

# HQ PreK Components: Frequently Asked Questions

Updated May 2021

## General

### 1. Do the high-quality components apply to charter schools, districts of innovation, and districts who are in partnerships with local child care centers or Head Start programs?

Yes, they do. Any public prekindergarten program serving eligible four-year-old students must implement the high-quality prekindergarten components. This includes:

- *Districts: TEC §29.153 (c) (c-1)*
- *Open-enrollment charters: TEC §12.104 (b) (3) (H)*
- *Districts of Innovation: TEC §12A.004 (a) (1)*

### 2. Our district is currently offering prekindergarten even though we do not have 15 eligible students. Must we offer full-day services, as outlined in the Texas Education Code, and do we have to comply with the high-quality components?

If a district serves eligible four-year-old students in a prekindergarten program that generates Foundation School Program (FSP) funding, it must operate full-day services and comply with the high-quality components.

## District Reports

### 1. What is the purpose of the High-Quality Prekindergarten Component District Report? What are districts expected to do with the results contained in the report?

The High-Quality Prekindergarten Component District Report was designed by TEA to inform district leaders of their status in meeting the high-quality prekindergarten components each school year and to offer support in the implementation of those components. Superintendents are encouraged to emphasize areas of high quality and areas in need of improvement with their early education staff in their ongoing efforts to meet statutory requirements and in offering a prekindergarten program of the highest quality.

### 2. What do the numbers in the report represent?

- Curriculum – number of prekindergarten classes serving eligible four-year-old students using the district-adopted curriculum
- Student Progress Monitoring – number of eligible four-year-old students assessed with a commissioner-approved instrument
- Teacher Qualification – number of prekindergarten teachers with the identified additional qualification that serve four-year-old eligible students
- Program Evaluation – number of prekindergarten classes serving eligible four-year-old students that implemented a program evaluation

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### **3. What if I find the data contained within my district's report to be inaccurate?**

All districts, open-enrollment charter schools and districts of innovation that offer a prekindergarten program upload their unique data into the Early Childhood Data System (ECDS) annually; the report contains the data that was uploaded by the district. Districts are not able to correct the data after its final submission; however, they are encouraged to review their current policies and procedures about collecting and uploading the data into ECDS. Districts should ensure their early childhood program staff and PEIMS staff discuss the prekindergarten components required for submission.

### **4. Our district has a “-1” on the Prekindergarten Progress Monitoring page; what does that mean?**

Student counts of less than five are masked with the “-1.” If your district's report has a “-1” in one of the columns, that means that less than five students fall into that category and must be masked for FERPA compliance.

### **5. Why are there differences in the BOY and EOY number of students assessed in my district's report?**

Many districts experience variations in the number of eligible four-year-old students served at the beginning and end of the school year for various reasons. For example, students may move out of the district or enter into the district mid-year and miss one of the assessment windows.

## **Curriculum**

### **1. What are the requirements related to curriculum for a prekindergarten program?**

The curriculum used in a prekindergarten classroom serving eligible four-year-old students must be aligned with the 2015 Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines. *TEC §29.167 (a); 19 TAC §102.1003 (c)*

### **2. May a district use a locally designed curriculum for its prekindergarten program?**

Yes, a district may use a locally designed curriculum as long as the curriculum aligns with the 2015 Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines. The district should have evidence of the alignment of their locally designed curriculum to the 2015 Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines.

### **3. I heard that a district must use a curriculum that is listed on the current Instructional Materials List; is that true?**

The [Instructional Materials List](#) is developed by the State Board of Education. The curricula that are contained on the Instructional Material List have been reviewed, and it has been determined that they align with the 2015 Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines. A district does not have to use a curriculum on the Instructional Materials List. Districts must, however, use a curriculum that aligns with the 2015 Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines.

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### **4. Are there physical education requirements for prekindergarten?**

Full-day prekindergarten students are required to participate in moderate or vigorous daily physical activity for at least 30 minutes throughout the school year as part of the district's physical education curriculum or through structured activity during daily recess.

Learning relates directly to mobility and motor skills, and, therefore, activities that enhance gross motor development are recommended for young students. The [2015 Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines](#) suggest at least 45 minutes of outdoor time in their sample full-day schedule (page 16). *TEC §28.002(l)*

### **5. Are children required to have a rest time in prekindergarten?**

Policy relating to rest time for full-day prekindergarten students is determined at the local level. Rest time, if given, can be counted as part of the daily instructional minutes in full-day prekindergarten. The [2015 Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines](#) suggest a rest time in their sample full-day schedule (page 16).

## **Student Progress Monitoring**

### **1. Is a district required to use an assessment from the commissioner's list?**

Yes, school districts, open-enrollment charter schools, and districts of innovation must use a tool that assesses the five developmental domains and is listed on the [2017-2021 Commissioner's List of Approved Prekindergarten Assessment Instruments](#). They must use one of the assessment tools from that list to submit their student progress monitoring data into ECDS. *TEC §29.1532 (c); TEC §29.167 (a) (2); TEC §29.169; 19 TAC §102.1003 (c)(1) and (f) (2)*

### **2. What if a child in our prekindergarten program will not participate in the assessments that are a part of the student progress monitoring tool we are using?**

It is recommended that prekindergarten children be given adequate time to adjust to the new experience of going to school. For some students, that adjustment time takes longer. It is allowable to schedule the assessments at a time that the child will be more willing to participate.

Young children may hesitate to participate in a pull-aside activity when their interests are focused on something occurring in the classroom. Teachers may want to consider one of the following strategies:

- conducting assessments at one of the learning centers
- changing the time of the day when the assessment is attempted
- changing the location of where the assessment is attempted

The goal should always be on collecting authentic, accurate data and to help the child feel comfortable in the assessment process.

### **3. Should student progress monitoring be done with children who have a disability?**

Districts should always follow the instructions and guidance on a child's Individual Education Plan (IEP). An IEP may include instructions regarding whether it is appropriate to use the student progress monitoring tool with the child or

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not. At times a teacher may be instructed to conduct part of a student progress monitoring tool with a student with a disability (e.g., a child with a mobility difficulty could be assessed in all measures except those that require movement). Written instructions regarding appropriate accommodations may also be included in a child's IEP.

### **4. Is it necessary for teachers to conduct student progress monitoring using more than one tool if the prekindergarten program is funded by more than one source?**

Funding sources may have differing guidelines regarding student progress monitoring. It is recommended that a district review the expectations of each funding source and choose a student progress monitoring tool that meets all of the specifications of each funding source. As an example, if a prekindergarten program receives Foundation School Program (FSP) funding from the state of Texas along with Head Start funding from the federal government, the district or charter could choose to use the Children's Learning Institute CIRCLE assessment tool. It meets the expectations of both Texas and the federal government.

### **5. Are districts required to submit BOY, MOY, and EOY student progress monitoring data?**

Districts must submit beginning-of-year (BOY) and end-of-year (EOY) student progress monitoring data for their eligible four-year-old students into ECDS. It is recommended that districts use the results of BOY, middle-of-year (MOY), and EOY student progress monitoring data to inform classroom instruction. *19 TAC §102.1003 (c) (1)*

### **6. Where can a district or charter school get specific answers regarding the student progress monitoring tool they are using?**

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) can answer questions about the expectations in statute and/or Commissioner's rule regarding student progress monitoring. However, the best source of information regarding specific assessment tools are the publishers of the tools.

### **7. What are the five developmental domains that are required to be assessed in prekindergarten?**

The five developmental domains include:

- Health and wellness
- Language and communication
- Emergent literacy – reading
- Emergent literacy – writing
- Mathematics

*19 TAC §102.1003 (c) (1)*

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### 8. What skills are included in health and wellness?

Health and wellness skills are those skills listed in the Social and Emotional Development and Physical Development domains of the 2015 Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines. They include the following: Self-Concept skills, Self-Regulation skills, Behavior Control, Emotional Control, Relationships with Others, and Social Awareness skills, Gross Motor Development skills, Fine-Motor Development skills, and Personal Safety and Health skills.

### 9. How often should student progress monitoring be done?

Formal/summative assessment should be done three times a year (BOY, MOY & EOY). The BOY and EOY data must be uploaded into the ECDS at the end of each school year. BOY and EOY data show the progress the student made within that grade level. MOY data can be used to determine whether instructional strategy changes are needed.

Informal/formative assessment is done by teachers during the daily activities of each school day as they observe how students are responding to their instruction. This informal assessment data enables the teachers to adjust their instruction immediately to meet individual students' needs.

All assessment data, both formal and informal, should be used to inform instruction.

### 10. Is a district required to implement progress monitoring for 3-year-old prekindergarten students?

If a student is served in a stand-alone PK3 classroom, **specific progress monitoring is not required**.

Progress monitoring is required in high-quality prekindergarten classrooms. If a student is served in a mixed classroom (PK3 with PK4), where **progress monitoring is required** a teacher should implement progress monitoring that is developmentally appropriate for students and may adjust monitoring for 3-year-olds or exclude 3-year-old students if it is deemed developmentally inappropriate.

Student progress monitoring is a very important part of the teaching cycle and is considered a *best practice* with all age groups. It enables a teacher to effectively adapt the daily classroom instruction to meet the needs of their students.

### 11. Is a district required to submit data in ECDS for 3-year-old prekindergarten students ?

If a district conducts student progress monitoring with its eligible three-year-old students **using a tool from the Commissioner's List**, the BOY and EOY data must be submitted into ECDS annually. This is true for both standalone PK3 classes and mixed PK3/PK4 classes. *TEC, §29.1532*

## Teacher Qualifications

### 1. Does the additional teacher qualification pertain to all prekindergarten teachers?

The additional teacher qualification applies to the teacher of record in a prekindergarten classroom that includes at least one eligible four-year-old student.

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### 2. Do districts need to provide their teachers with a mentor for 15 hours?

Districts serving eligible four-year-old students must employ prekindergarten teachers who are appropriately certified to teach early childhood (as per TEC Subchapter B, Chapter 21) and meet **one** of the following additional qualification options:

- Certified + Has a Child Development Associate Credential (CDA)
- Certified + Has a Montessori certification
- Certified + Has taught for at least 8 years in a nationally accredited childcare program
- Certified + Has a degree in ECE, Special Education-ECE or a non-ECE degree with 15 units of ECE-specific coursework
- Certified + Completion of TSR-Comprehensive Program
- Certified + Has completed 150 hours of professional development in ECE-specific topics, 75 of the 150 hours being in a mentoring/coaching relationship
- Certified + Completes 30 hours of ECE-specific professional development annually with 15 of the 30 hours being in a mentoring/coaching relationship until 150 hours are documented

Although mentoring/coaching is only listed in two of the options listed above, mentoring/coaching is considered a best practice in early childhood. *TEC §29.167 (b) (c); 19 TAC §102.1003 (d)*

### 3. Are prekindergarten teachers who work within a charter school or district of innovation required to be certified?

Yes, all school districts, open-enrollment charter schools, and districts of innovation must employ prekindergarten teachers who are appropriately certified and meet one of the teacher qualification options referenced above if they are serving eligible four-year-old students.

*TEC §29.153 (c) (c-1); TEC §12.104 (b) (3) (H); TEC §12A.004 (a) (1); TEC §29.167 (b) (c); 19 TAC §102.1003 (d)*

### 4. When will teachers be expected to meet the additional teacher qualifications?

As of 2019, all prekindergarten teachers who teach eligible four-year-old students must meet one of the additional teacher qualification options.

### 5. My existing prekindergarten teacher holds valid Texas certificates in both Elementary Early Childhood Education (PK-6) and Elementary Self-Contained (PK-6). Does this meet the teacher qualifications?

No, school districts, open-enrollment charter schools, and districts of innovation serving eligible four-year-old students must employ prekindergarten teachers who are certified **AND meet one additional qualification**. Please refer to the list above for clarification on the additional teacher qualification options.

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### **6. If a special education teacher serves eligible prekindergartners in a special education classroom, does the additional teacher qualification apply to that teacher?**

No, it does not. The additional teacher qualifications do not apply to *special education classrooms* established to provide special education services. The additional teacher qualifications apply to a teacher of record serving eligible four-year-old students in a *prekindergarten classroom*.

### **7. I have been a prekindergarten teacher for 20 years. I have 9 hours of specific ECE coursework within my degree; I have also taught in a nationally accredited site for 3 years. Have I met the additional qualifications requirement?**

No. Prekindergarten teachers serving eligible four-year-old students must be appropriately certified to teach prekindergarten and must meet one of the additional qualifications referenced above. Options cannot be combined to create another option.

### **8. What is considered “early childhood – specific” coursework?**

Coursework that is early childhood-specific covers the age span from birth through 2nd grade. Coursework that covers the entire age span of elementary-aged students (PK-6<sup>th</sup>) is not early childhood specific coursework. This same definition applies to the professional development referenced in the “additional qualifications” options.

### **9. Will the Children’s Learning Institute provide documentation of completion of Texas School Ready (TSR) - Comprehensive training?**

The Children’s Learning Institute should be able to provide documentation to the district or charter school upon request. For more information about Texas School Ready, please visit their website at <https://texasschoolready.org/>

### **10. Can you provide additional guidance on mentoring/coaching?**

The core elements of mentoring/coaching are:

- a one-to-one relationship between a mentor/coach and the teacher(s)
- on-the-job support that focuses on the development of specific early childhood education knowledge, skills or practices that can be used in daily work with children
- a shared commitment to continuous improvement to ensure positive outcomes for all children

A mentor/coach could be:

- An early childhood expert
- Early childhood staff from a Regional Educational Service Center (ESC)
- An instructional coach within/outside of school district
- A supervisor\*
- A principal or another leadership administrator with an early childhood background within a school district

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- A coach from an early childhood agency, such as the Children’s Learning Institute (CLI) or Texas School Ready (TSR)
- A peer teacher who is considered an expert in early childhood education or in a specific early childhood skill or practice
- A coach/leader/facilitator of an established professional learning community
- A professional mentor/coach who specializes in technology-based coaching

\*It is advised that a supervisor keep their mentoring/coaching role separate from their supervisory role.

Effective mentoring/coaching is implemented in a cyclical manner over a designated timeframe. The mentoring/coaching cycle includes:

- Collaborative action planning and goal-setting
- Learning opportunities (modeling, video reviews, research)
- Practice (co-teaching, observations with feedback)
- Reflection (independent and collaborative feedback)

Mentoring/coaching relationships can be implemented through a variety of methods, including but not limited to the following:

- Face to face interactions (ongoing planned and unplanned interactions between the mentor/coach and the teacher)
- Professional Learning Communities (ongoing planned interactions between the mentor/coach and a group of teachers that are working or learning the same knowledge, skill or practice)
- Technology-based coaching (ongoing planned interactions between the mentor/coach and the teacher that are facilitated through some form of technology, rather than face to face interactions)
- Hybrid or a combination of methods

### **11. Would meeting with teachers in a campus PLC count as “mentoring/coaching” hours?**

A professional learning community (PLC) that has *ongoing planned interactions* between a mentor/coach and a group of teachers that is working or learning the same early childhood knowledge, skill or practice could be counted as mentoring/coaching hours.

It is important that the PLC is implemented in a cyclical manner over a designated timeframe and that there is a strategic focus for each meeting.

### **12. With the new full-day requirement, what are some options for giving prekindergarten classroom teachers the required 45 minutes of daily planning?**

Districts have several options for providing classroom teachers serving prekindergarten students a 30-minute duty-free lunch and at least 45 minutes for planning and preparation within the instructional day. Some of these options could include:

- Participation of the prekindergarten students in “specials” conducted during the school day. “Specials” could include PE, music, art, or time spent in the library. During these time periods, prekindergarten students could be supervised and receive instruction by an appropriately certified teacher other than the teacher of record.



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- Rotation of supervisory responsibilities between appropriately certified teachers and/or educators, which may include educational aides (e.g., for recess or lunch). The expectation is that instruction is continuing during these time periods.
- Supervision and instruction conducted by a paraprofessional who is, at a minimum, appropriately certified as an Educational Aide I, II or III (<https://tea.texas.gov/texas-educators/certification/initial-certification/becoming-an-educational-aide-in-texas>)

It is recommended that districts have policies in place to identify the timeframes and circumstances when it is allowable for students to be instructed without the direct supervision of their teachers of record. Please see *TEC §5.001, TEC §21.003, TEC §21.404 and TEC §21.405(a)*.

### **13. If a district is anticipating hiring a PK-certified teacher, does the teacher have to have the first 30 hours of PD, including 15 hours of mentoring/coaching, completed before the teacher can be hired?**

No. The newly hired prekindergarten teacher serving eligible four-year-old students must complete their first 30 hours of PD (including 15 hours of mentoring/coaching) before the district submits its annual data into the Early Childhood Data System (ECDS) in early summer.

## **Student to Teacher Ratio**

### **1. How do you define “attempt” in connection with teacher-to-student ratios?**

In meeting this high-quality component, districts should implement and document their continuous efforts in maintaining the 1:11 ratio until it is achieved. *TEC §29.167 (d); 19 TAC §102.1003 (h)(i)*

### **2. What qualifications must a teacher aide meet?**

There are certifications for which a teacher aide may apply. In order to apply, the teacher aide must first be employed by a school district. Teacher aides are encouraged to contact their employing school district for application instructions **and to confirm they meet any additional requirements established by the district prior to being issued an educational aide certificate.**

For Educational Aide I, Educational Aide II, and Educational Aide III requirements, please visit [https://tea.texas.gov/Texas\\_Educators/Certification/Initial\\_Certification/Becoming\\_an\\_Educational\\_Aide\\_in\\_Texas/](https://tea.texas.gov/Texas_Educators/Certification/Initial_Certification/Becoming_an_Educational_Aide_in_Texas/)

## **Family Engagement Plans**

### **1. When is the Family Engagement Plan due?**

In implementing the high-quality prekindergarten components, districts must have a written Family Engagement Plan containing the six required components and should be in the process of implementing the plan beginning on September

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1, 2019. The Family Engagement Plan URL must be submitted to TEA within ECDS each year.  
*TEC §29.168; 19 TAC §102.1003 (e)*

## **2. Should the Family Engagement Plan be a district document, or can it be relevant to just one campus?**

Districts must write and implement a Family Engagement Plan associated with the district's prekindergarten program. A district should have one document that covers the whole district. Campus-level modifications within a district may be made to suit the needs of each prekindergarten program. The Family Engagement Plan URL associated with the entire district must be submitted to TEA within ECDS.

## **3. What information must the Family Engagement Plan contain?**

The written Family Engagement Plan must contain information on how the district is achieving and maintaining high levels of family involvement and positive family attitudes toward education through the following six components:

- Facilitating family-to-family support
- Establishing a network of community resources
- Increasing family participation in decision-making
- Equipping families with tools to enhance and extend learning
- Developing staff skills in evidence-based practices that support families in meeting their children's learning benchmarks
- Evaluating family engagement efforts and using evaluations for continuous improvement

*TEC §29.168; 19 TAC §102.1003 (e)*

## **4. How can a district make their Family Engagement Plan available for families of students and community stakeholders?**

The Family Engagement Plan must be made available on the district's or campus's website.

*TEC §29.168; 19 TAC §102.1003 (e)*

## **5. Our district already has a document that addresses how to encourage family involvement. Can we use that document to comply with this high-quality component?**

Often districts/charter schools already have a written document that describes their approach to working with the families of the students they serve. This is especially true if a district receives Title 1 funds or is in partnership with a Head Start grantee. It might be possible to use that existing document as the Family Engagement Plan if:

- the existing document contains the six expected components;
- the activities listed in the document are implemented in the prekindergarten program; and
- the document is available on the web.

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## **Program Evaluation**

### **1. Is there a program evaluation tool that is required for districts to use in meeting this requirement?**

No. TEA has developed the Early Childhood Program Self-Assessment and the Early Childhood Program Self-Assessment Guide to assist district-level personnel in meeting this high-quality requirement, but LEAs are able to determine which program evaluation tool they want to use. At minimum, districts must use student progress monitoring data to evaluate their program. *TEC §29.169 (a); 19 TAC §102.1003 (g)*

### **2. What methods could a district use in giving families the results of the prekindergarten program evaluation?**

There are a variety of ways districts could inform families of the results of the program evaluation, including the following: using the web; sending home a written report; or hosting a meeting to discuss the results. Districts should document how the results of the prekindergarten program evaluation are communicated with families.

### **3. How often should a prekindergarten program evaluation be done?**

Program evaluations should be done annually.