

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Consent Item
April 1, 2020

SUBJECT: Approval of Amendment to Rules 6M-4.740 and 6M-4.741 related to School Readiness Program Assessment and Threshold Requirements.

PROPOSED BOARD ACTION

For Approval

AUTHORITY FOR STATE BOARD ACTION

Section 1001.213(2), Florida Statutes

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Early Learning (OEL) administers federal and state child care funds and partners with 30 local early learning coalitions to deliver comprehensive early learning services statewide. The office oversees three programs—the School Readiness Program, the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program, and Child Care Resource and Referral services. OEL is required to submit its proposed rules to the State Board of Education for approval.

OEL is required to comply with lead agency responsibilities in the administration of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Trust Fund which funds the School Readiness Program. This includes the implementation of a high-quality early learning program which includes a system focused on improving the educational quality of child care services delivered by School Readiness program providers.

Beginning in 2014 through 2018, School Readiness child care providers participated in a voluntary pilot project to determine the quality of teacher-child interactions in their classrooms. This project utilized a program assessment tool, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), to record and score teacher and child interactions on a 1 – 7-point scale. In addition to financial incentives, participating providers received various types of supports to improve the provider quality such as coaching, free or low-cost professional development classes, and training.

The success of this project attributed to the 2018 passage of Representative Erin Grall's House Bill 1091 that required the Office of Early Learning to "adopt a program assessment for school readiness program providers that measures the quality of teacher-child interactions." These requirements are codified at Section 1002.82(2)(n), F.S., which requires OEL to also establish quality measures including a minimum contract threshold and program improvement through an improvement plan, participation requirements, frequency and exceptions.

Rule 6M-4.740, F.A.C., establishes the program assessment requirements and Rule 6M-4.741, F.A.C., establishes the required thresholds to be eligible for a SR contract with early learning coalitions and quality improvement plans. Notable is that Rule 6M-4.740(3), F.A.C., includes exemptions for participating in the required annual program assessment. Providers must not have specific health and safety violations and meet one of the following:

- Have 20-percent or less of all SR child care slots filled for child care centers or with two or less SR child care slots filled for family child care centers.
- Offer only overnight or school-age SR child care services.

The initial rules were adopted in November 2018 and set the threshold at 2.51, a minimally acceptable score, for the 2019-20 program year. The impact was that 11 providers did not meet the minimum threshold and were ineligible to offer the SR program. Providers who earned scores of 2.51 – 2.99 were required to have a quality improvement plan. The rule also includes the provision that early learning coalitions can waive the contract minimum threshold in certain circumstances. To date, no such waivers have been issued. The total number of providers in each CLASS score range is below.

Total Number of Providers in Each CLASS Score Range for 2019-20

CLASS® Composite Score	Number of Providers	Percent of Total Providers
0.00 – 2.50	11	.04%
2.51 – 2.99	95	2%
3.00 – 3.49	297	7%
3.50 – 3.99	634	15%
4.00 - 4.99	2,085	51%
5.00 - 5.99	908	22%
6.00 - 7.00	88	2%
Total	4,118	100%

Note: For 2019-20, approximately 45-percent or 3,343 of the total 7,461 SR providers were exempt from the annual program assessment.

Rule 6M-4.740 is amended to further clarify program assessment requirements which includes standards to qualify for an exemption to program requirements, guidelines for quality improvement and the frequency of program assessments that are administered. Rule 6M-4.741 is amended to raise the bar in a two-step, two-year (2020-21 and 2021-22), process by increasing the minimum threshold for contracting and the minimum quality improvement threshold.

For the 2020-21 program year, providers must earn a score of 3.50 or above or meet one of the exceptions as described above. Providers earning scores within 3.50 - 3.99 will be required to have a quality improvement plan. A provision was also included that would allow providers scoring in a certain range, but below the contract threshold, to continue to be eligible for a SR contract for 2020-21 if they also agreed to participate in a quality improvement plan. To date, approximately 43-percent of the total program assessments have been conducted and reported for the 2020-21 contract period. These data are below.

Total Number of Providers in Each CLASS Score Range for 2020-21

CLASS® Composite Score	Number of Providers	Percent of Total Providers
0.00 – 2.50	9	0.51%
2.51 – 2.99	31	2%
3.00 – 3.49	114	6%
3.50 – 3.99	283	16%
4.00 - 4.99	973	55%
5.00 - 5.99	334	19%
6.00 - 7.00	15	1%
Total	1,759	100%

Based on the above, 40 or 2.5-percent of SR providers would be ineligible to offer these services in 2020-21 and 114 or 6-percent would be eligible if they agreed to participate in quality improvement activities.

For the 2021-22 program year, providers must earn a score of 4.00 to meet the minimum threshold for contracting. A summary of the minimum threshold scores and those requiring a quality improvement plan for 2019-20 through 2021-22 program years is listed below.

Program Year	Minimum Threshold for Contracting	Required Quality Improvement Plan
2019-20	2.50	2.51-2.99
2020-21	3.50*	3.51-3.99*
2021-22	4.00	NA

*Providers scoring 3.00 - 3.50 are eligible for a SR contract if agree to participate in quality improvement plan activities.

For the providers that would require a Quality Improvement Plan for the 2020-21 program year, there are supports available for professional learning and growth to improve the quality of teacher: child interactions.

The handbook, Form OEL-SR 740 is amended to conform to amendments made in Rule 6M-4.740 as well as add clarification to areas determined necessary from questions received after implementation of the initial rule.

Supporting Documentation Included: Proposed Rules 6M-4.740 and 6M-4.741, F.A.C. Form OEL-SR 740 Program Assessment Requirements Handbook (February 2020); and School Readiness Program Assessment Flyer

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