

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Consent Item
March 17, 2021

SUBJECT: Approval of Amendment to Rules 6M-4.740, Program Assessment Requirements for the School Readiness Program and 6M-4.741, Program Assessment Threshold Requirements for the School Readiness Program

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. 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.

Section 1002.82(2)(n), Florida Statutes, enacted in 2018, requires OEL to establish by rule a program assessment for school readiness providers that measures the quality of teacher-child interactions and includes a minimum contract threshold and program improvement, participation requirements, frequency and exceptions. The program assessment tool, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), is used 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.

Rule 6M-4.740, F.A.C., establishes the program assessment requirements. 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.

Rule 6M-4.741, F.A.C., establishes the required minimum thresholds to be eligible for a SR contract with early learning coalitions and quality improvement plans. For the 2019-20 program year, the contract minimum threshold was set at 2.51, a minimally acceptable score. 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.

Rule 6M-4.741, F.A.C., was amended in May 2020 to raise the bar in a two-step, two-year process by increasing the minimum threshold for contracting to 3.50 for 2020-21 and to 4.00 for 2021-22. The minimum quality improvement thresholds were also raised accordingly.

Given the state of emergency caused by COVID-19, the Commissioner of Education, in March 2020, cancelled all program assessments for the remainder of 2020-21 through DOE 2020-EO-01. Providers that already had a program assessment and earned the 2020-21 minimum threshold of 3.50 were eligible for a new contract for 2020-21. Providers that did not receive a program assessment due to the pandemic, were eligible to extend the 2019-20 contract to provide services for 2020-21.

Given the continuing impact of COVID-19 and its impact on early learning child care providers and the ability of the early learning coalitions to conduct these in-person observations, Rule 6M-4.741, F.A.C., is amended to allow an additional year for increasing threshold requirements

Additionally, Rule 6M-4.740, F.A.C., is amended to allow for program assessment scores conducted within the last three years to be used for contract eligibility purposes to offset COVID-19's impact on in person CLASS observations. Language is added to clarify that a Quality Improvement Plan period may extend beyond the contract year depending on its start date and is applied for purposes of executing a new contract. OEL removed obsolete language and made other clarifying edits and minor corrections throughout. The handbook, Form OEL-SR 740 is amended to align with the timeframes in Rule 6M-4.740, F.A.C. The handbook is further amended to require submission of teacher credentials in the Quality Performance System.

A summary of the required minimum thresholds and their impact is 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	3.50	3.51-3.99
2022-23	4.00	NA

*Due to COVID-19, providers were granted either a contract extension, if they did not have an assessment conducted or a new contract if a score of 3.50 or higher was earned.

CLASS Data for 2020-21 & 2021-22 Contracts

CLASS Score	2019-20 Number of Providers Statewide	2019-20 Percent of Providers Statewide	2020-21 & 2021-22 Number of Providers Statewide	2020-21 & 2021-22 Percent of Providers Statewide
2.51-2.99	83	2%	16	<1%
3.0-3.49	304	7%	114	3%
3.5-3.99	648	14%	317	10%
4.0-4.99	2,286	51%	1,197	37%
5.0-5.99	1,060	24%	1,485	48%
6.0-7.0	97	2%	119	4%
Grand Total	4,478		3,248	

Source: From Quality Performance System (QPS) as of June 30, 2019 and as of January 27, 2021.

*Assessments were conducted in 2019-20 and 2020-21. COVID-19 related Executive Order (DOE EO 2020-01) cancelled assessments for the remainder of the 2019-20 fiscal year; therefore, not all SR providers had an assessment for the 2020-21 contract year.

Supporting Documentation Included: Proposed Rules 6M-4.740 and 6M-4.741, F.A.C.; Form OEL-SR 740, Program Assessment Requirements Handbook (2021)

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