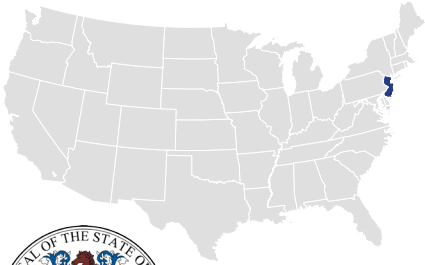


PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS 2016 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

New Jersey





U.S. Department of Education PDG Annual Performance Report Executive Summary

Based on ED 524B OMB No. 1894-0003 Exp. 06/30/2017

Grantee State: NJ

PR/Award #: S419B50020

You are required to submit an Executive Summary of up to 3000 words with your Annual Performance Report. This summary should relate to your approved application and summarize the goals and objectives that have been achieved under your grant, what you learned, and any evaluation results. Describe any unanticipated outcomes or benefits from your project and any barriers that you may have encountered. If there have been any changes to the project from the approved application, those should be explained as well.

The New Jersey Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Education and Family Engagement (DECE), has been highly successful in implementing high-quality preschool programs through a combination of state and now, federal funding from the Preschool Expansion Grant. New Jersey oversees the operation of public preschool programs in 147 local school districts throughout the state, representing over 50,000 preschoolers served. Through funding to school districts, preschool programs are now operating in a variety of settings including public schools, private community providers and Head Start programs. The DECE works collaboratively with other Department of Education offices (Special Education, Title One, Homeless and Migrant Education) as well as a variety of other state agencies including the Departments of Human Services (Division of Family Development), Children and Families (Offices of Licensing, Child Protection and Permanency, and Family and Community Partnerships), and Health (Office of Early Intervention), providing maximum supports for early learning and integration of services for children and families.

New Jersey's Preschool Expansion Grant builds on the strength of its well-developed high-quality early childhood education infrastructure. The addition of preschool expansion funds to the already far-reaching and comprehensive early learning system in New Jersey provided an opportunity for outreach to 16 additional school districts and their local communities. In year two of the grant (2016) state-wide enrollment targets were exceeded, reaching a total of 1887 additional high-need four-year-olds in new (1120) and improved (767) slots. All high-quality components continue to be monitored by dedicated staff who work closely with individual school districts for successful implementation. Through funding from the Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant, New Jersey further developed its robust tiered quality rating and improvement system, Grow NJ Kids, which is now being used to support quality improvements throughout the early learning community, including in the preschool expansion districts and locally contracted private providers. Grow NJ Kids, along with other required high-quality elements, provides a framework for program implementation, engagement of families, workforce development, and program administration.

Below can be found highlights and accomplishments of year two (2016) implementation.

Highlights and Accomplishments

- 1. Measurable quality improvements** - In the fall of 2015, baseline measurements of classroom quality were conducted by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) with the use of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale - Third Edition (ECERS-3). Assessments were completed in a total of 122 classes over 17 (original) school districts, measuring classroom quality in all four-year-old and mixed-age general education/inclusion classes. A study of those same classrooms was conducted again in the spring of 2016 in order to gauge quality improvements over the first year of grant implementation. The results of the spring 2016 study show measurable quality improvements in overall averages and ranges for the full sample of classrooms. The average total score of all districts was 3.58 in the fall, increasing to 4.27 (on a 7-point scale) in the spring, showing a significant change for the first year of program implementation. Statewide scores improved over all subscales (see below). These results are a testament to the intensive supports and interventions that districts received from DECE staff.

Average scores by ECERS-3 subscale and overall

Space and Furnishings **Fall '15 = 3.54** **Spring '16 = 4.06**

This subscale addresses the areas of indoor and outdoor space, room arrangement, organization, display, furnishings and equipment.

Personal Care Routines **Fall '15 = 3.24** **Spring '16 = 4.03**

This subscale addresses practices around daily routines such as meals and toileting as well as health and safety practices.

Language and Literacy **Fall '15 = 3.91** **Spring '16 = 4.56**

This area addresses the classroom's formal and informal communication, language and vocabulary expansion opportunities, and use of books and attention to print.

Learning **Fall '15 = 2.98** **Spring '16 = 3.71**

This subscale looks at the learning opportunities in each of the areas of the classroom including fine motor, art, music/movement, blocks, sand/water, dramatic play, nature/science, math/number materials and activities, use of technology, and diversity.

Interaction **Fall '15 = 4.49** **Spring '16 = 5.15**

This area addresses supervision of children, discipline, staff-child interactions, individualized teaching and learning, and interactions among children.

Program Structure **Fall '15 = 4.15** **Spring '16 = 5.14**

This area addresses classroom operations and schedule, including groupings, transitions and flexibility.

Overall Average Score **Fall '15 = 3.58** **Spring '16 = 4.27**

2. Implementation of the New Jersey Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) - In 2016, the first cohort of eight preschool expansion districts was enrolled in the New Jersey Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) and supporting Kindergarten Seminar. A total of 96 teachers and administrators from the eight districts participated in three-day, in-person trainings in Teaching Strategies GOLD (GOLD), a rigorous and developmentally appropriate performance-based assessment instrument. Thirteen three-day KEA sessions were conducted in three regions of the state.

During the first seven weeks of kindergarten, teachers collected evidence of children's performance across three of the nine GOLD domains including social-emotional, literacy, and mathematics, for the purpose of assigning a rating along a developmental continuum. Once teachers made ratings for each child at the end of the seven-week period, district-level teachers and administrators were able to view ratings and data of individual children, as well as aggregate ratings within each learning domain. Technical assistance visits were made by Teaching Strategies and DECE staff early in the school year, as well as subsequent visits at the request of individual districts.

As a strategy to support best practices in the kindergarten year, teachers participating in KEA also attend the Kindergarten Seminar, which is a five-day regional series that began in October 2016 and ends in May 2017. This exciting and novel approach to supporting KEA implementation has revolved around best practices (e.g., curricular, whole-child learning, and appropriate environments) in order to support educators implementing this assessment system effectively and with fidelity. The seminars provide participants an introduction to key features of New Jersey's Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines and the KEA initiative. The series includes sessions to support teachers in organizing classroom environments and schedules, implementing developmentally appropriate practices, applying effective teaching strategies that support children's development and learning, incorporating the New Jersey Student Learning Standards and weaving in the GOLD assessment cycle throughout. Finally, all participants will use the instrument throughout the kindergarten year as a formative assessment tool.

3. New Jersey visit by US Secretary of Education, John King - In June 2016, New Jersey was honored to host the US Secretary of Education, John King. Secretary King and his staff visited the Clifton Early Learner Academy, Clifton, NJ in order to promote pay equity for preschool teachers and showcase the early successes of the Preschool Expansion Grant. During the visit, Secretary King visited a preschool classroom (run in collaboration with the local Head Start), actively engaged with the excited children and then conducted a live interview with the teacher. In advance of the meeting, a video crew from the US Department of Education

(USDOE) spent a day with the preschool teacher and developed a video “Spend the Day with PreK” which was subsequently posted to the USDOE Facebook page and Youtube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lWRmsr4D_yc&feature=youtu.be) and viewed by over 2.6 million people. The event provided an opportunity for New Jersey to highlight the successful growth of high-quality preschool programs made possible through the Preschool Expansion Grant.

- 4. Participation in the Pyramid Equity Project** - In 2016, one New Jersey preschool expansion district (Clifton, NJ) was selected to work with national experts to implement the enhanced Pyramid Model and evaluate the effects on children's social-emotional and behavioral health, expulsion and suspension, and racial/ethnic and ability-based disparities in each of these areas. The Clifton Early Learner Academy, working with the Pyramid Equity Project, is receiving monthly training and technical assistance support from national experts in Pyramid Model implementation and culturally responsive practices. When the work with the district is complete (June 2018), the Clifton site will serve as a national model addressing disproportionate discipline practices in early childhood programs.

Program activities include:

- Training in implicit bias and culturally responsive practices;
- Training and support of the implementation leadership team;
- Training and support in the use of Practice-Based Coaching by classroom coaches;
- Reliability training in the use of the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool;
- Training in data tools and data decision-making related to implementation and outcomes;
- Support for the implementation of a behavior incident tracking system that includes a mechanism for making decisions related to disproportionate discipline practices.

Throughout the second year, New Jersey continued to make good progress in addressing some of the challenges faced in the first year of implementation, including the development of professional learning opportunities for program administrators and the improvement of inclusion rates across districts. Staff continue to customize technical assistance to meet the needs of individual districts, planning on-site meetings with school administrators and classroom support and coaching as needed. Efforts to support implementation of the newest component of the grant, the KEA, will be ongoing as working across grade levels in the elementary school setting has presented some new challenges. Kindergarten teachers are, generally, not under the supervision of the preschool administrators so planning, execution, and supervision of KEA implementation requires an additional level of involvement and support from other district administrators. Individualized supports to-date have included such things as phone correspondence and face-to-face meetings with preschool supervisors, other district administrators (principals, elementary and curriculum supervisors, etc.) and DECE staff

with both preschool and Kindergarten areas of specialization. In this way, each district is supported in determining the best strategies for successful participation and implementation of all KEA components. DECE staff will continue to tailor technical assistance to each district to provide maximum support for achievement of positive outcomes for Kindergarten children.



U.S. Department of Education
PDG Annual Performance Report
Grant Status Form
Explanation of Progress (524B Section A)

Based on ED 524B OMB No. 1894-0003 Exp. 06/30/2017

Grantee State: NJ

PR/Award #: S419B50020

Section A: Performance Objectives Information and Related Performance Measures Data (narrative)

1. Project Objective

1(a) GPRA Performance Measure: The number and percentage of Eligible Children served in High-Quality Preschool Programs funded by the grant. Describe the State's progress in meeting this Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) measure based on enrollment of Eligible Children in High-Quality Preschool Programs funded by the grant as of December 1, 2016.

In 2016, New Jersey successfully enrolled 1120 new children into preschool classrooms and improved preschool services and conditions for an additional 767 children. Throughout the spring and summer of 2016, DECE completed the following activities in an effort to increase enrollment of eligible children into high-quality preschool programs:

- Supported districts in locating appropriate classroom space to serve additional preschool children, either in-district or in private provider locations;
- Provided resources and support to all districts in developing Four-Year Preschool Program Plan updates to expand capacity and quality across all districts;
- Worked with districts to develop recruitment and marketing strategies, determine family eligibility, and enroll eligible children;
- Provided guidance on budgeting and planning for the start of the new school year.

Districts completed the following activities in support of increasing enrollment of eligible children:

- Developed Four-Year Preschool Program Plans and budgets to expand capacity;
- Located and secured space for new classrooms and developed contracts with private providers as needed;
- Purchased materials and equipment to prepare classrooms for the opening of the school year;
- Developed or expanded marketing and recruitment strategies to locate typically hard-to-reach populations;
- Began outreach to families in an effort to maximize enrollment of both general education and special education students into grant-funded classrooms.

Program activities are monitored closely by the project director and district liaisons who are in regular contact with preschool supervisors and fiscal specialists to gauge progress on all project components, including enrollment of children and inclusion of children with special needs. Monthly enrollment reports are required of all districts until enrollment targets are met and individualized strategies were shared with districts to maximize recruitment of new children from hard-to-reach families. Enrollment numbers are also tracked through the state's data collection system, Application for State School Aid (ASSA), which is used to gather resident and non-resident pupil counts. Regular check-ins with supervisors to determine areas of need and meetings amongst district liaisons ensure that resources are shared and maximum supports are in place.

Please describe, as required in Program Requirement (k)(2) in the Notice Inviting Applicants (NIA), how the State established policies and procedures that ensure that the percentage of Eligible Children with disabilities served by the High-Quality Preschool Programs is not less than either the percentage of four-year-old children served statewide through part B, section 619 of IDEA (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.), or the current national average, whichever is greater.

Note: The current national percentage of four year-old-children receiving services through part B, section 619 of IDEA is 6.4%. Source: 2012 IDEA Part B Child Count (www.ideadata.org). States should include detailed information on ALL structural elements.

An important component of our High-Quality State Preschool Program is the inclusion of preschool children with disabilities in general education settings. We know that a general education preschool classroom is an optimal environment to support children with disabilities' individual needs, because of the wide range of skills, interests, and abilities typical of this age group. We are also committed to ensuring that adaptations and supports for preschoolers with disabilities are carried out in the context of the curriculum's daily activities, interactions and routines.

New Jersey preschool expansion grant districts are required to include children with disabilities in general education to the maximum extent possible. DECE recommends that districts plan enrollment of children in general education classrooms to mirror the general population, which would be 1-2 children with special needs in a class of 15 children. Guidance for inclusion of children with special needs can be found in the New Jersey Administrative Code NJAC 6A:13A, the Self-Assessment Validation System (SAVS) and the Preschool Program Implementation Guidelines. Required elements for inclusion, as noted in the guidelines are as follows:

- Administrative supports are in place that facilitate inclusion;
- Children with special needs are served in the least restrictive environments with Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals addressed in the context of the curriculum and daily activities;
- Children with special needs are served in general education classrooms to the maximum extent possible;
- The proportion of children with and without special needs reflects that of the general

population;

- The IEP team includes the teacher, parent, child study team member, and special education personnel; and
- Push-in and pull-out services are not used or are used on a limited basis.

All high-quality elements are required in the inclusion classrooms as noted in question 2, below. In the 2016-2017 school year, the overall expansion district average inclusion rate is 14%. While this is higher than the national average, there is still much work to be done in many of the expansion districts. Individual percentages of inclusion per subgrantee can be found in the APR Data Workbook, Table A(3)(c). This table indicates a very wide range of inclusion rates amongst the expansion districts.

New Jersey's successful rates of inclusion are based, in large part, on the history of our state-funded preschool programs. During the many years that state programs have been in place, inclusion of preschool children with special needs has been a high priority. State-funded districts who are serving less than 50% of their children with special needs in general education settings are required to make a plan to improve rates, with a target rate of 50% inclusion. Individual districts are provided support by DECE staff in collaboration with our colleagues in the Office of Special Education, including on-site visits to assess classrooms and provide technical assistance and meeting with school administrators to troubleshoot issues that arise. New Jersey Department of Education also provides professional development on preschool inclusion best practices, providing the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and developing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Districts are also required to use the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence of Infants and Young Children to implement strategies for preschool children with behavior challenges, resulting in decreases in the number of referrals to child study teams for special education services.

While progress has been made to include children with special needs in general education classrooms, improved numbers of inclusion students continues to be slow in several districts. In many districts, the historical model has been to serve preschool children with special needs in self-contained classes. When a review indicates that targets are not being met, the DECE district liaisons, along with our colleagues from the Office of Special Education work closely with special education and early childhood staff from the school district to develop an improvement plan. DECE district liaisons provide individualized support and coaching to increase levels of inclusion. The Office of Special Education provides an additional level of technical assistance and offers professional development to support inclusion.

Describe the State's progress in increasing the number and percentage of Eligible Children served in High-Quality Preschool Programs funded by the grant.

In 2016, subgrantees were successful in enrolling a total of 1,120 children into new slots and 767 in improved slots, totaling 1,887. The state's experience and high level of expertise in developing new preschool programs laid the groundwork for ease of transition into the work of the grant. The preschool expansion programs follow already established high-quality standards as outlined in the Elements of High Quality Preschool Programs, New Jersey Administrative Code NJAC 6A:13A (Code) written as a result of the Abbott decision. Also in place are program standards including NJ Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards, NJ Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines, and NJ First through Third Grade Implementation Guidelines.

In the spring of 2016, one school district made a decision not to continue participating as a subgrantee for the remaining three years of the grant. In consultation with our project officer, a decision was made to reallocate the school district's 93 slots to eliminate the need to recruit and orient another subgrantee into the project. The DECE moved quickly to redistribute the slots in order to reach projected targets for year two. All 16 remaining school districts were invited to request additional slots and were required to submit justification noting whether they were at full enrollment and how many additional children they would be able to accommodate. The slots were distributed to five selected school districts, providing an opportunity for them to expand their program to serve additional high-need four-year olds. The speedy resolution of this issue resulted in a successful and seamless transfer of slots and associated funding to serve more preschool children in their communities.

All Preschool Expansion grant districts are enrolled in New Jersey's tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System, Grow NJ Kids (GNJK). In 2016, all programs completed their self-assessment (the first step in GNJK) and are at various levels of having completed Quality Improvement Plans, gathering documentation, and applying for enhancement grants to support quality improvements.

The New Jersey State Preschool Program coordinates services and supports to school districts through collaborations with Head Start and the Office of Special Education. In this way resources are shared and maximized to provide the greatest benefit and limit duplication of services. The Head Start state collaboration director is located at the NJ Department of Education (NJDOE) which allows for ongoing dialogue and trouble-shooting of any issues that arise as districts develop partnerships with their local Head Start programs. The DECE works closely with the Office of Special Education to provide supports to districts to increase the number of children with special needs that are included in preschool general education classrooms.

Progress in establishing and maintaining high-quality programs within our subgrantee school districts is monitored closely with regular reporting requirements (enrollment, expenditures), personal, face-to-face contact with all districts, and bi-monthly meetings with supervisors to share information and review program requirements.

1(b) GPRA Performance Measure: The number and percentage of children served overall in the State Preschool Program. Please describe any increases or decreases in this GPRA measure based on fall enrollment in the State Preschool Program for the 2016-17 school year.

New Jersey State preschool programs are currently serving a total of 49,653 preschool children. The breakdown of children by program is as follows: 35 Former Abbott districts (fully-funded) serve 43,326 children (19,998 three-year-olds and 23,328 four-year-olds) and 96 Preschool Expansion Aid (PEA) districts (partially-funded) serve 6327 children (442 three-year-olds and 5885 four-year-olds). Including new grant-funded slots, a total of 69% of high-need four-year-olds are being served statewide. The percentage of four-year-olds being served has decreased slightly due to the recommended implementation of smaller class sizes (from 18 per class to 15 per class) in the districts that are serving both State- and grant-funded children.

To support high quality early childhood programs, the DECE:

- Develops and aligns teaching, learning, and program standards and guidance based on current research on early childhood education;
- Develops resources to facilitate the implementation of each component of high-quality preschool programs;
- Tracks and adjusts progress through a continuous evaluation and improvement cycle; and
- Provides statewide, regional and on-site support to key staff in state-funded schools and districts.

Currently, the DECE supports preschool programs in 147 school districts in a mixed delivery system of private providers, Head Start and school districts (former Abbott, PEA, and Preschool Expansion Grant districts). The DECE reviews preschool budgets to guide the use of funding for former Abbott and PEA districts. The division also oversees the work of the state advisory council, the NJ Council for Young Children, which aligns and coordinates early childhood services across the state, and houses the Head Start Collaboration director, in order to coordinate the work of school districts' contracting and collaborating with Head Start.

Quality of the program is measured at five levels:

Child level

- Children are screened upon entry to the program to assess development and to help determine if additional supports may be needed; their progress in the classroom is tracked using performance-based assessments that help teachers adjust instruction based on the various developmental stages of children in the group.

Classroom level

- Teachers, coaches and building administrators/provider directors use tools to evaluate classroom practices, interactions, activities (e.g. Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Third Edition (ECERS-3); Supports for Early Literacy Assessment (SELA); Preschool Rating Instrument for Science and Mathematics (PRISM); and curriculum-specific fidelity tools)

Site/Program level

- Beginning in 2015, providers and schools in the State Preschool Program began participating in GNJK. Roll-out has continued across the state to continue enrolling new participants across all program types. To promote high quality programs for infants and toddlers, child care providers in each community serving high need infants and toddlers are encouraged to participate in GNJK.

District level

School districts assess the implementation of each program component through the use of GNJK or:

- A self-assessment (with a validation component), the Self-Assessment Validation System (SAVS), which measures the implementation of each component of the Preschool Program Implementation Guidelines and Code.
- Summaries of both classroom evaluations and child performance to inform areas of need and professional development planning.

State level

Classroom quality and child progress are carefully monitored through:

- Aggregate scores and ratings from GNJK.
- University-conducted structured evaluations of classroom quality in a random sample of classrooms every year.
- University-conducted tracking of child outcomes over time.
- Summaries and analysis of district-reported SAVS data, classroom evaluations and child performance.
- Analysis of number of children served, rates of inclusion, and teacher qualifications.
- Audits of fiscal practices.

1(c) GPRA Performance Measure: The number and percentage of children in the High-Need Communities served by the grant that are ready for kindergarten as determined by the State's Kindergarten Entry Assessment or, if the State does not yet have a Kindergarten Entry Assessment, other valid and reliable means of determining school readiness.

In the Year 2 APR, grantees will provide disaggregated data on the school readiness of the children served by the grant. This may include information collected about the children served by the grant at the end of their 2015-16 preschool year or in their 2016-17 kindergarten year. States may provide data from a sample of children (e.g., a sample being used for any evaluation).

In the Year 2 APR, grantees must describe their progress towards identifying the measures, methods, and data on the school readiness of children served by the Preschool Development Grant. In the narrative below provide the following information:

- The name of the assessment tool(s) and the Essential Domains of School Readiness measured;
- When the assessment tool(s) is/are given (e.g., in preschool and/or kindergarten);
- Whether the assessment is mandated by the State, and for which children;
- How long the State has been using the assessment tool(s);
- Whether the assessment tool(s) is/are implemented throughout the High-Need Community and/or Statewide;
- Whether the State provides or will provide training for local staff administering the assessment. If so, describe the requirements including processes to ensure continued reliability in the administration of the measure;
- If school readiness data is reported to the State, describe when and how data are reported.

Also, please describe, if applicable:

- The State's definition of "school readiness;"
- Disaggregated information about children's school readiness on individual domains or subsets of the measure;
- School readiness data for children disaggregated by subgroup (e.g., students who are American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian, not Pacific Islander; Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander; Black or African American; Hispanic/Latino; White, not Hispanic; two or more races; with disabilities; English learners; and from any other subgroups the state determines appropriate; and
- How the State will continue to make progress in meeting this GPRA measure.

The New Jersey Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) is part of a larger data system, the New Jersey Standards Measurement and Resource for Teaching (NJ SMART). NJ SMART is a comprehensive statewide longitudinal data system that serves multiple purposes: staff/student identification, data warehousing, data reporting, and analytics. The KEA is a performance based assessment, used primarily to inform instruction and as one data point in assessing preschool program efficacy.

Assessments and Instruments

The name of the assessment tool(s) and the Essential Domains of School Readiness measured;
Teaching Strategies GOLD® (TS GOLD®)

The key to a seamless transition from the various early learning environments from which children come into the K-12 public school system is in understanding the developmental stage and level of readiness of children at the intersection point of kindergarten entry. We chose a Kindergarten Entry

Assessment (KEA) that met two main objectives: 1) *To understand children's academic and social development at school entry to inform instruction, and 2) To serve as one data point in evaluating preschool program efficacy.* Teachers collect data about children in the first seven weeks of school and use the information to understand children's readiness. Thresholds are based on national norms and norms from our pilot. The numbers below describe the cumulative raw scores for each domain that a child who is “ready” for kindergarten should possess. TS GOLD® is being used with children entering kindergarten.

Teaching Strategies has established kindergarten readiness points for all six areas of development and learning: Social Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive (Approaches to Learning), Literacy, and Mathematics. The kindergarten readiness point is intended to be used in the fall for the New Jersey Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA).

<u>Area</u>	<u>Raw Score for K GOLD® Readiness</u>
Social Emotional	47
Physical	30
Cognitive (Approaches to Learning)	49
Literacy	41
Mathematics	35

Whether the assessment is mandated by the State, and for which children;

The KEA is voluntary and funded. School districts can choose to administer the tool. However, the preschool expansion grant school districts are required to begin using the KEA during either the 2016-2017 or 2017-2018 school year.

When the assessment tool(s) is/are given (e.g., in preschool and/or kindergarten);

The tool is administered in kindergarten. Many school districts also use the TS GOLD® assessment system in their preschool programs.

How long the State has been using the assessment tool(s);

New Jersey began a pilot of the KEA starting in September of 2013, and continues to expand enrollment each year. As of June 2016, the DOE has trained 854 teachers and 302 district level administrators across 91 districts in TS GOLD® covering 15,267 children. TS GOLD® is a rigorous and appropriate performance-based assessment instrument. During the first seven weeks of kindergarten, teachers collect evidence of children's performance across three of the nine TS GOLD® domains including social emotional, literacy, and mathematics, for the purpose of assigning a rating along a developmental continuum. Teachers who are in year two of implementation collect evidence on two additional TS GOLD® domains including, cognitive and language. Once teachers make ratings for each child at the end of the seven-week period, district-level teachers and administrators are able to view ratings and data of individual children, as well as aggregate ratings within each learning domain. The DECE TS GOLD® administrators have access so that they can generate aggregated

outcome reports; they cannot generate any child-level reports or access child-level data. One DECE TS GOLD® Manager has access to individual teacher accounts, with child-level data, only when an administrator or teacher submits a written request for assistance. Child data reports go to a New Jersey Department of Education (DOE) Data Steward. In order to maintain the highest data security and quality standards, optimize data use and minimize misuse of information, both the DECE TS GOLD® Manager and the New Jersey DOE Data Steward participate in yearly training offered through the Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC).

Whether the assessment tool(s) is/are implemented throughout the High-Need Community and/or Statewide;

During the current 2016-2017 school year, the first cohort of preschool expansion districts was required to begin using the KEA. Eight of the preschool expansion school districts had some portion of their Kindergarten teachers and supervisors attend training on the KEA between June and August 2016. A total of 86 teachers and 10 administrators from the expansion districts participated in the KEA training which was held in three regions of the state in 13 separate three-day sessions. Individual school district administrators decided which of their Kindergarten staff would participate (all or a sampling of classes). Teachers that attended the KEA training conducted by Teaching Strategies are currently in the process of attending the Kindergarten seminar, a series of 5 classes conducted by the NJDOE. The seminar classes cover such pertinent topics such as: review of NJ Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines, learning environment and materials, customizing curricula, differentiated instruction, and documentation.

Training and Test Quality

Whether the State provides or will provide training for local staff administering the assessment.

Teaching Strategies conducted a total of 13 three-day in-person training sessions this past summer, in 3 regions and has now reached 854 teachers and 302 administrators from 91 school districts throughout the state. Training topics included: Observing and Documenting, Scoring Reports, Family Communication, and Reliable Assessments. Similar training will be provided to the remainder of the expansion districts in 2017.

After the training, teachers completed a reliability assessment, adding credence to the accuracy of teacher ratings before beginning to use the instrument. Teachers collect their data over the first seven weeks of school. They use the information collected to assign a score in each of the three developmental areas. Throughout the roll-out, KEA teacher training is supported by the training of district administrators as well as professional learning communities that help to embed principles of assessment into every day practice.

New Jersey has developed a set of guidelines and checklists to guide the interpretation of the portfolio collections, which helps ensure that teachers are collecting and rating information accurately and reliably. Once the teachers assign the scores, Teaching Strategies uploads the data into NJ SMART, New Jersey's statewide longitudinal data system. Teachers and administrators also

participate in a kindergarten seminar that supports the high quality implementation of performance based assessments.

Data and Usage

The State's definition of school readiness:

New Jersey defines school readiness as the extent to which children have developed the necessary physical, cognitive, language, and social-emotional skills when they enter kindergarten to be successful in school and in life. However, we also maintain that only age should determine whether or not a child enters kindergarten, and that the school system is responsible for creating family partnerships and ensuring that the kindergarten learning environment is ready for the child, regardless of the child's competencies when they transition. This definition is in accordance with what we know to be best transition practices for children, families, and schools. Further, the New Jersey position is in accordance with the research provided by the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS-SDE).

Disaggregated information about children's school readiness on individual domains or subsets of the measure;

The school districts that are participating in the preschool expansion grant are required to use the KEA beginning in year two. Half of the school districts (eight) were trained in 2016 (or before) and the other half will be trained in the summer of 2017. As participating teachers are in the early stages of KEA implementation, data collection and input to the system is still in its infancy stages. In some cases, data is missing for participating teachers and school districts. DOE will plan to provide individualized technical assistance to districts to help ensure that data entry is completed as expected. Data that has been gathered does not yet show a complete picture of the preschool expansion students at kindergarten entry, although early data indicates a high level of readiness in the literacy domain, one measure of school readiness.

Upon completion of an assessment period and the assignment of scores, Teaching Strategies uploads the scores into NJ SMART. The Department of Education's NJ Standards Measurement and Resource for Teaching (NJ SMART) is a comprehensive statewide longitudinal data system solution that serves multiple purposes: staff/student identification, data warehousing, data reporting, and analytics. We will be able to link the kindergarten readiness data to prior experiences in early learning and development settings, where possible, and to later performance on New Jersey state tests, starting with the third grade Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments.

NJ-EASEL (New Jersey Enterprise Analysis System for Early Learning), our early childhood integrated data system, when ready, will allow us to match data from our early childhood data systems to assess our programs' efficacy. We will be able to link the valuable KEA data with early learning and development programs across sectors (e.g., Licensing, NJ SMART, Workforce Registry, Home Visiting, child care, State preschool, Early Head Start, Head Start, and Early Intervention), providing concrete

feedback on the efficacy of all early care and education programs.

The NJ-EASEL technology is being developed by the State Office of Information Technology (OIT). For GNJK, TS GOLD® will provide us with insight into whether the levels of the system are correlated with children's performance in kindergarten, and will provide valuable information to programs so that they can make adjustments that will improve the chances for children to succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

For Preschool Development Grants - Development Grants States ONLY:

1(d) GPRA Performance Measure: The number of States that collect and analyze data on State Preschool Program quality, including the structural elements of quality specified in the definition of High-Quality Preschool Programs.

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Section A: Part B - Selection Criteria

In this section of the APR, States will report on their progress addressing the Preschool Development Grant's selection criteria. The State should read the questions carefully and report in the narrative fields directly below the questions. Please include any data, data notes or formulas to help the readers understand the State's narrative responses.

1. Ensuring Quality in Preschool Programs (Selection Criteria "C" of the application)

Describe the State's use of funds received over the grant period for State Preschool Program infrastructure and quality improvements, including the State's efforts to implement a system of monitoring and support at the State level toward activities such as those described in Section (C)(1)(a-k) of the NIA.

Note: States will report amounts and percentage of funds for State Preschool Program infrastructure and High-Quality Preschool Programs in the Competitive Preference Priority 3 Chart.

During 2016, New Jersey's efforts to ensure quality were supported with the strong early learning infrastructure already in place. Using the elements of the state's High Quality Preschool Program in conjunction with GNJK, expansion districts were provided maximum supports to ensure the continued expansion of high quality preschool programs in 16 districts throughout the state.

a) Early Learning and Development Standards - New Jersey has in place early learning and development standards encompassing birth through grade three. These include: NJ Birth to Three Early Learning Standards, NJ Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards, NJ Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines, and First through Third Grade Implementation Guidelines.

b) Program Standards consistent with a High-Quality Preschool - Individual districts' implementation of program standards is monitored by district liaisons who reviewed and approved Four-Year Preschool Program Plan updates, budgets, and professional development plans to ensure compliance with grant requirements. Districts also worked to complete GNJK self-assessments, develop Quality Improvement Plans, and apply for enhancement grants. Grant funds also supported a spring 2016 study of classroom quality across districts through use of the ECERS-3. The study, completed by NIEER, gathered data across all standards for individual districts. Reports were shared with district personnel and DECE staff and will continue to be measured annually (each spring) to gauge progress in improving scores on the ECERS-3. A report of the NIEER study, comparing fall 2015 and spring 2016 scores can be found in the Executive Summary. Data shows that ECERS-3 scores improved over all subscales and most indicators.

c) Programs for children with disabilities and English learners - Expansion districts are required to have appropriate supports in place for English language learners; those supports vary by district and school. All districts are also required to include children with special needs in general education classrooms. Progress in this quality indicator varies by district and individualized supports are being provided by district liaisons to improve numbers of inclusion students. All districts are required to use a developmental screening tool to help identify children who are most

at risk for achievement and behavior problems. In addition, districts have a Preschool Intervention and Referral Team (PIRT) to provide targeted strategies for positive behavior supports. The Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) is being used to assess and improve children's learning environments and classroom behavior strategies, and districts have access to Preschool Special Education Consultants that will support best practices in the classrooms, including those that support children with disabilities in the mixed-delivery system. Grant funds are being used by districts to purchase developmental screening tools and pay salaries of required staff, including PIRT members.

d) Methods to determine availability of High-Quality Preschool Programs - DECE works closely with individual districts to determine best locations for preschool programs using the needs assessments conducted by NIEER in the spring of 2015 as well as outreach to the early learning community. Five school districts are currently contracting with local Head Start programs to meet projections for added high quality classrooms.

e) Preschool teacher education, training programs, and professional development - Teachers in programs participating in Preschool Expansion are required to possess, at a minimum, a bachelor's degree, and a P-3 certificate or equivalent. Any teachers or teacher assistants wishing to obtain a degree or a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential are eligible for scholarships through GNJK. In 2016, a wide variety of professional development opportunities were available through GNJK and DECE.

f) Improvements to teacher and administrator training programs and professional development - Trainings were held in various geographic locations to meet the needs of participants in GNJK, including the expansion districts. In addition, the DECE conducted targeted training to support preschool supervisors, new Master Teachers, and new PIRT members working in expansion districts. Expansion grant staff conducted supervisor professional development during 2016 that specifically targeted preschool supervisors and was held in conjunction with bi-monthly support meetings. Topics included: preschool teaching best practices, an overview of the New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards, reflective supervision and lesson planning, designing inclusive preschool classrooms, performance-based assessments, and the Pyramid model of positive behavior supports.

g) Use of a Statewide Longitudinal Data System to link data - Children registered in both grant- and state-funded preschool programs are enrolled into New Jersey's statewide longitudinal data system, NJ SMART. Each child is assigned a unique Student Identification Number, allowing the system to follow each child from grade level to grade level. Participating school districts, private providers, and Head Start programs receive their own site-level codes, which will ultimately allow us to develop a monitoring system connecting child outcome to early experiences at specific district, provider, and Head Start sites.

h) Implementing a comprehensive Early Learning Assessment System - New Jersey has a robust comprehensive early learning assessment system that is built into GNJK. Implementation of the

four types of assessment (screening, performance-based assessment, environmental measures, and measures of teacher-child interaction) is incorporated into GNJK (for early learning providers and participating school districts) and the Self-Assessment Validation System (SAVS) for State-funded school districts not enrolled in GNJK. In year two of the grant, participating school districts used GNJK to assess the program across five categories and five levels. School districts, private providers and Head Start programs are required to use valid and reliable developmental screenings (Ages & Stages Questionnaire, Early Screening Inventory-Revised); formative assessments that correspond with the comprehensive curricula and learning standards (TS GOLD®, The Child Observation Record (COR) or Work Sampling System); and measures of environment (ECERS-3) and adult-child interaction (Classroom Assessment Scoring System/CLASS).

i) Building preschool programs capacity to engage parents - As part of the GNJK self-assessment, expansion districts are required to use an additional Strengthening Families self-assessment to gauge effectiveness in parent engagement and supports. Training in the Strengthening Families Protective Factors is offered through both GNJK and DECE. Expansion districts are required to have active parent advisory groups and encouraged to participate on their local County Councils for Young Children (CCYC) which are required to have 51 percent parent membership. The goal is to have school district participation on the CCYCs to support development of parent leaders in each community. Each county council works within the community to support families as children transition into preschool through kindergarten and helps to facilitate linkages to community resources.

j) Building state- and community-level support for high-quality programs - Through the RTT-ELC grant, the State established a coordinated network of prenatal/early childhood services known as Central Intake Hubs to function as a single point of entry at the county level for pregnant or parenting families. Central Intake helps to streamline access to health care resources, social services, and other community supports. Early learning providers across settings are working to connect families with Central Intake and encourage them to participate on the CCYCs for their counties. No grant funds are being used, as these activities are covered by the RTT-ELC grant.

k) Other activities to support the delivery of High-Quality Preschool - Bi-monthly meetings for preschool expansion supervisors provide opportunities for networking and exchange of information and strategies amongst school districts. Some districts have made connections with State-funded preschool programs in their county in order to seek guidance and benefit from experience. Preschool expansion supervisors have also started networking amongst themselves to share best practices and troubleshoot any implementation challenges that arise.

2. Expanding High-Quality Preschool Programs in Each High-Need Community (Selection Criteria D of application)

Describe the progress the State has made during the reporting year to implement and sustain voluntary high quality preschool programs for eligible children in two or more High-Need Communities (Selection Criteria D(4) of the application) that include **ALL** structural elements listed below that are included in the definition of High-Quality Preschool Programs. States should include detailed information on ALL structural elements.

- High staff qualifications, including a teacher with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a bachelor's degree in any field with a State-approved alternative pathway, which may include coursework, clinical practice, and evidence of knowledge of content and pedagogy relating to early childhood, and teaching assistants with appropriate credentials;
- High-quality professional development for all staff;
- A child-to-instructional staff ratio of no more than 10 to 1;
- A class size of no more than 20 with, at a minimum, one teacher with high staff qualifications;
- A Full-Day program;
- Inclusion of children with disabilities to ensure access to and full participation in all opportunities;
- Developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and evidence-based curricula, and learning environments that are aligned with the State Early Learning and Development Standards, for at least the year prior to kindergarten entry;
- Individualized accommodations and supports so that all children can access and participate fully in learning activities;
- Instructional staff salaries that are comparable to the salaries of local K-12 instructional staff;
- Program evaluation to ensure continuous improvement;
- On-site or accessible Comprehensive Services for children and community partnerships that promote families access to services that support their children's learning and development; and
- Evidence-based health and safety standards.

Please describe the progress the State has made in establishing High-Quality Preschool Programs that include ALL structural elements listed above that are evidence-based and nationally recognized as important for ensuring program quality.

To ensure program quality, New Jersey is using the same process that was used to raise the quality of the 35 school districts currently in the state's High-Quality Preschool Program (former Abbott districts). The 16 school districts participating in preschool expansion are required to meet the same high-quality program and learning standards used in the state's program, and memorialized in our Administrative Code, N.J.A.C., 6A:13A, Elements of High Quality Preschool Programs, Preschool Program Implementation Guidelines, Self-Assessment Validation System (SAVS) and GNJK. Private providers and Head Start programs contracted with school districts have agreed to the terms of the annual Preschool Provider Contract in addition to using GNJK to work through the levels of quality.

The state's administrative code and other quality guidance documents (mentioned above) contain the following required quality structural elements that were addressed with preschool expansion grant districts in 2016:

- Maximum class size of 15 children with one certified teacher and a teacher assistant;
- Full-day preschool program consisting of a six-hour day and in keeping with each districts' school calendar for a 10-month academic period (180 day minimum);
- In-district administrator and/or supervisor to ensure coordination of all of the elements of the high-quality preschool program within each school district, including oversight of any contracted private providers or Head Start programs;
- Teacher with a Bachelor's degree and certification in preschool - grade three or other equivalent preschool certification. Teachers working at private provider programs contracted through the districts are eligible for scholarships through GNJK in order to complete a Bachelor's degree program and attain teaching certification;
- Instructional salaries that are comparable to school district salaries;
- Developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically relevant comprehensive curriculum (districts choose from High Scope, Tools of the Mind, Creative Curriculum and Curiosity Corner) and assessment (TS GOLD®, Child Observation Record, or Work Sampling System), that is aligned with the Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards. Professional development in a variety of curricula and assessment systems was offered in an effort to support full curriculum implementation and effective child assessment. Larger expansion districts used grant funds to support personalized professional development and coaching by the curriculum developers;
- Master Teacher(s) to provide coaching, classroom support, and professional development to instructional staff; master teachers are required at a ratio of one to not more than 20 preschool classrooms. In 2016, four expansion districts sent a total of five staff to the seminar

for new master teachers; the nine-session seminar is held monthly to orient and train master teachers in the requirements of their new role. Participants successfully completing all course requirements are awarded a fellowship letter from the NJDOE. Requirements include the submission of a portfolio that includes written evidence of reflective coaching sessions, documentation of completion of structured observation instruments, and group presentations based on NJ Teaching and Learning Standards.

- Structured observation tools are used by the Master Teacher to assess implementation of curriculum and quality components and to systematically gauge quality changes over time. The primary tool used in New Jersey in 2016 was the ECERS-3 (new last year) which is now gaining more widespread use on the national level. Training in the application and appropriate use of the ECERS-3 have been conducted throughout the state to orient expansion district staff to its use and effectiveness in measuring and guiding quality improvements. To build capacity and support DECE's work with school districts, seven NJDOE staff have now become reliable in the ECERS-3.
- Developmental screening instruments are required to be administered by classroom teachers at the beginning of the school year. The screening tool is used to determine if further evaluation of the child may be necessary. Professional development in administering the various screening tools was offered to districts in 2016 and individualized support was provided by district liaisons on an as-needed basis.
- Preschool Intervention and Referral team (PIRT) to provide intervention and support services; PIRT may consist of school psychologist, learning disabilities teacher, social worker, and/or speech and language specialists. The PIRT is responsible for consulting with master teachers and classroom teachers to adapt and modify teaching practices to help preschool children meet the preschool standards. Two sessions of professional development in the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social and Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children by the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) are underway this school year. All expansion districts were invited to attend the four-day sessions to get training for additional staff in the Pyramid model of positive behavior supports for children. The fall 2016 Pyramid trainings (two sessions of 4-days each) were attended by 23 staff from preschool expansion districts. PIRT members were also invited to training in the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) which is used to gauge teacher effectiveness in implementing the Pyramid positive behavior supports in the classroom. In the 2016-2017 school year, there will be a total of 16 sessions of two-day trainings in the TPOT which will be attended by approximately 26 preschool expansion staff (based on registrations to-date).
- Preschool nurses are required at a ratio of one for every 300 preschool students, including those students contracted with private provider and Head Start programs. The nurses' role is to ensure that basic health services are provided, including:
 - Vision, hearing, height and weight screenings of each child upon enrollment in preschool;

- Maintenance of records pertaining to immunization, physical examinations and other records necessary for transition to kindergarten;
- Parent education and communication designed to meet the health, nutritional, and social service needs of children enrolled in the program.
- Community Parent Involvement Specialist (CPIS) or other appropriate person (social service staff) is required of each expansion district to collaborate with all relevant preschool instructional staff, administrators, and support personnel to plan and facilitate greater engagement of families in the school and community. District CPIS work closely with preschool personnel to assess family needs (through surveys), engage parents in preschool and district-wide events, and connect them with local advisory councils or parent groups. Expansion districts also use the Strengthening Families protective factors framework and self-assessment as a requirement of participation in GNJK. Strengthening Families, developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy, provides seven primary strategies for engaging and supporting families while building protective factors to empower parents as partners in their child's education. Individual school districts plan a wide variety of parent events to best meet the needs of their communities.
- Each district board of education was required to establish an Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) comprised of district and community stakeholders whose role is to engage around early childhood issues in the community, advise on preschool matters, and seek opportunities for collaboration and resource-sharing. CPIS also work to connect families with local County Councils for Young Children (CCYC). Each CCYC works within the community to support families, facilitate linkages to community resources, and provide opportunities for families' involvement in authentic decision-making and leadership development.
- Expansion districts are required to include children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) in the preschool general education classrooms, recommended at a rate of 1-2 per class of 15 children. Preschool supervisors are working closely with their special education counterparts to determine appropriate placements for children and provide related services and supports to ensure the greatest likelihood of success. District liaisons work closely with each school district to share appropriate resources and give guidance on best practices for inclusion. Additional supports are available through the NJDOE, Office of Special Education, in the form of regional specialists that can provide on-site and personalized technical assistance to districts as needed.
- School districts are required to provide appropriate supports for English language learners depending on the particular need of each community. Home language surveys are distributed to families upon enrollment to help determine levels of support needed for new preschool enrollees. Districts provided supports in a variety of ways including bilingual instructional staff, in-class strategies for teachers by an ELL specialist, bilingual classroom materials, professional development for instructional staff, and resources for parents.
- Professional development for districts was offered by the state in a variety of venues and on various topics to support all components of the grant requirements. In 2016, the state's GNJK training

was the primary vehicle for delivery of training. Training was offered in several different regions to maximize accessibility for all participating subgrantees. Topics covered a wide range of subjects and levels in order to provide options for districts depending on need. The DECE also scheduled professional development for Master Teachers and PIRT members to help ensure compliance with grant requirements. Districts were also responsible for developing individualized professional development plans to support such topics as curriculum implementation, inclusion of children with special needs, and support of English language learners. The following specific topics were among those offered free of charge to expansion districts through GNJK and DECE:

- Let's Move Child Care
- ECERS - 3 Overview
- Creative Curriculum
- High Scope Curriculum
- Teaching Strategies Gold
- Inclusion Strategies
- Pyramid Positive Behavior Supports
- Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT)
- Strengthening Families
- Performance-Based Assessments
- NJ Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards

Districts were required to create transition teams to develop plans for transitioning children from entering preschool through third grade. Teams are comprised of various stakeholders including administrative staff, teachers (across grade levels and disciplines), and Child Study Team staff who meet to establish district goals and plans for seamless transitions of children and families through the early education system.

Progress on implementation of the above quality structural elements and required grant components are monitored by district liaisons with the use of the GNJK self-assessment, ECERS-3, and the District Activities Tracking Plan. These tools help guide the work of the liaisons with the districts and provide methods for planning and measuring quality improvements over time. Intensive technical assistance is provided to be sure districts are successfully implementing all elements. In the past year (2016), 126 on-site technical assistance and monitoring visits were conducted with preschool expansion districts.

Selection Criteria (D)(4) from NIA

Describe the number and percent of Eligible Children served and the cost per slot.

The total percentage of eligible children being served by the grant across 16 school districts is 49%. The number of new children targeted to be served in year two of the grant was exceeded by 160 additional new slots. The cost per pupil for year two was \$9,225 for new slots and \$4,500 for improved slots. There are no planned changes to targets for years three and four.

3. Collaborating with Each Subgrantee and Ensuring Strong Partnerships (Selection Criteria E of the application)

Describe the extent to which the State has collaborated with each Subgrantee to ensure that each Subgrantee is effectively implementing High-Quality Preschool Programs (Selection Criteria E (1-9) of the application) and how the State ensures strong partnerships between each Subgrantee and LEAs or other Early Learning Providers, as appropriate.

Since the start of the grant in January 2015, DECE has worked to develop and maintain close working relationships with the participating school districts. All districts are assigned a liaison who is primarily responsible for regular contact and program monitoring to ensure all grant components are being successfully implemented.

1. Establishment of roles and responsibilities of the state and subgrantee toward implementing the state's plan-

The NJDOE and subgrantee school districts have clearly defined roles as outlined in the annual Cooperative Agreements that are developed by NJDOE and signed by responsible parties at both the state (commissioner and Director of Budget and Accounting) and local levels (school superintendent). State responsibilities includes oversight of all district activities and grant components. Four dedicated staff oversee the work of 16 expansion districts. Grant staff are housed within the DECE and enjoy the benefits of much experience and expertise to support the development and maintenance of high-quality preschool programs. Staff are assigned to specific districts and are responsible for the following grant activities completed annually:

- Review and approve Four-Year Plan updates and budgets;
- Conduct on-site visits to meet with school personnel;
- Assist districts in assessing selection of classroom space and setting up new rooms as necessary;
- Provide support and resources on specific topics (e.g., inclusion, curriculum, math, developmental assessments, screening tools, TPOT, etc.);
- Assist districts in negotiating relationships, contracts, and budgets with private providers, as applicable.

School district roles and responsibilities:

- Develop annual plans and budgets;
- Determine locations for new classrooms, as needed;
- Develop contracts with private providers, as applicable;
- Recruit, hire, and supervise staff;

- Implement required quality components including grant and GNJK;
- Recruit and enroll children;
- Complete enrollment and quarterly expenditure reports.

2. Increasing organizational capacity and infrastructure of the subgrantee to provide high-quality preschool programs-

DECE staff continues to work closely with school districts to build internal organizational capacity including the addition of staff and structural supports to meet all grant components. Staff maintain close contact through email, phone, and face-to-face meetings with all districts to provide individualized direction and assistance as needed and monitor progress on quality components.

3. Minimizing local administrative costs - Budgets are reviewed and approved annually by DECE staff with the support of the Office of Academic Initiatives and Fiscal Accountability. Quarterly expenditure reports are submitted and reviewed to ensure appropriate expenditure of funds. Funds to districts are paid through the state's Electronic Web-Enabled Grant System (EWEG) as reimbursement requests are submitted, reviewed and approved providing an additional mechanism for monitoring expenditures.

4. Monitoring to ensure delivery of high quality- District liaisons work with individual districts to monitor quality components to determine the status of implementation through on-site visits and District Activities Tracking plans. GNJK is used to measure additional quality standards that are tracked across five categories and five levels. Classroom quality studies are done by NIEER on an annual basis to gauge quality changes. First year results demonstrated that expansion districts made improvements across all quality subscales in the ECERS-3. Individual school districts that contract with private providers or Head Start are responsible for monitoring both program and fiscal components of the provider. Privately contracted providers receive the same support services for their classes including coaches, behavior support, nurses, and therapies where appropriate. District Master Teachers assess classroom quality using the ECERS-3 and supervisors in contracted provider programs also participate in GNJK to assess quality across all program components.

5. Coordination of plans related to assessments, data sharing, instructional tools, family engagement, cross-sector and comprehensive services efforts, professional development, and workforce and leadership development-

Grow NJ Kids is the primary vehicle for coordination of plans across all areas noted above. Incorporated into GNJK are instructional tools, family engagement, cross-sector and comprehensive services, professional development, and workforce. This assures that all school districts and provider partners work within the same high quality parameters and are being held to the same high standard. Also incorporated into GNJK is the Strengthening Families framework which addresses assessment and best practices related to family engagement. GNJK also includes the NJ Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards.

In addition to GNJK, preschool expansion programs are guided by Department of Education and the *N.J.A.C. 6A:13A, Elements of High Quality Preschool Programs* which describes regulations used by districts to ensure compliance with state requirements for grant participation. This serves as a reference for districts and liaisons when determining such things as teacher compensation requirements and the role of the Master Teacher. Additional high quality parameters are outlined in the *Preschool Program Implementation Guidelines* which describes more detailed recommendations for community collaboration, recruitment and outreach, and administration.

District liaisons work closely with individual districts to develop professional development plans (annually) and access free training available through the state and GNJK. Regular meetings are also held with key district staff to review information about all grant requirements and share resources to support the work of the districts. This year's meetings also provided an opportunity for professional development for school administrators on relevant topics such as inclusion, performance-based assessments, and Pyramid Positive Behavior supports.

6. Coordination and delivery of High-Quality Preschool Programs - DECE continues to work closely with various state departments through the NJCYC and the Interdepartmental Planning Group (IPG). This important collaboration provides ongoing opportunities for coordination of service delivery across state- and federally-funded preschool programs, home visiting, child care, Head Start agencies, Title I programs, programs for homeless children, and programs for young children with disabilities.

In addition to coordination at the program office level, the NJDOE has a strong system of checks and balances for fiscal accountability across program funding sources. Districts are required to maintain a uniform system of financial bookkeeping and reporting that is consistent with generally accepted accounting principles. State-funded preschool programs have their own unique revenue source and program codes for budgeting and reporting expenditures, allowing school districts to track preschool funding separately from other state and federal funding (Title I, IDEA, McKinney-Vento, etc.). Any district receiving grant dollars received unique program codes for tracking grant expenditures. Each school year, districts provide the NJDOE with a Comprehensive Annual Financial Report detailing expenditures from all funding sources in the prior school year. Districts must also submit annual independent audits of all expenditures.

7. Integration within economically diverse, inclusive settings - To ensure economic diversity within each program, New Jersey leverages existing state funding provided to participating high-need communities to enhance existing preschool slots and add new slots for eligible children. School districts already receiving state funding for preschool are permitted to serve any resident three- and four-year-old child, without regard to income eligibility. This allows for more economically diverse populations in each classroom. Preschoolers with disabilities are also included in classrooms serving eligible children, following the model already established within the state's High-Quality Preschool Program.

8. Delivery to eligible children in need of additional supports - Each district is responsible to create an annual program plan update to articulate how and where they will serve each of the following

groups (where appropriate): children with disabilities, English language learners (ELL), children in migrant families, children in homeless families and children in military families. The plan describes what accommodations will be made to address the unique needs of each group. For instance, the plan will show how the Home Language Survey will be shared with teachers and directors/principals to address the needs of ELLs, and will describe what accommodations will be made for their families, including assistance with translation.

9. Outreach and engagement of diverse families - Districts employed a wide variety of techniques including public service announcements, door-to-door distribution of flyers, leaving information at local pediatricians' and business offices, translation of materials into native languages represented in the community, mass mailings to public school families, newspaper advertisements, and outreach to local family resource centers. Districts also use the Strengthening Families self-assessment to gauge effectiveness of family engagement and work on improving services to all families. District CPIS are responsible for planning parent events and connecting families to community resources.

4. Alignment Within a Birth Through Third Grade Continuum (Section F of the application)

Describe progress the State has made for alignment within a birth through third grade continuum in activities for birth through age five programs ((F)(1)(a-b) in the NIA) and kindergarten through third grade ((F)(2)(a-d) in the NIA).

Through the RTT-ELC and preschool expansion grants, New Jersey has expanded and improved initiatives to ensure smooth transitions for children and families across the birth through third grade continuum. In the second year of the grant, New Jersey state departments continued working in a cross-sector collaboration to expand and enhance services to families of its youngest children. In regular meetings of the NJCYC, a myriad of community stakeholders and state leaders discussed issues across all sectors that affected families seeking access to services. NJCYC members in attendance represented programs of all types serving families of children from prenatal through school-age. Efforts undertaken at the NJCYC and the IPG continue to support a strong continuum of learning for children from birth through third grade. In addition, internal work being done at DECE encompasses birth to grade three, including such projects as Early Head Start/Head Start, Kindergarten and First through Third Grade Guidelines

1. (a/b) Transitions for programs serving children from birth to five - Central Intake, New Jersey's single point of entry into comprehensive early childhood system provides the framework for seamless referral and coordination among key child and family-serving partners from pregnancy to age eight. With core funding commitments at the state level (Departments of Health, Children and Families, Human Services and Education), and cross-sector collaboration, the Central Intake hubs ensure easier access for programs and families to a continuum of early learning and development services and supports within each community. Partners in this collaboration include Early Intervention, Special Education, Home Visiting, Early Head Start/Head Start, child care and family child care, Special Child Health Services, before and after care programs, prenatal clinics and Medicaid-managed care

organizations.

This past year, the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) implemented a statewide network of County Councils for Young Children (CCYC) which are now up and running in all counties. The CCYC structure embraces the Strengthening Families Framework which facilitates parent participation in identifying local successes/concerns, setting priorities, and establishing a local structure. Each CCYC partners with local providers (e.g. Home Visiting, Head Start, Child Care Resource and Referral, Family Resource Centers, etc.) to identify parents to participate on the CCYC. The CCYC also includes other stakeholders and services (e.g. faith-based organizations, civic groups, libraries, museums, etc.) that support parents and families. Expansion districts are encouraged to solicit participation from parent advisory groups on the CCYC. Each CCYC, which is comprised of 51% parents, seeks to develop the skills of parent leaders and recruit additional parents to participate in local events. The goal is that parents will have greater input into the service delivery and coordination at the local level and become equal partners in improving quality and access to early childhood services. Both Central Intake and CCYC have dedicated sources of funding that align with specific state or federal priorities and/or grants. Because of their direct relationship to identifying and linking children and families to preschool programs they are considered leveraged resources for support of preschool expansion. Transition teams are now in place in all districts and staff are meeting between grade levels to develop transition plans for children and families from before preschool entry through grade three.

2. Transitions for programs serving children from Kindergarten to Grade 3 -

(a) Ensuring that children are prepared for Kindergarten: New Jersey is working to ensure that children are well prepared for kindergarten by implementing the components of the high-quality preschool in the schools and providers in the 16 subgrantee communities, and by encouraging sites serving infants and toddlers to participate in GNJK. Districts are being supported by DECE staff to meet the standards of the state preschool program, and are being included in the ongoing evaluation of classrooms to inform quality improvements. Districts are working to meet the structural elements dictated by code and guidelines, and are participating in GNJK to ensure that all program features are in place.

Expansion programs are required to fully implement developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive instruction and evidence-based curricula. Teachers also use a performance-based assessment system such as TS GOLD, Work Sampling System, or Child Observation Record. Professional development in both curriculum implementation and performance-based assessments were provided in 2016 through GNJK; in addition, many individual districts provided their own professional development to staff to ensure full implementation of curriculum. With this and all other high-quality elements in place, New Jersey is poised to ensure that children are well-prepared for entry into Kindergarten.

(b) Efforts to sustain developmental gains of children:

(i) Collaboration between preschool and Kindergarten teachers - Each districts' transition

team consists of teachers across grade levels including preschool and Kindergarten teachers. The transition team meetings provide opportunities for dialogue and planning around the needs of children and families in transition. Some examples of transition activities that have taken place in the past year include:

- Preschool student visits to kindergarten classes;
- Kindergarten orientation for all students;
- Parent/teacher conferences;
- Parent/guardian workshops;
- Preschool-Kindergarten Buddy Program;
- Transition to Kindergarten;
- Multiple open houses with flexible times;
- Kindergarten Summer Prep Program/Extended School Year Program

During 2016, all districts were introduced to the Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA) and the Kindergarten seminar. The KEA uses the TS GOLD system to assess children's academic and social development as they enter kindergarten. Teachers are encouraged to use TS GOLD beyond kindergarten to measure progress, guide individualized instruction, and assist in curriculum planning, professional development, and interactions with parents. This provides opportunities for all districts to improve best practices at the kindergarten level and further coordinate activities and experiences.

(ii) Expanding access to full-day kindergarten - All participating expansion districts already offer full-day Kindergarten.

(iii) Increasing percentage of children who read and do math at grade level - Expansion of the KEA provides additional data to track progress of children from preschool into early elementary years. Data will be reviewed and targets will be set to increase the percentage of students who are proficient in reading and math skills.

(c) Plan to engage families - Transition teams at the district level have planned a variety of transition activities to include families. Parents attending the preschool program are surveyed using the Strengthening Families Protective Families Survey to gauge their needs.

(d) Steps you have taken to build upon or align -

(i) Child learning standards - Through the RTT-ELC grant and NJCYC, the NJ Birth to Three Early Learning Standards and Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards were aligned and a guidance document created. Kindergarten and First through Third Grade Implementation Guidelines have also been completed.

(ii) Teacher preparation and workforce competence - The Kindergarten Seminar is available to all districts participating in the KEA and includes sessions that introduce the key features of the Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines and the KEA. Classes continue to be available through GNJK and NJDOE, covering standards and implementation across all early grade levels including the new

First through Third Grade Implementation Guidelines.

(iii) Comprehensive early learning assessment - District liaisons have been working closely with districts to implement comprehensive assessment systems from preschool into kindergarten and beyond. Professional development in the use of various levels of assessment, including TS GOLD is provided through the RTT-ELC and expansion grants. Support is available to help teachers at all grade levels integrate the information learned to systematically address all areas of assessment: classroom environment, teacher-child interaction, developmental screening and performance-based assessment.

(iv) Data systems - As districts enroll teachers in the KEA, data is entered into NJ SMART, the state's longitudinal data system. Children will be assessed at both the beginning and end of kindergarten to track progress.

(v) Family engagement - See 2(c) above.

Section A: Part C - Competitive Preference Priorities

Competitive Preference Priority 1: Contributing Matching Funds (if included in the State's approved application).

Describe the progress the State has made on its credible plan for obtaining and using non-Federal matching funds to support the implementation of its ambitious and achievable plan during the grant period. For progress *not* made in this area, please describe the State's strategies to ensure that measurable progress will be made by the end of the grant period. Please describe any changes made to the data reported in **Table 7(a)**; explain if your *Year 2 Target* differs from the *Year 2 Actual*.

As can be seen in our original application (and in the 2015 APR), our match began with a significant boost due to an increase of \$14.4 million from FY13 to FY14. As shown in Table 7(a), we then met our projected year one (FY15) increase of \$4,773,000 to New Jersey's already substantial preschool program budget of over \$650 million annually. In year two (FY16), we then exceeded our initially projected match of \$5,773,000 by over \$1.67 million (for a total match of \$7,447,000 in year two). In spite of a flat enrollment projection for FY17, state funding preschool did not decrease in year three (FY17). Instead, we maintained our year two matching level of \$7,447,000. If we conservatively project to maintain that same matching level for year four as well, we will more than meet our match for the grant. These matching funds will be used to support additional slots in the high-need communities participating in New Jersey's High-Quality Preschool Program. Funding will be distributed to individual school districts (and to contracted providers, as appropriate) based on enrollment projections submitted to and approved by the New Jersey Department of Education. Including our initial match of \$14.4 million, our total matching contribution will equal \$41,514,000, representing a 78% match to our grant funding.

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Supporting the Continuum of Early Learning and Development (if included in the State's approved application).

Describe progress made in creating a more seamless progression of supports and interventions from birth through third grade, such as high-quality infant and toddler care, home visitation, full-day kindergarten, and before and after care services for, at a minimum, a defined cohort of eligible children and their families within each high need community served by each Subgrantee. For progress *not* made in these areas, please describe the State's strategies to ensure that measurable progress will be made by the end of the grant period.

New Jersey has continued its collaborative partnership approach (IPG) that spans the birth through third grade continuum and goes across multiple sectors, including the Department of Education (Division of Early Childhood Education and Family Engagement, Offices of Special Education and Title One, Homeless and Migrant Education), the Department of Human Services (Division of Family Development), the Department of Children and Families (Offices of Licensing, Child Protection and Permanency, and Family and Community Partnerships), and the Department of Health (Office of Early Intervention). This cross agency collaboration has resulted in a more coordinated delivery of services starting prenatally, and we continue to find new ways to ensure continuous and consistent high-quality early learning and development opportunities throughout the prenatal/birth to age eight continuum.

Central Intake hubs and CCYC (see 4, 1 a/b above) provide a mechanism to streamline families' access to comprehensive services. Information about services available through collaboration with our state partners has been shared with each district for use by social workers and Community Parent Involvement Specialists (CPIS). They in-turn have shared the information with families in an effort to maximize supports and resources to needy families. Central Intake provides families access to such services as home visiting, child care, adult education, housing, health, and mental health services. Local parent councils are active in all counties and district staff have been developing contacts by attending meetings and events to gather information about the availability of community resources and to make connections with local stakeholders. DECE district liaisons are working with their assigned districts to help facilitate development of relationships and collaboration in their local communities.

In-district transition teams, including staff from various early grade levels and across disciplines, continue to meet to ensure that transitions between grades and programs are as smooth and seamless as possible. Transition teams and district staff were also responsible for surveying families to identify educational and social service needs and provide resources and information to them as needed. The work done in transition teams is also providing new opportunities for dialogue across grade levels to work toward better articulation and minimal disruptions during periods of transition.

Preschool expansion supervisors work closely with district special education coordinators to seek children for enrollment into the preschool general education settings. Placement of children with IEPs into the general education setting is done through a joint effort of preschool and special education staff working together to determine "goodness of fit" for eligible children with special needs. Individual districts reached various levels of success in the integration of children with special needs and liaisons continue to work closely to promote positive growth in this area. Districts are provided with resources and professional development to learn more about strategies for inclusion of children with special needs. Districts have continued outreach to local Early Intervention providers to bring children with special needs into their state- or federally-funded preschool programs as they turn three years old. Children are then enrolled into grant-funded classrooms as they become age- and income-eligible to participate and space is available.

To ensure that the benefits of the high-quality preschool program continue beyond preschool, district administrators are introduced to the KEA and Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines. Kindergarten teachers participating in the KEA are also be enrolled in the Kindergarten Seminar, which focuses content on using both the Guidelines and the KEA. To help schools navigate the increasingly complex world of Common Core and higher expectations for accountability, and to promote smooth transitions across the grade levels, New Jersey also developed First through Third Grade Implementation Guidelines. Funded through the RTT-ELC grant, the guidelines include information on pedagogy and young children, best practices in assessment, reading interventions, center- and project-based learning, as well as specific guidance on implementing and assessing the Common Core using

developmentally appropriate instructional practices and highlighting strategies for teacher evaluation. District liaisons and DECE colleagues are working closely with individual districts for successful implementation of the KEA and best practices in grades kindergarten through third grade.

Competitive Preference Priority 3: Creating New High Quality State Preschool Slots (if included in the State's approved application).

Describe progress made in using at least 50% of the State's federal grant award to create new State Preschool Program slots that will increase the overall number of new slots in State Preschool Programs that meet the definition of High-Quality Preschool Programs. For progress *not* made in this area, please describe the State's strategies to ensure that measurable progress will be made by the end of the grant period.

New Jersey continues to be highly successful in creating new high quality preschool slots. To-date, the subgrantees are serving a total of 1887 new or improved slots. Of these, 767 are improved and 1120 are new which exceeds initial projections for year two. As districts begin planning for year three implementation (school year 2017-2018), DECE staff are working closely with districts to ensure that they are prepared to increase enrollment as projected in the year ahead.

Section B: Budget Information

Budget and Sustainability (Section G in the application)

1. Please provide a brief explanation of any discrepancies between the State's approved budget and its total expenditures for the reporting year. Explain carry-over funds that have not been expended or obligated from January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016.

New Jersey's year two approved budget was under-expended by a total of \$3,208,344.10. Approximately \$386,594.19 of this funding is attributable to our state-level infrastructure expenditures (including indirect costs and grantee technical assistance). The remaining unexpended portion of \$2,839,749.91 is funding budgeted for our high-quality preschool programs.

State-level infrastructure expenditures were lower than expected because salary, benefit, grantee technical assistance and MOU costs came in lower than anticipated. We expect grant expenditures to increase during year three of the grant, but will also reexamine how grant funding is budgeted to maximize our interactions with districts operating the high-quality preschool programs.

Subgrantee expenditures for the high-quality preschool programs increased significantly from year one to year two. District programs are now well underway, grant expenditures have become more regular, and we expect expenditures to continue to increase through the course of the grant.

2. Please describe any substantive changes that you anticipate to the State's Preschool Development Grant budget in the upcoming fiscal year (January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017).

Any substantive changes to our year three budget will likely involve carrying forward unexpended year two funding, but no changes are currently proposed in the nature of how funding will be expended. Our subgrantee school districts will continue to expend year two grant funding to close out the 2016-16 school year. We expect the majority of the school districts will not begin to spend year three funding until the second quarter of 2017.

State-level infrastructure funding will also be carried forward into year three, with no substantive changes to our expenditures. We do expect that direct and indirect costs from one of our larger MOUs will be charged to the budget during year three. In addition, we anticipate benefit expenditures will increase during year three since state benefit costs continue to rise annually. Related expenses (travel, supplies, indirect) are also expected to increase above year one and two levels and grant staff intensify their work with subgrantee districts.

3. Describe the State's progress on its plan for sustainability at the end of the grant period to ensure that the number and percentage of Eligible Children with access to High-Quality Preschool Programs in the State will be maintained or expanded, including to additional High-Need Communities.

We are confident that New Jersey will be able to maintain, and possibly expand, the number and percentage of eligible children being served in high-quality preschool programs after the grant period. For the current school year (2016-17), we are already expecting to spend a larger amount of state aid

on state-funded preschool programs than originally anticipated in our application. We also expect to maintain that increase for the 2017-18 school year. In addition, state legislators are in the process of proposing several pieces of legislation aimed at increasing funding and enrollment in the state-funded preschool program. While we cannot guarantee future funding increases, we are encouraged by the current state of preschool funding in New Jersey.

4. Please provide a brief explanation of any discrepancies, if any, between the Subrecipients' approved budgets and their total expenditures for the reporting year. Explain carry-over funds that have not been expended or obligated from January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016.

Although our subgrantees' total expenditures for year one were significantly under expended, we saw those expenditures increase significantly in year two, and we expect expenditures to increase further as subgrantees continue to enroll more grant-funded children. As stated above, subgrantees will continue to use year two grant funding to close out the 2016-17 school year. After that point, they will begin using year three grant funding to support the costs of the 2017-18 school year.

