



New Jersey Department of Education  
Division of Early Childhood Education  
Office of Preschool



## Preschool Expansion Aid (PEA) Frequently Asked Questions

*Updated October 18, 2019*

### PEA Funding

**1. Will funding be provided beyond the 2019-2020 school year?**

Funding for preschool education is expected to continue until the program is fully funded as part of the district's regular state aid.

Please note, districts that have received PEA funding will be expected to develop a plan for implementing all elements of high quality across the preschool program in the coming years, including conversion of all half-day preschool slots to full-day preschool slots.

**2. Will the district be funded if it only applies for enhancements?**

No, our focus is expansion of high quality full-day students/seats. Districts who may not have space in-district should consider contracting with Head Start or a private preschool provider.

**3. How should the district show their funding on the budget worksheet?**

Submit the budget projecting for the 2020-2021 school year, including new expansion dollars.

**4. If PEA funds are intended to fund the cost of serving only the general education students in the district's preschool program, how are the preschool children with disabilities funded?**

Preschool students with disabilities are included in the resident enrollment count which is used to determine State aid pursuant to the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA). IDEA funds must be used for the education costs of students with disabilities. Additional information can be found in the September 2011 [guidance](#) issued by the Department (<https://www.state.nj.us/education/finance/fp/af/AccountingClarificationMemorandum.pdf>).

**5. How are IDEA Part B funds used to support expansion?**

IDEA Part B funds must be used only to pay for providing special education and related services to children with disabilities that are in excess of the regular education costs. The excess cost rule (34 C.F.R. §300.202) applies to children in states with publicly funded regular early childhood programs such as New Jersey.

The excess costs of providing a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to children with disabilities, such as costs for special education teachers and administrators; related services providers (speech therapists, psychologists, etc.); materials and supplies for use with children with disabilities; professional development for special education personnel; professional development for regular education teachers who teach children with disabilities; and specialized equipment or devices to assist children with disabilities, may be funded with IDEA Part B funds.

**6. Can we use the PEA funds to cover tuition-based students who are not residents?**

No, eligible students must be residents. However, tuition, equivalent to the county per pupil rate received through PEA, can be accepted for district employees' children contingent upon the district serving their universe of all eligible children.

**7. Is there an income requirement for a child to be eligible?**

No, PEA is open to all age-eligible children who are residents of the district. School districts eligible for PEA have a large number of students receiving free and reduced-price lunch and are expanding their universe of children. School districts should include an explanation of how they will ensure that lower income students will have ample opportunity to participate in the preschool program.

**8. What budget amount should be included on the title page in the Operational Plan?**

The amount of PEA funding that the district is requesting from the state, needs to be pre-populated on the Budget Statement tab of the Budget Planning Workbook. It should match the amount of PEA indicated on the budget worksheet.

**9. Can awarded PEA funds be used for start-up costs?**

Yes, start-up costs are built into the per-pupil rate and are an allowable expense.

**10. Can funding be used for minor facilities improvements?**

Yes, funding can be used for *minor* facilities improvements, such as installing child size fixtures but may not be used for major construction such as building an addition.

**11. Is the funding for full-day programming only?**

The funding is intended to be used to provide a full-day program of a minimum of six hours. However, if half-day classes for 3 and 4-year-old children currently exists, funding will be provided at half the county rate for those children as long as the district is opening full day classrooms.

**12. If we are expanding our general education preschool classrooms, do we have to expand our classrooms for preschoolers with disabilities as well?**

In accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.1(c), the length of the school day and the academic year for students with disabilities, including preschoolers with disabilities, shall be at least as long as that established for nondisabled students. Thus, if an LEA is offering a full-day general education program, children with disabilities must have access to a full-day program either in a general education or special education setting.

**13. Are districts required to provide transportation? Can PEA funds be used for transportation?**

District boards of education that receive State aid for preschool programs according to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-54 shall also provide transportation to preschool students who live "remote" from their school of attendance. The definition of "remote" defines the eligible mileage for preschool students in line with the statute. PEA funds can be used to cover costs of transportation for preschoolers. If the district offers transportation to other students they must offer transportation to preschoolers.

**14. Can PEA funds be used for lease or purchase of a building?**

PEA funds can be used to lease or rent space in a building but cannot be used to purchase a building.

**15. How do districts plan a budget for administering a contract with Head Start or a private provider?**

The county rates include funding for "district-wide costs" (master teachers, nurses, early childhood supervisors, professional development, etc.). Regardless of whether children are served in the district, Head Start, or provider settings, it is permissible for the district to appropriate a share of each of the

applicable per-pupil amounts for those costs, but the costs to provide those services varies widely from district to district. The budget workbook does not automatically pull out the district share, so the district needs to negotiate a rate with the Head Start or a private provider that allows it to effectively run its program.

**16. What are the Funding and Program Codes for Preschool Education Aid (PEA) and is there a different program code a district should use if they have a half-day program. program?** Funds for Preschool Education Expansion Aid (PEEA), plus the 2019-2020 Preschool Expansion Aid funds (PEA) are both recorded in fund 218.

**17. How is the pre-K universe calculated?**

As per 6A:13A-2.3-(d), the universe of eligible preschool children to be served by a school district in the next school year is determined by the following method: 1. For school districts providing universal preschool, the number of first graders reported on the Application for State School Aid (ASSA) is multiplied by two. 2. For school districts providing targeted preschool, the number of first graders reported on the Application for State School Aid (ASSA) is multiplied by two with the result multiplied by the percentage of free and reduced lunch pupils in kindergarten through grade 12.

## Application

**18. Can PEA funds be used for 3-year-olds?**

Yes, PEA funding covers both 3 and 4-year-old children.

**19. In the budget workbook, table 1, how should existing PEA districts enter the number of expansion students from last year?** There are no expansion students for the 2018-19 school year. When completing the PEA budget workbook, Table 1, "2019-2020" Projected Enrollment, existing PEA districts should include the children already budgeted for in their enrollment projections on the ECPA/ELLI PEA line. Any new expansion children should be put on the Expansion PEA line.

**20. Who should fulfill the Master Teacher role?**

Educators fulfilling this position must have the opportunity to observe all classrooms during the educational part of the day and have time to meet with teachers without the children present. The role of the Master Teacher is to coach classroom teachers on curriculum implementation and best practices as well as be able to attend and provide professional development.

Districts can hire a part-time Master Teacher, partner with another district or Head Start to share a Master Teacher or hire a consultant to fill this role.

For more information on the role of the Master Teacher, please visit: [Preschool Guidance and Materials: The Role of the Master Teacher](#)

**21. We would like to hire a PIRT Specialist/Master Teacher to support our expanding program. Any suggestions or recommendations?**

There are several options for districts to consider. First, districts can hire a part-time Master Teacher or PIRT Specialist. Second, one person with appropriate experience can fulfill both roles with a split position. Third, a district may partner with another district or Head Start to share services for either or both positions. Or, a district can hire a consultant(s) to fulfill these roles.

Both the Master Teacher and PIRT Specialist are coaching roles. The role of the Master Teacher is to coach classroom teachers on curriculum implementation and best practices and attend and provide professional development.

The role of the PIRT Specialist is to coach teachers on Social/Emotional Development using the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social and Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children and help plan interventions to support children to be successful in the classroom. To perform their job responsibilities in supporting the classroom teachers, those fulfilling this position must have the opportunity to observe all the classrooms during the educational part of the day and have time to meet with teachers without the children present.

For more information on the role of the Master Teacher, see the question above.

For more information on the role of the Preschool Intervention and Referral Team Specialist, go to [Preschool Guidance and Materials: Planning for Pre-Referral Support, Screening and Referral Services in Preschool](#)

**22. Is it permissible for districts to target and/or give priority to low income families for the program?**

Yes, districts may give priority enrollment to low income families for the free preschool program.

**23. What documentation must be submitted with the application if the district partners with a provider or Head Start?**

The district must submit a letter of intent from the provider or Head Start stating that they intend to partner with the district.

**24. I am considering contracting with a Head Start or private provider. Is there a template for the contract?**

Yes, both can be found on the DOE website: [Head Start Contract](#) or [Provider Program Contract](#)

Note: Districts can search licensed private providers by county on the Licensed Child Care Center Explorer: [Licensed Child Care Center Explorer](#).

**25. Do classrooms in Head Start and Private Providers have to be new/empty classrooms that are brand new?**

No, existing classrooms in a Head Start and/or Private Provider can be considered expansion if they adhere to the PEA requirements (class size of 15, residents that meet age requirement, a P-3 certified teacher, etc.) and meet the square footage requirements.

**26. Can you get a waiver for less than 950 sq. feet?**

Yes, the district can apply for a waiver. The district's application should include a detailed timeline and plan that explains how it will ultimately meet the 950 sq. feet requirement.

**27. We are thinking of hiring a parent liaison. Can you tell me the qualification needed for parent liaison? For example, do they need a bachelor's degree?**

Based on the needs of the district, this position can be filled in a variety of ways. See *N.J.A.C. 6A:13A-4.6* for more details:

[Elements of High-Quality Preschool Programs – New Jersey Administrative Code NJAC 6A:13A](#)

**28. What does comparable compensation mean for salaries and benefits?**

In-district teachers should be compensated with salaries and benefits that are the same as other teachers in the school district. Teachers in provider settings should receive salaries on par with district teachers who have comparable education, credentials, and years of experience. A minimum of medical benefits must also be provided to teachers in provider settings and co-pays are allowable.

**29. On the budget statement, the ECPA/ELLI PEA and Expansion PEA funds pre-populate from Table 1; is that what I must budget for?**

No. Districts must manually enter other funding streams, including PEA carryover, tuition, and funding for children with IEPs. Each column should match the appropriate funding stream total and overall total. If there is a check total message at the end, then something does not match, and it will need to be revised.

**30. I have many “To Be Hired” (TBH) if my district is awarded additional funds. How should I represent that in the budget? What if I am unsure of the salaries?**

All TBH should be included throughout the budget on the appropriate tables (Tables 4, 4a, Schedule A and Budget Statement). The salary and benefits should be estimated based on your district’s salary guides. You should factor into your salary the appropriate years’ experience required of the position you are hiring for (i.e. a Master Teacher requires at a minimum of 3 years’ experience, but an attractive resume may have more).

**31. Where on the budget should I list my out of district placements?**

There is no place on the budget to list your out of district placement, however, you should include them in the Operational Plan under the “Outreach, Recruitment and Enrollment” section.

**32. What do I do if my application gets rejected?**

If your application is not approved by the Department of Education, and you are former ECPA/ELLI you will continue to receive Preschool Education Aid in the amount shown on your most recent FY19 state aid notice. All districts whose application is not approved should continue to build local partnerships to help support the potential student population. They should also consider continued work on their application to strengthen their plans for preschool in the event the FY 2021 budget includes PEA funding for the 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive year.

## **Program Components**

**33. When do the program components have to be in place (i.e. master teacher/coach)? Is it prior to the start of the program or can they be added while the program is being implemented?**

The district application should outline a plan for all required program components to be in place as quickly as possible upon opening new classes. Applications will be reviewed and scored based on the strength of the plan and the ability to meet all program requirements in a timely manner.

**34. Can a teacher with a K-5 or K-8 certification and 2+ years of preschool experience teach preschool?**

Teachers who hold a K-5 or K-8 certification cannot be hired for new preschool classrooms. We are waiting on a response from the office of certification about existing preschool teachers who are teaching preschool under a K-5 or K-8 certification. You can reach out to the certification office on your own if you would like to expedite the response for your individual district. The Customer Service telephone number is (609) 292-2070.

**35. Do new classrooms have to meet the existing high-quality standard of 950 square feet for preschool classrooms?**

Yes, preschool classrooms in both district and provider settings should total 950 sq. ft. Detailed information about space requirements can be found on the NJDOE website in [Guidelines for Preschool Facilities](#).

**36. How is a nap incorporated into the school day?**

Naptime, or quiet time, should be included within the six-hour school day schedule. Please refer to the [naptime guidance document](#) which can be found under Section VI: Support Services.

**37. How do I enroll my program in Grow NJ Kids, New Jersey's Quality Rating and Improvement System?**

Check the website for information about [Grow NJ Kids](#) and about how to enroll.

**38. Are school districts that contract with private providers required to submit additional documentation?**

Yes, once provider contracts are finalized, districts should submit copies of each to DECE via homeroom.

**39. How many preschool children with disabilities should be served in a preschool inclusion classroom?**

The inclusion of preschool children with disabilities should be guided by naturally occurring proportions. Naturally occurring proportions is defined as including the same percentage of children with disabilities in general education classrooms as the percentage of their presence in the general population of the community (Policy Statement on Inclusion, 2015). For example, if 10 percent of the preschool population are children with disabilities, then an average of 10 percent of the children in each classroom have disabilities. Students with disabilities should be dispersed throughout all general education classrooms, with no more than 5 children identified with a disability per class, with a preference for a lesser amount of 2-3 children per class.

**40. We are increasing our general education classroom day from half-day to full day with the new funding. However, because of funding and space constraints, we won't be able to expand from half-day to full-day in our 3 half-day preschool disabled self-contained classrooms until next year. What do we do?**

As discussed in question #12 above, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.1(c), the length of the school day and the academic year for students with disabilities, including preschoolers with disabilities, shall be at least as long as that established for nondisabled students. Thus, if an LEA is offering a full-day general education program, children with disabilities must have access to a full-day program either in a general education or special education setting. LEAs should first consider whether the preschool students with disabilities may be educated, with appropriate supports and services, in a general education setting. As noted by the United States Department of Education 2017 Dear Colleague letter, "[t]he LRE requirements under Part B of the IDEA state a strong preference for educating children with disabilities in regular classes alongside their peers without disabilities." An LEA may use IDEA Part B funds to support the costs associated with placing a student with disabilities in a general education setting through for example, materials and supplies, additional instructional staff, or specialized equipment or devices. LEAs should use State and local funds for the general education costs of students with disabilities.<sup>1</sup> Specific information on funding and accounting for preschool program costs for children with disabilities and preschool general education children is available in a [September 2011 memorandum](#) issued by the Department.

**41. Can students be taken out of the classroom to receive services with a therapist?**

Related services for a student are determined on an individualized basis; however, the NJDOE recommends and supports the use of integrating therapy services into the classroom. The child will learn best through opportunities presented in his/her natural environment which promote immediate generalization. The integrated therapies approach also provides the opportunity for the classroom teacher to learn from the therapist and embed opportunities for practice throughout the daily classroom routines.

## Other Program-Related Questions:

### **42. Does the district need to provide breakfast and lunch to all students, including those attending private provider settings?**

Only if they are eligible to participate in free and reduced lunch.

### **43. Who should serve on a district's ECAC?**

An Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) is defined as an “advisory group of community stakeholders interested in the education and welfare of children in preschool through grade three that is convened by the school district” (N.J.A.C. 6A:13A-1.2). These community stakeholders may include (but are not limited to): “Child care providers, pediatric medical providers, Head Start agencies, child and family advocates, municipal government, health professionals/agencies, social service providers, higher education, philanthropic community, mental health agencies, school district central office, teacher’s union, business community, parents, kindergarten through grade three teacher(s), bilingual education specialists, supervisors and administrative organizations, early intervention/special education groups, community groups such as: NAACP, Urban League, churches, YMCA/YWCA, and The New Jersey Association for the Education of Young Children (NJAEYC)” (NJDOE, Preschool Program Implementation Guidelines, 2015).

### **44. Can a district implement a supplemental curriculum?**

The district must implement their curriculum with fidelity for a minimum of three years before considering adding a supplemental curriculum. Below is the Division of Early Childhood Education guidance for supplemental curriculum. The Division of Early Childhood Education state-funded school district preschool programs must adopt a comprehensive, evidence-based curriculum model that is aligned with the New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards. Districts should be working toward fidelity and full implementation of their chosen curriculum before including additional curricular enhancements. Once implemented, curricular enhancements will become part of the DECE monitoring and assessment of the preschool program.

When a district is choosing a curricular enhancement, they should ensure that the materials are:

- (i) Based on scientific research and include standardized training procedures to support implementation;
- (ii) Aligned with the New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards;
- (iii) Content-rich;
- (iv) Part of a structure that promotes measurable progress toward learning and development; and
- (v) Organized within a scope and sequence of developmental progression that ensures appropriate learning experiences based on how young children learn.

If state-funded school district preschool program administrators are considering curricular enhancements, the Division of Early Childhood Education requires administrators to:

- (i) Ensure that staff receive support to effectively blend enhancement materials with curricula;
- (ii) Provide professional development, feedback and support for effective implementation;
- (iii) Monitor the fidelity of implementation; and
- (iii) Collect evidence that child outcomes improve with the addition of the curricular enhancements.

### **45. Can a school district be a vendor for a private provider's food program?**

Yes, school districts can be a vendor. Please contact:

New Jersey Department of Agriculture Division of Food & Nutrition Child

and Adult Care Food Program  
Stephanie Sutton-Page, State Coordinator 22  
South Clinton Avenue  
Building 4, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Trenton,  
NJ 08609-1212  
[Stephanie.Sutton-Page@ag.nj.gov](mailto:Stephanie.Sutton-Page@ag.nj.gov)  
P.O. Box 334  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0334  
PH: 609-984-1250  
FX: 609-984-0878

**46. Do private providers have CDS codes for SIS? Who claims students who are attending private providers?**

CDS codes are needed for students in private providers. To get the codes, a district must call or email NJ SMART help desk. (Questions about NJ SMART can be directed to the NJ SMART Help Desk by calling (800) 254-0295 or e-mailing [NJSMART@pcgus.com](mailto:NJSMART@pcgus.com).) To request a code, inform the NJ SMART office that the district is contracting with a preschool provider. State the name of the district and name of contracting private provider. Then the district will receive CDS code for the provider. The district is responsible for reporting students.

**47. Do districts need to reserve slots for homeless children and are they held to the same rules as the upper grades (i.e. if they don't have space then send them to a neighboring district, and be charged tuition)?**

Districts do not have to reserve slots for homeless children; however, they should prioritize enrollment when they find out a child is homeless. Districts do not have to enroll the child if the program is full. Nor do they have to send them to another program. They should refer them to a Head Start program who has requirements around serving homeless children.

**48. Offering unemployment**

Unemployment is not an option for those that are in a contractual work agreement. Example: Although teachers are 10-month employees, they have signed a contract which includes their salary and that their employment is for 10-months. The contract usually indicates the dates Sept. 7 through June 30 therefore, they are not entitled to collect unemployment for the two months they are not working.

If the provider is going to offer the teacher employment for the following school year, they can have the teacher sign the contract before the June 30<sup>th</sup> date. Also, you can include the fact that they are collecting their salary over a 10-month period versus the 12-month period.

**49. Does a district have flexibility with start times? Do private provider school hours have to be the same as the school district? Can they just be the same number of hours (6)?**

Yes, there is flexibility if it's a 6-hour day. Provider hours do not have to be exact but should be closely aligned.

**50. Is an Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) required and what would a suggested membership roster look like?**

A preschool through grade three early childhood advisory council (ECAC) is recommended to review preschool program implementation and to support transition as children move from preschool to grade three, *N.J.A.C.6A:13A-4.6(c)*. The membership of the council must consist of stakeholders in the community, as well as parents, contracting private providers and the local Head Start agency, if applicable, with new representation added as needed, *N.J.A.C.6A:13A-4.6(c)1*.