program personnel so that parents can participate in decisions related to their children’s education.
- Encourage the formation of parent-teacher organizations, parent advisory committees, or other parent groups to identify and respond to issues of interest to parents.
- Provide parents with current information regarding policies, practices, and children’s progress as documented through performance-based assessment data and program evaluation procedures and outcomes.

ISBE Family Engagement Framework:
The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) believes meaningful family engagement is a cornerstone of effective schools. Meaningful family engagement is based on the belief that parents, educators, and community members all share responsibility for a child’s education and well-being. Families have a stake in all aspects of our education system and are key partners in every area of school improvement.

ISBE has compiled research, best practices, and trainings to give districts, schools, community stakeholders, and families tools to help build and expand school-family partnerships. At the center of ISBE’s efforts is a set of principles and strategies, called the ISBE Family Engagement Framework. The framework recommends the following four research-based principles to encourage more systemic, sustained, and integrated engagement. The principles are:
- Develop systems that support family engagement
- Build welcoming and supportive environments
- Enhance communication with parents
- Include parents in decision making

The ISBE Family Engagement Framework is to be used in developing and expanding school-family partnerships to support child learning and healthy development.

Indicators of Family Involvement
The following indicators serve as a sample list of family involvement indicators. A parent/school/community survey, based on these sample indicators, could be developed and then used annually to gather important information about the level of family involvement satisfaction in your program.
• Parents are welcome in the school and their support and assistance are sought.
• Multiple opportunities are available for parents to be involved with school.
• Parents are partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
• Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and child learning.
• Communication between home and school is regular and two-way.
• Parenting skills are promoted and supported.
• Parents play an integral role in assisting child learning.
• Barriers to family involvement such as transportation and language are reduced.
• Family workers, social workers, and community parent involvement specialists work together to assist parents in obtaining services within the school district and the community.

**Family Involvement Records**

PFA programs are monitored periodically. As part of the monitoring process, assessors may ask to see documentation of family involvement or parent engagement. Programs should develop a system for tracking the level of parent engagement/family involvement in their program. This information should also be used for programmatic improvement.

**Additional Resources**

- [Office of Head Start’s National Center on Parent, Family and Community Engagement](#)
- [School Community Network](#)
- [US Department of Health and Human Services](#)
  - [The Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework](#)
Community Collaboration
Preschool for All (PFA) programs need to meet the comprehensive and sometimes complex needs of all families. The process of raising and educating healthy and successful children requires a vision for community-wide commitment of programs, schools, and service agencies to address the needs of the whole child. PFA programs should work toward building relationships with other community service providers and develop formal agreements, also known as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), that will clarify and strengthen the mutual understanding of each entity’s roles and responsibilities. PFA grantees will have an MOU with the local Head Start agency.

Memorandum of Understanding
An **MOU** is a document that describes a formal agreement between two or more parties. It is not a legal agreement, but it does indicate the establishment of a relationship. An MOU is generally recognized as binding, even if no legal claim could be based on the rights and obligations laid down in it. It is also sometimes called a letter of intent. For the protection of all parties, develop the written agreement before beginning services to children and families. The agreement can be supplemented with an annual partnership work plan. Review all agreements with legal counsel before signing.

MOUs with other programs can be the first step in the development of a comprehensive service delivery system. The service delivery involves cross-agency efforts that focus on meeting the needs of individual children and families. Today many families across all income levels are experiencing greater stress and child poverty is at record levels. An individual program or service provider cannot view itself as an isolated institution within the community, separate from family and other community services. A priority for the PFA program should be to work in collaboration with other service providers to develop a seamless referral and follow-up system. Programs must take affirmative steps to establish ongoing collaborative relationships that go beyond the development of referral networks. Therefore, programs are encouraged to secure a broad range of services by working together with community agencies. The following is a list of agencies you may want to consider partnering with in your community.

- Local Public Health
- Child and Family Connections
- Early Intervention
- Easter Seals
- Special Education Services
- Hospitals
- Other Prevention Initiative Programs
- Head Start/Early Head Start Agencies
- Mental Health
- Domestic Violence Prevention Shelters
- U of I Cooperative Extension
- Crisis Nursery
- American Heart Association
- Red Cross
- Libraries
- School
- All Our Kids Networks
- YMCA/ YMCA Child Care Providers
- Food Banks
- Child Care Connection/Resource and Referral, Educational Centers, Refugee/Immigrant-Serving Agencies and Mutual Aid Societies
Collaboration
“By working together and incorporating diverse perspectives to create effective partnerships, communities can be more impactful than when they work alone. When communities build effective local systems through collaboration, they are better able to create change.” – Partner-Plan-Act

Some collaboratives are funded by the state of Illinois. Examples of such collaborations include, but are not limited to, All Our Kids (AOK) Networks; Innovation Zones; Local Interagency Councils; and Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) collaborations for coordinated intake and Community Systems Development work. Other collaborations have developed organically within the community and are funded by the local service providers or a philanthropic organization. There are a variety of collaboration efforts in Illinois. Some communities have no organized collaborations while others have multiple collaborations from which to choose to join. Each program can decide which collaboration(s) to participate in to benefit the children and families they serve.

Comprehensive Plan for Collaboration
Programs will provide a comprehensive plan that articulates the how collaboration with partners will benefit children and the families that are being serviced by the Preschool for All program. Plans should provide specific and targeted supports for children and family’s needs as identified through the weighted eligibility, and screening and intake processes and procedures.

Community Systems Development
As an initiative of Illinois’ Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant, the Consortium for Community Systems Development was charged with completing a strategic plan for a community systems approach, a type of blueprint to help organize and extend the state’s current supports for local collaboration around early learning and development. The purpose of the Illinois Community Systems Development Plan is to develop a statewide approach to ensuring that every child in the state enters kindergarten safe, healthy, ready to succeed, and eager to learn. For more information and up-to-date initiatives, check the partner plan act website.

A pilot program has been initiated in several communities using the ABLe Change Framework. This approach uses system scans and a few simple rules to direct and shape system behavior. The rules are:

- Engage diverse perspective
- Think systemically
- Incubate change
- Implement change effectively
- Adapt quickly
- Pursue social justice

Additional Resources
- ABLe Change Framework: A Conceptual and Methodological Tool for Promoting Systems Change
- Build Initiative
- Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development
- Illinois Early Childhood Collaboration
  - Checklist for Developing a Partnership Agreement/Contract
- Illinois State Board of Education
  - Agency/Community Partnership Agreement
  - Prevention Initiative Implementation Manual
- Partner Plan Act.
Personnel
All Preschool for All (PFA) program administrators/child care directors and staff paid by the block grant must hold appropriate licensure and/or qualifications for the position for which they are employed. Complete licensure requirements and answers to frequently asked questions may be found at the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Educator Licensure webpage and Part 25 of IL Administrative Code-Administrative Rules for Educator Licensure.

Professional Staff
All teachers of children ages 3 to 5 years must hold a current, registered Professional Educator License (PEL) endorsed in Early Childhood Educator (ECE) or a PEL with ECE endorsement and one of the following endorsements: provisional educator, alternative provisional educator, resident teacher, or visiting international educator.

Special Education
PFA/Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) blended classroom teacher holds current, registered PEL with ECE endorsement AND ECSE approval.

English Learner Licensure
Preschool teachers must hold the proper license to teach preschool children. Preschool teachers must hold a PEL with an Early Childhood endorsement. By July 1, 2016, preschool teachers who provide native language/English Learner (EL) instruction to EL children must also hold the EL or bilingual endorsement that corresponds with the teaching assignment. A teacher who provides bilingual instruction, which may include instruction in the home language, in English and EL, must hold the bilingual endorsement. A teacher with the EL endorsement may provide EL instruction to help EL children learn English. The teacher who provides the native language/EL instruction may be the classroom teacher or another teacher who pushes into the classroom part of the day. A pull-out model is not generally recommended, but may be used in some circumstances. Teachers not providing these services are not required to hold the endorsements.

To provide bilingual instruction to preschool children, a teacher must hold (1) a PEL with endorsements in Early Childhood and bilingual education or (2) both a PEL with an Early Childhood endorsement and an Educator License with Stipulations with a bilingual education endorsement.

To provide English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction to preschool children, a teacher must hold (1) a PEL with endorsements in ECE and either bilingual education or ESL or (2) both a PEL with an ECE endorsement and an Educator License with Stipulations with a bilingual education endorsement.

In a classroom, the licensure requirements for either bilingual or ESL instruction may be met through a co-teaching or push-in model in which a licensed early childhood teacher serves as the classroom teacher and a teacher with the bilingual and/or ESL endorsement co-teaches or pushes into the classroom, and both teachers work together to plan instruction for ELs.

By July 1, 2016, all districts must have properly endorsed teachers for preschool ELs in place. Beginning school year 2014-15, any school district unable to meet these requirements has to submit a plan using the template provided to the State Superintendent of Education each year. The plan must demonstrate that the program is actively working toward recruiting and hiring fully qualified staff and currently serves preschool-age ELs. The plan must indicate how the district will provide programs to meet the needs of EL preschool children without fully qualified staff. School administrators responsible for the preschool program and the bilingual education program must jointly develop and monitor the plan.
TBE/TPI Program Director
The Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE)/Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI) Program Director who oversees the program in the district should meet the requirements for administrator qualifications included under Part 228.35(d). This individual may often be someone other than the Early Childhood Director in the district. As such, implementation of a successful preschool EL program will require ongoing communication and coordination between the TBE/TPI Program Director and the staff who oversee the Early Childhood Program.

Noncertified Staff
Noncertified staff (PARA) employed to assist in the instruction of children ages 3 to 5 shall meet the requirements set forth in 23 Ill. Adm. Code 25.510(b) (Endorsement for Paraprofessional Educator) or hold an approval for paraprofessional educator received in accordance with Section 25.15(a)(2)(f) (Types of Licenses; Exchange). Paraprofessionals must obtain the appropriate Educator Licensure with Stipulations. A paraprofessional educator endorsement on an educator license with stipulations may be issued to an individual who:

- Is at least 20 years of age and;
- Holds a high school diploma or a General Education Diploma and has met one of the following requirements:
  - Holds an associate degree (or higher) from a regionally accredited institution of higher education (evidence is an official transcript); or
  - Has completed at least 60 semester hours of credit from a regionally accredited institution of higher education (excluding remedial coursework); or
  - Presents an official score report from Educational Testing Service showing a score of 460 or higher on the ParaPro test; or
  - Presents evidence of earning the following scores on the WorkKeys test (offered by ACT): Reading for Information (4), Writing or Business Writing (3), and Applied Mathematics (4)

Parent Program Noncertified Personnel
A parent coordinator or parent educator position in PFA programs does not require a degree or licensure. The Parent Coordinator/ Educator position may be filled for purposes of coordinating activities that enhance parent participation in two-way, meaningful communication with the school regarding child’s learning and other school activities, helping parents to play an integral part in assisting their child’s learning by getting actively involved in their child’s education at school, and helping parents understand their role as a full partner in their child’s education.

Administrators
Directors of Child Care Centers offering Preschool Programs
By July 1, 2017, directors of child care centers offering preschool programs funded under Section 2-3.71 of the School Code and this Part shall have either:

- a minimum of a baccalaureate degree in child development or early childhood education or the equivalent (i.e., baccalaureate in any discipline with a minimum of 24 semester hours of credit in child development, early childhood education, or ECSE, including relevant field experience) and a Gateways to Opportunity Level II or III Illinois Director Credential issued pursuant to Section 10-70 of the Department of Human Services Act [20 ILCS 1305/10-70] (see http://www.ilgateways.com/en/credentials)
- Or meet the requirements of subsection (c)(9)(E)

School Administrators
By July 1, 2017, directors of preschool programs funded under Section 2-3.71 of the School Code and this Part and administered by school districts shall hold a professional educator license endorsed for principal or general administrative issued under 23 Ill. Adm. Code 25.337 (Principal (2013)) or 25.335 (General Administrative (Through August 31, 2014)), respectively.
Sample Job Descriptions

Teacher

Job Goal: To create a flexible PFA program and developmentally appropriate class environment favorable to learning and personal growth of children; to facilitate children’s development of communication abilities, attitudes, skills, and knowledge needed to provide a good foundation for future success in school, in accordance with each child’s ability and based on the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS); to build strong ties between home and school; to establish good relationships with parents and with other staff members.

- Provide learning experiences in language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, physical education, fine arts, foreign language, social/emotional development, and other subject matter suited to the needs of children.
- Develop and use instructional materials suitable for verbal or visual instruction of children with a wide range of mental, physical, and emotional maturities.
- Develop in each child an awareness of his/her worth as an individual and his/her role in the family and community.
- Provide ongoing observation and authentic assessment of children and maintain documentation of each child’s progress and growth.
- Provide individual and small-group instruction designed to meet individual needs of children in communication skills, health habits, physical skills, and development of satisfactory self-concepts. Work with other support personnel/agencies to promote this goal.
- Enrich educational program through study trips to community resources such as museums, parks, and through classroom visits by resource persons from the school and community. Share and interpret these experiences with children and parents.
- Plan and coordinate the work of aides, assistants, parents, and volunteers in the classroom and on field trips in order to obtain the maximum benefit from their efforts.
- Develop activities for parents that promote parent participation and involvement in education activities provided for their children.
- Communicate regularly with parents by means of parent meetings, newsletters, home visits, and individual parent conferences.
- Interpret school program to parents in order to strengthen parental understanding of the individual children’s needs and the school’s role in the child’s life.
- Provide appropriate climate to establish and reinforce acceptable child behavior, attitudes, and social skills.
- Cooperate with other professional staff members in assessing and helping children solve health, attitude, and learning problems.
- Create an effective environment for learning through functional and attractive displays, interest centers, and exhibits of children’s work.
- Maintain professional competence through in-service education activities provided by the district and through self-selected professional growth activities.
- Select and requisition books, instructional aids, instructional supplies, and food.
- Participate in curriculum and other developmental programs as appropriate.
- Perform other incidental tasks consistent with the goals and objectives of this position.

Sample Duties for Teachers

- Select a curriculum that is aligned with the IELDS.
- Develop and implement daily lesson plans that meet the developmental, social, emotional, and intellectual needs of all children in the class.
- Set up and maintain an environment in the classroom that fosters learning, including switching or rotating materials in interest areas on a regular basis.
- In cooperation with other staff, carry out routine duties such as toileting, hand washing, cleanup, and supervision of children at all times, including outdoor play.
- Collect anecdotal notes and portfolio items to assess children’s development using individual records.
- Communicate weekly with parents through a newsletter.
- Host parent meetings throughout the year on various topics. These are in addition to parent conferences.
- Conduct parent teacher conferences twice a year.
- Compile a list of equipment and materials needed for the classroom and, with the approval of the center director, order the materials.
- Meet with the center director to help manage the grant.
- Meet with teaching assistant to go over lesson plans and share teaching strategies.

**Teacher Assistant**

Job Goal: To assist the PFA teacher in developing and implementing a developmentally appropriate program for young children.

- Assist with classroom learning activities.
- Supervise children inside and outside, including, but not limited to, bus duty, recess, field trips, classroom activities, and lunchroom.
- Maintain accurate records, as assigned by teacher.
- Assist with the assessment and evaluation of learning.
- Assist with the preparation of materials for use in the program.
- Assist and maintain an orderly learning environment.
- Assist with identification of and attention to children’s health and hygiene.
- Assist in providing individual and small-group instruction in learning activities.
- Assist in communicating with parents.
- Maintain strict confidentiality of student records and data.
- Participate in professional development.
- Accompany teacher on home visits.
- Perform other incidental tasks consistent with the goals and objectives of this position.

**Parent Coordinator/Educator**

Job Goal: The purpose of the position of Parent Coordinator is to work with the teachers, administrators, and parents to coordinate and advocate for family involvement to facilitate children's learning.

- Assist the teacher in planning and implementing programs and services offered.
- Establish the PFA program as a place that invites participation and partnership through the development of a wide variety of “welcome” activities for parent/families.
- Conduct a variety of programs for parents and children at flexible times of the day to accommodate parent needs.
- Facilitate parent education, playgroups, and family development programs.
- Maintain records for all meeting agendas, facilitators, presenters, and meeting attendance (e.g., parent sign-in sheets).
- Conduct home visits and provide support to parents and their children.
- Coordinate resources (e.g., transportation, child care, etc.) for the purpose of providing the parent an opportunity to become an active participant in school activities/organizations.
- Evaluate effectiveness of program activities periodically and keep current with trends and developments in the field.
- Recommend and arrange for new programs as need.
- Collaborate with local and state agencies.
- Maintain needed supplies and equipment for program activities.
Perform other incidental tasks consistent with the goals and objectives of this position.

Additional Resources

- Educator License with Stipulations (ELS): Endorsed as a Paraprofessional Educator
- Illinois Licensure Testing System (ILTS) - Teacher, School Service Personnel and Administrator Licensure Testing
Professional Development

Professional development (PD) is defined as activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators so that they might, in turn, improve the learning of children. Programs are required to have a written PD plan for all staff members, including teachers, paraprofessionals, and parent coordinators, in order to support continuous quality improvement and professional growth. The following points are necessary to complete the plan:

- Determine the professional needs and interests of each staff member within the program. This information may be obtained through an annual staff survey, program monitoring, or a staff member’s individual evaluation.
- Develop an annual written plan that addresses each staff member’s professional needs and interests. PD opportunities may include, but are not limited to: district or agency in-service/training, outside consultants, book studies, webinars, coaching, professional learning communities, classroom observations, or graduate courses.
- Plans should be created collaboratively with staff member and administrator in order to reflect both professional interests and professional needs.

Professional Development Resources

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) provides funding to different technical assistance projects throughout the state. These projects are designed to meet the professional development needs of staff working in Preschool for All (PFA) programs.

Early Childhood Center of Professional Development

The Early Childhood Center of Professional Development (ECCPD) at the Illinois Resource Center works directly with ISBE’s Early Childhood Division to provide professional development opportunities for educators whose work is funded in whole or part by the state’s Early Childhood Block Grant. A calendar of professional development opportunities is printed each school year, distributed to the PFA programs, and posted on the ECCPD website. Educators may register online, by regular mail, or by fax. The calendar and website are updated monthly. The professional development offered is intended for administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, and others working with children birth through age 5, and covers such topics as language/literacy development, observation and assessment, curriculum, and social and emotional development. Most workshops are offered during the week, although some are scheduled in evenings and on Saturdays.

Early Choices

Early CHOICES is operated through a grant awarded by ISBE to the School Association for Special Education in DuPage County (SASED); 100 percent of annual funding for the project is from federal sources. Early CHOICES is the Preschool Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) initiative and provides professional development and technical assistance to the early childhood community in Illinois. Early CHOICES assists ISBE in meeting its local needs by providing services throughout Illinois. Early CHOICES partners with the other technical assistance projects serving the early childhood community, such as Illinois STAR NET and ECCPD.

Illinois Early Learning Project

The Illinois Early Learning (IEL) Project and website are funded by ISBE and managed by staff at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. IEL is intended for early care and education professionals and parents who care for children ages birth through age 5. A variety of resources for early care and education professionals and parents can be found on the IEL website in English, Spanish, and Polish. Resources include Tip Sheets on high-interest topics; links to activities, videos, and resources to help implement the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards; a statewide calendar of training events; and responses to questions about topics related to early education and development. The website also features responses from IEL Director Dr. Lilian Katz to questions from parents and teachers.
Illinois STAR NET
Illinois STAR NET provides a variety of opportunities for personal and professional growth for those working in early care and education settings with young children ages birth to 8, with an emphasis on children with special needs. STAR NET, operated through a federal grant awarded by ISBE, provides training workshops and conferences, technical assistance and consultation, linkages and networking, funding opportunities, and resources regionally to the early childhood community in Illinois. Six different STAR NET regions make up the state and the Regions Map will identify the appropriate region for your district.

The Center’s Library
The Early Childhood Library has more than 2,500 books, videotapes, and periodicals specifically related to early childhood issues.

Additional Resources
- Gateways to Opportunity: Illinois Professional Development System
- Illinois Head Start Association
- Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA)
- Illinois Principal Association
- Lead Learn Excel Library
- McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership
- The Center: Resources for Teaching and Learning
  - Conference Descriptions
- The Early Intervention Training Program
- The Ounce of Prevention Fund
Budget, Financial and Reporting
This section provides guidance and information to assist administrators in developing and submitting an appropriate/cost-effective budget and in successfully administering the fiscal requirements of the grant. An overview of general fiscal and grant administration requirements is included, as well as sample budget worksheets and help/tip sheets for the electronic submission of applications, budget amendments, and expenditure reports.

Illinois State Board of Education Web Application System
Annual Preschool for All (PFA) grant applications are created each fiscal year in the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Web Application System (IWAS). The ISBE Helpdesk may be contacted by calling 217/558-3600.

Project Timeline
Project Begin Date – The calendar date at which a grant recipient may begin to conduct activities and encumber obligations that will be charged to a state or federal grant. Obligation of funds cannot begin prior to the project begin date. If the continuing application has not been submitted by July 1, funds cannot be obligated until the application is submitted. The start date of the project cannot precede the beginning of the fiscal year for which the funds are appropriated. The project begin date is the date submitted to ISBE in a substantially approvable form or July 1, whichever is later.

Project End Date - The calendar date at which a grant recipient must end all activities and encumber obligations that will be charged to the state or federal grant. A project end date change is necessary if a grant recipient is unable to obligate and/or complete all the activities included in the approved budget on or before the original project end date (normally June 30). Please see information on Budget Amendments below. End date extension is not necessary if all activities are completed/obligations encumbered and only liquidating outstanding obligations.

Joint Agreement/Cooperatives
Joint Agreements are defined as a collection or consortium of at least two or more Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to perform a mandated service or function more equitably or efficiently.

Licensed Sites or Exempt Sites
If any classrooms will be at sites that are exempt from Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) licensure, the exempt sites page must be completed. Exempt sites include school districts, Regional Offices of Education (ROEs), and other exempt public entities. If any classrooms will be at sites that are required to have DCFS licensure, the licensed sites page must be completed. On either page, number of classrooms is referring to physical classrooms, not sessions. All classrooms, regardless of funding stream (PFA, tuition, Early Childhood Special Education, Head Start, etc.) that have at least one PFA child enrolled should be counted.
Programs in child care centers must have a current and valid license from DCFS.

Budget Considerations
Budgeting is a project plan in which ideas, goals, and objectives are translated into expenses that are segregated by Function and Object per ISBE’s Part 100 Requirements for Accounting, Budgeting, Financial Reporting and Auditing, ISBE’s State and Federal Grant Administration Policy, Fiscal Requirements and Procedures document outlines necessary information in overseeing a grant. The budget is of equal importance to the narrative and can be approached as an important final check in clarifying the practical application of the program. Careful deliberation should go into completing the budget section. No budget, when submitted, can be more than an “informed estimate” of the costs to be incurred, but careful budget planning will ensure that the financial support requested will be adequate to carry out the goals of the project. The approved budget connects the proposed expenditures to program activities and objectives.
Before developing a project budget, the writer must fully understand all of the state and federal rules and regulations that govern the program. This includes allowable direct costs, indirect costs, assurances, project forms, and instructions and what changes are permitted in a budget once the project is approved. The project writer should contact staff at the local level or at ISBE who understand the rules and regulations and can provide assistance to include the information that is necessary in the final document.

A complete copy of the approved application, approved budget, and all approved amendments must be maintained by the grant recipient. These documents and other supporting information must be maintained for a minimum of three years (see Record Retention below) and will be used by ISBE staff to determine fiscal and program compliance. Any changes/corrections must be properly documented (via electronic review checklist, email, notes on the budget breakdown, or budget summary) and changes noted at the grant recipient level.

Note: All activities and obligations that will be charged to the approved grant must occur within the project begin and end date.

**Supplement vs. Supplant**

Most federal- and state-funded programs specify that only supplemental costs may be charged. Those funds are intended to supplement (i.e., in addition to) and not supplant (i.e., replace) local funds. Local districts are required to maintain, in each eligible attendance area, a level of expenditure that is at least equal to the level of expenditure that would be maintained if federal/state funds were not being expended in that area.

No project or activity can be approved if it proposes to provide a service required by state law. For example, any project to singly provide special education for children with disabilities cannot be approved because special education is required by state law with special funds appropriated to pay for it. In like manner, basic kindergarten programs cannot be approved for the same reason.

In most cases, compensation for supervisory personnel (including superintendents of schools, directors of education, supervisors of instruction in regular curriculum areas, and principals) falls within the category of expenses that would be incurred if a school were not participating in a federal/state-funded program. This would not be eligible for reimbursement unless additional administrative personnel are necessary and hired specifically for that purpose. Extreme care should be taken in determining the applicability of the charges to the federal/state program.

Payrolls must be supported by time and attendance or equivalent records for individual employees. Salaries and wages of employees chargeable to more than one grant program or other cost objective will be supported by appropriate time distribution records.

**Supplement, Not Supplant Tests**

To determine whether an expenditure supplements and not supplants, grant recipients must run these three tests. **Expenditures must pass all three tests to truly be supplemental.**

**Test I: Required** – Is the program or activity that the district wants to fund required under state, local, or another federal law? If it is, then it is supplanting.

**Test II: Equivalency** – Were state or local funds used in the past to pay for this program or activity? If they were, it is supplanting.

**Test III: Non-Title I Programs** – Are the same programs or activities being implemented in other schools that do not receive Federal funds (e.g. Title I) AND are these programs and activities being paid for with state or local funds? If yes, then this is supplanting.

**Budget Detail Page**

The budget detail page is to be used to indicate itemization and descriptions of budget expenses that are to be listed and identified within the proper Function Code/Object Codes. This page also indicates the current fiscal year’s allotment of funds for the PFA program. Programs should plan a budget that uses the full allotment, leaving a $0 allotment remaining indicated. NOTE: If a SAVE button is not visible at the bottom of this page, please select Page
Lock Control at the top of the screen to be sure all sections are unlocked, which allows changes to be made on the other tabs. Failure to save each page as it is completed will result in data loss.

- **Function Codes/Object Codes**
  - PFA programs have limited Function and Object Codes when compared to other ISBE state and federal programs. A detailed list can be found at [Detailed Function Descriptors](#). When entering budget line items, Function and Object Codes are the first two columns to be completed. The Instruction box in the top right corner of the page will identify additional specific instructions for the entire page.

- **Expenditure Description and Itemization**
  - This textbox is intended to indicate itemization and descriptions of budget expenses. An appropriate level of detailed information should be entered for each Function/Object Code selected. Examples of appropriate levels of detail are located in [Instructions and Examples for Completing the Budget Detail Page](#). Providing an adequate description will facilitate the approval process. Inadequate detail will result in the application being returned for additional information.

- **ECBG Funds**
  - Indicate the total amount requested for each Function/Object Code. The total amount in this cell must match the itemization included in the Expenditure Description cell. Expenditure amounts should be in whole dollar amounts only.

- **Delete Row**
  - If a line of detail needs to be removed, select this checkbox, then click the “Save Page” button.

- **Create Additional Entries**
  - If additional lines of budget detail are needed, click the “Create Additional Entries” button located at the bottom of the page. Each time this button is clicked it will add five additional rows of budget detail cells.

- **Calculate Totals**
  - When the Budget Detail Page is complete, click the “Calculate Totals” button at the bottom of the page. (Important: Clicking on “Calculate Totals” does not save the information.)

- **SAVE**
  - Please verify all data entered is correct and all allocated funds are appropriately budgeted. Save must be clicked before leaving the Budget Detail Page.

Note: Indirect Cost is not applicable to state-funded PFA.

Note: It is allowable to have multiple function/object rows. Example: function 1000/object 100: staff for Lincoln school; function 1000/object 100: staff for Washington school, etc.

### Salaries and Benefits (Objects 100 and 200)
When budgeting for salaries, plan to budget for the proportionate amount of benefits. If a staff member is shared with another program/grant, the proportionate share of salaries and benefits should be charged to each grant/fund source. The program should also maintain [Time & Effort Logs](#) to support the allocation charged to each grant. Specific documentation must be maintained at the program level for auditing purposes.

Professional teaching staff who hold a registered Professional Educator License and who work in a PFA program whose fiscal agent is a school district or ROE program may participate in the [Teacher Retirement System (TRS)](#). For state grants, TRS is paid by a special appropriation and only the “over-and-above” costs for TRS can be included on a state grant budget. TRS may exclude positions such as parent coordinators, parent educators, or teacher assistant(s)/paraprofessional(s), including any who may hold teaching degrees and educator licensure. TRS program rules and regulations guide the use of TRS on PFA budgets. For more specific information, please contact [TRS](#). The [Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund](#) may be available to those not covered by TRS.

### General Administrative Expenses (Function 2300)
In accordance with [23 Illinois Administrative Code 235](#), the budget shall specify no more than 5 percent of the total grant award used for administrative and general expenses not directly attributed to program activities. A higher limit
not to exceed 10 percent may be requested by the fiscal agent, who has provided evidence that the excess administrative expenses are beyond its control and that it has exhausted all available and reasonable remedies to comply with the limitation. Requests must be submitted each fiscal year, contain detailed rationales, and be made prior to submission of the online application/amendment. Upon approval and subsequent submission, the approval must be noted in the district comment box or within a textbox on the Budget Detail Page. If a 10 percent exception has been approved for Function 2300, the budgeted cell may not exceed 10 percent of the total grant allotment in the Final Expenditure Report.

Daily Snack/Meal Reimbursement (Function 2560)
PFA requires half-day programs to provide one snack and full-day programs to provide one meal AND one snack. While PFA funds may be used for these meals, programs are encouraged to apply for reimbursement under the School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program (NSLP), Special Milk Program (SMP), and/or the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). School districts are eligible to participate in the NSLP, SMP and the CACFP. Child care centers are eligible to participate in CACFP and SMP. For more information about these programs, visit the School Nutrition Programs website.

Note: If an LEA is approved for any of the Child Nutrition programs, it cannot also be claimed on the grant. That would be double-dipping and is not allowable.

Equipment/Capital Outlay (Object 500)
Equipment is one of the items identified as a “capital asset” under ISBE’s Part 100 Requirements for Accounting, Budgeting, Financial Reporting and Auditing to describe an instrument, machine, apparatus, or set of articles that meets all of the following criteria:

- Under normal conditions of use, including reasonable care and maintenance, it can be expected to serve its principal purpose for longer than 12 months
- Does not lose its identity through fabrication or incorporation into a different or more complex unit or substance
- Is nonexpendable; that is, if the item is damaged or some of its parts are lost or worn out, it is more feasible to repair the item than to replace it with an entirely new unit
- Retains its appearance and character through use
- Has a cost equal to or in excess of the capitalization threshold adopted by the school board

Capitalization threshold means a dollar figure above which the cost of an item will be depreciated.

All equipment must be inventoried and clearly labeled “Purchased with PFA Funds, Year.” In an audit review, an external auditor may ask to see the PFA Inventory, accompanying receipts, and the items on the inventory to ensure proper labeling has occurred.

The Inventory Register of items purchased with PFA funds must include:
- Description
- Serial number or other identification number
- Funding source for purchased property
- Who holds title
- Acquisition date and cost
- Location, use, and condition of property
- Disposition date

In addition to the information above, more definitions, including Acquisition Cost, Current Fair Market Value, Purchase, Inventory, Management and Disposition of Equipment, and the right of ISBE to transfer equipment if grant activities cease to exist, may be found in Section B: Equipment of the Fiscal Requirements and Procedures document.

Examples of Unallowable Expenditures
- Gift cards
• Promotional items of any kind
• Graduation/promotion-related expenses
• Itinerant services provided by special education staff (should be covered by special education funds)
• Compensation for principal, assistant principal, superintendent, directors of child care centers, etc. (Exception: PREK ONLY Early Childhood Center)
• Vehicle purchase
• Building purchase or any other permanent structure (Rent may be allowable, if there is a need for space that is NOT already owned by district/fiscal agent.)
• Tuition reimbursement
• Out-of-state travel
• Playground equipment may be an allowable expenditure. Consult with your program consultant for more information and guidelines. Programs are cautioned to consult with the Consumer Product Safety Guide and Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised Guidance on playgrounds before making a purchase decisions.

Payment Schedule
In accordance with applicable regulations for each program, payments should be requested to meet actual cash needs of the project. All payment requests should be based on the projected date of expenditures.

When completing the Payment Schedule on a state application/amendment, indicate the amount needed in each month of the program, beginning with the first full month of the project and ending with the last full month of the project. Payments cannot be requested before the project begins or after the project ends.

Note: Salaries and fringe benefits are normally expended in equal intervals and should be projected in this manner.

When teachers are paid on a 12-month salary basis and the project period is for nine months, the three months’ salaries and related fringe benefits paid after the project ends (and AFTER the service has been rendered/activity has occurred) should be included in the last project payment. Equipment, supplies, contracted services, and in-service activities should have the payment requested in the month for which the expenditure is anticipated.

When a revision of the original payment schedule is necessary, a revision may be included on an amendment (see Amendments below). Formal notification with any payment revisions to the remaining payments will be acceptable 30 days prior to the project ending date. Any increase must be reflected in another month as a decrease. Payment schedules should be equal to the project budget.

Additional information regarding ISBE vouchering of payments may be found in ISBE’s Financial Reimbursement Information System (FRIS). The FRIS Inquiry Quick Help Guide is available to help programs navigate.

Note: The ISBE “Voucher Date” is not the same date on which the Illinois Comptroller processes payments. The date disbursements are released from the Comptroller’s Office can be found on FRIS Inquiry. Please see the Illinois Comptroller Vendor Inquiry page for additional payment information specific to your program.

Expenditure Reports
Expenditure reports are utilized by ISBE primarily as a program accountability and cash management tool. Expenditures must always be reported on a cumulative (i.e., year-to-date) basis from the project begin date through a specific period of time.

Public Act 96-0795 effective July 1, 2010, requires that state grant recipients with awards in excess of $25,000 must submit quarterly expenditure reports to reflect the progress of the grant program. All grant recipients, regardless of
the amount awarded, will be required to submit quarterly reports. Expenditure reports can be submitted more often than quarterly.

Grant recipients with approved access to IWAS must submit expenditure reports electronically via the Electronic Expenditure Reporting System. Notification of required expenditure reports is sent via a courtesy, reminder email from the Division of Funding and Disbursement Services. Please review the *Electronic Expenditure Reporting Quick Help Guide* for more information.

Effective with fiscal year 2013 projects and thereafter, all state or federal grants will be required to submit additional expenditure information if ALL of the following conditions are met:

- The project end date is AFTER June 30
- The expenditure thru date is AFTER June 30
- The expenditures are greater than the June 30 reported expenditures

Grant recipients must report the split of expenses for obligations/activities June 30 and prior compared to July 1 and after.

Any amount reported in an expenditure account (cell) not budgeted or not within the acceptable expenditure variance will not be accepted. Failure to submit an acceptable report will result in the delay of current payments. Expenditures and obligations in excess of the total project budget will not be allowed.

Expenditure reports are due 20 calendar days after the expenditure through date. Reports not received by the due date will result in project funds being frozen until an acceptable report is submitted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Reporting Project Begin Date</th>
<th>Report Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>September 30</td>
<td>October 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>December 31</td>
<td>January 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>March 31</td>
<td>April 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>June 30</td>
<td>July 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Excess Cash on Hand**

Excess cash on hand is determined by comparing the amount disbursed by ISBE to date, not necessarily received, indicated on the grant recipient’s expenditure report minus the total amount expended and obligated on a cumulative basis for the reporting period. A positive balance indicates excess cash on hand. This amount will be withheld from the next scheduled payment(s). The amount of excess cash is placed in reserve and will be released when a subsequent cumulative expenditure report is submitted with a zero or negative cash fund balance.

The payment schedule should be submitted based on the actual cash needs of the district. Lump sum, semiannual, or quarterly payments are not appropriate unless a unique expenditure obligation warrants such disbursement. If the payment schedule has been prepared in a reasonable manner, excess cash on hand should not occur.

**Final Expenditure Reports**

A final expenditure report is defined as:

- the project end date equals the cumulative expenditure through date
- there are no outstanding obligations reported

If a completion report is submitted with outstanding obligations, then a final expenditure report that reflects total project expenditures (with all prior obligations liquidated) must be submitted no later than 90 calendar days after the project end date. Failure to submit this final expenditure report in a timely manner will result in project funding being withheld for the current and subsequent year until the report is received.
A revision of a final expenditure report will not be accepted unless extenuating circumstances warrant a revision. A request to revise a final expenditure report must be submitted in writing or via email to the Division of Funding and Disbursement Services staff for approval.

**Carryover/Return of Funds**
Carryover of funds is not allowed for state-funded programs. If any PFA program will not/cannot expend all program funds, please contact the ISBE Early Childhood Division as soon as possible. The division will assist the program in filing a “downward” amendment for the amount of funds that will not be expended.

PFA funds that have not been expended for the project year must be returned to ISBE. Unexpended funds “lapse” and will be returned/credited to the State General Revenue Fund. The Division of Funding and Disbursement Services will request funds to be returned when the amount to be returned on a grant is more than $50, unless specific grant provisions require otherwise. The division will follow procedures as prescribed in the [Illinois Grant Funds Recovery Act][1] [30 ILCS 705].

**Amendments**
All amendments must be submitted in IWAS and are due to ISBE 30 days prior to the project end date. Specifically, if the project end date is June 30, the amendment is due by May 31. A project with an end date of August 31 has an amendment due of no later than August 1. Amendments must be received prior to the obligation of funds based on the amendment.

Amendments are required for:
- The scope of the project is expected to change (Example: The program changes from a traditional program to a blended program, or a half-day program is extended to become a full-day program)
- The expected expenditures exceed the budget cell by 20 percent or $1,000, whichever is greater
- A new expenditure needs to occur and it has not already been budgeted (opening a previously unbudgeted cell)
- Closing a previously budgeted cell
- Additional funds have been allotted or returned on either a one-time or continuing basis

Amendments are not required for:
- An end date extension past June 30 is NOT needed for regular term staff salaries paid on a 12-month salary schedule
- An end date extension past June 30 is NOT needed to pay obligations (e.g., purchase order for supplies) incurred June 30 or prior
- An end date extension past June 30 IS NEEDED for new activities and obligations incurred July 1 or later (e.g., Summer School, Professional Development)

Each budget amendment/payment schedule replaces the one prior. Include all budget cells (even the ones that are not changing) and a new payment schedule (even if it is not changing) on the Budget Summary and Payment Schedule.

**Outstanding Obligations**
An outstanding obligation is any liability for which funds are committed prior to the end of the reporting period and is expected to be paid within 90 days. See [State and Federal Grant Administration Policy][2] for further guidance.

**Requests for Additional Funding**
In the event extra Early Childhood Block Grant funds are available, district/program requests will be considered. Please email earlychi@isbe.net to request a copy of the Additional Funding Request form.

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[1]: [Illinois Grant Funds Recovery Act][30 ILCS 705]
[2]: [State and Federal Grant Administration Policy][30 ILCS 705]
[3]: [Illinois Grant Funds Recovery Act][30 ILCS 705]
Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA)

The purpose of the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) is to increase accountability and transparency in the use of grant funds while reducing the administrative burden on both state agencies and grantees. The law provides for the development of a coordinated, non-redundant process to establish effective and efficient oversight of the selection and monitoring of grant recipients, ensuring quality programs; limiting fraud, waste, and abuse; and defining the purpose, scope, applicability, and responsibilities in the life cycle of a grant. Illinois state agencies are in the process of implementing the requirements of GATA.

Please visit ISBE's GATA page for more information on the current fiscal years GATA registration and reporting requirements. All grantees must complete the registration process and be qualified annually to do business with the state of Illinois.

Record Retention

The grant recipient shall retain records for three years from the final date of filing a claim. ISBE can re-compute within three years from the final date of filing a claim for reimbursement to any school district if the claim has been found to be incorrect and can adjust subsequent claims accordingly, as well as to re-compute and adjust any such claims within six years from the final date for filing when there has been an adverse court or administrative agency decision on the merits affecting the tax revenues of the school district. However, no such adjustment shall be made regarding equalized assessed valuation unless the district's equalized assessed valuation is changed by greater than $250,000 or 2 percent. [105 ILCS 5/2-3.33].

All purchase orders, time-and-effort sheets, and other supporting documentation must be retained at the local level and must be available for review or audit any time within the three years after termination of the project or until the local entity is notified in writing from ISBE that the records are no longer needed for the review or audit.

Records may be disposed of:

- after their individual retention period is complete
- providing any local, state, and federal audit requirements have been met
- as long as they are not needed for any litigation either pending or anticipated
- and, if they are correctly listed on a Records Disposal Certificate submitted to and approved by the appropriate Local Records Commission

The responsibility for retention and destruction of records is shared between the ISBE and the Local Records Commission. Prior to the destruction of any records following the three-year period, a fund recipient must contact the Local Records Commission, Illinois State Archives, Margaret Cross Norton Building, Illinois Secretary of State, Springfield, IL 62756 or at 217/782-7075.

Financial Audit/Monitoring

The ISBE Division of Federal & State Monitoring periodically reviews PFA programs. Funds used to provide for salaries, supplies, professional development, and costs associated with the program will be audited. More details are available by reviewing the Federal & State Monitoring Division’s checklist. Inappropriate expenditures could result in audit findings and funds may be required to be returned to ISBE. More information can be found in the Required Audits section of the State and Federal Grant Administration Policy, Fiscal Requirements and Procedures.

Student Information System: Early Childhood Data

All PFA programs are required to enroll their children in the ISBE Student Information System (SIS). Child data must be entered at pre-determined periods throughout the school year based upon an ISBE reporting timeline. Early childhood data to be entered includes homeless status, English Language Learning, Early Childhood Outcomes System (ECOS), enrollment data, and other demographic information.
The SIS system is designed to assign a unique Student Identifier (SID) to each child, collect demographics, collect performance and program participation data for each child, track children from school to school and district to district within Illinois, and to report timely and accurate information and data through standardized reporting capabilities. This system serves as the vehicle to collect child-related information electronically from school districts. The result of successful implementation is the ability to provide the state education agency, state and federal entities, the education community, and the public with timely and accurate data collection and reporting for children, schools, school districts, and the state.

The SIS application allows authorized users at school, district, and ROE sites to access the system via IWAS. This application facilitates the assignment of an individual SID through secure online web forms or mass assignment of SIDs through batch processing. The statewide SID web application is designed from the user’s perspective to include all the function necessary to perform the user’s role effectively and efficiently. For more information about SIS or to view a SIS training calendar, visit [https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Student-Information-System.aspx](https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Student-Information-System.aspx).

### Data Elements

**Student Demographics**
- Race and Ethnicity Codes for SY2011 and After
- Lineage Suffix Codes

**Student Enrollment**
- Entry-Grade Level Codes
- Enrollment Type Codes
- Program Indicators
- Household and Income Form
- Notice for Reporting Socioeconomic Status in the Student Information System
- Language Codes
- Language Codes by Alpha

**Early Learning**
- Early Childhood
- Early Childhood Validations Reference
- Student Data for ECOS
- Special Education ECOS Decision Tree
- Special Education ECOS Forms and Instructions

**Exit Enrollment**

**Exit Type Codes**

### Student Health Data

Immunization/health examinations are required of all children PreK-12 as per compliance with PA 097-0910 (105 ILCS 5/27-8.1) (from Ch. 122, par. 27-8.1). Please complete the online survey providing immunization and physical examination data as of October 15, or an earlier exclusion date established by your district/school, and submit the completed survey to ISBE by November 5 of each calendar year. All student counts for polio, DTP/DTaP/Td, Tdap, measles, rubella, mumps, hepatitis B, Hib, varicella (chickenpox), pneumococcal, and meningococcal are to be reported for the specific grade levels required by law to be immunized. More information can be found in the Immunization/Health Examination section of the Health Requirements/Student Health Data webpage and in the Student Health Data: Immunization System IWAS User Guide. Special education children should be reported by the home or sending school.
**Employment Information System**

In 2013, ISBE retired the Teacher Service Record data collection system and replaced it with the Employment Information System (EIS) for district use in reporting data for teachers, administrators, and other employees. Through EIS, not only can data be entered and edited using online screens, but it can also be submitted via batch file. EIS also allows data to be reported continually (no closed periods during a school year) for both licensed and non-licensed employees. Further, EIS incorporates the administrator, teacher, and benefits data that school districts are required to report by October 1 each year, per Sections 10-20.47 and 34-18.38 of the School Code. Additional information can be found [here](#).
Program Accountability

Programs are required to implement with fidelity all components of the Preschool for All (PFA) Request for Proposals (RFP) and the continuation e-grant. They must also follow the Illinois Administrative Code and align programming to Birth to Five Program Standards as agreed to by signing the PFA Grant Assurances.

Assessors will make regular monitoring visits to observe and evaluate PFA programs to ensure that they are complying with grant requirements and meeting quality standards. Monitoring visits are typically conducted on a three-year basis. The assessor assigned to monitor a program will make contact in advance of the visit to identify a three-week period during which the visit will take place and to provide the program with needed information. Both the administrative and classroom components of the program will be monitored. The visit consists of two parts, which include:

- Classroom observations using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale 3 (ECERS-3). Typically, it takes an entire class period to complete the classroom observation
- Program compliance assessment using Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Early Childhood Block Grant 3-5 Compliance Checklist

Tips for Compliance Monitoring

Programs are encouraged to review ISBE’s Tips for Compliance Monitoring and attend training on the monitoring tool provided by the Early Childhood Center on Professional Development or STAR NET prior to the monitoring visit.

Initial Continuous Quality Improvement Plan

Programs will receive follow-up reports, indicating findings based on ECERS-3 and the Compliance Checklist. Instructions will also be included to assist in developing a two-part Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP), which should be developed collaboratively by program staff, administrators, and families. The CQIP will address 5 Focus Areas of the (ECERS-3) the program indicates needs improvement for each year following the monitoring visit and all areas of the compliance (Compliance Checklist). Programs will have 30 days from receipt of the follow-up reports to complete both the ECERS-3 and Compliance Checklist CQIPs and return them to ISBE. A CQIP Instructional Webinar, CQIP Training & Technical Assistance Resources, and an example of an ECERS-3 CQIP are on the ISBE Early Childhood web site under accountability.

Both CQIP documents must be electronically signed by the program Authorized Official (as indicated in the current year’s approved PFA Grant) and submitted to ecpiip@isbe.net. After receipt, ISBE will review and communicate changes which may be necessary in order for the CQIPs to be approved.
Reviewing CQIP Yearly

Compliance Checklist and ECERS-3 CQIP documents must be electronically signed by the program Authorized Official (as indicated in the current year’s approved PFA grant) and submitted to cqi@isbe.net by May 31st. Compliance Checklist CQIP should address all compliance items by the following school year. Updates on your Compliance Checklist should be submitted to ISBE yearly. The ECERS-3 CQIP will be updated with follow up comments that indicates progress made during the program year. Programs should chose five new focus areas for their ECERS-3 CQIP in years two and three following the monitoring visit. Please view the CQIP instructional webinar for detailed instructions.

Coaching

Findings from the PFA monitoring visit may result in programs being invited to participate in the PFA Coaching Project. The project is funded by ISBE through the Illinois Resource Center at no cost to programs. Programs receive support, on-site visits, and resources from the PFA Coaching Project to assist in the process of continuous program improvement. PFA coaches are experts in the field of Early Childhood Education and have extensive experience with PFA. Programs previously participating in the PFA Coaching Project have shown strong improvement in follow-up monitoring scores.
**Program Self-Evaluation**

In addition to monitoring from ISBE, each program must have a written, annual self-evaluation to determine if progress is being made toward achieving all required components of the grant. Information gathered through this self-evaluation should be the basis for the program’s continuous quality improvement. This annual self-evaluation process should inform its individualized staff development plans and can also be used to revise the program’s CQIP.

Methods of program self-evaluation may include some or all of the following:

- parent survey of the program’s services
- staff survey of the program
- review of the children’s progress using their developmental assessments and portfolios
- self-review of the program and classroom(s) using the Compliance Checklist and/or a program quality tool, such as the ECERS-3 or CLASS
- review of the program’s current CQIP

Information that may be collected includes, but is not limited to:

- **Where are we?**
  - An understanding about the program and its current conditions through an analysis of current program and population served data.
    - What has been accomplished within current program goals?
    - What resources supported these accomplishments?
    - What accomplishment goals have yet to be reached?

- **Where do we want to be?**
  - Establish or update program goals and measurable objectives, specifically identifying children and families to be served, the program’s demographics, and desired outcomes for serviced populations.
    - What has not yet been accomplished?
    - What new goals need set?

- **How do we get to where we want to be?**
  - Identify what is needed to help meet the goals.
    - What resources are needed (e.g., staffing, funding, equipment, stakeholders’ support, school/district/state support, community support)?
    - What services should be delivered?
    - What is the quality of instruction and curriculum?
    - What is the timeline for completing steps toward goals?

- **How do we know if we are getting there?**
  - An analysis of accomplished activities given timelines, with movement toward accomplishing goals and objectives.
    - What is the status of the goals compared to initiation of working towards goals?

After the self-assessment data is gathered, the program should summarize its findings in a written document and set new goals and objectives for the next program year. The new or revised goals and objectives could be added to the current CQIP or a new CQIP could be written. After the new or revised CQIP is in place, programs should determine who will review the goals and objectives to monitor progress.

**ExceleRate Information**

*ExceleRate Illinois* is the state’s quality rating and improvement system for early learning and development programs that serve children from birth to age 5. ExceleRate unifies all of the state’s early learning programs under a common set of standards across multiple settings to provide families with important information about quality early learning programs in their community. ExceleRate is a comprehensive system that includes Licensed Child Care Centers, PFA programs, Head Start/Early Head Start Programs, and Licensed Family/Group Child Care Homes.
PFA sites located in a school-based setting are awarded an ExceleRate Circle of Quality based on its Compliance and ECERS-3 scores obtained during regular monitoring visits.

A PFA site located in a licensed center that has any classroom that is not funded by PFA will be rated with the rest of the center through the ExceleRate Licensed Child Care path.

The **Gold Circle of Quality** recognizes programs that have demonstrated quality on all 15 standards, as validated by an independent assessor. Gold Circle programs meet or exceed specific quality benchmarks on learning environment, instructional quality, and all program administrative standards; group size and staff/child ratios; staff qualifications; and professional development.

**Awards of Excellence**
Once a program has achieved the Gold Circle of Quality, it can apply for an ExceleRate Illinois Award of Excellence as the next step toward continuous quality improvement and recognition for excellence in specific areas of program quality. There are five Awards of Excellence in the following content areas - Preschool Teaching and Learning, Family and Community Engagement, Linguistically and Culturally Appropriate Practice, Inclusion of Children with Special Needs, and Infant and Toddler Services. For more information about the Awards of Excellence, visit the [ExceleRate website](#).

**Additional Resources**
- [ExceleRate Illinois](#)
- [ExceleRate Illinois Providers](#)
Preschool Expansion Grant
The Preschool Expansion Grant (PEG) is funded by a federal Preschool Development Grant (PDG) awarded to Illinois in December 2014. The goal of the program is to expand access to full-day early childhood education and comprehensive services to the most at-risk 4-year-olds in their communities. These programs provide comprehensive services to children and families, including high-quality family support and engagement opportunities, medical, dental and mental health services, inclusive classrooms with supports for both English learners and children with special needs, as well as a comprehensive Social Emotional Learning program. Along with these enhancements, PEG programs must engage in creating a Birth to 3rd Grade Continuum of Supports for both children and their families. These supports include both school level systems of support (curriculum alignment and access to school supports) and coordinated access to medical, mental, and dental health resources in the community. The PEG is a discretionary grant that is jointly administered by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Note: Documents referenced throughout this manual are available on the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Preschool Development Grant website.

Requirements
At minimum, a child must be 4 years old and from a family with income at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). The child must turn 4 years old by September 1 in order to enroll in the program. Children who are age-eligible for kindergarten are not eligible for the program.

Eligibility and Weighted Priority Enrollment Form
PEG grantees are required to utilize the approved Eligibility and Weighted Priority Enrollment Form (Enrollment Form). This form must be kept in each student record for review upon request. Staff members completing the income verification portion of this Form must provide their signature assuring the income documentation indicated was reviewed.

Age Eligibility
Programs must prove the child is age eligible using any one of the following forms of evidence:

- Child’s birth certificate (copy is acceptable)
- Passport
- Court documents
- Medical records
- Visa
- Other governmental documentation

A child’s certified birth certificate is the preferred form of evidence to prove age eligibility. Programs should first ask families to produce the child’s birth certificate; if it is not available, the program can assist families with identifying other options for proving the child’s age. If the family is unable to produce any evidence, a written statement attesting to the child’s date of birth, signed by the parent or guardian, as well as a plan to obtain the documentation is required. In this case, programs should assist families in obtaining a certified birth certificate.

Income Eligibility
Programs must prove income eligibility for all participants enrolling in the program by documenting how family income was calculated using any one of the following forms of evidence:

- Pay stubs (two most recent, consecutive)
- Proof of WIC benefit
- Proof of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit
- Proof of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) enrollment
- Proof of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefit
• Proof the family receives Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)
• Tax return (most recent)
• Wages and tax statement (most recent W-2)
• Verification/letter from employer
• Proof that parent is enrolled in Medicaid (a medical card with the child’s name does not prove income eligibility)
• Signed written statement from the family (provide form for families with no income)

Families derive income from many different sources and may need several options to prove income eligibility. The preferred ways to verify income eligibility, however, are through proof of enrollment in a public benefits program or pay stubs. Programs should first offer parents the opportunity to use proof of enrollment in a public benefits program or pay stubs to verify their income before offering other options. For parents that are not employed, programs should first work to obtain documentation of receipt of one of the public benefits listed above before utilizing a signed written statement from the parent, as this is the least preferred documentation.

As mentioned above, programs should encourage families to provide verification that they are enrolled in public benefits programs during the eligibility screening process. Evidence of enrollment in a public benefit program includes possession of a public benefits card with the family’s name printed on it (such as a Link card), a signed and dated letter from the administering agency, a referral from the administering agency that indicates the family is receiving a specific benefit, or contacting the administering agency directly after a release of information is signed by the family. Programs should document the evidence used for verification and use their best judgment in determining whether or not to accept evidence that appears questionable in some way.

If families present without proof of income or verification of public benefits at the time of the eligibility screening, programs should still assess the family for other eligibility, including priority selection factors, and accept provisional proof of income (such as a signed written statement from the family or only a single paystub, etc.) until the family is determined to have enough cumulative points from the selection factor assessment to enroll in the program. Programs must collect the appropriate documentation before or soon after the child begins attending the program, but may wait until that point in order to save time and work for both the program staff and family, particularly for families that don’t have enough points to enroll in the program.

Note: Verification of income must be completed no earlier than six months prior to the child’s first day of attendance in the PEG program. For example, programs that served a child at age 3 would need to do a new determination of income eligibility for the PEG program rather than relying on evidence of the family’s income at the time the child enrolled in the program for 3-year-olds.

Household Size and Income
For the purposes of determining income eligibility of a family for the PEG program, “family” includes all persons living in the same household who are:
• Supported by the parent(s)’ or guardian(s)’ income
• Related to the child’s parent(s) or guardian(s) by blood, marriage, or adoption
• The child’s authorized caregiver or legally responsible party

Programs should count income only from parents or guardians of the child, including unmarried parents residing in the same household. Income of adult siblings of the child who are residing with the family or unmarried partners of the parent who are not related to the child should not be counted. Income of a parent who does not reside in the household with the child should not be counted; however, programs should request information on child support, if applicable, and count that income toward the total household income. Non-resident parents should not be included in the total household size.

Categorical Eligibility
Children who are homeless and children who are in foster care are considered categorically eligible for PEG program. Income verification is not required (as it can be assumed homeless families have low income and children in foster care have no family income). If a program determines a child is homeless or in foster care, it must allow the child to begin attending the program without immunization and other medical records, birth certificates, or other documents, giving the family reasonable time to present these documents.

**Eligibility for blending and braiding**

If a program blends and braids funding with another funding stream, such as Head Start, the program must meet the most restrictive requirements of all funding sources. For example, if a PEG program blends funding with Head Start, all families must meet the Head Start income eligibility criteria and all children must meet the PEG age criteria.

**Active Recruitment**

As detailed above, PEG programs are designed to serve the most at-risk children and families. Identifying and enrolling these families requires an intentional effort to actively seek out and educate families experiencing challenging situations.

While many programs have regular success in attracting families for screening days or walk-in enrollment opportunities through fliers or passive recruitment, these families often present with fewer risk factors than the targeted population for this program. In order to fulfill the goal of the PEG, programs must develop and implement a comprehensive recruitment plan inclusive of the following components:

- **Assessment of Community Need**: The recruitment plan should be informed by the particular needs, challenges and opportunities of the community. Data from a variety of sources, including the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM), local community leaders, and others should be used to develop this plan. In addition, this assessment should provide an indication of where in the community priority families live and the location of services and institutions that currently serve them.

- **Identification of Barriers**: Programs should determine the specific barriers faced by parents in their community that prevent or delay enrollment of their children in early learning programs. Issues such as lack of knowledge, challenges obtaining documentation, challenges with transportation, or others should be noted and programs should identify opportunities to overcome these barriers.

- **Targeted, Multi-Pronged Recruitment**: Based on the assessment of community need, programs are expected to develop a portfolio of recruitment approaches to reach families through multiple methods and efforts. Some approaches to consider include:
  - Participation in or hosting of community events for families
  - Door-to-door canvassing
  - Newspaper or radio public service announcements
  - Close partnerships with potential referral sources
  - Recruitment efforts in parks, grocery stores, food pantries, laundromats, and other potential locations frequented by families

- **Education**: Many families, particularly those in the target population, may not have been previously exposed to messages about the importance of early education. Some may believe that children are too young to attend school at the age of 4. In order to engage these families in the PEG program, programs need to educate families, answer their questions, and allay their fears. In particular, programs should plan to help parents understand the following:
  - The impact of early education on brain development and later school success
  - The importance of socialization and social emotional learning
  - The program’s approach to curriculum and play-based learning
  - Developmental appropriate practice and how the program is designed to support young learners
  - Family support and the opportunities available for parent education and engagement

- **Follow Up**: Programs should secure multiple forms of contact information in order to follow up quickly and frequently with interested families. If families encounter barriers to enrollment, programs must provide
support, referrals, and assistance to overcome those barriers. This may include referrals to medical homes to obtain vaccinations or assistance obtaining a birth certificate.

**Priority Factors**
The PEG program is intended to serve the children with the highest needs in each community; therefore, programs are required to prioritize children by need as part of their recruitment, selection, and enrollment process for the program. Per Illinois’ application, PEG grantees will be expected to fill their slots with eligible children with very high needs, defined as eligible children who receive 25 or more points on the Enrollment Form.

- The highest priority selection factors for the program are: homelessness, child welfare involvement, disability (child has Individual Education Plan [IEP] for more than itinerant speech services or has been referred for special education evaluation), and family income at or below 50 percent of the FPL. These factors are weighted at 50 points.
- Other priority selection factors include: income at or below 100 percent of the FPL, caregiver with no high school diploma or General Education Diploma (GED), teen parent at the birth of first child, immigrant or refugee family, active duty military family, English not spoken in the home, and child displaying developmental delays for which a referral to special education is not indicated at the time of the screening. These factors are weighted at 25 points.
- Programs may select additional significant risk factors to incorporate into their Enrollment Form. These factors may be weighted at no more than 25 points and should be based on identified community needs.

**Documentation/evidence of priority selection factors**
All selection factors, with the exception of income, will be documented through a parent interview and questionnaire because producing evidence of many of the priority selection factors may prove onerous for both families and program staff.

The responses from the parent interview and questionnaire will be used by program staff to complete the Enrollment Form. The parent questionnaire gathers all information needed to determine whether a parent/guardian is on active military duty, the age of the parents at the birth of the first child, whether the parent completed high school/GED, and whether English is spoken at home. The interview gathers additional information about homelessness, child welfare involvement, immigration and refugee status, as well as other more general information about the family’s strengths and challenges. If a program is serving the child during his or her “3-year-old year” and/or if the program has previously collected the needed information for the family, the program does not have to conduct a new parent interview for purposes of completing the Enrollment Form. However, as noted above, verification of income eligibility must be completed no less than six months before the child begins the PEG program.

Programs will also receive additional information through the child’s developmental screening, referral sources, and the income verification process that can be used to verify the presence of some of the selection factors without requesting additional documentation. If programs verify presence of selection factors through these other methods, the corresponding questions that assess for these factors on the parent questionnaire/interview should be skipped. For instance, if a local family shelter refers a family they are serving to a PEG program, that referral provides verification of the family’s homelessness and therefore the program does not need to ask the family the questions to assess for homelessness in the parent interview. All programs must use a parent interview and questionnaire combination that includes at least all of the questions included on the sample form in this guidance document, and all programs must complete the Enrollment Form for every child enrolled. Programs may add additional questions to the parent interview as indicated by local or program needs.

- Homeless Status: If the family reports frequent/multiple moves, family members living in different places, a temporary living situation, or describes unsafe, very crowded, or substandard housing, they are very likely homeless and should receive 50 points on the eligibility form. If the family has been referred by a homeless service provider (e.g., shelter worker, McKinney-Vento liaison), this verifies the family is homeless.
- Child Welfare Involvement: If the family was referred by or has verified involvement with a child welfare agency, the child should receive 50 points on the eligibility form.
• Immigrant/Refugee Family Status: A family that has confirmed its status as a recent immigrant or refugee family should receive 25 points on the eligibility form. If the family was referred by a refugee services agency or other immigrant services agency, this verifies the family’s status as well.

• Children with Disabilities: PEG classrooms must include children with IEPs who meet the income requirements for the PEG program. Program monitoring will include an analysis of the percentage of children enrolled who have an IEP other than an IEP for speech only. The percentage of children with IEPs other than speech only should be no more than 30 percent in each classroom, and programs are strongly encouraged to include at least 9 percent of children with IEPs in each classroom. PEG program-eligible children who are referred for a special education evaluation should continue enrollment in the PEG classroom. The IEP team must consider the PEG classroom as the first option for educational placement for children who are found to be eligible for special education. Children with IEPs will have their services provided in the PEG classroom embedded in the activities and routines of the day as indicated in the IEP.
  o Note: Children with disabilities must meet the basic program eligibility requirements. They must be 4 years old on September 1 of the school year in which they are served, and their family income must be below 200 percent of the FPL.

Waiting List
In order to ensure that the most at-risk children are enrolled in the Preschool Expansion Program, programs are expected to develop a waiting list and undertake a selection process prior to enrollment. This process is detailed in the Weighted Eligibility Flowchart.

In general, children should be added to a waiting list as they are recruited and information should be collected to complete the Eligibility and Weighted Priority Enrollment Form. Point values from this form should be assessed and children should be prioritized according to these point values. Program enrollment must be determined based on these priority point values.

Reserving Slots
Per Illinois’ application rules, PEG programs must develop a local plan for ensuring that preschool services will be available to age-eligible children with especially high needs (e.g., children who are homeless or in foster care) even if those children do not present for screening and eligibility determination until after the school year begins. Each PEG program must work with its community partners to develop this plan based on past enrollment patterns, child mobility, prevalence of homelessness and foster care placement in the community, and other factors.

It is anticipated that most PEG programs’ plans will include reserving at least 5-10 percent of their program slots to be filled during the first two months of the school year. These slots would be filled immediately by any child who is homeless, in foster care, or otherwise demonstrates especially high needs. If the slots are still not filled by October 15, the program would enroll the highest-need children from the waiting list.

In addition, programs are expected to maintain contact with agencies serving homeless families and children in foster care throughout the year; if a homeless or foster child is identified as needing preschool services after all spots are filled, programs must make every effort to keep in contact with the family and place that child in a classroom as soon as an opening becomes available.

Establishing Referral Relationships
Programs are strongly encouraged to develop formal referral relationships with local providers that serve families that experience the priority selection factors, such as homeless service providers and McKinney-Vento liaisons, child welfare agencies, housing authorities, refugee resettlement agencies, and public aid offices. Not only will this ensure that programs are able to target the highest-need children for enrollment, but a formal referral relationship can also support the process of verifying eligibility for the PEG program. For example, the local TANF agency could refer families they serve directly to the PEG program using a mutually agreed upon standardized process that incorporates verification of the family’s receipt of TANF benefits. Programs are encouraged to develop referral
forms collaboratively with partners that incorporate verification of age, income, and selection factors to the largest extent possible.

**Comprehensive Family Services**

A key component of the PEG program is comprehensive services provided to children and their families. These services fall into four primary categories:

- **Mental Health**
  - Program should contract or collaborate with a qualified mental health provider or consultant. This individual should have experience working with young children and their families.
  - The consultant should provide training and education opportunities to parents and staff on relevant topics related to child mental health, child development, guidance and discipline, support for children with special needs, and self-care, among others.
  - The consultant should support the program in developing and implementing protocols for social emotional screening, general classroom observation, and other appropriate methods for identifying children in need of mental health supports.
  - The consultant should additionally work closely with program staff to identify children in need of individual observation and referral. This individual observation may be triggered by a score from a social emotional screening or concerns from teachers and parent/guardian. Support and education should be provided to parents to determine if a referral is appropriate for their child and to navigate this process.
  - As appropriate and required, individual consultation should be provided to children or parents as a bridge to long-term mental health services.
  - Mental health providers may also use a reflective case consultation approach, a model to support program staff in addressing the significant needs of children and families experiencing challenging circumstances. (See the link to Reflective Practice Guide under “Additional resources” at the end of this section.)

- **Health and Dental**
  - The program should have a referral relationship with local dentists and pediatricians.
  - Program staff should assist parents in establishing a medical and dental home for regular, ongoing preventative care and any required follow-up treatment.
  - The parent educator should ensure that children receive regular preventative care according to the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment schedule and any necessary follow-up treatment.

- **Family Support and Resource Referral**
  - Parent educators should conduct a family needs assessment with each family to identify family strengths, needs, and goals.
  - During the course of the year, parent educators should check in with families to assess the supports needed to meet their needs and attain their goals and to help celebrate progress.
  - Parent educators should make active and informed referrals to external agencies, including social service organizations, government subsidy programs, educational institutions, and others to support parents in overcoming barriers and achieving their goals.

- **Parent Education**
  - The program should design a robust menu of parent education opportunities designed to support parents in meeting the needs of their children and achieving ambitious family goals.
  - Parent input, collected through surveys, planning meetings or other sources, should be a guiding factor in determining the subject matter, format, and schedule of parent education opportunities.
  - Parents should have an opportunity to learn from and interact with experts in a variety of relevant fields, including:
    - child medical and dental health
    - mental wellness
    - family strengthening
In addition to formal meetings, programs should identify other opportunities for parent education, such as establishing a resource library, planning family field trips to cultural and educational institutions, or hosting community resource fairs for parents.

In designing these comprehensive services, programs should make sure that supports provided to families are both effective and sustainable. Developing a strong and clear Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with service providers (including mental health/dental/medical providers) and referral partners (such as housing organizations, job training programs, GED programs, etc.) ensures that the process for referral is transparent and seamless for families. These MOUs should also clearly outline the types and intensity of services that families should expect to receive, ensuring that these align to family needs and program expectations.

To ensure sustainability, programs should work to develop a lasting relationship between a family and the resource/service provider that will be continuous and ongoing until a particular need is met or goal is achieved. For example, while a program may choose to work with a “dental van” to provide preventative dental care for children, it is critical that the families of children receiving this treatment are connected to a “dental home” where they can receive ongoing care and any necessary follow-up treatment. If a barrier to long-term support is identified, such as a lack of medical insurance, the program should assist the parent in signing up for available free and subsidized insurance options.

Each program should develop a written plan for family support and education that details how the program will support families holistically. This should include a clear strategy for collaborating with community institutions and organizations to assist families in a variety of key areas, including income supports, food pantries, housing, social services, and other services relating to health/mental health, domestic violence, substance abuse, adult literacy, education and training, and financial asset building.

**Family Engagement**

In addition to providing parent education and family support, PEG programs should intentionally take steps to engage parents as active stakeholders in the design, implementation, and success of the program.

The Head Start Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework provides a strong starting point for programs in developing a clear strategy for integrating parent and family engagement meaningfully in the PEG program. This framework is built on seven family engagement outcomes:

- Family Well-being
- Positive Parent-Child Relationships
- Families as Lifelong Educators
- Families as Learners
- Family Engagement in Transitions
- Family Connections to Peers and Community
- Families as Advocates and Leaders

As a part of this parent engagement strategy, each PEG program is expected to cultivate group of parent leaders to serve on a Parent Advisory Council. This Council should be established with a meaningful role in influencing and recommending program design and continuous quality improvement.

Each program should determine the appropriate size of its Council based on the size of the program and should use multiple methods to actively recruit parents as members. Program staff should ensure that participation on the Council is both accessible and inviting to parents from a diverse range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, work schedules, and family structures. In addition to parents, program teachers, staff, and administrators should serve as members of the group.

The Council should meet on a regular basis and should receive information from program staff about program performance, challenges, and successes. Appropriate information may include aggregate enrollment and attendance trends, selected program curricula, upcoming events, proposed policy changes, and the program’s continuous
 qualidade improvement plan. Meetings should be structured to provide for both information sharing and substantive discussion, with recommendations from the group formally shared with the program’s administration after each meeting. A copy of the agenda, minutes, and any distributed materials should be retained by the program.

Participation in the Council should be an opportunity for parents to develop critical leadership and self-advocacy skills. The program should provide training to prepare and empower parents for this opportunity. Training may include an orientation to the policies and procedures of the PEG program, an overview of district/organization history and policies, parliamentary procedure, and an introduction to budgets and fiscal management.

When possible, the members of the Parent Advisory Council should be empowered to join staff members in attending community meetings as representatives of the program. Meetings of local community early childhood collaborations, such as the Innovation Zones, or meetings to discuss collaborations with local social service organizations are an excellent way to support parent leadership development and empower parents with community connections that will benefit their families beyond participation in the program.

In addition, the program should consider empowering parents with structured leadership roles, including chair, vice-chair, and secretary, to ensure that meetings are driven by and for the interests of parent members. Parent members of the Council should elect their peers for these roles. Specific orientation, training, and support for each role should be provided.

**Staffing**

In addition to Preschool for All (PFA) staff requirements, PEG programs are required to hire individuals to serve as parent educators and instructional leaders. Parent educators should work collaboratively with families, education staff, and community partners to ensure that the program meets the needs of the whole child and supports parents/guardians in addressing family needs and setting and achieving ambitious family goals. In particular, they should manage parent engagement and education efforts, implement delivery of comprehensive services, and provide supports to ensure consistent child attendance. The maximum caseload for parent educators is one per 100 children.

The instructional leader should support classroom education staff (teachers and teacher assistants) to refine their practices, improve instructional quality, and achieve mastery as early childhood professionals. In particular, this should include managing implementation of curriculum and supplemental curricular materials, collaborating with teaching staff to develop individual professional development plans, and providing ongoing observations, coaching, and support to teachers. The maximum caseload for instructional leaders is one per 10 classrooms.

**Salary Parity**

PEG programs are additionally expected to attain salary parity with educator salaries in the local public school district. School district salary scales are publicly available documents and should be consulted to determine the appropriate starting salary for teachers, based on level of education. This salary scale should be made available as evidence for the compliance monitoring process.

**Sample Schedule**

Preschool Expansion programs are required to offer a school day program at least the length of the local first grade day. In the majority of districts, the school day for first grade children is at least six hours (360 minutes) long. The following model schedule is provided in an effort to ensure alignment with the requirements of the PDG and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-3) recommendations and best practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Arrival and Quiet Centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>Cleanup Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Whole Group Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 minutes</td>
<td>Choice Time** (includes breakfast as a center)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 minutes: Cleanup Time
30 minutes: Gross Motor*
20 minutes: Small Group Time
5 minutes: Prepare for lunch
30 minutes: Lunch
60 minutes: Rest Time/ Quiet Centers
5 minutes: Cleanup Time
30 minutes: Gross Motor*
65 minutes: Choice Time** (includes snack as a center)
10 minutes: Clean up Time/Prepare for departure/Dismissal

*Gross Motor: One full hour of gross motor programming, at minimum, must be offered to all children daily.
**Choice Time: ECERS-3 recommends choice time for a substantial portion of the day. For a six-hour program day, this is defined as two hours. If breakfast or snack are served as a center/on an open basis, five minutes must be added to the total choice time for each, increasing the total time to 130 minutes, as reflected in the schedule above.

Additional Resources
- Build Initiative
  - Preschool and School Readiness: Experiences of Children with Non-English-Speaking Parents
- Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI)
  - Head Start Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework
  - How We Got Johnny, Jada and Jose in Preschool
- Illinois Children’s Mental Health Partnership (ICMHP)
  - Issue Brief: Early Childhood Mental Health and Homelessness
  - Reflective Practice Guide
- Illinois Department of Child & Family Services (DCFS)
  - Teen Parent Service Network (TPSN)
- Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS)
  - Parent Income Calculation Worksheet
  - Wage Verification form
- Illinois Early Learning Project (IELP)
  - How Can Teachers Support Young Learners in Military Families?
- Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development
- ISBE
  - Early Childhood Special Education Services
- National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY)
- National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)
- National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP)
  - Trauma Faced by Children of Military Families
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)
  - Continuing Education
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- US Department of Education (USDE)
  - Preschool Development Grants
- US Health and Human Services (USHHS)
  - Birth to 5: Watch Me Thrive!
  - Child Welfare Information Gateway
  - Expanding Early Care and Education for Homeless Children
  - US Federal Poverty Guidelines
  - Working with Pregnant & Parenting Teens
Preschool for All Implementation Manual Evaluation
The Illinois State Board of Education values your opinion. Please take a moment to complete the following evaluation regarding the content of this manual. When completed, please fax to (217) 785-7849.

My role is
(Check all that apply)
- teacher
- special education
- researcher
- child care
- social service agency
- program administrator
- state employee
- parent coordinator
- screening team
- teacher assistant
- Head Start
- community based
- school based
- grant writer
- community based
- o state employee
- parent coordinator
- o school based
- o consultant
- o Head Start
- o volunteer
- o grant writer
- o at-risk support staff
- o researcher
- o program administrator
- o screening team
- o special education
- o social service agency
- o community based
- o teacher assistant
- o parent coordinator
- o consultant
- o Head Start
- o volunteer

1. I found the manual to be useful because:
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2. Two examples of the way I have used this manual are:
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________________________________________________________________________________________

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________________________________________________________________________________________
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________________________________________________________________________________________
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For more information or if you have any questions, please contact:

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