



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

# DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: January 21, 2026  
To: Local Educational Agency Leads  
Route To: Principals, Assistant Superintendents of Curriculum and Instruction, Supervisors,  
Preschool Instructional Coaches, Teachers  
From: Katrina T. McCombs, Assistant Commissioner  
Division of Early Childhood Services

## **Clarification of Implementation of the New Jersey Universal Preschool and Kindergarten Act (P.L. 2025, c.100) and P.L. 2025, c.101**

On July 9, 2025, Governor Phil Murphy signed into law the New Jersey Universal Preschool and Kindergarten Act (P.L. 2025, c.100; S.3910/A.5717) and P.L. 2025, c.101 (S.4476). These statutes significantly expand access to early childhood education in New Jersey by:

- Establishing full-day kindergarten statewide in districts that are not currently offering full-day programs;
- Require Preschool Education Aid (PEA) districts to partner with Ready, Willing, and Able Licensed Child Care and Head Start programs;
- Document due diligence in developing partnerships with licensed childcare providers and Head Start programs;
- Prioritizing preschool students who are at-risk in recruitment and enrollment practices;
- Usage of PEA funding for other preschool purposes under certain conditions;
- Allowing the option of multi-year contracting; and
- Information on Preschool Expansion Grants and the Cost-Sharing Pilot.

To ensure understanding and compliance, the information below provides further guidance and clarification outlining the new requirements established under P.L. 2025, c.100 and P.L. 2025, c.101. This guidance is intended to help PEA-funded school districts understand and implement these requirements effectively. The following information summarizes key provisions of P.L. 2025, c.100 (The New Jersey Universal Preschool and Kindergarten Act) and P.L. 2025, c.101.

### **Collaborations and Due Diligence**

Districts must make every effort to collaborate with local ready, willing, and able private providers and Head Start programs within their district and neighboring communities that meet all requirements of N.J.A.C. 6A:13A. Districts must demonstrate these due-diligence efforts to establish partnerships with all eligible private providers and Head Start programs within their district and neighboring communities. This might include, for example, conducting annual outreach to local licensed providers and Head Start programs to gauge their willingness and ability to partner.

Districts can locate the private provider and Head Start programs within their district and neighboring communities by utilizing the New Jersey Department of Human Services [Licensed Child Care Center List](#).

### **At-Risk**

At-Risk Recruitment and Enrollment Districts are responsible for identifying and recruiting at-risk and hard-to-reach families (e.g., recent immigrants, low-income, teen parents, homelessness) to ensure these children receive priority placement in preschool programs. Districts must document their strategies and procedures, which will be reviewed as part of the annual Preschool Operational Plan submission. Identification and documentation can be completed using a variety of methods tailored to the district's needs.

### **Allocation of PEA Funding**

Districts that have achieved full implementation may allocate Preschool Education Aid (PEA) for additional purposes, including summer programming for preschool students, professional development for preschool staff, transportation services for preschool pupils, and preschool facility improvements. Districts should work with the Division of Early Childhood Services to allocate funds for these additional purposes.

A district achieves full implementation by serving the number of students that the district was funded to serve in the current fiscal year and meeting all program requirements under the PEA program.

### **Redistribution of Seats**

Districts must obtain Commissioner approval prior to implementing any significant redistribution of State-funded preschool seats among district, private provider, or Head Start settings. A formal letter requesting approval and providing justification must be submitted to the Division of Early Childhood Services at [doeearlychild@doe.nj.gov](mailto:doeearlychild@doe.nj.gov).

### **Contracting**

Multi-Year Contract Authority Districts are authorized to establish preschool program contracts for up to three years through board resolution. Districts are still required to utilize the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) approved contract provided each year. More information regarding 2026-2027 PEA contracts will be shared by the Division of Early Childhood Services at a later date.

### **Preschool Expansion Grants (This applies to districts that are receiving PEA for the first time in Fiscal Year 2026, 2027 and 2028)**

Steering Committee: The Universal Preschool Implementation Steering Committee, established within the NJDOE and organized by October 9, 2025, is responsible for evaluating the three-year program, recommending a statewide preschool funding methodology, supporting mixed delivery partnerships and proposing optional methods for school districts to establish centralized enrollment systems, analyzing tax levy adjustments, and identifying strategies to strengthen and expand the preschool workforce, with the ability to convene local subcommittees for practitioner input.

### **Cost-Sharing Pilot (FY 2026–FY 2028)**

P.L.2025, c.100 establishes a three-year cost-sharing pilot for newly funded districts. Under this pilot, for districts receiving PEA for the first time in 2025-2026, 2026-2027 or 2027-2028, PEA awards amounts will be calculated as follows.

In accordance with standard practice, the total cost of an awardee's program will be calculated on a per-pupil basis based on the awardee's projected FTE enrollment. The NJDOE's share of that total cost – i.e., the amount of PEA a district will receive – will be a percentage of that total cost. The percentage will be the district's District Aid Percentage (DAP). In accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-54(h), a school district's DAP will equal the greater of 40% or the percentage derived by dividing the district's equalization aid, as calculated pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-53 by the district's adequacy budget, as calculated pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-51.

This cost-sharing methodology does not absolve awardees of high-quality preschool program requirements (N.J.A.C. 6A:13A). Awardees must meet all requirements governing state-funded preschool programs, including requirements to demonstrate growth towards serving the district's universe of eligible preschool students. Districts must provide support for any costs necessary to meet program requirements that are not covered by the awardee's PEA funds (as determined by the State's cost-sharing methodology outlined above) and can be met through other sources, which may include, but need not be limited to, local tax levy, available reserves, or general fund state aid. Tuition cannot be charged to eligible residents to meet the local cost share as the preschool program must be offered free of charge to students. P.L.2025, c.100 does provide awardees with an additional tax levy adjustment equal to their preschool local share, which can be implemented through the district's normal annual budget adoption process and does not require direct voter approval or a special election. This cost-sharing pilot program does not apply to preschool programs that were funded prior to the 2025-2026 school year. Questions regarding the Cost-Sharing Pilot can be emailed to the Office of Preschool Finance at [PreschoolFinance@doe.nj.gov](mailto:PreschoolFinance@doe.nj.gov).

### **Mixed Delivery Handbook**

The NJDOE released a Mixed Delivery Handbook, and we would appreciate your support by sharing the link with the licensed childcare providers and Head Start programs contracting with the Local Education Agency.

The NJDOE also anticipates amending N.J.A.C. 6A:13A to reflect the requirements of the legislation and will provide further communication and technical assistance to support implementation.

c: Members, State Board of Education  
NJDOE Staff  
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network  
Garden State Coalition of Schools  
NJ LEE Group