



STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: August 19, 2026
To: Local Educational Agency Leads
Route To: Principals, Assistant Superintendents of Curriculum and Instruction, Supervisors, Preschool Instructional Coaches, and Teachers
From: Katrina T. McCombs, Assistant Commissioner
Division of Early Childhood Services

Important Reminders for Early Childhood Services for the 2026-2027 School Year

As schools and programs prepare to welcome students and families for the 2026-2027 school year, we recognize the dedication and leadership required to launch another successful year of preschool education. The purpose of this memo is to highlight key requirements, deadlines, and planning considerations that districts and early childhood partners should address as the school year begins. The decisions made during these critical opening weeks establish the foundation for student growth, family engagement, and program quality throughout the year.

Thank you for your continued partnership and commitment to providing equitable, high-quality early childhood experiences for New Jersey's youngest learners. Together, we can ensure every child begins the school year with the support and opportunities needed to succeed.

Please review the important reminders below as you prepare for the successful opening of the 2026-2027 school year.

Screenings of Preschool Students

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:13A-5.3, district boards of education must conduct a developmentally appropriate early childhood screening for each child upon enrollment in preschool. These screenings are intended to identify children who may require further assessment or a comprehensive diagnostic evaluation.

In addition, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:13A-4.5(b), district boards of education must ensure that all enrolled preschool students receive, at a minimum, vision, hearing, dental, height, and weight screenings.

Please note that these screening requirements apply to all preschool students, including those enrolled in district-operated programs, contracted private provider settings, and Head Start programs.

Preschool Projected Enrollments

School districts will submit projected preschool enrollments for the 2027-2028 school year no later than November 15, 2026. At this time, districts should be engaging in discussions with contracted providers regarding potential classroom expansions, reallocations, or reductions.

Enrollment projections should be based on current enrollment data, waitlists (for districts other than former Abbott districts), and classrooms that will be available for occupancy on the first day of school in September 2027. Projected enrollments must be entered through the Preschool Budget and Operational Plan (PBOP) platform. Additional details regarding enrollment projections, including the date PBOP will open, will be shared with districts in the near future.

Temporary Classroom Units (TCUs)

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:13A-7.1(f), the use of Temporary Classroom Units (TCUs) in all PEA-funded preschool programs will sunset at the conclusion of the current school year. Beginning with the 2027-2028 school year, TCUs may no longer be used to serve preschool students.

Districts currently utilizing TCUs should ensure that permanent, age-appropriate classroom spaces are identified and ready for occupancy by September 2027.

For questions regarding these requirements, please contact the Office of Preschool Education Programs at doeearlychild@doe.nj.gov.

We wish you and your staff a successful and rewarding 2026-2027 school year!